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Performing Bristol: towards a cultural politics of creativity

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Submitted for PhD, February 2014

This thesis examines the role of cultural creativity in urban belonging. It explores some of the people, places and organisations involved in producing and consuming Bristol as a creative city, to show that this performance is a contingent achievement. Drawing on the performance practices of spoken word, scripted theatre and Carnival in Bristol, the thesis argues that this instability of cultural creativity is played out through a dynamic of order and disorder. This is illustrated through the manner in which four elements of creative practice take place in Bristol. Firstly, 'making' is shown to occur through an emergent order that produces and maintains unstable spaces for creativity in the city. Secondly, such spaces for creativity are worked through by 'circulating' pasts that can be both a constraining and a productive force in contemporary belongings. Thirdly, this ambiguity of attachments is played out through acts of 'expressing' that both constitute and upset the subject. Fourthly, the 'fragmenting' of cultural activity is shown to be both product and producer of such precarious belonging. Taken together these creative movements point to the way culture is vital to building a social world from an individual one, but this is always a fragile construction. The ongoing necessity to belong, however fleetingly, must be balanced with the creative process of culture that is never straightforwardly affirmative. Culture's tendency towards disorder might be productive but it also results in uncertainty. Without the stability of roles or the continuity of practices, a recurring implication of the order/disorder tension is the attempt to govern culture, to limit the scope of its creativity. The thesis draws out the potential and the constraints of such contingency to work towards a cultural politics of creativity. The creative tension in culture illustrates how people continue to work to belong, how they maintain attachments in the face of uncertainty.

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List of Abbreviations

ACE – Arts Council England

BCC – Bristol City Council

DCMS – Department of Culture Media and Sport

MXC – Malcom X Community Centre

SSG – Southwest Scriptwriters group

TFT – Tobacco Factory Theatre

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1. Introduction

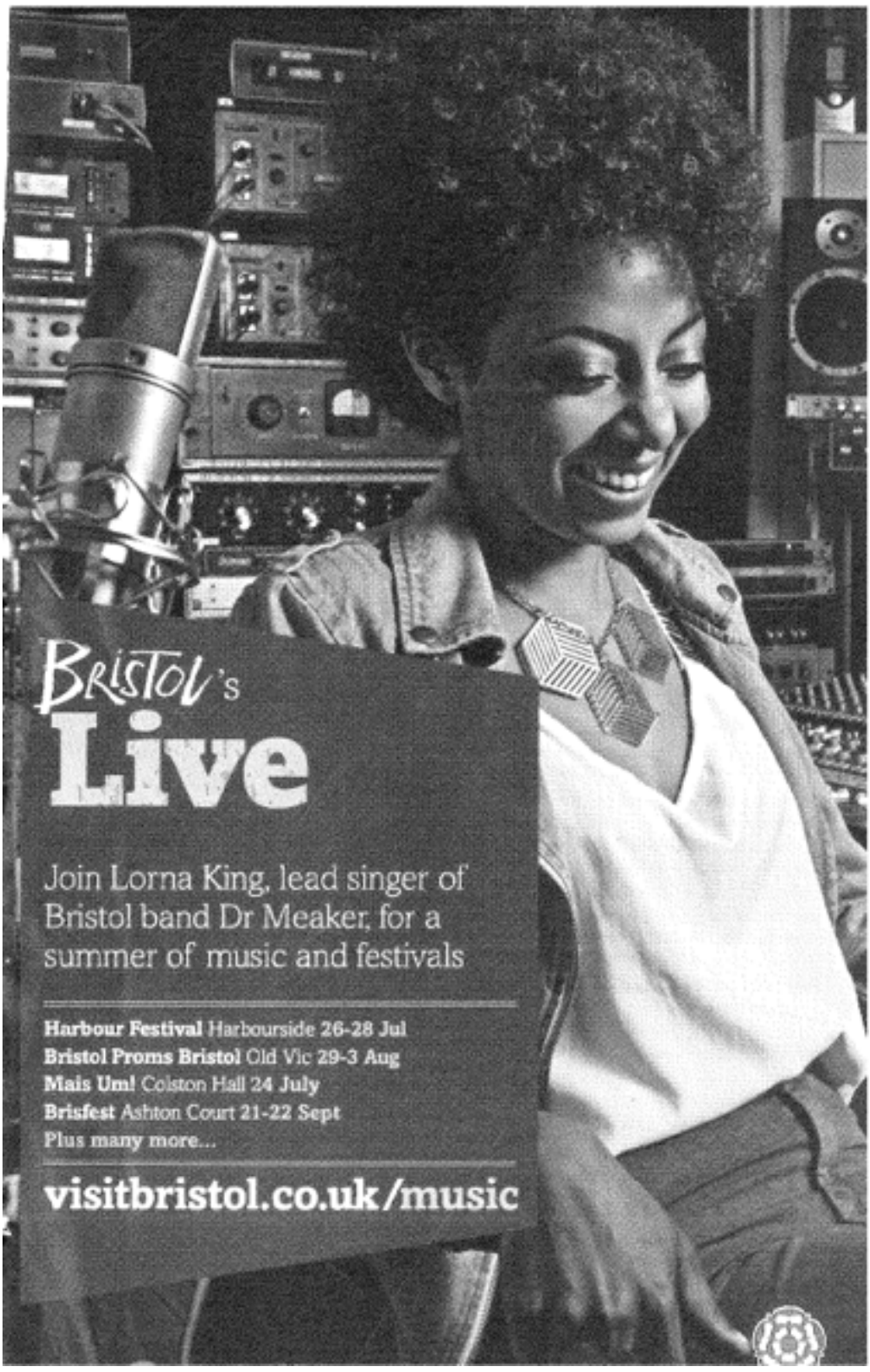


Figure 1: *Bristol's Live* advertisement, The Guardian 20 July 2013.

Bristol's Live! It's vibrant, it's exciting, it's creative. There is a certain buzz about Bristol, something in its *culture* that makes it a lively place to be. It's pervasive self-narrative stresses diversity, the thriving juxtaposition of Banksy's graffiti with the Arnolfini contemporary art gallery; of low art with the high. It champions self-starters and independence; channelling the quirky margins into the mainstream. Yet, celebrating *Bristol's Live* (Figure 1) belies a wider ambivalence concerning the substance and position of culture in contemporary British society. On the one hand, culture is central to the nation, it can 'strengthen communities, bringing people together and removing social barriers' (Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 2013). In this sense, culture is valued by policymakers and government not only for its capacity to build society but also as a source of economic productivity. On the other hand culture is dismissed as a non-essential service for the national population in a semi-Maslowian hierarchy of support in times of constrained budgets. The potential for culture to be inauthentic, to be commodified and commercialised, further diminishes its weight in society. So the status of culture is ambiguous. Such uncertain positioning is exacerbated by the multiple and competing definitions of the substance or matter of culture. It can be sensed but is often neither tangible nor reducible to a stable materiality. To reframe Augustine's adage on what 'time' is, 'if you do not ask people, they know what it is, but if you ask them then they cannot define it'. The result is that it is easier to sell Bristol's cultural offer allusively, drawing on music festivals as examples of culture rather than using the term itself. This is because the uncertainty of culture means that it is contested. The simultaneously ubiquitous yet indefinite presence of culture means that it is constantly up for grabs, open to negotiation, appropriation and redirection. Foregrounding and elucidating such contingency enables the workings of cultural instability to be examined for their broader social and political implications. A first step is to consider what culture might be.

A question of culture

Bristol's Live sells the city through music, through a framing of culture as performance. The action and intensity of performance evoke the vibrancy of the city, opening out the culture of Bristol as an unstable process. This thesis takes

performance to illuminate the contingent creative practices of cultural production and consumption involved in urban belonging. Performance will illustrate how the instability of culture is played out through a dynamic of order and disorder. This involves creative acts of boundary making – or processes of representation – that aim to frame and build locations. These are creations that define us as subjects both through making classifications and rendering experience sensible. Whilst both these acts seek to produce an order, each is constantly working with and through disorder. With classification, definitions are produced that render the world knowable through more or less systematic symbols and typologies. The categories constructed in this process do not pre-exist, they are created to provide a coherence. However, without renewal or reworking, such classifications can become mismatched, at odds with the incoherence of the world they seek to order. Equally, to elucidate experience, we create things, stories and imaginations that are ours and to which we belong. Yet such attempts to construct a space for ourselves are tiring, they require energy to maintain. When this dissipates we can find ourselves in a state of disarray: out of place or in a position against our own choosing. Through performance, the playing out of this productive tension between order and disorder is shown to be at the heart of what is at stake in culture. That is, on the one hand culture seemingly 'does something' that produces a coherence: a sense of collective and/or a collective sense. On the other hand, culture equally requires acts of separation and destabilisation, upsetting attempts to fix attachments.

So culture is vital in the building of a social world from an individual one, but this is always a fragile construction. The thesis examines the ongoing necessity to belong, to make attachments, however fleetingly. Yet equally it shows how this creative process of culture is never straightforwardly affirmative. Culture's tendency towards disorder might be productive of belonging through the requirement to build anew but it also results in uncertainty. Without the stability of roles or the continuity of practices, a recurring implication of the order/ disorder tension is the attempt to govern culture, to limit the scope of its creativity. By drawing out the potential and the constraints of this contingency, the

thesis works towards a cultural politics of creativity. It explores how the creative tension in culture means representational processes can continue despite their inadequacy, or are subject to disruption even when they appear functional. A number of performance practices in Bristol will provide an empirical basis for exploring how to cope in this dynamic of order and disorder. These will interact with various theoretical approaches that share a broad interest in the fragility of process, in the uncertain and sometimes impossible work of maintaining attachments. In line with the indeterminate creativity of culture that resists ossification, the thesis operates to make connections across and between these creative practices and theoretical approaches. When taken together the overall effect of these connections is to advance a cultural politics of creativity by 'showing' more than 'telling'. The intended result of this collage of theory and empirics is an emphasis on what occurs through narrating, rather than on the content of the narration itself. This method of assembly seeks to downplay the product of creativity in favour of its processes. The aim is to give a sense of the work of creativity that operates both through connection and fragmentation. Under question are the ways in which the telling constantly seeks to make and secure the tale.

Each chapter takes a different element of the creative process of culture to show the excessive force of such creativity. By demonstrating what (cultural) creativity does, rather than detailing its products, the thesis presents as a performance like the frame for culture given in the *Bristol's Live* campaign. In juggling intense presence with absence, performance provides an excellent means of attuning to the instability of culture. Chapter two explores how performance can work across the tension between order and disorder in creativity to define culture as a fragile process. The chapter traces three differing tendencies in 'approaching' performance, to illustrate how it opens up the dynamic between being and becoming in our understanding of the world around us. In using performance to frame culture, the suggestion is not that the latter is subsumed by specific examples of the former: culture does not solely equate to music festivals for example. Rather performance is evoked as a sometimes definite, sometimes

indefinite set of practices that emphasise the dynamism of culture, the action involved in ongoing processes of representation. In this sense, performance does not necessarily refer to a specific event or practice, but can be used more widely to imply the construction of subject positions. In other words, using performance aims to show how representational work infuses all aspects of our worldly practices, rather than taking place in a separate cultural realm. This foregrounding of culture to aid understanding of the world around us is by no means new. It sits within a trajectory of scholarship that has sought to grasp the role of culture in society, both within human geography and in the broader field of cultural studies. Most relevant to this thesis is the so-called 'new cultural geography' and the subsequent responses to this.

The 'new' in this cultural geography effected a change in the understanding and significance of culture for the discipline. Like many (intellectual) movements, the force of this change was just as heterogeneous as it was homogeneous. Nonetheless, it was broadly characterised by a shared conviction that culture was not a 'super-organic' determinant thing (Duncan 1980). Instead, following in the steps of the Birmingham school of cultural studies and taking direction from the burgeoning body of 'post-structural theory', geographers espoused an idea of culture as embedded in power. Power relations were decoded through the semiotics of landscape, together with the textual analysis of events (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Duncan and Barnes 1992; Jackson 1989). The result was an 'insistently critical, political resonance' (Gregory and Ley 1988: 115) that understood culture as 'the very medium through which social change is experienced, contested and constituted' (Cosgrove and Jackson 1987: 95). This 'cultural turn' resulted in the diffusion of interest in culture as object and method for enquiry beyond the sub-discipline. However, such interest in culture did not occur without criticism. Far from grounding culture in society, Mitchell (1995: 103) argued that the shift enacted by geographers had led to 'further mystifications of social power' that continued to reify the concept as an empty abstraction. For Mitchell this could be rectified by focusing on cultural classification: the deployment of culture as a means of ordering in the name of power and profit.

Others concentrated on cultural experience, turning to performance. Whilst in agreement with Mitchell that 'new cultural geography' produced culture as a separate sphere, Thrift (1997) argued that a key implication of this was the underplaying of (everyday) practices. Thrift's (2000) 'non-representational theory' can be seen partially as a response to this neglect.

Implicit in Thrift's criticism was the contention was that 'new cultural geography' did not take culture far enough. That is, although it explored how representations were sources of power that could be internalised or resisted, it did not examine how this subjectivisation occurred. 'New cultural geography' did not emphasise the practices of negotiation and experimentation required to maintain the ongoing construction of belonging. In this light, the culture that was the object of the 'new cultural geography' was static, a discursive reflection that might have influence in the world but was nonetheless separate from it. Therefore to counter this, Thrift put forward performance, with its emphasis on (embodied) practice and (material) process. This move towards the 'more-than-representational' (Lorimer 2005) in human geography might be situated within a broader shift away from language and narrative as structures for understanding the world, towards the material immanence of world making. So although initially performance appeared seemingly as an alternative to representation, this thesis sees performance as characteristic of the dynamism of representational activity. In short, representation, and culture more broadly, is understood as a process. Thus, culture might produce representations that have a stability, but cultural work is always also a 'doing' in excess of these objects. Therefore, the appearances of performance in the thesis aim to open up this complexity of representational processes. They are attentive to the material and experiential elements of acts of making, but also do not shy away from the continued importance of the meaning of performance in producing belonging. I take from performance studies the notion that performance can be a vehicle for memory, that it can convey a sense of broader attachments beyond its own occurrence. So whilst performance always has the potential to go awry, the thesis considers how the attempts to sediment and stabilise belonging can be reconciled with this uncertainty.

To examine how culture might be a doing, three practices of performance are drawn upon in the thesis. These are not case studies that structure the chapters, but rather often make appearances in more than one place in the thesis where they illustrate particular elements of creative activity. Unlike those advertised in the *Bristol's Live* campaign, these performances are not predominantly orientated around music. Instead they all share elements of theatre; that is the attempt to dramatise a more or less familiar scene. In one, performance poetry (used interchangeably with spoken word), this involves the dramatisation of language through the vocalisation of poems in the presence of an audience. Spoken word has been chosen because it is a 'successful' marginal form of performance. Making an entrance in chapters three and five, Bristol's performance poetry scene illustrates the difficulty of maintaining position as a poet in the city despite the constant uncertainty of the margins. Theatre as 'scripted' performance also features, both as a professional (chapter three) and community-based act (chapters four and five). These practices have been selected because they demonstrate the ongoing importance of making representations, of telling stories that can secure attachments. Yet by following theatre production processes and by interviewing those involved, it becomes apparent that both the practice of theatre and the stories it creates are by no means stable. Carnival is the final performance and should rightly appear as the epitome of Bristol 'happening'. It is the dramatisation of the inner city St Paul's neighbourhood of Bristol through dance and music intended to resonate with the Caribbean. But in the example explored here in chapter six, it is a performance that does not occur, emphasising the fragility of culture. In examining the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival, the weight of the past in shaping what performance should be comes to the fore. Therefore, emerging across these practices is a sense of possibility and constraint; the potential for performance to stabilise does not go unchallenged. This points to the work required to maintain belonging in a changing atmosphere: the labour of culture that is first and foremost a creative act.

Culture and economy

Cultural labour translates into a product in the *Bristol's Live* campaign: culture is part of what the city sells. But there is an ambiguity to the industrial quality of culture. For some, the more productive culture becomes, the less it enables the construction of attachments to a collective. This is Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997 [1944]) 'culture industry' that induces passivity through the consumption of standardised cultural goods. In this factory of culture, the primary orientation of attachments is towards the products of capitalism, felt as a false psychological need. An alternative reading embraces such (mass) production. Emblematic of this is the 'creative industries', a New Labour policy construct that shoe-horned together a disparate set of activities that were not first and foremost 'cultural'. Rather, the concept built on the role of innovation in the knowledge economy, bringing together 'those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skills and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (DCMS and Creative Industries Task Force 1998). The productive capacity of these practices is explicitly promoted and signified a change in the role of government support for arts and culture. Rather than solely subsidise 'high culture', the focus on the 'creative industries' extended the remit of cultural activity to include the media and other non-traditional forms. Thus the uncertainty of the connection between culture, creativity and productivity has resulted in the umbrella term of the 'cultural and creative economy'. Here, the relationship between culture and industry loses its negative connotation, but simultaneously becomes primarily focused on product and profit. This economic orientation moves away from culture as a negotiation of the stability and instability of belonging. Instead, culture tends towards a permanence, fixed through the products of innovation.

Yet, as chapter three will illustrate, the 'making' of the creative industries does occur through the negotiation of volatility. There is a culture to economy, work involves ways of constructing and experiencing the subject that are vital to the understanding and practice of production (McDowell 1997; Gibson-Graham 1996; Amin and Thrift 2007). Through an examination of the activities of scriptwriting

and performance poetry in Bristol, the chapter draws attention to the cultural processes involved in creative practice. It considers how the apparent stabilisation of creative acts into products occurs through the uncertainty of belonging; through the ongoing capacity to build locations, however temporary. In considering these Bristol-based performance practices, the chapter aims to intervene in debates on the geographies of urban creativity. Building on Porter (2000), a dominant typology for such geographies has been the creative cluster that supports productivity through spatial proximity. Yet the occurrence of performance poetry in Bristol does not easily fit this model of fixity through agglomeration. The chapter shows how these sites of creativity have a materiality, but one that is neither concentrated nor absolute. There is a 'viscosity' to creativity in the city, it emerges as a force for adaptation that works and reworks urban infrastructures. Thus, spoken word indicates that what is at stake in creativity cannot lie solely in its product, but must also include its processes. It is through the unfolding of creativity that situations are negotiated, that things come to matter and that events take place. The chapter draws a parallel between this and the ongoing potential for movement, for new direction that is felt in Deleuze's philosophy. Here accumulation is not an end point; it is rather an unstable locus of creative/ destructive forces. The emphasis on process therefore seeks to provide a specific politics to the cultural and creative economy.

Chapter three sketches a frame for urban creative practice that is attuned to how creativity takes place; how it is made in and makes the sites of its own occurrence. The suggestion is that urban creativity is a fragile performative act, one that is difficult to condition and govern. The concept of curation is used to describe how creativity emerges as an ongoing struggle through its distribution across the city. Here the frame for creativity is not one of economic production. Rather, curation points to the labour involved in maintaining the process of creativity often without tangible product; in finding the energy to keep going regardless of outcomes. This is cultural work because it involves practices of defining position, manners of relating that constitute often temporary locations for creative activity. The curatorial processes of selecting, arranging and sustaining

are put forward to shed light on how creativity occurs despite or even as a result of this instability. Through these three activities, creativity appears not as an absolute rupture but rather as an ongoing process of often minor acts of adjustment. Taking curation out of the gallery divorces it from the direction of institutions, opening out the potential of creativity as an immanent process. Nonetheless, curation also points to the ongoing importance of institutional frameworks as shifting markers that contribute to the changing conditions for urban creativity. Thus through curation, the chapter outlines a particular relationship between culture and creativity.

Culture emerges as a mutable process, orientated towards the stability of belonging but driven by the instability of creative practice. The demonstration of this opens up what has been something of a 'black box' of creativity in urban policy. The 'creative' policy projects of Landry (2000) and Florida (2002) have been taken up in cities across the world. Part of their attraction is that creativity seemingly requires few resources; it is an innate capacity waiting to be tapped. Yet as Peck (2005) and others argue, the meaning and practice of creativity is far more messy and contested on the ground than in policy. The example of Bristol demonstrates the importance of specific and material but nonetheless unstable geographies to urban creativity. The capacity to create is dependent on interactions and reconfigurations, ways of relating that necessarily draw on but rework that which is already there. In Bristol, the work of scriptwriting and performance poetry often take place in between the spaces of institutions; in touch with but not entirely subsumed by these structures. One implication of such creative practice is its instability for the practitioners, a condition of precarity that some argue is a broader characteristic of the culture of contemporary labour (Ross 2008, Standing 2011). Cultural and creative production are therefore put forward as co-constituting processes that occur through complex changing conditions. The fragile work of creativity ensures that culture can never completely ossify or stagnate. This raises a question concerning stoppages in culture and in particular the appearance of that which is out of time.

Culture and the past

The Harbour Festival advertised in the *Bristol's Live* campaign points to the role of the port in the city's culture. The festival celebrates Bristol's maritime heritage. The city was a vital node in the transatlantic trade that saw Bristol grow in the 18th and 19th centuries, generating wealth for the few. This connection with Africa and the Americas is echoed in the arrival of migrants from the Caribbean to Bristol in the mid-20th century. Predominantly from Jamaica, these migrants form part of a wider dominant narrative of Black presence in Britain associated with the Windrush and more broadly the decline and fall of Empire. So Bristol's port is an example of the complex resonances of the past in contemporary culture. That the port is out of time; that it is no longer what it once was; renders it simultaneously superfluous yet immensely pressing. Using the past as an orientating hook for culture can provide the security of traditions which may quickly slip into a constraining force. But equally, the apparent stability of the way things are is built upon sedimented and often non-contiguous layers of previous events, practices and understandings. Thus foregrounding the past can result in a dangerous stagnation of culture but also is vital in understanding contemporary processes of belonging. Chapter four addresses this dilemma by framing the past as in creative circulation. History is not solid but rather has an uncertain materiality that, like Bristol's port, continues to move in the here and now. This 'circulating' from elsewhere comes to inform attachments to and in the present as people work to reconcile temporal (and spatial) distance with changing contemporary proximities.

Viewing the past as changeable, inchoate and even irruptive is not new. Postcolonial approaches delineate a present that is bound up with both tangible and intangible pasts that challenge senses of unity in contemporary culture. The chapter foregrounds this disruptive role of the past in culture through the lens of multiculturalism. It responds to the way normative theories of multiculturalism can negate a fluid understanding of culture's then and now, aligning more to the fixity of the 'mosaic' than the mobility of the 'melting pot'. Brown (2006) argues this means that one reading of culture's past as static is substituted with a different yet equally limiting understanding. In the first, culture is equated with immutable

tradition that weighs down a modern society. In the second, the past gives culture its definition and value but only as that which may be selectively taken up from its position of separation from everyday social practice. So from Brown's argument, there is a sense that multicultural policy exchanges a notion of culture as primitive prescription with that of culture as a liberal choice. However, rather than focusing on the different discursive constructions of culture in multicultural policy, chapter four takes a different tack. It explores the dynamic of fluidity and fixity of the past in the unfolding of cultural practices of living with difference. The aim is to bring into dialogue two different critiques of the 'culture' of multiculturalism through a focus on how circulations of the past are performed. I put forward one critique that takes a postcolonial line, framing Bristol's culture as post-imperial. Here the simultaneous appearance and disappearance of pasts unsettles any understanding of culture as immutable tradition. The other challenge foregrounds the practices and encounters of everyday multiculture to illustrate the ubiquity and embeddedness of the cultural work of positioning. This critique illustrates that culture cannot be sidelined as a choice, but rather is central to the negotiation of 'stranger' proximities.

Together these two challenges point to the uncertain importance of the past in the ongoing reconfigurations of belonging involved in living with difference. In particular, for postcolonial approaches to the present, Britain's imperial history plays an ambiguous but nonetheless significant role. The legacies of empire are incipient in the ways difference is framed and felt in Britain. Yet focusing on everyday multiculture can tend to set aside this history in favour of the potential of the encounter. Proximity is negotiated through propinquity, chance meetings that open new directions that avoid the knots of old entanglements. So whilst both approaches undermine the fixity and separation of culture espoused in normative multiculturalism, they place a differing weight on the past. Although (cultural) encounter is seemingly more creative, refusing the constraints of history, the chapter demonstrates how a postcolonial culture also gives rise to creativity. The focus is on the mutability of forms of attachment that are given through cultural practice. Specifically explored is the role of race as an unstable force for

connection and division in living with difference. The chapter points to the way race is both present and absent in postcolonial theory and normative multiculturalism. In the case of the former, the literary and historical methods detailing the co-constitution of race and empire risk little direct engagement with contemporary anti-racist politics. With the latter, the various claims for a post-racial era are at odds with the continued weight of race (Glassman 2010). That is, despite or even because of its disappearance through conflation with broader cultural difference, race continues to do work in society (Nayak 2006). My suggestion is that this ambivalence of racial attachments is indicative of the uncertain significance of the past in contemporary practices of belonging.

The motif of circulation is used to open up this dynamism of the past. Three forms of movement are identified in chapter four that are creative (although not exhaustive) of contemporary appearances of race in Britain. In so doing, the aim is to bring together the materiality of movements from here to there, with the mobility of ideas that can perpetuate or disrupt the orientation of attachments. Therefore, a problem driving the chapter is the delimitation of the postcolonial present in Bristol. In part, this question arises from the largely historical focus of engagements with postcolonial theory in British academic geography, with some notable exceptions (see Jazeel and McFarlane 2010; Pollard *et al* 2011; Noxolo *et al* 2012). Empire seems to be elsewhere, both spatially and temporally. Yet not only is there an ethical obligation inherent in postcolonial approaches that necessitates attempts to bridge this distance, but attention to the postcolonial present is also given importance through empirical 'realities'. To flesh this out, the chapter takes three practices of performance in Bristol of those who identify as Black and/or of African-Caribbean heritage. The two community theatre groups of the Malcom X Elders and Breathing Fire are illustrative of the circulations of diaspora and postcolonial migration. The collaboration between the writer Edson Burton, his publisher and a number of theatre institutions is used to elaborate on the process of creolisation. A postcolonial frame helps to make sense of the instability of race in these examples. It points to the uncertain work of history in the unfolding of race in contemporary culture. Equally, focusing on race provides a

form for the material orientation of postcolonial theory, a vehicle for understanding its political relevance. So taken together, the aim is to demonstrate that a dialogue between postcolonial perspectives and processual understandings of difference is mutually beneficial, enhancing understanding of the category and experience of race in everyday multiculture.

Culture and experience

The focus on performance in the *Bristol's Live* campaign draws on the buzz achieved through participating in a live event, through the unfolding experience of being there. The circulations of the past in everyday multiculture also have an experiential emphasis that undermines a 'conservative, categorical politics of identity' (Lorimer 2005: 83). Yet amidst this fluidity of performance it seems difficult to achieve any stability of subject position. In fact, the struggle to secure the subject can look superfluous in light of a 'suppler form of politics, born of experimental connections in the constant proliferation of events' (Lorimer 2007: 91). This seeming disappearance of the subject through a focus on performing experience may appear at odds with the centrality of performers to performance. Performance demonstrates the presence of the subject; it is an expression that emanates from the performing subject. This is the great ruse of performance: it both draws the subject and simultaneously is the means for its erasure. An attention to the experience of culture highlights these co-existing possibilities and is examined in chapter five through a focus on (artistic) expression. Under consideration is the way that the creativity of 'expressing' can both reinforce and undo the subject. That is, the artwork is produced by the artist, but also divorced from their control. The chapter explores the way this separation challenges the stability of the artist through a focus on performance poetry. The act of the audience receiving the poem means that the poet does not have complete control over their artwork. The poem exists in part through the absence of the poet. The chapter draws on Derrida to show how this absence in the artwork can work as a broader negation of any conscious presence. From this anti-humanist perspective, the subject is reduced to a cipher, devoid of fixed essence or reference.

However, the chapter moves on to argue that there is a limit to this erasure of the subject. The post-structural use of language to frame the world cannot do justice to its volatile materiality. The attempts to build on, yet also move beyond, the insights and methods of post-structuralism drive much of the contemporary debates on the politics of subjectivity. Taking forward the notion that the subject is unstable or even without foundations, a key concern is the ways in which subjectivity continues to emerge. That is, how the boundaries of the subject are drawn and redrawn. The variety of theoretical and practical interventions under the banner of feminism continues to be a vital force on this contested terrain and has implicit influence throughout the thesis. From one direction, feminism has highlighted the power of language, particularly through the relationship between utterance and social norms. Butler's framing of gender as a performance achieved through repetitive citational acts employed Derrida's 'differance' to delineate a foundationless subject. Yet the purpose of drawing on this essential absence to language is not to write off its significance but rather to point to its continued role in shaping society. Despite being empty, Butler shows how words still carry enough weight to carve social positions. Thus in highlighting this capacity of language, feminism challenges the stability of (named) position, the givenness of givens, but also points to the ongoing importance of words in constructing the subject. However, from another direction, words are rendered less significant. Here, feminist approaches seek to challenge the stability of the subject through a focus on the body, on the materiality of the subject. For Grosz, this is a materiality that is not fixed but volatile and vital. Matter is subjectivising, a virtual force through which it is possible to follow, if never to pin down, the subject. It is precisely this instability of matter, of the flesh, that makes the body a site of contest, a position worth fighting for.

So whether through an attention to words, matter or their interactions, what feminism does is show how the subject is still important. Chapter five suggests therefore that the deconstruction of the subject can only go so far in attending to injustices; there is always a need to build anew. The chapter picks up on this necessity by exploring what expression might mean for experience. Moving away

from the limitations of expression as the work of a more or less stable subject, the focus is on the potential of expression as framed by a particular understanding of the aesthetic. The turn to the aesthetic and, more broadly, to the affective in social theory can be seen as one response to the dominance of language and ideology as lens on the world (James 2012). The chapter draws on the aesthetic as something less definite but equally as forceful to replace the rigidity of these structures: the power of sensation. This equates to the material yet often intangible experience of art, but also extends beyond this sphere. So this is not simply aesthetic experience, but experience as aesthetic. The chapter demonstrates how such an understanding is not without precedent, pointing to the pragmatism of Dewey in which the work of art was always in extension beyond its apparent boundaries. I show that the renewed interest in aesthetic experience in part lies in the (posthuman) requirement to redraw the bounds of the subject. The aesthetic provides a means of considering the intensity of presence with its potential for excess, for new connections that enable a becoming otherwise. In short, it opens one route for the rebuilding of the subject, however unstable that position may be.

Yet, to return to feminism, there is reason to approach such a focus on expressive experience with caution. The feminist (and postcolonial) emphasis on speaking positions is a reminder that no experience is universal. In light of this, the chapter provides a more modest attempt to indicate two potential directions for aesthetic practice in the world. The first outlines how aesthetics might be understood as distributive. That is, how expression revolves around dividing the sensible to open and close positions. The second suggests that aesthetics can be a force for appropriation. This is not an equation of expression with absolute capture, but rather emphasises how it is receptive to new relations. Expression occurs as an intensity of engagement rather than detached reflection. In both cases, aesthetics points towards the complexity of understanding the ongoing construction and erasure of the subject. To illustrate this, the definition and practice of ‘community theatre’ are examined through the work of ACTA, a Bristol-based community arts organisation. The two approaches to the aesthetic illustrate how the constitution

of and participation in community is always a contested process. Through this, expression appears as creative of a subjectivity, but one that is always open to or undergoing transformation. So called 'speaking positions' remain important but are often only fleetingly arrived at. The experimental element of experience, the 'going-with', challenges fixity but cannot eradicate stoppages. The take-up of position, the making of attachments, is always also a failure to move, a blocked attempt to go elsewhere. In this light, such blockages in ongoing processes of attachment may occur as the fragile recovery of location.

Locating in instability

The unifying feature of the 'offer' advertised in the *Bristol's Live* campaign is the live experience. Yet the diversity of events apparently contained under this banner tends towards an incoherence. Nonetheless, Bristol still has some consistency; it maintains a sense of place despite or even because of these diverse experiences. Stability continues to be felt in the face of the disorder of cultural practices. The question that arises here concerns how belonging occurs through such uncertain processes, how attachments can be understood to materialise. This involves a focus on the complex work of culture in joining together the construction and experience of social categories such as race, gender and class. Chapter six explores the 'fragmenting' of this relationship between (cultural) representation and (social) reality, beginning with a discussion of the postmodern frame for culture that characterises it as amorphous yet empty, both everywhere and nowhere. In this understanding, the emphasis on the circulation and consumption of image(s) means that culture is shallow, neither quite more nor less than reality. Instead, reality itself is redefined as exaggerated, and authentic in its inauthenticity. One result of this framing of culture is that representation is no longer clear cut. The connection between image and reality, position and occupation, loses its linearity. The chapter highlights how this points to an alteration in the relationship between culture and society. If culture was once something that interacted with but was fundamentally a supplement to the social world, from this postmodern perspective it is now thoroughly infused in society. Certainly, practices of making representations of ourselves and others, have always

been part of social life. However, the suggestion is that ‘postmodern’ culture involves quantitative and qualitative change, an increase in the volume and embeddedness of representations. Importantly as the chapter goes on to develop, this is combined with the apparent ease with which such positions can be discarded, circulated and reworked.

In this blurring of culture and society, the latter has come into focus whilst the definition of the former has been lost. Explaining and analysing practices of representation becomes a means for ‘expanding our once comfortable understanding of the social’ (Lorimer 2005: 84). Put another way, the ubiquity of culture means that its theoretical purchase is reduced. Such a paradoxical condition in the understanding of culture has occurred in the attention to culture in human geography. There has been a shift for (British) cultural geography from sub-discipline to trans-disciplinary formation (Daniels 2010). The result is that cultural geography has been evacuated (Wylie 2010), with few scholars able to ‘afford to be *only* a cultural geographer’ (Kirsch 2012: 433, emphasis in original). Undoubtedly, focusing on culture alone cannot exhaust attempts to understand the social world. But equally, obfuscating the work of cultural practices limits explanatory capacities. Instead, as chapter six explores, we need to reconsider what is meant by culture and cultural practice. Specifically, this requires examining what is useful in the term as both an approach to and substance in society. In particular, the chapter outlines a shift away from the stability of representations, from any straightforward approach to the image, in both the theory and practice of contemporary culture. The development of ‘non-representational’ geographies can be understood as one element of this. As indicated above, rather than rejecting representation, this broad theoretical approach is attuned to the complexity of representational processes. The work of representation is not clear cut, either as the act of ‘standing for’ or of ‘standing again’. Instead, a more nuanced approach to the practices and appearances of representations is required, one that emphasises their varying intensities of social presence.

The chapter suggests that such a focus on the uncertainty of the matter and meaning of representations matches a growing sense of social contingency. Risk, the continuous measured chance of occurrence, operates as a dominant frame for making sense of the conditions of the present. This 'crisis ordinariness' (Berlant 2011: 196) in which volatility is the norm, has given rise to a growing feeling of instability. Matching this mood, the cultural work of making attachments in society is increasingly precarious. Chapter six examines this fragility through a focus on the cancellation of the 2012 St Paul's Carnival. The apparent absence of the event throws into question what Carnival is; how we can delimit the substance of its occurrence. This question of substance speaks to the wider reinstatement of 'matter' in culture and beyond. In part, this material (re)turn is a reaction to the overly discursive and textual emphasis of much work influenced by post-structural social and cultural theory. In this context, a focus on the material is seen as a return to the 'real' world. However, as the chapter outlines, matter does not appear as stable in much of this scholarship, as a building block in a concrete reality. Rather it is various allusive, vital and contingent. This is a materialism that means 'we do not determine in advance which processes in a given situation [...] are most influential; [...] nor the precise role that the 'cultural' might play' (Kirsch 2012: 435). The cancellation of Carnival illustrates this contingency of culture, showing that whilst matter may be meaningfully ordered through cultural practices, it also has the capacity to work autonomously, to go awry. The immanence of these attachments means that the exact structure and weight of matter cannot be known in advance. One implication of this is that stoppages and breakdowns become important.

Thus the inconstancy of matter contributes to the instability of representations. The chapter suggests that St Paul's Carnival was cancelled in part because of a perceived failure to perform a Black British identity. The organisers' proposed material configuration of movement, territory and entertainment was rejected by those in and associated with the African-Caribbean community of St Paul's. However, that the substance of Carnival is contested and contrived is important. Through the negotiation and unfolding of Carnival's cancellation attachments are

both made and broken. Chapter six will argue that this is demonstrative of a broader uncertainty surrounding the attachments framed and constituted through cultural practices. Specifically, race appears as a precarious form of belonging with a volatile consistency that is differently orientated around nations, territories and bodies. The practices of producing Carnival are shown to be vital in the upholding of this racial ambivalence, ultimately contributing to its cancellation. This discussion suggests that representational work involves both successes and failures, or perhaps more accurately, there is no clear distinction between the two. For whilst Carnival's cancellation might be framed as a failed performance of racial attachments, race continues to manifest as a form of connection and division in the moments contributing to and surrounding its non-occurrence. Thus, the stoppage of Carnival is neither clearly success nor failure; rather it is an example of the ongoing processes of maintaining position in/through the precarity of attachments. Therefore, in contending that this contingency to Carnival is emblematic of culture more broadly, the chapter points to the ongoing importance of a distinctive cultural focus when examining the social world.

Creative movements

The complexities of the *Bristol's Live* campaign begin to indicate the potential of the city for exploring the creative work of cultural practices. The particular performances of Bristol's past and present make the city a suitable 'laboratory' for experimenting with the contingent creativity of culture. However, although Bristol certainly presents as especially innovative, offbeat and diverse, the intention is not for this relationship between creativity and culture to be limited to the Bristol example. With this in mind, the body of the thesis consists of chapters orientated around five movements: approaching, making, circulating, expressing and fragmenting. These are motifs for the creative practices examined in their respective chapters, but taken together point to the broader cultural politics of creativity I seek to develop. Through these movements, the aim is to show creativity as a force that drives cultural practices with an inconstancy that has challenging consequences. The movements provide some order but resist ossification, in an attempt to evoke the indeterminate creativity of culture that I

felt during my year of research in Bristol. So the structure of the thesis reflects the need to look differently at creativity. The volatility of the creative process requires an approach that gives a sense of fluidity; a sense of the way creativity avoids attachment to a single action or actor. The aim is to provide an account of creative activity that acknowledges but simultaneously challenges conventional ways of writing about geographies of creativity. Instead of a focus on a particular location or firm, the thesis is written to account for the eclectic array of activity that constitutes creative process. Thus the five movements structuring the thesis provide a means of opening up the multiplicity of relations at work in the making of the creative city.

This approach to writing also facilitates the theoretical work attempted in the thesis. The following chapters seek to bring together some of the insights of the 'new cultural geography' with the emphasis on process and practice typified by 'non-representational theory'. Just as the 'new cultural geography' contested understandings of culture as a determining force or entity, writing through movements highlights the fluidity of culture. By focusing on different aspects of creative practice in Bristol, the intention is to show how culture is part of, rather than separate from, everyday 'social' and 'economic' practices. Simultaneously though, this eclectic writing approach also attends to some of the complexity of representational processes underplayed by the predominantly textual focus of the 'new cultural geography'. By drawing together a variety of forms of making, the intention is to give a sense of representation as a practice that involves ongoing negotiation and experimentation. The theme of movement highlights the excessive nature of these practices, which require the interactions of matter and meaning always involved in the making of belongings. However, this approach to writing does have drawbacks. The thesis does not follow a more conventional separation of methodological, theoretical and empirical material. It therefore might seemingly require more work of the reader to hold these different orders together across the chapters. Equally, the emphasis on showing rather than telling can tend towards the inconclusive. A synthesis of each movement is provided by way of a conclusion to each chapter to mitigate this. On balance, these potential drawbacks are

outweighed by the way in which the structure of the thesis works to build in complexity across the chapters, to enable a variety of representational processes to come to light.

This eclectic approach to writing mirrored an equally mixed methodology. The study of the processes and practices of creativity demands a varied and open-ended research practice. The research aims to give a sense of the myriad of ways in which creativity occurs in Bristol through a focus on performance. As chapter two will demonstrate, performance is a particularly tricky object to approach, emphasising the limitations to any method for capturing the world. So instead of attempting to paint a complete picture, I aimed through my methodology to show up some of the multiplicity of ways in which different forms of performance were made possible in Bristol. To this end, I used an array of qualitative methods: interviews, archival work and ethnography. This collection of methods begin to attend to some of the many and entangled relationships between performances, people and places in Bristol. That is, they provide a sense of the messiness of Bristol's performance, beginning with the recognition that being 'representative' of this landscape is an impossibility. Each of the methods deployed are forms of representation with different qualities that tend to exaggerate certain forms of knowledge over others. Thus the individual methods, and by extension the overall methodology, has both possibilities and problems for attending to the creativity of performance in Bristol.

Interviews were conducted with 25 participants over the course of one year in Bristol. Interviewees were associated in different ways with the performance scene in Bristol (see the Appendix for a full list). A number were from the two organisations that I regularly worked with for the research. One of these was Southwest Scriptwriters group (SSG), a collection of writers for stage, radio and screen that was open to all, meaning that the membership was composed of a mixture of amateur and professional writers. The other was ACTA, a community arts organisation based in the Bedminster area of Bristol but working across the

city and beyond. Other interviewees were associated with organisations that I worked with for shorter durations, namely St Paul's Carnival and Breathing Fire. Breathing Fire is a playback theatre company composed of nine women of African-Caribbean heritage. Playback is a specific form of community theatre that will be further discussed in chapter four. In addition, I conducted interviews with a number of poets and spoken word artists who performed at various events across Bristol. Together with these interviews with individuals who produce performance in the city, I also interviewed representatives from a variety of 'cultural' organisations that had a role in enabling performance in the city: the Tobacco Factory Theatre (a young but respected 'producing' theatre south of the city centre), Bristol City Council (BCC), Theatre Bristol (an Arts Council England funded organisation that surfaces briefly in chapter two), two independent publishers (City Chameleon and Burning Eye Books), Arts Council England (ACE) and two poetry networks (Poetry Can and Apples and Snakes).

These interviews are underpinned by a constructivist rather than a realist epistemology. That is, the process of interviewing is thoroughly entwined with the process of analysis. The interviews construct (sometimes contradictory) narratives about performance in Bristol. As such, they produce rather than simply describe knowledge. In addition, this knowledge is understood to be contextual: it is not necessarily transferable to, nor commensurable with knowledge from, other situations. The interview material that appears in the thesis is therefore not taken to exhaust the multiple angles on performance in Bristol. Instead, it forms one way of illuminating these complex creative geographies. In addition to interviews, the methodology also involved ethnography in the form of participant observation. Whilst interviews provide multiple individual accounts of performance in Bristol, participant observation enabled rich description of individual performances. One of the strengths of participant observation is that it can help to illuminate the (often unconscious) elements of an event unfolding. This is particularly relevant for research on performance, which as chapter two discusses, is grounded in embodied and often spontaneous practices. As a participant observer, I spent time with SSG, attending their weekly scriptwriting workshops where members would

put forward a script for feedback from the group (see chapter three). In addition, I attended the two week rehearsal period for the professional production of a script written by a group member.

I also observed elements of a number of different projects run by ACTA. I spent the most time on ACTA's project with the Malcom X Elders to be explored in chapter four. This was a theatre group formed from the 'elderly' first-generation migrants from (predominantly) Jamaica who met weekly at the Malcom X Community centre (MXC) in St Paul's. I attended their weekly rehearsals as they devised and practised a play, then later watched and helped at three performances, one at a festival (see below), one at the ACTA centre in Bedminster and another at a Bristol secondary school. I also attended one of the youth theatre groups involved in the 'Get Together' project. As detailed in chapter five, the project aimed to bring together a number of different sectors of the community in and around Bedminster. I went to the weekly rehearsals of the youth theatre group as they prepared for a performance that was to take place at the ACTA centre after the 'Legends in Light' procession around Bedminster. Finally, I worked as part of a documenting team for the International Festival of Community Theatre hosted by ACTA in Bristol. As a 'documenter' I was able to attend a variety of workshops, discussions and performances so that I could provide written observations of these sessions for ACTA. This experience is drawn upon in chapter five. In addition to these ACTA performances, participant observation was used in combination with interviews to gain an understanding of the variety of performance that constituted Bristol's spoken word scene. I attended approximately 40 spoken word events in the city and my observations of these form part of the discussions of the geographies of creativity in chapter three.

Finally, participant observation was also an important element of the research on St Paul's Carnival. I attended a number of protests and events associated with Carnival's cancellation, and these are predominantly detailed in chapter six. To supplement my understanding of the protests over Carnival, I also undertook

archival research in Bristol Records Office, further reflections on which are made in chapter two. As with interviews, the accounts provided from participant observation must be understood as partial. Whilst attempting to capture a sense of the fullness and potential of performance, the rich descriptions of participant observation are never able to completely contain events. So as with interviews then, participant observation is understood as part of a process of constructing knowledge. The iterative processes of observing and writing are highly selective, emphasising certain elements whilst obscuring or underplaying others. Taken together, this array of methods forms a methodological approach suited to the demands of performance that necessitate a varied and open-ended research practice. As indicated above, these demands mean that each chapter works through a separate form of creative movement that is illustrated by often more than one performance practice. The result is that the chapters all weave together the theoretical with the empirical, a strategy that is well suited to a thesis dealing in the multiple complex approaches to and of performance, as will be opened up in the following chapter.

2. Approaching

"Artistic territory can indicate to us that the politics of subjectivity – and especially of the relation to the other and of cultural creation – is in crisis, and that a transformation of these fields is surely underway." (Rolnik 2011: 24).

Performance is a lens on the unsettled subject. It is demonstrative of culture as a process of unstable practices of positioning, implying that things are not quite what they seem. Within geography, performance has operated as a destabilising approach towards the White, male subject, but it has also itself been approached as entity that captures such volatility. It can be both a conceptual and methodological tool, together with empirical object. The power of performance lies in this combination that enables different ways of (attending to) doing in the world. Performance blends together the conceptual with the material; imagination with practices. It may be governed or experimental but always points towards the creative potential to become otherwise. However, that performance can be both conceptual framework and lived activity is also problematic. It means that performance is 'an essentially contested concept' which necessarily lacks an 'overarching semantic field to cover such seemingly disparate usages' (Carlson 2004: 71). To make sense of these complexities, this chapter will draw out three approaches to performance that have made an appearance in geography. The first focuses on display, highlighting how performance is often defined by what it is not. This explores the relationship between designated performances and the 'reality' of non-performance. Following this, the anti-foundational potential of performance is examined; its capacity to undo the subject. In the face of this deconstruction, the constrained reproduction of the subject is considered through the operation of performativity. Contingency is the final approach, foregrounding how performance involves uncertain conditions of emergence. It manifests as a deliberate yet fragile act that demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining the appearance of the subject. Together, these approaches highlight how performance frames culture as the ongoing making of worlds, and the complexities of belonging in spite of these uncertain processes.

Display

As display, performance throws into relief certain practices over others. It suggests that one configuration of a given activity is 'real' whilst another is 'put on' for show. This separation enables performance to be governed but also affords it the possibility to intervene. Designating certain acts as performances means addressing them in a different way. Equally, this classification also recognises the different capacity of such events for action on or with other things. The take up of a role may result from an external assessment or involve individual choice. In both cases though, the suggestion is that performance is a cultural process that helps demarcate the boundaries of the subject. To consider these elements of display, Goffman's understanding of social interaction as performing a role will be foregrounded. Here, the vocabulary of performance is used to show how social acts require individuals to become more than themselves. Such acting illustrates how performance is established through specific relationships with its surroundings; through its landscapes or ecologies. Any absolute distinction between performance and reality is challenged in the latter framing, and this is cemented by performance's potential for instrumentalisation. The display of performance becomes a means of intervening in the attachments between people; in the formation of community.

Performing a social role

Performance has been invoked to consider how social interaction involves display. The dramaturgical vocabulary of roles and audiences is used to frame the differing appearances of the self. Human interaction is dependent upon the configuration of the scene being enacted. In this 'theatre of everyday life' those involved would generally not consider themselves to be performing. Rather the language of performance is externally deployed to make sense of social and cultural practices. In one foundational application of this vocabulary, Goffman (1959) draws on the importance of an audience in the definition of performance. He uses performance to refer to 'all activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers' (Goffman 1959 : 32). The implications of this are that

social interactions are site-specific; manners of relating and positioning are understood to occur through the influencing activity of participants in particular scenes. The focus here has tended to be on micro-interactions, from which an individual's performance can be read. The individual on the 'front' uses certain expressive equipment intentionally or unwittingly during his [sic.] performance. Therefore, performance can be more or less figurative as the individual may be taken in by or cynical about their own acts. In both instances though, the enactment of this role is considered to deviate from the 'backstage' reality of the situation. Thus the display of an individual through social interaction demonstrates broadly how the self is unstable but in a particular way. That is, the self is exterior here, not interior (Mead 1934).

