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# Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

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## Abstract

Throughout this thesis, performance theory and the accompanying practice as research are utilised, along with anthropological and philosophical analysis, in order to examine how gift intersects with live art practice. The ways in which it is made and encountered in contemporary (predominantly UK) society are of particular focus.

*The Horse's Teeth*, a 2012 project that saw the authorship of six new performance works gifted to six artists, is used, along with Bourdieusian notions of cultural capital and Sara Ahmed's theory around the 'stickiness' of emotions to explore how authorship is both subjective lived experience and a means of accumulating capital. By then analysing the affective dimensions of gift giving within *The Horse's Teeth*, a model is developed to show how gift can effect subject-formation.

Building on this model, organ transplantation is proposed as an exemplary instance of the 'successful gift', a gift that both bridges identities and affirmatively increases the capacities of the recipient(s). *The Kindness of Strangers*, a solo performance in which I investigate the relationship between the work's audience, my anonymous bone marrow donor and Blanche Dubois, is then used to consider the potential of performance to be such a gift. In the proposed understanding, what the audience and performer give to the performance and each other is presented using Jean-Luc Marion's work on anamorphosis and Jacques Rancière's emancipated spectator.

Referencing the autobiographical element of *The Kindness of Strangers*, the transformative potential of Rosi Braidotti's affirmative ethics is used to explain how the excess of trauma can sometimes be transformed into the excess of gift; a gift to both the traumatised self and, potentially, another. This develops the proposal made by thinkers such as Lyotard, Marion and Derrida that the gift cannot be fully comprehended at the time in which it is given. Inferring from this that the successful performance gift also resists being known by either audience or performer in its totality, the problem of how to make such unknowable performance is explored using Richard Sennett's writing on craft. The second chapter concludes by considering reciprocity, in particular applause as a reciprocal gift from the audience, as an expression of thanks for what the performer has given.

Having established a clear sense of how performance can be understood as gift, the final chapter examines how such gifts sit within capitalism. A variety of funding systems are considered, as well as the manner by which gift and performance, as Illichian blessings, defy capitalist valuation. Capital's attempts to gain propriety by developing authorial relationships to the blessing is presented through analysis of corporate patronage, before an overview of current activist work to undermine this in the context of oil sponsorship is provided. The work of Liberate Tate, a group formed to break the relationship between BP and the Tate, is considered in particular depth here. The thesis concludes by proposing a reconsideration of how the arts are valued within funding systems, particularly in relation to waste and the way in which funders undermine the gift within performance by demanding quantified outcomes in advance.

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The relationship between the gift and live art and performance is close and intricate, with the language used to describe one often evoking the other. Both demand that they are read as sincere and honestly delivered, whilst common parlance will compliment a performer's talent by describing them as gifted, and discussion after the event will frequently acknowledge the generosity (or its lack) of an on-stage actor. And it is not just the audience that uses such language; performers themselves will often reflect on a particular audience with language resonant of gift giving – sometimes the talk is of 'a very receptive audience' and at others the complaint is that they 'weren't giving anything'.

Such negotiations, that see the giving of something between audience and performer are an essential quality of the liveness of performance. As Peggy Phelan notes in an article on mediatised performance, it is 'an old boast... *theatre gives you living truth*' (Phelan, 1993, p.6. my emphasis.). In considering the industry that surrounds such moments of liveness, Hans Abbing (2006) argues that the arts occupies a unique relationship to the economy due to the willingness of many artists to work for free, whilst Lewis Hyde considers the creative process to be rooted in the reception of gifts from elsewhere:

An essential portion of any artist's labor is not creation so much as invocation. Part of the work cannot be made, it must be received; and we cannot have this gift except, perhaps, by supplication, by courting, by creating within ourselves, that 'begging bowl' to which the gift is drawn. (Hyde, 2007, p.145)

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Whilst Hyde's suggestion is that an essential part of the creative process is the invocation of something akin to the muse, a mysterious (even mystic) source outside of the artist, companies such as the Manchester based performance ensemble Quarantine will often more concretely invoke voices from elsewhere, creating an arena in which non-performers (pregnant women, young men from a Manchester estate, soldiers) can share their experiences and perspectives with the theatre-going public. They give a platform to people who wouldn't typically be heard in such a context, and their participant performers then give of themselves to the audience. As Lyn Gardner writes about *Susan and Darren*, a piece Quarantine made with the mother and son of the title:

As the ragged story of their lives unfolds, it dawns on you that not only are Susan and Darren discovering as much about each other as we are about them, but they are also shining a light on our own familial relationships. This is not so much a performance as a gift - one that comes straight from the heart. (Gardner, 2006)

Gardner appears to make a distinction between performance and gift when she says that the piece is '*not so much a performance as a gift*' – though she does not expand on this difference, and it is unclear how committed to such a position she is.

The attitude adopted throughout this thesis is somewhat different in that I propose that performance and live art can be readily understood as a gift in most, if not all, circumstances. The perspective I propose is not limited only to those times when a particularly heartfelt point of contact is established, but to performance in a much broader sense. This does not mean that all works of

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performance are inherently generous, they're not necessarily all 'successful gifts' (a term considered in some more depth in Chapter 2), but each performance can nevertheless be understood as a gift, one that moves in a multiplicity of directions between performer, audience and the performance itself.

The performance works examined throughout are sited in a variety of locations and utilise a variety of forms. I reference conversational pieces, scripted works, and performative actions that take place in theatres, galleries, and public spaces (the street, parks, and shops). Some of the works have audiences who bought tickets and travelled to a venue, some were free to attend, whilst others are performative encounters in which the 'audience' are unaware they are witnessing an artwork. To encompass this variety of encounters, I frame all the works referenced as live art, by which I mean the extensive modes of live action that is well described by the Live Art Development Agency:

The term Live Art is not a description of an artform or discipline, but a cultural strategy to include experimental processes and experiential practices that might otherwise be excluded from established curatorial, cultural and critical frameworks. Live Art is a framing device for a catalogue of approaches to the possibilities of liveness by artists who chose to work across, in between, and at the edges of more traditional artistic forms. (Live Art Development Agency, nd.)

Throughout the thesis, I will also, at times, refer to performance and theatre. In part this is a rhetorical device, utilised to avoid excessive repetition of the phrase 'live art', although it is also to deliberately acknowledge a more

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expansive frame in which the methodologies and analysis I am considering could be applied.

Whilst, throughout the thesis, performance is considered *as* gift, I also reference a number performance works that explicitly *use* gift, works that set up performance contexts in which gift-giving is a concrete performance element. For instance, Sara Juli's *The Money Conversation* was a spoken word and dance piece for the theatre that toured to Australia, the UK and throughout North America between 2006 and 2011. The performance sees Juli enter the performance space with her life savings before, in a series of playful interactions with the audience, she 'confronts her own troubled relationship with money by giving it all away' (Elsie Management, nd.).

Although directly gift-giving is utilised in a somewhat similar fashion, a markedly different relationship between performer and audience was set up by Ansuman Biswas in the week long durational work *Present*, performed as a part of the *Louder than Bombs* series at Stanley Picker Gallery in London (Stanley Picker Gallery, 2010).<sup>1</sup> In this piece, Biswas enters the gallery space with nothing, relying on the generosity of the audience to feed, water and clothe him over the time of the work, promising that 'Anything given – large or small, essential or whimsical, material or insubstantial – will... be used in some way' (Art Exchange, 2012).

Rajni Shah is another artist who has made a number of pieces of work that directly use gift-giving as a means of formal engagement. These include a series

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<sup>1</sup> A later outing of the piece took place in 2012 at The Art Exchange Gallery in Colchester (Art Exchange, 2012).

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titled *small gifts*; a research project funded by the Live Art Development Agency and supported by Lancaster's Nuffield Theatre, that explored the 'the role of gift and conversation in public spaces' (Shah, nd.-a) and culminated in her running 'a series of workshops exploring gifting for an NHS harm reduction service for women who sell sex from the streets of London' (Shah, nd.-b). In the piece, *give what you can, take what you need* Shah demonstrates a third approach to the incorporation of gift into performance. In this work, co-commissioned by Futuresonic and the Nuffield Theatre in Lancaster, Shah's role was one of host; a table was set up in public space, and members of the public were offered a gift of a pound coin, mounted and presented in an envelope, which acted as invitation to take a seat and join the group. They could stay as long as they wanted, enjoying the convivial and warm atmosphere, whilst the pound that they had been given could either be kept, returned, or spent on something for people within the group.

As a set of performances illustrating a range of gift mechanics, it is useful to draw on social anthropology in order to position these three works in relation to that which Marcel Mauss calls the system of 'total services'; the complex system of religious, juridical, economic, political, familial and moral codes that operate in a society (2002, p.6). As Mauss continues, writing what would become the modern foundations of western understanding of the gift, he articulates three 'obligations' that operate within this system – the obligation to give, the obligation to receive and the obligation to reciprocate.

Using a study of the Maori, Mauss explains how to give a gift is to give a part of oneself, thereby leaving the giver with a deficiency that only reciprocation

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can complete: '... one must give back to another person what is really part and parcel of his nature and substance' (p.16). This obligation to reciprocate is an implicit demand (implicit since social pressure insists that none of the Maussian obligations are overtly manifest) and is identifiable in Shah's piece. The piece may be initiated with a gift to the public (the pound coin that brings them in towards the table) but, for the performance to continue, it is necessary that they reciprocate – either by directing their energies to Shah and the people that make up the group at that time, or by leaving something behind for the people that are still to join.

Artistic exploration of Mauss's 'obligation to give' can be seen in the Ansuman Biswas work. Mauss explains this obligation by noting that 'To refuse to give... is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality' (p.17), and gives the example of an Australian huntsman who must give the spoils of the hunt to his parents-in-law. As Mauss explains it, 'the recipient possesses some kind of right of property over anything that belongs to the donor' (ibid.), and for some of those that encountered Biswas in the space, that obligation might have felt particularly present: when he was hungry, they knew that the responsibility for sustenance lay with them and when he was naked, he had a stake in the clothes that they were wearing.

To complete this correlation between Mauss's work and the performances mentioned, Sara Juli's work can be seen to illustrate the 'obligation to receive'. In the performance Juli would give money to audience members in a variety of ways, often comic. At one point audience members were invited to reach into her underwear to pull out bank notes, whilst another saw her hold a

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note between her toes, offering it to an audience member, whilst hopping away from them each time they tried to grab it. Mauss notes that the Dayak clan in Polynesia have 'developed a whole system of law and morality based upon the duty one has not to fail to share in the meal at which one is present' (ibid.), and similarly the central premise of Juli's performance demands that the audience take the money she offers to them.<sup>2</sup> Should they refuse, the performance becomes a radically different proposition.

In highlighting these works it is clear that performance can utilise a range of aspects of the gift. Each of these performances also offers the possibility for analysis in terms of a provocation made by the gift to capitalism. To state these challenges in their simplest terms: Juli presents an alternative to accumulation; Biswas questions materialist consumerism; and Shah presents what she herself identifies as a 'playful exploration of notions of community and conversation through gift exchange' (nd.).

However, the notions of gift central to each work are significantly problematised by their operation within broader systems of capitalist accumulation. Though different demands and perspectives on generosity are provided by each, in all three the artist is financially rewarded for their performance and, by making work of a particular profile, the authority of their position as artist is consolidated by making gains of cultural capital. In particular, they gather what Bourdieu (1986) describes as institutional capital; the legitimisation that accompanies the work through the marking of it with the

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<sup>2</sup> At least this is the case for the duration of the performance. Audiences were given the opportunity to return the money at the conclusion of the piece.

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logos of institutions such as The Chelsea Theatre, the Live Art Development Agency and the Nuffield Theatre, whilst these relatively high-profile works also facilitate an expansion in the artists' professional networks, resulting in gains of that which Bourdieu calls 'social capital'.

Whilst the generosity in the works is complicated by both their institutional relationship and the need for each artist to maintain and develop a career, it is too simple to dismiss them because of the context in which they sit, to write them off as output from 'the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication [which] can assimilate an astonishing number of revolutionary themes, and can even propagate them without seriously placing its own existence or the existence of the class that possesses them into question' (Benjamin, 1970, p.30). Neither however, should they be taken simply at face value – as simple examples of gift that inherently mark a move towards social justice through their apparent challenge to capital. This tension, the relationship between performance as gift and the return artists make in the form of cultural capital is the focus of Chapter 1 and a theme that underwrites much of the project. A significant research area is an exploration of the tactics and understanding that might be adopted so that artistic generosity is not immediately subsumed into accumulation whenever it is encountered in the context of an artist's career.

Whilst not directly tackling this particular problematic, in a timeframe approximately parallel to these performance works, a turn is noticeable within performance and art scholarship towards issues relating to gift, issues such as value, finance and artists' working conditions (in particular questions around free labour). In Summer 2016, *Canadian Theatre Review* took 'Funding' as its

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theme, whilst in a special *OnCurating* issue on 'Precarious labour in the field of art' it was observed that '[o]ne of the most consistent findings of research on work within the creative industries is that it is experienced by most who are involved with it as profoundly satisfying and intensely pleasurable (at least some of the time). A vocabulary of love is repeatedly evinced in such studies' (Gill and Pratt, 2013, p.33). 2012's Psi#18 conference in Leeds presented a range of responses to the statement 'performance :: culture :: industry', whilst the issue of *Performance Research* that followed the conference, *On Value*, was a consideration of what the editors saw as 'a fundamental tension between cultural value and economic value' (Performance Research, 2013). A forthcoming issue of the same journal even more explicitly references gift by taking as its theme *Generosity* (Performance Research, 2017).

Whilst these moves towards themes of the gift can be understood as resonant with a broader political shift, this thesis does not propose a detailed analysis of the development of this particular zeitgeist, although the financial crisis, austerity and the since abandoned move towards a Big Society (Butler, 2015) go some way to providing a plausible, if somewhat simplified, explanatory context.

An additional explanation for the contemporary interest in gift arises because, as Chapter 3 explores, it has an integral link to authenticity (it needs to be understood as authentically given in order to be successful), and thus reflects a broader social interest in the 'real' for contemporary societies that are saturated with marketing strategies and mediatised presentations of the self. As this chapter suggests, artistic acknowledgement of this desire for authenticity

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can be seen in movements such as the turn towards the performance and body art of the 1970s and its successors.

Whilst intriguing, the focus of this research is not however an attempt to present a comprehensive breakdown of why aspects of gift theory might have particular contemporary resonance. Instead, the thesis and the accompanying practical research that was presented as a part of the *Giving in to Gift* festival that I produce in Liverpool (see Appendices) is proposed as a contribution to the ongoing debate on these themes. It is an attempt to bring additional perspectives to the question of what 'cultural value' might be and how it operates by considering performance and the ways in which it is made through the lens of the gift whilst also enabling additional understanding of gift mechanics themselves.

There is also something decidedly personal to the analysis developed over the following pages. As someone who was the recipient of a bone marrow transplant from an anonymous donor in 1998, questions around altruism and the causality of the gift have a particular resonance for me. My life has literally been dependent on them.<sup>3</sup>

The three chapters of the thesis have been structured along two concurrent paths. The first of these utilises the gift to explore the theatre on a range of levels – from how artists negotiate the making of work and their careers, to the artist's relationship with their audience, to the theatre as an industry within a capitalist society.

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<sup>3</sup> Ironically, it took my haematologist to note the link between my personal history and this research, thereby sowing the seeds for the second practical project that I would undertake, *The Kindness of Strangers*.