The notion of performance as display therefore works through a dynamic between making and faking, to the point of suggesting there is no authentic self behind the mask (Doniger 2005). It highlights the relationship between particular acts and the 'everyday'. Certain situations and events might 'make' the everyday, but equally particular roles could be construed to 'fake' it in order to cause or avoid a disruption. This problematises any easy division between theatrical performance as an imaginative realm and everyday performances as mundane acts necessitated by interaction. This dynamic has been explored via the everyday self but also through the collective and sacralised everyday of ritual. Broadly understood, a ritual is a set of practices that are repeated with a particular rhythm that performs specific 'cultural' meanings. For Turner, rituals arise 'out of conflict situations [...] and proceed to their denouement through publicly performed conventionalised behaviour. If they succeed the breach is healed and the status quo, or something resembling it is restored' (Geertz 2004 : 65). Thus, rituals occupy an ambivalent position that can be construed both to conform to and resist the everyday, making them fertile figures for considering the dialectics of protest. They have the 'capacity to express the opposite on the same plane' (Edgar in Kershaw, 1992: 71), in what appears for Bakhtin (1984) as a dialogic operation that unfolds through acts of mimicry and grotesque realism. One example of this is Carnival, a ritualistic performance practice that will be returned to later in Bristol. Carnival

enacts the ‘crossing of many kinds of boundary’ (Riggio 2004 : 13) in a ‘dialectic between civilised respectability and vagabondage’ (*ibid*. p. 19). Yet the extent to which Carnival’s transgressive capacities can effect ‘real world’ change has been questioned.

Whilst the overall ritual act of Carnival is a spatio-temporal disruption of the everyday, the ritualisation of the acts within it can be understood to weaken their potential to resist. Hill’s (1997) description of Carnival practice in Trinidad provides a useful illustration of this tricky relationship between conflict and public performance through ritual. Hill shows how an ambiguous power dynamic is built into Carnival that leaves the reality of the status quo unresolved. In the 19th Century Canboulay (deriving from ‘cannes brulees’ or burnt cane), ex-slaves re-enacted scenes associated with the labour of slavery on the 1st August, the anniversary of emancipation. However, before emancipation similar scenes were enacted by planters at Carnival time, in which they ‘disguised as estate Negroes [sic.] and carried torches in procession through the streets of the town’ (Hill, 1997: 23). Thus the freed slaves were imitating the White planters who had previously been imitating the bonded slaves. It was unclear which ‘reality’ was being unsettled. Thus, the Canboulay becomes a commemoration of protest rather than its enactment. Equally, the entire event of Carnival can be conceived as a permissible disruption that is a ‘licensed affair in every sense’ (Eagleton in Kershaw, 1992: 73). Here, Carnival occurs as a ‘temporary transgression of a hierarchical normality’ (Kershaw, 1992: 73) that is ultimately a strategy for reinforcing it. So, one dynamic opened out by these ritualistic displays concerns the possibilities for invention through such role play. Central to this is the question of whether taking up a role embeds or separates an individual from the everyday.

In fact, the boundaries of display are unclear. As Geertz (1993) argued, the boundaries between ritual and the everyday are necessarily blurred as the lived and the imagined world turn out to be one and the same. In relation to Carnival, Kershaw (1992: 73) points to the way in which its roots are to be found in the self-organisation of community, with its meaning deriving from this context. So, whilst

framing particular activities as displays might enhance understanding of a situation, performance functions imprecisely. The term can seemingly be applied to any situation. Thus, Bell (2004: 93) argues that the 'performance paradigm' is popular in part because of the 'obscurity of the slippage involved'. This is 'how much more readily 'performance' slips from being a tool for analysis to being a feature of the object' (*ibid.*). Although Bell's comments relate specifically to rituals, they are relevant to a broader array of social situations. The suggestion is that performance is the event under scrutiny, rather than a means of scrutinising the event. Bell's criticism follows that of Geertz (2004: 65) who argues that 'ritual theory' makes 'vividly disparate matters look drably homogeneous'. If the designation of performance acts to unify situations and/or positions then its value as a tool for drawing analytical distinctions is diminished. Yet, even when performance has been applied to draw out the particularities of situated roles, it can still be problematic. Defining only certain acts as performances and only certain sites as their setting can rely too heavily on their clear distinction with non-performance. Rather than an obvious division between front and back, 'performances work through, and settings comprise, much more complex mediations of frontness and backness' (Crang 1994: 695). There is often no clear criteria for differentiating between doing and performing.

Performance Landscapes and Ecologies

One way of ensuring that performance is known as such is through technologies that work to separate particular acts as displays. These acts of designation establish a relationship between performance and its surroundings. This serves to set forms of display against a distinct reality. Such recognition of performance concerns its legitimacy, the extent to which acts are 'true' to themselves and/or what surrounds them. These exercises are typically undertaken as an instrument of government, aimed at measuring the scope and scale of a performance in a particular territory. A common technology is that of the map that identifies and locates performance from a 'birds-eye' perspective. This involves an act that seeks to define, control and orientate performance by writing it onto an existing landscape (Christophers 2007). Theatre Bristol, an ACE funded collective of

producers in the city, provides an example of how performance is governed by its definition in relation to its environment. The establishment of the organisation resulted from a requirement for greater knowledge of the relationship between performance and the city as this producer describes:

"*Theatre Bristol grew out of a series of locality plans, you can tell that was a sort of Arts Council name, that was funded by the money that came out of the Arts Council's Theatre Review in 2001 which essentially discovered what everyone already knew which was that theatre audiences were dying, nothing was really being developed. It needed an injection and rejuvenation. And in the South West they took the money that was pumped into the industry to set up a series of what they call locality plans which were kind of region by region and they were to really make sense of what each region specifically needed. And in Bristol, after a couple of years of kind of thinking with this steering group what they decided they needed was, in the first instance, was someone to kind of map really what was there because there was a lot of provision but it wasn't all hooked up and it wasn't really talking to each other.*"

So whilst the organisation's broad remit is to develop theatre in the city, it exists both as and through the definition of acts of performance in Bristol.

Theatre Bristol produced performance as separate, as display, by constructing a landscape of the city. They designated particular activities as performances and collated them to produce a (textual) picture of their distribution across the city. This appeared in the 2008 discussion paper *"Bristol Live": A Performance Culture of Ambition*. In this document, Theatre Bristol presented an overview of the city which is a '"view from space" (rather than an "inch to the mile" map) across a crowded and fast-moving landscape' (Theatre Bristol 2008: 6). It summarises the condition of performance in Bristol at the time through focusing on the 'range of buildings and public spaces, programmes which generate production, promotion and participation to animate the spaces, and the people who have the talent to link the two together' (*ibid*.). Important to note here is that whilst other elements do appear, people are central to this definition of performance. However, unsurprisingly given the ethos of the organisation, this is a reluctant attempt to define display. The document provides an externally applied rather than internally adopted definition of performance that therefore does not claim to be exhaustive.

But the paper itself emerged from a series of 'open space' events that are more indicative of Theatre Bristol's relationship with and role in performance. Again in the words of the producer, open space is:

"a way of having meetings that is non-agendaed. It sounds really hippy-ified and it's really hard to describe how effective it is until you've been in one, but once you've been to one it's like "this is totally the only way to have a meeting!" And it essentially says that everyone that is in the room, they're the right people to be there and you set the agenda through being there. It's based on the idea that you talk about what you want to talk about and you take responsibility for making that discussion happen, but that you also take responsibility for only being in the discussions you want and leaving the ones you don't want. So it's very fluid and [...] it's incredibly democratic, you don't go around the room saying who you are and why you're important. It's like you are important, you don't need to represent anything other than yourself. So it's been a really great way to put artists in the same room as the director of Bristol Old Vic [the city's oldest theatre institution] *or whatever and really just open that stuff out. So it's great for both parties, all levels of those hegemonies. I think that's one of the kind of interesting ways of sort of changing some of the power dynamics in the city because those conversations have been able to happen regularly and facilitation is very important in an open space discussion - it has to be done in quite a specific way actually - but it does mean that you kind of can't ignore your stake holders, whether they be an artist, director or a producer. I think that's really opened the way that organisations like Bristol Old Vic have been able to, have been either forced to re-evaluate who their community is, but also be less scared of what they think or their audiences or what their artists might think and embrace that properly. And similarly for artists not just to be whinging about there not being opportunity but actually to get them in conversation with who-ever."*

Theatre Bristol's operation emerges here as fluid, working with and through the changing relations of performance practices in Bristol. There is only a partial separation of acts of display from the everyday, as their processes of production come into focus. This rests uneasily with the static and prescriptive external definition of performance.

So to better fit the ethos of Theatre Bristol, the definition of performance became opt-in. This was undertaken:

"*by building a website which would be user-generated and would effectively be a live audit of what was in the city and it's [...] entirely about people that choose*

to self-select into the theatre community which of course is brilliant compared to the normal, particularly Arts Council mapping, that is very top-down. It's a completely different approach that way. It was really about trying to encourage fully a very broad understanding of what theatre might mean; to really take account of the massive inter-disciplinarity in Bristol's performance-making community."

Through this self-definition, performance is bounded by a different positioning in its environment. Acts of theatre were no longer discrete; instead they were (or needed to be) joined up in specific ways:

"*as part of that auditing process [Theatre Bristol] talked also to artists and providers and other people established in the industry to find out what else was needed to make it stronger and from that grew the need for the independent producers that sit in-between venues, funders, artists and that's where the artist support programme came from.*"

Such an approach to the connections between performance and its environment can be understood as ecological. Partly building on Read's (1993) connection between theatre and everyday life, this emphasises the ways in which designated performances are constituted by and reliant upon their environment, rather than contained by but separated from it. For Kershaw (2007: 15) this primarily concerns the consideration of the connection between different elements; what he terms the 'interrelationships of all the factors of particular theatrical (or performance) systems'. This ecology of performance not only conjures up connections with an environment but also emphasises the importance of resilience. Neither performance nor its (relationship with its) surroundings stay the same. Simpson (2008: 809) highlights this in his ecological approach to street performance that positions it as a 'co-functioning transient happening' that may involve people but is always also more-than-human (unlike Theatre Bristol's landscapes). Simpson's (*ibid.* p. 810) articulation stresses the importance of temporality, the necessity to be 'attentive to both the evental sets of relations – those lines of connection that trace out little modifications - [...] and the contextual sets of relations – [...] those segmentations that cut us up in multiple ways, but nonetheless practically work out.' Here, the definition of performance can reconfigure and render visible the ephemeral topography of the city. Thus two opposing positioning of performance in the city begin to emerge: the static order of the map is set against

the disruptive potential of performance to modify places, a point returned to in chapter three. That is, ecologies of performance suggest a more complex relationship between practices of display and urban life. The capacity to display both requires but can also rework existing connections in the city.

Instrumental Theatre

As such, putting on a display can intervene in the configuration of attachments. This is performance as theatre, but of a specific type. Theatre is a deliberate display that adheres to certain spatial and aesthetic boundaries. Most recognisably, theatre takes place in a building designated for its purpose and involves dramatic qualities often drawn from the interpretation of a script. However, the instrumentalisation of theatre, its use as an intervention, challenges this view. Here, the display of theatre is not distinctly separate from its audience. Rather, there is a two-way relationship: the audience participates in or is somehow constituted by the performance. This is 'community theatre', a label that has at least two separate meanings. One understanding posits community theatre as a venture that seeks out new audiences (and venues) beyond those of existing institutions. This seeks to strengthen the 'self-determination of the community' and consequently enhance its 'ideological survival' (Kershaw 1992: 66). In the second instance, the community becomes the producer of theatre. Here there is a greater depth of engagement between theatre and everyday life, enabling more substantive claims to be made for its capacity to intervene. A key manifesto is Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed* which centres the potential of theatre on a poetics that attributes rather than delegates the power to act. A similar capacity is described by Pratt (2012: 117) who points to the opportunity theatre provides 'to blur the opposition between those who look and those who act [...], and between those who are locked within their functions, roles, and social identities and those who exist beyond them.' Boal argues that through this ability, theatre must be understood as a means for establishing a dialogue that renders active (drawing on Friere (1972)) the 'oppressed'.

The ability of such displays to intervene is ambiguous. This uncertainty again arises from the dividing lines between performance and the everyday. There are two elements to this: one is that the capacities of performance are ambiguous and the other is that 'community' lacks a coherent definition. Taking the latter first, understanding whether theatre can have an impact on community necessitates some picture of the status quo. Yet the sense of 'community' cannot be easily rendered; both in terms of its definition and its implications for artistic quality. Robinson (2004) demonstrates this through her attempt to gain a picture of community theatre in London (and recruit groups for her study). Many to whom she spoke rejected the label of 'community' in relation to their theatre practice. In part this was a result of the perceived lack of collective attachments between those involved. In this light, community is seen as 'a nostalgic hankering after a shared sense of the human that never actually existed' (Kershaw 1999: 192). These conservative impulses (Mackey and Whybrow 2007) are countered by Schaefer (2012) when she invokes Nancy's (2000) 'being-in-common' as a frame for community, rather than 'common-being'. This upsets the notion of a stable subject that community theatre runs the risk of affirming (Kwon 2004). Equally, the term community has also been rejected because of the connotations it has for artistic quality. Labelling theatre 'community' implies an inferior level of performance, as the emphasis is on participation rather than excellence. The final product is less important than the process of taking part. Theatre Bristol defines this as the 'tension between quality and openness' (2012: 3). Thus the association of community with theatrical display is contested.

The other element contributing to the ambiguity of instrumental theatre is the capacities of performance. The outcomes of using theatrical display as a tool are unclear. For some, theatre is understood as a rehearsal for political change and a means for re-enchanting modern life (Salas 1983; Park-Fuller 2005; Fox 2007). For others, its practice is a translation across space and time to redress social injustices (Gilbert & Tompkins 1996; Amkpa 2000; Houston & Pulido 2002; Nagar 2002). However, the ease with which the action of the theatre space may translate outside it can be questioned. The shared bonds that tied individuals during the

practice of display do not necessarily transpose beyond it. This is a point taken up by Pratt and Johnston in their work with both legislative (2007) and testimonial theatre (2010). Regarding the former, they argue that theatre's potential to bring about policy change should not be overestimated, particularly given the apparent incongruities between creative practice and bureaucratic operation. With the latter, they suggest that whilst certain 'emotional intensities' were engendered during the performance; it is uncertain if or how these might be sustained beyond the performance space. So the recognition that emotions 'align individuals with communities' (Ahmed 2004: 119) through 'utopian performatives' (Dolan 2005) does not answer the question of how the models of theatre can be applied beyond the performance space. The problem remains of tracing 'where these feelings and these connections go once the show is over and the stage is struck' (Pratt, 2012: 129).

Here therefore, the distinctive display of community theatre emerges in its capacity to exceed the space defined for its performance. It is instrumental through its ability to break the bounds of its own occurrence. For this Pratt and Kirby (2003) suggest that thinking with the 'interspatiality' of performance is helpful. They argue that the multiple spaces that inform performance are integral to its potential as an object of study. This concerns where the event might linger after its occurrence, but also those sites significant for its composition; a Brechtian interest in exposing the production of the production. Such an approach indicates some of the ways in which performance might 'impact' beyond the event. For example the act of sharing stories in theatre informs and is informed by activity outside of performance. Conversations that precede performance can heavily shape experience and understanding of the event (Lev-Aladgem 2004; McEwen 2007). Telling a story can provide both relief but also upset that extends beyond the moment of performance. Pratt (2012) delivers a sense of this through the audience responses to the play *Nanay*, the testimonial place. Both in discussion and through poems on audience surveys, the audience as witnesses simultaneously implicate but also exonerate themselves from the testimony depicted in the play. Thus performance has provided a vehicle and purpose for the narration of what are

often painful stories to tell (Kaptani and Yuval-Davis 2008). So in this instrumentalisation performance as display starts to give way. From being an act distinct from reality, it becomes one that participates in that reality. Stable subjects do not simply take up roles, instead the constitution of subjectivity is ongoing through such practices.

Anti-foundational

If display is underpinned by a stable foundation or subject, another approach to performance marks it as anti-foundational. Performance becomes the name for the ongoing acts of subject formation that negate stability. The process of performativity names this work of performance. This is the way in which the apparent givens of the subject are produced without essence, made real through their consequences. Therefore, performance is not 'acting' in the sense of taking on a role. In fact, performativity throws into question the notion of agency as subject-centred. For Butler, this means that the acts that constitute the subject revolve around a dynamic of citation and repetition that sediments particular norms. Here, 'power' is dispersed, working in parallel with resistance. Yet through this performativity the materialisation of the subject - how differences work through the matter of the body - is unclear. The performance of stories is used to demonstrate the necessity to consider the potential of matter, the way attachments unfold. Equally, Butler's framing of the performative seems to restrict the creativity of performance; reducing the capacity for the subject to become otherwise. A sense of this potential is given through the performance of memory, where the past can be understood as an irruptive and creative potential in the present. So this anti-foundational performance points towards the acts of making the subject, but neglects the materiality and vitality of difference in this process.

Performativity: citation and repetition

Understanding performance as anti-foundational aims to radically upset fixed categories, to show how appearances or 'norms' are produced. This involves acts that are constrained and constraining constitutors of reality. Unlike performance

as display, acts are divorced from particular roles that are associated with certain settings. The notion of a front and a back (stage) are done away with, along with any vestige of a stable self. The arguments of Butler (1993) concerning the performative nature of gender are pervasive in contemporary applications of this approach. Like Goffman, Butler aimed to upset certain 'givens' through the conceptual tool of 'acts'. However, the intention was never to outline how a particular given was 'fake', existing solely as a contained performance. Rather she demonstrated how givens were unstable but nonetheless 'real' in their consequences, produced through but also producers of particular acts. Although there is seemingly no fixed time or space to this designation of performance, some stability might be found in the continuity of the performative process. This is an operation that whilst disruptive retains a symmetry through its settling and unsettling of a norm which 'takes hold to the extent that it is "cited" as such a norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels' (Butler, 1993: 13). This is an instability that persists in that 'the act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene' (Butler 2004 : 160). So performativity becomes a means for considering how the subject seems to take hold. That is, how norms continue to direct despite the very production of their normative nature. Performativity renders 'social laws explicit' (*ibid.*), exposing the processes of their citation.

In this process performative acts do not have neatly bounded agents but this does not foreclose the possibility of agency. To enable this, the performative is understood as both dramatic and non-referential. The former unsettles individualistic assumptions to suggest that norms (such as gender) are not only constructed, but enacted in a collective rather than singular process. Butler (1993: 12) argues, though, that performativity is not 'primarily theatrical'; indeed she suggests that 'its apparent theatricality is produced to the extent that its historicity remains dissimulated'. So this is not performance as an event without context, it is always a chain of acts that are 'a reiteration of a norm or set of norms' (*ibid.*). The latter, non-referential dimension of the performative, emphasises this citational process to show how its constructive emptiness leaves

room for agency. In contrast to the designation of performance as a social role, Butler's process of performativity is directly and primarily aimed at revealing 'power'. With the non-referential nature of the performative, she outlines a process through which (Foucauldian) power can operate without a centre. Butler draws on the 'performative' utterance from speech act theory as a 'discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (*ibid.* p. 13), only to displace it with Derrida's reformulation. Here a performative utterance 'is not the function of an originating will, but is always derivative' (*ibid.*). The corollary of this is a certain dispersal of agency that situates power and resistance in parallel rather than in opposition. Agency locates as a 'reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power' (*ibid.* p. 15).

Thus central to Butler's formulation is a shift from the theatrical to the linguistic model of performativity. The interest is predominantly in the discursivity of acts, their capacity to be read and re-inscribed. This underplays the potential of acts to materialise in unpredictable ways (or not at all). Therefore it is necessary to make a distinction between performance and performativity in Butler's work. For as Lloyd (1999: 201) puts it 'if performativity produces that which it names, what is it that prevents a performance operating performatively?' If Butler defines performance as a bounded act, whereas performativity is always a recitation of conventions, it is unclear how the limitations of the former are drawn. Responding to this, Benhabib (1999: 33) shows that through Butler's work on performativity (specifically *Gender Trouble*, *Bodies that Matter* and *Excitable Speech*) there is a move to diminish the importance of bounded performances or 'a series of disjointed gender enactments without a centre'. However, the resulting emphasis on acts as discursive has been at the expense of material possibilities. Although Butler ties the discursive production of norms to their materialisation, it is unclear exactly how this process occurs and what is the 'matter' of its product. Butler (1993: 15) suggests that materialisation is a sedimentation of norms through 'a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the "I"'.

But this is not a materialisation with obvious content; it seems empty through its production of 'abjected bodies' in 'a field of deformation' (*ibid*. p. 16). The performance of stories is useful for exploring this limit of the material in Butler's performativity.

Moving stories

Stories can be understood as primarily discursive entities that performatively shape subject formation. In this sense, they might share a linguistic basis with Butler's performative operation that cannot adequately attend to the possibilities of materialisation in performance. In particular, stories have been associated with the construction of attachments to the nation (Anderson 1983; Bhabha 1994). Acts of narration are able to produce differentiated national subjects often through association with a collective past (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Stories become a means of delineating what qualifies as the subject; they draw the boundaries of national identity. In this understanding of story work, as for Butler, matter is that which counts. It appears through its mediation as something to react to rather than something that can react without intervention. Therefore matter unmediated is 'unthinkable and unrepresentable' (Kirby 1997: 109), as is 'the possibility of its creativity beyond the operations of anything we could understand as "the cultural"' (Bell 2007: 99). Thus, this suggests that stories work not to materialise the subject, but rather the opposite. They operate to regulate and sustain an entity without foundational substance. Yet the emergence of subjectivity through such stories has always been more than a discursive act. The materiality of stories makes a difference. That is why Benjamin (1999) laments the fall of storyteller; the oral tradition; at the expense of the modern increase in textual 'information'. Equally, it is why the specifically textual form of the novel has been tied to the rise of nation, rather than the verbal telling of stories. Such material performance of stories in the production of subjectivity challenges the primacy of the discursive. It is not only that enactments of stories are material, but also that this materiality is not always predictable.

Thus, storytelling can be understood to open up the instabilities of collective belonging, rather than to sediment an existing identity. Within human geography this approach has been framed by Cameron (2012: 575) as an attempt to divorce 'story' from 'notions of ideology, epistemology, representation, power and knowledge'. She argues that geographers working with stories have shown their operations to be partial and malleable. Stories are not 'wholly *disciplined* by power relations'; neither do they 'wholly *exemplify* discursive processes' nor are they a 'wholly *representational* form' (*ibid*. emphasis in original). A key example of this ambivalence of stories in performance is Pratt's (2010; 2012) ongoing collaborative work exploring the position and experience of Filipino domestic caregivers in Canada. As mentioned earlier, one project emerging from this has been *Nanay*, a testimonial play based on the stories of a small number of those involved in the Live-in Caregiver Programme (LCP) (Johnston and Pratt, 2010). In the play, the stories could be understood to work as an unproblematic representation, in which their presence in performance directly reflects experience beyond it. Here stories might both make present again the testimony of those outside of the performance, but also come to speak for those mothers on the LCP as a collectivity. Yet the operations of representation are not straightforward. Pratt (2012) makes clear that *Nanay* is neither a constitutive abstraction – a product of the observation of the LCP – nor is it to be externally consumed as a substitution. Instead, the play necessitates an active engagement with the ways stories may challenge and disrupt conventional lines of representation in research and beyond.

Thus storytelling materialises through the creation of multiple singular engagements. For Johnston and Pratt (2010: 123) this works towards a 'complicated process of identification', which is not dissimilar to Bakhtin's novelty of the novel as an 'open' in its historical emergence. That is, Pratt 'takes stories into realms that are precisely *not* defined by affiliation, equality, or a shared sense of community' (Cameron, 2012: 582 emphasis in original). This occurs through the encounter: the meeting of people, stories, objects and emotions in the performance space. Emotional intensities in the performance of stories create felt

connections that cannot be easily traced onto existing constellations of affiliation. In this performance of stories, their materiality manifests in how they affect, they move. Cameron (2012) links this with Gibson-Graham's (2006) use of the story as a potential 'emotional opening'. Again, the story is not used to reference an existing collective, but is rather orientated towards 'the emergent, the not-yet-here, and participates in the materialisation of new realities' (Cameron, 2012: 580). However, unlike Pratt's cautionary approach to the work of stories, Gibson-Graham are interested in the alternative realities and communities that might be performed through stories. Such transformative stories are 'wilfully optimistic' (Cameron, 2012: 581), even if Gibson-Graham (2006: 136) do recognise the 'halting manner' in which such change may occur. If Pratt's approach to stories offers one check on Gibson-Graham's optimism, Hoskins' (2010) stories of Angel Island Immigration Station provide another. Hoskins concern is not so much with making stories into performance, but rather with how stories perform. This is the ways in which stories circulate at a site, recuperating events that may challenge dominant narratives. In showing how unwanted (unofficial) stories linger at Angel Island, Hoskins illustrates how stories perform in an unruly manner. Thus, the way stories materialise in performance plays an unpredictable role in the production of collectivities. Stories can but do not always 'perform', and when they are performed this process is no guarantee of a shared sense of attachment.

Such attention to the uncertain materiality of stories has also focused on the research process. Cameron (2012: 577) highlights how research using 'small stories' signals a different kind of inquiry, 'a pausing to account for particularity.' Referring specifically to Lorimer (2003; 2010) she suggests that the story appears as 'a heterogeneous assemblage of memories, practices, and materials within which one can identify particular 'narratives', but which cannot be wholly reduced to the concept of narrative' (*ibid.*). Of interest here is the role of stories in producing research. This is the difficulty of giving an account, an action that *qua* Butler; is constructive of the subject (of research). However, this account of research is not merely a linguistic or discursive one. Instead, as with the performance of stories above, it is material and this materiality is unpredictable. In part, this concerns

the embodied presence of the researcher in the research process to be accounted for. In recognition of this, Denzin (2003) puts forwards 'performance ethnography' as a dialogic mode of engaging with the world that 'creates spaces for give-and-take' (*ibid*. p. x), undoing the 'gazing eye of the modernist ethnographer' (*ibid*. p. 37). The result of this dynamic in the research process is the 'performance text' that 'privileges immediate experience, the evocative moment when another's experience comes alive for the self' (*ibid*.). Examples of this might be the interview as an active text that performs a story, or the 'narrative collage' which attends to the way research is 'made, heard, encountered and experienced' (Wood *et al* 2007: 869). Emerging from such media is a sense of the embodied nature of writing, it is an act of 'disturbing materiality' where 'the hand, the body [...] produces a space in which lives, events, and the past are interred' (Chambers, 2008: 18).

Thus there is an uncertainty to this materiality of the stories of/in research. Writing has an ambiguous presence that operates through 'haunting rather than dwelling' (Wylie 2007: 185). It has an ability to produce a sense of embodiment but one that is never complete. Equally, the encounter with a text cannot be defined in advance, as has been suggested by reception theory (Iser 1978; Jauss 1982). Here the text sets in train the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the reader, enabling something new to be brought into the world. However, although Iser recognises the encounter with the reader as constitutive of the working of texts, there is a certain rigidity to this meeting. Iser's understanding of response is structured such that the text constructs or delimits the situation in which the reader can act. More flexibly, Hones (2008) puts forward the 'text as it happens'. The text performs here as part of an always emerging geographical event. Rather than structuring, these text events are understood as relational, generated both through the initial encounter of author, text and reader, but also through the connections of broader social mediations. Therefore, the encounter with accounts of research raises questions concerning their interpretation, about 'a better vocabulary and critical framework' (Cameron 2012: 586) for their approach. Thus stories within and beyond research demonstrate the necessity to attend to the

material doings of performative acts. If subjectivity is to be understood as an ongoing production, the 'stuff' of this production requires attention. This is to consider the complex excessive relationship between words and things, categories and their substance. Thinking through the material practices of stories demonstrates the possibility for them to go awry, for their transformation through encounter. Such creative potential of performance is taken up through a focus on memory in the following section.

Memory Work

Memory, remnants of the past, might be understood to frame performance, structuring the constitution of the subject. Such an understanding seems to construct foundations, removing the creative potential in performance for the subject to become otherwise. In this reading, memory is a stable product that appears in but is not changed by performance. Here performance might act as a store for memories that are written into it in particular ways. It functions similarly to 'heritage' sites, monuments and other official markers of the past that are recognised to hold or signify memories. Framed as one of these 'biographies of site' (Till, 2012), past and present remain distinct in performance, with the markings of memory easily understood. Memory is taken to be coherent, fixed and immutable; a view that is supported through its relationship with space. Space contains as separates memory, veiling the difficulties and inconsistencies of its presence. Exemplary of this are Nora's (2009 [1984]) 'lieux de memoire' that are sites for the modern production of national and ethnic memory. Similarly, Boym's (2001) 'restorative nostalgia' is associated with narrating a coherent story of the nation in which memory gaps are patched up. At stake in this relationship between performance and memory is the question of which memories are represented. Often this comes down to a broad division between official and unofficial histories where social memory is understood to be controlled by those in power (Connerton 1989). However, in this approach there is little room for the interaction between performance and memory; for how the one might transform and disrupt the other.

Another approach to memory frames it as mutable, constituted through movement. Remembering is a communicative and imaginative social practice that is ‘not complete but a shifting, heterogeneous, partial and repetitive assemblage of acts, utterances and artefacts’ (Healy, 2008 : 9). Thus, memory-work involves degrees of uncertainty and improvisation that have an equivalence to the workings of art(ists) (DeSilvey 2010; Till 2012). This creative possibility of memory speaks to the potential for novelty in performance. Butler’s conception of performativity overlooks such creativity, bypassing the ‘most interesting aspects of language-in-use [which] occur in situations where there are no stipulated social rules or codes’ (Benhabib 1999: 339). She underplays the ways in which acts are ‘not only iterations but also innovations and reinterpretations’ (*ibid.*). In contrast, this creative pairing of performance with memory points to the eruption of moments ‘to bring the past into contact with the present’ (Crang and Travlou, 2001: 174). The body might be a central vehicle for such memory, as outlined in Taylor’s (2003) conception of the repertoire. The repertoire of performance transfers memories through the presence of embodied movement. Importantly, this is partly a process of mutation as the repertoire ‘both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning’ (ibid. p. 20). It therefore sits in contrast to the textual nature of the archive that supposedly resists change. By transmitting live, embodied action, the repertoire is specifically local, it necessitates unpicking through the site of its occurrence. This has the potential to deemphasise the visual in the transfer of memories, moving away from textual readings and highlighting the role of other sensory registers (Lahiri, 2011).

Yet, even if performance is better characterised by the memory-work of the repertoire, the archive remains important. Like the textual medium of stories, the archive cannot be conceived as completely static. It exists in a tension between control and liberation, with the potential to both limit freedoms but also produce space for agonistic politics. So on the one hand, Taylor (2003: 36) suggests that the archive has repeatedly ‘announced the disappearance of the performance practices involved in mnemonic transmission’. Historically, writing the archive has involved claiming the disappearance of embodied practices, and has accomplished

this disappearance through the very textual substance of this claim (Taylor 2003). Yet, on the other hand, the archive might reveal bodily evidence rather than erase it (Pollock 1993; Stoler 2002). Although often associated with official sources (Black 2003), the archive provides an illusion of completeness. It falters and stumbles, showing bodily weakness that might allow for marginalised voices to be heard. Thus, to the extent that the archive works to make manifest memory, it might be understood as a creative performance. However, this creativity is subject to conditioning. The Foucauldian reading sees the archive as disciplinary, shaping what constitutes credible knowledge of the past (Ogborn, 2003). Here, the archive operates as a 'system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events' to regulate the present (Foucault cited in Withers, 2002: 304). The relationship between the archive and memory is therefore not a given; it is necessarily unstable. This instability of memory was thrown into relief through the use of the archive to approach performance in practice in my own research. With the loose aim of finding out more about the history of St Paul's Carnival, I went to Bristol Records Office (BRO). In searching the catalogue, I was met with a strict organisation of sources. Each source was categorised by subject and by media type, and sometimes by date. However, this strict classification of information did not translate into an organisation of my own experience of the archive.

Working in the archives can be a messy business (Kaplan 1990; Kurtz 2009; Trachtenberg 1989). My overwhelming sense was that of incoherence over the course of my visits to the records office. This was partly because the process of searching seemed so distributed; I had to guess whether a source would be useful to me based on a brief description. I then had to request for the source to be found and brought out to me, before I could find out what it contained. The result of this was uncertainty over whether I had the 'correct' information, which was then followed by the question of whether the meaning I had read into the sources was correct. Both the material and the meaning of the past in the archive had the potential to be rearranged; memories were not static. Rather, they had an orientation to the future; operating as a door that opens onto another door (Derrida 1996). That is, archives are open to dissemination in particular ways that

change their materiality, with implications for the ways they are encountered. Beyond BRO, there were examples of such distributed archives of performance. In particular, the spoken word scene generated a number of blogs and Facebook pages that both promoted and recounted performances. Unlike BRO, which was run by BCC, these were sites built through private web platforms such as Wordpress and Facebook. However, these spaces were open to public viewing, and given the everyday embeddedness of the technology, were more readily accessible and available than the records office. Despite having to conform to the templates of the operator, blogs (this was not so true of Facebook pages) were often highly creative, interspersing accounts of performance (through different media) with poetry and illustration. Thus, there is a sense in which memory is proliferated in these archives, through the creative circulations of comments and links to the blog from elsewhere.

Performativity challenged

So if discursivity and restriction are emphasised by Butler in the ongoing constitution of the subject, the work of stories and memory show that performance must be approached in other ways. The way stories are told, the matter of their unfolding makes a difference to their constitution. Equally, memories do not simply structure the present; rather they are performed through irruptive, creative work. This is not to say that performativity has been rejected as a frame for the powerful doing and undoing of subjects. For example Gibson-Graham (2008: 614) describe practices of knowledge production as performative ontological projects. Their attempt to engender 'diverse economies' necessitates eschewing a realist or reflective perspective in order to recognise 'the activism inherent in knowledge production' (*ibid*. p. 615). Elsewhere, performativity has been used to explore everyday spatial practices. In considering the constitution of the 'homeless city', Cloke *et al* (2008: 246) invoke performativity to consider 'tactical agency' and the 'different traces of homelessness capable of reinscribing the city'. The aim is to show how spaces and encounters of homelessness may be 'brought into being' (*ibid*.). However, the balance in performativity between the operations that make the world legible and the practices through which it is lived

remains contested. Bialasiewiez *et al* (2007) demonstrate this through their suggestion that the imaginative geographies operating in and through US Security Strategy are performative. US Security Strategy functions via 'a discursive mode through which ontological effects [...] are established' (Bialasiewiez *et al*, 2007: 408). By invoking performativity they aim to show that discourse does not have to negate the significance of materiality. Instead the two are inextricably linked through the process of materialisation that occurs through performative citation. Yet the trick carried out here is an insertion of 'matter' into discourse, so that the latter encompasses 'both the ideal and the material, the linguistic and the non-linguistic' (*ibid*. p.406). So here discursive citation remains the model for performance.

To move beyond this, matter and creativity must be understood as central to conceptions of performance. The subject may lack foundations, but its production involves substance and therefore the materials to become otherwise. To return to the example of memory, this is the potential for the shattered fragments of the past to awaken multiple planes of consciousness, to paraphrase Boym's (2001) 'reflective nostalgia'. Performance is no longer the active deployment of memory from a fixed stock (the archive). Instead, neither the stock is fixed nor is performance discrete from it. Instead, performance is the process through which memory continues. This draws on Bergson's framing that makes a distinction between memory and perception. Here memory is in excess of perception; it has a purity that is lost in any actualisation. The performance of memory therefore lies in its action, the way it 'creates anew the present perception, or rather it doubles this perception by reflecting upon it, either its own image or some other memory-image of the same kind' (Bergson 1991 [1911]: 101). Such an understanding of 'memory in motion' (DeSilvey 2010) necessitates a focus on kinesis rather than stasis. Roach's (1996: 34) 'kinaesthetic imagination' highlights this, emphasising the way memory operates as 'an improvisation of broad themes with claims to the future as well as the past'. Whilst for Roach memory ultimately retains some stability as a resource, for DeSilvey movement is the condition of memory, as with the distributed archives above. Memory may thus be understood as a moment of

creation that can be actualised but never wholly contained by the present. A different politics is therefore disclosed, one that focuses on the conditions for the emergence of memory and what memory itself might condition (pointing to the need to rethink practices of curation, a point returned to in chapter three). This is played out through the potential of memory in performance, sometimes to be embodied, sometimes to circulate in 'pre-individual affective capacities' (Clough 2007: 9).

The broad critique emerging through the matter of stories and the creativity of memory is that Butler's performativity does not provide a constructive alternative to humanist versions of agency. Whilst she does away with the foundations of the subject, performance is structured by difference rather than occurring as difference itself. This is important because performance might be generative in ways that exceed the categories of difference that can make things and bodies matter. There is a role for material culture in the politics of boundary-making. This involves allowing 'matter its due as an active participant in the world's becoming' (Barad 2003: 803). It is this sense of performativity that is taken up by Gregson (2011) to frame the activity of disposal. The work in ship breaking yards becomes material reconfigurations that intervene in the world to realise different agential possibilities. Thus the approach of performance through performativity becomes an illumination of the rhythms or repetitions of material itself that have ontological effects. Difference is about more than constraint; it also includes experimentation with resistance and intensity (Braidotti 2013). This means understanding the production of subjects through performance beyond a 'transhistorical matrix of power' (*ibid*. p.98). Rather difference itself might become unhinged through performance, leading to alternative subject formations.

Contingent

The openness and creativity found lacking in Butler's approach points to the contingency of performance. If the subject is in production through ongoing acts, then the direction and execution of these practices is ambiguous. Instead of

reproducing or resisting norms, performance concerns the uncertain conditions of emergence of subjectivity. Difference does not determine performance but instead acts as a driving force; the consistent potential for the subject to be otherwise. Yet such potential of each individual act means that things can go awry. The contingency of performance results in intended and unintended consequences. The ways in which performance has been used to undo the city demonstrate this. Human interventions in urban space unsettle the fabric of the city. Performance opens up unexpected pathways that demonstrate the contingent unfolding of the urban. But these performances also throw into relief what occurs beyond the body; the cultivation of atmospheres that exceed absolute definition. In this uncertain experience, performance becomes a means of experimentation; a series of acts that explore the emergence of the subject rather than the subject itself. It therefore operates as a vital element of ethnomimesis, the deliberate yet fragile acts of maintaining the appearance of the individual or collective subject.

Performing the city

Performance has been shown to be a contingent intervention in urban space. Here, performance is approached as an occurrence with artistic and creative qualities that have the potential to upset the usual rhythms of the city. As such, these tend to be happenings that take place in mundane or everyday urban spaces to reconfigure the taken-for-granted. The focus on urban performance interventions might be split into two (overlapping) strands: one explores how they take place through practices of participation in the urban whilst the other considers what the events might do or set in train. Pinder (2005; 2008) provides a useful way into the former through his discussion of artistic interventions into the city. These are ‘practices that are critical and politicised in relation to dominant power relations and their spatial constitution, [and] make use of artistic and creative means to question and explore social problems and conflicts without necessarily prescribing solutions’ (Pinder 2008: 731). Drawing on examples of urban performances in London and New York, he argues that these interventions shed light on two key areas of debate in urban theory. The first is the ‘right to the city’ and involves the way in which creative practice in public space can provoke debate on the meaning

of urban living (Loftus 2009). The second is ‘writing the city’ and concerns how representations or knowledge of the city might be constructed. Thus, through these artistic interventions, Pinder seeks to close the division between theory and practice. His aim is for closer understanding and, crucially work, between ‘urban theory, empirical research and artistic and activist practice’ (Pinder 2008: 733). The suggestion is that this can be (at least partially) achieved through ‘exploration’; how we write the city through our right to pass through it. This points to the legacy of contemporary urban performance interventions from practices of psychogeography.

Here, attempts to know and change the city were undertaken by various creative modes of participation in it. Pinder (2005: 389) indicates how the ‘playful-constructive behaviour’ of the Letterists and Situationists can be understood as a political analysis of urban space that was searching for a better city. The practices were not simply reliant on chance but instead involved ‘conscious assertion of revolutionary desire’ (*ibid*. p. 397). This necessitated that creative interventions in the city challenged the constraints of absolute location through the use of movement and trajectory. Walking was and continues to be considered a central practice for such deliberate enactment of change in psychogeography. This activity is transformative through its capacity to unsettle two divisions: performance and non-performance; and researcher and researched. This returns to the relationship between performance and the everyday. Although not universally possible, walking around the city is considered a 'normal' activity that nonetheless has the capacity to challenge the apparently bounded nature of both performance and knowledge production. As De Certeau (1984) suggests in ‘Walking in the City’, it is a practice that occurs below the ‘thresholds at which visibility begins’, enabling a smudging or erasure of existing subject positions. Walking can set in motion forms of attunement that are simultaneously experiential, analytical and interventional (Myers 2011). It is thus one means of participating in an ‘observation’, or of ‘taking part in the world, rather than representing it’ (Crang 1997: 360). The opportunity to both go with (or participate in) the process of performance and to reflect on what occurs in that process is provided. As such, walking is a contingent unfolding

that can work against singular and detached readings of a situation. The potential to walk different routes resists ‘comprehensive explanation for any given phenomena’ (Hillyard 2010 : 12). Equally, as an embodied practice walking involves more than simply seeing; it ‘requires cognisance of the full sensory experience of being in place’ (Kearns 2010 : 257). Pinder’s interest in these practices of performance begins to indicate what such events might set in train.

This redresses some of the imbalance in approaches to urban art. As Miles (2004: x) argues ‘much of what has been published emphasises the role of cultural institutions in urban regeneration while ignoring more radical forms of practice that irritate those institutional structures’. Instead, the contingent intervention of performance sets out to identify how some ‘creatives’ ‘have become a strong voice of contestation in present-day urban order’ (Novy & Colomb 2012: 3). Yet this potential of performance to intervene in the urban must be tempered by an attunement to the complex relationship between creativity, intervention and ethical progress. In part this necessitates a conceptualisation of the relationship with the past, one that often ossifies into a politics of loss (Bonnett 2009). In relation to contemporary British psychogeography, Bonnett (2009) argues that this revolves around the problematic positioning of nostalgia. Through the simultaneous refusal and deployment of nostalgia, he suggests that psychogeographical attempts to enact or envisage a better future are always caught up in negotiations of the place of the past in radical politics. The potential for artistic interventions, such as performance, to enact change must also be questioned. To avoid simplistic celebration or romanticisation, it must be recognised that ‘the political efficacy of projects and practices is not an intrinsic quality’, rather it can ‘only be understood in relation to particular contexts, connections and situations’ (Pinder 2008: 733). Pinder (2011: 688) suggests that such interventions thrive on opportunity but might therefore be insufficient to address more structural processes ‘through which urban spaces are produced and radically transformed’. A consideration of what enables and is enabled by performance interventions can help to redress this. This concerns the potential and the problems of the contingent space of performance that can create a disruption in the urban. Pløger (2010) argues that this capturing

of city space to create temporary ‘liberated’ or ‘autonomous’ places can be understood as a political strategy of ‘eventalisation’. This builds on Foucault’s (1998) ‘heterotopic’ spaces, making a distinction between the ‘staged’ event and the ‘chance’ event.

Whilst both can upset the everyday social order, Pløger argues the former is serial in content and place, whilst the latter may recur in form but not in content. This capacity in ‘eventalisation’ to repeat differently means that it is experienced as transient and fleeting, drawing attention to their conditions of possibility. This concerns the temporal structure of performance, how ‘the consequences of a future event [...] achieve affects over the here and now in relation to an event that has occurred’ (Anderson & Holden 2008: 155). In reference to street performers, Simpson (2011: 426) argues that the ‘betwixt and between’ state of performance has the potential to ‘produce convivial and social spaces’ but is also spatially and temporally out of place, rendering it contentious in various ways. For the street performers Simpson encountered in Bath, this took the form of a tightening of controls over issues such as noise levels, timing and the quality of the act. However, these external controls cannot legislate for the way in which capacities to act might be enhanced or dulled during performance. Simpson (2008) shows how the arrhythmic folding into performance of ‘external’ rhythms (such as the weather) can heighten concentration and improve the ability to perform. Performance interventions also depend upon an audience, an unpredictable coming together of people that can be difficult to sustain. Especially in the case of street performance, this collectivity is part of the performance but is also somehow external, having the power to leave and therefore partially undo the event. Thus, performance is fragile; both held together and enabled to circulate through particular atmospheres. These are the relations of tension between ‘presence and absence, materiality and ideality, definite and indefinite, singularity and generality’ (Anderson 2009: 80) through which performance occurs and that exceed ‘the performer(s)’. So the transience of performance interventions indicated by Pløger is both conditioned by and conditions atmospheres; they deal

in and are dealt with through ‘collective affects that are not reducible to the individual bodies’ (*ibid.*) from which they emerge.

Experiments in Performance

Therefore, performance becomes a means of experimentation, a series of acts that ‘go with’ rather than cause contingency. This understanding has meant performance might function as a generative ‘thinking space’ (McCormack 2010: 203) that enables movement ‘in the relational midst of the world’ (*ibid.* p. 205). The instability of the subject is taken as a starting point with the emphasis on the ongoing conditions of emergence. Crucially, performance is not just time for rumination. Rather, as an experimental moment it is a theoretical space that is equally and simultaneously empirical (Dewsbury 2010). Such experimental performances are often but not always undertaken by the researcher. McCormack experiments through performance at a dance studio in London (McCormack 2004; 2005) and Wylie embarks on a couple of jaunts into the English countryside (Wylie 2002; 2005). Meanwhile, both Dewsbury (2000) and Simpson (2009) use vignettes from forms of artistic performance to supplement wider theoretical claims. Such performance experiments have a genesis in the development of and further elucidate ‘non-representational theories’. These now diffuse and disparate ideas emphasise the significance of performance for both the practice of geographers and their engagements with and in the world (Thrift 1997; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). Although Thrift initially used the figure of the dancing body, no single performance intervention is valued above another. Rather, Thrift and Dewsbury outlined four broad ‘apprehensions’ of performance, each of which have a different value but demonstrated that overall the term can offer geography ‘more conceptual and empirical breathing space’ (2000: 429). A broad conceptual steer is given through the direction of Deleuze’s ‘creative thoughts on creativity’ (*ibid.* p. 417) that can be tied to performance through their ‘emphasis on a sense of movement’ and an associated kinaesthetic space ‘in which no fixed standards of representation exist’ (p. 419). Empirically, performance is able to address the ‘generally limited nature of the methods’ (p. 424) used in human geography but is also ‘itself a form of knowledge, an intelligence in-action’ (p. 425).

The framing of performance as experimentation in human geography is developed from these early attempts to theorise the concept. Dewsbury (2000) enacts a key shift by providing a different understanding of performativity compared to that of Butler. Butler's performativity was constrained and discursive; matter was meaning sedimented through power inflected acts. Instead of this, Dewsbury suggests that performativity is immanent, practical and creative. It is the 'incessant need to think otherwise' or 'the sense of experimentation that greets us everyday' (*ibid* p. 495). An implication of this is that it is through 'the performances that make us, the world comes about' (Dewsbury *et al* 2002 : 439). Here practises in and with, rather than on, the world are understood to provide insight. Performance thus becomes a useful framer for a move beyond the reading of representations towards their 'material compositions and conduct' (*ibid*. p.438). The 'doing' of performance is symptomatic of the way in which processes of making meaning are transformative, continually assembling and disassembling rather than stabilising. In order to 'get at' these processes of becoming – 'the taking-place of the empirical' (*ibid*. p. 439) - a new vocabulary was required to elucidate the nuanced experimental experiences of performance. Words such as enunciation, iteration, invocation, rhythm, intensity, modulation begin to crop up. These terms for describing ongoing change were required as a means to articulate differences and distinctions in the world as continuing process. Thus, unlike with Goffman where performance provides a means of framing and differentiating with social interactions, the performance experiment might be understood as the ontological condition of the world that requires separate ways of attending to it.

So what sort of interventions are these experiments in performance? The sense here, as hinted above, is that these are theoretical and (necessarily also) methodological interventions in human geography. Specifically, they challenge the contours of the human as the subject of this geography. A key element for contest is the role of interpretation as a way of being in and constructing knowledge of the world. Both Wylie (2002; 2005) and Simpson (2009) use performance to intervene in 'constructivist, realist and phenomenological' (Wylie, 2005: 245) approaches to

the world. In narrating the 'performance' of ascending Glastonbury Tor and walking a stretch of the South West Coast footpath, Wylie seeks to develop an idea of landscape as the 'entwined materialities and sensibilities with which we act and sense' (*ibid.*). This is a method that is sympathetic to the notion of 'dwelling' or being in the landscape but challenges the coherence of the subject associated with dwelling. Instead, the entwining of self and landscape described by Wylie is postphenomenological: it concerns 'the conditions of emergence of something rather than determining the essence and intrinsic relations of each thing' (Simpson, 2009: 2572). Simpson (2009) also takes up this approach to offer a specific critique of interpretation in relation to music. He distinguishes between hearing, which he holds to concern judgment, and listening, which concerns the experience of sound itself. Once again, co-constitution is emphasised as the materiality, rhythm and timbre of music are understood to resonate in us, perpetually making and unmaking us (*ibid*. p. 2571). The contingency of performance comes to the fore as an open and excessive 'space of enactment' (McCormack 2005: 121). This undermines attempts to write closed accounts of the world that identify any 'great revolution' (McCormack 2004: 219) and instead emphasises how both concepts and materials might be animated in ways that can require particular moods of responsiveness (McCormack, 2010).

Part of both the strength and the weakness of this work is the way in which the descriptions of and through performance tune us into the minutiae of an event for theoretical elucidation. On the one hand the apparently sparse or highly personalised empirical research means that it is often difficult to gain a sense of the broader political significance of the work (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Creswell 2012). On the other hand, these more nuanced manners of engaging have diffused (to a degree) through the discipline to offer more complex presentations of research. Whilst some of the interventions above appear thin in both 'methods' and 'empirical material', they can display a refreshing amount of discussion and exposure of the research process (McCormack 2005; Wylie 2005). As a result, both their style and practice of approach has encouraged methodological experimentation in human geography. Often these have not been absolute

innovations but are rather attempts to make existing methods ‘dance a little’ (Latham 2003: 2000). They are underpinned by the view that methods for attending to a world-in-the-making must themselves be creative. Performance has been used both to describe the act of doing research but also as the object of it. As part of the act of research, performance focuses on what methods can do to approach non-cognitive and embodied aspects of sociality. Thus, Latham (2003: 2007) suggests that for interviews ‘the notion of performance helps to deflect us away from looking for depth (in the sense of a single unified truth) and directs us towards detail (in the sense of a fuller and more variegated picture of the interviewee)’. As well as interviews, the question of what images can do, together with practices of seeing, has been opened up, although not explicitly through an invocation of performance. These ‘non-representational’ approaches to images have considered the relationship between visuality and materiality (Bissell 2009); particularly through the montage (Doel & Clarke 2007).

At stake is the contingency of the representational process for getting at research phenomena. Uncertainty surrounds both the practice of representation and the subject it captures. Rather than being contained representations ‘images simultaneously conjure the singularity of each individual thing, and through repetition, the set of relations in which this thing is a participant’ (Latham & McCormack 2009). Images are not simply inert objects that are put to work only through interpretation. Instead they can be understood as ‘blocks of sensation with an affective intensity’ (*ibid*. p. 253). Similarly, video must also be understood as multisensory in that it can ‘touch its viewers and illicit its viewers’ experience of touch’ (Laurier in Garrett 2011: 533). Significant here is the way in which the act of making a video is understood as an intervention in, rather than just a recording of, the world (Garrett, 2011). Video has also been used in approaching performance as the empirical object of research. Morton (2005) uses video as one element of her ‘performance ethnography’ of Irish folk sessions that aimed to attend to the unplanned, fluid and unexpected nature of the events. She claims to develop a ‘bottom-up politics of methodologies’ that starts with the practice of performance rather than any theoretical prescription. Again concentrating on

street performers, Simpson (2011) considers the use of video as a method of approach. However, in contrast to Garrett (2011), Simpson argues that video did not present an affective relation. He suggests that whilst video can render visible minute detail of corporeal movements and communication, it 'provides little in the way of a sense of the felt aspects in and of these movements' (Simpson, 2011: 350).

Thus, these experiments in and with performance in human geography are not without limitations. Although there has been a shift in the methods and objects of research, these changes are often more of style and manner than of kind. Nonetheless, the stability of the human as geography's subject has been upset through the use of performance to emphasise the contingency of practices of knowledge making. By showing up the volatility of acts of representation and downplaying interpretation, unpredictable configurations of materials and affects come to inform experiences of the world. The result is a subject is without anchor, one that is seemingly unrepresentable. Instead attention turns to its conditions of possibility, the elements that point to the infinite potential of the subject. In this uncertain context, individual and collective belonging can be difficult to maintain. However, these challenges of performance do not necessitate a complete abandonment of representation. Rather they draw attention to its inherent uncertainty as an act that materializes incompleteness. It is both constitutive – it makes present again – and substitutive – it speaks for. This work or performance of representation means that taking it at 'face value' only gets us so far. The image of a group has a complex relationship with the practices that bond individuals to/ in a group. Not only are collective attachments uncertain, but equally insecure are the ways they might cohere into an impression of stability. Performance occurs as the unfolding of this contingent relationship between individual and group. It simultaneously emphasises the process of making and the made product; the constitutive and substitutive work of representation. This role of performance in the contingency of representation can be framed through ethnomimesis.

Ethnomimesis

Ethnomimesis is the way in which we encounter, stereotype and recognise cultural practices for ourselves and manifest them to others. Through this, representations of groups arise to mediate the social distance between self and other (Cantwell 1993). This is a process of performance; it involves acts that play on and bring into being social reality. The idea of society, the collective of individuals, is brought into being through the constitutive and substitutive elements of representation. The coherence of the group – its binding force – is enacted through practices of performance. Equally, in this process the performance can come to speak for a whole (or wider) group. Cantwell's approach is anthropological, risking positing culture as a more-or-less bounded set of ideas and meanings (Rosman and Rubel 2004). However, by focusing on the performance of coherence – how boundaries appear – ethnomimesis unsettles any certain limits to culture. It becomes a means for exploring the role of cultural contingencies in society; how imaginations of ourselves may inform and destabilise attachments to a collectivity. Thus ethnomimesis might contribute to 'socially responsible and culturally theorised' (Nayak 2011: 560) scholarship on belonging in three ways. As a first move, ethnomimesis conceptualises culture as a process. It focuses on how cultural representations are made to stand for a whole group. For Cantwell, this is fundamentally an imaginative act that invents social groups through cultural practices. Ethnomimesis values such acts of invention rather than overlooking them as contrived. Representations can thus be understood as deliberately creative acts; they are fostered and forged rather than organic products of pre-existing cultures.

With ethnomimesis, cultural production becomes the ongoing creative work involved in the appearance of stability. In particular, the emphasis on culture as a process highlights the complexity of acts of representation. The focus on material and imaginative practice in ethnomimesis means that representation cannot be held as a primarily discursive act separated from embodied identity. The 'irresistibly creative' (Cantwell 1999: 224) nature of ethnomimesis provides an additional indication that revealing difference (such as race) to be a 'social

construction' (see Hankins et al 2012; Veninga 2009) may not destabilise these categories enough (Saldanha in Slocum et al, 2009). Ethnomimesis emphasises the role of cultural production and transformation in the unstable interaction between difference and representation, rather than the construction of the former by the latter. It shows how difference can be emergent, upsetting any notion of cultural essence. Secondly, ethnomimesis is a social process. It operates to connect the individual to the collective: 'the body reflects, impersonates, and represents its relation to other bodies *in relation* to the social world' (Cantwell 1999: 223 emphasis in original). This addresses a key question raised by vital materialist scholarship on the relationship between difference and embodiment (Grosz 1994; Saldanha 2007; Braidotti 2013). Here the materiality of phenotype is re-ontologised, biology is once again a differentiating force for what sex and race might 'do'. A central concept is that difference is emergent – it occurs – beyond the singular individual. However, this produces a difficulty in understanding how individual embodied practices relate to the sedimentation of differences as collective categories in society. A corollary of this is a concern over the degree to which processual understandings of difference can or should be able to provide an explanatory framework for social inequalities. Ethnomimesis can help address these questions through its relation of individual acts with broader social conditions: it focuses on the practices through which singular representations come to be representative in society.

Ethnomimesis indicates how the instability of such representations develops as a condition of their performance and circulation with both accidental and strategic social effects. This is to consider the 'work' done in the embodied encounters of performance. The effect of coherence achieved through performance involves 'painstaking labour' (Ahmed 2002: 569). Collectivities are produced through rather than pre-exist performance; they are 'formed through the very work we need to do in order to get closer to others' (*ibid*. p. 570). Thus, this 'politics of encountering' shapes groups without a shared ground, acknowledging that alliances form but without assuming the taking of a singular form. Ahmed (2004) argues that emotions are central to this effort for coherence, working by sticking

figures together to create the semblance of a collective. Such attachments are not necessarily positive, negativity is also important for the production of collective states (Berlant, 2004). Thus, ethnomimesis is a way of conceptualising the 'sense' of a collective. It is not concerned with how the body becomes mimetic, an accomplice of social reproduction in Bourdieu's (1984) sense of habitus. Here, emotions force individuals back into established practices, making the communication of affect 'performative rather than as an opening to all sorts of consequences' (Berlant, 2008: 4). Instead, ethnomimesis stresses how collectivities may be played out through the contingencies of individual encounter. It highlights how this is always a fragile achievement, open to disruptions and fragmentations.

The third point is that ethnomimesis encourages attention to the taking place of both 'meaning' and 'matter', responding to overly discursive framings of culture. The 1990s saw the mobilisation of an understanding of culture as hybrid, circulating and non-essentialised (Gilroy 1993). Such cultural hybridity subverted foundational fixings to territory to emphasise scattered belongings and ambivalent attachments (Bhabha 1994; Ifekwunigwe 1999). Culture was explored through a politics of representation (Hall 1992), meaning role of the materiality of place in the construction of cultural difference was ambiguous. More recently, the practical interaction of the discursive and the material in the sedimentation of difference has been highlighted in studies of everyday multiculture which outline various politics of being together through the 'vernacular' spaces of the school, the street and the nightclub (Back 1996; Amin 2002; Lim 2010; Swanton 2010; Wilson 2013). To undermine essentialised notions of culture these 'everyday performances' foreground the practices of racial difference, emphasising the materiality of these encounters, with less focus on the role of meaning in how bodies might come to matter. Through a conversion of disordered practices and perceptible signs into (more-or-less) ordered representations, ethnomimesis presents a frame for attending to the nuances of this relationship between meanings and matterings. By providing a lens on specific sites of cultural production, it shows how encounters always take place through processes of mediation (Amin 2012). Therefore ethnomimesis shows how performance enables a consideration of the negotiation

of the ambivalent matter and meaning of differences through localised unfoldings of boundaries and movements.

Synthesising

Performance is a complex configuration of the conceptual and the material. It frames culture as a process, drawing attention to the making of the subject, rather than the subject as made. Geographers have approached the term as a means of unsettling worlds; shedding light on the co-constituting interactions between people and places through three main areas. A first is display, the way in which performance renders certain activities distinct over others. The subject performs a role, becomes more than themselves, in undertaking social acts. Here, performance is understood through its relationship with its surroundings, having the ability to both act upon and constitute them. Secondly, performance has operated as a means for erasing foundations. It puts the subject into constant production through repetitive citational acts. Yet the material, creative potential of performance can be lost in this framing. A final area has stressed the contingency of performance; the way in which the ongoing production of the subject results in uncertainty. Performance operates to unsettle the existing contours of reality as a disruptive practice that is reliant on a variety of elements. It has an experimental quality that emphasises the conditions of possibility of the subject, rather than the subject itself. This seems to render representation impossible, throwing into question individual and collective belonging. However, the chapter has suggested that performance demonstrates the always unstable nature of representation; the difficulty inherent in the labour of connecting individuals and producing collectivities.

In the following chapters, performance manifests as both idea and practice of culture. The final framing of contingency in this chapter is not meant to be the ‘evolutionary end point’ for these appearances of performance. Thinking through roles and following performatives remain important tasks that are themselves concerned with uncertainties. However, the question of what performance might

do with and as contingency is the one I want to leave open. This concerns the creative possibilities of performance along with their potential to go awry. In relation to the subject this means attending to the way difference manifests as both a force and enforced, as opportunity and as constraint. Performance foregrounds the contingency of attachments, the ways in which belonging is always a precarious undertaking that must be worked at to be maintained. For the city, this means performance is an intervention balanced between participation in and partitioning of the 'everyday'. That is, it can be both an everyday practice and a means of throwing such practices into relief. This grounding of performance in the definition of the everyday affords it the potential to both disrupt and maintain social order. It is both a playing out of existing urban configurations and an opportunity for their rearrangement. So performance occurs as an often deliberate yet fragile act that opens up a particular politics. On the one hand this concerns how performance takes a particular shape, why certain attachments are made over others. It occurs as an innovative practice that might be directed to particular ends. On the other hand, it points to the work of sustaining performance, to the way some belongings are more stable than others. In the friction between force and enforcement there is always potential for fragmentation, for difference to exceed or be exceeded. This tension in performance between scripting and improvisation, between direction and deviation is taken up in the following chapter.

3. Making

> '*The word* creativity *appears in this book* [The Craftsman] *as little as possible. This is because the word carries too much Romantic baggage – the mystery of inspiration, the claims of genius.'* (Sennett 2008: 290, emphasis in original).

That cities can be creative is now received wisdom in urban policy. Cities perform; they make things appear through practices of direction and deviation that exceed a cultural frame. The language of innovation has become central to urban economic development and regeneration. Cities must foster an environment that enables the creative activities that are crucial for growth. This rendering creative of place seemingly removes creativity from its position as a personal attribute. It suggests that creativity might extend beyond the individual. Yet in practice, both scholarship and policy on urban innovation has continued to contain creative practice in the workings of a particular 'class' of people, at certain sites, and in specific products. This chapter argues that whilst practices of making may be isolated in these ways, creativity always also resists capture. That is, creativity must be understood as a process, meaning that making can never quite be grasped. Therefore, the difficulty in understanding making lies not in the disconnect that Sennett sets out to challenge between mind and body, between imagination and materialisation. Rather, the chapter places the difficulty in the way the creative process always escapes absolute encapsulation. This black box of creativity is explored through a brief genealogy of the term that outlines its development as a personal attribute. Deleuze's vitalist philosophy will then be put forward to challenge this perspective. Creativity emerges here as a process without singular origin or end point, illustrated via the scripting and production of a play in Bristol. Through this activity it becomes apparent that creativity 'travels', which has implications for its relationship with urban space. Framing creativity as process is shown to challenge attempts for its stabilisation in localised clusters of people and organisations. Instead, through Bristol's spoken word scene, the concept of curation is developed as a cultural practice that produces and maintains the unstable spaces of creativity in the city.

The black box of creativity

The creative cities mantra has become pervasive. Both supporters and detractors of the connection between cities and innovation have aided in the growth of the 'new-found cult of urban creativity' (Peck 2010: 195). For its supporters, creativity has become 'the defining feature of economic life' (Florida 2002: 21), a 'talent' stockpiled in particular people who are drawn by 'edgy cities not edge cities' (Peck 2010: 198). For its detractors, the doctrine of urban innovation scripts a particular kind of creativity over others, underplaying the value of making for more-than-economic reasons (Boren and Young 2012). In both instances, the 'creative city' is reified, turned into something more concrete than the fragile playing out of creativity in practice. Supporters adhere to the notion that if specific conditions are met, a creative city will result. Detractors are sceptical of this position but nonetheless continue to harden the notion of the 'creative city' through making it the focus of their critique. In their rush to boost or deflate the concept, the two sides largely treat creativity itself as a black box. The questions of what creativity is and how it occurs in the city can easily remain unanswered. Partly at issue here is the inherent difficulty in defining creativity that places any claim for a monolithic creative city on shaky ground. Creativity is enigmatic, often tied to mysterious 'eureka moments' and the inexplicable workings of visionary minds. However, whilst the practice of creativity seems shrouded in mystery, the movement of creativity as discourse might be easier to trace.

Pope (2005: 19) argues that the term 'creativity' fell into use to encompass the specifically modern responses required to cope with 'accelerating changes of an increasing magnitude'. Emerging first through work in education and psychology in the 1920s, Pope suggests that creativity became synonymous with 'imaginative solutions' in the modern world in the mid-twentieth century (*ibid.*p. 20). This deliberate instrumentalisation is at odds with the apparently innate quality of artistic creativity (see chapter five). Whilst both ascribe creativity to the human, such instrumentalisation means it becomes a required attribute, a way of managing problems that then itself becomes a target of management (Prince 2014). The focus on creativity as a producer of solutions has given rise to what

Osborne (2003: 508) terms ‘technologies of creativity’. He suggests that psychologists and managers are positioned as experts with the governmental tools to conduct and condition creative activity. The capacity for creativity to be organised (noted as paradoxical (Styhre 2006)) seemingly removes some of the mysticism of the term, and democratises the potential for creative ability. However, this managerial discourse is founded upon a particular understanding of creativity as the innovation of a clearly defined product or solution. Here creativity is understood *post hoc*, synonymous with the product, rather than the manner in which the innovation was achieved. Hallam and Ingold (2007) suggest this is a backwards reading of creativity, one that starts with the results rather than the developments that gave rise to them. Thus although positioning creativity as the subject of management has increased the visibility of the term – we live in ‘a veritable age of creativity’ (Osbourne, 2003: 507) – the processes of creativity tend to remain hidden.

This paradoxical state of the prominence of the term but the concealment of the practice has continued in the emergence of the category of the ‘creative class’. Again creativity is foregrounded as a personal attribute. Florida (2002) delineated a new ‘order’ of people, creating a class who are broadly grouped around their engagement in innovative industry and activity. Yet, the meaning of creativity is vague and contradictory. Creativity is understood as a ‘universal and humanistic’ (Peck 2010: 199) endeavour but is simultaneously disproportionately possessed by certain talented people. Beyond its association with particular occupations, creativity is sufficiently indistinct for it to be applied to a wide range of people and places. For example, the ease with which the concept of a ‘creative class’ can be loosely applied to empirical realities explains its popularity in policy circles and beyond. However, under closer inspection this ambiguity is problematic. The creative class appears both as an indicator of creativity – that which demonstrates creative presence – and a generator of creativity – the conditions needed for creativity to occur. The confusion surrounding causality arises in part because of its lack of accurate definition (Markusen 2006). Although further sullied elsewhere, this problem flows from the muddy waters of Florida’s

initial exposition. In bracketing together a ‘super-creative core’, ‘creative professionals’ and ‘bohemians’, Florida merges very different professions with disparate attitudes towards culture (Comunian, 2011). In particular, the position of ‘bohemians’, as those who fall outside of the mainstream, is poorly theorised. ‘Bohemians’ might be members of the creative class, but they also form part of the ‘live and let live’ ethos of tolerance that attracts such workers to the city.

The ambivalent situation of ‘Bohemians’ is indicative of the lack of unity to the ‘creative class’. Despite Florida’s focus on occupation, creativity cannot be tied to a single activity, making this a class without material base. Creativity is therefore apparently apolitical, with ‘creatives’ set free from the old forms of collective mobilisation associated with a class-based society. The result is that creativity is diffuse amongst often contradictory elements. There is a tension between those who occupy the mainstream creative core of the city that is productive of economic growth, and the parallel but often marginalised sets of ‘artistic’ or ‘alternative’ practices that are necessary for a ‘creative atmosphere’. Florida’s umbrella use of creativity overlooks the nuances of creative practice in the city. Spaces of creativity exist outside the formal workspace, often produced through vernacular activities that are ignored in Florida’s thesis (Gibson 2003). The result is that the relationship between modes of informal creative labour and the more formalised creative professions is underexplored. This means the increased prominence Florida has given creativity has brought with it a parallel neglect of the conditions of creative labour. Nowotny (2011: 19) describes these conditions through the rise of the ‘project-institution’ that has ‘no stable institutional structure at its disposal’ which therefore ‘allows it a certain flexibility’. Despite these problems, Florida’s creative class has underpinned approaches to urban policy the world over. By attributing creativity to particular people, and arguing that such people can then drive urban growth, Florida’s mantra has encouraged urban policy-makers to invest in infrastructures that will attract this class. The focus is on the creative people, not the process of creativity itself. Therefore, in the creative city formulation creativity appears in a liminal state, simultaneously visible as a discourse and invisible as a practice.

The creative process

Florida's inflation of the idea of creativity at the expense of its practices has not gone unnoticed. Some skeptics have asked questions concerning the sort of creativity that is valued in Florida's formulation. Rather than focusing on the causal accuracy of the relationship between creativity, 'creatives' and urban economic growth, the criticism here concerns the type of creativity Florida implies. The suggestion is that creativity occurs for a variety of reasons and in a variety of places that exceed the occupations emphasised by Florida, and that are subsequently targeted by policy-makers. A wide range of 'vernacular' creative practices have been highlighted (that previously escaped vision) to illustrate how making might have a different orientation (Edensor *et al* 2009; Warren and Gibson, 2011; Gilmore 2013). Rather than the economic productivity of knowledge-based work in areas such as engineering, science and ICT, the cultural value of creativity is stressed, including the 'affective, emotive and cathartic' (Gibson and Kong 2005: 544) aspects of these pursuits. There is also a sense that creativity might be economically useful in different ways. For example, the possibilities to 'take back the economy' outlined by Gibson-Graham *et al* (2013) involve innovative practices of production and exchange for apparently more equitable ends. By problematising what is considered creative, these criticisms have shown that how creativity occurs is important. Creativity cannot be pre-given, rather the multiplicity of forms of creative practice are indicative of the variety of types of labour required to bring it about. Therefore, these criticisms give equal or greater value to the process of creativity, compared to its product. Such an interest in process is also found in more theoretical engagements with creativity.

Here the distributed or drawn out nature of creativity becomes the focus. In Sennett's (2008) examination of craftsmanship he argues against a separation of the head and the hand in practices of making. The contention is that any form of skill, however abstract, is grounded in physical practice that is arduous but not mysterious. The creativity of craftsmanship occurs through continued involvement and incremental change that is attuned to the minutiae of practices. Sennett's

interest lies in how this process of interaction with materials might shape humanistic values. The desire to do a task well, to make something good, does not have to result in alienation or be encouraged through competition. Instead, developing technique involves both a building up and a letting go, as traces are left in inanimate things. So the care involved in this cultivation of (more-or-less) material things might frame a broader ethics. For Sennett then, making is temporally distributed, a creative process firmly situated in the interactions between people and objects. A less humanistic picture of creativity as process might be found in the networked nature of scientific knowledge. Acts of discovery - 'geographical', scientific or otherwise – are not understood as singular but rather are made up of a variety of components that blur the boundaries between disciplines (Latour 1993; Law 2004). Unlike Sennett, who primarily focuses on the human, this actor-network approach leaves room for (and indeed emphasises) non-human agency in discovery. Here creativity appears as greater than any individual, a process through which change occurs via increment rather than rupture. Ingold and Hallam (2007) suggest that as such creativity should be understood as improvisation rather than innovation. The former is orientated towards process, emphasising the exploration of possibilities within certain boundaries, whilst the latter is focused on the outcome. So in these framings, rather than leaving the finished product, the distributed and processual nature of creativity produces worlds in the making.

Such a conceptualisation of creativity as a process can be routed through the thinking of Gilles Deleuze. A vitalism and ontological force runs through his philosophy that sees a world in constant creation. Underpinning this is 'difference'. Difference does not operate through negation as a Lacanian lack or Derridean impossibility. Rather, it is in the affirmative moment, found in what the parts *can* do together - their 'alterations, amalgamations, penetrations' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 99). Difference is not understood as the effect, rather it is framed as the cause:

"the difference is internal to the Idea; it unfolds as pure movement; creative of a dynamic space and time which corresponds to the Idea." (Deleuze 1994: 24)

This leads to a rejection of representation as a basis for understanding difference. Orientated around identity as 'Sameness', representation cannot be or explain constant and irreducible worldly variations. Meanwhile, creativity appears synonymous with difference, as both are processes of variation through the making of associations. This absolute heterogeneity is found in matter itself which is 'a creativity beyond the creativity that is habitually attributed to culture, language or the mind' (Saldanha 2007: 21). Many and varied materials work together but never form a stable whole. Difference as creativity therefore relates 'not to the production of goods but rather to a precise state of intermingling' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 99). Here, multiple parts must relate but also constantly work through their separation; their productivity distributed through alterations and their performance ongoing but contingent. A result of this is that the division between the product and the process of creativity becomes untenable.

Thus this driving force of difference means that creativity cannot be easily isolated. Such resistance to capture is central to the notion of subjectivity that emerges in Deleuze's philosophy. Deleuze can be positioned alongside a number of 'continental' (Derrida, Foucault) or 'post-continental' (Badiou, Nancy, Ranciere) philosophers involved in a project to conceptualise subjectivity without stability or universality (Mullarkey 2006; James 2012). For Deleuze, to think a subject of any sort is not an attempt to capture a moment of creation (Jeanes 2006). Rather the subject must be thought genetically (as opposed to representationally), through the composition of forces that work on it and in it. The genetic method of approaching the subject foregrounds immanence which 'is in itself: it is not something, to something; it does not depend on an object or belong to a subject' (Deleuze 2001: 26). Immanence is affirmative, everything remains in the process, nothing is lost (Deleuze 1990). The result is that 'one never commences; […] one slips in, enters in the middle' (Deleuze 1988: 123) in a trajectory that distributes the subject such that the 'interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior' (*ibid*. p. 125). Thus, there is an internal multiplicity to the subject that undoes the loose dialectic of the one and the many (Mullarkey 2006). This means the subject might well be framed as a cipher or a sieve through

which dynamic forces struggle to emerge (Grosz 2005). With this philosophy then, neither the subject of creativity nor creativity as subject can be contained. Instead, creativity must be traced immanently through the alignment of forces that mark it as a process without conclusion. The significance of this processual approach to creativity is demonstrated in the following section through the production of a script in Bristol by members of the Southwest Scriptwriters group (SSG).

Scripting

Writing a script paradoxically demonstrates the instability of scripted performance. Far from being a self-evident base, scripts are worked at and altered over time, as one project with SSG shows. SSG are a membership funded group who meet for weekly workshops over three terms in the year. As indicated in chapter one, the group is a mixture of amateur and professional writers working on scripts for radio, theatre and the screen. Three elements can be drawn out of this particular SSG project to demonstrate the process of creativity: the brief, the workshop and the read-through. The brief provides a possibility for the script to emerge. In this case, a number of writers from SSG were asked to write a two-act play based on a photograph they had been given. The plays were to form part of an ACE funded project of new writing called 'Picture This' produced by Theatre West and held at the Alma Tavern pub theatre in the Clifton area of Bristol. The construction of a brief was essential to Theatre West's successful bid for funding; it demonstrated what was unique about their project. However, the brief predominantly worked to orientate creativity, rather than as an absolute starting point. Writers were always influenced by more than the immediate brief, often drawing on recurring themes in their work. So the photograph, combined with the Alma Tavern's black box theatre, provided a means of constraining these recurring ideas. In this context, scripts appeared firstly in isolation, composed in the solitary 'studio' of the writer. Eventually though, they had to make a public appearance. This was where the SSG weekly workshop came in as a relatively stable space for practice and experiment. The workshop was used by writers in SSG to obtain

feedback. In these events, scripts were read out by members of the group and followed by time for discussion and feedback.

The responses were generally not prescriptive; tending to pick out areas where improvements might be made rather than trying to rewrite the piece. However, this was not an easy process, as the SSG artistic director states:

"*We tend to think of it from the point of view of giving feedback rather than receiving it and the fact is the feedback we give isn't a neatly packaged statement of what you must give to your script in order to improve it. What it is is a kind of amorphous mass of conflicting opinions and then the writer needs to decide what is valuable and which parts they are going to choose to accept.*"

The difficulty was compounded by the workshop often serving as the first airing for a script that had previously only been seen by the writer's eyes. So whilst the aim was to take any comments away from the workshop to improve the script, it was often difficult to treat such criticism objectively:

"*When you begin to write, if you've written something you think, 'great, I've written something.' You're very very reluctant to do anything with it because that's kind of like undoing that work you've done. So a real beginner's trait is wanting to kind of protect what he or she has written and not be open to rewriting at all which if you succeed in getting a script anywhere in television or film then you've probably got to let go of that very quickly.*"

Eventually, generally through the necessity of a deadline, tinkering with the script gave way to submission for read-throughs. For 'Picture This', 45 scripts were whittled down to nine through this activity. The read-throughs involved the sight-reading of scripts by actors to a small audience, including the Theatre West producers. Of the final nine scripts commissioned from this process, five went into production, whilst the remaining four were performed as 'rehearsed-readings'. The latter is a more advanced form of read-through in which actors and a director have worked with a script for a limited duration prior to performance. These could also be termed 'script-in-hand' performances, where a play is walked and talked through to make a performance space. One purpose of these rehearsed readings was to showcase new writing, to provide an opportunity for its partial production and reception. It was a way to render the activity of theatre-making visible and

significant in Bristol. The read-through was thus rarely an end point, where a finalised script was put into motion. Rather it was both an exposure of the script to and intervention through the practice of performance. Read-throughs showed up the apparent impossibility of finishing the script on the page, with its enactment always producing alterations and interpretations. For one production, in discussions between the writer, the director and the cast, the script was changed numerous times during the read-through and even during later rehearsals.

So scripting demonstrates how creative practice is unstable and ongoing, despite the apparent necessity for conclusions or outcomes. Whilst scripts were produced, these were adapted on the page and then built on and opened out in performance. This exposure of the script as process rather than product is at odds with the way 'scripting' has been applied in the (critical) creative cities literature. Here, 'script' has been used as a short-hand to denote the lack of focus in urban policy on the contingent process of creativity (Rantisi & Leslie 2006; Catungal *et al* 2009). The creative cities 'script' is seen as dogma that 'has found, constituted and enrolled a widened civic audience for projects of new-age revitalisation […], determining what must be done, with whom, how and where' (Peck 2005: 742). One implication of this dogmatic stance is the production of an apparently neutral position. Florida himself claims to be without politics (Peck 2010) and urban creativity is held as a panacea for growth without wider social implications, despite the problems highlighted above (and see Pratt 2011). A result of this is that the use of social and cultural theory to frame the occurrence of urban creativity has been limited. This is partly because the focus on the product over the process of creativity can avoid throwing up the problem of how making occurs unevenly. Yet theory, such as the writings of Deleuze, can attune us to the *sense* of an event or object, to the conditions of its occurrence. Thus, the prevailing sense of creativity as process at work in Deleuze's philosophy can be used to reflect on how urban creative practice happens. So whilst scripts can work as a figure for stability, the 'final' product in Bristol indicates that this only occurs through the instability of the ongoing process of creative development. The people and things involved in making would continue to be so after the play was finished.

Beyond an attention to process, Deleuze also provides a sense of the distributed and hence often fragile nature of creative practice apparent in scripting in Bristol. Emerging here is a micropolitics to creativity. This does not oppose the centralised to the segmentary but recognises their entanglement: classes are 'fashioned from masses' and 'masses are constantly flowing or leaking from classes' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 235). So as well as temporal, this distribution of creativity also occurs spatially. The scripting process happened across a number of different sites: the writing room, the workshop and the theatre, to name a few. Despite sticking to certain places and times more than others, creativity is not completely fixed. This has implications for how the taking place of creative practice is conceptualised. Rather than directed through a centralised point, scripting occurred immanently via a series of connected acts. Creativity thus takes place through movements, acts of traversing and extending that are indeterminate both 'in what caused them and in terms of the processes they give rise to' (Due 2007: 134). These acts are deterritorialising, they undo existing arrangements. In their most fundamental form, Deleuze terms such deterritorialising forces 'lines of flight'. These are radically immanent movements that effect a 'destratification' from the inside: the productivity of creativity is also destructive. These constructive and destructive movements are suggestive of two characteristics of the spaces of creativity. One is that creative practice constitutes the sites for its occurrence. The other is that these are necessarily temporary sites, subject to reconfigurations and erasures. The next section will outline how such a processual or relational understanding of the spaces of creativity has begun to emerge in recent work on creative cities.

Placing creativity beyond the cluster

Far from focusing on the process of creativity, the stabilisation of creativity through the representational device of clusters has been a key frame for understanding its urban geography. The concept builds upon traditional economic theories (eg Marshall (1920)) that have stressed the importance of agglomeration and spatial concentration for production. From this economic perspective, creativity occurs 'where many specialised but complimentary individuals and

organisations come together in constant interchange, thus forming functional as well as spatial clusters of interrelated activities' (Scott 2001). The emphasis is on product specialisation through the concentration of know-how and technology (Amin and Cohendet 2004); an interest that has long been typical to studies of the geography of economic activity (Fujita *et al* 1999; Porter 2002). Cities (and especially their 'centres') emerge as the nexus for such interactions, with the creative worker thriving through the density of contact networks, codified knowledge and cultural amenities (Bassett *et al* 2002; Hitters and Richards 2002; Florida 2002b; Wojan *et al* 2007). As such, this placing of creativity in the city is primarily a geography of production. It focuses on the location of firms, organisations and agencies of creativity, in order to understand how this contributes to competitive advantage (Malmberg and Power 2005; Staber 2011; Zheng 2011). In particular, the dynamics of the cluster are thought to be productive through processes of socialisation that preserve local knowledge (Gibson and Kong 2005). The conceptual move here is that the demand for innovation requires forms of tacit learning that are necessarily social. This still even today necessitates proximity because 'new communications technologies can insufficiently capture the full range of human expression' (Pratt 2000: 429). Such an attention to production means there has been limited focus on how creativity develops through the connection with cultural consumption in the city (Comunian 2011).

However, this understanding of the geography of urban creativity has been challenged for two related reasons. The first takes issue with the way clusters locate creativity. From a cultural economies perspective, the adequacy of clusters as a descriptor for the location of creativity has been questioned. Partly under contention has been the definition of clusters, which as Martin and Sunley (2003: 11) argue is 'highly and ridiculously elastic' meaning that the term can provide only limited conceptual insight into the geography of creativity (Coe and Johns 2004). A corollary of this ambiguity is that the 'success' of creative clusters is difficult to judge, particularly in relation to assessing their effectiveness in policy (Porter and Barber 2007, Vang and Chaminade 2007; Mizzau and Montanari 2008).

As a result of these inadequacies, work on the cultural economy has 'begun to move beyond assessments of clustering and agglomeration' to focus on the 'operation and evolution of creative fields' (Reimer 2009: 678). More nuanced approaches to the relationships between creative clusters have emerged. These stress the significance of networks not just in connecting but also in transforming clusters through the specificities of creative practice (Van Heur 2009; Lin 2013). The importance of the 'intangible elements' (Comunian 2011: 1174) of a city's infrastructure means that the complexity and transience of the cultural economy is increasingly foregrounded. In particular, the significance of temporary proximity for creativity has become a focus (Bathelt and Graf 2008; Ramírez-Pasillas 2010; Klein 2011). In this vein Power and Jansson (2008: 425) argue that the circulatory production of temporary spaces such as trade fairs aids creative activity through iterations over time that may 'generate unexpected, unpredictable and chaotic outcomes.' Highlighting the importance of unstable spaces for creativity indicates a need to consider how such instability occurs.

This points to the second problem with foregrounding the clustering and agglomeration of creativity in the city. The focus on clusters has insufficiently attended to creative practice. One issue is that by fixing creativity to a particular site, it risks becoming a spatially delimited activity that occurs as a 'black box' at certain urban locations. This not only means that interrogation of the conditions of creativity can be sidestepped, but also that further insight into the cultures of creative practice can avoided (Gibson 2003). However, when this black box of creativity has been opened, there tends to be an overemphasis on practices that involve face-to-face contact and ties of reciprocity and trust (Amin and Cohendet 2004). A spatial closeness underpins these connections that does not do justice to the complex taking place of urban creative practice. Amin and Cohendet (2004: 93) argue that innovation occurs through spatial practices that 'bring into close proximity sites that might appear distant and unconnected on a linear plane.' In this understanding, the importance of spatial concentration is diminished. Instead, relational distance becomes significant (Ibert 2010). The 'city-as-territory' (Jacobs 2012) is no longer the model for the location of creativity. Instead, creativity

unfolds with urban space, juxtaposing disruptive events with predictable rhythms of activity, atmosphere and sociability (McFarlane 2011). Such a framing means that urban creative practice is bound up in both the production and consumption of innovative products that can extend into the 'vernacular' and even the 'tasteless' (Warren and Gibson 2011; Edensor and Millington 2012).

Thus, the interest in the spatial practices of creativity has also led to a decentring of the social. For some, this has meant considering the importance of isolation and complex socialities for the development of learning and innovation (Sjöholm 2013). For others, the suggestion is that creativity occurs through but is not exhausted by human activity. Amin and Roberts (2008: 29) argue that practices of knowledge production and exchange are reliant on an 'elaborate texture of organisational, technological and informational intermediaries'. People are part of, but not the sum total, of such a coming-together. This has implications for the framing of creativity in the city. The role of human interaction in urban creativity is not denied, but stressed are other forms of relation involved in the placing of urban creative practice. Creativity occurs at 'the intersection of numerous trajectories of all kinds' (Massey and Rose cited in Mar and Anderson 2012: 331), that necessitate a focus on 'the porosity of given localities to receive 'flows' from elsewhere' (Mar and Anderson 2012: 332). Therefore, the focus on creative practice moves away from the cluster to point to the importance of process at work in Deleuze. That is, the role of creativity in the complex, emergent and more-than-human constitution of urban space becomes apparent. A key dynamic of such a move is an understanding of urban creativity as performative: creative practices are involved in producing space for and through their occurrence. This mutual instability of place and creativity raises the question of how creative practices occur and are sustained in the city. Curating is put forward as a frame for this activity through the lens of the volatility of creativity in Bristol.

Urban Curating

That creativity occurs in Bristol is seemingly self-evident. In a list reminiscent of Florida's indicators for urban economic growth, BCC states that among the unique

assets of the city are its creativity, unorthodoxy and innovativeness. Creative industries make up 12% of all Bristol businesses (Invest in Bristol 2013) and the city is a 'desirable place for young talent to live and work' (Bristol Cultural Development Partnership 2011: n.p). One reason for this is the competitive advantage accrued through the support of both commercial and subsidised activity in the cultural economy. BCC maintains that 'culture is economically significant but not only of financial value' (ibid.). The city has a thriving arts scene that spans flagship cultural institutions such as BOV and the Arnolfini contemporary arts gallery, to the more transient spaces of performance art and community theatre. This sits alongside the digital and media creativity attracted by the presence of Aardman Animations and the BBC, illustrating the ongoing importance of place in new media production (Pratt 2002). Yet, despite the presence of such innovative people and organisations, there is increasing recognition that sustaining creativity in the city is not easy. The sense that creative practice is unstable, that the taking place of creativity in Bristol must be worked at, is becoming ever more apparent. As public-sector bodies significant in maintaining Bristol's creativity undergo substantial budget cuts, it has become more important to consider the conditions of possibility for creativity. The reduced capacity of BCC means that rather than providing direct funding, it is looking to 'determine the environment in which creativity functions' (Bristol Cultural Development Partnership 2011: n.p.) This means taking on a commissioning role that enables teams of organisations to work together. Thus, there is increasing reason to attend to the nuanced ways in which creativity occurs in the city. Attempts to generate creativity in Bristol do not simply involve enacting a 'script' (Lewis and Donald 2010). Instead, maintaining creativity is understood as a complex and mutable process.

That the taking place of creativity in the city is unstable is not a novel revelation. Not only are cultural and creative products often immaterial and transitory (Mansvelt 2010; Power 2010), but the conditions of their production are recognised to be volatile. Creative workers, far from being a class of their own (Markusen 2006), are united with other sectors of what has been termed the 'precariat' in the requirement that their labour be flexible and insecure (Gill and Pratt 2008;

Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Leslie and Catungal 2012; Mould *et al* 2013). Such literature has opened up important questions concerning the problems of instability for 'creatives', particularly their potential for exploitation (Holt and Lapenta 2010; Pratt 2011). However, the concern here is neither with the products nor the people of creativity, but rather with the spatial practices. Of interest are the ways in which urban creative practices work with or through instability. If creativity has no stable site but is distributed across the city, performatively producing location, then this raises the question of how such creative practices are sustained. In discussing the complex formation of 'site' in the collaborative practices of a community-based arts project, Mar and Anderson (2012) introduce the notion of 'urban curating'. They suggest that urban curating describes the distribution of creativity through 'emergent and collaborative engagements where new relations are being crafted' (2012: 332). Significant in their approach is the positioning of practices before location. Curating details the spatial practices through which creativity locates in the city. In this sense, Mar and Anderson (*ibid.*) suggest that curating is an 'interspatial' activity because it emphasises the 'translocational dynamics' of creativity. That is, curating does not fix creativity to place, but rather involves creativity in contingent gatherings of institutions, people, and representations that are mixed with ways of working and making.

So for Mar and Anderson, curating becomes the act of producing relations that generate spaces for and through creativity. The concept can be pushed a little further however. Curation may be developed through its three functions: selecting, arranging and sustaining. These functions provide a greater depth of understanding of the always emergent order to the taking place of creativity in the city. Such application of curation to practices outside of museums and galleries is increasingly prevalent in popular culture. The term has been used to describe the co-ordination of (often inter-disciplinary) arts events, especially festivals. For example, in his conceptualisation of the curation of music performance, Reynolds (2011) takes curating out of the gallery but retains its tie to a (meta-)authorship. The return to the received functions of curation outlined above is helpful for the understanding of the term developed through Bristol's spoken word scene. Taking

selecting first, this points to the particular ways creativity unfolds in the city. In the curation of creativity, existing elements are selectively put into play. Certain aspects of the city become productive for and through creative practice at different times. For spoken word, picked up (and put down) are organisations, locations, people and technologies (among other things). Arranging then concerns how these elements are connected; how their position is given through their relations. This involves a reworking of existing arrangements through which new constellations emerge. With spoken word, this might mean assembling a space for performance in a venue. As a result, the spaces for creativity can be understood to materialise through practice. Rather than only being positioned, creative activity is also positioning; it produces the city through its connections. This means that the production and consumption of urban creativity cannot always be easily separated. The collaborations that apparently produce creativity are also building upon, or consuming, prior configurations.

Sustaining then refers to the future orientation that must come with these two prior activities. The particular relations of creativity are contingent; attempts to connect objects, people and technologies do not always succeed. Equally, if such connections are made, they are often fragile, susceptible to fracture through changes in direction. Therefore, for the emergence of creativity through selecting and arranging, there must be a register of concern. This guardianship is a relation that is attuned to the continuity of engagement, a fostering of the ongoing possibility of connections. Central to this is 'cultivating care for the task in hand, and working at the problem over and over again' (Amin 2012: 57). That is, the relations that constitute creative practice necessitate investment; they require an intensity of involvement over time. The result is an appearance of stability. So, the occurrence of performance poetry at particular locations in the city obscures the ongoing accumulation of arrangements that produces such spaces. However, these resonances with the traditional meanings of curating are accompanied by a key departure from such a definition. Urban curating is a distributed process in that it takes place without a single institutional or artistic director. Instead, urban curation describes the processes that enable the seeming order of creativity to

occur alongside the continued driving force of incoherences. The 'organisation' of these disparities is contingent, the 'rules of the process are immanent rules generated by the process itself' (Lazzarato *et al* 2009: 10). Such pragmatic curating of creativity exists 'neither in complete discrepancy nor in interiority' (*ibid.*) with the institution, rather curation becomes producer and (re)assembler of spatial and temporal elements. Spoken word in Bristol provides a means for exploring such curation; it focuses on the performance rather than the script to conceptualise the occurrence of creativity in the city.

Performance poetry and the city

Whilst curation attunes us to the process of urban creativity that exceeds the cluster; it says little about the specific cultural forms through which this takes place. As such a form, spoken word might be contrasted with other cultural approaches to literature that have tended to focus on representations. Nonetheless, it can be situated within a broader trajectory of scholarship that has connected the creativity of writing with the city. There is a long history of framing the condition of Western cities through written forms. Writing has functioned as a medium for apprehending urban experience, often blurring the lines between fact and fiction. In the nineteenth century, 'factual' accounts of British cities sought to illustrate the realities of urban life in order to bring about social change (Engels 1993 [1845]). Later, more literary approaches also aimed to give an understanding of urban experience. In Benjamin's (2002) work on the Paris arcades in the 1920s and 1930s, writing functioned as a means to present the disjointed and juxtaposed sense of the city. Meanwhile, for De Certeau (1984), writing or literary forms such as stories and poems operated primarily as conceptual rather than material frames for urban experience. He suggested that walking in the city provides a 'space of enunciation' (p. 98), a 'long poem' (p. 101) that operates through a particular rhetoric. This connection between walking and writing, between traversing the city and inscribing it, also emerges in contemporary psychogeography (Sinclair 2003; Self, 2007). Building on the artistic and playful interventions of the Letterists and Situationists (Pinder 2005; 2008), such work uses writing to open up a disruptive experience of being in the city (as highlighted in chapter two).

Distinct from these literary pairings of writing and the city are seemingly more fictional accounts (Daniels and Rycroft 1993; Brosseau 1995; Johnson 1999). 'Seemingly' because in some cases such accounts have been held to produce an equivalent sense of the lived experience of city spaces (Johnson 2000; Kearns 2005; Crang 2008).

Binding these diverse threads connecting writing and the city is an interest in how literature might (re)present the urban. The focus on performance poetry is distinct from these approaches in that it considers writing as an urban practice. The emphasis shifts from what writing says about the city to how writing is performed through urban space. Spoken word lends itself to the study of such literary urban practice for a couple of reasons. Firstly, as a performance it necessitates the creation of social spaces in ways that other, more isolated, forms of writing might not. This results in the emergence of scenes associated with particular cities, such as the San Francisco Renaissance (Davidson 1991), and the 'Liverpool poets' (Wade 1999). Secondly and related to this, the spaces of performance for poetry are often made by those engaged in other forms of literary (and artistic) practice. For example, the New York City based counter-cultural movements of the 'Harlem Renaissance' and the 'Beat poets' were played out through spaces for the performance of spoken word among other forms (Hrebeniak 2006; Sanders 2007). In these movements and elsewhere, the performance of poetry can produce an environment for both the sharing of and creation through other artistic forms. Therefore, performance poetry provides a lens on how creative practice takes place in the city. It opens up the spaces made through creative practice, framing them as unstable, receptive to the opportunity for alternative activity. Yet despite this potential, the presence of performance poetry tends to be neglected in the midst of more visible, audible or commodifiable urban creative practices.

One reason for this is its diverse form which makes it difficult to define. Loosely, performance poetry can be understood as more than the written word. It translates the act of assembling words across sensible registers: from the visual to

the oral/aural. It is a live playing out of the transformations in the sound and meaning of words that take place through vernacular use. Every performance involves the deliverance of a poem, but with differing degrees of embodied enactment. The 'value' or purpose of spoken word is predominantly intrinsic, lying in the sharing of poetry between poet and audience. However, poetry slams - in which poets compete against each other to receive the highest score for their performance - are also a popular format. These difficulties of definition also contribute its divisiveness as an art form. Whilst some argue that spoken word democratises poetry, taking it 'out of the classroom and placing it firmly in the hands of the people' (Woods 2008: 19), others suggest it contributes to the death of poetry as the poems 'are not strong enough to be published in even minor poetry journals' (Thompson 2013: n.p.). Therefore the emphasis on sound and performance can be considered to diminish the quality of poetry as an art form. However, this also means that interactions between music and poetry are common in spoken word, further blurring its boundaries. The emergence of 'Dub poetry' in the UK in the 1970s (with figures such as Linton Kwesi Johnson), followed by the popularity of a number of Black performance poets in Britain the 1980s (such as Jean Binta Breeze, Benjamin Zephaniah and Grace Nichols), drew on music either overtly through its use in performance, or by incorporating particular rhythms into the sound of poems (Dawson 2007).

So spoken word takes place in but also constitutes the city. It is one example of the unfolding and mixing of cultural forms from elsewhere, that give rise to localised variations (Gilroy 1993; Chambers 2008). Equally, the event of performance itself creates a particular bounded space within which attachments are made through embodied experience and experiment (McCormack 2010). Spoken word can construct a shared, communal atmosphere in which the audience participates instead of passively consuming the performance (Wright 2000). The spaces of creation opened up through Bristol's spoken word scene will be illustrated using ethnographic and interview material collected over my time in Bristol. I regularly attended open mic nights, getting to know, and sometimes more formally interview, those who participated. The embedded nature of ethnographic

research enabled close study of the processes of the scene and the capacity to track any changes in these rhythms. Equally, the interviews flagged up the personal and/or ephemeral spaces that were often inaccessible to the researcher but were nonetheless vital to the subsistence of spoken word. Using this data the occurrence of performance poetry will be developed following the three processes of curation outlined above. Selecting is taken first to consider how the spaces for performance poetry are chosen in the city. It will illustrate how the venues for spoken word draw on diverse and multifunctional elements of the city to become locations for performance. This will be followed by a discussion of processes of arranging. The venues for spoken word are shown to be relationally constituted, both extending into the city and withdrawing from it to construct a distinctive space for performance. Finally, the way the scene is sustained will be explored through the simultaneous intensity and malleability of involvement. This highlights the requirement to work at and through both the regular spaces for spoken word in Bristol, and those that lie beyond them.