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Viewed along the lines of this trajectory, the first chapter uses analysis of *The Horse's Teeth*, a project that saw me gift the authorship of six newly created pieces of work to six other artists, and Bourdieu's notions of symbolic capital, in order to analyse the systems of authorship in which an individual artist operates. In this chapter, works presented by the artists Taylan Halici, Jordan Mckenzie, Rachel Gomme and Richard Layzell in the Horse's Teeth are used to support the analysis. The next chapter brings the audience into consideration, and again, practical research is of central significance. For this chapter I draw significantly on *The Kindness of Strangers*, a solo performance developed to explore the relationship between the audience, my anonymous bone marrow donor, and Blanche Dubois, the protagonist of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Through analysis of this work, what the artist and the audience each give into the performance event is considered. The third and final chapter brings the focus out yet another level and places the making of theatre and performance in the context of wider neoliberal society. In particular it situates arts funding as a bridge between a capitalist economy and the non-economic elements within the arts whilst acknowledging the work done by activist groups such as Liberate Tate, Art Not Oil and Reverend Billy Talen to challenge such capitalist strategies.

The second pathway along which the thesis can be tracked addresses the nature, operation and mechanics of the gift, both in more general terms and through consideration of the performance as gift. In the opening chapter, analysis of *The Horse's Teeth* allows for the development of an initial framework for conceptualising the giving of gift. The binarism of giver and recipient is challenged to accommodate a more expansive understanding of who is the

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recipient and who the giver, whilst Sara Ahmed's proposals around the 'stickiness' of emotions are adopted to argue for less individualistic notions of ownership than those demanded by capitalism. In the second chapter, this basic mechanic is developed to include a gift's 'success' (or otherwise) by adopting, as metaphor, ideas around organ transplantation, with the performance of *The Kindness of Strangers* providing practical insight. The third chapter then concludes the trajectory by bringing this model of the gift into direct relation to capitalism. Here I adopt Ivan Illich's notion of the blessing to identify those elements of theatre and the gift that most clearly resist economic valuation, whilst also considering how this resistance might be utilised by capitalist institutions, how the refusal to be valued acts to exponentially increase value.

Since Mauss's foundational work on the gift, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (2002), was originally published in 1925, there has been a tendency to understand gift in binary opposition to economy. Whilst a central tenet of this thesis has been a desire to distinguish the two systems, to consider how alternatives to capitalist thinking manifest through the gift, the relationship between them is more complex than the stark separation implied by Mauss.<sup>4</sup> More recent anthropological work, such as Michèle de La Pradelle's prolonged study of a marketplace in Provence, France, repeatedly

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasising how Mauss positions his subject matter in opposition to finance, anthropologist Chris Gregory notes that 'Mauss makes no reference to Marx in his essay, but his ghost haunts its every page as a kind of invisible antithesis. Mauss's method was, like Marx's, dialectical, evolutionary comparative and political. Dialectics enabled Mauss to see that even though gifts appear voluntary they are, in reality, repaid under obligation; his evolutionary approach led him to suggest the primacy of gift exchange over barter; and his comparative method enabled him to see the significance of the distinction between stranger and relative and between the alienable and the inalienable in terms that were the mirror-image of those employed by Marx.' (1999, p.920).

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demonstrates that gift and exchange are both readily identified in a single marketplace encounter. She writes that '[t]o focus on the value exchanged on markets, while dismissing as secondary the ephemeral society that takes shape around a market stall or counter, is to engage in an abstraction' (2006, p.3). This 'ephemeral society' of social interaction, status assertion and informal generosity is as much a part of the market as the exchange of currency for commodities. To draw from Eve Sedgwick, rather than making an opposition out of economic transactions and unquantifiable interaction, it is perhaps easier to think of the two systems as being *beside* each other, overlapping, intersecting and affecting each other yet each possessing their own characteristics and distinct areas of operation.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst it is tempting to apply Sedgwick's spatial reimagining to binaries each and every time they present themselves, such a solution would inevitably be as reductive as the binary that it is supposed to resolve. Gift and the economy, collective and individual identity, and the audience and the performer are all pairings that are complicated at various points within the thesis, whilst another dichotomy that acts as a central theme is the apparent contradiction between the potential of the gift to act as both a form of transgressive excess and a means of social control. The thinking of Jean-Luc Marion was particularly useful for conceptualising the excessive nature of the gift, although Sara Ahmed's and

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<sup>5</sup> Sedgwick writes that '*Beside* is an interesting preposition also because there's nothing very dualistic about it; a number of elements may lie alongside one another, though not an infinity of them. *Beside* permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics that enforce dualistic thinking: noncontradiction or the law of the excluded middle, cause versus effect, subject versus object. Its interest does not, however, depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relationships, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings.' (2003, p.8)

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Richard Dyer's work was also essential for formulating an understanding of the affective aspect; a dimension often overlooked but nevertheless essential to this excessive quality.

The opportunity to use the gift for social manipulation is particularly apparent in Chapter 3, when capital's tendency to employ strategies of funding and sponsorship is considered, although it is a theme touched on earlier. When theorising the audience's engagement with performance, the gift is shown to impose a common identity upon its recipients (Chapter 2). This dimension of social control is also apparent when considerations around the return are considered – as mentioned, Bourdieusian notions of cultural capital are key here, as well as the Derridean demand that such return invalidates the gift.

It is this paradox, the identification of gift as both a radical act of generosity and as a tool of self-interest that is core to the problems of those performance works that enact generosity, and it is in this paradox that the fundamental questions of the thesis can be seen to be found: what is there, within performance, that can be identified as resisting capital in both its financial and symbolic forms? What potential challenges to capital does the gift offer? And how might the gift be used as an implement to pry apart some of the basic assumptions about how performance is made and presented?

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### **Chapter 1 – The Author of the Gift: Locating Authorship in *The Horse's Teeth***

#### ***The Practice of Authorship***

When Roland Barthes published *The Death of the Author* in 1967, he described authorship as 'the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology' (1977, p.142). In the time since, the sociologist Eve Chiapello has critiqued the individualism inherent within notions of the 'artist genius' as 'aristocratic' (2004, p.588) whilst, in a similar vein, Foucault writes in 'What is an Author?' that such identities constitute the 'privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences' (2008, p.281). These descriptions are, as Chiapello continues, rooted in a variety of challenges to the author's status as an individual. As she notes, sociologists have drawn attention to the social structures that support the creative process, whilst thinkers in the Marxist tradition have chosen to emphasize the totality of the labour involved in the production of art.

In spite of such criticism of what is, in its essential prioritization of the individual, the capitalist identity par excellence, most forms of art practice continue to operate systems of attribution and recognition that identify discrete units of authorship in such a way, either by ascribing the role to a sole artist or a clearly defined collective.

As an intervention into such practices, throughout the summer of 2012 I developed six new interventions and performances which, upon their performance, had their authorship gifted to six other artists. Through this act of gifting, all future rights of presentation and adaptation of the work were transferred to the artist, meaning that, if they wanted, they could re-present the piece in its entirety (as two of the artists went on to do), or reuse elements of it in

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other work they might make. Gifting the authorship also meant that each work was presented in the name of the recipient artist as a part 2012's *Giving in to Gift* festival in Liverpool, under the collective title of *The Horse's Teeth* (with one work, 'a belated gift', performed at the end of January 2013).

Following an examination of other performance practices that have complicated notions of the author as an isolated individual, this chapter uses *The Horse's Teeth*, and the specific mode of collaboration that is to be found within it, to critique notions of a discrete authorial identity, in particular the tendency such identification has towards capitalist accumulation. Whilst specific works are referred to at points, the emphasis of this analysis is on the project itself, the manner by which the authorship was given, and the qualities associated with these gifts in a more general sense.

I use anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualisation of symbolic capital to highlight the way in which both an author of a performance work and the person who gives a gift make a variety of non-financial gains from such sharing.<sup>6</sup> I then contrast the systems in which these symbolic gains operate with the financial economy by analysing *Work Fair*, the piece Taylan Halici presented in *The Horse's Teeth*. I trace the gains made by those involved in the project, and draw attention to the potential for exploitation in such accumulation, before identifying two ways by which authorial identity can be formulated.

One of these identities, the capitalised Author, holds the stores of symbolic capital, whilst the second, that of the non-capitalised author, is presented, using

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<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu (1986) creates a taxonomy of capital that includes the economic, social, and three forms of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised). Since he groups all forms of non-economic capital under the label of symbolic, this is the term I am using.

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aspects of Rosi Braidotti's work on subjectivity, as the subject in which the lived experience of creating the work is to be found. With an awareness that this second identity includes, but is not limited to, emotional experience, another two works in *The Horse's Teeth*, Jordan McKenzie's *The Perfect Gift* and Rachel Gomme's *Bodies in Space*, are then used to analyse more closely this affective dimension. I draw significantly from Sara Ahmed's thinking on emotion here, in particular the quality of 'stickiness' that she uses to conceptualise the movement of affect between phenomena. Taking such a metaphor as a tool for understanding gift more broadly, I conclude by outlining a particular conception of ownership, one which encapsulates the manner by which the author(s) of an artwork can be described as 'owning' emotions, capital, and gifts.

### ***Beginnings (Methodologies and Rationales)***

Some scholars conceptualise collaborative modes of devising as a reaction to the questioning of authorship arising from Barthes' work on the death of the author. The history of devising from the 1970s that Govan, Nicholson and Normington (2007) present traces a shift from when such methods were used to criticise the authority of the playwright and director, to a more contemporary economic and creative practicality in which skill-sharing and the division of responsibilities exemplify the 'unstable, short term, [and] flexible' working conditions identified as the hallmarks of post-Fordist production (Zoran and Vukovic, 2013, p.2).

With well recognised artistic directors heading up pioneering devising companies such as Forced Entertainment, The Wooster Group and The Living

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Theatre,<sup>7</sup> it can be seen that, whilst some modes of developing work are less reliant on a single authorial voice in the creation process, and therefore encourage a 'multidimensional clashing' of meaning (Govan et al., 2007, p.95), systems of individualist attribution remain clearly identifiable.

Which is not to say that challenges to such systems are not attempted. One such manipulation of accreditation can be seen in Jerome Bel's dance work *Xavier Le Roy* (2000). In this, Bel asked the eponymous artist to make a work that he would then 'sign', providing a high-profile example in which both the act of creativity and the ownership of such creative labour is blurred. In a conversation about the piece, Le Roy observes that although he originally wanted to do a performance that would 'appear' to an audience to be by Bel, he realised that this was impossible. Nevertheless, he is emphatic that 'I would never have done this performance. From the beginning I would never have done it. It's absolutely unthinkable' (ctlgrsnn, 2009b). This delocation of authorship into a form that refuses to settle within an individual artist was a key influence in developing the methodology used in *The Horse's Teeth*. Whilst differences remain - not least that the work I offered to the recipient artists was deliberately framed as gift, whilst Bel asked Le Roy to make the work for him<sup>8</sup> - this awareness of how their practices intersected provided a conceptual frame whilst formulating the different stages of *The Horse's Teeth*.

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<sup>7</sup> Tim Etchells, Elizabeth LeCompte and Judith Malina respectively.

<sup>8</sup> Whilst asking for a gift may not necessarily invalidate it, in an extended video conversation around the work (ctlgrsnn, 2009c) Bel and Le Roy make no reference to ideas around generosity

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Each work was developed after an initial object-centred gift exchange between myself and the recipient artist; the item I received from each of them then acted as an impetus for the development process of the final work. Unlike Le Roy, I made no attempt to make work 'as' the recipient artist – this was not an attempt at impersonation – nevertheless, there was a desire for the work made to be useful to the recipient after the initial performance, to feed into the discourse of their practice in some way. Reflecting this intended utility, each work had a blog, accessible to the artist that 'authored' each work, in which I documented the process of making their piece, whilst each artist also agreed to continue to engage with the work after my involvement finished, to assert their authorship in some manner. The brief for this engagement was deliberately as open as possible, with the artists being asked to do anything that they would normally do with a piece of work that they have created (on a spectrum of possibility ranging from simply adding it to their CV, to using a singular element from it in the development of a new piece, to performing the piece again somewhere else, etc.). Throughout the process, a constant referent was to ideas of what could and could not be given; to how completely the authorship might be transferred; and from this to begin to extrapolate new ways in which authorship could be described.

Writing on 'the collaborative turn' in socially engaged practice, Claire Bishop argues against the assumption that to renounce authorship in socially engaged practice is inherently anti-capitalist:

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The discursive criteria of socially engaged art are, at present, drawn from a tacit analogy between anticapitalism and the Christian "good soul." In this schema, self-sacrifice is triumphant: The artist should renounce authorial presence in favor of allowing participants to speak through him or her. (2006, p.183)

Whilst there is little sense in assuming that authorial denial automatically challenges capitalism, to trace the root of this sentiment back to a misguided notion of Christian self-sacrifice also appears somewhat misplaced. As previously noted, there is significant literature on both the social dimension to, and the extended labour of, making art. In her critique, Bishop makes little acknowledgement of these factors in decisions to renounce authorial identity.

Nevertheless, whilst the work produced in *The Horse's Teeth* is not readily positioned in the socially engaged sphere that Bishop addresses, she does, in the instance of this work, still prompt reflection upon possible motivations for authorial distortion. In the context of *The Horse's Teeth*, I would argue that, far from being based in naïve assumptions about the nobility of self-renunciation, the root of this intervention into authorship is an attempt to draw attention to the presentational modes through which ownership of the creative process are typically attributed, to investigate the boundaries of where our ideas of the author lie, to make a gift to the participating artists (with all the affective investment and possibilities for interpersonal attachment associated with such generosity) and, to a degree, make gains for myself by producing the project.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Aside from any acknowledgement that the work may have received from the performance

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### ***Accumulation and Symbolic Capitalism***

Reflecting on thirty years of writing practice, Pierre Bourdieu notes that a significant theme throughout his work is a consideration of the manner by which symbolic capital operates as a conduit for power within any given field (be that the 'capital' manifest in those objects that have a particular symbolic status, the people an individual has relationships with, or even the manner by which an individual presents themselves physically). He writes that:

... struggles for recognition are a fundamental dimension of social life and that what is at stake in them is the accumulation of a particular form of capital, honour in the sense of reputation and prestige, and that there is, therefore, a specific logic behind the accumulation of symbolic capital.

(1994, p.22)

In the field of performance, this symbolic capital is accrued in a range of ways, a partial description of which is only possible here. Nevertheless, such gains are identifiable through association with particular individuals;<sup>10</sup> by being supported by particular organisations / funding bodies (or gaining a qualification from one);<sup>11</sup> by demonstrating certain skills or talents that are appropriate to the socio-temporal field in which they are produced (virtuosity in the broadest sense); or by presenting work that makes particular kinds of comment (and for

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community, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that *The Horse's Teeth*, and this writing, are being utilised in my attempts to gain a PhD.

10 These associations Bourdieu describes as social capital, or 'social obligations ('connections')'. To draw attention to this, in *The Horse's Teeth*, since 'such personal aspects of curation and production are often hidden from view... each person involved in the Horse's Teeth has been asked to write two sentences on their relationship with everyone else who is taking part' (Giving in to Gift, 2012a). These sentences were then mapped on a diagram and made public on the project website.

11 Aside from the financial gains of funding, there is the symbolic gain of being 'worth' giving money to.

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that practice to then become known, either via word of mouth or, more consequentially, when texts, with their own significant stores of capital, interpret said practice). There are myriad other ways in which capital is bestowed even less within an individual's control, again too many to list, but the way we look, the kind of body we have, our manner of speaking, all have an influence on how an artist is received within a given field.<sup>12</sup> It is by accruing symbolic capital in these ways that access to power is gained within the field of performance. In its idealised (and often critically unexamined) form, an arts career is a feedback loop in which, by repeatedly gaining capital (funding, institutional support and being written about) the chances of making further gains grows more likely.