Selecting

Spoken word is a particularly unstable form of creative practice in that it has ‘no place’. It occurs without clearly institutionalised and permanent venues such as the theatres and concert halls of drama and music performance. Instead it is necessary for venues to be selected from existing urban locations. As such, hosting performance poetry is never the primary function of the sites where it takes place. This is demonstrated by the 'bread and butter' of the spoken word scene in Bristol: the fortnightly or monthly 'open mic’ (meaning ‘open microphone’) nights. At any one time there were at least six different open mics operating per month. The majority of these took place in bars and cafes, with some venues holding more than one regular night. Examples of this were the Left Bank bar and the Arts House café; two venues in Stokes Croft. This is an area that independently defines itself as Bristol’s ‘cultural quarter’ (a performative enactment of the creative cluster) and is home to a number of studios and performance venues. Stokes Croft’s thriving arts scene contributed to the presence of two regular nights at both the Left Bank and the Arts House. The main exception to this type of venue was the

Central Library, which hosted a day time open mic called ‘Can Openers’. However, because of competing usage of space in the library, this event subsequently moved to the cafe at BOV, the city’s oldest theatre. As well as open mic nights, there were also a number of more institutionally programmed spoken word events. One example of this was 'Word of Mouth', a twice monthly event with normally two or three invited performers at both a pub and the studio space of BOV. Another was the biannual Bristol Poetry Festival which was supported by ACE to programme performances at the Arnolfini amongst other venues.

These processes of selection were creative; they necessarily involved making a site a venue for performance poetry. This involved the often undisclosed practices of ‘hosting a night’, which included a variety of activities from promotion to procuring audio-visual equipment, as well as MCing the event itself. Such nights, whilst generally associated with a specific location, often had a name different from that of the venue. For example, the two nights at the Left Bank, were called ‘Shh...! It’s Sunday’ and ‘Poetry Pulpit’. One of the MCs of ‘Poetry Pulpit’ describes the necessity to make the two nights distinct:

“I think there was definitely a little bit of anxiety, is it just going to become a replica? Is it going to confuse people? So, yeah, we did at the time set out to have a different format and do it slightly differently. […] I would say that Shh is probably like a little bit cooler, it’s just got more a soulful vibe to it, whereas Poetry Pulpit is run a little bit like a sinking ship [laughs] most of the time. It’s very unorganised and booze-fuelled normally and so I guess some people are more drawn to that and some people would really rather there would be more of a format, a bit more music and you know, a bit more urban poetry and they would probably stay clear of Poetry Pulpit just because it is such a comical affair, just the way its run, like not consciously at all.”

So these names gave an identity to the night that worked to obscure its ongoing and unstable maintenance through the distributed practices of curating. That is, the host was neither wholly the physical venue nor the person or people ‘MCing’ the event. Therefore, the name served as a particular language internal to and partially stabilising the scene beyond its lack of owned physical infrastructure: regularly performing poets would always refer to the night rather than the venue. However, the corollary of this was the ephemerality of any given night. The

existence of a night largely relied on both permission from the venue and the ongoing work of the MC(s). Consequently, when the hosts decided, for whatever reason, to stop putting on the night, this would either result in its termination or in continuation under a different guise. Thus the sites of performance are examples of how creativity is highly situated (Pratt 2011). Place is important but discontinuous for spoken word, meaning that processes of selection must be repeated in order to uphold creative practices. Sometimes such continuation would involve moving to a different location in the city. On other occasions the venue would stay the same but the name of the night was changed.

In both instances of selective continuation there was an alteration of creative space. Whether held at the same or at a different location, there was a change to the 'feel' of the night. This indicates the complex interplay between the material and immaterial in the production of venues for performance poetry. A night, as a central time-space for spoken word, involved the build-up and dissipation of practical rhythms through the unfolding of multiple activities. These engendered 'tactile […] forms of community' (Malbon 1999: 26) that were bound up in the constitution of particular atmospheres (as mentioned in chapter two). These atmospheres leant the spaces of performance elements of instability and fixity, being both material and ideal, definite and indefinite (Anderson 2009). On the one hand, nights were contingent upon a fragile assemblage of sounds, senses, people and technologies. On the other hand, the site for performance and the way the night was run by the MC(s) leant it some permanence. As such, processes of selection could never completely legislate for spoken word: the occurrence of creativity was dependent on the contingent coming together of a variety of elements (Leslie and Rantisi, 2011). The spaces of creativity remained unstable despite the efforts of those involved, including MCs. Not only would MCs bring their own personality and temporal structure to the night, but crucially they would choose particular poets and friends to attend. To establish a night - to give it some stability - it was necessary to have a good network of possible contributors and people to fill the room. This fear of failure due to poor attendance was an ongoing worry, even for an established night. As nights were un-ticketed, there was no way

of knowing in advance who would turn up. Consequently, on a number of occasions nights consisted of fewer than 10 people. These instabilities of selection were closely linked to the overall lack of effective institutional infrastructure for performance poetry in Bristol.

Institutions have an important but complex role in urban creativity (Comunian *et al* 2013). This complexity was played out in Bristol, despite the city's lack of physical institutions to oversee the development of spoken word. Just as the unstable space-time of nights meant that spoken word events were only ever partially contained by the physical venue, the infrastructures for poetry that did exist were unable to manage the scope and scale of the scene. There were three poetry organisations that had differing breadths and depths of operation in Bristol. Poetry Can had the biggest presence, with offices located in the city centre and both BCC and ACE funding for their work. Their purpose was to support and promote poetry in Bristol, but also across the whole of the southwest of England. The two other organisations were national networks that covered Bristol, but no more so than other regions or cities. So, given their various ties to other locations, the focus of each of these three organisations was never entirely on the development of poetry in Bristol. This inadequate attention was often two way though. While some poets tapped into and used these networks to their advantage, others ignored them entirely. This was demonstrated by the regular discontinuities between the listing of events on the Poetry Can website and the variety of happenings on the scene. The result was a degree of input and organsation of the scene by these three networks, but an inability to completely delimit the breadth of activities. The organisations contributed to but did not oversee the practices enabling performance poetry in the city. So, in the case of Bristol's spoken word scene the selection of creative spaces was a necessity because there was a lack of existing institutional or corporate venues. The broader point is that locating creative practice in the city is not self-evident; the spaces of creativity are not constant (Power and Jansson 2008). Instead, the taking place of creativity involves processes of selection that can temporarily position creative practice. This is

closely tied to the productive activity of arrangement that is taken up in the following section.

Arranging

The act of arranging involves both positioning of and in the spaces of creativity. Once marked, the fragile space-times of spoken word are maintained through the ongoing reworking of existing arrangements. In part this involves how the taking place of performance poetry relates to other occurrences in the city. One element of this is a consideration of the temporal positioning of events; insuring that they do not clash. The assortment of nights that take place in Bristol fall on a variety of days of the week and into different fortnightly or monthly cycles. Here arrangement manifested in the establishment of a Facebook group to share information on scheduling by those involved in the scene. Another aspect of how nights relate is through practices that extend their presence; making them apparent beyond the event in particular ways. Publicity was a key component of this. Some nights advertised through flyers that were placed at choice locations such as cafes, studios and other spoken word nights. Most also had a presence on the internet that would sometimes include photos and commentary of a night, making it linger beyond the performance. One night even provided recordings of their slot for all performers. Such practices simultaneously built up the distinctiveness of the night whilst also trying to broaden its reach. This relational positioning of nights indicates how creativity occurs through arrangement that distributes as well as concentrates creative practice (Mar and Anderson, 2010). Whilst creativity requires an intensity of engagement, this does not occur in isolation from other practices. Rather, arrangement demonstrates how the spaces of creativity are partially stabilised through their connections with what occurs beyond them.

Arrangement also concerns the positioning of elements that more overtly constitute the placing of creativity. For spoken word, this meant the organisation of the space for performance. The majority of venues did not have a formal stage area, and therefore most poetry nights operated without rigorous division between

the audience and performers. Whilst there was a cessation of the usual activities at the venue (such as drinking and chatting), this occurred by degree. Disruptions to performance often continued to occur. Therefore, throughout the night the performance space was under constant negotiation, upheld through a variety of acts of arranging. These processes of reworking defied any easy separation between the production and consumption of urban creativity (Communian 2011). This was exemplified by the unstable positioning of the audience through the ongoing rearrangement of the 'forth wall', both spatially and temporally. In terms of space, open mic nights necessitated movements from the audience to the performance area and vice-versa. The performance area itself was often make-shift, not a stage as such, but generally denoted as separate from the audience through forms of decoration and most obviously because it was the location of the microphone. Poets would be part of the audience until they were called upon by the MC to perform. Therefore, over the course of a single night, a high volume of movement was necessary between the stage and the audience. The result being that the performers were the audience, but not all the audience were performers.

However, a degree of stability was needed for spoken word to take place; performance required a few footholds to get off the ground. A clear window of performance was necessary for each poet: something that marked their particular moment and location in the stage area as distinct from their position in the audience. The role of the MC was vital to this aspect of arrangement. They not only supplied some sort of introduction for the poet, but also provided the opportunity for the crowd to applaud before the performance. This collective act of applause served two functions. It afforded the performer time to come up to the stage while the crowd was clapping. In addition, it served to maintain the night as a time for performance – without the applause conversation was likely to break out. However, the MCs were not in complete control of this arrangement. For one thing, the poets themselves would often attempt to demarcate their own performance once they were in the stage area. This would often involve a 'storying' of their poem; offering a small anecdote that related to the content or creation of the poem in some way. Equally, interruptions to the performance space

were always possible. It remained a necessarily precarious zone, susceptible to the occasional drunken wanderer. Thus, whilst some stability was afforded through acts of arrangement, these were immanent processes without a single director (Mar and Anderson, 2012). The performance space, a key site for the occurrence of creativity, was itself contingent and performative.

These contingencies of arrangement were also found in the timings of the event. The uncertain space of performance was exaggerated by the blurring of audience and performers through the general adherence to what some called ‘poets’ time’. Although measured at the discretion of the individual poet, poets’ time was generally taken to mean that time passed more slowly - or that poets are late. Practically, this meant that both performers and audience members turned up at the roughly the same time. Open mic nights were specifically run on this basis, with performers generally asked to sign up on arrival to perform. However, the abnormality of this time-keeping was exposed during the limited number of occasions performance poetry was placed in more institutionalised settings. One example of this was the collaboration between Word of Mouth and BOV. This ticketed night was held in the studio of BOV and was programmed in advance. The MC of Word of Mouth described the initial mismatch between his and BOVs’ perceptions regarding the requirements to put on the event. To arrange what was needed for the event (just a microphone), BOV called the MC weeks in advance. The theatre also felt that the MC and the poets should arrive several hours before the event was due to start. Through indicating the typical requirements for theatre performance, this example highlights the relative lack of advance organisation for most events on the spoken word scene. This exposes the tension at work in arrangement between positioning and position, between movement and fixity. Arrangement does not mean that creativity either requires or defies order. Instead, creativity occurs through a negotiation of these seemingly opposing conditions. Thus, the spaces of creativity constituted through such dynamic practices require sustaining.

Sustaining

The spaces of spoken word were sustained through an intensity of engagement over time. This is a form of guardianship in that it seeks to 'take care' of the scene through a focused involvement in the practices that enable creativity. A strong collaborative ethos existed that worked with and around the spoken word scene's various instabilities. Rather than Do-It-Yourself (DIY), Bain and McLean (2012: 7) suggest that 'Do-It-Ourselves' (DIO) is more appropriate to describe the role of 'collective, rather than individual, creative self-sufficiency'. Such a framing is salient for the maintenance of performance poetry in Bristol, which involved collaborative practices of creative existence. One element of this was the snowballing of opportunities from already existing spaces as described by this poet:

"So things like Vanessa and Jeremy's new night is because they've met from other nights and they've said, well why don't we do our own night? So it's expanded that way. And then, it's kind of self-perpetuating in that respect because poets meet each other and say let's do our own night, and they go off and do that and then other poets will meet at that."

This fueled the cultivation of an inclusive ethos, in particular through the fostering of new talent by establishing a night solely for young poets. The night took place early evening in a café; an alcohol-free location and therefore accessible for under 18s. Another aspect of this collaborative organisation was the high volume of unpaid labour that went into producing events. Most nights were run on funds from donations only, meaning that almost all poets performed at and hosted nights for free. Therefore the promotion of and production for a night took place on a shoe-string budget. This illustrates the problem and potential at the heart of precarious labour (eg Ridout and Schneider 2012). Whilst exploitative, working in these unstable conditions also enables a different kind of creative production that exceeded the demands of the market. This tendency towards 'commons' rather than 'competition' meant that labour for individual nights was shared through collaboration with others on the scene. Plugs for other events were given at open mics, and MCs would often attend alternative nights to their own. Through such collaborative and collective practice, the spaces of creativity are sustained despite the often precarious position of the individual artists (Novy and Colomb 2012).

The paradox here is that the intensity of involvement of poets simultaneously required a degree of adaptability. The balance of creativity between order and disorder means that concentrated investment in creative practice is not enough. Sustaining creativity also demands the capacity to cope with changes in direction, resistance and ambiguity (Sennett 2008). This meant working with and through the unstable occupation of being a poet. Poets displayed an adaptability that fed and resulted from the mixing of poetry with other (creative) forms. As is typical for many artists (Bain 2005), few poets were able to make a living from spoken word, and for many it was a secondary form of creativity. Poetry featured for some as an almost recreational activity, time spent away from the day job. Others situated it within a broader portfolio of creative activities, such as writing, graphic design and music. In these cases, performance poetry was often a practice that people came to later, sometimes to enhance other forms of artistic endeavour. So although poets were committed to spoken word, this commitment was always positioned within a wider range of creative practices and other obligations. Such necessary malleability of poets was reflected in their performance practices. Open mic nights would almost always intersperse poetry with other forms of arts practice, including cabaret, projections and most commonly music. The latter involved poets who used musical accompaniments, but also musicians by themselves as open mic performers or in feature slots. Thus spoken word was sustained not only by intense involvement in poetry, but simultaneously through the mixing of performance with multiple creative pursuits.

This meant extending creative practice beyond the poetry scene, including the temporary sites of festivals. As Power and Jansson (2008) suggest in relation to trade fairs, such impermanent gatherings aid the reproduction and renewal of innovation. They provide an opportunity for creative practitioners to share knowledge and to better understand their competitors. If collaboration rather than competition better describes the creative development of poetry, the temporary spaces of festivals were nonetheless important for sustaining the scene. The poets performed at some literature specific festivals, but many were predominantly

orientated around music. At these events, spoken word existed as an annex to the main attractions, contributing to the eclectic ambience of the festival. So whilst poets were able to reach a wider audience through (often paid) performance on the festival circuit in and beyond Bristol, this again necessitated a degree of malleability. The appearance was not on their terms: poets had to accept a place on the margins of an event centred primarily on another artistic form in order to be included at all. However, the festivals served an important function beyond the opportunity to perform. They were vital sites for networking and collaboration between poets. In particular, the opportunity to see and meet performers from elsewhere enabled MCs from Bristol to book new poets for feature slots at their nights. Such exchanges demonstrate that the vitality of Bristol scene cannot be understood as endogenous. Feature poets from elsewhere helped to sustain its momentum. Instead of stabilisation and clustering, sustaining performance poetry therefore involved taking advantage of temporary spaces for creative exchange that occurred beyond the regular sites of activity.

So, central to sustaining creative practice was the foregrounding of process (Sjöholm 2013). That is, there was no clear end product or goal for spoken word. Rather, engagement revolved around how spaces for performance could continue, without any apparent culminating position, such as publication or institutionalisation. This is illustrated by the way poets operated in relation to the latter. Poets worked through rather than in or with institutions. One example of this is the collaboration between a poet and BOV. The theatre's artistic development programme supported a poet to create a solo show which toured venues in the south of England. The relationship was mutually beneficial: the poet was given funds and the theatre's name to create and promote a show, and BOV extended their artistic repertoire with minimal investment. Nevertheless, to have this relationship with BOV, the poet was required to broaden their practice by working in different artistic mediums such as stop-motion animation. Therefore, although BOV required the poet to make compromises, he predominantly worked through the institution; using its benefits to devise a show largely independently of it. Collaboration was not directed from the top, but rather the project took shape

through the interaction of the players involved. The aim was not for the poet to become ‘institutionalised’; it was to use institutional support to set a particular project in train. Such institutional linkages are openings rather than closures for spoken word. They are examples of the sustainment of creativity through practices of fostering connections and the adaptive but often repetitive capacities that go with them (Amin 2012). This is a process that is orientated towards the future; it involves ambitious activity without obvious object.

Synthesising

Urban creativity occurs as a process that defies fixity; it cannot be completely contained in people, objects or places. Making always happens in some excess of human understanding and practice. Yet despite this evasive nature, creativity continues to be propounded as an apparently manageably resource for urban economic growth and regeneration. Such scholarship and policy has rendered the discourse of creativity visible over its practice. To counter this, the practice of scripting has been used to illustrate how creativity is a process that is ongoing and distributed, despite the apparent necessity for organisation and constraint. The sense of creativity at work in Deleuze’s philosophy emphasises how this is an affirmative yet fragile process that has implications for the relationship between creativity and the city. The cluster has been central to the geography of urban creativity, serving to concentrate and stabilise the occurrence of innovative activity. However, creativity is increasingly understood as unstable, reliant on temporary spaces and transitory networks for its occurrence. There is a mutual inconstancy to place and creativity that is performative. In short, creative practices are involved in producing space for and through their occurrence. This resistance of creativity to absolute positioning in the city has been framed through three practices of urban curation that unfold through Bristol’s performance poetry scene. Selecting has emphasised that the places for creativity do not pre-exist; they are put into play at choice moments. Arranging shows how such sites function through practices of positioning, which constitute them as both concentrations and distributions of urban space. To uphold creativity in these conditions requires sustaining; a simultaneous intensity and malleability of involvement. These

processes combine to enable creativity to take place with and through instability. This is because curation is an immanent act of organisation in which there is neither a single director nor end point.

The concept of curation works to highlight the culture of creativity in the city. This is the practices of positioning involved in urban creativity, how it takes place through the foundational tension between order and disorder. Curation offers one means for thinking through the apparent stability of creativity at particular sites despite the continued movements of its practice. As such, curation is not intended to detract from the significance of space for the occurrence of creativity. Instead, the aim is to do the opposite through a consideration of the place and placing of the elements of creative practice that often seem to elude capture. Rather than fixing creativity through clusters, curation begins with volatility and dispersal. This tension between order and disorder in the creative city is important. Creative practices can be both deliberate and fragile; they are often intentional occurrences that fail to always come off. Whether in the making of a product for economic value or in the bond of community, there is an ambiguity to the occurrence of creativity. Therefore, any form of creativity involves 'a commitment to process' (Bain and McLean 2012: 2) that necessarily entails changing relations with and of place. This requires 'an appreciation of the uncertainty' (*ibid.*) that often accompanies such open-endedness. Whilst potentially exploitative, such precarity simultaneously provides alternative possibilities for creative practice, beyond the constraints of economic growth. As hinted at in the chapter, spoken word may be conceived as 'anti-market', with its emphasis on transience seemingly avoiding the lures of commodification. So beyond its economic purpose, the creative city has the potential to both shape and break attachments; producing new forms of togetherness whilst letting go of others. The making of and in the city is a continual challenge that requires labour, sometimes for and sometimes at the expense of a collective orientation. In the face of such an uncertain future, belonging necessitates moving with and reworking old ties. These processes of circulation are turned to in the next chapter.

4. Circulating

"The idea of positionality begins by subtracting movement from the picture. This catches the body in a cultural freeze-frame. The point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zero point of stasis" (Massumi 2002: 7)

That race is a construction; that it must be put together, is received wisdom in social and cultural geography and beyond. Race is made through intentional and unintentional creative acts. On the one hand, this construction means that race bears no weight; it is empty and so cannot serve to determine positions in society. On the other hand, exposing construction reinforces the categories it aims to upset; more or less clearly defining race as a position within a discursive field. Therefore, construction renders race simultaneously absent and present; both weakening and strengthening its significance. Yet, building on the previous chapter, if creativity is an ongoing process then the construction of race need not be a fixed presence or absence. Instead, the matter and meaning of race can be understood through processes of circulation. This chapter takes the circulations of Britain's imperial history as creative forces for managing in and disrupting the attachments of race in the present. It considers how movement can act as a frame to unsettle conservative approaches to the past in Britain while simultaneously implying the ongoing significance of imperial connections. As the policy of living with difference, multiculturalism seems to work against such movement, fixing belongings. However, two differing critical approaches to multiculturalism are outlined, one historical/textual, the other contemporary/ethnographic. Combined, these put race into circulation as created and creative in three ways: through diasporia, through postcolonial migration and through creolisation. Bristol, with its contentious history as a port to the Atlantic, provides a site for these circulations through the performance practices of those who identify as African-Caribbean. These acts demonstrate how cultural practices should not be understood to subsume race; to remove it from debates on living with difference. Instead, an attunement to how racial attachments are both intentionally and unintentionally performed demonstrates the complex inherence of the past in the construction of the apparent 'racelessness' of the present.

Multiculturalism: fixed or fluid?

A cultural fix

Multiculturalism provides one frame for exploring the ongoing yet uncertain weight of race in Britain. The term points towards cultural tradition rather than imperial legacy as the lens for imagining and explaining racial 'difference'. Multiculturalism can be defined both normatively and positively. Normative definitions (eg Modood 2013) have tended to outline multiculturalism as a framework for government, particularly focusing on the challenges for conceptualising citizenship. Positive definitions (Pitcher 2009) have focused on the empirical realities of living in multicultural societies. These distinctions in definition are significant given the variety of claims that multiculturalism has failed (Wolf 2005; Fukyama 2005). Most notably in Britain, the Chair of the (then) Commission for Racial Equality in 2004 stated that multiculturalism was out-dated because 'it made a fetish of difference rather than encouraging minorities to be truly British' (Modood 2013: 11). In this assimilationist view, the goal of multiculturalism should be to integrate 'migrants' into British society. But the attempts to pursue multiculturalism are thought to have achieved the opposite: increased fragmentation. For those who adhere to a more positive definition, multiculturalism has not so obviously failed to produce results. The term remains helpful for describing the everyday conditions in many (urban) areas of Britain. Here, multiculturalism describes the way 'in which cultural difference has become fully acknowledged as a constant part of society' (Pitcher 2009: 2). However, although subscribers to these positive definitions do not dismiss the difficult successes of multicultural conditions, they (and others) have found failures in the mobilisation of multiculturalism as a discourse of government. In particular, there is a problematic relationship between multiculturalism and race.

At issue is the way multiculturalism enacts a simultaneous perpetuation and erasure of race through the elevation of 'culture'. This cultural fix is seen to be a central technology in producing the 'racelessness' (Goldberg 2002) of contemporary states. Goldberg argues that the state has always been implicitly racialised, and crucially that the obfuscation of race continues into the present.

Whereas in the past the state was produced through a naturalised positioning of race, it is now racialised through a historicising lens. In the former, the apparent validity of hierarchies of biological difference normalised (and therefore made unremarkable) racialised relationships between citizens and the state. With the latter, the awareness of the dangerous presence of race in the past produces the invisibility of racialised processes in the construction and government of contemporary states. In this light, it is contended that multiculturalism becomes a means for 'redrawing and laundering' contemporary racisms (Lentin and Titley 2011: 8). Claims to be 'post-race' sit alongside ongoing racialised practices of government (Glassman 2010; Lentin 2012; Nayak 2012). As Kapoor (2011) puts it, public and institutional discourse has increasingly seen an erasure of racial terms that is accompanied by the silent and ambiguous use of race through policies of policing and securitisation. Thus, through the obfuscation of race, multiculturalism (re)produces, rather than transcends, dominant structures of racial privilege (Hage 1998; Pitcher 2009). To avoid any charge of racism, race becomes conflated with culture (Mills 2007), and thus positioned as a target for government. So as in chapter three, culture is subject to governance but this time for social rather than economic purposes. Culture here is problematically fixed, it is a determining factor with 'a tangible essence that defines it and then explains politics as a consequence of that essence' (Mandami in Brown 2006: 19). The result is that 'culture' (and race, ethnicity and religion that it comes to encompass) is a hindrance that needs to be managed or resolved. This 'culturalisation of politics' (Brown 2006: 22) through liberal doctrine means that culture must be contained so that it becomes optional for individuals, rather than their governing force.

However, beyond multiculturalism, cultural inflection has resulted in a more fluid racial politics. As Jackson and Jacobs (1996) noted, anti-racism had its own cultural turn. Here though, culture was not a fixed essence, it was something to be collectively produced, contested and dissected. This is what Hall (1992) framed as a politics *of* representation that focused on both the content and production of culture. This was situated as contrary to a politics *through* representation in which

Black British people had sought recognition, often by mobilising more-or-less essentialised identities. This risked retaining the weight given to race as biological determinant. Instead, the process of making representations was shown to be vital to racial politics both by upsetting essentialisms and also through empowering those who made such depictions. Gilroy's (1993) imagination of the 'Black Atlantic' added particular nuance to these debates. The Black Atlantic highlighted types of connectedness and identification across space and time that 'cannot be confined within the borders of the nation state' (Gilroy 1993: 85). Culture was central to this argument. He demonstrated how both the 'tradition' privileged by 'essentialists' and the 'notional pluralism' preferred by 'anti-essentialists' was problematic (*ibid*. p. 100). Gilroy argued that the 'syncretic complexity of Black expressive cultures' illustrated that 'the opposition between these rigid perspectives has become an obstacle to critical theorising' (*ibid*. p. 101). By showing culture as 'a *changing* rather than an unchanging same', breaks and interruptions in transmission become important, 'working a powerful magic of alterity in order to trigger repeatedly the perception of absolute identity' (*ibid*. emphasis in original). Whilst Gilroy's account has been challenged on the basis of the limited breadth of evidence (particularly concerning gender and class (eg Oboe and Scacchi 2008)), his 'anti-anti-essentialism' is nonetheless powerful in its illustration of the complex work of culture in Black political subjectivities. This understanding of culture as situated and material; yet transversal and changing; points to the significance of spatial and temporal trajectories in developing critical approaches to the relationship between race and multiculturalism.

Contentious pasts

One such critical approach is orientated around the 'context supplied by imperial and colonial history' (Gilroy 2004: 2). The connections between race and empire have been well detailed elsewhere (eg Rutherford 1997; Levine 2003; Anderson 2007). Important here is the role of historical movements of things, people and ideas in shaping contemporary positionings of race. These circulations are necessarily 'agonistic', they disrupt the present in uneasy and often irresolvable ways. The thrust of this approach is the contention that these pasts are

inadequately present; their contemporary appearances are deficient in some way. For Gilroy (2004) these histories emerge in the present as a 'postimperial melancholia'. In this pathology the unsettling elements of Britain's history are 'diminished, denied, and then if possible, actively forgotten' (*ibid*. p. 98). Yet, paradoxically this results in a 'morbid fixation with the fluctuating substance of national culture and identity' (Gilroy 2004: 13). Such selective remembering of colonial pasts has also been noted elsewhere, for example in Australia where it manifests through the 'strange but definite ways' in which 'Aboriginal people and things appear in and disappear from public culture' (Healy 2008: 10). So the past is present, but in such a way that denies its controversy, feeding the structuring absence of race in the contemporary politics of living with difference. In Britain, the result is that non-White citizens are rendered postcolonial subjects through the prescriptions 'of colour blind liberal-democratic politics, symbolically, though not materially, denuded of racism' (Hesse 2011: 47). Thus, the obfuscation of the complex imperial histories and geographies of contemporary Britishness supports the elimination of overt race politics from normative multiculturalism. Gilroy's diagnosis of this condition as one of melancholia may seem a little to all-encompassing; it does not leave space for the nuanced manners in which the past might manifest in Britain's present. Nevertheless, he rightly draws attention to the malign ways in which imperial histories emerge to reinforce rather than challenge the unity of national identity.

This inability to develop a (practical) politics is exemplary of a broader issue concerning the substance of postcolonialism in Britain. This is the problem of 'the relationship between theories of an era and the practices which constitute that era' (Shohat 1992: 101). Whilst 'any mapping of the postcolonial is a problematic and contradictory project' (Sidaway 2000: 292), in Britain this undertaking seems to have taken a theoretical rather than a practical orientation. One origin for these discursive underpinnings lies in the role of literary theory in popularising postcolonialism (eg Ashcroft 1989). The result is that the term is associated with textual methodologies and philosophical deliberations that seemingly avoid contemporary (civic) political struggles. The focus on the colonial past, especially

on its imaginative geographies, has sought to challenge or 'provincialise' Eurocentric perspectives (Blaut 1993; Lester 1998; Blunt 1999; Chakrabarty 2000). However, whilst this discursive focus has privileged 'Other' voices, it has also legitimised 'a renewed interest in the texts of the West rather than their displacement' (Nash 2002: 220). Specifically charging 'what passes for postcolonial theory in British geography', Gilmartin and Berg (2007: 120) suggest that this method may destabilise older forms of colonial epistemologies but it simultaneously reproduces new forms. This occurs through two processes: firstly by the creation of a hierarchy that privileges the faraway over the nearby. The implication here is that the (post)colonial happens elsewhere, seemingly disconnected from Britain. Secondly, through the authoritative manner in which those in the Anglophone 'core' define the important debates and central positions of 'Geography'. Therefore, the past is controlled and categorised in these postcolonial appearances, partitioned in such a way that it does not impinge on the present.

Thus there is a mismatch between the theoretical acknowledgement of imperial pasts and the policies and practices constituting Britain's 'multicultural' present. Once again, the presence of the past can result in a perpetuation of the inequalities its appearance sets out to challenge. This time this occurs not through a resort to nationalisms, as in Gilroy's 'melancholia', but rather through a sort of 'political inertia'. A postcolonial or postimperial lens seems to have little to offer understandings of Britain's present, perhaps because of 'the apparent impossibility of defining a specific political and ethical project to deal with material problems' (McEwan 2003: 341). There have been attempts to rectify this imbalance. One element of this, which arguably retains a textual focus, has been postcolonial urban theory (eg Driver and Gilbert 1998; King 1999). Short (2012: 139) states that such work focuses on colonial inscriptions of cities, and the re-inscriptions that follow decolonisation. A key question here is the degree of influence empire has (or should have) for understanding contemporary cities (Yeoh 2001). Jacobs (1996: 10) has argued cogently for attending to the subtle inherence of imperialism in the urban landscape, that exists in the 'opaque intersections

between representational practices, the built form' and a range of other axes of power. Another approach to 'grounding' postcolonial debates has been to consider the (neo-)colonial present. Whilst some explore contemporary imperial practices of the 'West' elsewhere (Gregory 2004), others consider the continuation of colonialism closer to home through debates over land and indigeneity (Head 2000; Cameron 2008). These tend to have a clearer political project: postcolonialism deals overtly with the ways colonialism is ongoing in countries such as Australia and Canada. Despite these presents in Britain and beyond, the overarching sense is of an inability to connect 'critiques of discourse and representation to the lived experiences of postcoloniality' (McEwan 2003: 341). The matter and meaning of empire in contemporary Britain is insufficiently attended to, in particular how the imperial past inheres in everyday geographies of multiculturalism.

Complex presents

The second critical approach to race and multiculturalism considers the everyday circulations through which race appears in multicultural states. This finds its political drive not in the legacies of empire, but rather in the need for pragmatic approaches to living with difference. Such a focus on the present, with an eye to the future rather than to the past, became particularly apparent after the 2001 'race riots' in Bradford and Oldham (Amin 2002). This temporal orientation also echoes that of the normative multicultural project that is concerned with planning ahead, with maintaining the relationship between citizens and the state. The result has been a growing interest in geographies of everyday multiculture that focus on the experiences of 'cultural complexity' (Noble 2009: 50). Such scholarship has examined the ways cohabitation unfolds in urban settings, often through the lens of the encounter (Lim 2010; Wilson 2013; Swanton 2010; Noble 2011). Rather than stabilising such explorations around a politics of identity, there has been a shift in vocabulary towards terms like 'cosmopolitanism' and 'conviviality' (Mitchell 2007; Noble 2009; Wilson 2011). Key is the emphasis on the processes of living together in everyday spaces such as the street; the bus; or the school. A relational approach is taken to both 'community' and 'place'. This works against the tying of a particular (racialised) group to territory (Keith and Cross

1993), to stress the instability of both community and place. Importantly though, this instability is primarily framed materially, as opposed to being a socio-cultural construction.

This material inflection can be understood as a different form of response to the absent presence of a politics of race in multiculturalism. Whilst Gilroy advocates that the weight of race be brought to bear through imperial history, geographies of everyday multiculture focus on contemporary interactions and exchange. Such interest in everyday experiences can be understood as a response to overly discursive framings of anti-racist politics. As Jackson and Jacobs (1996) argue, the cultural emphasis offered by 'postcolonial' perspectives was attractive in the face of seemingly out-dated forms of anti-racist politics. However, focusing on textual representations to demonstrate the volatility of identities has been unable to get at the complex registers through which difference is negotiated day-to-day. Therefore, the aim in centring on encounter has been to highlight the 'labour of community' (Noble 2009: 53); the fragile material production and contestation of the bonds of belonging. A question that arises from such processes concerns the matter and meaning of racial attachment. Community is not fixed and race is unstable, yet both the discursive and material configuration of belonging remain racialised. An approach to race is required that does justice to its ongoing weight but allows for its instability. Processual approaches to race attempt to do this (Saldanha 2007). Here, race is understood as what phenotypically differentiated bodies do through movements, clusterings and encounters (Slocum 2008; Swanton 2010; Nayak 2010). A central concept is that race is emergent – it occurs – beyond the singular individual. The difference of bodies, their affective capacities, is only experienced through what they do (Saldanha 2010). Race is understood as viscose, both fluid and sticky, with the possibility for flows and accumulation (Saldanha 2006).

Such an approach to race is well suited to the practical interactions of everyday multiculture. Yet, this particular material return to race raises certain challenges.

To suggest that the significance of race in part depends upon phenotypical differences can risk biological determinism. It is worth outlining why Saldanha's conception of race is a challenge to both such determinism but also to 'colour-blindness'. Phenotype, in this case skin colour, does not determine in advance particular traits or groupings. Instead, in processes of mixing, it becomes an important element in what makes particular bodies 'stick' together. So the significance of phenotype is not stable, it emerges by being worked at and through. This conceptualisation therefore recognises that race, as a sensible embodied formation, remains significant. It does not try to deny the ongoing role of race in society, as in 'post-race' claims. However, this raises another challenge in terms of the explanatory capacities of such a processual approach to race. There is a difficulty in understanding how bodies aggregate into 'politically ambivalent configurations of racial formation' (Saldanha 2010: 2422). This is the question of how the emergence of race through individual embodied practices relates to race as a collective category in society. A corollary of this is a concern over the degree to which processual understandings of race can or should be able to provide an explanatory framework for social inequalities. So conceiving of race as processual enables a focus on the matter of everyday multiculture, but struggles to provide a politics to attend to the role of race in material disparities in society.

Outlined above have been two critical approaches to the ambivalent weight of race in the discourse and practice of multiculturalism. Both argue that race remains important to the conceptualisation and the practice of multiculturalism, despite claims that (the significance of) race has been erased. Both orientate their argument around a 'material' basis to race. However, the understanding of 'material' differs between the two. In one, material refers to the historical conditions through which race has taken shape and shifted, agonistically appearing in the present. An attunement to the ongoing movements of the imperial past is significant. The method involves interpretation and analysis of representations, often texts, to detail the circulations of race. In the other, material equates to the experiential processes through which bodies circulate and interact. Important are the everyday spaces of living together with difference. The method here is often

ethnographic. In both cases, race is to some extent simultaneously created and creative. In the first argument, the significance of race is constructed through past movements, occurrences and injustices. Yet these circulations of race also give rise to new cultural practices. In the second argument, the weight of race is primarily given in the moment, and this amassing can then influence other forms. There is potential for dialogue between these two approaches, specifically here through the conscious performances of culture. These provide an opportunity to explore how 'postcolonial' configurations might manifest in the processual unfolding of race. Rather than simply 'performing' multiculturalism through the appearance of diversity, such creative cultural practices can shed light on the difficult work of reconciling the weight of the past in present arrangements of race. The chapter returns to Bristol to consider these creative entanglements of race and culture through performance.

Bristol: slavery obscured

Bristol's history can be characterised by circulation. Briefly the major slaving port in 18th century England (then second to Liverpool (Brown 2005)), the city grew through wealth largely generated by the transatlantic trade. Bristol's location meant that it was well suited for both Atlantic exports and imports, one of the most influential being tobacco. This past entanglement with slavery makes an appearance in the present. It plays a part in contemporary framings of Bristol's 'diversity' as described on *the majesty of smallness* blog in the post 'Bristol, give me a signal' (Schraer 2013):

"*It's a city that still bears the scrawled markings of its slave trade past: the main shopping centre named after a dynasty of slave owners, the harbourside thrumming with a history that echoes of sugar, tobacco and human traffic in the shadow of the old Fry's chocolate factory, and you can stroll down Black Boy Hill as it slopes gently into Whiteladies Road (I'm not being facetious, that's an actual geographical fact). But you've taken your historic mould and twisted and writhed from it in happy contortions.*"

Yet, Bristol is not especially ethnically diverse in comparison to other cities in the UK. According to the 2011 census Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents make up 13.5% of the population, significantly fewer than Birmingham (42%); London

(40%) and Manchester (33%). But despite the statistics, there is a 'sense' of diversity in the city that seems to come from its location amidst the 'White monotony' of southwest England but also from a certain humour-inflected openness to eclecticism. This is aptly described on the same blog:

"*Bristol. City of squats whose graffiti is a more famous landmark than its cathedral, who has a bakery called Bread an' Ting, a home-ware store called Happytat and a stationery shop called Paper Gangsta; even your shop names have a sense of humour.*"

This (sense of) cultural diversity is an important element of the city's creative potential. For example, in the 2010 BCC report *Raising Bristol's cultural ambition*, some of the key qualities of the city are that it is unorthodox, edgy and multicultural. However, whilst Bristol's history might play a part in the mixing of cultural forms in the city, not all would agree with this positive interpretation of the past. The implications of Bristol's history remain up for debate.

Far from being the basis of 'diversity' there is a suggestion that this past has led to divisions. The city's role in the 18th century slave trade continues to cause controversy. The 2008 *Report of the Abolition 200 Steering group* states that this means '(for some) being Black in Bristol' requires walking 'around with a lot of baggage' (p. 11). This weight of race has been framed territorially in the Comedia 2006 report *Intercultural city study: making the most of diversity*. The report suggests that because 80% of BMEs live in the defined inner city area, Bristol as a whole seems very White. This perception of isolated neighbourhoods is repeated elsewhere in the report: one respondent describes Bristol as a 'collection of villages which may be side by side but which maintain strong individual identities' (p. 23). Yet such separation retains an ambivalence as some 'people seem to identify areas of Bristol with high BME populations (St Paul's, Montpelier, Easton) as the ones that are the most successful in terms of diversity but other people seem to think these are "no go areas"' (p. 19). The 2008 *Report of the Abolition 200 steering group* can be perceived as one attempt to understand and resolve these fragmentations. The report details the lessons learnt from activities that took place in Bristol in 2007 to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the

slave trade. One result of this review was the establishment of the Bristol Legacy Commission in 2008 to continue the changes made to services for BME residents in the city. However, the Commission was closed in April 2012, due to reductions in funding.

Emerging from the report were two different positionings concerning the importance of race. One was the ongoing sense of marginalisation and disenfranchisement: 'in Bristol it is felt that there is a shared establishment reluctance to fully represent all communities at all levels' (p. 14). This inequality occurs both in terms of service provision for BME residents, but also regarding artistic and cultural provision. There has long been a perception that the slave trade, as part of both African-Caribbean and Bristolian history, has been inadequately represented in the city. In fact, as the Abolition 200 report details, there is a sense that the city's legacy in the transatlantic trade is celebrated. One example of such positive commemoration occurred in the attempt to name a new shopping centre 'Merchant's Quarter'. The protests against this resulted in the eventual name of 'Cabot Circus', after the 15th century Italian explorer who sailed from Bristol. However, despite these perceptions, there has been 'official' recognition of the trade in the city. The abolition bicentenary brought the establishment of the Bristol Black Archives Project to protect and promote the history of African-Caribbean people in the city. In 1999, Bristol's City Museum and Art Gallery staged its first major exhibition on the slave trade, and in 2002 the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum opened, only to close in 2008. The Bristol Industrial Museum, that re-opened as M-Shed (a Bristol people's museum) in 2011, also has an exhibition. These presences of and contests over commemoration mean that some resent those who continue to bring up Bristol's past. Dresser (2007: 4) provides one example of this through a newspaper correspondence on the suggested removal of a statue of Edward Colston, a Bristol merchant directly involved the slave trade: 'here we go again! Once more the activist diggers of the past want to make us feel guilty for the actions of our forefathers.'

The other positioning discernible in the report suggested that race was not as significant to a sense of belonging in the city. The report stated that 'reaching people through traditional community buildings to consult, promote and involve them has got harder' (p. 14). This was because 'African-Caribbean communities have progressively moved away from the traditional inner city areas in recent years' (*ibid.*). Here there is a sense of mixing rather than fragmentation. The ties of racialised communities to specific territories are no longer as strong, certainly not in the case of those of Caribbean heritage. These two different positions are indicative of the uncertain weight of race in the city: it is historically important yet the strength of its bonds in social ties are weakening. On the one hand, there is a sense that the past needs to be recognised, on the other it seems that some have moved beyond it. In part, at issue is what recognition of the past does. It might involve keeping up cultural traditions or a degree of acknowledgement for wrongs perpetrated. Yet where this goes, how this alters the present, can be unclear. Equally, despite the necessity to expose the dominance of Whiteness in the British imaginary, there is a difficulty in connecting with the fragmentations of Black history. For as Hesse (2000) states, Black Britishness has been articulated through spaces of narrative displacement and interruptions to historiographic continuity. To explore some of the complex circulations of the matter and meaning of being 'Black' in Bristol, the theatre of the Malcom X Elders, Breathing Fire and Edson Burton (with City Chameleon) will be focused upon. All identifying as Black or of African-Caribbean heritage, the performance practices of these groups shed light on the ways in which race and national belonging in multicultural society continue to be entwined. Through the framings of diaspora, (post)colonialism and creolisation, these cultural acts show how racialised pasts are often an agonistically played out in the multicultural present.

Diasporic Connections

One way of framing the presence of race in everyday multiculture is through diaspora. In Bristol, past movements were productive of racialised attachments in the present for both Breathing Fire and the Malcom X Elders. These diasporic movements tied race to nation through implicit connections between Blackness

and belonging to a more-or-less defined spatio-temporal elsewhere. As Clifford (1997: 269, emphasis in original) argued 'the empowering paradox of diaspora is that dwelling *here* assumes a solidarity and connection *there*. But *there* is not necessarily a single place or an exclusivist nation.' The relative stability of the (material and/or imaginative) connection between here and there differs, as the practices of Breathing Fire and the Malcom X Elders will demonstrate. However, such uncertainty around the definitions of 'here' and 'there' is not universal across approaches to diaspora. King and Christou (2010: 105) outline two distinct strands, the former stressing stability and the latter fluidity. There is the:

'traditional approach which considers diaspora as a descriptive-analytical category mainly concerned with specifying criteria for inclusion (cf. Safron 1991; Cohen 1997) and the more 'postmodern' use of the term as a socio-cultural condition (Hall 1990; Brah 1996).'

In a similar diagnosis, Mavroudi (2007) contends that diasporas have been conceptualised as either 'bounded' or 'unbounded'. The former tends to portray space, place and identity as stable categories, whilst the latter focuses on 'the margins, the unfixed spaces in-between states and subject positions' (Mitchell 1997: 536). This unbounded diaspora is 'seen as disrupting the homogeneity of the nation-state' (Mavroudi 2007: 472), but the concept has also been criticised for not taking material processes into account. Cultural geographies of diaspora have attempted to rectify this imbalance by focusing on 'material and imaginative connections between people and a territorial identity' (Blunt 2007: 689; Tolia-Kelly 2004).

The Black or African diaspora lends itself to the more open 'cultural' framings. There is no obvious descriptive-analytical category, no clear 'nation-state' from which Africans are dispersed. Instead, there is a 'history of transportation, slavery and migration' which necessitates the imaginary coherence of 'Africa as the name of the missing term' (Hall 1990: 224). Such an orientation was the foundation of the Pan-African movement (Griffith 1975), and also served as the basis for 'Negritude' as a rejection of French colonial racism (Cesaire, 1972). Both these movements, along with Black Power in the USA, all broadly involved an essential

notion of Blackness that would contest what West (1990: 26) calls 'the modern Black diaspora problematic of invisibility and namelessness'. However, whilst this assertion of Blackness through an African origin story was a mode of anti-racist political mobilisation; it risked accepting White conventions in two ways. On the one hand it struck a moralistic tone that drew on the similarities between Black people and White people in order to gain White acceptance. This paradoxical necessity yet inability to meet the norms of White society mirrors that detailed in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). On the other, the evocation of roots tends towards homogenisation, erasing difference between Black people. The inadequacies of these responses led to a recognition of the many differences that constitute what it means to be Black. That Stuart Hall (and to some extent Paul Gilroy) have been expounders of this perspective cannot be divorced from their location in Britain. The UK did not have anything like the Black Power or Civil Rights movements in the USA. Rather, the dominant narrative of Black presence in the UK takes the Windrush as its origin, a step removed from the history of enslavement that marks race relations in the USA.

The anti-racist movement in the UK took shape 'along the lines of multicultural solidarity, rather than reactive ethnic specificity as in the USA' (Dawson 2007: 53). Whilst in the 1970s groups like the 'Race Today Collective', associated with the Notting Hill Carnival, promoted African-Caribbean identity, they were staking a claim to Black Britishness, not purely renewing their ties with elsewhere. Thus, in Gilroy's Black Atlantic and in Hall's cultural identity as continuity and rupture, there is a sense of the circulations that both constitute and disrupt Black experience. Any conceptions of a Black diaspora must therefore exceed binary oppositions of 'past/present', 'them/us'. Instead, 'at different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited' (Hall 1990: 228). This is a similar reading to that of Brah's (1996) 'diasporic space' as a situated and historically contingent phenomenon. It is in this contingency of diaspora that creativity is important. The making of cultural practices through which diaspora is partly materialised can repeat, rework and break away from connections with an elsewhere. Such cultural practices, though always creative to the extent they are

new expressions, can seemingly simply rehearse the past. However, the practices that produce these cultural forms, together with the ways in which they are played out, suggest that this is not the case. Breathing Fire and the Malcom X Elders demonstrate that whilst notions of an origin or home are played upon through their performance practices, these are always complexly bound up with other ties.

The sense of diaspora was configured differently by the two groups, reflecting those more open and closed framings of the term. For the Elders there was a clear perception of 'home' as tied to the Caribbean, particularly Jamaica. For Breathing Fire, the group was constituted on the basis of its members being women of African-Caribbean heritage. The Elders intentionally performed this identification with a shared home through their storytelling, more on which will be explored in the following section. Suffice to say that the group was encouraged by the two community arts workers from ACTA (a Bristolian community arts organisation) to share stories about their experiences of arriving in UK in the 1950s and 1960s to form the basis of a play. In these stories, they would often, although not always, refer to Jamaica (or Barbados or Guyana) as 'home'. The Elders needed little prompting to tell these stories as they enjoyed sharing them. There was also a sense that the group worked 'naturally' well together, although the community arts worker did not explicitly suggest that this is a result of their shared (sense) of origin:

"we won't create a script for this show, I'm not going to sit down and write down word for word what they've done. We'll leave the performances improvised and very loose because they've got the experience to do that and they're all very good natural performers."

So the Elders' performances use their shared 'home' as the conditions for improvisation. These may be stories of origin but they are creatively reworked in each retelling. Despite this creativity, a relatively stable model of diaspora is produced. Through their performances, the dimensions of here and there were given some solidity by the Elder's reiteration of the division between 'home' and 'England'.

In contrast, the content of Breathing Fire's performances did not necessarily plot any coordinates of diaspora. Breathing Fire performed 'playback theatre' in which audience members tells stories which are then recounted back by the performers through one of a series of improvised forms. As such, the stories told in performance could be relatively mundane, but tended to be themed around a particular topic, such as 'summertime stories' or 'Black History Month'. In light of this absence of stable subject matter, the processes of rehearsing and performing created spaces in which connections with an elsewhere might be able to materialise. Unlike the Elders, who rehearsed once a week, Breathing Fire got together around once or twice a month. These rehearsals took place on either a Friday evening or during the day on Saturdays. All the women had multiple commitments, including work and families, around which they had to fit rehearsals. The Saturday rehearsals ran from around 10am until 4pm and were a productive yet social affair. This social aspect was both the function and the product of the group being constituted by women sharing 'African-Caribbean' heritage. Establishing the group drew on existing networks of Black women in Bristol and specifically sought to create a space for Black women to get together and perform. The rehearsals were a time for sharing stories (both as friends and to practice improvisations) but also food and advice. As Carter (2005: 58) argues, these 'banal and ordinary activities' are vital for creating a sense of diasporic connection. In this regard the performances of Breathing Fire were by no means the main site for the construction of diasporic connection. Being a woman of African-Caribbean heritage was played out through the processes around performance, the sharing in each other's lives as the one performer I interviewed recounts (subsequent quotes are also from the same performer):

"*That's one of the things that has been amazing in Breathing Fire, is how we practise is we just do loads of playback, we never get bored of it, it's great, different stories, it's just like gossip, you just gossip all night about yourselves and we do playback. And we have, when you keep doing that you just get to know each other really really well and really, you know, just love, I can't explain, I can't talk about it any other way, particularly the older members. You really sort of develop a really strong connection in just seeing people's lives week after week.*"

This was facilitated by the way rehearsals often felt like a 'safe' space, not just for experimentation with performance but to let down your guard.

Drawing on Goffman's vocabulary of stages, instead of being the 'front', performance becomes the opportunity to retire to the 'back'. So this performer contrasted being at rehearsal with her professional life:

"Breathing Fire is amazingly for me, a sort of, a kind of opportunity for authenticity so in, you know, I don't agree that there is a real authenticity but I'm just calling it that because I can't think of anything else to call it. But you know, to be in my, in a rehearsal and just say exactly what I'm feeling, exactly, not having to translate it into middle class [laughs] and things like that which are actually, is, you know, sometimes it is and sometimes I do censor what I say in rehearsals, you know I'm not saying I never do but sometimes it's just really nice, that thing."

This 'authenticity' was in contrast to the performer's work environment where she said she felt uncomfortable as a Black woman from a working class background. This sense of a shared Black identity was manifest in the practices of storytelling:

"*For me and my background, that's an aspect of my background, of telling stories about quite mundane things sometimes [laughs] in my family, but you know, telling 'this happened, I went there and this happened, and she said' you know sort of thing and I think probably a lot of African-Caribbean have a sort of similar, and probably African people, similar sort of background. So there is a sort of connection there. And the thing about people listening and being heard which I like very much. And the fact that people really get things out of other people's stories as well you know, they just relate, really relate to somebody's experience of whatever."*

Equally, the embodied element of Breathing Fire's performances was said to be different from White playback groups:

"They notice, they feel we use our bodies quite differently in sort of more…yeah [pause]…not sure how to describe it really. I think there's more courage probably in the way that we use our bodies and I think that's probably to do with, just being, the experience of it. I know in my sort of background I've been dancing since I was really tiny and so at family gatherings people watching me dancing, that's not an issue at all. So I think a lot of Black people have that culture where it's really embedded from a really early time which does affect how you can use your body. Also, Olivia's a dancer, I've done quite a lot of salsa and you know, also just those learnt skills as well. But I think it is all of us. I think we probably use rhythm more and song more and yeah, I think we're probably, um ah that's what people say, we're sort of more vibrant, more alive than other groups."

So Goffman's backstage no longer denotes the absence of performance. Instead it becomes space for the performance of a set of embodied habits considered typical of being Black or African-Caribbean. This was neither easy to articulate nor to locate. Diaspora appears irreducible to lines a on a map, instead manifesting in felt connections that are sedimented through shared practice.

Thus between the Elders and Breathing Fire there were differences in both the coordinates of diaspora and the ways these are traced. The Elders connected with 'home' through the content of their storytelling whilst Breathing Fire created a more amorphous Black space through their rehearsal and performance practices. However, neither of these processes of coordinating diaspora are clear cut. With the Elders, the performance of the Caribbean as 'home' in their stories was challenged by their 'everyday' lives. Many of the women had lived in Britain for over forty years. Although most did still relatively regularly travel back to the Caribbean, they had many ties in Bristol that had little or nothing to do with an 'African-Caribbean community'. For Breathing Fire, sharing African-Caribbean heritage created some connections but it was not all encompassing. Being Black was formative of connections but still relationships have to be worked at. The performer indicates the value of this accumulative process:

"Generally it's going to make it easier, for me it makes it easier if I've rehearsed and practised with somebody and sort of - me and Valery have a magic on stage sometimes and me and Paula, part of that is that I know I can do anything to her [laughs] you know, and it's absolutely fine. In one performance doing a - it was about a feminist encounter group, you know, so I just opened her legs and was just showing her vagina, do you know what I mean? And I can do that with Paula because we've known each other a long time and it's ok, I'm a lesbian, she's a straight woman. With some women in the group I just wouldn't do that because it would feel too rude but I was just like [makes cracking noise], open her legs, 'there look!', kind of thing [laughs], on stage. I know she can take it, and she'll take those kind of risks with me. And if we make a mistake, we'll forgive each other, and you know, we can be, we're quite rough with each other on stage if we need to be. And that comes from the rehearsal, how many rehearsals we've done together. That definitely comes from a lot of time spent playing together, actually a lot of it is playing."

Just as Hall (1990) emphasises the play between similarity and difference, the nominal African-Caribbean connection of the members had no single meaning. There were different interpretations of what it meant to be Black in the group that challenged the 'safety' of this backstage space:

"*I think there can be a real reluctance to think about differences, and to explore differences and difficulties. You know so I'm a Black lesbian within, and I'm the only Black lesbian now, there was another but now she's left. One of the new members I feel is homophobic in quite a scary way and quite assertive. And I've got quite a lot of power in the group, I still find it quite hard to challenge and um…yeah so there's something that I would have liked which we've actually never managed to do which is to actually explore what do we mean by being a Black women's group? You know, explore those issues because you know, I'm not into just, this kind of biological, racialised way of thinking about what…which we can get into I think sometimes…'Black people are like this' and stuff [laughs]. But also to explore all those other differences, of class you know, class I find significant sometimes in the group and definitely sexuality.*"

So in these performance practices race emerges unstably through diasporic connections. Such connections may be with a more-or-less fixed elsewhere: a home or less locatable African-Caribbean imaginary. However, these attachments orientated around a shared sense of (past) displacement neither materialise nor mean in the same way. This has implications for how racial attachments might be figured in relation to Britain.

Postcolonial migrants

If diaspora works uncertainly in the unfolding of race in Britain, so too does the country's imperial history. The migration of many British citizens from the then colonies to the metropole after the Second World War shaped the discourse on race for decades to come. By the 1960s, this appearance of non-White bodies in Britain had triggered sufficient alarm for the Commonwealth Immigrants Act to be passed; one of a series of pieces of legislation that restricted the rights of citizens in the Commonwealth to migrate to the UK. This was also the period of the final 'decline and fall' of the British empire, with many countries gaining independence in the two decades following the Second World War. Thus the presence of an African-Caribbean population in Britain is not clearly 'postcolonial' in the temporal

sense, but it can be understood as a result of empire. Equally, the way in which these Black bodies are constructed or felt as out of place can also be linked to empire. Hesse (2000: 111) terms this 'postcolonial racism', defined as 'the continuing incidence of an unacknowledged White racism in contemporary Western cultures, together with a disavowal of its antecedents.' This results in a difficult situation. On the one hand, there is a need to recognise the imperial histories of inequality that have produced these migrants. On the other, highlighting such histories can risk maintaining the position of these non-White British citizens as 'Other'. The solution to this, according to Gilroy (2004: 165), is to recognise the postcolonial migrant 'as an anachronistic figure bound to the lost imperial past.' This does not mean abandoning the history of migration, but rather making the figure of the migrant 'part of Europe's history rather than its contemporary geography' (*ibid.*). This would undermine the current conflation of 'non-Whiteness as non-Europeanness' that sits alongside 'a discourse of colourblindness that claims not to see racialised difference' (El-Tayeb 2011: 227).

The dilemma that results from this 'postcolonial racism' concerns how to do justice to the role of the past (in constructing race) without producing conservative approaches to the present. Therefore, trying to make sense of race in Britain's postcolonial situation requires problematising what history is; exposing how it is constructed and received. One aspect is the necessity to recognise that there are multiple histories that upset any normative connection between race and nation. Postcolonial theory emphasises a plurality of ways to look at the conditions that led to the present (Chakrabarty 1992), which has also meant recognising the past of those colonised people apparently without history until the colonial encounter (Wolf 1982). This sheds light on the methods used to make history appear seamless and authoritative: the epistemic violence (Spivak 1988) committed in the construction of the past through simultaneous representation and repression. The argument here is that the West has sought to undermine non-Western ways of perceiving of the world through practices of silencing, distorting and generalising that are equally as significant as material repression. Stories of elsewhere are framed as 'facts' or 'events' that have an objectivity beyond their

teller. Ricoeur (1985) argues against this dominant conception of history (in the West), suggesting that the past is both subjectively experienced and interpreted through the temporal articulation of narrative. There cannot be any objective standpoint on history because the historian is always themselves constituted through narrative unfolding. That is, any attempt to understand the experience of time must involve a level of interpretation which is ultimately subjective. The relevance for the construction of histories is that any account of time 'interpellates the teller and the tale with a critical responsibility' (Chambers 2008: 25). Thus, there is a co-producing entanglement of teller and tale in that 'the self does not tell a story, it is told in the telling of a story' (Sheerin 2009: 151). Thus the plurality of histories means that any foundational link between race and nation is thrown into question.

In fact, postcolonial theory indicates how the relationship between race and nation is constantly reworked through open-ended historical processes. That is, constructing the past is always also a construction of subject positions, a creation of a subjectivity. In this sense, the past must be met as 'an active and influential occupation' not 'an archaic residue' (Jacobs 1996: 35). Attempts to conceptualise the temporal experiences of postcolonialism often invoke an agonistic and disruptive engagement with a past which appears as out of time in the present (Patel 2000). To upset such a tendency, there must be an attention to the processes through which we connect with imperial history. Meeting with the past occurs through a certain cultivated mode of receptiveness. This might be equated with Spivak's action of 'unlearning', that aims at exposing and undermining one's own privileged position of learning and knowledge. Such action is a difficult task that involves a balance between recognising the structures that can constitute 'Other' or subaltern positions, but also leaves an openness to alternative locations. It requires an engagement with the past grounded in transformation; postcolonialism as an 'ethico-politics of becoming' (McFarlane 2006: 45) that makes space for 'a condition that does not yet exist, but working nevertheless to bring that about' (McEwan 2003: 349). So there are two key orientations towards history that emerge in a postcolonial frame for racial belonging. One is the

plurality of history, the potential for a variety of narratives that can upset normative stories of race and nation. The other is the open-endedness of historical processes; the notion that there is no pre-determined position for race in relation to nation. Both of these elements contain aspects of struggle that link the particularities of the 'postcolonial condition' in Britain to a politics of anti-racism.

To flesh out what such a postcolonial condition might mean in practice, three forms of attempted relation will be explored through a focus on the Malcom X Elders. Ways of collaborating, articulating and learning emerge as central to a plural and open approach to the past. Yet each of these manners of relating is not without contestation. It is often through such dispute that the uncertain weight of race in the present comes to the fore and may be opened up to negotiation. Taking collaborating to begin with, the Malcom X Elders theatre group functions through connections with both the Malcom X Community Centre (MXC) in St Paul's and ACTA. A number of members of the wider Malcom X Elders Forum started to rehearse when the artistic director of ACTA was

"*approached by a community development worker, I think it was 2005, saying that she had been working with the Malcom X Elders to create a book based on their experiences of moving to England in the 60s. And they had said how they thought it would make a good play, piece of theatre. And the community development worker knew about ACTA's work, knew that was what we did and asked us to a meeting with Gloria, who is the chairperson of the Elder's Forum.*"

This initial meeting resulted in a long running relationship between the Elders and ACTA that continues to produce original pieces of theatre. The necessity for collaboration lies in part in the expertise brought by Neil, the White male artistic director of ACTA, and his co-worker Phillipa, who had family ties to the African-Caribbean community in St Paul's but had subsequently moved outside of Bristol. It also lay in the apparent neutrality of Neil as someone external to the group, who was not entirely privy to its internal politics, and therefore was able to adjudicate and push along the processes of artistic composition and execution. In the past the group had tried to work independently but it had failed, mainly because of internal arguments.

Collaborating therefore showed an openness to new conditions but also the desire to render sensible a particular history. These histories were manifest in more centralised circulations than those of the diasporic connections above. In particular, past and present conflicts were orientated around MXC in St Paul's. The site for the Elders' rehearsals, the centre was built by BCC following the 'race riots' in St Paul's in 1980, and was renamed after Malcom X by those in the area because many felt it had been imposed without adequate consultation (Dresser & Flemming 2008). Thus MXC was both symbolically and practically a site for the making and breaking of forms of attachment and ownership, in this case in the shape of the 'Black' community associated with St Paul's. In the past, and now less frequently, Caribbean music nights were held at MXC, making it something of a party venue, especially at Carnival time. However, there was a great deal of uncertainty around the future of the centre. In part, this was financial: at the 2012 AGM it was stated that reliance on funding through grants was no longer an option; MXC was down to two staff working two days a week. Equally though, there was uncertainty around the community the centre serves in St Paul's. The older African-Caribbean ties were loosening through the generations and meanwhile a Somali support group had started regularly using the venue. The physicality of the centre therefore marked absences, both the historical lack of investment in the African-Caribbean community associated with St Paul's and the contemporary dissolution and reconfiguration of those attachments. Within this context, the collaboration of the Elders with ACTA might be understood as a necessity. ACTA had the institutional capacity to fund and produce an activity associated with the centre, which also worked to reinforce MXC's connections with African-Caribbean migration.

However, this collaboration was not favoured by some in the wider Elders Forum. The Elders Forum met every Monday morning at the Malcom X Centre. The group was composed predominantly but not exclusively of women, many of whom were first generation migrants from the Caribbean. Although they met in St Paul's at MXC, most lived in other areas of Bristol and so had to travel by car to get there.

This additional effort was indicative of the importance of both MXC and St Paul's to the memory and presence of Black struggle in Bristol. The Forum itself was a space for informal discussion amongst this community between and during activities such as knitting and reading, followed by a lunch which is made by the members. The lunch then bled into the rehearsals for the theatre group which began at roughly half past one in a smaller room off the main hall. Whilst this movement initially appeared fairly neutral, over my time with the group it became clear that it was a point of contention. The theatre group consisted of nine women, which was less than half of the regular attendees of the Elders Forum. However, theatre was the only afternoon activity offered for the Elders, as organised by the chair of the Forum (who was a member of the theatre group). This was creating a real and perceived division in the Forum. A large number of the Elders did not want to do (or feel capable of doing) theatre, but there was no alternative afternoon activity. As a result, the majority would leave the centre once lunch was over. The corollary of this routine was the perception by the 'outsiders' that the theatre group was somehow exclusive. So whilst collaboration opened up new possibilities, it was also felt to undermine the strength of existing community ties. So creativity appears as both constructive and destructive, as in chapter three. Through these contests over the use of MXC the uncertain endurance of the colonial past for racial attachments is able to materialise (McEwan 2003).

Collaborating therefore functioned both to undermine and to reinforce the bonds of a shared history as Black Britons. Interruptions and displacements of and as this past were pervasive (Hesse 2000). A second form of relation; articulating; predominantly worked to solidify this sense of shared history. Articulation through the act of telling stories formed the basis of the Elder's shows. In order to make 'We Have Overcome', as mentioned above, the Elders told stories about the period of their migration to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s. The broad narrative ark of the piece was then set out by the main community arts worker, with the agreement of the Elders. This loosely divided the content of the stories that the Elders were to give into two areas: firstly their experiences of leaving the West Indies, and secondly what happened on arrival to England. The telling of stories was often a

combined effort, for although each of the Elders had unique experiences, they tended to share similar problems and responses. So whilst individual anecdotes were told in rehearsals and ended up in the show, many of the stories were combinations of a number of the Elders' experiences, of for example, working as a nurse in Bristol. Therefore such storytelling was not necessarily linear: as in the postcolonial aesthetic, stories from different times overlapped to some degree and the exact shape of a story was played out through performance (Tolia-Kelly 2011).

This was partly because the Elders tended to forget this level of specificity, but also because of their strengths as improvisers:

"If we wrote it down it would take three times as long to do the process, and it wouldn't be as good because actually what they say naturally is a lot better than certainly I could write. I mean even if I was trying to take down verbatim what they did in one session and use that as a script, next time it came round, they wouldn't say the same thing. Having what they said the first time written down would just confuse them. So when I work with that group, we always leave it loose."

However, although the Elders shared apparently 'natural' acting abilities, reaching a consensus on the content and presentation of stories was not always possible. This partly concerned the accuracy of a story, but also setting the appropriate 'tone' of a narration for a contemporary audience. In one particular rehearsal a number of group members felt uncomfortable over the appropriateness of a particular scene for a contemporary audience as this excerpt from my field notes recounts:

Neil encourages each member of the group to come up with a little anecdote that described their first experience of England. These end up being mainly 'negative differences' that Neil suggests should be summed up by the phrase 'we wouldn't do that at home'. This causes discord amongst the group, particularly with regard to the story of their disgust on finding English people washing their knickers in the kitchen sink. A couple of members asked whether it would offend people in the audience, saying that they didn't want to make the audience feel uncomfortable. Neil tells them not to worry – what is interesting is that you found it different and that is culturally interesting.

So articulation worked to recognise the history of African-Caribbean migration to Bristol, seeking to make it more sensible through performance. This was achieved through the mobilisation of a particular aesthetic, namely non-linear and poly-vocal storytelling, but also in the act of recuperating the past. The bringing forth of memory was important here, but equally significant was the contestation of this process. Putting together the show played out key questions of who should remember what, and the way in which this remembering takes place (Healy 2008).

The final manner of relating is learning. This is the process through which the Elders seek to pass on rather than over their past. The Elders performed 'We Have Overcome' in a number of different contexts: to a predominantly African-Caribbean community, to a White community and also in schools. One aim of the performances was therefore to maintain the bonds of the African-Caribbean community in Bristol through rehearsing their shared history of migration. A key element of this again occurred through the matter and meaning of MXC; through sustaining its connections with the historical experiences of Black Britishness. ACTA tried to ensure that each new project involved staging a show at the centre because this was felt to tie stories of migration to familial relations, bringing together the community. This involved the transformation of MXC:

"*We, ACTA, we went in and we made the whole place into a theatre. We put in a seating unit and lights and we put out 120 seats and the Elders came in on the night of the performance and said 'that's not enough'. And we said 'oh well you know, we're quite used to this sort of thing and usually 120 will be good if we can get 120 in'. 'Won't be enough'. And they were right. We had the whole place completely rammed from the floor to the ceiling. I mean there's a balcony in the Malcom X Centre and we had people standing four deep on the balcony [laughs]. Everyone in that community turned out to see that show.*"

The attempt to create and maintain forms of attachment by providing a history also occurred through performances beyond the African-Caribbean community. A number of the Elders were motivated to start the theatre group so that their performances could educate the younger generation (including their grandchildren) who they felt were behaving inappropriately to new, often Somali children in the city.

During my time with the group, ‘We Have Overcome’ was performed in one school, with the intention of doing more performances in the autumn. The school performance that I attended finished with a short question and answer session between the cast and the students about the Elders experiences. So there was also an anti-racist politics at work in the Elders performances, although this was never explicitly stated. Performing was not easy for the Elders, some were very shy at the beginning of the composition process and even the more experienced in the group got nervous before performances. Yet despite these difficulties, the Elders were determined to create a show and perform it. This motivation to speak of their experiences did not equate to preaching. The Elders told their stories with humour, often in a matter-of-fact way. Emerging through this, though, were occasional and often subtle insights into the discrimination and hardship they suffered as a result of being Black in Britain: the unrecognised qualifications, the poor quality housing. Despite this, the play ended with the statement that the Elders had overcome these challenges and that England was now their home.

Therefore the Elders negotiate a difficult balancing act. On the one hand they seek to challenge and pluralise the history of White Britain. On the other, telling their stories of migration risks positioning them as outsiders to the nation. MXC was emblematic of this as both an opening for and a containment of African-Caribbean belonging in Bristol. Thus, the Elders demonstrate the unavoidable ambivalence to the narration of migration stories (Hoskins 2010). This ambivalence returns to the dynamic of order and disorder in creative practice. That is, making a story can produce an order that provides clarity of position, but also therefore risks unwanted stabilisation, limiting the potential for changes in direction. A postcolonial frame enables a more subtle approach to both the meaning and matter of such circulating stories in relation to the nation. It attunes us to the processes through which the nation is constructed as a sealed unit. Through a theoretical approach that stresses plurality and open-endedness, the singularity of any connection between race and nation is challenged. Materially, postcolonial connections highlight how the movements that constructed empire continue to

manifest in the present in subtle and complex ways. So the historical orientation of the postcolonial therefore also concerns how the present and future is imagined. Britain's imperial past does not determine the practice of its 'multicultural present'. However, equally, such a history is not incidental; its uncertain weight is vital to understanding the absent presence of race in living with difference.

Creolising Culture

The apparent absence of race in multiculturalism might be framed as the result of increased mixture and mixing. 'Mixed race' Britain means that race is no longer a marker of difference. According the 2011 census, one million people in Britain identify as mixed race with reportedly 85% of the public in support of mixed race relationships (Bakare 2012). However, this 'post-racial nirvana' is not the whole story (Ifekwunigwe 1999). Rather, a more nuanced approach to race is required by these meeting points for its continued production. The possibility of Britain as an 'open creolised complexity' means that it cannot be contained by the 'narrow requirements of modern nationalism and identity' (Chambers 2008: 55). The extent to which such a creolised culture can be said to exist in Britain is open to debate. On one level, this concerns whether race still matters as a set identity. This means focusing on the creativity of the 'shifting middle ground of divergence and convergence' (Bongie 1998: 52) in which identity is neither a 'fixed essence' nor a 'vague and utterly contingent construction' (Gilroy cited in Bongie 1998: 51). It is through these movements that race can seem to disappear but equally can become significant. As Aleyne (2002: 609) argues 'identities based in ethnic communities have often proved to be potentially useful, to provide a sense of solidarity in the face of political and social exclusion.' On another level, creolisation points to the 'mechanics' of mixing. That is, the 'parts' that are being mixed and how they operate when together. Highlighted here are the often uneven and unequal terms through which 'African-Caribbean culture' has met with 'British culture'. Creolisation does not provide a manual for such mechanics, but rather sheds light on the complexity of the ongoing process.

The term creolisation itself bears multiple origins that are reflective of the instability of the situations it is used to describe. Theoretically, the term sits with postcolonial approaches but it is materially set apart from them by a particular Caribbean history and geography. Creolisation has meant (and continues to mean) variously a mixing of languages, cultures or races. Whilst often used to mean 'a person of mixed European and African blood', creole has never been 'fully fixed racially', with its primary meaning always concerning 'cultural, social and linguistic mixing' (Hall 2010: 28). The geographical root of the term is in the Caribbean, with the popular use of creole to name the language(s) created through the mixing of various 'parent' languages through European colonisation of the region. These linguistic connotations have remained in attempts to delineate the process of creolisation. Edward Kamau Braithwaite positioned the distinctive language and writing of the islands as vital to 'trying to be one's creole, Caribbean self' (Bongie 1998: 59). For him, this necessitated a focus on the origins of the creolisation process, primarily in African culture (Dawes 1999). Edouard Glissant similarly foregrounds language in his understanding of creolisation. The creole language is seen as one important result of the transplanting of populations to the Caribbean that shows up the difficulties of translation. However, Glissant is not concerned with fixing a creole identity. His interest is in the 'constantly shifting and variable process of creolisation' (Glissant 1989: 15) that eschews origin. In this, he also moves away from a singularly linguistic or discursive approach to creolisation (Hoving 2002). Stressed is 'the mingling of experiences' that produce 'the process of being', abandoning any foundational fixity (Glissant 1989: 14). Instead 'relationship [...] is emphasised over what in appearance could be conceived as a governing principle, the so-called universal "controlling force"' (*ibid.*).

Glissant's emphasis on fluidity can be said to build on the 'non-dialectical ontological immanence' of Deleuze and Guattari (Apter 2006: 245). His cross-cultural poetics imagines the world as a 'rhizomatic network of relations' (Hoving 2002: 126) in which identity is an effect not a cause, not a multiculture of mixed but fixed identities. The notion of creolised cultures aims 'not to define a category

that will by its very nature be opposed to other categories ("pure" cultures), but in order to assert that today infinite varieties of creolisation are open to human conception, both on the level of awareness and on that of intention: in theory and in reality' (Glissant 1989: 140). Unlike Deleuze and Guattari though, a specific history and geography (of the Caribbean) are explicit in Glissant's theorising that has two implications. One is his primary focus on cultural relations. The Caribbean is the site 'par excellence' for the forced coexistence of different people. This intimate cohabitation of apparently incongruous ways of life focuses attention on the processes of exchange, made most obvious through the constant alterations of cultural forms such as language and music. So 'total existence is always relative' (*ibid*. p. 142) because of the ongoing 'creative schizophrenia' (Dash 1987: xxvi) of cultural forms. Therefore, culture is emphasised not as a marker of stability but rather because of its latency and mutation: 'it is important to stress not so much the mechanisms of acculturation and deculturation as the dynamic forces capable of limiting or prolonging them' (Glissant 1989: 141).

The other implication of Glissant's historical and geographical awareness is an attunement to the violence of creolisation. This sits in contrast to celebrations of hybridity (Shohat 1992). The coexistence of different cultures occurred as a result of the 'brutal impact of colonisation, slavery and transportation' (Hall 2010: 37). This points to the political disparities noted between 'postcolonial' and 'postmodern' perspectives, both of which stress plurality, mimicry and hybridity (Appiah 1991). For the former these aesthetic elements are framed as forms of resistance, whereas in the latter they can be nihilistic. Postmodernism seems to abandon the often gruelling weight of the past, writing out histories of struggle. Glissant highlights this process of obfuscation, pointing to certain rituals that are negative or painful relics in Martinique, but are seen to have positive potential when performed elsewhere beyond the Caribbean. So the creative process of creolisation for Glissant is one of (cultural) survival. He suggests that there are potentially two strategies deployed to sustain community. One is *reversion* which seeks to 'consecrate permanence, to negate contact' and is 'recommended by those who favour single origins' (Glissant 1989: 16). The other is *diversion*, which

Glissant posits as the primary strategy used by those in Martinique. Diversion may be understood as a form of resistance that does not operate through direct opposition. Instead 'diversion is the ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed: it must then search *elsewhere* for the principle of domination' (*ibid*. p. 20, emphasis in original). It is a 'trickster strategy *to find another place*' (*ibid*. p. 23, emphasis in original) that works to drive the ongoing encounters of creolisation. Glissant's point is that cultural syncretisms are the product of struggle driven by the need for a detour. They emerge through the necessity to look elsewhere to 'link a possible solution of the insoluble to the resolution other peoples have achieved' (*ibid*.).

Thus, in Glissant's understanding of creolisation, living with difference involves the creativity of entanglements with and through adversity. Belonging emerges not through connection to the 'ancestral soil' but rather in the 'social, cultural and historical narratives that rework an inherited terrain in an unsettling fashion' (Chambers 2008: 59). Rather than a point of origin, creolisation emphasises moments 'in which conflicting identity models clash before they are resolved into possible and impossible identities' (El-Tayeb 2011: 242). Both problematic and beneficial about the term is that it is 'a living practice that precedes yet calls for theorisation while resisting ossification' (Shih and Lionnet 2011: 31). A potential issue here is the extent to which creolisation can be removed from its 'Caribbean context'. Sheller has argued forcefully concerning the dangerous effects of a 'generic and dislocated notion of creolisation' (2003: 195) that has occurred through appropriation of the term by the Western academy. Perhaps contra the practice of creolisation, she warns that such concepts should be regrounded in the Caribbean to recover 'the political meanings and subaltern agency that have been barred entry by the free-floating gatekeepers of global culture' (*ibid*. p. 196). However, as Said (1983: 227) argued, there is a 'fundamental uncertainty about specifying the field to which any one theory or idea might belong.' The possibility that theory may become cultural dogma does not necessitate its abandonment. Instead, it means taking up ideas with an eye to

their particularities, by measuring the 'distance between theory then and now, [...] to record the encounter of theory with resistances to it' (*ibid*. p. 247).

Certainly the processes of mixing that have occurred beyond the Caribbean, including in Britain, must be recognised as different. Yet the emphasis on resistance and inventiveness through cultural forms in creolisation is not dissimilar to Black British political strategies. The potential of creolisation here is that it 'allows us to see not simply hybrids of limited fluidity [...] but new cultures in the making' (Baron and Cara, 2011: 4). Despite Sheller's warning (above) then, interest continues in creolisation as a frame for mixed identities and cultures beyond, as well as in, the Caribbean (Cohen and Toninato 2009; Baron and Cara 2011). Equally, there has been increased attention to the theoretical purchase of the term. In part this is its potential to redress or upset the intimate link between post-structuralism and Anglophone postcolonial theory (Gikandi 2004). If postcolonial debates have been dominated by Indian intellectuals, the Caribbean situation of Glissant's creolisation unsettles this. Related to this is the emphasis in such 'dominant' postcolonial theory on 'the difficulty of giving an account of oneself' (Shih and Lionnet 2011: 20) in the face of colonial power. Shih and Lionnet (*ibid.*) argue that this has led to 'a self-perpetuating and politically unproductive anxiety' that might be understood as melancholia. Unlike Gilroy's (2004) description of 'postimperial melancholia' in Britain, this does not result in ongoing returns to the certainties of empire. But, as with Gilroy, this melancholia emerges from the uncertainty of position in the present and can induce a state of self-absorption that is debilitating. It is for this reason that such Anglophone postcolonial theory is 'reactional theorising, rather than actional theorising' (Shih and Lionnet 2011: 20). Creolisation, with its emphasis on transformation, might provide a way out of this anxiety without losing hold of the violences of the past.

The potential of creolisation as a way of conceptualising Britain's multicultural present can be elucidated through the practices of one writer in Bristol. The writer, Edson, had his collection of poetry *Seasoned* dramatised in 2011. This

production process involved the mixing of a variety of people and institutions that resonate with the framing of creolisation above. As a Black writer, Edson's collection of poetry was a likely candidate for publication by City Chameleon, a Bristol-based publisher that sets out to support artists from a range of social and cultural backgrounds. City Chameleon is also run by one of the founding members of the Bristol Black Writers group, a collective that Edson also played an active role in. The particularities of this route of production and dissemination of Edson's work then take on a more complex trajectory. Edson and City Chameleon received ACE funding to turn *Seasoned* in to a live art production. This was initially performed at the Arnolfini in 2009, Bristol's flagship contemporary art gallery. The subsequent development of the piece resulted in a two week run at the Tobacco Factory Theatre (TFT) in 2011. Creolisation might frame this as a challenge to the Whiteness of Britishness through the mixing of inputs from a variety of cultural organisations in Bristol and beyond. In playing on the practice of 'seasoning' slaves, the work was grounded in the colonial past but related this process of 'breaking the self' to contemporary belonging. Although the piece ended in an attempt to get everyone from the audience up dancing with the cast, it was not all celebratory. At points there was an agonistic tone; a struggle to commit in various ways.

This unease points towards the necessary work of diversion in creolisation as a strategy for living with concealed power. The mixing of cultural forms; of institutions associated with the British orthodoxy and artists apparently marginal to this; occurred unevenly. The play was performed in the studio, rather than the main TFT. The attendance was low, reinforcing the logic of this decision. However, Edson suggested that it had been advertised as a piece of African-Caribbean theatre which had the effect of narrowing its audience base. The production of this play for ACE and TFT can be framed as a product of the institutionalisation of 'diversity', which acts as a form of concealed power. Arts institutions must legally perform diversity by adopting specific language and documentation (Ahmed 2007a). That is, the 'disorder' of diversity becomes acceptable through practices of governance. One result is that the materiality of diversity documentation

directs attention away from the ‘reality’ of inequalities. Two recent reports from ACE are indicative of the difficulty of such diversity talk in artistic and cultural production. One is a short, manifesto-like document that considers ‘the creative case for diversity’ (ACE 2011). This builds on the ‘understanding in the arts community that diversity and creativity are inherently linked’ (p. 3), to argue that previously marginalised art be brought to the centre. Here there is a shift away from ACE’s previous approach ‘that did separate strands of work on race, disability and gender equality’ (p. 3). Such mainstreaming is a discursive repositioning away from a ‘deficit’ approach to diversity; to one that rightly recognises the significance of (cultural) exchange in creative practice. However, such a statement of intent risks remaining only in the documentation. According to the logic of the creative case, structures that targeted and supported marginalised groups (and therefore simultaneously reinforced their separation) would presumably be removed. Therefore, it is uncertain how the ethos of the creative case would be carried out in practice.

The other document also moves diversity into the mainstream. Building on the creative case, the report suggests that diversity has a more structural role to play in the maintenance of a strong cultural sector. Diversity is ‘a way to increase the adaptive resilience of organisations, making them less vulnerable to unexpected change’ (Nwachukwu and Robinson 2011 : 3). Diversity here is seen to help insure a broad base of ‘reliable incomes streams’ (p. 6). It appears as an attribute that sometimes awkwardly slips into a singular object or type of person. However these reports play out in practice, both documents implicitly suggest that the language of diversity does not inherently result in equality of opportunity. Paying lip service to diversity conceals the practices and structures that (perhaps unintentionally) maintain the status quo. In order to achieve recognition for his writing, Edson had to work around this tricky discourse of diversity. He felt that sometimes he had been asked to do things because he was seen as a Black writer. He took up these opportunities but was nonetheless frustrated by this categorisation:

"*I think writing is a craft and when you get it right, you get it right, when you get it wrong you get it wrong and you should be told that regardless of whether you're a Black writer, a young writer or someone.*"

There is sense here of creative practice as always already creolised. Culture is always a bringing together of apparently diverse forms that have the potential to either lose their distinctions or be thrown into relief. Edson's writing was influenced by what he termed a 'Black canon' but this was not always explicit. So playing to the label of 'Black writer' can be read as Glissant's 'trickster strategy' against the paradoxical perpetuation of existing inequalities through the discourse of diversity.

The apparent stability of labeled positions is contested through movements of 'parallactic displacement' (Glissant 1989: 20). Edson is able to move into the category of Black writer if necessary, utilising it to his advantage whilst undermining its fixity:

"*You only get one shot and if you mess up, the phone won't call. [...] So the fact one is then rung again and someone else has passed on your name is not because you're a Black writer.*"

So Edson's case, and the work of creolisation more generally, shows how race does still matter in the meeting of cultural practices. Being Black was an important part of Edson's creative practice, it influenced his personal output, but also shaped the opportunities available to him. However, creolisation also alerts us to the changing significance of race; its potential to matter differently in each exchange. This potential for difference through action is not citational in the Buter's sense, but neither does it lapse into utter contingency. It is orientated by the necessity for diversion; the connection with an elsewhere that can be both problem and solution. Creolisation therefore both intensely grounds race in the unfolding practices of the present, but always also necessitates an attunement to the incursions shaping race from the past.

Synthesising

Circulations of Britain's past are creative forces in the unfolding attachments of race in the postimperial present. As a port, the movements of Bristol's past continue to have creative resonances and dissonances in the contemporary formation of race in the city. This chapter has shown how these circulations both support and challenge recent approaches to race that have framed it as a socio-cultural construction. This renders race absent in that it is emptied of significance. Yet it also affords it a presence, perpetuating the distinctiveness of race by focusing on its emergence as a separate category. The chapter has argued that if race is understood as constructed, then this must be seen as an ongoing creative process involving circulation. In showing race as both made and unmade the chapter has thrown up contradictory responses to this creativity. On the one hand, multiculturalism (as discourse) might be understood as a form of social governance of creativity, seeking to remove the creative potential of race to shape society. That race continues to be made and unmade demonstrates the limits of these attempts at order. On the other hand, there is a sense that the creativity of mixing is necessary for 'diversity'. Yet such disorder is itself often a managed achievement, measured through the performances of documentation. So as in chapter three, creativity appears again as a difficult balance between order and disorder. The implication of this framing of creativity for racial attachments is that they are neither fixed nor fluid. Rather they are emergent through movements that can meet to attach, break and entangle disparate materials and meanings. Such creative appearances and disappearances of race are important to debates on living with difference for three reasons. Firstly, they help explain the apparent 'racelessness' of multiculturalism. The shift to the 'cultural' to frame difference apparently removed the determining weight of race. But race nonetheless remains a marker of difference, made conspicuous through the attempts to deny its articulation.

Secondly, the circulations that move race highlight the complexity of the spatial and temporal elsewheres that are often absent from the present of multiculturalism. In framings of multiculturalism the importance of empire in shaping understandings of race has been underplayed, together with empire's

formative role in creating the material conditions for living with difference. The focus on movement in this chapter has shown how circulations may be orientated around ongoing sites of struggle, like the Malcom X Centre. Such locations can show the continued significance of imperial connections for contemporary belonging, whilst also unsettling conservative framings of Britain's history. The anti-racist struggles of the past can appear both concordant and discordant with contemporary inequalities. Thirdly, the appearances and disappearances of race provide a direction for postcolonial framings of Britain's present. Finding orientation in spatial and temporal movement enables a material fusion of contemporary practices with past activities, avoiding the discursive tendency that has characterised postcolonial approaches. So circulation has served as a link between two critical approaches to multiculturalism. One highlights the role of anti-racist politics of the past, while the other foregrounds contemporary negotiations of living with difference. By introducing forms of circulation grounded in cultural practices, the aim has been to work across this division. Each movement has shown the creative possibilities and problems of making the past matter in contemporary framings of race. Diasporic connections created race through links to a nation elsewhere, but equally had to work through the uncertain meaning of such ties. Postcolonial migrants necessitate a recognition of history but equally risk the ongoing creation of racialised others. Creolisation understands how racial attachments involve creative differentiation through cultural expression but also points to the historical contingencies that influence this process. The next chapter takes up this notion of expression to further consider the instability of cultural experience.

5. Expressing

> "*We need to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing. [...] The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming.*" (Braidotti 2013: 12).

Aesthetics is a realm for considering the paradox of expression; the animating movement of culture that frames experiences of the present. It explores how expression both constitutes and upsets the subject. That is, expression is apparently both subjective; it is of the subject; but equally it is in excess of those boundaries. Therefore, aesthetics frames the circulations of race in the previous chapter as constitutors of the condition of 'flexible subjectivity and freedom of creation' that Rolnik (2011: 28) suggests extends beyond artistic experience. This chapter takes up these connections between artistic creation and subjectivity. On the one hand art is an expression that stabilises through the perception of the artist. It creates a distinction between subject and object by apprehending the world through forms, and producing representations to give them meaning. Artist, form and representation all seem to operate in separation from the world. On the other hand, the expressive practice of art is considered to be subjectivising. It renders manifest forces of affect that work at the subject through the incorporation of sensations. These incorporations exceed existing representations, placing art firmly in the world by driving new expression. The chapter details a shift in geographical scholarship from aesthetics as the approach to the meaning of expression onto what expression achieves; changing orientation from interpretation to cultivation. Rather than being contained by the artist and artwork, expression becomes associated with the aesthetic force of sensation. To do this, the first part of the chapter works through critiques of perception, form and representation using examples from performance poetry in Bristol. The suggestion is that these critiques have tended to show the limits, not the potential of artistic expression. The exception to this is 'non-representational' geographies that point to expression's conditions of possibility, taken up in the second part. A focus on the expressions of community theatre is used to demonstrate the

(dis)assembly of the subject through the creative distributions and appropriations of aesthetic experience.

Perception

Expression has served to stabilise subjectivity through the perceptions of the artist. The artist constitutes their separation from the everyday; the distinction between subject and object; through their creations. Within geography (discussion is limited to this discipline throughout the chapter for reasons of both space and relevancy), artists have been assigned a role in imaging and imagining the world (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Driver and Martins 2005), illuminating the experience of 'site' through the construction of artwork (Kwon 2004; Morris and Cant 2006).Historically, the artist had been the purveyor geographic knowledge from voyages of discovery by the visual representation of exotic places (Livingstone 1992). Contemporary human geography has largely lost this descriptive emphasis, but the artist still features through collaborations with geographers that aim to shed light on particular worldly experiences (Hawkins and Lovejoy 2009; Till 2008). Such geographic engagements are 'celebrated for their questioning of disciplinary practices and procedures, reworking, and at times even repoliticising, well-worn practices, spaces and knowledge' (Hawkins 2013: 64). Yet there has been little examination of what being an artist means. Although not mutually exclusive occupations (for a number of geographers would self-define as artists (eg Crouch 2010; Yusoff 2008), the artist is to some extent reified in these engagements with geographers. They are implicitly distinguished by their unique expressive abilities; a capacity that has traditionally made them an 'alienated and tempestuous figure' (Bain 2005: 28). Thus the label of artist tends to define an owner of expression, a director of, but separate from, its relations with/in the world. Here, aesthetics becomes the description of such direction; it elucidates what the artist expresses. This tying of expression to the artist has been central to the positioning of aesthetics in the realm of the humanities. Yet this understanding of the artist relies heavily on a myth; a collection of half-truths and fictions that are often played upon by artists themselves. The figure of the poet illustrates this.

Poets are exemplary of the artist myth. Expressing through the solitary activity of writing, their art is often incomprehensible to many yet elevated to perfection by the few. Central to the myth of the artist are two elements: ascetism or withdrawal combined with an enhanced ability to 'see' the world. The former is often taken to be a causal factor for the latter. This is described by one poet in Bristol:

"*the myth of the artist [...] seems to be really concentrated with poets. That whole sort of 'oh they have to live in poverty; they have to suffer loads; they have to have deep inner turmoil; they have to write two lines a day sitting in a coffee shop; they have to drink vodka; put vodka on their cereal, they have to have on-off relationships with lots of people; and that makes them truly great. They just have to be there and suffer and not make any money.'*"

One reason for the suggested concentration of the myth with poets may rest in their art form. Poetry has an 'obscure [...] nature' (Rosen, 1988: 7) that is 'impalpable, resistant to definition' (Paz, 1990: 77). To be able to produce poetry therefore requires an ability to perceive the intangible, meaning that the poet has particularly acute expressive abilities that exceed other artists. The poet is able to provide truth; cutting an almost messianic figure that uses 'sacred, ineffable language' (De Man 1985: 29) to get at 'the other voice' (Paz 1990: 74). It is for this reason that the expression of poetry can be rendered exclusive or inaccessible:

"Poetry has really become a dirty word now, ever since TS Eliot really it has become so centred around academia and obscure forms [...] and these opaque concepts and if you don't get your head around that then you're an idiot."

Yet this separation of poetry, and of the poet, is not the whole story.

The poet's expressive capacities are not solely constructed through their division from the world. One reading of the apparent withdrawal of the poet is that their expression is written off as a deceit. The removal of the poet from reality means that they manipulate language for effect rather than for accuracy, often inciting dangerous emotions (Edmondson 1995). Elsewhere, far from being the product of withdrawal, the poet's expressive capacities can be understood to occur in dialogue with their worldly surroundings. Here it is possible to look to the role of

poets in subcultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Beat Generation (Sanders 2007; Hrebeniak 2006), or equally the position of poet laureate in Britain. In these instances, the poet remains one of the people, affording her the capacity and legitimacy to 'report on the experience of life as it is at the point of writing and feeling' (Wade 1999: 10). Therefore, far from isolation, the poet is always in some ways 'speaking back' to the world or to an audience. This might be framed in terms of a responsibility to their tradition or their community (Breiner 1980). Poets must simultaneously allude to that tradition, demonstrating their cognisance of it, but also produce something different from it. So there is both an acknowledgement and rejection of community meaning that 'the poet claims priority knowing that claim is false' (Breiner, 1980: 5). Such simultaneous acknowledgement and rejection of tradition was registered by certain poets in Bristol, as through this example:

"most poetry isn't worth reading to be honest, even if you picked up a book of Wordsworth or Keats you'd struggle to get to the end of it."

Yet, the performance element of spoken word meant that a community was immediately apparent:

"for performance, you've got an audience in mind and you're not just writing for yourself, for your friend. It has to be…people have to be able to understand something from it and take something from it. It should be entertaining in some way."

So poetry is the expression of the poet's perceptions but is shaped by occurrences beyond their figure. The poet retains their mysterious ability to express, but this does not occur through complete withdrawal. Geographers have played a part in questioning the separation of artistic perception from the world through their emphasis on situated practices. For example, Sjöholm (2013) argues that the apparently solitary space of the studio is entangled in a complex web of sociality that is more suggestive of co-production rather than isolation. Equally, collaborations between artists and geographers demonstrate the inaccuracy of claims that the former withdraw from 'real life' (Foster and Lorimer 2007). However, this opposition to the belief in the separation of the artist's perception does not liberate expression. It remains in the artist's control. A focus on form, on how the world is apprehended through perception, has challenged this though.

Form

Form equates to the artwork, it is the shape that perception takes as a means of knowing the world. Artistic forms continue to be a focus for geographical investigation for example through novels (Noxolo and Perziuso 2013), paintings (Colls 2011), video installation (Cresswell 2012) and performance (Abrahamsson and Abrahamsson 2007). They are understood to enhance and convey particular understandings of the world. One trajectory for the entry of artwork into geography is the response to the discipline's turn to spatial science in the mid-twentieth century. By attempting to get at the subjectivity of phenomena (Tuan 1974), this call to art critiqued the apparent dehumanisation of geography (Marston and De Leeuw 2013). The aim was to consider what insight such artistic representations could offer into 'real' geographies (Aikens 1977), and also to explore the influence of place on artistic production (Carney 1980). The 'new cultural geography' that followed on from this humanistic shift also drew upon art. However, here attention to artworks was motivated by the role of such products in power relations. The focus was not on art as an element of a reified culture (Duncan 1980). Instead, it was on art as a site for cultural contestation, be that through architecture, visual art or performance (Cosgrove 1984; Duncan 1990; Jackson 1988). Central to this approach was the metaphor of the 'text'. Artworks were texts encoded with particular meanings that could be read through semiotic analysis to reveal discursive power formations (Barnes and Duncan 1992). A key influence was the structural and post-structural theory that was shaping the growing field of cultural studies (Barnett 1998). Derrida's assertion that there is 'nothing beyond the text' produced a deconstructive approach to artworks that both liberated and constrained expression as is elaborated below.

In this understanding, form is separated from perception. That is, the expression of art is not directed by the artist. Instead gains significance beyond the artist's engagement. Aesthetics therefore comes into play through the interpretation of art. This 'post-structural' divorcing of expression from the artist's objectives is exemplified by the art of the poet: language. The relationship between language

and meaning demonstrates that expression is performative; it constitutes its content through its occurrence rather than through the speaker's intention. Three different relationships might be isolated between language and meaning. The first is commonsensical: language contains meaning that is transferred through its use and that refers to something beyond it. This might broadly equate to 'truth-based accounts of meaning' (Lee 2011: 10) where language works referentially to transmit information and pass on knowledge. One problem with such accounts is empty terms; expressions that lack any apparent reference. A second relationship might posit that meaning is not completely contained by language but rather is constructed through language use. In this perspective expression is creative in that meaning is no longer contained in language, but remains tied to it as a product of forms of (linguistic) activity. The third and most extreme relationship posits that language is empty of meaning. This position questions the assumption that some positive presence (or meaning) is conferred through language, demonstrating the constraints rather than the potential of expression. As challenges to the connection of form with artistic perception, the latter two relationships will be explored in more depth.

The suggestion that the meaning of language is constructed through its use takes a first step in freeing the work of expression from the artist. Linguistic expression is a social act that produces meaning, rather than simply operating as a vehicle for the poet's intentions. Demonstrative of this performativity is the instability of language in social context: what words do in ordinary usage (Austin 1975). An early example of this is Wittgenstein's (2001 [1953]) linguistics that are suggestive of such social capacities for words to mean. In particular, through the concept of 'language games', Wittgenstein drew attention to the range of activities in which language occurs. By suggesting that saying something in a language was analogous to making a move in game, he aimed to highlight how situated activity shaped the workings of language. This was 'the idea that one and the same sentence may be used to do very different things on different occasions' (Lee 2011: 16). Shotter's (1993) 'conversational realities' build on this importance of language in practice. He suggests that language operates through a 'rhetorical-responsive' function. This

means firstly that our ability to speak representationally, or 'to describe a unique state of affairs [...] independently of the influence of our surroundings', arises primarily through 'speaking in a way that is responsive to others around us' (Shotter 1993: 6). Secondly, our use of language is not merely referential. Instead, it can 'move people to action or change their perceptions' (*ibid.*). The motivation for Shotter's conversational social constructivism arises out of his rejection of realism, the notion that there are 'indisputable foundations [...] in terms of which claims to truth can be judged' (*ibid.* p. 13). Instead Shotter attempts to negotiate a middle ground between relativism and determinism in the relationship between language and meaning. He argues that for his position to resist the relativism of 'anything goes', knowledge can be framed by 'situating it in a community' (*ibid.*). Whilst this seemingly risks determining meaning through a 'fixed' interpretive community, Shotter suggests that language, and 'accounts' more generally, are self-specifying in that 'they work to construct [...] that context or setting within which their telling makes sense' (*ibid.* p. 112).

A situated and practised connection between language and meaning can also be found in Bakhtin. The motif of dialogism that runs through his work is characteristic of his understanding of meaning in language and beyond. This is primarily that meaning is intersubjective, found between expression and understanding (Hirschkop 1999). In relation to language, this implies that every utterance is 'a give-and-take between the local need of a particular speaker to communicate a specific meaning' (Holquist 2002: 60) that is always an answer to another utterance. This inbetweenness of the utterance, the sense that it is always a response rather than an origin, again situates the analysis of the operations of language in society. Decisions for who takes precedence in delivering a response develop out of group practice (Holquist 2002). Bakhtin's understanding of language is therefore more clearly concerned with 'power' than that of Shotter's. The social situatedness of language for Bakhtin is indicative of its position as a site of struggle. He suggests there are 'official languages' that carry ideologies of particular kinds and necessarily privilege 'oneness' (Holquist 2002). However, this singularity is always contested through the 'double-voice' of the utterance; it's

internally dialogised nature in which the Self's and the Other's voice interpenetrate (Holloway and Kneale 2000). Thus both Shotter and Bakhtin provide an understanding of linguistic expression as social, divorcing it from the absolute control of the individual artist. Worldly forms are distinct from artistic perception: language has no pre-existing meaning that can be directed by the poet. Yet, although meaning is not contained by language, the constitution of meaning through language's (often contested) operations in society retains a tie to the speaker. Meaning comes about through the speaker's role in the construction of particular conversational realities. So in this position, a creativity is afforded to expression, but it remains partially tied to the artist.