Writers on generosity also draw attention to the non-financial gains made by the giver of gifts. Lewis Hyde observes that, 'In communities drawn together by gift exchange, 'status,' 'prestige,' or 'esteem,' take the place of cash remuneration' (2007, p.80), and as has been consistently argued in analyses of the potlatch (a ritual that is explored more fully in Chapter 3), this return can be seen as the key motivator for the demonstrative destruction that is an integral part of that ritual (c.f. Bataille, 1997, and Mauss, 2000).

Recognition of these gains is typically taboo, for 'the model which shows the interdependence of gift and counter-gift [that] destroys the practical logic of exchange... can only function if the objective model (every gift requires a counter-

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<sup>12</sup> As well as notions around identity politics, Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and the closely related idea of hexis is relevant here: 'Bodily hexis is political theory realised, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*... The principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit' (Bourdieu, 1977, pp.93-94. original emphasis).

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gift) is not experienced as such' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.23).<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, gift, typically presented as being outside the realm of capitalist gain, is seen to risk reintegration if an attempt is made to consider the movements of symbolic capital.

Whilst perhaps not a taboo, there is often reticence, in the arts and elsewhere, on financial transparency.<sup>14</sup> In *The Horse's Teeth* this was challenged by showing the project budget online in the form of a spreadsheet (Giving in to Gift, 2012b). When various aspects of project management and production (and the fact that I produced 6 gifts) are taken into account, it is clear from this that I received substantially more income than the others involved in the project, although in each instance of my role as donating artist I received the same income as the recipient artists (£250). However, by examining the operation of symbolic capital within *The Horse's Teeth*, the gains made are revealed to be somewhat more complex.

Unlike examining a monetary trail, there is a difficulty in defining the movements of symbolic value due to its inherently unquantifiable nature. Which is not to say that it does not move in recognisable ways, nor that it is not possible to recognise an individual with a greater or lesser store of capital in a given situation. Instead, it is that it is near impossible to describe the transactions made within this economy in terms much more specific than the 'power' or 'social energy' that Bourdieu uses (1986). Although he goes on to state that 'The

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<sup>13</sup> This assumption that every gift demands a counter-gift is something that is returned to throughout the thesis.

<sup>14</sup> Notable exceptions to this include art activist groups The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home (nd.) and The Free University of Liverpool (nd.).

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universal equivalent, the measure of all equivalences, is nothing other than labor-time (in the widest sense)' (ibid.), it is apparent that even in this 'widest sense' (that would include the labour of previous generations and the work of developing a particular network of social contacts) certain factors are omitted (such as being in the right place at the right time) that remain only practically describable in terms of chance. Whilst Bourdieu acknowledges that not all labour-time is valued equally, these moments of chance have the potential to alter the value of the work undertaken as much as any conscious effort of previous labour.

A striking similarity between the different forms of capital is the potential they have to be used for further gain. In the analysis first presented by Marx, the capitalist is the person who invests money in the production and sale of commodities in order to generate more money. He presents this in the formulation  $M-C-M$ , an equation used to represent 'the transformation of money into commodities, and the re-conversion of commodities into money: buying in order to sell' (1990, p.248). As Marx and those who have followed him have articulated however, one of the problems with such a system of accumulation is that those with substantial capital are able to pay others to work for them in the production and sale of commodities (the  $M-C$  part), but are under no obligation to equitably distribute the gains made from the latter part of the equation ( $C-M$ ). As the worker's labour is treated as a commodity like any other, they only partially reap the benefit of their labour through the wage that they are paid; there is additional value, on top of this, that the capitalist takes even though they have not performed the labour that created this value. This, the difference in

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value between the first and last 'M' in the equation – that which we typically understand to be profit – Marx identifies as 'surplus value'.

Whilst all the forms of capital can be utilised for capitalist gain, it is important to note that there remain significant differences between the operation of the symbolic and financial forms. Bourdieu himself states that, in his work, he tries 'to avoid all kinds of reductionisms, beginning with economism' (Wacquant, 1989, p.42). To make links between the forms of capital too directly is to betray the conception of them. To understand how the forms differ, an analysis of *Work Fair*,<sup>15</sup> the performance Taylan Halici presented as part of *The Horse's Teeth*, proves useful.

In response to a photo album of things that were 'mine' (my passport, my shit, my reflection, etc), the gifts, sent by Halici, that were to become the foundation of *Work Fair* were an Apple Store worker's T-shirt, a bicycle inner tube, Robert Louis-Stevenson's essay *An Apology for Idlers* (presented as pages torn from a book), and a postcard of someone resting (on which Halici had written a short note). As the documenting blog, *Stevenson at Work, on a Bike* (Jeeves, 2012c), shows through its commentaries on Sartre's writings on freedom, documentation of a visit to Liverpool's International Slavery Museum, and video of both Spartacus and Mel Gibson as William Wallace in *Braveheart*, I took these gifts from Halici as prompts for considering questions around work, freedom, and independence from 'wage-slavery'.

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<sup>15</sup> The name is a homonym of workfare, a reference to the changes in the welfare state implemented by the Coalition government that forced the mid to long-term unemployed to work for free at employers such as Poundland, Tesco and Greggs in order to continue receiving their benefit (Boycott Workfare, 2013).

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Through such considerations, *Work Fair* was developed and became a piece in which a day was spent seeking work by distributing flyers and approaching potential employers. When doing this, it was explained that a condition of the work was that usual wage relations would be reversed and the employee (that is, myself, as performer in Halici's work) would pay the employer minimum wage for the work undertaken. Although there was inevitably a degree of confusion, and sometimes suspicion, when the offers were made, work that was paid for in the two iterations of the piece (for Halici also presented the work as a part of Camden People Theatre's *Sprint* festival in 2013) included setting up a bar for a celebrity Christmas party, working on a market stall, distributing flyers and 'locating a space to chill' by the river Mersey.

In that it involves giving the fruits of labour freely to another, the piece shares some characteristics with the donation of authorship in *The Horse's Teeth*. The operation of labour as presented in *Work Fair* however explicitly focuses on wage relations and the financial economy, whilst *The Horse's Teeth* can be seen to explore relations of symbolic capital.

To use Marx's terms, in *Work Fair*, notions of surplus value are taken to an extreme: the employer receives all the value gained from the labour. On top of this however, the employer also makes financial gains in excess of the labour's value; the rate of £6.19/hour (the national minimum wage as of November 2012) was paid to them. This monetary value was brought into the employer / employee transaction by labour performed elsewhere (in this instance, through the work that had gone into funding the project).

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In the instance of *The Horse's Teeth*, the recipient artists make symbolic gains from my labour even though they are not my employer. Such gains are made as soon as the piece is attributed to them, meaning that I, as in conventional Marxist analysis, am – as worker - only making a proportion of the symbolic gains generated by my labour. Since this is symbolic surplus value however, unlike monetary value, the gains made by the recipient artists are not at the cost of my own.

To explain this, it needs to be understood that the unusual relationship we have in *The Horse's Teeth*, the fact that the work is presented by a different authorial identity than the person who developed it, actually acts to increase the symbolic return over the gains that would have been made had the pieces been created and presented by a single artist. By diminishing my share of the total symbolic gains, the piece is made more interesting (a marker in the valuation of an artwork), and the total gains are thus increased.

In *The Horse's Teeth*, symbolic capital from labour performed elsewhere is also brought in to the project. All the artists involved were, to differing degrees, 'known' artists within the field of performance – all have presented work both throughout the UK and internationally, some have produced publications about their work, and, taken together, they have decades of experience in making performance artworks. However, this capital is not, as is the case with the money in *Work Fair*, transferred from one individual to another in a simple transaction. Whilst it is possible for symbolic capital to be transferred from one individual to another – for instance by writing a letter of introduction or recommending a

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show – this does not necessarily reduce the stores of capital of the person making the recommendation.

Nevertheless, whilst there are observable differences in the operation of the forms of capital, the potential for capitalist accumulation remains in all instances; it is not uncommon for opportunities to work with a high-profile artist or institution to be offered in return for a 'gain in experience' and the chance to list such an association on the CV.

The controversy around a 2011 fundraising event at Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art provides a high-profile example of such systems in operation. Yvonne Rainer (amongst others) accused Marina Abramović of exploitation 'reminiscent of [Pasolini's] *Salò*' by employing fifty performers as decorative centrepieces at a fundraising dinner at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Some performers spent the duration of the event sat beneath the dining tables, their heads exposed, 'rotating as decorative centerpieces at diners' tables and others – all women – ... [were] required to lie perfectly still in the nude for over three hours under fake skeletons' (Artinfo, 2011). Alongside the explicit fee of \$150, implicit payment for the labour was the gains of symbolic capital that come from being associated with a work by Abramović at MOCA. Whilst debate around the controversy centred on questions of how exploitative the employment could be when the performers had chosen to undertake the work, a position that largely ignores the systemic self-exploitation identified as a hallmark of the precariat (Gill and Pratt, 2013), the lead artist and institution clearly receive a greater proportion of the symbolic capital than is given to the performers of the work, all of whom have remained largely anonymous.

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In *The Horse's Teeth*, as well as financial payments, the recipient artists received a portion of symbolic capital by being presented as author of the work, whilst I, as donating artist, also made gains: both through my 'generosity' as donor, and also whenever my role as originating artist is acknowledged. As with any gift, the acknowledgement of my role as donor is a sensitive issue; '[t]he simple identification of the gift seems to destroy it' (Derrida, 1992, p.13). In keeping with this, to reference my position as originator of the work too simply risked keeping the work with me, stalling its journey toward the recipient artist before it could be completed. It would be as if I demanded the return of the symbolic capital at the moment in which the gift was given, and the code of the gift demands that this return is not made immediately; the gift must travel an appropriate distance before the return is made, it "must not be restituted *immediately and right away*" (ibid. p.41).

The paradox of the gift, as Derrida presents it, is that the gift needs to be presented without being identified as gift, that '*At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or the donor*' (ibid. p.13). Of course, to define the 'limit' so starkly is to firmly install the gift onto the plane of theory, and the impossibility of Derrida's position in practice becomes apparent should my identification as donor of the gift of authorship in *The Horse's Teeth* be made too obliquely. In *The Horse's Teeth*, had the transfer of authorship not been acknowledged at all (and if, by taking some magic pill, both myself and the recipient artists had forgotten the process behind the work's creation), then the gift would not actually be made, there would only be a deceit in attribution, and the essential question of where to locate the authorship never asked. Which is

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not to say, as Derrida might suggest, that the gift, as given in *The Horse's Teeth*, is therefore rendered illegitimate. As will be explored more fully in the next chapter, whilst identifying it as such might reduce the gift to a degree, it is still possible for the gift to remain valid should the perceived generosity of the gift be in excess of such reduction.

In *The Horse's Teeth*, the donation of the authorship functioned through oblique acknowledgement in the project publicity. There was no mention of my involvement on the project flyer (Appendix B), whilst the publicity e-mails had just a footnote mentioning my involvement (Appendix C). On the project website, subsidiary to the main page presenting the artists was an additional page fully explaining the process (Giving in to Gift, 2012a).

The other assumption implicit in the Derridean analysis is that gifting is an undertaking made between two identities, a transaction between donor and donee. When *The Horse's Teeth* is considered however, the nature of the gift (the quality of the generosity used to describe it, the degree to which it can even be called 'gift') is also clearly determined by how it is presented in the space outside this binary. Symbolic capital is not just accrued by the donor through the recipient's appreciation of the gift; all those who encounter the story of the gift contribute to the formation (or evaporation) of this capital, and the sense that it is generous (or not). With a gift as rooted in the public realm as *The Horse's Teeth* (marketed as it was to the performance community), gains are accrued according to how it is perceived by all those who encounter it. Whilst to focus on the movement of the gift between donor and donee does somewhat complicate the binarism of such a pairing (cf. Skantze, 2007), a closing down of conceptual space

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remains unless we consider that there are others who are affected by ('receive something from') the gift.

### ***The Disguises of the Author***

As a project funded by Arts Council England and partnered with the Bluecoat in Liverpool, *The Horse's Teeth* was, in its relationship to funding organisations and institutional frameworks embedded in dominant modes of subsidised theatre production. To a degree, conventional notions of authorship were also maintained in that I used a singular name (my own) on the application, was the primary contact for both the Bluecoat and the Arts Council and, although the authorship was transferred, it remained attributable to a discrete and singular identity (the recipient's).

Arguably, instead of acknowledging that the authorship of the works in *The Horse's Teeth* had been gifted at all, a more direct challenge could have been mounted on the tendency towards the accumulation of capital that lies within normative practices of authorship had my identity been completely hidden. Yet this may not have been the most efficacious tactic. Those encountering the work would still be approaching it from within those normative modes, and have certain expectations on how authorship should be encountered. In other words, either the recipient artists would be assumed to be the author in the conventional sense if my contribution was completely concealed but they were still named, or - if the work was presented completely anonymously - to know that an author exists (by merit of an encounter with the work), but not know

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whom they are most likely acts to stimulate curiosity, which could then become the dominant response to the work. As Foucault writes:

... if a text should be discovered in a state of anonymity – whether as a consequence of an accident or the author's explicit wish – the game becomes one of rediscovering the author. Since literary anonymity is not tolerable, we can accept it only in the guise of an enigma. (Foucault, 2008, p.287)

By gifting the authorship to the six other artists, a more oblique challenge is made on the dominant modes of production by encouraging analysis of how systems of authorship operate. By 'giving away' these behaviours, attention is drawn to the manner by which the role of the author is not fixed, but is actively performed. In much the same way that Shannon Jackson notes that Brechtian actors 'attempt to de-autonomize individuated acting styles that produced individuated heroes... [when they are asked] to perform the context of one's character' (2011, p.121), here the recipient of the gifted authorship performs the conventions of individuated authorship whilst not fully inhabiting that role. Gifting the authorship enables distance to be gained on the phenomenon, creating alienation and allowing it to be labelled 'as something striking, something that calls for explanation, [and] is not to be taken for granted, not just natural' (Brecht, 2014, p.180). In this way a challenge is mounted on 'the holders of capital [who] have an ever greater interest in resorting to reproduction strategies capable of ensuring better-disguised transmission' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.55).

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Examining the disguises that capital wears may, in specific contexts, prove to be a more fruitful tactic towards diminishing the powers of the dominant class than always enacting the most radical alternative and hoping it will propagate. Shannon Jackson makes an argument for such embedded action when she picks out 'a less quoted portion of an oft quoted essay' by Nancy Fraser:

... if public and counter-public spheres continue to insist upon their own "sharp separation" from the state, it "promotes what I shall call weak publics, publics whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation and does not also encompass decision". (Fraser in Jackson, 2011, p.9)

Even when a work is presented anonymously there will have been an interplay and focussing of forces that led to the work's formation. To conceive of identity (or identities) in this more fluid manner challenges the notion of the 'Author' (with a capital 'A' to signify it is the identity that holds the stores of capital) as a vast simplification of these forces' effects. Fluid, permeable and dynamic, this more nuanced understanding of authorship (with a lower-case 'a') can be understood as the self(s) that create the work.

The feminist writer and philosopher Rosi Braidotti identifies the subject as 'a radically immanent, intensive body, that is, an assemblage of forces or flows, intensities, and passions that solidify in space and consolidate in time, within the singular configuration commonly known as an "individual" self' (2006, p.238). Although any number of such subjects might converge to author a text, to deny a place for the intersection of these forces in a porous subjectivity (a denial that

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the notion of individuated Authorship demands) is to also simplify what the writing subject is.

To avoid setting up too easy an opposition between the two forms of authorship, it is worth also noting their mutuality and interdependence; the fact that, whilst it is conceptually convenient to highlight their differences, they are not entirely disparate. Capitalised Authorship has real consequences in the lived experiences of an author; it is a significant determinant in how an individual feels, acts and is received: it is one of the flows of which Braidotti writes.