The third relationship I outlined above similarly posits the performativity of linguistic expression, but instead suggests that there is no meaning to language. Both artistic intention and social performance seemingly become irrelevant in the face of the essential absence (of meaning) built into expression. Here the form of expression is more radically disconnected from the artist, but is simultaneously more limited; less creative. The problem is that incompleteness of form becomes a sticking point; it is viewed as lack rather than potential. In this post-structuralism, meaning is not just constrained through the location of words in broader (linguistic) structures. Instead, the arbitrariness of meaning is such that it constantly evades any permanent association with words. From this perspective there are a 'multiplicity of meanings in a text, in a poem, in a word, but there will always be an excess that is not of the order of meaning, that is not just another meaning' (Derrida 2005: 165). Derrida argues that the rules that constitute language necessarily connote this excess of meaning. The semantics and syntax of language combine in iteration. The iterability of language upsets the classical formulation of 'linguistic signs as the unity of sensible signifier and intelligible signified or meaning' (Glendinning 2007: 192). So instead of the direct connection between language and meaning through referral, Derrida develops iteration as a potentially infinite process of repetition. Here, meaning is always bound up with its absence as the experience of language is an 'ineluctable loss of origin' (Derrida 2005: 53) because the 'sign is originally wrought by fiction' (Derrida 1973: 56). The

conditions of possibility for the presence of meaning in any utterance are themselves 'the possibility of an iteration in the radical absence of this one' (Glendinning 2007: 198). Thus meaning appears as 'elliptical withdrawal' (Derrida 2005: 105), no longer embedded in an idea of 'the event of speech that would express an ideally pure presence' (Glendinning 2007: 201).

The broader argument made through Derrida's approach to language is an anti-humanist one. It contributes to the exposure of 'human nature' as an 'historically and culturally specific discursive formation' (Braidotti 2013: 24). The demonstration of the disconnect between perception and form, between the artist and artwork, is intended to extend beyond the linguistic example. The variations on the theme of the 'Death of the Author' rehearsed by Barthes (1977) and Foucault (1979) dislodge 'man as the subject of knowledge' in a 'decomposition of subject-centred philosophies' (Burke 1998: 15). Derrida contributes to this by showing the absence of authorial intention specifically in language, suggesting that this model of iterability can be tied to experience more generally. That is, the impossibility of complete presence in language is the same for all other forms of intentionality, other 'meaning-conferring acts' (Baldwin 2011). At stake is an understanding of pure, unmediated human consciousness through which 'an object or property meant is wholly "present"' (Baldwin 2011: 274). Derrida's opposition to this can be read as a challenge to phenomenology (specifically of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* (1973)), to the ascendancy of the perceptions and consciousness of the human subject. Phenomenology grounds ordinary experience in acts of consciousness that make meaning through what is presented in perception. Husserl's phenomenology makes a distinction between two forms of experience. One is indication in which an associative connection is established through signs; there is no intrinsic link between the indicator and the thing indicated. The other is expression and involves meaningful or essential connection. This is then paired with a distinction between language as 'a complex of physically articulated signs and the intrinsically meaningful mental states on which the meaning of language depends' (Cerbone 2006: 152). Such 'mental soliloquy' of the latter does not involve mediation, but neither does it produce 'real worlds'. Instead, fictitious

language is used ‘because the subject has nothing to communicate to itself’ (*ibid.* p. 153).

By disputing the distinction between genuine and fictitious language Derrida develops the anti-humanist position. He argues that all language involves structures of representation and repetition. Any word produced stands for an ideal type; therefore no one word is more ‘real’ than another. Representation is common to signification in general meaning so that ‘there is every likelihood that “effective” communication is just as imaginary as imaginary speech and that imaginary speech is just as effective as effective speech’ (Derrida, 1973: 51). Thus Derrida shows that the mental state is subject to signification, and so the supposed intrinsic purity of expression is always bound up with the associative connections of indication. This means that anything present in consciousness is always entangled with absence. The corollary being that the ‘presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it is continuously compounded with a non-presence and non-perception, with primary memory and expectation’ (*ibid.* p. 64). The phenomenological claims for experience through pure expression or perception are therefore undone. Expression implies an ‘essential and irreducible relation to an alterity that can never be lived in the form of presence’ (Glendinning 2007: 183). The result of this is a deprivileging of the category of human: there is no fundamental meaning of human life waiting to be revealed (Glendinning 2007). Thus, through Derrida, the form of art is not only set free from perception, but it eradicates the conscious subject of that perception. The emphasis is on the erasure and absence of the human rather than the construction and presence of human sociality, as in Shotter. Therefore, whilst they similarly point to a disconnect between the artist and expression, Derrida demonstrates the limits of expression whilst Shotter points more to the creativity of language.

However, this removal of the causal link between intending subject and expressive form results in Derrida’s and Shotter’s shared emphasis on the situated occurrence

of language. If meaning is not inherent in the artwork then it must be given through location. For both thinkers, these sites of language use are relationally constituted. For Shotter, the accounts constructed in language become 'self-specifying' through and by defining their context. Derrida uses a more overt 'geographical' imagery to suggest that language

'can take on meaning only in relation to a *place*. By place, I mean just as much the relation to a border, country, house, or threshold as any site, any *situation* in general from within which, practically, pragmatically, alliances are formed, contracts, codes and conventions established that give meaning to the insignificant, institute passwords, bend language to what exceeds it' (Derrida, 2005: 29 emphasis in original).

This placed constitution of expression is demonstrated at Bristol's poetry open mic nights. On the one hand, performance seemed to reinforce the link between expression and artistic intention. The words that filled the room came from the poet. On the other hand, words seemed to work beyond the poet. They demarcated spaces; drawing and breaching lines between audience and stage. Equally, language sometimes seemed disembodied; descending into background noise. This became particularly obvious when there were disruptions to performance, such as a 'disorderly' member of the audience as this poet recounts:

"I was just saying it, performing it, going through the motions of doing it but without really paying that much attention to doing it because I was focused so much on what that bloke was doing, it was really surreal. I just kind of got in the zone and let it keep coming out and it did, my mouth just kind of detached itself from the rest of my body, it just kept talking and I was really conscious of what he was doing and where he was going and stuff, and yeah that was pretty difficult."

So at open mic nights it was possible to understand language as meaning (referentially), as constructing meaning or even as without meaning. Poetic expression in performance uses languages referentially but necessarily exceeds this in order to connect with an audience. Significant here are the implications of the poet's presence in performance, which seem to render flawed the separation of artist from expression. This is the very notion of the conscious and speaking

individual that Derrida (1981: 30) seeks to diffuse by suggesting that 'the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself' confirming 'that, as Saussure said, "language is not a function of the speaking subject."' In part, the poet's presence points to the (continuing) importance of interpretation, of the role of the audience in producing meaning through the context of performance. Equally, considering how form takes place through embodied representation highlights the materiality of the encounter with the artwork. A focus on 'matter' opens up the potential of expression as a subjectivising force, posing a challenge to Derrida's anti-humanist position without recourse to the agentive subject.

Representation

Such materiality of the form of expression can be considered through the medium of representation. This is the question of how an artwork 'works'. One response to this question by geographers has been to foreground context as part of a wider acknowledgement of positionality (McDowell 1996; Rose 1997). The post-structural turn away from artistic intention opened one route for the analysis of art in the way artworks were received. Expression was understood to 'mean', or to work, through the interaction of artist and audience with their respective contexts. This built upon a literary 'aesthetics of reception' in which the artwork operates as a form of communication that shapes its interaction with the audience (Iser 1976; Jauss 1982). However, emphasising the context of the artwork's reception not only risked simply shifting the operation of expression from artist to audience but also slipping into a relativism. This means that the question of how expression works comes down to which contexts we 'consider and privilege in the process of decoding literary (or any other) texts' (Cresswell 1996: 420). Moving away from this aesthetics as interpretation, another route has been to consider what expression does beyond (or between) both artist and audience; beyond the moment of construction and reception of representation. This foregrounds the 'non-representable' qualities of expression; the dynamic between the material and the immaterial, between the actual and the virtual (Thrift 1997). The performance of expression itself does something that resists textual capture; it 'cannot adequately be spoken of' (Nash 2000: 655). Instead, the interest turns to

embodiment; to expression as presentations, showings and manifestations rather than as representations (Thrift 1997). However, the distinction between representation and non-representation; between text and embodiment; is by no means clear (Rogers 2010). It is rather one of orientation and responsiveness, an attunement to the open potential of expression as well as an engagement with its concretised possibilities.

Despite his focus on the structure of language, Derrida does seemingly engage with this materiality of representation. He contests the 'tyranny of the text' (2001 [1978]: 297) that denies the 'nonrepresentable origin of representation' (*ibid*. p. 294) and puts forward the stage as an alternative. Apparently contrary to his argument against the privileging of speech as presence, Derrida suggests a solution to the text's tyranny through the stage's 'creative and founding freedom' (*ibid*. p. 299). In his essay on Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', Derrida calls for the overthrowing of the 'theological' stage that contains

'an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter *represent* him as concerns the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters who represent characters who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the "creator"' (*ibid*. p. 296 emphasis in original).

However, Derrida's point here is not to privilege speech (performance) over text (script), but rather to demonstrate the limits of the 'theological' stage. This is to challenge the notion that action can be determined by an absent creator that constitutes a 'theological eternity' (O'Connor 2010: 55). Instead, in questioning the representational work of this 'theological' stage Derrida aims to show how 'the absolute cannot be a being' (*ibid*. p. 56), once again returning to the impossibility of presence. Such questioning of the work of representation in performance also occurred in spoken word through the distinction between page and stage. In spoken word, a page poet generally publishes their poetry and may do 'readings',

whereas a stage poet would not publish their poetry, rather they would perform it (without a text) to an audience.

In Bristol, there was a perceived difference between the expression of page and performance poetry. To be a performance poet you did not have to have a knowledge of canonical published poetry as this poet highlights:

"I don't really have a good understanding of page poetry and its formal aesthetics."

This meant that performance poetry was seen to be less governed than page poetry which is judged according to the stylistic conventions of the canon. One poet alluded to this when he described his experience of coming into contact with this 'canon':

"So I started writing [poems] and I sent them off to be reviewed by the experts. And I don't know why they didn't like it, but it didn't score very well on their scoring systems, they were trying to steer people away from what they call 'hard rhymes'. They tried to get me to be more expressive and surprising and have a little extraordinary turn of phrase in the poem to make it unique and make it stand out which is a way a lot of the modern poetry went whereas mine doesn't. It's proper in your face. You don't have to think at all or understand anything about poetry or form or structure or anything to enjoy it."

Rather than reproducing these formal standards of page poetry, performance poets were guided by their audience:

"I wouldn't have even written poetry if it weren't for the performance element of it. So I don't write poems that I'm not going to perform, I write with an audience in mind."

This involved privileging the sound of the poem to a greater degree than page poets:

"The performance poets, it would depend on the style of poet obviously, but the general thing is you have to have an ear for it because you don't write by talking - I assume people don't because I don't know how that would work. I don't write by saying words out loud until it sounds right, I write it but I do it conscious of the sounds of it, and the rhythm and the kind of rhymes and the half rhymes and the echoes and the repetition. And I write with my ears, whereas as there is a sense in

page poetry which you use as much your ears as your eyes and how it builds on the page and how it looks on the page."

Along with these difference in formal composition, there was also a sense that the expression of poetry through performance produced different cultural spaces to that of page poetry. One performance poet gives an indication of this as he describes his introduction to spoken word:

"I started looking into it and realised it was actually huge but it doesn't get the kind of exposure that page poetry gets because you can't get published if you're a performance poet because you can't publish performances. So it's always a little bit under the surface on the arts scene."

Operating outside the more formalised spaces of publication enabled performance poetry to offer a vitality that could breach any perceived gap between life and art:

"I think what's wonderful about slam is [...] that it brings an element of real life. Cos that other stuff, [page poetry] does not…I don't know if soul is the right word to use but they don't…people who do that, they're not giving anything of themselves so I can't see how they can expect an audience to give anything back. For me, I do try and bring a level of emotional chargedness and I always talk about stuff that's going on around people and that lives in the present. And I think that's really important, that reality and that relation to a person's real life and their real world is what marks [performance poetry] out as a genre, and what makes it interesting."

The interest in 'real life' in performance poetry meant that it was politically distinct from the page. As highlighted in chapter three, Wood (2008: 19) suggests that poetry slams serve a democratising function by enabling participation in the making and reception of poetry beyond the ivory tower. A number of poets echoed this sentiment, suggesting that:

"There's a kind of anti-intellectual movement against academic poets, [some people] don't think that poetry should be taught and that, some people don't think that poetry should be written down."

Such opposition against the written text meant that some felt page and performance poetry were not comparable:

"It's a separate genre really. People come to spoken word from rap and theatre and from comedy and from all kinds of angles and it's so much bigger, it doesn't need to be associated…the person who is best at that is not some ponse who gets six grand a year and loads of bottles of sherry to write poems about the queen. Those two things, even though they are somehow given the same name, those two things could not be more different as far as what actually goes on. I think that's all it is, a problem of definition. We need to scrap the idea of performance poetry and of trying to appease poets and of trying to get in with publishers [...], to stop trying to think that that is the best thing and leave proper poets to the readings that no one goes to and to their non-existent sales and their creative writing courses to train more people like themselves. And we need to just go out, go into the world which is what we do and find our audiences."

Thus, performance poetry emerges as a movement, as freer expression than words on the page. The opposing side in this distinction between page and performance can be equally scathing. Former performance poet Nathan A Thompson criticised in *The Independent* (02.02.2013) both the socio-cultural and the formal qualities of performance poetry. Referring specifically to slams, he states that 'the audience is almost always half drunk and if you want to win you have to pitch your poem pretty low' resulting in 'the poetic equivalent of nob [*sic*.] jokes – and plenty of actual nob jokes.' In his opinion the result is that much slam poetry lacks the quality required for publication. Such an assertion rang true with experiences of publishing for poets in Bristol:

"I was going out to test work live but I was still looking for publication so I would send pieces out to magazines and found that pieces that what worked best and proved the most popular in a live situation were the least successful when it came to trying to get things published.[...] I mean Neil Astley at Blood Axe [publishers] [...], he rejects performance poetry quite openly as being, just because you've stood up in front of people at an open mic and people have laughed and clapped doesn't make you a poet. He'll say that performance poetry generally doesn't transfer to the page."

So as Derrida suggests, there does seem to be a certain 'tyranny of the text' in which page poetry more obviously governs and is governed compared to performance. This difference is then played out spatially as performance poetry takes to the stage energetically through the visceral relations between words and audience. Page poetry is confined predominantly to the text, escaping only through the controlled medium of readings.

Yet as indicated above, Derrida's engagement with the materiality of representation does not simply favour the theatre over the text. He is not suggesting that if freed, the 'enslaved interpreters' of the text would be more fully present. Rather as a challenge to representation as completion, the contention is that neither the page nor the stage can be equated with fulfilment. Thus, the distinction between page and stage is not absolute: both are constituted by the same foundational impossibility. This blurring of boundaries was demonstrated in Bristol where despite not submitting to the formal qualities of page poetry, performance poets can be understood to work within certain guidelines. These are poetic in that they involve attention to rhythm and rhyme, but generally in a looser manner than page poetry. One poet explains:

"I believe there are a lot of formulae to performance poetry that people perhaps don't like to talk about but are very much there. Particularly like the slam stuff which is inherited from America. If you see Americans doing it, it's even more like that because there is a certain inflection. I mean you're probably aware that it kind of reaches certain highs and then drops gently. Like that kind of….and when you've studied drama like I have, you're aware of how these things…So there's all these bits that don't have anything to do with subject matter so to an extent you're just tacking that on as a module, in a way."

As well as the potential for formal qualities, poets also questioned the material basis for distinction between the two. The difference between page and performance poetry was not always apparent on the stage:

"I know some really good poets who always have their book in front of them even when they know the poem by heart and it works for them. The book's physical presence is part of their performance. And I know people who hold the page and they don't even really look at it, they just stare at the ceiling or they stare at the audience and I've seen things like this work really well."

Not only do performance poets write their poems down in some form, but the process of developing a piece involves a complex set of movements between page and stage that undermine an absolute distinction between the two. One poet illustrates this through a description of his composition process:

"You'll write it out and when you come to perform it, you'll forget bits and you'll change words by accident until that's it, until it solidifies. And once it's dry, if you like, it's not going to change."

So the page informs the performance of the poem but does not dictate its occurrence. Equally, the performance reworks or fine tunes the initial text. There is an unstable distinction between the two.

Ultimately, the page versus stage debate focuses attention on the doing of expression, on the representational process that positions artist and audience. This 'doing' may seem more intense in the moment of performance, when the deviation of expression is more obvious:

"I get a kick out of the poetry because it's so much harder, if you fuck up, you fuck up, there's no hiding and so you kind of just have to go balls to the wall and that's wicked because you stand on stage and you've got all of the words in your head and you have to remember them in the right order and more than that you have to perform it. And sometimes you forget the words, and there's no worse feeling. Your stomach drops out and your mouth goes dry and you're suddenly like, fuck! All these people are waiting for what I have to say and I don't have anything to say because I've forgotten. But when you perform a poem without that happening, you just get a kick, that's awesome and these people listen to me."

So, focusing on the performance of expression involves a deprivileging of the cognitive and the textual in order to foreground the experiential. Yet a poem may be felt whether it is embodied in a text or in a performance. In Derrida's attempt to overthrow the 'theological' stage, textual expression does not give way to spoken performance. Instead there is a recognition that all expression is 'pure presence as pure difference' (*ibid*. p. 312). Therefore both page and performance are subject to disappearances, neither can completely capture the presence of expression. For the poet's art (and in Derrida's view more generally), this is because 'the essence of language is that language does not let itself be appropriated' (Derrida 2005: 101). So embodiment does not simply mean a focus on the (human) body over the text; a clear opposition between non-representation and representation. Rather it means attending to the material configuration of expression; the medium of its occurrence. Here, the artwork of the poet, in

whatever medium, involves representing this 'spectral economy' (*ibid*. p. 105) of language, giving 'this essence of language a new body' (*ibid*.). So Derrida's apparent engagement with the materiality of representation mirrors the claims he makes through the form of language. The differences between representation on the page or on the stage are overruled by the absence inherent to all expressive form. The poet is 'permanently engaged with a dying language' (*ibid*. p. 106), whether embodied in performance or in the text.

Yet, the unpredictable work of substance across page and performance above also shows the limits of Derrida's position. The matter of the text is not completely fixed, and neither is the embodied experience of performance completely volatile. Thus Derrida underplays the material possibilities of expression. By attending only to the problems of form, Derrida leaves the volatility of the matter of representation underexplored. His work can be seen as a contribution to 'an era of theory [...] in which language is "the destroyer of all subject"' (Burke 1998: 14). Not only does this underplay the challenges made to subjectivity beyond language, but it also avoids the (material) possibilities for rebuilding the subject. Understanding the floors of 'the humanist project' need not mean an end to the notion of subjectivity. This is one of the attractive elements of Braidotti's (2013) posthumanism. Her emphasis on subjectivity recognises that 'we need new frameworks for the identification of common points of reference and values in order to come to terms with the staggering transformations we are witnessing' (Braidotti 2013: 196). That is, despite the problems of the subject it remains a necessity, impossible to do without. Focusing on the materiality of art has provided one frame for such a reconstruction. Approaches to art that see it as enabling 'matter to become expressive' (Grosz 2008: 4) point to the way substance can be subjectivising. Instead of marking absence, artistic matter is a creation of form that can 'resonate and become more than itself' (*ibid*.). This potential for art 'to generate and intensify sensation' and therefore 'directly impact living bodies' (*ibid*.) provides a further approach to the aesthetics of expression, that makes a departure from its intellectual history.

The Aesthetic

Aesthetics has typically been a means for approaching art, for trying to capture something of these uncapturable qualities of expression. Human geography has recently seen a revival of aesthetic interests. While the aesthetics of humanistic geography were decried as 'narcissistic individualism' (Dixon *et al* 2012: 250), the discipline has been increasingly influenced by the 'artistic turn' in radical social theory (Hawkins 2012: 59). This uptake of aesthetic concerns rejects the rationalist tradition that was one influence on Kant's thought (Dixon *et al* 2012). From this position, aesthetics is based on the cognitive assessment of an object to have a particular property, enabling universal claims concerning the nature of these objects (*ibid*. p. 251). It is firmly the product of a human subject that 'requires a form of "disinterested" judgement' that necessitates a suspension of 'one's practical, ethical and political engagements' (Johnson 2007: 211). This rationalist tradition therefore renders aesthetics relevant for the contemplation of art but not beyond that. As will be explained, geographers have drawn on critiques of this tradition that seek to enliven the aesthetic through an empiricist approach. Their attempt to rethink the aesthetic challenges the rationalist tradition by suggesting deviation from it. This is in contrast to other critiques of the rationalist approach that have primarily pointed to the problems of (rather than the solutions to) its social implications. Bourdieu (1984) explored the aesthetic through the role of taste in transforming economic and social capital into cultural capital. Eagleton (1990: 3) similarly suggested that aesthetics disguised social differences, arguing that it is 'inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class society'. Yet for him, the materiality of aesthetic 'artefacts' meant that aesthetics 'also provides a challenge and alternative to these dominant ideological forms' (*ibid*.). In both these attempts to liberate it from art, aesthetics operates as a political tool that can both hide and expose inequalities.

The recent interest of geographers in the aesthetic has also sought to explore its political potential. However, the concern has been with the political possibilities more closely aligned with the empiricist (rather than the rationalist) tradition that is also present in Kant's philosophy. Here aesthetics involves expressions of

subjective feeling without cognitive content (Dixon *et al* 2012: 251). This enacts a shift away from aesthetics as a judgement of expression, onto the practice or experience of expression (Wylie 2005; McCormack 2004; 2008). Geographers' interest in the experience of expression draws on phenomenological and pragmatist approaches to aesthetics. One line of influence may be traced to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of expression. Whilst not labelled an aesthetics, Merleau-Ponty's (1964) phenomenology of language considers the complexity of expression; how it is co-constituted through a variety of embodied faculties. Specifically he points to the ways in which linguistic expression works through more than just words. It is necessary to 'consider speech before it is spoken, the background of silence which does not cease to surround it and without which it would say nothing' (*ibid.* p. 46). The contention is that the meaning of words lies partly in 'linguistic gesture' such as 'a hesitation, an alteration of the voice, or the choice of a certain syntax' (*ibid.* p 89). Kendon (2004) expands this understanding to argue that gestures more broadly (ie not those involved in the act of vocalising words) are central to producing an 'utterance'. This he defines as 'an "object" constructed for others from components fashioned from both spoken language and gesture' (2004: 5). So meaning given through gesture occurs both in the (sonorous) qualities of the voice and also other embodied forms of communication.

This attention to the practices of composition of expression, particularly through the body, can be illustrated through the act of clapping. Whist not a vocalisation, clapping uses sound to communicate through embodied movement. It is a practice particularly associated with the delineation of performance and played an important role in the unfolding of spoken word nights in Bristol. Unlike the gestures referred to by Merleau-Ponty and Kendon, clapping did not necessarily accompany or enhance speech. There were multiple events of clapping at spoken word nights that meant different things. Across these differing moments it is possible to expose the tension in expression between its government through certain codes and its potential for disruption. Although occasionally employed for other motives such as ridicule, almost all clapping at spoken word nights was in *appreciation*. This act served to show that members of the audience connected in

some way with the performer's piece. Such clapping could occur during the performance, if a joke was told for example. Generally though, clapping took place at the beginning and the end of a poet's set. At these different points, clapping had the potential to be both a *convention* and a *disruption*. Here, the singular or scattered act of clapping might be distinguished from the collective act of applause. The former is described by Connor (2003: 69) as 'convulsive and climactic', marking a 'change of state' or an 'interruption to the steady unrolling of time'. The latter is described as 'convergent and conjunctive' which 'rather than intensifying time [...], thickens and spreads it' (*ibid*. p. 70). Thus a single clap has more potential to upset the rhythm of the night whilst a group clapping plays to that rhythm by exaggerating it. This was particularly the case with applause at the beginning of a poet's set, where the audience were actively encouraged to clap by the MC to fill the empty space whilst the poet made their way to the stage.

However, this mapping of disruption onto a clap and convention onto applause does not always hold. Interesting here is how the individual's singular clap can in the moment become clapping as a collective act. That is, how a clap is passed on into a round of applause. This is an immanent and responsive movement that defies any easy distinction between disruption and convention. An eruption of clapping can be both a governed act but also an interruption. The significance of the individual clap is constituted relationally; it has no inherent meaning. Rather, its implications are spatially and temporally defined. Crucially, this meaning cannot be completely defined in advance, the significance of expression is contingent. So at spoken word nights, it wasn't simply that a clap occurred during performance in the venue that gave it meaning. Rather it was the particular atmosphere of the performance space at that time. This is the weighty intangibility of dispositions, sounds and movements that are constantly reworked over the course of the night. Often, therefore, claps are in the moment responses to this changing configuration that themselves instil an alteration in atmosphere. Such significance of clapping in the moment implies that something other than interpretation is going on. Whilst a round of applause involves an interpretation of the end of performance, it is clear

that much clapping is more spontaneous; seemingly a non-cognitive reaction. Thus, clapping provides and takes on significance as an embodied practice that reacts to and with the changing elements of its surroundings.

Emerging from this understanding of clapping is the difficulty of reducing expression to a single register of experience. Expression produces and is produced by a variety of interacting tangible and intangible elements, only some of which involve cognition. This relational occurrence of expression is hinted at by both Merleau-Ponty and Kendon. For Merleau-Ponty (1964: 73) 'at the moment of expression the other to whom I address myself and I who express myself are contestably together'. Meanwhile, Kendon sees in the gestural utterance an ability to link individual forms of expression to social processes. However, despite both pointing to its relational constitution, neither offers a sense of the contingency of expression. Instead, there is an attempt to trap gesture into a structure of signs to be read and interpreted: a 'second order language' for Merleau-Ponty (1964: 45) or 'communicative codes' for Kendon (2004:3). Expression remains tied to the cognitive human subject as the source and receiver of expression, to some degree governed by these external communicative codes. Yet despite retaining the role of interpretation in attending to expression, this phenomenological approach nonetheless foregrounds embodied practice. Merleau-Ponty points to the way expression is not always a product of direct human intention by showing how verbal communication relies on more than just words. He demonstrates the importance of focusing on expression as a doing, a relation that is sensed and given through material interactions. Pragmatist approaches to aesthetics build on these experiential elements of Merleau- Ponty's framing of expression, whilst downplaying the role of description and interpretation.

Pragmatism has been taken up by geographers interested in exploring the experimental and transactional nature of experience (Bridge 2008; McCormack 2010). The pragmatist emphasis on thought as a 'tool' or 'doing' resonates with Shotter's approach to language in use. Its application to aesthetics implies the

meaning through doing that occurs in the experience of expression. Shusterman's (2000) 'pragmatist aesthetics' aims to undermine the traditional separation of the practical from aesthetics as disinterested judgement. His central argument is that aesthetics is not wholly interpretation, it is also enriched experience. His defence of experience begins with a critique of the role of interpretation in aesthetics. Hermeneutic universalism or the 'belief that to perceive, read, understand or behave at all intelligibly is already, and must always be, to interpret' (Shusterman, 2000: 115) is the dominant position in interpretative theories of aesthetics. Shusterman suggests that this anti-foundational position has itself become foundational such that we no longer merely see everything through interpretation; rather 'everything is in fact constituted by interpretation' (*ibid.*). To counter this, he argues that a distinction must be maintained between interpretation and understanding. Whilst the former tends to involve conscious, deliberate thought and linguistic expression; the latter can be an unreflective, unconscious and 'unproblematic handling of what we encounter' (*ibid.* p. 133). Thus understanding names those aspects of experience 'never captured by language' (*ibid.* p. 134); those elements that we were not even aware of. Unlike interpretation which must always have a (textual) product, understanding may be present in 'a shudder or a tingle' (*ibid.*). Shusterman begins to expand on such embodied understanding of meaning through his notion of somaesthetics as the 'study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and creative self-fashioning' (*ibid.* p. 267).

So this pragmatist focus on the processes of experience has led towards a reconsideration of the role of the body in aesthetics. Rather than the rationalist position in which aesthetics involves acts of cognition, this draws on the empiricist position by suggesting that the body is understood as a vehicle for accessing as well as producing expression. Such pragmatism is anti-Cartesian in that it imagines the 'continuum body-mind' (Bridge 2008: 1580). This upsets the separation of knowledge and sensation, in which the former is considered to be of the mind, and the latter of the body. From such a Cartesian perspective, the premise of aesthetics in embodied sensation means that it is unable to deliver valid

knowledge of the world. Johnson (2007) provides an elaborate critique of this argument. His central thesis is that aesthetics 'should be the study of how humans make and experience meaning' because 'the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the same ones that make linguistic meaning possible' (2007: 209). That is, the knowledge acquired through embodied expression is equivalent to the knowledge produced through apparently cognitive processes. Knowledge is embodied because it is tied to experience, to the way one thing relates or connects with other things. As such, the knowledge acquired through aesthetics is immanent; it occurs in the consequences rather than determines the causes of expression. Like Shusterman, Johnson also situates his understanding of aesthetics in the pragmatist tradition by drawing on John Dewey. In Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934), Johnson finds art as an exemplar of aesthetic experience but not its sole sphere of influence. For Dewey (cited in Johnson, 2007: 212)

'the doings and sufferings of experience are, in the degree to which experience is intelligent or charged with meanings, a union of the precarious, novel, and irregular with the settled, assured and uniform – a union which also defines the artistic and the aesthetic.'

In this formulation, aesthetics names an approach to expression as meaning in the making that emerges through the relation of certain elements of our experience to other actual or possible aspects.

Moving away from poetry, such contingency of expression in embodied practice begins to be illustrated in the warm up activities for the ACTA young people's theatre group. The facilitator would always open the session with a game that encouraged group cooperation whilst simultaneously stimulating the participants both mentally and physically. These games worked to attune the participants to the expressive possibilities of their bodies. One game in particular did this very well. 'Giants, wizards and elves' was a scaled-up version of 'scissors, paper, stone'. Each character was connoted by a certain bodily stance and noise: a giant involved standing on tip-toes and a growling noise; the wizard was slightly crouched, holding a wand and shouting 'kazaam' and the elf was on haunches

making shrill shrieking noises. The giant ‘wins’ by squashing an elf; the elf wins by outwitting a wizard; and the wizard wins by zapping a giant. The group was split into two teams and each team had to decide in secret which character they would be. They would then turn to face each other in two lines and advance forwards for the count one, two, three. Once three was uttered, each team had to assume their character. The team of the winning character would then try to catch as many of the opposition as possible before they could flee back to the safety of their start line. The game was won overall by the team who captured the most members of the opposition. Relevant here is the capacity for both novelty and certainty in the expressive capacities of the bodies in the game. Expression worked as a relation between participants through embodied shapes. While the rules of the game dictated the meaning of the shapes in advance, the implications of this; the further connections made, could not be legislated for. The speed and agility of reaction of particular bodily configurations was open. The game shows elements of both the precarious and the settled that constitute Dewey’s aesthetic experience.

The pragmatist foregrounding of the experiential begins to show how the aesthetic might function as a lens for the contingency of expression in the world. This is because expression is framed as a relation; a name for the possibilities of connections made in experience. However, there are two problems with the pragmatist approach to aesthetics as outlined above. The first is that aesthetics continues to operate externally from the world; it serves to get at a meaning or product that is transcendental to expression. The problem here is that aesthetics, or the contingency of expression, is separate; it is unable to act in the world. For Shusterman (2000: 133) this is apparent in his notion of understanding which operates as the ‘initial ground of meaning’ for aesthetic experience. Similarly, Johnson (2007: 208) ‘seeks to bring aesthetics into the centre of human meaning’. So whilst both stress that meaning is accessed through and occurs in process, there seems to be an underlying assumption that meaning somehow pre-exists this activity, or is its guiding purpose. The quest for the meaning of expression, and for the aesthetic as the description of this process, is not challenged. The second problem is the centrality of human experience in this framing of the aesthetic.

Although the anti-Cartesian position of pragmatist philosophy need not be applied in this way, the focus by both Shusterman and Johnson on extracting meaning centres expression around the figure of the human. This is because the ability to make meaning is understood as a privileged and therefore distinguishing feature of human culture from the natural world. However, such humanist underpinnings can be restrictive; they close down opportunities for engagement with and through aesthetic experience.

To respond to these two problems requires further consideration of aesthetic practice in the world. This is to make what Dixon (2009: 412) has called 'a much stronger claim for the aesthetic.' She reverses the traditional approach that uses aesthetics to illuminate what art can tell us about the world. Instead, Dixon focuses on art in order to demonstrate the possibilities of the aesthetic for approaching the 'properties of space and the possibilities of time' (Dixon 2009; Dixon *et al* 2012). Drawing on this, a response to the first issue might involve showing how aesthetics concerns the conditions of possibility for expression. The interest lies not in finding the meaning of expression, but rather in what enables expression to appear meaningful. That is, how the aesthetic renders manifest; its *distributing* of the sensible (Rancière 2004). With respect to the second problem there is a necessity to demonstrate how the aesthetic attends to expression as a subjectivising force. Aesthetics no longer seeks to secure expression around a particular subject. Instead, aesthetics describes the openness of expression to connection; the always unfolding dynamic between its virtual capacities and their *appropriating* actualisations. These responses point to a worldly aesthetic practice that stresses the contingency of expression. Expression is shown to be uncertain, dependent upon particular conditions and yet always working to create new possibilities. Thus aesthetics becomes a means for understanding the transforming subject; for making sense of the ongoing construction and erasure of location even as claims are made upon it. The two directions for aesthetic practice – distribution and appropriation- will be elaborated on below.

Aesthetics as distributing

Aesthetics can operate as a distributing force; as the mode through which 'generalised inclusion and specific or localised exclusion' occur (James 2012: 119). This understanding of the practice of aesthetics is attributable to Rancière's notion of the 'distribution of the sensible' (Rancière 2004). The concern is with the expressibility of phenomena. Here sense, or the sensible, is a 'mode of being' that is capable of apprehension through perception (*ibid*. p.22). This is 'aesthetic' because it is a mode of being 'specific to artistic products' (*ibid*.). However, the central paradox of the distribution of the sensible is that art is defined by no longer being art. The 'absolute singularity of art' is asserted at the same time as the destruction of 'any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity' (*ibid*. p. 23). The specific sensory apprehensions that define artistic expression (as opposed to its designation through technical perfection) suspend divisions between form and matter, between understanding and sensibility. These are the very divisions that constitute art as separate. So both participation and partitioning are at work in the distribution of the sensible. The division of sensory modes gives rise both to identity and non-identity; to the 'part with no part' (Rancière 1999). At stake is not a dynamic between 'fixity and variability' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 350), but rather between inclusion and exclusion. Critical are the conditions through which one counts as visible or audible (i.e. sensible) whilst another does not.

Counting in this aesthetics as distribution is a question of both the work that is done with expression and of the work expression does. On the one hand, expression is a product; it is considered the material basis of artistic labour. Expression is the work of the artist, or that which makes the artist a worker. Rancière argues that 'art anticipates work because it carries out its principle: the transformation of sensible matter into community's self-presentation' (Rancière 2004: 44). On the other hand, expression renders or produces certain elements sensible rather than others. This provides the grounds of intelligibility that might define a community, in particular that of the working subject. Here, expression shifts from being the material conditions to the conceptualisation of work as 'the subject of a quarrel' (Rancière 2012: 210) over different organisations of

community. This is where making and thinking are combined; where Rancière (2004: 43) finds the 'immanence of thought in sensible matter'. Expression is the materiality of work but it is also bound up in the constitution of subjectivity. It therefore both produces and denies 'the part of the subject who incarnates, represents or symbolises work' (Rancière 2012: 206). Expression necessarily involves a distancing; the 'capacity to produce the statements of the working collective rests upon a radical separation with forms of being-worker' (*ibid*. p. 210). So by bringing together art and work through his conception of aesthetics, Rancière highlights a radical 'dis-identification' (*ibid*. p. 212). Art is not art and the worker is not a worker. Making and seeing are brought together such that both participate in and divide community. Aesthetics is the playing out of this tension through the distribution of the sensible.

Rancière's aesthetics therefore offer a way of reconceptualising the contested position of art in the world. As Dixon (2009: 412, emphasis in original) states, for Rancière artistic practices 'are both a particular form of politics *and* are capable of commenting on politics in itself.' This responds to two dominant formulations of art and politics. The first explores the power of appearances in society through the aestheticisation of politics. Aesthetics operates here as a form of 'style' that distracts by exerting 'a powerful pull that can be all the more seductive in situations where the ideology is neither known nor enthused over' (Gilroy 2000: 147). The second refers to the revealing content of art that can provide an illuminating rupture from routine. This is what Benjamin (1999) termed the politicisation of art and what Adorno and Horkheimer (1997 [1944]) suggested reduced all art to propaganda. Rancière challenges these opposing configurations of the relation between art and politics by denying their initial separation. For him, there is no sphere of art distinct from a sphere from politics. Instead art always equates to a political question; both art and politics 'depend on a specific regime of identification' (Rancière 2009: 26). Such regimes are constituted by exactly what separates art from the world and simultaneously denies that singularity; the modes of perception that share in and share out experience. Thus the distribution of the sensible denies the separation of art into the realm of 'the

cultivated classes that have access to a totalisation of lived experience' in contrast with the labour of 'the uncivilised classes immersed in the parcelling out of work and of sensory experience' (Rancière 2004: 44). The result is a concern with expression not for its meaning, but rather for the roles and occupations it distributes.

This question of how occurrences of art distribute the sensible to both open and close certain positions in the world can be explored again through ACTA. Community Orientated Arts and Social Transformation (COAST) is a collaboration between ACTA and three European partners in Germany, Poland and the Netherlands, supported by the EU Culture Fund. All four groups create original theatre with socially excluded and marginalised people. In March 2012, ACTA hosted the COAST International Festival of Community Theatre in Bedminster. The event included performances from all the theatre groups, as well as workshops and discussions. It offered a good opportunity to reflect on both the definition and the role of community theatre. Two points of contention continued to surface over the three days of the festival. One was the meaning of community and the other was the significance of artistic quality. The link between these, and the question of what is at stake in this relationship, is thrown into relief through the 'distribution of the sensible'. Community was mobilised in different ways by the theatre groups. Both ACTA and the Polish company, Teatr Grodzki, used community predominantly to describe those taking part in the theatre. In contrast, the German company, Expedition Metropolis, and the Dutch company, Rotterdams Wijktheater, used the term to connote their separation from institutionalised theatre. This separation occurred through their aims to seek out and tell the stories of new audiences who were perceived to be excluded from institutionalised theatre. In both these instances though, community theatre works as a regime of identification to produce a group of people as collective political subjects. The community in question was to be made manifest as a form of disruption that would constitute a political moment. For ACTA this might be elderly people, for Rotterdams Wijktheater this could be Chinese migrants to the Netherlands.

However, in both these instances the attempt at transformation through identification via art results paradoxically in the maintenance of the community's position. The rendering sensible of 'the community' of community theatre as separate was necessary for its targeted interventions. Yet, the production of such division reinforced the separation, elderly people or Chinese migrants were made visibly distinct from 'the mainstream'. Another paradox manifested in discussions over artistic quality. For those who sought their community as audience, the aim was to have a 'quality' finished production. Meanwhile, those whose community was actively participating in the theatre placed more emphasis on the value of the process of production rather than the final piece. Both cases show the struggle between the singularity of art and the simultaneous abandonment of such separation. Community theatre is valuable because of its artistic qualities: its ability to transform actions, matter and events into a presentation of community. Paradoxically, these qualities are also what connect it to the world: they eradicate any division between the matter of theatre and the matter of community. These contests over 'community' and 'art' exemplify the problems and the possibilities of community theatre through the constitution of 'the part with no part'. On the one hand communities are enabled to participate through art; both share in the world. On the other, community and art necessitate constitution as separate from the world through their work on each other; both are divided from the world.

Aesthetics works here in the maintenance of this paradoxical distribution. The expression of community theatre renders a collective subject sensible as both part of and separate from the world. The implications of this disruptive positioning of sense are left deliberately open. The occurrences after the rupture rendering sensible of the subject are beyond the political moment for Rancière. So aesthetics as distribution goes beyond the interpretation and contextualisation of art that has occurred in geography (as outlined above). Instead, the focus on the possibility of expression raises critical questions concerning 'that which is made visible and that which can be said' (Dixon 2009: 422). Dixon's argument is that aesthetics should have important reach in the discipline beyond its current 'home' in cultural geography. She suggests that its focus on sense foregrounds the

potential of matter that might bring 'the humanities and the sciences into some form of collaborative engagement' (*ibid*. p. 423). The appropriateness of Dixon's use of Rancière's thought to pursue this goal might be challenged. Whilst Rancière certainly removes aesthetics from the sole purview of art, his philosophy is arguably centred on the human subject. His interest in sayability as an indicator of political rupture relies on the significance of speech (or *logos*) as the distinguishing feature of humans from animals (Rancière 1999). So Ranciere's aesthetics as distribution is useful for framing the relationship between expression and a particular kind of politics. This foregrounds the role of expression in constituting the human subject as contingent between the common and the singular. Aesthetics as appropriation might provide a challenge to the certainty of this category of the human.

Aesthetics as appropriating

Aesthetics may exist as an appropriating force that produces the subject. Rather than expression emanating from or even distributing (between) subjects, it works to proliferate their potential creation. For Dixon *et al* (2012, this time not drawing on Rancière), this means that aesthetics has the potential to shed light on 'post-human' concerns in geography. These have been the various decentrings of the human and/or tracings of anthropomorphism. However, instead of simply outlining the (anti-Humanist) crisis of man, the aesthetic sits as a tool for the 'posthuman era' to work 'towards elaborating alternative ways of conceptualising the human subject' (Braidotti 2013: 37). Such a reading of expression and aesthetics may be found in Guattari (1992) and in his combined work with Deleuze (1987). Aesthetics functions as 'a dimension of creation in a nascent state, perpetually in advance of itself' (Guattari 1992: 102). In this, expressive qualities are 'not "pure" or symbolic qualities but proper qualities [...], appropriative qualities' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 356). Thus the aesthetics of expression give rise to a 'non-discursive, pathic knowledge, which presents itself as a subjectivity that one actively meets' (Guattari 1992: 25). There is therefore an 'autonomy of expression' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 350) in which expressive qualities are objective rather than subjective. Expression is not simply a matter of individual

presentation, ‘to express is not to depend upon’ (*ibid*.). Rather, expression involves a mode of responsive to attachments formed and those yet to be formed.

Aesthetics names this appropriative capacity of expression; this propensity to create rather than reflect. Expressive qualities concern possession and appropriation in that ‘they delineate a territory that *will* belong to the subject that carries or produces them’ (*ibid*. p. 349, my emphasis). This territorialising function makes expression productive and possessive; its movement is ‘content’ because it is ‘the emergence or proper qualities’ (*ibid*. p. 348). Yet the territorialisation of expression does not simply mean capturing or stabilising. Rather, ‘it is not one *or* the other’ (*ibid*. p. 350, emphasis in original); certain territorial motifs or points are fixed only if others are variable. So there is a particular materiality to this expression; a sensation that is ‘neither cerebral nor rational, nor is it harboured in phenomenology’s lived body’ (Dixon *et al* 2012). Instead, the body of expression emerges through forces of rhythm and chaos (see Bennett 2001; Grosz 2008). Despite such disorder, this need not be a body without position. Rather it speaks to the posthuman subjectivity outlined by Braidotti (2013: 50) which is ‘material and vitalist, embodied and embedded, firmly located somewhere.’ So aesthetics can attune us to the creativity required for the ‘pursuit of alternative visions and projects’ that are ‘offered by the decline of the unitary subject position upheld by Humanism’ (Braidotti 2013: 54). The possibilities of this aesthetics of appropriation may be examined by focusing on how expression is a creative moment that opens up new relations.

To explore this, we will return to ACTA and consider their ‘Get Together’ project. In this project, ACTA work within Bedminster, drawing on a sense of community as clearly bounded to place. Get Together is an ongoing programme of activities primarily funded by the National Lottery. It ‘brings together local people from different generations and cultures, to share stories and work together to improve and celebrate the local community’ (ACTA website). My involvement with ACTA coincided with the start of this process. The company were beginning a series of

activities with three different ‘hard-to-reach’ communities in Bedminster: older people, vulnerable young people and migrant families. Some of these activities took place at the ACTA centre, such as the young people’s theatre groups, whilst others were to begin as ‘outreach’ projects. The latter involved storytelling with elderly people in nearby sheltered accommodation and visual arts with refugee and asylum seeker families. Such outreach projects were tailored very specifically to the particular communities involved. For example, the visual arts activity with asylum seekers would be a good opportunity to be creative without the requirements of language or confidence. These initial activities with ‘hard-to-reach’ groups were aimed at their longer term participation in Get Together. The other aspect of the project was the staging of events that sought to combine these disparate groups. The main example of such a get-together during my time with ACTA was ‘Legends in Light’. This was a musical parade of lanterns around the streets of Bedminster in December 2011. The lanterns were large sculptures, made by those in the community to fit the theme of myths and legends. The collaborative process of making these was a good way to get families involved in the project.

The parade itself ended at the ACTA centre, where there was a barbecue and a performance by the newly formed community choir. Get Together shows how sense works in expression through the potential for attachment. The collective creativity involved in these activities brought people together; it connected them, through shared expressive acts. ACTA articulate this process through a vocabulary of difference and similarity:

“So the aim of the whole thing is that through the programme [...] older people and younger people, migrant families and young people, everyone is working together for a joint aim, through this process of working together and sharing ideas people actually stop worrying about the difference and feel, start seeing the similarities.”

There is a tendency for this language of similarities and differences to slip into essentialisms. In its openness to new relations, expression defies such foundational attachments. Nevertheless, ACTA’s ethos of connection rather than division does

underpin the work of expression. The unfolding of expression is not an absolute logic but rather an orientation, a disposition towards something that was previously separate, distanced or detached in some way. These attachments of expression are ambivalent; they do not necessarily constitute recognition or an acknowledgement of similarity. Making a lantern together does not simply overcome conceptions of difference, but the sense of its expression enables a mode of responsiveness to attachments. In momentarily expressing something together, the possibility of a shared set of relations is created. Therefore, framing the creativity of ACTA through an aesthetics of appropriation attunes us to the complexity and contradictions of contemporary belonging. An indication is given of the capacities of expression to redraw the lines of subjectivity, despite and sometimes because of apparently enduring attachments. Such an aesthetic works towards 'a vision of the subject that is "worthy of the present"' (Braidotti 2013: 52).

Synthesising

Expression is an animating force of (cultural) experience that has the capacity to both reinforce and upset the stability of the subject. Aesthetics has been the implicit and explicit frame for such expression in geography. Artistic creation has both separated and participated in the world as the subject of study. This chapter has narrated a story of geography's engagement with artistic expression beginning with a focus on the perceptions of the artist as a describer of the world. Yet the artist was soon recognised not to 'own' their expression, and attention turned to the interpretation of the form of artwork. Instead, artistic expression was partly given through how it was received. Aesthetics might be initially located in this act of elucidating artwork as representations. But this contextual focus said little of what expression does beyond artist and audience. To fill this silence, geographers turned to the non-representable qualities of artistic expression. Expression became something that resists capture through a combination of the material and immaterial, of virtual and actual qualities. The attempt to harness these qualities occurred through a focus on experience. Aesthetics re-enters the tale as an approach to expression that emphasises the sensual and the relational. It is shown

to condition the possibilities for expression and also to be an attunement to the work of expression as a subjectivising force. Therefore, the character of the aesthetic is given greater scope. Rather than commenting on art's role in the world, the aesthetic becomes an approach to the world itself. The uncertain attachments of the present, particularly the contours of posthuman subjectivity, might be understood as a product of the aesthetic, of the capacities of expression to distribute and appropriate. Thus aesthetics works as '*an achievement across adversity* requiring the difficult coming together of affect and reason' (Saldanha 2012: 277, emphasis in original). Through expression aesthetics must reconcile the apparent solidity of what is there with its ability to become otherwise.

The end of this story is unclear. The attunement to the sensible is important for understanding the experience of belonging in the present. Yet there is a question concerning what such a focus on sensuous processes means for our conceptualisation of the subject. On the one hand this is an uncertainty over the agency of the subject; over the type and validity of the politics of such an aesthetic approach to the world. For Saldanha (2012: 278), this is a worry about the attempt to use artistic concerns as a replacement for 'politics as strategic, messy, sometimes violent mass action.' While this chapter has shown that an attunement to the aesthetic does not necessarily mean focusing art, stressing the dynamic capacities of expression can seem at odds with the exposure of systemic injustices. On the other hand there is an ambiguity concerning where the contours of the subject might be drawn. Aesthetics sits as one response to the recognition that we need new analytical and material tools to fashion our ongoing 'becoming present'. These tools must take into account the challenges to the human to ground alternative pathways for the subject. With its humanist legacy, aesthetics provides a fecund plane upon which to start such an engagement. It can combine creativity with criticism; invoking the 'humanist imperative towards improvement and critique' (Lorimer 2012: 287). Nonetheless the question remains 'if the aesthetic subject is no longer a human being made exceptional by their ability to make sense of the world around them, and, crucially, to recognise their capacity for so doing, then what, if anything, remains of the human? And what does a

subject encompass?' (Dixon *et al* 2012: 256). This challenging incoherence will be taken up in the next chapter.

6. Fragmenting

"The model of anarchist/DIY performativity aims to revitalise political action […], not first by mapping out the better good life but by valuing political action as the action of not being worn out by politics. […] The urgency is to reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself." (Berlant 2011: 262).

Cultural performances are increasingly understood as contrived, commodified or at worst extinct. Creative practices such as Carnival have fragmented. Partially separated from local direction and production through state and commercial intervention; they are seen to lack authenticity and originality. Postmodernism might have it that these are empty performances. Yet this is at odds with the complex materiality of their occurrence. Cultural performances are put together and disseminated; they are contrived; but often in the face of a sense of growing contingency. The contours of an uncertain and contested subjectivity are manifest in such fragmentary performances. Expressed is a 'subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated' (Braidotti 2013: 49), drawing on the challenges to the 'human' discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, the work of these performances is performative in that their occurrence is subjectivising. However, this deviates from the discursivity that underpins Butler's rendering of the subject through the citation of norms. Rather it involves the resolution and dissolution of material practices of coming together, of assembling. In this performativity, the challenge is not one of achieving *the* performance. It is rather one of continuing to act; of avoiding being worn out by the weighty processes of invention and reconfiguration. This chapter takes the example of the cancellation of the 2012 St Paul's Carnival to explore the vitality of the fragments of performance. It begins with an examination of how 'matter' – things and objects – make their way (back) into cultural performance, drawing on 'speculative realist' and 'vital materialist' approaches. The liveliness of these material practices is shown to balance the subject between the solid and the fragile, between the deliberate and the contingent. Such a balance is framed as precarious belonging through the recounting of three moments of cancellation in which the contingency of Carnival forces the reconfiguration of attachments.

Performing things

Things, substance or 'the material' are making a (contested) return to culture (Whatmore 2006; Anderson and Wylie 2009; Tolia-Kelly 2013). This supposed re-emergence can be situated as a response to postmodernism. This broad 'aesthetic' movement framed performances of culture in a paradoxical position. Culture was empty yet pervasive, nihilistic yet vital to contemporary politics. This paradox is premised upon a particular understanding of culture, one in which the 'images' rather than the 'practices' are dominant. The focus on images enables culture to 'become free-floating, it is everywhere, actively mediating and aestheticising the social fabric' (Featherstone 2007: 97). This apparent ubiquity of culture means that it must influence other spheres, hence the 'cultural turn' in geography and beyond. However, this reading of culture as image results in a flattening of distinctions in social life that can limit its theoretical purchase. This is Baudrillard's 'hyperreality' (1983) where there is a 'heightening of reality which becomes in turn a deadening of reality' (McRobbie 1994: 19). Image and reality merge. Culture occurs as a textual practice of cross-referencing in which reality is purely formal or stylistic. This hint at citation and mixing has similarities to the processes of both performativity and creolisation but lacks their political emphasis. Attempts to constitute and legitimate subject position become inconsequential as authenticity is irrelevant. As Featherstone (1995: 95) argues, rituals and ceremonies 'commodified and promoted to a wider audience' are embraced and enjoyed rather than inducing 'passivity amongst citizens who are essentially manipulated'.

A defining trait of this postmodern culture was its problematisation of representation. Intertextual and self-conscious images mean 'no return to a mode of representation which politicises in a kind of straightforward "worthwhile" way' (McRobbie 1994: 22). In words that still ring true for contemporary conditions of labour, McRobbie (*ibid.* p. 23) argues that what is attractive about the postmodern upset of representation is the way it maps onto 'the enforced fragmentation of impermanent work and low career opportunities'. This

demonstrates more broadly the way culture is one realm through which the present unfolds as a fragile condition. However, the vocabulary of images cannot suffice when attending to the complexity of representations in contemporary society. Representations must be understood as practised and worked at; configurations of matter and meaning subject to circulations and stoppages. Such complexity of representation might be understood as a driving force for 'non-representational' approaches in geography. As indicated in chapters two and five, the idea that representation is not enough to get at or be in the world underpins this broad position. This is not an outright rejection of representation but a drive to focus on its excesses. Rather than stability there is movement, instead of discourse the emphasis is on matter, and containment gives way to relations. The result is that the language of representation and identity has been replaced by one of relationality and process (c.f. Massey 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006; Saldanha 2007; McFarlane et al 2012).

In thinking through categories of identification this has translated into an interest in two forms of materiality. One has tended towards a more stable understanding of matter as objects and things that resonate with and direct belonging (eg Tolia-Kelly 2004; Gorman-Murray 2008). In the other, matter is less about stability and more concerns shifting properties: its intensity or viscosity (eg Saldanha 2007; Slocum 2008). So across these materialities there is a tension between the independence and dependence of objects, between the durability and volatility of things. For the cultural performance of Carnival this means that it can be conceptualised as both concentrated and diffuse. On the one hand, Carnival happens, and in its happening it is able to take on a certain solidity. On the other hand, Carnival is an excessive occurrence that seems to go beyond the event; it is sensible from many different angles. It simultaneously represents yet fails to encompass African-Caribbean identity. This material tension in culture emerges in two approaches to the independence of objects that might inform how things perform. Of primary interest here is not how things perform *in* Carnival, but rather how Carnival manifests *as* a thing that performs. That is, how it can be both a

coherent and incoherent occurrence, a complex representation that reworks connections between matter and meaning.

Putting performance together

The first approach highlights the challenges of getting at the 'object' – Carnival – itself. Carnival might be understood to both withdraw from and enter relations with other entities without being reduced to either action. Here Carnival must be accessed via 'allusion rather than direct contact' (Harman 2010: 789). This draws on the 'object-orientated philosophy' at work in Harman's brand of 'speculative realism' (Harman 2010; Bryant *et al* 2011; Harman 2011). Objects are put into play as one means for overcoming the 'anti-realist trend' (Bryant *et al* 2011: 4) in continental philosophy that has foregrounded language and textual critique. Speculative realism rejects this 'correlationist' position; that is 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being and never to either term considered apart from the other' (Meillassoux in Bryant *et al* 2011: 3). In this vein, Harman argues (2011: 24) for the necessity to 'account for the difference between objects and their qualities', for an understanding of objects as beyond human access. Harman's objects therefore exist in a tension. He situates them in the 'speculative reality' that occurs between processes of 'undermining' and 'overmining'. Harman identifies these as two problematic approaches that have sought to eliminate objects from inquiry. Approaches that undermine objects suggest that they are too superficial to be the truth. Approaches that overmine objects argue that objects are too deep: 'they are unreal compared to what is truly evident in them' (Harman 2011: 24). This might be qualities, events, or giveness to human thought. Harman argues that the latter is evident in correlationalism and idealism which 'grant no autonomy to the object apart from how it is thought' (ibid.).

Instead of these approaches, the object for Harman is 'what is autonomous but not *entirely* autonomous, since it exists in permanent tension with all those realities that are meant to replace it implicitly' (ibid. p. 39, emphasis in original).

Therefore, this ontology emphasises the importance of objects as (semi-)independent but attunes us to the difficulties of getting at this autonomy. On the one hand, Carnival cannot be subsumed by elements that are greater or lesser than the event itself. On the other hand, it is difficult to frame Carnival without considering these constitutive elements. Thus, this first approach to the independence of objects shows the complexity of representation through the way things perform by enacting multiple realities. Carnival appears as an object through the contingent coming together of a variety of elements. Different happenings and materials cohere to produce the substance of Carnival's performance. The contemporary coherence of St Paul's Carnival can be understood through a combination of disparate forms of and motivations for the event. It began in 1968 as a community-run festival held primarily in the inner city areas of St Paul's and Easton (subsequently separated by the construction of the M32 motorway). Since then, the event has gradually gone through a variety of alterations, many of which reflect the changing significance of the area of St Paul's. Four elements will be focused on to provide an indication of how Carnival is enacted through a variety of elements: protesting, parading, sound systems and programmes.

St Paul's Carnival is bound up in broader protests concerning the matter and meaning of race in Britain's urban centres. The increased Black presence in Britain following post-war migration meant that collective identities were openly articulated and struggled over using the language of race (Solomos *et al* 1982). Much of this struggle centred on the spaces of the city. The 1980 riots in the St Paul's neighbourhood of Bristol were one of a number of instances of 'racial unrest' in British cities in the early part of the decade. Although sparked by bad relations between the police and 'inner city' populations, the riots were also a manifestation of structural deprivation. The violence resulted in changes to welfare and social provision for the Black urban poor (Owusu 2000). Despite this, race remained central to the construction of urban crisis, with moral panics constructing an homogenous Black population associated with violent territorial claims, crime and poor housing (Gilroy, 2002 [1987]). This worked to position the

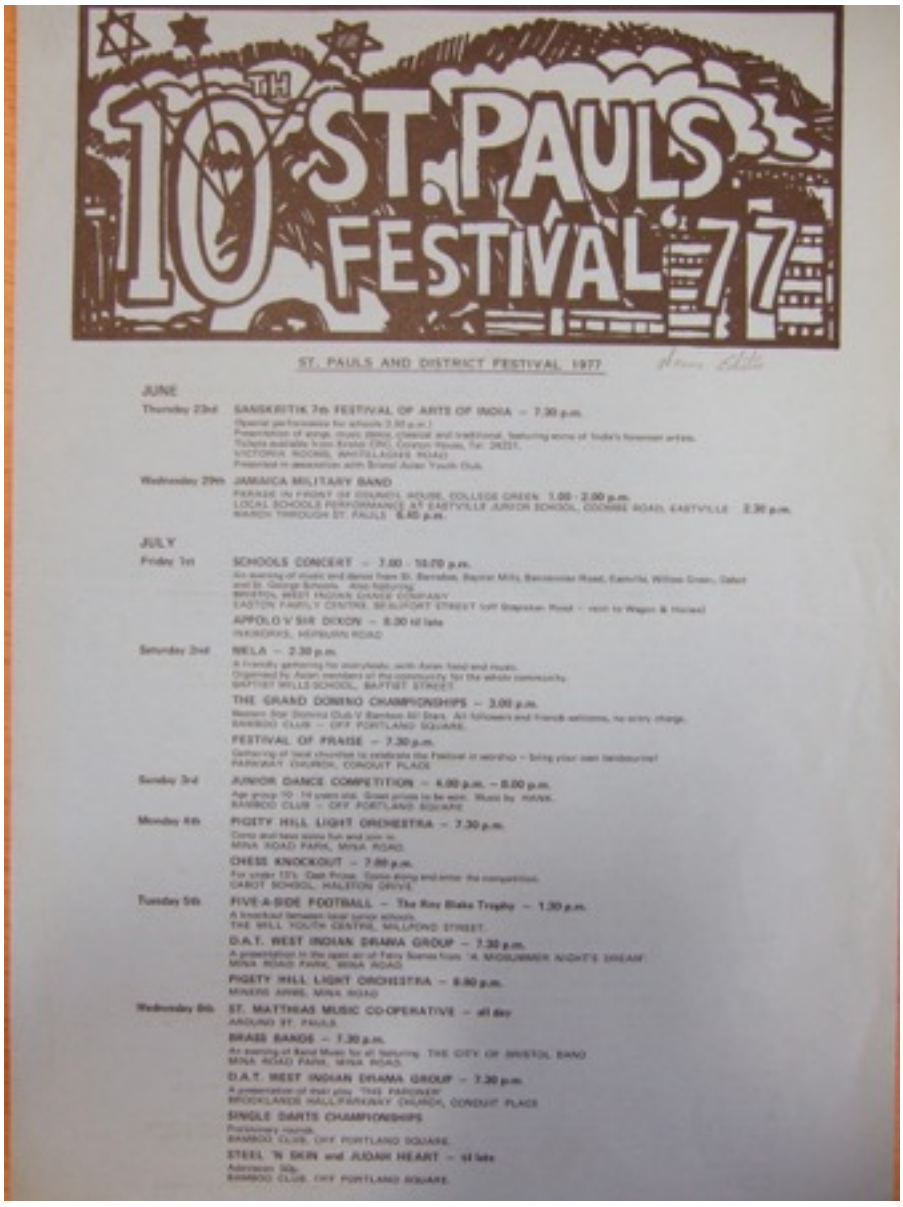
city as ‘the institutional framework for racist and racialising processes’ (Keith & Cross 1993: 26). The street was a central site of contestation, with Black occupation of these spaces associated with violence (Dawson 2007). In taking to the streets in celebration, Carnival emerged as a contestation of these negative constructions of Blackness in Britain. Therefore, St Paul’s Carnival manifests as a performance of dissent but it is not a straightforward protest. It is an example of the close relationship between cultural organisation and Black political mobilisation in Britain.

Carnivals in particular emerged as a ritualistic form of resistance that were central to the ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ of Black diaspora populations (Hall & Jefferson 1975; Dawson 2007: 76). Notting Hill Carnival in London was established in 1958 as a response to the state defined race riots in the area, and in the 1970s formed part of the Black resistance to neo-facism in Britain (Gutzmore 2000; Dawson 2007). Black political mobilisation had occurred in Bristol, most notably through the Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963 (Stephenson 2011). However, St Paul’s Festival, as Carnival was originally known, began as a community initiative to improve integration in mixed-ethnicity inner city neighbourhoods. But, by the early 1980s, the event had become much more clearly associated with African-Caribbean culture. This is reflected in the themes for the event which evoked (Black) protest, such as ‘uprising’ (1982 see figure 3) and ‘liberty’ (1984 see figure 4). During this period, both Hall (1990) and Gilroy (2002 [1987]) noted the importance of culture and creative experimentation in grounding experiences of Black people as distinctly British. This was also a critique of anti-racist movements that portrayed Black people as victims. Gilroy argued that Black culture acted as a form of political assertion and self-determination. Acts of cultural production provided an aesthetic coherence that balanced the seeming incoherence of Black Britishness as articulated through ‘narrative displacements and interruptions of historiographic continuity’ (Hesse 2000: 113). Artistic forms, such as Carnival, demonstrated the existence of a Black British culture that was centred on collective and everyday production processes.

The work of protest in putting together St Paul's Carnival is therefore tied to the practice of parading. The Carnival parade provides the opportunity for those in the community of St Paul's to display and be displayed. The preparation for and construction of the parade has long been embedded in the community. Yet, the material structure (and therefore meaning) of the parade has changed over time. Prior to the late 1980s, the procession involved the 'floats' typical to other carnivals in South West England. These were lorries carrying peopled scenes. But it was felt that 'whilst the decorated lorries always provided a large and impressive spectacle they had no real cultural contribution to make to the type of Carnival that happens in the Caribbean' (St Paul's Festival Report 1990 p.5). Instead of this, the organisers wanted a Carnival parade that resembled the Masquerade (Mas) costumes associated with Trinidadian Carnival, which involves walking and dancing. However, abandoning the lorries initially produced a disappointing result, according to the author of the report: 'the procession seemed to be smaller when in fact there were more participants [...]. The masqueraders became spread out and often fell into a sort of march' (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, it was recognised that achieving the quality of street theatre associated with Mas 'isn't suddenly going to happen, but sooner rather than later the innate energy and vitality that is the root of real Carnival is bound to emerge' (*ibid.* p.6). Regardless of whether this 'innate energy' has emerged, the change did result in the attempted establishment of permanent (meaning year-round) 'Mas camps' for costume making. Although these have failed to operate all year, even as temporary activities they have been a key practice for anchoring Carnival in the community of St Paul's. Thus, the matter of the parade has been central to the performance of the event.

Sound systems are another element that contribute to the enactment of Carnival. As with the parade, these work to tie Carnival to the people of St Paul's, but are equally challenges to this coherence. Sound systems broadly refer to a DJ or collective and their equipment (generators, turntables and speakers) that together constitute a particular 'sound'. They have historically been central to Jamaican music and were subsequently transferred to the UK with Jamaican migration (Hebdige 1988; Cooper 2004; Henriques 2008). Rather than playing a single style,

A Selection of St Paul's Carnival/ Festival programmes



10TH ST. PAULS FESTIVAL 77

ST. PAULS AND DISTRICT FESTIVAL 1977

JUNE

Thursday 23rd — SANSKRITIK 7th FESTIVAL OF ARTS OF INDIA – 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 29th — JAMAICA MILITARY BAND

JULY

Friday 1st — SCHOOLS CONCERT – 7.00 - 10.00 p.m.

APPOLO V SIR DIXON – 8.30 till late

Saturday 2nd — MELA – 2.30 p.m.

THE GRAND DOMINO CHAMPIONSHIPS – 3.00 p.m.

FESTIVAL OF PRAISE – 7.30 p.m.

Sunday 3rd — JUNIOR DANCE COMPETITION – 4.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.

Monday 4th — PIGETY HILL LIGHT ORCHESTRA – 7.30 p.m.

CHESS KNOCKOUT – 7.00 p.m.

Tuesday 5th — FIVE-A-SIDE FOOTBALL – The Roy Blake Trophy – 1.30 p.m.

D.A.T. WEST INDIAN DRAMA GROUP – 7.30 p.m.

PIGETY HILL LIGHT ORCHESTRA – 8.00 p.m.

Wednesday 6th — ST. MATTHIAS MUSIC CO-OPERATIVE – all day

BRASS BANDS – 7.30 p.m.

D.A.T. WEST INDIAN DRAMA GROUP – 7.30 p.m.

SINGLE DARTS CHAMPIONSHIPS

STEEL 'N SKIN and JUDAH HEART – till late

Photos author's own, taken with permission of Bristol Records Office

Figure 3: 1982.

Figure 4: 1984.

Figure 5: 1990.

Figure 6: 1991.

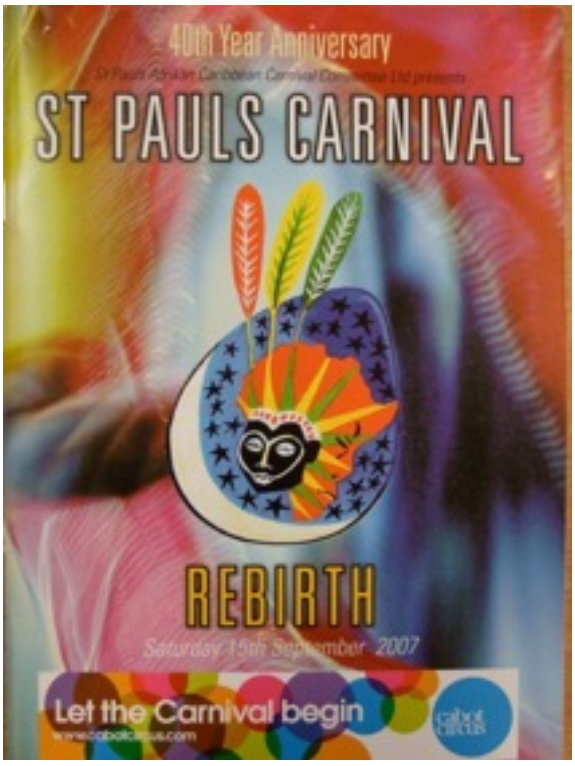


Figure 7: 2007.

sound systems have typically been ways to incorporate a variety of, often annually changing, genres of music to St Paul's Carnival. Made not only in the Caribbean but also in the UK and USA, this movement of music is constitutive of the circulations and settlings that comprise a shifting rather than static Black culture (Gilroy 1993). Essential to this movement of music is the Do-It-Yourself nature of the sound systems at the Carnival, in which individual DJs bring and set up their systems to play particular genres of music throughout the day and night. The practice is now formalised through a licensing system by the Carnival committee. Many of the sound system owners still have residential or familial ties to St Paul's: their presence connects the broader ties to the African-Caribbean diaspora with cultural production in the local area. Such 'global-local' ties are also enacted through the selling of Caribbean street food (most commonly Jerk chicken) at the event. Again, stall holders are now required to have a license but this hasn't entirely eradicated the practice of residents selling food and other products from their houses. Here Carnival performs through reworking the matter of cultural forms from elsewhere.

The final element here that might illustrate the complex enactment of St Paul's Carnival is the programme. This schedule has had a material basis in the form of a leaflet or booklet. Whilst these have all broadly aimed to outline the order of events, the later programmes have a more 'professional' or 'corporate' appearance, not least due to increased prominence of advertising (see figure 7). The early St Paul's Festival (see figure 2) involved a variety of events including sports, drama and comedy that claimed a mix of ethnic origins. With the changes to the event in the 1980s, there was a gradual shift to a more contained focus on the Carnival, as indicated by the name change in 1991 (see figures 5 and 6), with the fortnight festival period being significantly reduced by the 2000s. These alterations in the programme coincided with changes both to funding requirements and the associated organisation of Carnival. In 1991, the event moved from voluntary semi-autonomous status to an employer and separate organisation. In this move to become a 'charitable industrial and provident society', the name was changed, primarily because 'Carnival' was more easily associated with African-

Caribbean culture than 'Festival'. Having charitable status provided greater opportunities to access funding, meaning the possibility of a larger event. Along with this, though, came greater responsibilities, such as rising events management costs. In 2003, the organisation became regularly funded by ACE, a status they have maintained over the past decade. Since 2007, the programme has included far fewer peripheral events, a trend continued by the current (White) Carnival manager since his employment in 2009. Therefore, the programme is vital to Carnival's performance as both a material and conceptual frame for the event that can work to both stabilise and effect change. Thus, framing Carnival through these four elements begins to illustrate the multiple realities that make Carnival a thing that performs through a delicate balance of coherence and incoherence.

Letting performance act out

The second approach to matter in the complexity of representation navigates this dynamic between concentration and diffusion by focusing on the impact of Carnival as an entity. Instead of using allusion to get at the object itself, the object's ability to act on other things works to frame its vitality. Carnival's capacity to perform is not rendered through its isolation, but rather through its ability to take effect beyond itself, through the liveliness of its response. In this sense, a power is given to 'things' that were previously considered separate and inert (Bennett 2010). This moves away from an understanding of 'things' as the product of human making: both through acts of perception and of mechanisation. Such 'vital materialism' has proved popular for considering the (ethical) ecologies of human and non-human interaction (Adey *et al* 2011; Dixon *et al* 2012; Gibbs 2013). The claim that there is a 'culture of things' (Bennett 2010: 5) in which materials are 'lively and self-organising' (p. 10), means that 'the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated' (p. 13). As such, this 'thing-power' refuses complete reduction to human knowledge. Instead, it 'aims impossibly to name the moment of independence (from subjectivity) possessed by things' (p. 3). The impossibility of this independence points to two distinctive aspects of Bennett's performing things. The first concerns how such independence is known. The animation of things that Bennett describes might be just that: a product of her

perceptions that emerges from a combination of the cultural meanings (or semiotics) of objects combined with her own biography. Bennett's defence against this problem recognises that a 'perceptual style open to the appearance of thing-power' (p. 5) is important. However, she suggests that this is part of a wider process of rendering manifest which is 'both to receive and to participate in the shape given to that which is received' (p. 17). As a result, thing-power 'arrives through humans but not entirely because of them' (*ibid*.). The second aspect elaborates the status of independence. Bennett's 'things' are not independent in that they 'affect other bodies' (p. 3).

The act of separation removes things from their construction solely by human knowledge, rather than from other matter. In fact, Bennett's 'thing-power' is connecting, operating as a force or energy that makes things relate. The difficulty with this lies in understanding how objects appear and disappear independently if their separation is conceived only in terms of relation. Thus, whilst attending to 'things', Bennett's interest lies not in delineating their boundaries, but rather in what they do; in their intensity. So Bennett shows how acts of relation constitute the performance of things. Carnival manifests as a performance through its ability to act elsewhere. This is seemingly paradoxical: its 'thingness' is constituted by its ability to connect with other things, rather than to separate from them. An object or event occurs as a 'disturbance in the situation of the present' that partially manifests through the 'adaptations improvised around it' (Berlant 2011: 198). The result of Bennett's argument is a reformulation of agency. If things are always in relation an 'actant never really acts alone' (Bennett 2010: 21). It therefore becomes difficult to identify clear outcomes. The efficacy of the action is found in 'the idea of the power to make a difference that calls for a response' (*ibid*. p. 31). This upsets any notion of linear agency: cause and effect are fractual and emergent, agency is creative. So in Bennett's understanding of agency, all 'things' are changed by the process of acting. Carnival performs as a 'thing' through its relations with other things but also alters through such manifestations. To demonstrate this acting out, the appearance of Carnival at the Bristol Festival of

Nature will be explored, followed by a consideration of the influences on the event from elsewhere.

Despite the cancellation of the event in 2012, St Paul's Carnival did continue to perform. However, these acts involved changes to the shape and size of Carnival that necessarily altered its overall constitution. In Bristol, the main manifestation was of the Carnival as parade at the Festival of Nature. This took place on a rainy Saturday in June at the Habourside. The event was primarily organised by the BBC Natural History Unit that is based in Bristol, but there was also a strong presence from both of the city's universities. St Paul's Carnival was to appear under the guise of the puppets made by students at Millpond Primary School (on the edge of St Paul's) in a series of workshops. According to the Carnival website the parade was 'to mimic and be inspired by how nature uses its own resources to attract or repel other creatures in an elaborate fashion display.' The parade was scheduled to appear at midday, it actually materialised over thirty minutes later. A fox with a bee as an escort emerged from a side gate of the festival site. These two creatures were accompanied by a small 'samba' band. The group were soon surrounded by the camera crews who were broadcasting live on the big screen at the festival. This helped to amplify their presence which was fairly negligible given the scale of the site. It also attracted the buzz of a few more promotional bees that were busy advertising a product. This confusion was not lost on onlookers, who seemed slightly bewildered by the peculiar menagerie. The explanation for the appearance of the fox given to the TV presenter was that it was an animal that 'lived in Bristol'. However, the broader question of why the Carnival procession was occurring at the event was left unaddressed. In performing at the Festival, Carnival was reconfigured to suit the surroundings. It was changed through the process of acting; relating to the diverse ensemble of exhibits and stalls at the Festival, often through a shared absence of thematic connection.

Whilst the unfolding of such acting out was contingent, there was a motivation behind this relational performance of Carnival. ACE, as primary funders, required

that St Paul's Carnival engagement activities should continue, despite the cancellation the actual of Carnival day. The appearance at the Festival was an example of this activity. Others included dance workshops and a contribution to Bristol's presence at the 'Battle of the Winds' Olympic opening ceremony in Weymouth. As illustrated by the Festival of Nature, the Carnival was a very different beast on these occasions from that which was supposed to appear on Carnival day. This alteration through relation was encouraged by ACE, who in their quest to 'achieve great art for everyone' seeks to encourage the sharing of best practice between different artists. There is a tension at work here between two different (although not completely polarised) understandings of Carnival: as an event and as an art form. In one, St Paul's Carnival could be considered a relatively isolated occurrence, contained in the taking place of the Carnival procession and the associated revelry. The idea of having more than one procession would dilute the impact of the day. In the other, St Paul's Carnival may encompass a broader set of artistic and community-based practices that are orientated towards a procession in St Paul's but need not reach that point in order to continue. In recognising it as an art form, an ACE representative I interviewed described Carnival as:

"*going out, if you like, of St Paul's, as well as working in partnership with some of the other people that work in outdoor settings in the region. And that is then changing the quality of what they do and how it works.*"

So ACE emphasised the ongoing development of Carnival practice through both going out of and inviting others into St Paul's. This was seen by ACE as sharing best practice rather than importing talent from elsewhere:

"you set up those networks of making or performance groups locally but they draw on artistic skills that are relevant to the community but need not necessarily come from that locality. So you get sharing and the artistic game can get raised by that exchange."

Thus Carnival is paradoxically strengthened by its infiltration of and dilution by other elements. These relational incoherencies also occur when Carnival 'takes place'; they were not an attempt to 'cover up' the cancellation.

Rather, Carnival performs through and is changed by these connections with other elements. It is afforded both a solidity and a volatility via the relations that constantly redraw and upset its boundaries. Thus these two approaches to emphasising objects demonstrate how Carnival differently manifests as a thing that performs. They highlight the importance of materiality in the complexity of representational processes. In particular, the approaches illustrate the contingency of matter that works to upset 'straightforward' representation. Cultural performance is afforded an uncertain materiality, but one that is neither stable nor distinct. The first approach, building on Harman's object-orientated philosophy, stressed (semi-)autonomy, arguing that performances of culture must be approached via allusion rather than direct contact. The second, drawing on Bennett's vital materialism, emphasised independence as a vitality that is registered through relations with other things. Together these insights advance the understanding of representation as complex, associated with postmodernism outlined above. The difficulty of distinguishing between image and reality or of making them match is not just a textual practice that tends towards the containment of representation. It also involves considering the capacity for cultural performance to be both concentrated and diffuse; a 'going with' the coherences and incoherencies of its materiality. So attention to the inconsistencies and volatilities of matter emphasises the way representations such as Carnival are never entirely stable nor accurate. The attempt to define and embody certain categories of identification always has an excess; an element of contingency that may withdraw or relate elsewhere. Nonetheless, such cultural performances and the categories they enact continue to provide a grounding for social life. However, this amounts to a precarious form of belonging.

Precarious belonging

To conceptualise belonging as precarious is to be attuned to the uncertain materiality of cultural performances. Representations such as St Paul's Carnival maintain the appearance of particular categories of identification, of 'genres of reliable being' (Berlant 2011: 196), that orientate attachments. Yet if such cultural performances have an uncertain materiality, conditioned by a simultaneous

coherence and incoherence that upsets the unity of these categories, then belonging also exists in a disrupted state. So on the one hand there is a sense that belonging occurs in excess of these categories. Sexualised, racialised and naturalised differences are no longer determining, they are ostracised as 'the categorical boundary-keepers of the subject of Humanism' (Braidotti 2013: 38). Rather than constraining, such differences are affirmative, they 'have evolved into fully fledged alternative models of the human subject' (*ibid.*). On the other, there is a reluctance to do away with categories of identification. Race, gender and class remain vital lenses for understanding social inequalities. The fragmenting of representation necessitates a focus on the ways these categories are put into practice; how they are approached, made, circulated and expressed. Ahmed (2012) points to arguments that suggest that such categories are 'blockages' that restrict our capacity to act. But if we are to take one thing from Butler it is that these categories *are* acts. Although shifting shape through this playing out, social categories are useful for the way they can attend to constraints. They open up a space for critique that helps us 'understand how it is that the world takes shape by restricting the forms in which we gather' (*ibid.* p. 182). Belonging is therefore an ongoing negotiation of this excess and constraint: of the lightness of social categories set against their capacity to weigh us down (*ibid.*).

Precarity as 'adaptation to the adaptive imperative' (Berlant 2011: 195) describes this condition. It is suggestive of the resignation to change; the necessity to fit in or be fitted by unstable boundaries just to keep going. A variety of approaches to precarity exist, some of which position it primarily as an economic and political state (Neilson and Rossiter 2008), whilst others have seen it more as an ontological condition (Butler 2004). Most salient to the discussion in this chapter is Berlant's (2011) understanding of the term. For her, precarity is an affective state that is also aesthetically rendered; it requires a sense that dramatises the situation of the present. Thus a precarious condition is one constituted by an uncertain materiality. It describes a mood, an affective orientation or atmosphere that marks the present state as one of indefinite attachments. This affective positioning builds on work that sees emotions as vital to the way subjects become invested in particular

structures that can form the conditions of their subordination (Ahmed 2004). For Ahmed (2004) such structures were positioned as 'norms' or 'social ideals'. Although taking forward the notion that emotional registers are vital for understanding the positioning of subjects, Berlant suggests that these positionings are 'impasses' characterised by a 'mounting sense of contingency' (p. 11). So precarity becomes a way to frame the enduring present as transitional. As such, this conception of the present is not one wrought around the ossification of norms into social structures through processes of repetition. This is the model of performativity at work in Ahmed's (2004: 12) cultural politics of emotion in which 'social forms [...] are effects of repetition'.

Rather the present is understood as 'crisis ordinariness' (Berlant 2011: 196) and this is constituted through shared affective rather than social registers. Berlant's suggestion is that social reciprocity has been translated into the sense of 'loneliness of collective singularity' (p. 201). What remains of the social world is the fantasy of the 'good life'; the 'reproduction of inherited fantasies of what it means to want to add up to something' (*ibid.*). This persists partly as a response to the 'collective detachment from the normative world' (p. 222), or the 'fraying of norms [...], of genres of reliable being' (p. 196). Thus, the condition of precarity might be understood as rendered through affective (or emotional) attachments, but without the reproduction of a norm. Instead, the attachment is to a future that acts as a 'defense against the contingencies of the present' (p. 13). Ahmed's (2010) theorisation of happiness displays a similar future orientation to affective attachment. She suggests that happiness should not be understood as an expectation, as part of the demand 'that we live our lives in the right way' (p. 222). Rather, happiness should be understood as possibility, an opening up of being in other ways that are not certain: a 'being perhaps' (p. 223). For Berlant, the conditions of such precarity become apparent through the aesthetic or formal rendition of affective experience. Here the aesthetic is understood as a 'theory-in-practice' constituted by the patterning of affect. She argues that affect saturates the 'corporeal, intimate and political performances of adjustment that make a shared atmosphere something palpable' and through this 'releases to view a

poetics' (p. 16). Thus, the aesthetic is a way of making manifest the 'feeling out' (p. 17) of the conditions of the present.

Precarious belonging, then, describes the indeterminate endurance of social categories. It points to the material and immaterial fragments of genres of identification through which people try to sustain themselves in a contingent present. Against this backdrop the instability of cultural performances comes to the fore: forms such as Carnival no longer appear seamless. If St Paul's Carnival is framed as a performance of African-Caribbean belonging, the uncertain matter and meaning of these attachments becomes the focus of attention. The cancellation of the 2012 event emphasises this fragility, the way in which the identity performed by Carnival emerges as by no means self-evident. The non-occurrence of Carnival day provides a means of unpicking the difficulties of the process of representation. It exposes the complex interplay of different modes of belonging associated with Carnival that are neither completely matched by nor entirely distinct from the event itself. This fragmentation of cultural performance is not to be seen as unique. Rather, the cancellation of Carnival can be understood as exemplary of wider processes of cultural fragmentation in which the work of old attachments is indeterminate. Dealing with this uncertainty has become the norm; the unpredictable materiality of representation is part of the representational process. In attempting to make sense of the present as a situation unfolds 'people try to maintain themselves until they figure out how to adjust' (Berlant 2011: 195). With Carnival, the contributions and responses to cancellation demonstrate that the potential for non-occurrence is part of coping with the present, of 'living in the ongoing now of it' (Berlant 2011: 196). Thus the precarious belonging that is exposed through Carnival's cancellation appears in opposition to the tendency to frame cultural forms as stable representations. Yet, for more overt cultural performances (rather than 'texts') such as Carnival, the relationship with belonging has never been clear cut.

Carnivals and belonging

Carnivals are localised acts that play out broader contests over belonging (Keith & Pile 1993; Lewis & Pile 1996; Pile & Keith 1997; Marston 2002). Approaches to Carnival have tended to work through a couple of related binaries concerning both how it positions and its positioning. A first sees the form of Carnival, or the Carnivalesque, as encompassing or playing out a binary. This approach is encapsulated by Bakhtin's discussion of carnivals in the middle ages which stresses the dialogical nature of the form, as indicated in chapter two. This required a 'temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank [which] created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible in everyday life' (Bakhtin 1984: 10). This unique form of expression associated with the Carnivalesque was 'frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came into contact with each other and liberating them from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times' (*ibid.*). This proximity meant that the form of the Carnivalesque is given through inversion, through the disproportionate and the 'obscenely decentred and off-balance' (Stallybrass and White 1986: 9). A consequence of this is the ability to displace divisions between high and low culture, destabilising 'official meanings and authoritative discourses' (Shields 1991: 93). Following from this, a second binary is created that positions the event of Carnival in opposition to the everyday. This recognises that although the Carnivalesque works to overcome binaries, the event itself is defined through its opposition to normal rhythms and routines. Carnival is a 'temporary suspension' (Bakhtin 1984: 10) associated with the time out of both ritual (ecclesiastical processions) and anti-ritual (festive feasts and celebrations) events.

Thus Carnival privileges opposition, either through a suspension of binaries or through their reinforcement. In both cases there is an emphasis on identifying two elements that are in some way at odds. Unsurprisingly as a result, the interpretation of Carnival is also a dualistic activity, particularly in relation to belonging. Carnivals can both support and question essential identity. By drawing both physical and imaginative demarcations of the local, carnivals can tie identity to territory. Taking to the streets stakes an (homogeneous Black) embodied

presence as a form of ownership over contested urban space (Keith and Cross 1993). Such a 'specific geography of protest' (Jackson 1988: 224) occurred in the early manifestations of Notting Hill Carnival in London (Dawson 2007). The positive occupation of the streets of Notting Hill enabled by Carnival opposed both the physical violence towards and erroneous representation of residents from the West Indies. This connection to territory through its physical plotting in Carnival accompanies an imagination of that space. The place of Carnival is conceived as separate from its surroundings. In the case of the neighbourhood of St Paul's, Carnival plays out in an ambiguous relation to the stigmatisation of the area, both celebrating and rejecting this discursive territorialisation (Jaffe 2012). Slater and Anderson (2012: 543) argue that St Paul's is viewed through a 'black ghetto filter' that gives rise to inappropriate policy responses to deprivation in the area. They suggest Carnival is an example of the collective pride of the neighbourhood in the face of this external defamation. This involves an elaborate act of organisation that contradicts the negative image of the area. Here carnivals can be understood to materially and discursively construct a territory that exists as separate from or in resistance to the nation. In such a challenge, Carnival appears to bind a particular territory to a (Black) community.

Yet carnivals can also be interpreted as a response to a lack of ownership. Here, the community of Carnival is understood to exist despite the absence of a legitimate claim to territory. Thus, rather than operating as a performance of territorial ownership, Carnival functions as either a social protest or a safety valve (Humphrey 2001). As safety valve, it acts as a mode of catharsis that is regulated by the state. The upset of routine and (tacit) licensing of illicit behaviours in Carnival assuages popular tensions. The organisers of (if not the participants in) St Paul's Carnival have always worked with rather than against local state authorities. The local police, BCC and schools are all involved the coordination of the event. As social protest, Carnival is politics masquerading as cultural form, where conflict is part of the aesthetic of the celebration (Cohen 1993). In reference to Trinidadian Carnival, Nurse (1999) argues this aesthetic of protest is born out of the historical struggle of marginalised people to shape identity through resistance. Yet this

historical struggle can be dulled through processes of appropriation. The corporate and state interventions in the running of carnivals attest to this. Whilst Notting Hill Carnival was altered by sponsorship from Lilt (Carver 2000), the most marked interventions in St Paul's Carnival have been from state funders. These demand particular outcomes from the event that shape its occurrence. As a long-term funder, BCC's agenda has changed over time; the current interest being the financial benefits of festivals and events to the city. As the major national public funding body for the arts, ACE prioritise 'artistic excellence'.

Whilst Carnival is always embedded in localised negotiations of space, it is not limited to local territorial appropriations. Carnival equally sits in an ambiguous relation to the essentialisms of national identity. It can be interpreted to both maintain and challenge the purity of the nation. As forms of spectacle and ritual, carnivals can produce the 'imagined' community of the nation by instilling and enacting politics of belonging (Anderson 1983; Kong & Yeoh 1997; Derrit 2003; Phipps 2011). On the one hand, carnivals can contribute to a nationalist agenda that celebrates and in turn constructs the nation. Such performances may be acts of resistance, as with Carnival in Trinidad. Carnival is partly rooted in anti-colonial protest, acting as an assertive marking of the distinct culture of an independent nation (Hill 1997). The ritualisation of past violences is incorporated into the aesthetic of Carnival's form (Riggio 2004). However, this mode of incorporation has altered through the translations of diasporic carnivals. Riggio (2004) argues that violence has tended to occur externally at these diasporic performances, primarily between 'revellers' and the law enforcement. On the other hand, carnivals expose and play upon the myths of racial purity often foundational to nationalisms. Here, carnivals are understood to project more heterogeneous ideas of national citizenry. Alleyne-Dettmers (1997: 164) describes Notting Hill Carnival as a canvas for the display of 'multiple versions of what constitutes Black British identity'. This act of making representations of Black Britishness is also formative of such belongings. Inherent to the aesthetic of Carnival is the 'seamless fusion of arts practice and community engagement' (Connor & Fourrar 2004: 266). For St Paul's Carnival, community endeavours such as costume-making were and continue to be

carried out in schools and neighbourhood spaces. Such intrinsic collaborative practice means that carnivals both represent and enact a more fluid, or even 'hybrid', idea of the nation that contributes to a progressive multicultural politics (Jackson 1992).

Thus, Carnival is framed through a binary of resistance to and perpetuation of fixed belongings at differing scales. But Carnival is also a framer. Belonging in the event upsets these dualistic approaches: it involves both the creation and the destruction of connections. This works through the impulse for arrangement in ethnomimesis (outlined in chapter two), where despite processes of selection over time, representations of a particular group (such as people of 'African-Caribbean heritage' in St Paul's) appear to be organic and original. Thus, St Paul's Carnival can simultaneously perform a diasporic and a British identity. Through its unruly occurrence disordered belongings to communities orientated around nations, bodies and territories appear to cohere in performance. To understand how St Paul's Carnival resists 'dominant notions of Englishness' (Spooner 1996: 200) necessitates close attention to the manner of its happening. This variety of local, national and global ties materialise in often conflicting ways. A collection of organisations, technologies and cultural forms interact with diverse individual interests, actions and memories. When Carnival occurs, an apparent order emerges to conceal the contested and contingent coming together of these entities. In 2012 this complex interaction was unsuccessful. Certain connections had been upset whilst others had been intensified. By cancelling the event, the St Paul's Carnival Committee deemed this particular configuration of interactions a failure. Disagreement with the Committee's position both contributed to and resulted from cancellation. In these happenings, belonging is shown to be neither fixed nor fluid; rather it occurs as an ongoing reworking and orientation of attachment. The next section further unpicks cancellation to demonstrate this precarity of belonging inherent in the fragmentation of cultural performance.

Moments of Cancellation

Cancellation provides an opportunity to explore the ways in which the practices and meanings of Carnival resist organisation. The representational process of Carnival occurs as a deliberate act, one that tries to build or maintain investment in subjectivity. Yet these attachments are shown to be contingent, they neither consistently fall into place nor connect. Cancellation illustrates how Carnival is always a fragile achievement, occurring through rather than as a resolution of the breaking of attachments. This concerns a focus on its ethnomimetic process that both unpicks what takes place in Carnival, but also highlights the variety of entities that enable or disable its occurrence. St Paul's Carnival is billed as an African-Caribbean arts event majority funded by the public sector bodies of BCC and ACE. Its cancellation is suggestive of a Carnival tamed. This 'domestication' might take two forms. On the one hand, those of African-Caribbean heritage in Bristol no longer need the Carnival as a vehicle through which to protest or celebrate. In effect, Black British culture has been mainstreamed, and is no longer distinct from 'British culture'. On the other hand, Carnival has been appropriated, becoming a licensed performance of multiculturalism that is not supported by those in St Paul's. Here, African-Caribbean culture is given a space in British culture, but one that is separate, marked by marginality.

However, the argument in this chapter is that failure disrupts rather than recounts the story of a Carnival tamed. Cancellation demonstrates how the culture of Carnival is still contested. The event of Carnival itself became a non-functional performance of African-Caribbean identity. Ethnomimesis negotiates this fragility of the multiple imaginations of Black Britishness and African-Caribbean culture. Belongings are shown to be complexly played out beyond such categorical connections. The organisers insufficiently understood the process of Carnival, namely the participatory act of putting the event together. As the build up to failure shows, it is through these production processes that the contest, mobilisation and play of racial belonging unfold. Cancellation as disruption exposes Carnival's performance as far from self-evident. It opens up a politics of failure in which questions of representation and responsibility can be explored (Bennett

2005; Graham 2009). The failure of a particular institutionalised performance of the multicultural creative city is traced, exposing the contested meaning and matter of race as an unstable community relation. Whilst questions over the differing purposes and values of such festive manifestations of creativity have been raised (Waterman 1998; Duffy 2005; Quinn 2005), attention to the unsuccessful event and its implications has been absent. Instead of taking its occurrence, Carnival's cancellation is of value in bringing to light disputes over the ownership and meaning of practices of cultural production. Thus cancellation lays bare the ethnomimetic acts involved in the production and contestation of Carnival. These acts reproduce 'race' in particular as a precarious form of attachment.

Race manifests ambivalently as a form of belonging to community. This is because the process of ethnomimesis does not privilege any one community. Instead it shows how a single community gives way to multiple and overlapping communities, each constructed through differing forms of racial attachment. The creation of a singular performance of community requires the ordering of disordered practices, meanings and histories that involves a degree of consensus from all participants. Without such agreement, the disruptive circulation of stories is used here to play out the moments of cancellation through which disparate manifestations of community emerge. In these acts of narration, race uncertainly connects community through sensory registers, territorial demarcations and national affinities. Storytelling is particularly relevant for exploring Carnival, which is considered a site for the performance of collective memory (Roach 1996). Narrating, as both a connective and disjunctive act, is a vital modality for making memories present, whether through objects (Tolia-Kelly 2004), literary texts (Noxolo & Preziuso 2013) or performances (Johnston & Pratt 2010). In narrating Carnival's cancellation, the aim is to adopt a processual approach to the story. This focuses on the manners of unfolding that make stories, and what this making might in turn produce. Thus in the moments below, stories operate across two different registers. The first concentrates on the empirical to identify the production and circulation of stories that contributed to the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival. Here the contested movements of stories are considered through the ways they

produce or disrupt collective memory of the event. The second takes the story as a method that exposes instances of racial emergence in cancellation. This enlists the affective aesthetics of storytelling to make sensible a set of disruptive moments through which contests over Carnival are played out.

The narrations that follow consider some of the processes that complexly configure the precarity of racial belonging. They expose the difficulties encountered in constructing a Carnival that could coherently straddle the multiplicity of (Black) British and African-Caribbean attachments. The term 'moment' has been employed descriptively to give the impression of a specific temporality and agency. The narrations do not aim to provide the chronology of an event. Instead each moment is sketched without clear linearity, demonstrating the potential for both newness and repetition in each act of storytelling. Working with the production and circulation of stories shows their excessive nature where potential race 'events' always contain 'more than what is disclosed' (Amin 2010: 5). So these moments are loose markers of duration but also attunements to the fluidity of stories as contested movers and movements. The first moment is a screening of two pieces of archive film footage of St Paul's Carnival that fed into the heightened interest in the event prior to its cancellation. It will explore the surfacing of historical narratives and spoken and written memories that contest what Carnival should be. The second moment is an organised walk in St Paul's to protest against the proposed changes to Carnival. It will use the walk to tell stories of the conflict over who Carnival is for. The third moment is the poll and subsequent press release that performed the cancellation of St Paul's Carnival. This action functions as an anchor for the challenges to the management of Carnival.

Mobilising Pasts

In mid-March 2012, an event was advertised in the Arts House, a cafe and small but vibrant performance venue in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol. Dubbed 'Celebrate What? St Paul's Carnival' the evening presented two short pieces of archival film. One was a nine minute interview with Roy Hachett, a founder of St Paul's Festival.

The other was footage of the first ever event in 1968. With upwards of 20 people attending, the evening was a success given the size of the venue and the stimulation of discussion on the contemporary nature of Carnival. The screening occurred in the midst of heightened interest in Carnival after a series of rumours intermingled with official announcements from the organising committee. The 2012 Carnival was to be scaled back to a 'procession-only' event that would be limited to the Portland Square area of St Paul's in Bristol. This was because of concerns over safety resulting from rising year-on-year attendance figures, and a lack of funds to mitigate this. The proposed alterations to Carnival provoked the question the film screening posed. The essence of St Paul's Carnival was being challenged. The variety of 'sound systems' that normally played across the streets of St Paul's were to be sidelined in favour of a contained event in the Portland Square area of the district consisting only of a parade of Mas costumes. 'Celebrate What?' was a specific example of the way the suggested changes to the event rendered visible ethnomimetic process. It set in train the public circulation of a variety of stories about what St Paul's Carnival is, and by extension, should be. These stories mixed personal and collective memories of the event and were told through a number of different registers.