Meanwhile non-capitalised authorship both influences and is the manifestation of the capital held by the Author; any capital raised only accumulates because of the actions, temperament and embodiment of the non-capitalised self. Jorge Luis Borges' essay, *Borges and I*, whilst addressing his status as an author of written text rather than performance, still eloquently demonstrates the interwoven nature of these different selves, and the way by which, in combination, they channel that which arises from outside their unified identity:

It would be an exaggeration to say that ours is a hostile relationship; I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me. It is no effort for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because what is good belongs to no one, not even to him, but rather to the language and to tradition. Besides, I am destined to perish, definitively, and only some instant of myself can survive in him. Little by little, I am giving over everything to him, though I am quite aware of his perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things. (Borges, 1983, p.282)

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Barthes observes that 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing' (1977, p.147), and although he is right to note the reduction in such attribution, he neither draws specific attention to the stores of capital signified by the symbol of Author, nor does he acknowledge the role of the non-capitalised author in the formation of a work.

In *The Horse's Teeth*, I attempted to give away the Authorship of the work, the Authorial identity in which symbolic capital is accumulated, whilst arguably, lower case authorship, the lived subjectivity of creating the work that I am using Braidotti's 'assemblage of forces and flows' to conceptualize, could only ever be partially given (although an attempt at this was made by sharing blog posts that I used to document the creative process, see Appendix A). Whilst the project maintains 'the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner' (Barthes, 1977, p.143), it also reveals something of the nature of this attribution of Authorship, continuing the project that Foucault re-establishes after Barthes' declaration of the Author's demise:

Still, perhaps one must return to this question, not in order to reestablish the theme of an originating subject but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies. (Foucault, 2008, p.291)

In attempting to separate these modes of authorship, even if such a task can only ever be partially complete, it becomes possible to analyse how these modes function, including the flows of affective energy that are to be found within the authoring subject.

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Speaking informally with the participating artists after the production of the work it became apparent that, even though the emotional experience of creating the work could not be given to them (along with all the other cognitive, imaginative and relational aspects that constitute the lived experience of making the work), they nevertheless experienced a range of affective responses on seeing their name used to promote work that they had not actually made. Some felt 'pride to be associated with the project', whilst others talked about it in terms of 'distancing' and 'discomfort'.

One possible explanation for this discomfort is suggested by Foucault, who, when writing on the link between authorship and reprisal, proposes that:

Texts, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than mythical, sacralized and sacralizing figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive. (ibid. p.286)

Foucault's explanation of the origin of the author still reverberates today. The possibility of severe retribution for transgressive work remains and retribution is still violently applied to some authors' bodies; although such punishment seems highly unlikely in the instance of *The Horse's Teeth*. Rather, I would propose that there is also a risk, when attributing work, of damage being done to the constructed Author's name, of Authorial status being corroded, and it is this that perhaps seems more likely as a reason for the uncomfortable feelings some experienced in *The Horse's Teeth*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For here, the structure of the artists' identity was challenged and the symbolic capital associated with their name was trusted to another.

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The Author of the Gift: Locating Authorship in *The Horse's Teeth*

The title of the project was a reference to the adage 'Don't look a gift horse in the mouth' which, in turn, refers to the way in which the health of a horse can be assessed by examining the state of its jaw. Although the saying tells us that it is inappropriate to perform such examinations, that one should be pleased with any gift that is given (even if it is a diseased horse), when an artist finds themselves publically responsible for a work over which they have had no control of the making, and may end up disliking, a degree of discomfort becomes understandable.

In a similar vein, I, as producer, also felt a degree of unease in venturing into another's identity. The audiences who came to see the ticketed performance works were coming to see work by a particular artist and I was aware of the risk in subverting the expectations of those members of the audience not aware of the full context of the work's production. Since I was not making work 'as' the artist, but rather work that would be useful to them, there was likely to be a marked divergence from the artists' 'signature practice'.

This term is utilised by Susan Melrose to describe those experiences of an artist's past works that are invoked when a subject encounters the artist's name (Melrose, 2009). It is therefore evocative, in its blurring of normally delineated performance works, of the permeability around different texts that Foucault identifies in Barthes' position; for 'it is not enough to declare that we should do without the writer (the author) and study the work itself. The word work and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality' (2008, p.283).

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As was observed earlier, a central concern of *The Horse's Teeth* was an awareness of making work that could – in some way – be absorbed into the discourse of the artists' practice; that was 'useful' in some way to the artist. Gifts are given with the intention that they will be utilised. The inverse of this was that, when developing the work, I was in a position to utilise this discourse as a resource when developing the work.<sup>17</sup>

My concerns around distorting 'signature practice' were particularly pertinent when questions of who was to actually perform the work arose. Two weeks before the performance the artists were each given a written outline of their work, and asked to choose where 'along the spectrum of roles that runs between audience and performer... they wished to situate themselves' (Giving in to Gift, 2012a). In the majority of cases the artist, perhaps unsurprisingly, chose to take a more passive role, and asked me to assume the role of performer, even though, for some of the artists, having someone else perform their work was a radical departure from their usual solo practice.

Nevertheless, although some risk is observable, it is important to put this into context. Stephen Wilmer observes about the three artists who renamed

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<sup>17</sup> Derrida proposes that 'To reduce the latter [gift] to exchange is quite simply to annul the very possibility of the gift' (1992, p.76). If that is the case, then it could be argued that the gifts in *The Horse's Teeth* are invalidated because I 'take' from the artists' practices before giving back. However, this argument can only be made by decontextualizing the project and viewing elements in isolation. Whilst there were moments in which the generosity was diminished; for example, I gave the initial gifts that began the process on the condition that I would receive a return item to use as inspiration for the work, and as will be explored more fully later in the thesis such codified exchange acts against the spirit of the gift. In this instance, although the access I had to the artists' practices was definitely an essential component of the process that allowed me to gift a new work into that practice, since this was not a formally defined arrangement at the start of the project (instead, it was identified through this analysis), I would argue that such information, in a very real sense, slipped by without being noticed. Thus it becomes an exchange of gifts, something fundamentally different, when experienced, than the pre-determination of the barter Derrida identifies.

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themselves as Janez Janša after a Slovenian right-wing politician:<sup>18</sup>

Changing and duplicating their names would seem to undermine rather than strengthen the artists' marketability in the art world, where, normally, the individual name of an artist serves as a kind of commodity-making or branding mechanism. (Wilmer, 2011, p.48)

And whilst this may be true, there is demonstrably a great deal to be gained by such acts. The Janez Janšas, after altering their name, were asked to write a regular column in a national newspaper, they gained increased attention from the academy (with articles such as Wilmer's being published), and they produced a number of international exhibitions. One of the three observed, 'If the public is experiencing a certain uncanniness, the authors are living a certain uncertainty... It is what renders the whole situation extremely risky' (ibid. p.58). Although it might have 'felt' risky, this risk was in the form of a gamble, the stake of which was the artist's name, and the winnings, when collected, led to significant gains. A similar process was operating in *The Horse's Teeth*, and is arguably in operation each time an artist attaches their name to a piece of work that they produce.

Perspectives on the significance of this risk vary, with Gill and Pratt commenting that a pervasive mentality amongst those employed in creative work is that "you are only as good as your last job", and your whole life and sense of self is bound up with your work' (Gill and Pratt, 2013), whilst activist

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<sup>18</sup> In 2007, Emil Hrvatin, Davide Grassi and Žiga Kariž, three artists based in Slovenia, officially changed their name to Janez Janša, the name of the 'economic-liberal, conservative prime minister' of Slovenia (Janša, 2007). After their name change, they individually and collectively presented a series of works throughout Europe, and most recently a documentary film was produced in 2012 entitled *My Name is Janez Janša*.

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John Jordan has a very different take on risk-taking in the art world:

'There's a big difference between taking risks in the world of art and in the world outside. In the art world when you provoke, disobey the rules, push the boundaries, questions the canons you get discovered, rewarded, acclaimed. In the real world when you push the social boundaries you are marginalized, surveilled, beaten and imprisoned.'<sup>19</sup>  
(Jordan, 2006, p.5)

Even aside from the possible risks and gains that accompany the authorial manipulation in *The Horse's Teeth*, something quite fundamental is changed when Authorship is altered. We read performance work in conjunction with the artist's signature practice, by placing it within a recognisable discourse, and, just as we do not hear all words the same since their significance changes according to who speaks them, so does locating a work in relation to the identity of an Author (and by extension, the stores of capital within that identity) affect our reading of it. By changing the frame provided by the author and their associated signature, the work – as a series of actions performed in a specific space - would clearly be affected. As an example of this, one need only consider how *The Horse's Teeth* would have been received if all 6 pieces had been presented in my name, rather than the names of the 6 artists who were involved.

Barthes asserts the primacy of the text and places the Author outside it so

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<sup>19</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that the functioning of symbolic capital is just as present in the field of activism as the art world; people gain recognition for being associated with certain groups, being involved with certain actions, even from being 'marginalized, surveilled, beaten and imprisoned' (which is not to argue that those gains in capital outweigh the price paid of being targeted in these ways). It is not that activism does not have systems of capital, it does, as all communities do; rather I quote Jordan here in order to draw attention to the difference in what is risked in the two spheres.

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that he can assert the Author's death, yet this would appear to be a fallacy.

Foucault states that '... the text points to this figure that, *at least in appearance*; is outside it and antecedes it' (2008, p.281. my emphasis). Therefore, although Barthes is right that 'a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation... there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author' (1977, p.148), he is mistaken to declare the author dead. The author remains alive and active, an essential factor in determining the way in which the text is focussed onto the reader. They, and their stores of capital, are an integral part of the text that the reader activates.

### ***Economies with Emotion***

As noted, the lived subjectivity of the non-capitalised author includes the emotional affect that accompanies the encounters, acts and thoughts that make up the creative process. When the capitalised Author is emphasised, this emotional aspect is often passed over, in much the same way that the emotions that accompany the giving of gifts will often be ignored in critical analysis of the phenomenon (for typically, from Mauss' analysis onwards, it is the implicit exchange that remains the focus, any affective response is subsidiary, if mentioned at all).

Neither is the propensity towards devaluing emotional content to be found solely in these places. Indeed, as Sara Ahmed suggests, it can be seen in critical thought more generally. She notes that the common assumption is that:

To be passive is to be enacted upon, as a negation that is already felt as

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suffering. The fear of passivity is tied to the fear of emotionality, in which weakness is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others... To be emotional is to have one's judgement affected: it is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than autonomous. (2004, p.2)

Even when the involvement of emotions is noted, it is usually presented as naïve engagement, with the assumption that a negative but more 'true' meaning will be found should the experience be properly 'understood'. Whilst writing on 'delegated performance', the term she uses to describe the use of non-trained performers in contemporary arts practice, Claire Bishop acknowledges that these people often experience 'enjoyment in the face of a new experience' but observes that they suffer from 'a kind of Stockholm syndrome whereby they are grateful to their artistic captors and unable to admit the relative lack of returns on their labor invested in the work of art' (2012, p.109).

To redress such imbalance, the affective dimension should be considered on its own terms, with an assumption that it does have value, and to this end the remainder of this chapter will explore the emotional aspects of *The Horse's Teeth*. The nature of the negative affective responses that were anticipated to accompany the gifts given in Jordan McKenzie's *The Perfect Gift* (and the difference in what actually happened) will be considered before Sara Ahmed's theories around stickiness are used to explore the complex affective operations within Rachel Gomme's *Bodies in Space*. To conclude, an adaptation of Ahmed's theory will be proposed as a way of describing the gift transaction, from which ways of conceiving the ownership attributable to both Author and author in *The Horse's Teeth* can be inferred.

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To initiate the process that would lead to the creation of Jordan McKenzie's work in *The Horse's Teeth*, he gave me a nail file, five toenail clippings and a text found online about the nails used in the crucifixion (these were given as response to a £20 and a request that he 'buy himself something nice'). As I developed the work in response to this, the texts I posted on McKenzie's *Jesus and the Nails* blog (Jeeves, 2012c) included writing by Mary Douglas about material that has 'traversed the boundary of the body' (1966, p.121), a number of reflections on waste (including pieces about Liverpool's failed housing projects and the potlatch) and writing found online about beauty and self-improvement.

The work that grew out of this was entitled *The Perfect Gift*, and was presented in McKenzie's name, in a series of High Street shops, without permission. Acting as a Sunday afternoon shopper, and after briefly looking at what was for sale, I, as performer, asked the shop assistant what was popular, so that I could buy it as a gift for someone I did not know well. Their suggested items – ranging from a T-shirt to a set of computer speakers – were then bought. Once purchased, these items were given back to the shop assistant along with a gift label and a request that they be passed on to the next customer entering the shop who wanted to buy such an item.

When developing the piece, there was a clear expectation that this insertion of gift into the operation of a capitalist High Street chain would prove problematic, confusing and potentially antagonistic. I expected the gift to be refused or received only half-heartedly. Although the intention was not to look for confrontation, in the description of the piece sent to McKenzie beforehand, I wrote that 'In some ways, the focus of the piece is on the reaction of the shop

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staff to the request. If they are unwilling to do what is asked, the manager will be called for, and if it should still prove to not be possible, then a refund requested' (Jeeves, 2013). On performance however, the piece turned out very differently. Without exception, all the shop staff engaged with incredible good humour with the piece, and though one expressed some concern about the reaction of her manager, she readily changed her mind (Giving in to Gift, 2012c). This being the case, it is perhaps worth taking some time to examine the difference between the anticipated reaction of the shop assistants to these gifts (confusion, uncertainty, possible hostility) and their actual response (of momentary disbelief followed by laughter and engagement with the idea).

Richard Dyer writes of the 'economic determinism' present in Marxism which 'reduces everything to the economic rather than seeing things in relation to the economic (and much else besides)' and thereby, 'fails to understand how economic structures are lived and affected in the skin and bones of people working' (1992, p.170). These people were not capitalist machinations that were being talked to, but people, perhaps slightly bored to be working on a Sunday afternoon, who eagerly embraced what they saw as a generous action.<sup>20</sup>

Neoliberal economics, offering the market as a solution to all society's difficulties often forgets that 'Markets aren't real. They are mathematical models, created by imagining a self-contained world where everyone has exactly the same motivation and the same knowledge and is engaging in the same self-interested calculating exchange' (Graeber, 2011, p.114). In a similar vein, those

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<sup>20</sup> In order to avoid complicating the situation, the shop staff were not informed that the products were being purchased as part of a performance.

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on the left also have a tendency towards forgetting the lived reality of the systems they critique. They too risk using a reductivism that, whilst of some use in formulating ideological arguments and determining policy and position, is doomed to obscure the detail of the lived encounters that make up financial transactions.

Both sides of the ideological divide also tend towards mistrust of the kind of pleasurable responses witnessed in this piece. Sara Ahmed, writing on 'inappropriate' pleasure in the mainstream, comments that:

In mainstream culture, it is certainly not the case that pleasure is excluded or taboo... Indeed within global capitalism the imperative is to have more pleasure (through the consumption of products designed to tantalise the senses). And yet alongside this imperative to enjoy, there is a warning: pleasures can distract you, and turn you away from obligations, duties and responsibilities. Hedonism does not get a good press, certainly. Pleasure becomes an imperative only as an incentive and reward for good conduct, or as an 'appropriate outlet' for bodies that are busy being productive ('work hard play hard'). (2004, p.162)

A similar position is held on the radical left, where, as suggested previously, scepticism towards pleasure arises at times from a wish to avoid appearing naïve, or perhaps hesitance towards engaging in positions of privilege (the irony of which is that feeling miserable about privilege does nothing to move towards greater equality). 'Pleasure is something you can *guiltily* have, or have after the important things, or get as a reward for doing other things. As itself a goal, it is still not, to speak paradoxically, taken seriously. And nowhere is this

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more true than on the left' (Dyer, 1992, p.166). Of course, as Dyer goes on to articulate, the pleasure we get from 'indulging' in entertainment can be valuable in and of itself, for such pleasure can be suggestive of what 'utopia feels like'.

Which is not to say that one does not need to consider the wider situation, the fact that the shop assistants in *The Perfect Gift* had pleasurable encounters does not change the fact that the flow of finance up the capitalist hierarchy remains in position, nor does the action of the performance avoid the risk of problematisation should it be utilised in different contexts.

In the time since the performance, a number of instances in which enterprise has utilised actions similar to that of *The Perfect Gift* have presented themselves. A few months after the performance, a cafe in Liverpool began offering the same service by encouraging customers 'to purchase a number of teas or coffees alongside their own drinks. The extra drinks that have been bought will then be 'suspended' and offered at a later date to members of the community who cannot afford to buy a drink themselves' (Action on Addiction, 2013). Although this was offered by a dry bar, a social enterprise that does valuable work with recovering alcoholics and the broader community, there is still a hint of a marketing ploy suggested (there's no discount on the additional coffees), and ethical difficulties would also appear to be created when it comes to negotiating how to prioritise which members of the community should be given these donated coffees (and what happens if someone asks for a free coffee and one has not been bought?). More concerning than this though is the co-option of such a 'Pay it Forward' mentality by corporations such as the arch-emblem of turn of the century capitalism, Starbucks, which also instigated a similar scheme

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(Reynolds, 2013). Hans Haake suggests that 'The Left is often afraid that its ideas are co-opted. This fear sometimes reaches such a level of paranoia that all action stops. Naturally, one has to examine things case by case. But the most profound effect in the end is total co-optation' (Bourdieu and Haake, 1995). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the institutionalisation of the actions of *The Perfect Gift* are without cost.

By valuing the pleasure of the shop workers in *The Perfect Gift*, I also am not suggesting that justice is 'simply a matter of feeling good: it is not about the overcoming of pain, or even about the achievement of happiness' (Ahmed, 2004, p.196), instead my position is that whilst economic considerations remain relevant, we risk overlooking the value of reactions such as those presented in *The Perfect Gift* if we focus solely on the economic aspects.

Instead, the argument I am proposing is one in which we combine, with fluid and dynamic emphasis, an in-depth analysis of the economic along with the lived emotion when assessing a given situation or system. As Martha Nussbaum states, emotion should be 'part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning' (Nussbaum, 2001, p.1). This is not so that injustice can be excused, explained away or compensated for, but to remind ourselves that when critical thought obscures its emotional content, emotion still impacts on what is presented. Emotions are 'intentional in the sense that they are 'about' something: they involve a direction or an orientation towards an object. The 'aboutness' of emotions mean they involve a stance on the world, or a way of apprehending the world' (Ahmed, 2004, p.7). Our emotional position is integral to our subjective stance.

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Alongside recognising the significance of emotional affect, when we acknowledge the 'positive' emotions, those that spring from 'the living energy that enlivens another without affective penalty' (Brennan, 2004, p.41) we are reminded of 'what Utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized' (Dyer, 1992, p.18). Too often, an emphasis on emotionally 'neutral' analysis results in a dearth of emotion in the actions arising from such analysis. Justice entirely lacking in positive affect has little more appeal than joy rooted in injustice.

Bringing these reflections back to questions of authorship in *The Horse's Teeth*, it is worth noting that, whilst intervening into the circulation of cultural capital, and alongside the feelings of risk, and even in addition to the fact that a new performance work was made (for let us not forget that this is also an essential function of authorship), there were experiences of joy; both on my behalf – as the giver of a gift – and for the recipients, one of whom commented afterwards that the work he received was 'a perfect gift in every way'.

To gain more insight into the operation of affect in gift exchange, a reading of *Bodies in Space*, Rachel Gomme's work from *The Horse's Teeth*, proves useful. In making Gomme's work I was very aware that she often employs an aesthetic of calm and quiet (one piece of hers that I had previously witnessed at South London Gallery was simply a recording of the silence between her and a participant who signed up to sit across a table from her). Such an aesthetic awareness was perhaps as significant an influence on the resulting work as anything I documented on her blog *Butterflies in Space* (Jeeves, 2012a) (the title of which was a reference to the gift that she sent me of a paper butterfly, cut from

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the wrapping paper of the gift I'd sent her,<sup>21</sup> and then placed in a jar wrapped in bubble wrap). Which is not to say that the blog's reflections on vacuums, space, and the movement of what was outside to the inside can't be seen to have a marked impact on *Bodies in Space*, the piece that was made for Gomme, instead it was that there was already a clear sense of the aesthetic of the final piece from the very beginning.

A one-to-one piece in a large, half-lit performance space, *Bodies in Space* quietly places the audience and performer in a series of different proxemic and spatial arrangements. On entering the space for the first time, the singular audience member sits for five minutes opposite an empty chair on the far side of the performance space. Once this time has passed, an assistant takes them out of the space and, on re-entering, I, as performer, now occupy the facing chair. After another few minutes, they again leave and, on returning once more, the chairs are much closer together and are positioned next to a vase filled with water placed on a table. After another few minutes of sitting together, at the conclusion of the piece, the performer and audience member touch hands and submerge them in a vase of water. The water displaced by this action is captured in a small tray, poured into a jar and, once the lid is sealed, given to the audience member as a gift.

Theresa Brennan observes that whenever two or more people meet, the 'parties bring their affective histories into relationship' (2004, p.43). With a substantial part of the performance involving both audience and performer

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<sup>21</sup> This original gift was a kitchen timer and a written pledge that I would give her an hour of my time.

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sitting silently, with little stimulation other than the quiet and half-lit presence of the other, a space was created that was particularly conducive to noting such an intersection of emotions. How I, as performer, felt interacted with the emotional state of the audience and determined the specific mood within each repetition of the work.

Sometimes the audience would look interestedly about the room, sometimes they would laugh, some would appear discomforted, one cried, and others would remain quiet and still. As performer, there were times when I would feel comfortable with the structure of the work and my place within it, at others I would experience feelings of clear connection with the person opposite, and sometimes boredom or anxiety would suggest themselves. My emotional state would also depend on what I witnessed in the person opposite me, just as the audience would react to the emotions they sensed in my presence.

Sometimes these reactions would act to mirror the other's emotion: if they smiled, I would smile back. At other points however, the affect would be transformed; if they looked uninterested, I would be concerned at the reception of the performance. The emotional character of the space was negotiated between us in a manner identifiably collaborative; by bringing our affective histories in to the encounter something new was created. The ambience within the space was created by and unique to the particular configuration of subjectivities.

The conflation of these complex, changing and reactive states determined how the time of the performance was perceived by each of us and this perception was then invested into the jar of water given at the end, acting as a physical

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reminder of our experience of the time we spent together. The jar, as physical manifestation of the gift, acted as document of the 'collaboration' between performer and audience, between giver and recipient.

As a method of understanding the manner of this investment, Sara Ahmed's theory around the stickiness of signs, objects and emotions is useful; her ideas relate to the conceptual surfaces of these phenomena, and how they interact with other surfaces. She writes:

...a sticky surface is one that will incorporate other elements into the surface such that the surface of a sticky object is in a dynamic process of re-surfacing. The incorporation can lead of course to surfaces becoming less sticky. But the stickiness of that surface *still tells us a history of the object that is not dependent on the endurance of the quality of stickiness*: what sticks 'shows us' where the object has travelled through what it has gathered onto its surface, gatherings that become a part of the object, and call into question its integrity as an object. (2004, p.91)

In the instance of *Bodies in Space*, the jar of water would have remained a jar of water void of particular memory or affective attachment, but the experiences of the performance 'stick' to the object and are, when the recipient re-encounters the gift at a later date, reconstituted according to the demands of that later context.

A gift's surface is not inherently sticky; a jar of water could be given without any particular weight or significance attached to it, but instead the stickiness is '*an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and*

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*signs...* stickiness depends on histories of contact that have already impressed upon the surface of the object' (ibid. p.90. original emphasis).

Amongst all these different histories of contact, the giver of the gift is one such body that impresses on the surface of the gift object, and through this remains stuck to the gift; both in the metaphorical sense described by Ahmed, and literally in the case of the jar of water where my hand left a faint mark on its surface. Often, the gift-giver remains ensconced with what is given, reappearing each time the gift is encountered and thus, like the other attachments Ahmed references, 'call[s] into question its [in this instance, the gift's] integrity as an object' (2004, p.91).

When, as has been established, the gift is given to (by both affecting, and intervening in the symbolic economy of) other subjectivities than the donor and donee binary, then so does ownership of the gift (and the qualities of entitlement and responsibility it shares with authorship) – whilst it may 'stick' to different subjects to differing degrees, and to some more clearly than others – cease to be a quality of a singular, fixed identity.

In *The Horse's Teeth*, the capitalised Author's (formal, legal, attributable) ownership of the work was given to the six presenting artists. However, as has been noted, the non-capitalised authorship - the thoughts, labour and emotional experiences of constructing the work – was not, and cannot be, so completely transferred. For, not only does lived experience resist such renaming but, as will be explained, in the instance of *The Horse's Teeth*, the other could already be located within the non-capitalised author.

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Returning to Braidotti's definition of the subject, the boundary that structures the identity of the creating author is permeable and what is found within is the result of the 'forces and flows' that originate externally and are potentially externalised again (likely after some form of transformation within the self). When the identification of the subject as a bounded and self-contained individual is questioned in this way, it becomes equally uncertain how to definitively identify what is included in 'my' creative process in *The Horse's Teeth*. By drawing on the past works of the recipient artists when generating the work that would be later gifted to them, their artistic identity was blurred with my own, and the work made was something that was situated somewhere between our practices. To reiterate what Xavier Le Roy said of the work he made for Jerome Bel:

I thought I was doing what you would do. But in actual fact we realise that it's impossible. Yet, what's interesting in all of this is that I would never have done this performance. From the beginning I would never have done it. (ctlgrsnn, 2009c)

The work made was collaborative; it existed between my own practice and the recipient's, never settling into either completely. *Fěn Hóng Sè*, the work that Richard Layzell presented in *The Horse's Teeth* clearly illustrates this. In this performance, an afternoon was spent spray-painting the litter in Liverpool's China Town pink (the title is the Mandarin word for this colour). Although I developed the work as a reflection on the forced expulsion of the hundreds of Chinese men in Liverpool who had their UK residency revoked in the period after the Second World War (Jeeves, 2012b), the work was equally influenced by

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Layzell's previous work *White on White* (which saw him painting small areas of white walls with white paint in the Greek village of Skyros), the lessons in Mandarin that Layzell was having at the time and the fact that an earlier gift exchange as part of the project had seen him give me a small pot of pink paint (ibid.). This conflation of influences that were attributable to either myself or Layzell make clear the impossibility of settling on a singular identity for accrediting the work.

To translate the sense of motion in Braidotti's 'forces and flows' that constitute the self into Ahmed's model, a subject's identity (and an object's) is determined in terms of all that sticks from the energetic encounters Braidotti identifies. Since not all these encounters lead to the same degree of 'stick', Ahmed identifies that 'signs become sticky through repetition; if a word is used in a certain way, again and again, then that 'use' becomes intrinsic' (p.91). Employing Judith Butler's ideas of performativity, 'the way in which a signifier, rather than simply naming something that already exists, works to generate that which it apparently names' (p.92), Ahmed draws attention to the significance of a specific temporality in determining the power of the performative repetition to determine stickiness, it 'depends upon the sedimentation of the past; it reiterates what has already been said, and its power and authority depend upon how it recalls that which has already been brought into existence' (ibid.).

To phrase the effect of Ahmed's sedimentations of the past in a different manner and to explain why not all repetitions have the same impact: when a repetition is made by those with a higher store of financial or symbolic capital in any given field – be they an institution or individual – it will often carry more

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weight in determining what 'sticks' to an identity within that sphere. As Bourdieu writes, power and capital 'amount... to the same thing' (1986, p.47); those with capital have more power in determining meaning and identity through the repetitions they influence and undertake.

Returning to the feelings of risk that some of the artists felt on seeing their name attached to something that was not 'of them', I would argue that since a name is one of the signs repeated most consistently by authorities with significant power over us, and is therefore stuck most strongly to the self-identification of the individuated subject - it is one of the most key elements of an individual's identity. When the stickiness of the sign is challenged and, as was the case in *The Horse's Teeth*, attached to that outside the borders of the determined self, so the perceived integrity of that identity is destabilised, and potentially ruptured.

In an essay on the blurred identity identifiable in conjoined twins, Margrit Shildrick notes that 'the conventional understanding of the only proper form of subjectivity requires a clarity of boundaries between self and other, an affective and effective autonomy that is fully realised only by singular embodiment sealed by the skin' (2001, p.67). The bridging of identities facilitated by the gift demonstrates how such individualised understandings of the self are flawed.<sup>22</sup> As Shildrick writes elsewhere, this has ethical implications that 'demand an openness to the encounter with the unmarked other, the other that is neither the same nor different' (1997, p.213). When the distinction between selfhoods is

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<sup>22</sup> In an artistic context, this identity bridging will most likely manifest through gifts given in collaboration (either as formal collaborators or through the more informal influence of one artist on another),

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identified as porous, otherness becomes integral to the self, making the possibility of locating the other fully outside the boundaries of selfhood impossible.

To return to gifting as a form of collaboration, what is given by each collaborator is inevitably a result of their subjective history and, although this history cannot be fully comprehended by those that receive what they give (be they the collaborative partners or the audiences of the work), an intuited sense of that donating subjectivity nevertheless accompanies the act of giving. This history, when filtered through the medium of a gift that is accepted and 'sticks' to the recipients, leads to the gift acting as a link between the parties, maintaining a sense by which ownership is attributable to all those stuck to it, including the giver. Once given, despite attempts of the law to fix its location and attribute capital to a discrete, individuated and capitalised Author, *the gift, the capital it signifies, and the emotional response it provokes, is a part of, belongs to and affects – in other words, is stuck to - both giver and (all the) recipient(s)*. It is for this reason that it feels ethically suspect to dispose of a gift as soon as it has been received; it is not entirely the donee's to do with as they please.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Which is not to say that it cannot be transformed. Gifts purchased on holiday by well-meaning friends and family often eventually end up in the charity shop. Arjun Appudurai writes 'today's gift is tomorrow's commodity. Yesterday's commodity is tomorrow's found art object. Today's art object is tomorrow's junk. And yesterday's junk is tomorrow's heirloom' (2006, p.15). Stickiness does not mean that a permanent bond is forged.

**Chapter 2 – Stranger Possibilities**

***The Successful Gift***

In the previous chapter, by acknowledging the affective aspects within the gift transaction, the manner by which the gift acts to bridge the gap between singular identities was identified. By presenting individual selfhood as neither discrete nor self-contained, but instead as a subject with amorphous borders that contains the other, both the gift and authorship were seen to refuse to settle into a component of singular identity, and thus, single ownership.

Developing further understanding of the gift's operation, this chapter asks how we might be able to identify a gift as *successful*, and in particular posits that, if a performance can be understood as gift, then how might such performance be deemed a successful gift? To this end, the mechanics of such gifts are explored with a particular emphasis on the relationship of the audience and the performer.

Some gifts (of performance and otherwise) significantly bridge the gap between subjectivities; they, and the person that gives them, occupy a particularly conspicuous place in consciousness. They *mean* more than other gifts. However I would argue that gifts of such significance are not in and of themselves a success; it's possible that a gift's impact is due to a sense of disappointment felt upon its reception. Whilst these gifts have an effect (they do not fail in the same way as an unnoticed gift might be said to fail), this chapter argues that a successful gift has a particular kind of consequence, one that is recognised as positively reinforcing the bond between the giver and recipient in

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the manner suggested in Chapter 1, whilst also acting to affirmatively increase the capacities of the gift recipient(s).