The Save Our Carnival Association (SOCA, perhaps not coincidentally the term used for a form of Caribbean music with its etymology in a fusion of soul and calypso) collective neatly summed up one circulating notion of Carnival's essence through their statement of protest against the proposed alterations. SOCA, who chose to operate anonymously but with a presence on Facebook, were arguing 'No to Portland Square, no to no sound systems, no to no street traders, no to no main stage and yes to a full carnival in St Paul's.' Facebook became a central site for the circulation of official, non-official and purely speculative stories of what constitutes St Paul's Carnival. The specific significance of Facebook as a space for web-based stories lay in the breadth and depth of its use. Together with its high membership, Facebook has a particular degree of embeddedness in the experience and organisation of everyday social practices (Crang *et al*. 2007). It enabled stories of Carnival and meetings for its contestation to move across the 'virtual' and the

‘real’ by encouraging those who ‘liked’ the page to attend public discussions and protests. SOCA’s statements on the site were underpinned by a view of Carnival shared by others: that the streets of St Paul’s are not simply a venue, they are central to what constitutes the event. Here the story of Carnival was one of bringing community together ‘to take over the streets to celebrate and share our culture’ (SOCA Facebook page). Associated with this was the privileging of particular forms of activity on the streets. As one comment on the official St Paul’s Carnival Facebook page put it, the event ‘really wouldn't be the same without the street parties and sound systems; the procession is only a small part of the amazing event for most people, I didn't pay much attention to it last year.’ This story of Carnival summed up the event for many of the 100,000 attendees in 2011: music and partying on the streets.

Music as constitutor of Carnival also circulated in the stories of sound systems. The contention around the absence of sounds systems at the 2012 Carnival related both to their role in the cultural form of the event and to its ownership. As stated above, sound systems have an historical significance as movers of both the aesthetic and material technologies around the ‘Black Atlantic’. As the many of the sound system owners have residential or familial ties with St Paul’s, their absence from the 2012 event was felt to disenfranchise the community. Underpinning this outcry against the removal of sound systems was a more fundamental contention about the nature of Carnival. The proposed parade-only event would be based upon the Mas costumes associated with the Trinidadian Carnival tradition. Whilst the making of these costumes and the procession itself served as a good way for organisers to engage children from schools in St Paul’s and beyond, it did not involve the majority of attendees. In dispute was the nature of African-Caribbean arts represented at Carnival. Race and nation were conflated so that the nuances in national origin of the ‘community’ of St Paul’s were subsumed by a homogeneous ‘Black culture’. The majority of migrants from the West Indies to Bristol were Jamaican (Dresser & Flemming 2008). This rendered problematic the foregrounding of Trinidadian Carnival as representative of African-Caribbean culture in the city.

Equally, the contest over which practices of African-Caribbean identity should be privileged in Carnival also played on sensory registers. Images of Carnival as colourful costumed parade circulate both through official sources (such as the Carnival website and the 'St Paul's Carnival: Your Memories' book that was published in 2008 with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund) but also via media portrayals of the event. This emphasis on the appearance of Carnival was at odds with stories of the event that drew on sounds, tastes and smells. The importance attributed to the sound systems and street vendors by SOCA provides an alternative sensory understanding of the experience of Carnival. Such affective dimensions are suggestive of the way race, as a mode of attachment, can emerge through 'processes that exceed what is conventionally called social or even human' (Saldanha, 2007: 190). Following this, the contest over what constitutes African-Caribbean identity in Carnival encompasses a tension in the process of ethnomimesis between two differing manifestations of racial belonging. The first, building on the image of Carnival, positions race as a visible marker of difference that statically divides and displays through Carnival as an exhibition of multiculturalism. The second, using sounds and tastes, places race viscerally in the experience and interaction of bodies immersed in the multiplicity of sensory stimuli that constitute Carnival.

This experiential emphasis affords a fluidity to Black Britishness as a shifting signifier that materialises through engagements in the changes of a variety of cultural forms. The absence of sound systems in the footage shown at "Celebrate what?" reinforces this point: the particular combinations of materials and sensory modes through which Black Britishness is practised are dynamic. These are examples of the patterning of affect that Berlant suggests enable the contingency of the present to manifest through an aesthetic register. The disputes over Carnival's cancellation were played out through the weight of attachments to differing cultural forms. In not occurring, Carnival shed light on the tension between the desire to retain old attachments but also to move beyond them. Affective resonances with the past emerged through the contests over the parade,

sound systems and locations of Carnival. The significance of this past in how Carnival should feel, its atmosphere, was central to the disputes. Yet this was a present overdetermined by anachronism (Berlant 2011: 17). For alongside the investment in these forms of attachment, there was also a sense that such old forms were growing stale, a point returned to below. These differing configurations of the matter and meaning of race sustained by Carnival's ethnomimesis relate to the variety of purposes of the event for those involved. This points to the question of ownership of Carnival that will be explored through a moment of protest in the next section.

Parading in Protest

On the last Friday in March 2012 about forty people met at the Malcom X Community Centre (MXC) to begin a protest walk around St Paul's. Prior to the walk, brightly coloured banners and placards had been made that proclaimed the need to take 'St Paul's Carnival Back to its Roots' and to say 'No to Portland Square'. The group was not of a single racial background, and the walk was not orientated around a claim to African-Caribbean ownership of the event. Instead, it was one of a number that had been organised by the loose collective called Voices in the Community who operated predominantly through the Facebook page called 'St Paul's Carnival. Back to Its Roots'. The co-ordination of the event was a little ramshackle: it had been publicised with two different start times and did not end up following the planned route into the city centre. But these inadequacies of organisation are indicators of the community orientation that made the event a success. The main leaders of the walk had multiple commitments: many were actively engaged in a number of paid and voluntary community-based activities in St Paul's and had been able to pass on information about the event through these channels. The leadership and majority presence of women on the walk also fed into this, with the pressures of family commitments a further time constraint to more 'professional' organisation. Positively though, these family commitments did mean the unifying and pacifying presence of children on the walk. Although marching in protest, the walkers did not all share the same reasons for contesting the proposed changes. In the face of these disparate challenges from 'cuts to

funding' to the corporate appropriation of Carnival, the children on the walk set a particular tone of accord with community values. Yet the basis of the claims for the return of Carnival to its community roots was complicated through the process of the walk. Community emerged in uncertain relation with territory: the connection between the area of St Paul's and the people Carnival represents was unclear. The steps taken tell a story of the precarity of 'community' as unifier (Alleyne 2002; Closs Stephens & Squire 2012), in which no single understanding emerges of the ownership of St Paul's Carnival.

The walk set out from MXC onto Ashley Road. The narrow pavement forced the walkers into a long line, and a rhythm was immediately set up through a number of call and response imperatives. The calls, made by a woman with a megaphone, revolved around three main phrases which were then repeated back by the walkers: 'Save Our Carnival', 'Back to Our/The Roots' and 'No to Portland Square'. The walk continued onto Grosvenor Road and eventually down to Portland Square, before returning via City Road to MXC. This path through St Paul's plotted a number of key sites in the area that mark it as contested territory. As highlighted in chapter four, MXC itself was an indicator of past dispute, built after the 'race riots' in St Paul's in 1980. Indicative of reconciliation was the St Paul's Family and Learning Centre, whose construction was led by BCC in consultation with 'the community' in response to the past and present of serial under-investment in the area. Other sites were more directly associated with the protest against the changes to Carnival. The office of the Carnival committee was one of these. The walk stopped outside the office, continuing the call and response before eventually demanding that the organisers come out to provide a statement. The other was Portland Square, the proposed site for the scaled-back Carnival event. The square is situated on the fringe of St Paul's and is not seen by (some) residents to be strictly part of St Paul's itself. The walkers' course around the square demonstrated its peripheral location, as both audible and visible was the dual-carriageway separating St Paul's from the city centre. Walking through the streets also accentuated the role of the neighbourhood and domesticity in constituting ownership of Carnival. Whilst the square was an expansive public space,

performing and partying on many of the narrow residential streets of St Paul's at Carnival time underpinned the sense of community ownership of the event.

Yet this physical narrative of the relationship between territory and community in St Paul's was challenged by the sensibilities engendered by the act of walking as a means of narration. There was an ambiguity to the walk, which in its parading movement mimicked the action of the Carnival procession. In some ways, the walk very locally placed Carnival, performatively demarcating the St Paul's from which the event derives its name. However, the passage of the walk demonstrated that this was a contested act of narration, rendering sensible a gap between the residents and the protesters. The privileging of movement as the primary modality of protest immediately forced those who met the walk to either merge with it or abstain. As the walk wove its way through the streets of St Paul's, the walkers shouted for onlookers to join in. A couple of boys in their early teens, sheepishly took up a sign and stayed with the walk for the majority of its duration. Although there were cheers of encouragement and the beeping of car horns, this was one few instances where onlookers joined the walk. A number of people watching the procession actively refused to participate, either verbally or through a shake of the head. This gap between those in St Paul's and those on the walk was compounded by the paradoxical necessity to create or invite such separation. As the aim of the event was to make protest visible and audible, there was a requirement to create a spectacle. Such a display was constituted relationally: although the walk required walkers, it also needed people to witness the walk; to consume and in turn produce it as something out of the ordinary.

One such practice of consumption was the attempt to get passers-by to sign a petition about the proposed changes. In part, this broke down the division between the walkers and those in St Paul's, encouraging another form of support for the protest. Equally though, this discouraged passers-by to join the walk, instead situating the requirements for political engagement in the relatively minor act of signing. The other more overt act of consumption that separately produced

the event was photography. The immediate reaction of many onlookers was to take photos of the walkers which helped construct it as a discrete event to be made visible. To some extent, the register of the visible again worked against the experiential, with the production of images standing in for participation. Onlookers were constituted as such by the barrier effect of the camera that served as a stationary defence against joining the walk. However, photography was not only practised by those external to the walk, it was also an important part of active preservation of the event by the walkers. Photographs on Facebook were evidence of the walk's occurrence and enabled a sense of the event to linger after it had ended. These practices of consumption, production and re-production demonstrate the difficulty of representing the walk, both in terms of capturing the experience of the walkers but also articulating its broader meaning. As Murphy (2011: 240) argues, walks may be public and political, but there is no 'straight forward link between walking and progressive politics'. The walk demonstrated an ambiguous politics of community in St Paul's, in which the ownership of Carnival was played out through the disputed demarcations and meanings of territory. As an ethnomimetic act, the walk portrays Carnival as organic to St Paul's, but sustains the ambivalence of race in this configuration of community.

The protest walk provides a good example of the ways in which belonging occurs as part of what Berlant terms living in 'crisis'. The potential non-occurrence of the event does not appear as failure but rather as part of 'getting on'. In this process, the question is not solely what sort of belonging is performed in Carnival, nor how is such belonging performed. Rather the concern is with when and how forms of attachment come to matter. Racial belonging was simultaneously significant and insignificant in the walk, as the description above illustrates. The walk therefore constitutes an act of identifying 'the conditions under which certain attachments to what counts as life come to make sense or no longer make sense' (Berlant 2011: 13). On the one hand, the mixture of racial backgrounds both on and encountered during the walk might suggest that race is not a primary force of attachment. On the other, the attempt to make community legible by passing through St Paul's seemed tied to the spatial construction of race (Anderson 1991). That is, the

history of Black presence in St Paul's made race matter, but as both a constraining and affirmative attachment. Binding community to this particular territory recognises Carnival as an act of re-appropriation that has historically provided a legitimate space for non-white visibility and creativity in Bristol, specifically in the stigmatised area of St Paul's when this was (tacitly) unaccepted. So whilst African-Caribbean ownership was never explicitly articulated on the walk, the claim was implicit in the historical association of St Paul's with Jamaican migration. However, without overt articulation, this implied connection again risked homogenising African-Caribbean as a category by neglecting the nuances of the past and present population of St Paul's. As a contested form of attachment, this territorial typology of (racial) community fuelled a variety of eruptive forces that challenged the Carnival organisers.

Managing Cancellation

An online poll was launched by the Carnival committee on 18 April 2012. Participants could vote for a procession-based Carnival or for the cancellation of the event. The vote was to be counted five days later and added to the results of a one-day paper poll held at St Paul's Family and Learning Centre on 20 April. A press release from the organising committee revealed the outcome: ninety-three for a procession-based event and ninety-two for cancelling the year's Carnival (this is a 'turnout' from roughly 10,000 residents in St Paul's and 100,000 Carnival attendees in 2011). The same press release also announced Carnival's cancellation. The negligibility of the poll results offered no conclusive direction, making it vital for the Carnival organisers to carefully compose and disseminate a story to legitimate their decision. The press release served as the main device for capturing cancellation. Here, the organisers told a story of the growing scale of the event which meant uncertainties over health and safety. The attempt to mainstream African-Caribbean culture through Carnival had increased the event's popularity. The paradoxical implication being that Carnival was cancelled because it was too successful. Attendance figures had been rising by 10,000 a year up to the 2011 event. The original proposal to change the 2012 Carnival to a procession-only event emerged because the organisers maintained their finances could not provide the

necessary infrastructure to cope with the rise in numbers. This was one of the major points of contention for the protestors: many could not understand how an organisation funded both nationally (by ACE) and locally (by BCC) did not have the financial and logistical means to stage the event. The question posed by SOCA and others was 'why have they left it so late to communicate with us?' In other words, there was a perception that the story about the reason for the changes to Carnival did not make sense.

The unruly movements of stories about the proposed changes to Carnival had been a constant problem for the organisers up to the point of cancellation. In particular, to counteract the protests gaining virtual momentum on Facebook, a physical meeting was held at MXC to inform the community and to discuss the proposed changes. However, the Carnival committee were unable to make their point in the meeting without being shouted down by other attendees. The Carnival manager suggested that before this gathering incorrect information had been leaked, resulting in the impossibility of real dialogue and discussion. In this leak, the organisers' plans had been sensationalised, providing the attendees of the meeting with inaccurate information about both the funding Carnival received and the costs of event management. The key implication of this messy meeting was the subsequent resignation of the Carnival's artistic director, because he felt the event no longer had community support. This further undermined the organisers' position. Their failure to tell a tale that would contain Carnival's problems eventually resulted in the cancellation of the procession-based event. In the press release, concerns over health and safety related not only to the full event, but also to the 'potentially unquantifiable elements' of purely staging a procession. The threat of protestors and fringe events was deemed too great a risk to school children who would form the core of any procession. Thus the committee, as controllers of Carnival, were telling the story of an event out of control. Given the disagreements over the cultural ownership of the Carnival, it was unsurprising that this story of the failure of an already inadequate event increased the distance between the organisers and the community.

This storying of cancellation required two separate forms of justification from the organisers. In one, the Carnival committee had to make a case to their primary funders and other organisations, such as the police, who normally enable and allow the event to take place. The justification using safety concerns was one form of this upwards accountability. Equally important was highlighting the year-round programming of activities by St Paul's Carnival, but excluding the event itself. To demonstrate that funding was to be used productively, the committee included in the press release a number of their ongoing educational activities focused on African-Caribbean culture. For the other, the Carnival committee had to explain cancellation to the community and attendees more broadly. It was on this downwards accountability that the Carnival committee were challenged. In dispute was the committee's attempt to demonstrate engagement with, if not ownership by, the community. Opposition was levelled both at the content of their justifications, but also at the manner and position from which these reasons were given. In particular, it was felt that the education programme was neither year-round nor equivalent to community ownership. According to one community figure and former manager of Carnival interviewed, working with schools and establishing permanent masquerade costume making (Mas' Camps) had declined in recent years. In addition, poor communication of the reasons for the changes to Carnival detailed above was compounded by the perception that the organisers were external to the community. Although not explicitly articulated, the claim that Carnival was being taken away from 'the community' was hard to divorce from a racial politics when both the Carnival manager and schools liaison officer were White.

While adequately equipped to put together an event (the former coming from an events management background), neither the manager nor the schools liaison officer were easily able to tap into the fluidity of relations that constituted the African-Caribbean communities associated with St Paul's. Despite the organisers holding meetings and supporting fundraisers at key venues in St Paul's, there was still a sense of disconnect. In part this was because although the organisers aimed to produce an African-Caribbean arts event, they engaged little with the material

histories of Carnival. This was a neglect of both the localised meanings of the event for Black presence in Bristol, but also of Carnival's broader aesthetic ties with African-Caribbean culture. The production of art as part of rather than separate from the everyday is central to these practices, and continues to shape overt and implicit challenges to racism (hooks 2008). The primary goal of achieving the safe occurrence of Carnival neglected these materialisations. The result was the attempted production of a performance of African-Caribbean culture that simultaneously denied the histories of racism that motivated the event. The reduction of Carnival to a parade producing 'colourful' images of multicultural Bristol was therefore unsurprisingly rejected by many residents. In this parade, race was to be an unarticulated presence in producing an end product that signified diversity. The importance of the practices of Carnival's production to the positioning and negotiation of race was ignored.

This oversight resulted in the emergence of a separate and 'unofficial' Carnival-based event (a further example of the performance 'acting out' as outlined above). Organised by Voices in the Community and held at MXC on the original date for Carnival in July, the event was billed as a celebration of fifty years of Jamaican independence and forty-five years of St Paul's Carnival. As well as a number of local stall-holders providing food and drink, there was also a 'Carnival' procession mid-afternoon that paraded around St Paul's with a mini sound system on a push-bike. In the late-afternoon the main sound system arrived at MXC and was assembled ready for the local musicians and DJs who continued into the night. The organisers of the event were mainly of African-Caribbean descent and had drawn upon local networks to provide particular services. These included stall-holders together with children's activities, such as dance instruction, that were part of the existing infrastructure of the weekly Jamafrique evening social club at MXC. For the organisation of the event, Voices in the Community said that they had approached the Carnival committee for their support and potential collaboration but had received no response. The occurrence of an unofficial event illustrates the Carnival committee's failure to compose and disseminate an adequate story that could completely legitimate and therefore capture cancellation. Performances of

diversity can conceal and perpetuate the inequalities that they set out to challenge (Ahmed 2012). The organisers of Carnival inadequately understood the importance of the messy practices of putting together the event for the enactment rather than the representation of community. Instead community was shaped in the contested response to a perceived disenfranchisement. Inadvertently downplayed by the organisers was the creativity of ethnomimesis; the imaginative processes through which the materialisation of representations occurs.

One implication of cancellation therefore is that the norms of attachment played out through Carnival have frayed. The ideal performance put forward by the Carnival organisers was inadequate. The model of African-Caribbean community they proposed was tired, it lacked the vitality to orient attachments. Yet some hesitation is required before labelling this a situation of what Berlant terms 'collective singularity'. This is because a certain remainder of 'identity politics' can be traced. Those protesting the changes to Carnival mobilised around terms like 'community' and 'roots'. Therefore this could be read as an attempt to performatively invoke an essential identity that was being denied ownership of Carnival. Such a community partially materialised at the unofficial Carnival event. However, even at this event, the meaning of the St Paul's community remained ambiguous. There was a mixture of attachments complexly configured around different nations, territories and bodies. That is, the event was not simply 'about' being Black, of Jamaican heritage and living in St Paul's. Equally, the importance of attachments to community to Carnival is further diluted by the rising number of attendees. Despite the repetition of the principle that Carnival is a community event, the organisers' attempts to cope with growing attendance elides this ideal. Thus, the concurrent celebration and erasure of racial attachments by the Carnival organisers produced a sense of detachment. The organisers were attempting to juggle the needs of Carnival as an African-Caribbean form with the requirements of events management. The latter trumped the former, reducing or removing the particularities of collective attachment produced through one cultural form in the name of the individualising tendencies of another. The language of events management that attempted to govern the cancellation disconnected the

occurrence of the Carnival from the meaning and matter it had for its participants. Significant for the organisers was their liability for each individual in the event. This responsibility outweighed the capacity for or requirement of Carnival to produce community attachments.

Synthesising

Cultural practices are necessarily fragmentary. This chapter has explored the difficultly of belonging given this incoherence, this mismatch between representation and reality. It has suggested that such complexity of representational processes requires a focus on the uncertain materiality of culture. Object-orientated philosophy and vital materialism have provided two ways into the difficult matter of representations. These approaches stress an inconstancy yet vitality to material 'things'. The chapter has shown that this contingent materiality is at work in the fragmentary processes of representation. It has argued that foregrounding this (im)material instability of culture opens up new avenues for subject formation. Absolute difference is rejected as the sole boundary-keeper of the subject, and instead volatility and inconsistency is recognised as constitutive of subjectivity. The uncertain ways in which difference is both worked across and internalised become the focus. This is the precarity of belonging, the possibility that attachments may be both made and broken. St Paul's Carnival illustrates this necessary incoherence of culture and also indicates some of the results of this instability. Carnival is 'materialises' through the ways in which it exceeds itself. The inability to contain Carnival as an independent 'object' or an inert 'thing' means it must be understood through the challenges to its unity. The difficulties of putting Carnival together, as well as its ability to act beyond 'the event' demonstrate these excesses. In this context, the cancellation of Carnival in 2012 is not the dissolution of the event, but rather a further disruption in the ongoing instability of its unfolding. Belonging in or in spite of cancellation involves seeing vitality and potential in its disarray. Precarity becomes the condition of this present in which there is a sustained 'commitment to the work of undoing a world while making one' (Berlant 2011: 263). Through the making and breaking of

attachments, the instability of cultural practices such as Carnival uphold this precarious belonging.

There is a different model of performativity at work here. Cultural practices can continue to be considered as actions that make a reality. Yet this performance is not simply a representation of a stable identity. Nor is it part of a repetitive chain of citations that materialise or resist certain norms. Rather it might be considered what Berlant (2011: 261) terms an anarchist or DIY performativity. This rejects the negativity of measuring up to a structure and instead starts, shaken but reanimated, from the condition of survival. This builds upon the performative work of matter stressed by Barad (as mentioned in chapter two) but further emphasises material contingency over repetition. That is, the condition of survival that constitutes this performativity involves the uncertain resources and practices required to continue. Such material negotiations are just as likely be deviations from what went before, as they are to be imitative repetitions. So DIY performativity starts from the bottom-up and goes its own way. It is a process that does not deny the significance of past attachments but tends to work across and between rather than be structured by them. Thus, such an anarchist performativity is without norms except for that of precarity. Yet this precarity can result in an affirmative action: the attempts to belong in Carnival's cancellation do not negate the past but rather rework these attachments to create new modes of being together. So the instability of culture sustains this precarity of belonging: the fragmentation of old community ties provides the shaky foundations for novel forms of subjectivity. Cultural acts play out the uncertainty of creating attachments in the unfolding contingencies of the social world.

7. Conclusion: towards a cultural politics of creativity

The contested boundaries of culture have long been a theme of geographical research. Various processes of defining, understanding and challenging the lines dividing the cultural and the natural are central to the discipline. Yet, as the introduction indicated, there is a sense that the sub-discipline of cultural geography has been 'evacuated'. On the one hand, there has been a diffusion of culture across the discipline that means that the sub-discipline no longer has a specific focus. The 'new cultural geography', characterised by a focus on representation, foregrounded culture as a lens for understanding the relationships between place, power and production across the discipline. On the other hand, a focus on culture has been at least nominally rejected in the turn to non-representational geographies. The validity of representation as a focal point for research on and through the cultural has been challenged both epistemologically and ontologically. With the former, knowing culture purely through representation has meant techniques of 'reading' and 'decoding' that privilege interpretation. This has been criticised for neglecting the experiential and practice-based nature of everyday life that evades easy inscription. For the latter, equating culture with representation has risked fixing processes of belonging around essential identities. The issue here is that representation avoids the contingencies and instabilities of culture that are central to the formation of attachments. Therefore, the resulting 'non-representational' scholarship, whilst having antecedents in the 'new cultural geography', has predominantly been articulated through the language of 'the social'. Therefore, either through its dilution or its erasure, the distinctive substance of cultural geography is under question.

In response to this, the thesis has aimed to sketch an alternative frame for cultural geography. The focus on performance establishes culture as a process, as always 'in-the-making'. Representation remains important in this framing of culture for its instability and contingency. The boundaries drawn to construct or direct

‘difference’ are always incomplete, partial and undergoing change. In illuminating the processes that constitute culture, the intention has been to demonstrate their simultaneous creativity and fragility. This has involved opening the ‘black box’ of apparently stable ‘cultural products’ or representations to unpack the processes that constitute them. Emblematic of this have been the geographies of urban creativity often associated with Richard Florida’s ‘creative class’. Through the focus on a variety of performances, urban creativity has appeared as a process involving ongoing work that is frequently a distributed but collective endeavour taking place at the fringes of institutional support. The geographies of such creative practice are therefore fluid, reliant on often hidden infrastructures. Thus, the focus on the creative yet fragile process of culture is vital in understanding how attachments - to work, to home, to community - are made and maintained in an uncertain climate. Culture is understood as the practices that provide a sense of position, of being in relation, but that fall short of the stability of fixed location. For the creative city this cultural politics of creativity means attending to fluid geographies of production and consumption, together with the implications of such precarious urban performance for creative labour.

Certainly, the city doesn’t always perform. Bristol has a specific past and present that enables it to act out the fragile practices of belonging encompassed by a cultural politics of creativity. It seems to be a particularly creative city, receptive to and reflective of urban life as process. However, as with every city, the story of Bristol could be spun taking a different thread. Decay and deindustrialisation are obvious leads as the ‘life’ of the city is constantly challenged from a variety of directions. Yet throughout this thesis, Bristol has illustrated how break-down and construction co-exist. This is not simply the propensity to capitalise on degradation. Rather there is a tension inherent to creativity. Creativity is a possibility not always realised, and once put into practice can easily go awry. The specifics of Bristol’s performance demonstrate both the limits and possibilities of such creative framings of the city. This is important for the notion of cultural politics that has been developed across these pages. Culture matters in its contingency, because of its potential to be both coherent and incoherent. Creative

practices are vital to the instability of culture, aiding the construction of new forms of attachment. But such a creative force is neither always present nor effectively directed, meaning that culture can ossify, stagnate and fragment. Far from diminishing the importance of creativity, this inconstancy is critical to the changing matter and meaning of culture. It explains how representational processes can continue despite their inadequacy, or be subject to disruption even when they appear functional.

I began by setting out the ambivalent position of culture in contemporary society. That is, the way culture is simultaneously valued and dismissed. In addressing the problem of how to think culture given this indefinite state, the focus has been on representation. I have argued that representation is critical to understanding what is at stake in and what might be made from the remainders of culture. The challenges to representation render it a process of contest that nonetheless configures meaning and experience in and beyond any perceived 'cultural sphere'. Whether 'presenting again' or 'standing in for', representation can never be quite complete. The result is ongoing creative acts that seek to sustain but are unable to resolve this problem of representation. The emphasis on representation therefore renders culture important in framing and playing out the conditions and conditioning of our experience in the world. Attending to culture is necessary to enable us to build a social world from an individual one. It demonstrates that despite the upset of the human, of our normative frames for everyday life, subjectivity remains important. If uncertainty, fragility and crisis are the defining tropes of the present, then the resilience of representation indicates the continued necessity to mark positions, however fleetingly. Thus, this is not a fixed subject, but nonetheless offers a location from which to get to grips with 'the elements of creativity and imagination, desire, hopes and aspirations' (Braidotti 2013: 52) that make and break attachments.

In using the vocabulary of attachments, the concern has been with how such a subject is a site for orientation, for the direction of belonging. The argument is

that belonging is precarious, played out through the affective attachments and aesthetic sensibilities of representational practices. That is, the indeterminate creativity of culture is felt as an instability of position. We are constantly trying to make and secure the grounds of the present through the orientations provided by ongoing processes of representation. It is this condition that a cultural politics of creativity aims to unpick and elucidate. In the introduction, the advert broadcasting 'Bristol's Live' provided a useful jumping off point for drawing out these themes. It illustrated the relationship between culture and creativity in Bristol, drawing attention to the ambivalent role of the city's past. Culture appeared both transient and solid, opening up the problem of belonging in these conditions. This empirical grounding has been vital for the concerns of the thesis, functioning as a point of intervention in 'theory'. Drawing on worldly practices is a critical and creative necessity for elucidating the complex contemporary importance of culture that I have developed. The main concerns set out at the beginning and that have structured this thesis have been firstly the possibilities offered by performance to conceptualise culture as a 'doing'. This understanding of culture was carried forwards into the second interest in framing creativity as process rather than product. Thirdly, the role of the past in this creative cultural impulse has been explored. This pointed to a fourth question addressing the relationship between culture and our experiences of the present. Finally, the potential for this present to become otherwise opened up the uncertainty of belonging in these unstable conditions. These questions have navigated a course through a variety of theoretical approaches to the present as (in) a state of instability. Cultural creativity appears as a crucial yet potentially destructive force in coping with/in this condition.

Performance has been used as a theoretical and empirical hook for framing this capacity of culture. It conceptualises culture as a practice that is experiential yet always exceeds the bounds of the present. Performance opens up the dynamic between 'being' and 'becoming', between representation as object and representation as process. On the one hand, performance may be approached as a form of display, an exaggeration of an underlying reality. On the other hand, it has

a capacity to undo the subject, to upset any notion of foundations. The relationship between the performance and the performed is therefore not exact; it is a spatially and temporally distributed process. Such acts are not necessarily scripting or constraining, rather I have argued they tend towards contingency. Performance therefore exposes representation as an appearance of stability that is maintained through ongoing creative acts. Yet despite the sense that this contingency of performance is constructive; that it makes the city; creativity 'itself' has been appropriated. The notion of the 'creative city' has tied creativity to particular people and places. The attempts to capture making, to profit from its product, have been based on the belief that creativity can be contained. Contrary to this, I have argued that creativity resists capture, it occurs as a distributed process that unfolds with the city. Curation is put forward as an emergent order that produces and maintains the unstable spaces of creativity in the city. It explains the apparent stability of creativity at particular sites despite the movements of its practice. However, in all this process, open-endedness and emergence, stoppages and remainders have an uncertain status. Despite the clean slate promised by the innovation mantra, the 'creative city' does have a past. The making of culture is a sedimented process.

This means the construction and erosion of the boundaries to which we attach and resist is ongoing. I have argued in relation to race in Britain that these boundary negotiations necessarily involve the circulations of imperial history. The past need not be a stabiliser of culture; rather it can work as a catalyst for its contingency. The weight of history does not solidify the attachments of race. Instead, it is one element of the complex and ongoing materiality of its unfolding. Here race is neither entirely separate from nor entirely constructed by culture. Rather it is both material and ideal, a means of constraint and proliferation. The past plays antagonistically in this dynamic. It is vital in shaping the relevance of race as a lens on social inequalities, yet simultaneously can be perceived as a blockage to progress beyond these lines. This uncertainty of attachments, the sense that the creative acts at work in maintaining connection may go awry or coalesce, is played out through expression. I have argued that expression provides a complex cultural

frame for experience, both constituting and upsetting the subject. With the former, the bounds of the subject are drawn as the originator of the expressive acts that are given form and materialised through representation. With the latter expression occurs as a force that might distribute and appropriate; it is the conditions of possibility for the subject. Thus, expression provides a frame for the experience of what is there, but also indicates the potential to exceed this. Aesthetics operates as a means of attending to this dual capacity of expression. Its grounding in an approach to art nested in the (human) subject is twinned with its use to frame the dynamic capacities of expression beyond the artwork. Aesthetics therefore is shown to function as a means for understanding how the lines of community appear, and how they are unstably divisive, never quite able to find a coherent collective basis for attachments.

The fragmentation of cultural performance plays out this dialectic between flexible subjectivity and the fixity of identification. I have argued that cultural performances have a complex materiality through which an uncertain and contested subject emerges. Here social categories carry an ambiguous weight: sometimes they are light enough to throw off, while at other times they seem too heavy to shift. The result is a precarious belonging, attachments that are both solid and fragile; deliberate and contingent. Such a belonging works with the enduring potential of creativity to make connections but also the possibility for its constraint or appropriation. The subject emerges through an anarchist performativity that involves ongoing creative acts of response to changing situations. This is a process that rejects continuity as a frame for the present but nonetheless is driven by a desire for something to cling on to. In this way, the ongoing weight of social categories is realised through affective attachments; through a simultaneously tangible and intangible intensity that is exposed in the fragmentation of representation. In approaching, making, circulating and expressing social categories, representations continue to have influence despite their indeterminate material basis. Thus, the overriding mood connecting culture, creativity and belonging across the thesis is one of contingency. Culture is a creative process but never straightforwardly affirmative. Attachments are made

through processes of representation but these are always partial, meaning that belonging is precarious. I would like to outline some implications of this cultural politics of creativity for scholarship in three areas: the city, multiculturalism and community.

Urban cultures of economy

That urban economic production is unstable is nothing new. As nodes in national and global flows of capital, cities have been subject to the 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter 1975) seemingly systemic in this economy. The framing of urban creative practice in this thesis points to two concerns when considering the contemporary condition. The first is the way such instability in production is distributed across the city, and the second is how people get on with or in the face of this uncertainty. The concept of curation developed in chapter three offers a partial response to both these issues. For the first, curation is indicative of the fragile yet deliberate positioning of creativity in the city. It does not only occur in isolation or in concentration. With the second, curation illustrates how coping with instability involves the tenacity of collective and (more often) individual engagement. This requires both fostering connections but also the development of adaptive capacities. Here I want to elaborate further on the potential significance of this separation of curation from the institution. In fact, this understanding of curation might be seen as a response to the need to think institutions differently. Institutions have been framed as ossifications of capitalism, protections against its instability through establishing the present and future position for the worker. However, two challenges to this framing of institutions have been posed. Both emphasise institutional culture – that is the image and practices of self given through the activity of working - and the implications of this beyond the institution.

One challenge suggests that there have been material changes to the shape and operation of institutions as structures that organise society, with particular implications for the individual worker. Here we may consider the way the curation

of performance poetry in Bristol occurs without a single institutional director, peripherally tapping into the capacity of seemingly more stable institutions. Poets, if employed, have no clear position within an organisation, lacking permanent role and therefore relationships with others in or associated with the institution. Thus the type of curation occurring with spoken word is demonstrative of broader changes to the functioning of institutions. That is, 'casualisation, delayering and non-linear sequencing' (Sennett 2006: 49) that lead to an emphasis on immediate and small tasks; the rise of the project institution. This is a model that does not 'invite institutional authority' (*ibid*. p. 59). Rather, those on the periphery are on their own, answering to the centre only for results. The consequence of this is that the worker is left drifting in isolation, with no sense of 'deferred gratification and long-term strategic thinking' (*ibid*. p. 81). The argument here is that the transformation of institutions leads to an increase in inequality characterised not only by wealth but by isolation. Within this context, the notion of curation I developed can elaborate on some of these changes in practices of production but does little to address inequality. There is an unevenness in opportunity and occurrence of creative practice that must be taken into account when considering its distribution in urban space.

In addition, my analysis of curation as a practice at the peripheries of the institution differently frames coping with contingency. Far from working entirely in isolation, an ethic of care and collaboration emerges through the need to sustain spoken word. This is a check on the pervasiveness of the narrative of isolation as the dominant mode of work in 'new' institutions, but nonetheless points to the shortcomings of the example of spoken word. Whilst the performance poetry scene involves economy, it is quite a jump from other, more conventional, practices in the 'creative industries'. Most obviously, 'being a poet' was generally a secondary occupation, meaning that the pressure was not on this practice to make ends meet. Therefore, the potential difficulties of working in these sorts of conditions may not have been so evident. One particular element of this is the mood induced by such a working culture. Not dissimilar to the affective attachments evoked by Berlant (2011), Sennett suggests that the condition that pervades this new

institutional structure is one of anxiety born out of the uncertainty of position. So whilst curation provides a sense of the institutional changes taking place in urban economies, there is more work to be done to relate this to inequalities in distribution (of creative 'opportunity' and 'occurrence'), together with how these inequalities are felt and lived through. Meanwhile, the second challenge to institutional stability also stresses change but takes this as a conceptual starting point. Rather than stating that institutions are changing, the argument is that they were never stable in the first place. That is, the way in which 'we can understand institutions as processes or even as effects of processes' (Ahmed 2012: 20).

The intellectual work here involves unpicking the conditions of possibility for institutions; how it is that certain sets of practices 'acquire the regularity and stability that allows them to be recognisable as institutions in the first place' (*ibid*. p. 21). Curation is then not a symptom of institutional change but a name for the set of activities that afford the display of stability. Such curatorial work therefore aims to maintain boundaries but does not have to take place within the 'material' confines of the institution. Rather than coping with uncertainty, in this reading the worker must deal with constraining work of keeping up appearances. With the institution as process the problem is one of contiguity, a question of not blocking but fitting in. The emphasis is on how something or someone 'loses the air of contingency' (Arendt cited in Ahmed 2012: 29), producing a sense of stability illustrated through the assemblages of curation. So across these two challenges curation emerges as valuable in conceptualising the contingency of urban cultures of economy but the specifics of its use require narrowing down. It might frame the volatile state produced by institutional change or, almost conversely, the unstable conditions that make possible the appearance of stability. In addition, in both cases the question of inequalities or limitations to movement needs further consideration. With these caveats in mind, the concept of curation can enhance existing critical approaches to creative cities. These have stressed the precarity of the workforce, the importance of vernacular creativity, as well as the impacts of gentrification through blanket urban policy. The tendency across these approaches has been to point out the problems of 'creative cities' policy and practice,

focusing on what is neglected or negated. Curation can provide a means of considering how urban creativity occurs in such problematic conditions as neither entirely part of nor separate from these changing institutional cultures.

Performing multiculturalism: a postcolonial present

Appearances of stability are achieved through performance. I have suggested that multiculturalism, both as political theory and as lived practice may be more or less successfully performed. However, such a performance comes at a cost. Performances can never contain reality; there is always some sense of mismatch between 'representation' and 'practice'. Yet these performances, such as that of St Paul's Carnival, are often understood as the 'culture' of multiculturalism. This is a culture that you can pick and choose, a supplementary image that has apparently little implication on everyday life. Crudely put, this framing of multiculturalism is less living *with* difference than living *without* difference. It is premised upon an idea of neutral ground and seeks to obscure or separate 'culture' as a perceived threat to that neutrality. In emphasising the ambiguity of the postcolonial condition in Britain, I have tried to unsettle such a sense of neutral ground. The apparently blank slate of the state must not only be understood as a historical construction, but as constituted by a past that is persistent, insistent in the present. The vocabulary and tools of postcolonial theory are useful for this task because they point to the uncertain ways in which imperialism continues despite its nominal conclusion. This is neither simply a recognition of the past, nor an attempt to learn from or atone for historical injustices. Equally, the past is not invoked as tradition that acts as a determining cultural force. Rather the postcolonial condition necessitates an openness to disruption, to the past as a critical approach and presence in everyday multiculture.

I have framed this as a delicate balance between the 'conservative' and the 'progressive'. Emphasising the imperial past risks its unthinking celebration, which for Gilroy falls little short of nationalism. Thus, in some ways the 'blank slate' of multiculturalism seemingly avoids this trap. Its concern with the category of

citizenship, with delineating present positions in relation to the state, can occur without reference to the past. Yet, the negotiation of position in this state discourse remains orientated around 'difference', which is suggestive of sedimented practices and appearances that have taken shape irrevocably over time. These are ways of living and looking, which if not out of *place* in multicultural Britain, are perceived as somehow out of *time*. It is perhaps in response to this apparent immutability of 'culture' from another time-space that the more progressive focus on encounter and everyday multiculture emerges. The chance of and in meeting offers a means of breaking these apparently structuring forces from elsewhere. Rather than the shape lent to an event, the interest is in how something happening produces a shape, configuring positions. The encounter directs the unfolding of multiculture, not the other way around. However, as I have tried to show, centring on the event (or the performance) does not do away with history. Instead history takes on a different orientation. It concerns how we conceptualise the present, how we sense an era during its occurrence or what Berlant terms 'the becoming historical of the affective event' (2011: 6). Of interest in this understanding of history is how encounters contribute to a particular mood of multiculturalism. Yet important though this focus on encounter may be, the relationship between history and the present must also be connected from another angle.

The question here is how history appears to give the present an origin when the past lacks coherence. Interrogating this descent of the present is 'not the erecting of foundations, [instead] it disturbs what was previously thought immobile, it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself' (Foucault 1986: 82). To extrapolate from this Foucauldian approach, these are the disparate conditions for presence, the multiple occurrences and discourses that come to define social space as multicultural. If multiculturalism is one attempt to manage a period of uncertainty, it seems necessary to consider the conditions giving rise to this state. Contemporary instability is not simply set against a solid past, but rather continues from disparate movements of people, discourses and materials that can shed light on our present condition. Postcolonial theory provides one

(incoherent) framework for doing this. In part this concerns the attention it gives to plurality: multiple histories and multiple voices. Equally, postcolonial theory has a sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit emphasis on movement. Movement is written into the notion of colonisation and postcolonial theory draws on this motif both materially and discursively. It implies a focus on the ways in which ideas and people travel, together with the uneven and often 'violent' implications of this. Framing the present as postcolonial demands seeing the past as unstable, as not necessarily so, and therefore requires us to trace the remnants of this instability in our contemporary condition. This has implications for the stasis of 'culture' in multiculturalism.

To move beyond framings of culture as an amorphous and immutable mass, it is important to make sense of our arrival at this point. In part, this is the paradoxical combination of the endurance and the rejection of colonial thinking on the relationship between race, culture and nation. With the former, there remains the anthropological understanding culture as linked to 'savagery' and the 'tribal' customs of unenlightened races. With the latter, there is an acknowledgement that such biological racial thinking is no longer legitimate, but a resultant uncertainty about how to deal with the continuing weight of race in society. In both instances, cultural fixity is put forward as a means to deal with the anxiety of mixing. I have suggested creolisation as a possible antidote to this kind of thinking. The emphasis here is on movement and its products, but not the origins of such circulations. Unlike hybridity, creolisation more firmly takes mixing as a starting point, and is attuned to the inherent violences of this process. The implication of this is that there is no neutral ground; performances of multiculturalism cannot be easily separated from a cultural reality. On the one hand, this means continuing to value attention to the matter and meaning of 'difference' played out through overt performances of culture. These performances are not simply supplements to a reality, they have affective resonances that 'impact on the historical sense of the present' (Berlant 2011: 7/8). On the other hand it means recognising the complex weight of race in multiculturalism despite its apparent absence. Creolisation points to the ambiguous ways in which the mixings of blood, language and custom can

cohere into an idea of culture. Thus, creolisation emphasises the ‘immanent world making’ (Berlant 2011: 8) of the multicultural present through the (historical) circulations and translations that undo any tendency towards cultural ossification.

Politics of community

The backdrop of cultural instability leaves the use and definition of community a vexed question. The tension drawn out in the thesis is between community as bounded and given or as volatile and worked at. The problem is that whilst the ‘everyday’ unfolding of community supports the latter, the former understanding underpins much of the use of community in policy-making and implementation. Such stabilising of community is therefore a governmental tool, a means of identifying a group to enable targeted intervention. Whilst the aims of this are often altruistic, in practice it can be problematic as there is little room for the changing shape of community that produces a more complex landscape of inclusion and exclusion. In addition, by making such collectives targets for intervention, there is a tendency to underplay the myriad of innovative practices through which communities sustain themselves. Thus, community appears to be both valued (or at least acknowledged) but simultaneously weakened. This is because attempts to govern community can often undercut the ties that make up the very object of their intervention. That is, governing community can make it less distinctive, more similar to recognisable social norms. To paraphrase one community arts worker ‘hard-to-reach communities are only difficult to find if you don’t know what you’re looking for’. I have shown that so-called ‘community arts’, and particularly performance, play out this mismatch between the idea and the practice of community. Community theatre involves acts of expression that simultaneously come from but also create community. So the community (often) celebrated in community theatre is performative; it is constituted through the acts of its performance. Yet there is more at stake in the performative work of expression than the more-or-less effective citation of an idea of community.

In particular, I have suggested that the aesthetics of expression might function as the conditions of possibility for community. This draws on the creative rather than the interpretive work of expression. Community emerges through the arrangement and intensity of expression, as well as its engagement of sensibilities. Aesthetics can attune us to these distributive and appropriative capacities of expression. With the former, this means focusing on how community is made through the sharing in and sharing out of sensibilities; the role of expression in rendering groups visible and divisible. For the latter, the emphasis is on the differing potential for expression to become sensible through its movements; its openness to connections affording the ongoing possibility of community. In both cases, aesthetics considers how expression is involved in making a community with an uncertain materiality. With distribution, community manifests as an inconstant appearance, something that cannot always be sensed. With appropriation, community is not quite here yet; it has a virtuality that might be actualised. Across these instances, community is neither solely imagined nor practised, neither complete ideality nor materiality. Instead, the idea and the activity of community cannot be separated. This is because the attachments of community are to some extent ‘fantastical’, they involve a belief or sense of their existence without concrete evidence. Such attachments then become the basis of ‘work’, the ongoing labour of community that enables it to appear. So community emerges as a transient node through which individuals can connect to a group. The politics at stake here concerns the ambiguous presence of community; its potential to be both disrupted and eruptive. This uncertain agency of community is why the vocabulary of aesthetics is important. It attunes us to the complex relationship between the tangible and the intangible, the corporeal and the incorporeal, the weight of community as an inconstant body.

Thus, as a collective but changing entity with no clear rules of engagement, community might be thought of as a mood or an atmosphere. Atmospheres are useful for this contingent politics of community in two ways. The first relates to substance. Atmosphere invokes a less structuring form of collectivity, one that exists without obvious ideology. The term is suggestive of a gathering but one that

lacks the solidity of an essence. It avoids the rigidity of discourse and instead can be ‘complexly adaptive’, meaning that it cannot easily dictate or be dictated in advance. So atmosphere provides a means of understanding how community does not operate as a stable frame for individual belonging but nonetheless (community) continues to appear as a vehicle for the orientation of collective goals. The second aspect of atmospheres that might be useful to community is their boundaries. The conditions of inclusion and exclusion of atmospheres is uncertain, they require ongoing activity to ensure they are maintained. That is the constant work that links production and consumption of the more or less tangible substance of atmosphere. Yet whilst it is easy to be carried along by an atmosphere, individual dispositions towards this collective mass may not be unified. I can become part of an atmosphere without making a positive decision to do so. This mirrors the way the attachments of community can build up and dissipate with ease. On the one hand, community seemingly involves participation and engagement, an active labouring that differs from just ‘being there’. On the other hand, passive presence may also be enough to signify inclusion in a collective. So, atmosphere renders community weighty enough to be substantial without occluding its constant potential for change or dissolution. This is suited to the understanding of precarious belonging developed in the thesis that avoids the stability of norms but acknowledges the continued influence of social categories.

Such indeterminate weight of atmosphere highlights the ambivalence of creativity in the attachments of community. Creative practice seemingly ‘does something’ that brings people together. Yet it is equally involved in disruption and separation, upsetting attempts to form attachments. Creativity therefore drives the precarity of belonging in community as a force that can alter atmosphere through even miniscule constructive or destructive movements. The result is community as a process of contest, a constant negotiation of the differing pulls of creative practice that are often generated out of non-coherences and conflicting rationales. It is this turbulent atmosphere that might provide a frame for the culture of community. It points to the continued importance of representation as an ever more complex practice by highlighting collective attachment and

participation despite the uncertain duration or substance of such engagements. This is not representation solely as image, but rather as the broader conditions of experience in the world. Atmosphere indicates the sensible yet often inarticulable qualities of these experiences of affiliation with community. That is, belonging to something bigger often occurs through an orientation or an attunement, rather than any absolute connection. This is an attachments that involves both active and passive participation through more or less energetic acts of connection, just as the production and consumption of community are inextricably linked. So across the city, multiculturalism and community, the cultural politics of creativity emerges as an attention to the ongoing processes of representation that condition the experience of the present. Representation appears as a contingent negotiation of positions, practices and materials; only ever partially adequate and always subject to movements that challenges its ossification. In a period that asks for but constantly avoids recognition, the ongoing creative practices of representation illustrate how people continue to locate, how they work to maintain attachments in the face of uncertainty.

Appendix

Table of Interviewees

Name	Organisation/Occupation
Hazel	Poet, Acoustic Night Bristol
Andi	Poet, Acoustic Night Bristol
Tim	SSG artistic director
Edson	Writer, poet, formerly Bristol Black Writers
David	Scriptwriter
Liz	Poet
James	Poet
Stephen	Poet
Lorna	Actor, Breathing Fire
Action Hero	Performance artist
Jeremy	Poet
Pameli	Director/poet, Theatre West
Bertel	Producer, publisher, City Chameleon
Trevor	Poet
Clive	Publisher, Burning Eye Books
Nick	ACE
Jack	Poet
Colin	Director, Poetry Can
Tanuja	Producer, Theatre Bristol
Neil	Artistic director, ACTA
Carrie	Education Officer, Tobacco Factory Theatre
Steve and Jasmine	Manager and Education Officer, St Paul's Carnival
Tana	Arts Officer, BCC
Amirah	Jamafrique organiser, MXC
Sophie	Scriptspace Commissioner (Tobacco Factory Theatre)

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