To illustrate this idea of the successful gift the chapter draws on the example of organ transplantation, since here the success of a gift is particularly identifiable. If successful, the donated organ is not rejected by the recipient's immune system, but is accepted by the recipient as his or her own, hopefully radically improving their quality of life and perhaps even saving it. It therefore becomes a viscerally evocative example of how the incorporation of a vital part of one individual by another (a physical blurring of two identities) can transform the recipient's capacities for the better. On the other hand, failed instances of such gifts will lead – depending on the organ transplanted - to significant continued medical intervention and, potentially, death. By using transplantation as a metaphor to examine performance as gift, the analysis considers the specific economies of generosity that operate amongst performance makers and their audiences, suggests ways of formulating the borders between the various subjectivities present at a performance, and also sifts through the commonalities and differences in how a singular performance experience might be perceived.

As such issues are explored, connections are made with practical research into these themes; a solo performance, *The Kindness of Strangers*, that I developed with the designer Mamoru Iriguchi, and presented in December 2013 at The Bluecoat in Liverpool as a part of that year's *Giving in to Gift* festival.<sup>24</sup> The performance took as its subject matter the bone marrow transplant I received from an anonymous donor in 1998, and filtered this autobiographical material

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix D for the script, and accompanying DVD for video documentation.

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through Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a play I studied for my A-Level English Literature, one year before my cancer diagnosis. The title is a reference to the well-known quotation from Blanche Dubois who, as she is about to be taken away to a mental institution by medical staff at the conclusion of the play, tells the doctor 'Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers' (Williams, 1962, p.225).

Taking at its root the idea that both giver and givee have to fulfil certain criteria (actions, responsibilities, and roles) if a gift is to be successful, this enquiry examines what it is that the performer and the audience each contribute (give) to the formation of the successful performance gift.

I begin by using the conclusions of the first chapter, that the self is neither discrete nor defined, to suggest ways of understanding audience psychology, both from the perspective of the individual within the audience and the experience of the collective. This is then expanded on with Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness, in particular his ideas of anamorphosis and the saturated phenomenon, in order to conceptualise how audiences receive that which the performer gives. Taking *The Kindness of Strangers* as a case study, a particular focus is on the reception of autobiographical work; how a performer, in sharing traumatic life experience, can give something that the audience receives as gift. The integral role of the unknown in such gifts is then explored, and the apparent paradox of how to intentionally give something that is undefined addressed by exploring ways of formulating the relevant expertise for such gifting.

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I then move on from examining how an audience receives what the performer gives in order to examine that which the audience themselves bring to the performance. The end of the performance event, applause, is identified as a form of thank you, and analysed by drawing on the distinction between debt and gratitude. Following David Graeber, I argue that we have a cultural tendency towards viewing gift encounters as rooted in exchange, that we typically understand the gift as instigating a debt that demands a response, but that there are other ways of envisaging the operation of gift. Applause need not therefore be understood as a transactional exchange – a straight swap for the performance that has just been given. Instead, I suggest that it might be understood as reciprocation, as a gift that is returned (but not repaid), and in doing so an alternative dynamic is established. Finally, I explore the manner by which the giving of thanks via applause is not, in and of itself, a signal of the success of a gift – instead, like all gifts, it has the potential to be a hollow gesture, an act performed simply to fulfil certain cultural expectations.

### ***The Roles played by the Audience***

For practical acknowledgement of the active role that the audience has in determining a gift's quality, the opening scene in *The Kindness of Strangers* is useful. As the performance begins, the audience enter and, whilst they orientate themselves within the space,<sup>25</sup> a text, projected on a large screen, provides some autobiographical contextualisation of both my bone marrow transplant and my first encounter with *A Streetcar Named Desire* (the two incidents took place

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<sup>25</sup> At the start, and for much of the performance, there is no area specified for the audience. They move among the performance space alongside myself as performer.

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within a little over a year of each other). When this text has been displayed long enough to be read, I introduce myself to the audience:

I'm Tim. I wrote the words that you've just been reading.

I'm what you might call the protagonist in the story that's being told here this evening.

Hi.

Although I'm what you might call the protagonist in the story that's being told here this evening, it's not just my story that is being told.

The events that are about to unfold as a part of that story wouldn't take place in the way that they're going to if you weren't here. In fact, if none of you were here, they wouldn't take place at all.

You're an essential part of the story that's being told here tonight.

The text welcomes the audience in to the space and, by acknowledging the interaction between the different 'stories' of the performer and those of the individuals in the audience, draws attention to the significance everyone present has in making that particular performance event unrepeatable, noting that everyone, in some way, contributes to it, that they are a part of how the story is told.

To note the significance of those present in determining the events of the performance, that the responsibility for what happens extends beyond the performer, does not make everyone present interchangeable and uniform. Inevitably, at different points in the performance, some (most often, myself as performer) are more significant than others in determining the encounter that took place. Nevertheless, the reception of *The Kindness of Strangers*, as with any

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performance work, is the result of a complex interplay of encounters between any one individual audience member, the rest of the audience (as individuals and collectively) and the performers / staging of the performance itself.

In *The Kindness of Strangers*, for most of the performance the audience members were not seated in the auditorium but, with the seating bank in the Performance Space at the Bluecoat pushed away, were free to move and arrange themselves as they saw fit, either by standing or sitting, either on the floor or in one of the chairs placed around the space. For much of the piece, the audience were immersed in the work in the sense proposed by Gareth White when he, in a detailed exposition of what the metaphor of immersion might mean for a performance experience, suggests that it is to 'be surrounded, enveloped and potentially annihilated, but it also is to be separate from that which immerses' (White, 2012, p.228). The work encompasses the audience subjectivity, but they remain somewhat distinct from it; as White continues, they are like a person swimming in water.

For the majority of the performance, the audience occupied the performance space in the same way that I did; the lighting was general, a simple wash, and only at one or two key points focussed on me as performer. For both myself and the audience, there were constant reminders that other people in the audience were present. At key points in the piece, I would have a number of brief interactions with those present (I would ask them questions or to occupy certain positions in the space), which inevitably shifted the audience dynamic in the space; sometimes attention would be drawn to particular individuals and at others the group as a whole became more emphasised. For one section of the

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performance, I invited an audience member to sit opposite me in a manner evocative of a one-to-one performance work, whilst the final scene saw the audience seated in rows facing me as the performer in a more traditional arrangement. Even in this arrangement, or other theatrical encounters where the audience remain seated in a darkened auditorium however throughout, it is worth remembering that there is always a social element in operation; coughing, fidgeting, laughter and the odour of others can all affect the audience experience of onstage action, and more subtly, the levels of concentration and attention of those in the audience affect the manner of engagement of others.

As the description of these spatial and relational dynamics suggests, as the performer in the space with the audience, I was also very aware of their presence. For me, the title (as well as a reference to Blanche Dubois' famous line, and the generosity of my bone marrow donor), was an acknowledgement of the audience attention that enabled me to perform the work; that allowed me to tell my story. This being the case, I would try to establish a genuine sense of warmth for the audience whilst performing, something that – when successful – contributed to a general feeling of intimacy and mutual care within the space.

Such seepage of emotional states, in which individual experience is not only affected but also created by the influence of others, is consistent with the formulation of identity utilised in the previous chapter, after the understanding of the individual Rosi Braidotti proposed in her project for an affirmative ethics. To return to her words, she identifies the subject as 'a radically immanent, intensive body', one that is 'an assemblage of forces or flows, intensities, and passions that solidify in space and consolidate in time' (2006, p.239), and some

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of those forces, flows, intensities and passions are either shared with, or actually arise from those around us. When a crowd of such individuals come together, as they do in an audience, the interplay of these forces and flows acts to generate a collective identity; an identity that, to a degree, encourages the individuals within the group to share elements of an ontological state, one in which they, to the same degree, have intellectual judgements and affective responses in common.

To think of an audience in this way is to maintain the challenge to the normative conception of identity as discrete, individual and contained by the skin that was articulated in Chapter 1, and is to acknowledge that whilst the individual self does exist, it is neither entirely separate nor isolated from those around it. To return to the exemplary instance of blurred individuality from Chapter 1, Margrit Shildrick's study on conjoined twins notes 'that monozygotic twins in general habitually blur the boundaries between one and the other - simultaneously thinking the same thoughts, making the same choices, speaking together as one' (2001, p.164).<sup>26</sup> Though undeniably less pronounced in the instance of an audience, where the bond between them is temporary and predominantly non-physical, individual perspective in such a group is nevertheless also, to a degree, softened.

Since this is a theme that I will return to throughout this thesis, it is worth emphasising that just because identity is blurred in this way, it does not

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<sup>26</sup> Shildrick also draws attention to the role gender plays in the 'proper' determination of the self's boundaries, noting that historically:

... women, unlike the self-contained and self-containing men, leaked; or, as Grosz claims: 'women's corporeality is inscribed as a mode of seepage'. The issue throughout Western cultural history has been one of female lack of closure, a negative coding all too evident in one of Sartre's many derogations of the gross materiality of the female body: '[t]he obscenity of the feminine sex is that of everything which gapes "open"'. (1997, p.34)

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necessarily follow that individuality dissolves entirely. Braidotti acknowledges that '[j]ust because modern philosophy has discovered an area of twilight within human subjectivity and discourse; and just because this is blurring the century-old distinction between self and other, it does not inevitably follow that there is no more certainty about the self' (1994, p.141). Rather it is perhaps more the case that the group identity encourages a position that, unless actively resisted, the individual will be impelled towards.

To envisage more clearly an escape from the binarism between full individuation and amorphous unity, the categorisation that Richard Sennett uses when identifying the edges of two different sites of resistance is useful, namely that some boundaries are like cell walls and others resemble cell membranes:

Both resist external pressures to keep intact the internal elements of the cell, but they do so in different ways. The cell wall is more purely exclusionary; the membrane permits more fluid and solid exchange. The filter function of these two structures differs in degree, but for the sake of clarity let's exaggerate it: a membrane is a container both resistant and porous. (2009, p.277)

The self, whilst usually envisaged as static and with determined boundaries, is actually bordered with something more like a membrane; it 'resists indiscriminate mixture; it contains differences but is porous. The border [of the self] is an active edge' (ibid.), whilst that contained within is in constant flux.

Theories of the edge, in the form of surfaces, are also present in the Sara Ahmed writing (2004) referenced in Chapter One that theorises the way in which

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emotion 'sticks' and becomes attached to a phenomenon's surface. Individual subjects have such surfaces, but a group, such as an audience, is also engendered with a communal sticky surface, an emergent property generated from the individuals within the group that also affects and is in excess of each discrete group member. The group surface of an audience is not uniform, there are variations in the affective states within such a group (just as an individual's affective state also fluctuates in time and/or according to their focus), but even so, the audience's state encourages some general affective responses from individuals within it. Sometimes this communal position can be exaggerated, as Nicholas Ridout writes when introducing himself as an audience member in *Passionate Amateurs*, 'an author might wish to be rather careful about the use of this "we," careful, that is, to assume... that a solitary experience might have been shared by others' (2013, p.1). Nevertheless, whilst the homogeneity can be exaggerated, and the communal state will rarely, if ever, correlate perfectly with an individual's own experience, a link is often identifiable.

Along with this input of others, gifts (be they of performance or otherwise) are another of the Braidottian flows that factor in the formation of selfhood. As the previous chapter explored in some depth, gifts can contribute significantly to identity formation. Writing on this role of the gift in subjecthood, Barry Schwartz states that: "... to accept a gift is to accept (at least in part) an identity, and to reject a gift is to reject a definition of oneself' (1967, p.3). As Schwartz continues, to accept a gift, when the gift is made to a collective, is to affirm that collective identity:

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... when a single present is offered to a plurality, for example, a married or engaged couple, or a family, there is a heightening of awareness (on both sides) of their existence as a team. (p.11)

Thus to remain in an audience, to continue to accept a particular performance as a gift, is to accept a degree of assimilation into that collective identity, to adopt and agree with the collective response. The act of recognising oneself as part of this 'team' (to use Schwartz's term) acts to exert pressure towards a unified response, whilst to individuate oneself from the audience (most dramatically by walking out or heckling) is to reject it.

Although Theresa Brennan suggests that we are typically 'peculiarly resistant to the idea that our emotions are not altogether our own' (2004, p.2), in the performance encounter, as with the gift encounter, we readily accept another's role in our affective state, and also accept that the feelings expressed by those around us will encourage an affective reaction. Citing Émile Durkheim's understanding of emotion as something that does not just come solely from within, Sara Ahmed acknowledges a 'theory of emotion as a social form, rather than individual self-expression. Durkheim considers the rise of emotion in crowds, suggesting that such "great movements" of feeling, "do not originate in any one of the particular individual consciousnesses"' (2004, p.9). Again, the individual is seen to be other than a discrete identity bounded by the skin.

When the presence of others are so significant to experience, it is apparent that the quality of the gift, the measure by which it can be said to be successful, is not entirely the giver's responsibility. Alongside the actions of the giver / performer the other people present in an audience group impact on the

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experiential quality of what is given (for they are a part of it). Additional to this, it is important to remember that the individual's own subjectivity is also significant in determining the degree of the gift's success.

Recent decades have seen a body of theory developed that suggests that spectating in the cinema and theatre is not essentially passive. Jacques Rancière, setting out to 'challenge the opposition between viewing and acting' (2009, p.13), argues that to spectate is an action in its own right. Interpretation is an active state, the spectator 'compose[s] their own poem' from what they witness, just as, in their way, so 'do actors or playwrights, directors, dancers or performers'. The presumed passivity that accompanies sitting in a darkened auditorium thus dissipates when it is understood as a space that enables audience members to think on, process, and recontextualise the activity in front of them in order to activate their own understanding of what is being shown. He writes of the spectator that:

She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented. (ibid.)

The audience member is not the passive recipient of the gift in performance; she actively selects (if not always consciously) what she receives, and rejects through inattention or by walking out that which she does not want.

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As Rancière explains, oppositions such as activity and passivity (he also gives the examples of 'viewing / knowing' and 'appearance / reality') 'are quite different from logical oppositions between clearly defined terms' (p.12). They are not as objectively set as binarisms such as positive and negative, or 'equals' and 'does not equal'. As an example of this flexibility Rancière identifies the way by which the moneyed classes, those who did not need to work, used to be identified as *active* citizens (manifest in the way by which they could vote, and were also entitled to put themselves up for election), whilst the working classes were seen as more passive. As he continues, it is not the term used that necessarily matters, rather it is that 'the structure counter-posing two categories – those who possess a capacity and those who do not – persists' (p.13). It is in the breaking of this opposition that he locates political potency, that '[e]mancipation begins'.

Although it is the case, as Rancière continues, that '[e]very spectator is already an actor in her story, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story' (p.17), the activity of the audience should not be equated with the activity of the performer. It might not be possible to definitively argue who has the greater capacity, for an individual's capacity is to be found within the context of their own story, and each of those stories, and each of the actions within those stories, are qualitatively very different. It is also worth noting that, whilst there may be similar capacity for emancipation in both spectator and performer, different pressures are exerted on each. In the particular social context of the Bluecoat on the evening that I performed *The Kindness of Strangers* in 2013, the activity demanded of the audience members was very different from that expected of myself as performer.

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Nevertheless the audience are active, their presence transforming the performance. To reiterate what I say in my introduction to *The Kindness of Strangers*:

You're an essential part of the story that's being told here tonight...

... thank you for doing what you're doing that makes this, what this is.

This activity of the spectator, influenced as it is by the events of the performance (as well as anything else, emotional, intellectual or material, that they have taken into the performance space with them) does, in part, act to also transform the activity of the performer. That which the performer gives therefore mingles with that which has been given to the spectator previously (by other individuals, from other events (other performances), and their own responses), and acts to transform what is given into something different upon its reception. This is true of other kinds of gift, not just the gift of performance.

To return to the analogy with organ (or, in this case, blood) donation, the 'NBS [National Blood Service] website declares... whole blood 'is your blood in its natural state, and something we very rarely use. It's much more useful to us to have it separated into components' ... This means, of course, that what the donor gives is on most occasions not what the recipient receives' (Copeman, 2005, p.471. Emphasis removed). In performance, the interplay of different subjectivities, along with variations in proxemic and social relations, will ensure that what each member of the audience receives is, in a number of ways, different from that which the performer gives them, and also different – sometimes dramatically so - from what other audience members receive.

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An example of this is provided by one scene of *The Kindness of Strangers* in which I ask for volunteers from the audience who would be willing to lie on the floor with their heads contained in an orange cube. Once in position, these people create an image evocative of how I would lie in the machine that delivered the Total Body Irradiation (TBI) in the run up to my transplant (a photo of my younger self in this machine was displayed on the screen throughout this scene).

The experiences of those lying on the floor were probably somewhat uncomfortable, claustrophobic and perhaps slightly unsettling (like the experience of TBI), and was inevitably markedly different from those other members of the audience that watched this scene from 'outside', who had a clearer overview but probably less corporeal engagement with the work.

Different people will always filter the same work differently, though nevertheless, as previously proposed, there will still usually be a commonality identifiable in the various audience members' reception of the work; the gift received is not entirely arbitrary, a random manifestation presented from all imaginable gifts, it does bear some relation to what is given. In order to understand this process that sees what is given change within certain (flexible) limits into what is received, it is useful to turn to Jean-Luc Marion's theory of anamorphosis.

In his book, *Being Given: Towards a Phenomenology of Givenness*, Marion articulates a phenomenological theory rooted in the gift, or rather givenness – the quality he describes as what remains when we bracket the gift, giver and

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givee.<sup>27</sup> By focusing on givenness as the distillation of the gift encounter, he enables the conception of gift outside of 'an exchange where, as a present object, it would pass indifferently between the giver and the givee, but [instead] as a pure given' (2002, p.84). According to this theory, the quality of givenness is to be found in all phenomena, each encounter with a phenomenon being rooted in the givenness that it itself demonstrates; 'What shows itself first gives itself - this is my one and only theme' (p.5). This is not to say that they are given by some transcendental other, Marion is careful to avoid such a suggestion, stating instead that 'the origin of givenness remains the "self" of the phenomenon, with no other principle or origin besides itself' (p.20).

This originating 'self', a phenomenon of pure givenness, is identified as an 'amorphous form' that 'offers itself to no particular view, neither as an object resisting it nor in capitulation' (p.124). However, when this form arrives at the witness, and their gaze 'find[s] the unique point of view from which the second level form will appear', the anamorphosis is complete and the phenomenon is encountered. Marion uses the term '*Ana-morphosis* [since it] indicates that the phenomenon takes form starting from itself. In this way, we better understand that the phenomenon can come at once from elsewhere and from itself' (ibid).

In the more conventional sense of the term, anamorphic images are those that are constructed in such a way that they change according to the position the spectator occupies when viewing them. Perhaps the most commonly

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<sup>27</sup> To demonstrate the bracketing of the giver, Marion uses the example of a gift from an unknown giver (such as in organ donation), his bracketing of the givee talks of a gift to an enemy, in which the gift is made evident by 'denying it reciprocity', and the gift itself is bracketed when it is not possible to be objectified, such as when giving a blessing, or giving power.

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encountered example of this can be seen in the advertisements painted on the grass at high profile sports events. Viewed by those in physical attendance, the promoted logos appear skewed and warped, though when viewed from the specific location of a TV camera high in the stands, the branding assumes its usual dimensions.

Just as these images transform according to a spectator's location so does the subjective positioning of the witnessing self alter the anamorphic constitution of a phenomenon. As Marion writes:

The phenomenon crosses the distance that leads it (ana-) to assume form (-morphōsis), according to an immanent axis, which in each case summons an I/me, according to diverse modalities (arrival, happening, imposing), to a precise phenomenological point. This being brought into line aligns me in a direction rigorously determined by the anamorphosis of the phenomenon, in no wise by the subject's choice, but which in contrast submits the subject to its appearing. If I do not find myself exactly at the point designated by the anamorphosis of the phenomenon. I simply will not see it - at least as such as it is given. (p.131)

Marion is careful to articulate his theory in solely phenomenological terms, stating that 'At no moment was it necessary when describing the given phenomenon, to have recourse to situations of intersubjective or ethical relations. The description was always able to stick strictly to intentional immanence.' (p.175), and in such terms the anamorphic principle can be used to gain an understanding of the gift of performance. Those encountering a performance work each have a unique position on a phenomenon that is

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recognisably the same; one that allows for an infinite variation in perspectives whilst also refusing total comprehension of what is given:

The sides of the cube are six in number, but no one has ever perceived in lived experience more than three sides together. We therefore must, by moving the observer or the object, add new lived experiences for each of the missing sides; however, this movement carries with it the disappearance of the previous ones. (p.185)

Since it is impossible for two spectators to occupy an identical viewpoint total commonality of experience remains impossible, and as it is likewise impossible for a spectator to occupy the performer's perspective, there will always be a process of translation from what they intended when making the work; hence Barthes' argument for the death of the author explored in Chapter 1. Also writing on the impossibility of common experience, Rancière presents the phenomenon as a reference point distinct from its perception:

There is the distance between artist and spectator, but there is also the distance inherent in the performance itself, in so far as it subsists, as a spectacle, as an autonomous thing, between the idea of the artists and the sensation or comprehension of the spectator. (2009, p.14)

To reconstitute Rancière's comment in terms of the gift, there is the distance between the giver and the recipient, but there is also their distance from the gift itself. When successful, the gift may act to bridge the gap between the giver and recipient, and it may affect their identity in a more or less fundamental way, but they nevertheless maintain a unique perspective to it; each is located a different distance from the gift. Whilst bringing them together and becoming

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integral to their two subjectivities, the gift paradoxically also remains outside; a phenomena with its own anamorphically experienced identity.

### ***The Saturated Phenomenon***

As with any gift, part of that which determines the success of a performance is the manner by which it generates a bond between audience and performer. To achieve this it needs to be excessive, it needs to spill over the frame that contains it.

Bone marrow is so exemplary as gift because what is given is so much more than just a bag of bio-matter; it is potentially decades of life. 'A gift that does not run over its borders, a gift that... let[s] itself be contained in a determination and limited by the indivisibility of an identifiable trait would not be a gift. As soon as it delimits itself, a gift is prey to calculation and measure' (Derrida, 1992, p.91).

Some gifts – baby showers, wedding presents, Christmas gifts – can fail because although they fulfil the cultural demand for a gift to be made, this requirement is all they are, they do not exceed their cultural frame. They risk being what Dilnot, after Adorno, identifies as the gift-article; an item that is 'like a simulacrum, a thing which is almost not a thing (as with the "gift book," for example, which is a book that is very nearly not a book)' (Dilnot, 1993, p.146).

In addition to this cultural excess, the gift should also exceed one's subjective experience; the gift should not be ordinary, for '[w]hat is ordinary, familiar or usual often resists being perceived by consciousness. It becomes taken for granted, as the background that we do not even notice, and which

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allows objects to stand out or stand apart' (Ahmed, 2004, p.179). In such excessive encounters, what is given is not the sentiment that 'I am giving you a gift' or 'I am performing this for you', for such statements of intent are only the information they express, they lack the essential excess. Writing on how to fix meaning is to limit the information that can be transmitted, Lyotard describes such instances when he writes:

One does not *give* pieces of information. For either you are not aware of those concealed in your discourse, and you do not give them, they slip you by with it, gathered or not by your interlocutor; or else you think you know them (and allow me to doubt it), and you use their transmission for business or power, and not at all as a gift. (1984, p.86)

In Marion's phenomenology of givenness, he theorises this excessive quality through the identification of that which he calls the 'saturated phenomenon'. Inverting Husserl's identification that 'Intuition is (almost) always (partially) lacking to intention, as fulfilment is lacking to signification' (2002, p.191). Marion states that such phenomena present (give) themselves when more is intuited than the intention foresaw; meaning that 'givenness not only entirely invests manifestation but, surpassing it, modifies its common characteristics' (p.225). Reminiscent of Derrida's observation that to fall short of excess allows measure to be calculated, he states that the fundamental quality of these phenomena, 'lies in the fact that intuition sets forth a surplus that the concept cannot organise, therefore that the intention cannot foresee' (ibid.).

Since the givenness invested in manifesting such phenomena modifies the manifestation itself (in that what is intuited is in excess of what is given), Marion

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identifies the saturated phenomena as a paradox and gives the example of the Holocaust as a paradigmatic example. Talking of his father's relation to this event, he notes that 'he says nothing because we could not imagine it or form the least idea of it - in short, because we could not phenomenalyze what is nevertheless given to the survivor' (p.317).<sup>28</sup> Without wishing to glibly state that performance can or will phenomenalyze such intense saturation, it does, by providing a particular mode of encounter, enable alternative modes for this phenomenalisation to take place, offering a different lexicon to that typically available in everyday life.

Writing on Cathy Caruth's contribution to their book *Testimonial cultures*, Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey note in their introduction how she examines 'the way in which trauma itself is not witnessed: its truth as an event is never grasped in the present, but comes into existence, belatedly, through the recurrence of flash-backs' (2001, p.2). Citing earlier work by Caruth, they continue 'trauma is not experienced as mere repression or defense, but as a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment. The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event, but it is also a continual leaving of its site' (Caruth, 1995 cited in Ahmed and Stacey, 2001, p.6).

Marion and anamorphosis provide a different perspective on this repeated encounter with and departure from the traumatic event. Just as it is impossible to encounter more than three sides of a die, so is it also impossible to encounter the excess of trauma or the saturated gift in its entirety. Nevertheless,

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<sup>28</sup> This reduction in his father's capacity, the manner by which he 'says nothing' confirms how the Holocaust fails to meet the terms by which I am defining a successful gift (if such an illustration could ever be needed), whilst remaining, from a Marionian perspective, a clear example of phenomenological givenness and the saturated phenomenon.

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we do attempt to have exactly such an encounter, and so approach the trauma / gift repeatedly and from a variety of directions, thus revisiting them. As Ahmed and Stacey observe, 'testifying to trauma cannot simply be about recording that which has been: rather, it must bring to life that which already has failed to be' (p.2).

In *The Kindness of Strangers*, I return to one of the more distressing experiences of my transplant in a scene where I remember how, after receiving total body irradiation, I would vomit every time I lay horizontal:

It's not a bed, when I was on a bed, I'd be sick.

Every time. Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

This is after: the food was through a tube, straight into the bloodstream, food, blood and marrow. Through a tube, straight in to the bloodstream. There was nothing in my stomach. But still I'd manage to find something from somewhere to throw up.

Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

'I don't like a bed that gives much', said Blanche. What did this one give?

That was after, but at the beginning of this time that we're looking back to, fifteen years ago – why are we talking about this now? - fifteen years ago, I'd lie down each day, on a clinical receptacle that wasn't a bed.

It had a mattress and it was flat, it didn't have wheels and on the horizontal it was longer and wider than a large person's body, but still it

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shouldn't be called a bed; the robotic angles of the supporting structure, the sharp point of the footplate, the orange cube that went around the head took it into some other, non-bed like place.

There was a refusal to be a bed in other ways; there was little domestic, restful or caring about this thing for lying on - this stand for holding bodies up to invisible rays that took aim and passed through, that destroyed some, but not all, that they came across.

It would make me sick, horizontal sick, but that was after.

This was before.

The confused, repetitive nature of the writing and the distorted temporality ('This was before'; '... but that was after'), are, in some ways, representative of that which Lyotard was referring to in the earlier quote; this is not a clear, succinct description of what it means to experience irradiation, and arguably, to give such a clear summary would risk rendering the information transferred impotent and minimise its emotional impact.

Performing this text also allowed me to return to the trauma of that time itself, something that – at a distance of fifteen years from the original event – I found acted as a release. By returning to the trauma in a fundamentally different

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way from when it was first experienced, I was able to 'grasp' the event (as Caruth writes it) in a different, perhaps more full way.<sup>29</sup>

In a similar vein, though on the very different subject of the seemingly tireless desire children have for repetition in play ("Do it again!"), Walter Benjamin comments that 'every profound experience [cf. the saturated phenomenon] longs to be insatiable, longs for return and repetition until the end of time, and for the reinstatement of an original condition from which it sprang' (2001, p.120). Perhaps the reason such experiences demand we return to them is because of our inability to grasp them fully in the first encounter, by returning we hope to achieve more complete apprehension.

Of course, making such a return is not without risk. For catharsis to be achieved the return must be safe, otherwise the trauma will simply be experienced again, and the experiencing subjectivity re-traumatised. In addition, there is a chance that, whilst the moment of the trauma may not actually be completely relived, to fixate too much on the trauma can act to limit the otherwise continuous transformation of the subject to be found within Braidotti's forces and flows. Such fixation is to maintain the traumatic wound, it is to transform the injury into something else; it might not damage the self in the same way as the wound did in the actual moment of wounding, but it keeps the wound open and risks more harm being caused on top of what was originally inflicted (open wounds carry the risk of infection). As Sara Ahmed notes,

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<sup>29</sup> It is also worth noting that I experienced other aspects of the catharsis because I was able to relive the experience of the transplant with people in the audience that were not present in my life at that time; the performance enabled affective discharge by providing me with a space in which I could share in a way that usual social encounters do not provide.

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problems arise from psychic wounds when they become integrated into selfhood:

One of the reasons that it is problematic is precisely because of its fetishism: the transformation of the wound into an identity cuts the wound off from a history of 'getting hurt' or injured. It turns the wound into something that simply 'is' rather than something that has happened in time and space. (2004, p.32)

In performance terms, to fixate on the trauma denies the role of the audience in the successful gift. It is to turn the performance of traumatic recall into something akin to a public therapy that focuses solely on the performer / patient, and leaves the gift unable to cross the divide to the recipient.

Rosi Braidotti has written extensively on healthier alternatives to such reactions to injury in her formulations of the role affirmative ethics has in negotiating pain. Observing that all affective states, even the most profound, are not static, she writes that 'What is positive in the ethics of affirmation is the belief that negative affects can be transformed. This implies a dynamic view of all affects, even those that freeze us in pain, horror, or mourning' (2006, p.13). Being careful to acknowledge that this philosophy should not be used as an excuse for a lack of compassion, or an expectation that we should be able to just 'move on' from trauma at will, she instead notes that such ethics are 'rather a form of lucidity that acknowledges the impossibility of finding an adequate answer to the question about the source, the origin, the cause of the ill fate, the painful event, the violence suffered. Acknowledging the futility of even trying to answer that question is a starting point' (p.14).

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Such transformation of negative affect is not about denying our histories or refusing to acknowledge the existence of what has caused us to feel a particular way, instead, as Sara Ahmed writes, it is about marking what has passed whilst also sealing the wound. 'A good scar is one that sticks out, a lumpy sign on the skin. It's not that the wound is exposed or that the skin is bleeding. But the scar is a sign of the injury: a good scar allows healing, it even covers over, *but the covering always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body*' (2004, p.201. Original emphasis). For Braidotti, the ethical option is about trying to locate the value that there is in suffering, to recognise that 'A certain amount of pain, the knowledge about vulnerability and pain, is actually useful. It forces one to think about the actual material conditions of being interconnected and thus being in the world' (2006, p.15). Pain reminds us that the boundary around the self is permeable.

A trauma that dominates Tennessee Williams' original text, one which constantly threatens to break through into Blanche's present life and has clearly not been transformed in the manner proposed by Braidotti, is the tragic suicide of her husband, Allan Grey, after she told him that his homosexuality disgusted her. Throughout the play, hallucinatory repetitions of the Varsouviana, the music they danced to on that tragic night, is used as a dramatic device to show the slow collapse of Blanche's mental stability. As I comment in *The Kindness of Strangers*:

[Allan Grey] - who had died something like 15 years prior to Blanche's arrival in New Orleans at the start of the play - is only ever referred to obliquely, and never explicitly named – and yet it's obvious that he's

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rarely far from Blanche's thoughts and is perhaps as significant as Stanley when it comes to her eventual breakdown.

In an attempt to make a link between this trauma of Blanche's and my own experiences of the bone marrow transplant (whilst suggesting possible differences between them), in *The Kindness of Strangers* I recreate the scene where she has one of her first encounters with Mitch. Flirting with him, and demonstratively trying to impress him with her profundity, she tells him that: 'Sick people have such deep, sincere attachments. / Sorrow makes for sincerity, I think. / The little there is belongs to people who have experienced some sorrow' (Williams, 1962, p.149).

In the performance of *The Kindness of Strangers* this scene was presented as an interaction between myself and a recording of Vivien Leigh, who had played Blanche in Elia Kazan's film of the play. For this scene, I adopt the character of Mitch and stand in front of the projection screen, placing myself in the half of the screen he occupies in the film (which had been blacked out on the projection), and speaking his lines (which similarly had been removed from the soundtrack). In this way I, as Mitch, readily acquiesce to Blanche's position, stating 'That's right, they certainly do. / It sure brings it out in people.'

This combination of Blanche flirting 'with' me as she makes these statements and my ready agreement as Mitch with her histrionic pronouncements, acts to (over)identify my position as a transplant recipient with what she says, and this, in combination with the slightly ridiculous nature of the mixed-media encounter, gives the audience permission to reject the capital I have from being a cancer survivor.

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In autobiographical performance work such as *The Kindness of Strangers*, the giver has to balance what they give with how they give it in order for the gift recipient to be receptive to that which they offer. The potential of the gift to spill over its frame and have an affirmative affect on the recipient's subjectivity is, as has been established, significantly dependent on the recipient's anamorphic perspective on the gift. As the philosopher Michael Sandel observes, the successful gift grows from a solid awareness of the recipient's subjectivity; it does more than just satisfy the consumer preferences of the recipient:

[a good gift] engages and connects with the recipient, in a way that reflects a certain intimacy. This is why thoughtfulness matters... to give money rather than a well-chosen gift to a friend, lover, or spouse is to convey a certain thoughtless indifference - It's like buying your way out of attentiveness. (2012, p.101)

When the right balance is found, the performer of autobiographical work demonstrates the value that there is in their experience for others, and this becomes the gift they give. Just as '[t]hrough blood donation we become aware of our blood as an asset for others, as well as for ourselves' (Copeman, 2005, p.466) so can the giving of traumatic experiences transform them into an asset for both giver and recipient.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Dee Heddon notices exactly such value when, whilst recollecting her experiences as a recipient of a haircut from Adrian Howells in his 2006 one-to-one performance *Salon Adrienne*, she recalls how his confession that he had not always felt comfortable in his own body, enabled her to thoughtfully reflect on her own aging, and how her mother had died of cancer at the age of 42. As she summarises it, 'Howells gives of himself before asking of you' (2008, p.169).

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### ***The Unknown Gift***

The location of affirmative value in negative experience is not necessarily always apparent, and is rarely available at first. Nevertheless, as argued by Braidotti, it can be done. These 'gifts' of traumatic experience, like the appreciation of the heightened viscerality and awareness of mortality that my bone marrow transplant sometimes provides, reflect an essential aspect of gift in a broader sense. The gift cannot be known straight away, its excessive nature refuses to allow it to be contained within the moment in which it is given. The successful gift oscillates between being known and unknown.

This is perhaps one of the reasons why, in Western and Asian cultures, we wrap gifts; it is done in order to maximise their unknown quality. In *The Kindness of Strangers* a performative variation of gift-wrap was utilised when I called upon the help of the audience to complete the performance.

In this section, I called upon 'the kindness of strangers' in the performance space with me by giving individuals within the audience written instructions that directed them to each undertake a particular action. I did not simply give them the instructions though. Rather, the requests were given out in two stages; the first directed the audience to a location in the performance space where they then encountered another set of instructions (and any related props) for the actual action.

By sharing the directions in this way, the audience were encouraged to engage more fully with what was given (which, in effect, was a request for them to collectively take on the responsibility for the performance for a short while). The use of an envelope for the first set of directions was akin to gift-wrap; it

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generated engagement with an unknown gift and then, when 'unwrapped' by opening the envelope, a second level of concealment was found. In this way the gift still avoided being known, in that directions to the gift itself was all that was then given. Only once these had been followed was the gift encountered (in the form of the action that they were asked to perform).<sup>31</sup>

Even the actions escaped being fully knowable however. Whilst it was apparent that they referenced an aspect of either my experiences as a transplant patient or something from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the exact significance and why, aside from the generation of a particular aesthetic, the audience were asked to perform them remained, in part, unknown (the actions included such direction as: walk around the space using crutches; put on a Tom Cruise mask and read an account of a panic attack I had whilst watching *Mission Impossible* at the start of the treatment; play poker and drink whisky; etc.).

The wrapped gift, a gift given but not yet identifiable, is a heightened expression of the encounter with that which, after unwrapping, can be described as a successful gift. As long as the gift is to remain a gift, it cannot be entirely divulged. For if it becomes fully known (familiar, ordinary) then the recipient will no longer notice or pay attention to what has been given and the gift will cease to be such. We cannot feel that we know all six sides of the die simultaneously for then we will no longer need to look at it.

The continuing reverberation of what has been given can be articulated in terms of cause and effect; the giving of the gift is the cause for an effect that is

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<sup>31</sup> The children's game 'Pass the Parcel' plays with this unknown quality very successfully. Whilst the game is ostensibly about 'winning' the gift by being the one who unwraps the final stage of the parcel; the joy of playing also arises from the excitement of being the one who unwraps the next layer of unknowingness.

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never fully complete nor wholly known. Marion writes on exactly this conception of the gift by presenting an event as the example of an effect and analysing its relation to its causes.<sup>32</sup> He argues that identifying causal links is fundamentally impossible; in the first instance because any effect is always the result of multiple identifiable causes, 'it can never be identified that the effect results from just one efficient cause' (2002, p.163), but that even when a multiplicity of causes are suggested, the infinite complexity of their interaction prevents them from being fully traceable. Writing of the various pretexts that have been suggested for the First World War he states:

All these causes, in one way or another, competed; all are widely documented for us. The event therefore accepts all the causalities one would assign to it. But it is precisely this overabundance that forbids assigning it a cause, and even forbids understanding it through a combination of causes. (p.168)

Although Marion acknowledges that there are antecedents 'that offer similarities, distant or precise, precedents', he notes, in terms reminiscent of the unfamiliarity of a successful performance, that:

... one can speak of event only to the degree that it exceeds these precedents ("I've never seen such a thing"). The more the excess is noted, the more the event imposes. The level of eventness—if one can speak thus—is measured by the amount of the phenomenon's excess over its antecedents. (p.171)

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<sup>32</sup> For Marion an event, just like any other phenomenon, is a gift in that it is given by and from itself.

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A noticed event – like a successful performance gift - is in excess of what came before and framed it; it is in excess of what 'caused' it.

To fully embrace Marion's dissolution of cause and effect is to significantly problematise intention; for if the link between them is shattered in this way, what hope is there for us to implement what we want, to initiate a cause (join a cause) so that what we desire comes into effect? How can we intentionally give a gift, or make a performance, or work towards social justice? Of course, in reality, we know that gifts can be given, performances can be made, and social justice can be fought for. How then to resolve this paradox?

Perhaps part of the solution is to be found in the idea that, rather than trying to manifest our aims, we should aim to create the soil from which they spring. If the successful gift, Marion's saturated phenomenon, is that which exceeds its frame, our energies should perhaps be focused on making the frame as something which holds up rather than encloses. Such a frame would encourage us to be alive 'to chance, to chance arrivals, to the perhaps of a happening' (Ahmed, 2011, p.178).<sup>33</sup>

In a similar manner, whilst writing on curiosity, Rancière notes the way in which it does not 'penetrate below illusion to an obscure reality; [but] rather it is more akin to a glance that reorients the field of perception itself' (Lewis, 2012, p.98), before declaring that '[i]mages change our gaze and the landscape of the possible if they are not anticipated by their meaning and do not anticipate their effects' (p.105). Derrida meanwhile determines that the gift 'must let itself be

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<sup>33</sup> Ahmed explores, in the essay from which these quotes are taken, the etymological link between happiness, happening, and perhaps. This 'hap' – as in happenstance – has its roots in an old English word for chance.

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structured by the aleatory; it must appear chancy or in any case lived as such, apprehended as the intentional correlate of a perception that is absolutely surprised by the encounter with what it perceives, beyond its horizon of anticipation' (1992, p.122). Emphasising the common ground between all these thinkers, Marion also comments that 'the saturated phenomenon *cannot be aimed at* [*ne peut se viser*]. This impossibility stems from its essentially unforeseeable character [*son caractère essentiellement imprévisible*]' (2002, p.199).

In Richard Sennett's writing on craft he also identifies that being alive to chance arrivals is an essential aspect of good artisanship. Although gift is never mentioned per se, he outlines the qualities of the good craftsman (sic) in a manner that can be readily translated into the qualities found within successful giving:

- The good craftsman understands the importance of the sketch – that is, not knowing quite what you are about when you begin...
- The good craftsman places positive value on contingency and constraint...
- The good craftsman needs to avoid pursuing a problem relentlessly to the point that it becomes perfectly self-contained...
- The good craftsman avoids perfectionism that can degrade into a self-conscious demonstration – at this point the maker is bent on showing more what he or she can do than what the object does...
- The good craftsman learns when it is time to stop. Further work is likely to degrade. (2009, p.262)

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To continue to articulate the gift in Sennett's terms, the action of the gift cannot have a blueprint (a firmly defined sense of "if I do this, then they'll feel that"), for a blueprint signals a 'decisive disconnection between head and hand in design: [it is] the idea of a thing made complete in conception before it is constructed' (p.42).

Exactly the same principles can be applied to the successful gift of performance. There is a risk, when developing a performance, that it will simply illustrate something that the theatre maker has determined ahead of time, something that could perhaps be better expressed in a form other than performance (often written language). Writing on Performance as Research, Mark Fleishman notes that 'there are differences that exist between PaR and other forms of scholarship and that these are important and productive for the discipline...they open up new ways of thinking and new subjects for exploration that traditional textual scholarship does not or cannot gain purchase on' (2012, p.29). For this PhD, I was aware that I needed to adopt a different way of thinking when working on the practice than that used when writing the thesis. If I were to allow my practical work to develop in the same manner as the writing, then my performance-making was at significant risk of simply illustrating a pre-determined textual target, and would not have the potential to contain the vitality present within a successful gift.<sup>34</sup>

Maria Shevtsova, writing on how theatre directing is not a purely cognitive process, notes that it also 'involves, to varying degrees of intricacy, the ludic, emotional and desire dimensions of creativity, as well as its subconscious

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<sup>34</sup> Vitality is perhaps another name for the excess of the gift.

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impulses and drives' (2002, p.48). As she continues, the use of facilities outside of what is consciously known allows a performance maker to surprise themselves, to encounter the excess of the successful performance gift in much the same way as their audiences do:

... directors, in conversation with professionals as well as spectators, may claim that they were unaware of having done something attributed to them. Or why - Peter Brook being a prominent example - they may claim that they did not start out with a clear idea of what they were looking for. Or why they speak, as Brook often does, of following their intuition rather than a specific theatrical precept, conception, or vision. (ibid.)

To utilise expertise is to escape in part from calculated intention, and enables the aleatory dimension that Derrida observes within the gift.

As shall be explored more fully in the following chapter, part of what makes gift such an anathema to capital is this refusal to be calculated in advance. In *The Art of Living Dangerously*, a report commissioned to explore the value found within the unquantifiable aspects of the artistic lifestyle, the report's authors comment that 'it is difficult to value care, craft and culture because they do not fit easily into the economic growth story or we distort them by insisting they do' (Exchange et al., 2013, p.13). In an echo of this, whilst writing on the trade of transplant organs, Rosi Braidotti highlights 'the perverse notion of the interchangeability of organs' (1994, p.64). As Braidotti sees it, the perversity arises from the denial of the individuality within our bodily tissues, the reduction of this diversity into financial exchange.

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To give a successful gift involves knowledge and expertise and the trust that the gift will be received in a temporally, spatially and subjectively appropriate manner. This is true of the successful performance gift, just as it is true of a transplanted organ, or the donated blood that relies on:

a system of co-ordinating and matching properly coded blood with similarly coded bodies in need. It is a system of synchrony in which the elements to be synchronized are not durable and thus are dependent upon the correct temporal as well as spatial co-ordination of each to the other (body and disembodied blood). (Copeman, 2005, p.472)

Of course, problems can arise even with 'correctly' matched blood, just as experienced performance makers can make dire pieces of theatre, and a recipient might reject the most thoughtful of gifts. The ground can be prepared, but the link between cause and effect remains tenuous and forever too complex to trace in full.

### ***Being Thankful: Gratitude, Debt and Applause***

Should the complexities of gift giving be successfully negotiated, then the cultural norms of the gift transaction demand that some form of acknowledgement, in the form of thanks, is given to mark the reception of the gift. In performance, if the transaction is completed satisfactorily, thanks are usually offered through applause, which is then, in turn, acknowledged by the performer giving a bow.

*The Kindness of Strangers* was, as I acknowledged in my opening monologue, very much concerned with ideas of thank you:

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Thank you is something that we're going to come back to throughout our time together this evening. Which isn't to say that the story that we're telling here tonight is about being polite; it's not about being polite. It's about something else, something that isn't tidy, complete or finished, but rather is something that isn't any of those things. In part, it is about thank you though.

In many ways, thank you is a form of return gift, a reciprocation of that which was originally given. In an attempt to articulate reciprocity in a broader matrix of exchange, Skågeby and Pargman (2005), after Kolm (2005), identify that reciprocity, whilst still motivated by the well-being of the other, is different from pure gift giving because of this concern it has with return. However, rather than the clear transactional value present in exchange, with reciprocation, the repayment is 'about returning gifts and thereby has a larger degree of freedom, ambiguousness and uncertainty. In a reciprocal return of a gift there is no explicit or precise agreement' (p.115).

Applause, like saying 'thank you', is a form of reciprocity that sits somewhere between gift and exchange. As with an exchange, it is both expected and its form known in an advance, and yet, like a gift, it is immeasurable but relationally quantifiable (in that some thanks or applause can be received as more genuine than others, but no measure of this authenticity can be objectively expressed). Like all gifts, the 'successful' thank you needs to be in excess of that which 'caused' it, i.e. the gift which the thanks acknowledges.<sup>35</sup> It cannot be made

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<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note the relationship that the phrase 'I can't thank you enough' has with this excess. In instances where this expression is uttered, the power of the original gift is acknowledged, whilst admitting that there is no possibility of achieving excess in the

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simply out of politeness, given solely because of cultural demands.

As the audience were told in the performance, the word 'thank' shares an etymological root with 'think', and originally was a statement that acknowledged that what the giver has given will be remembered. However, as David Graeber (2011, p.123) notes, the different ways of saying thank you have different implications: the Portuguese 'obrigado' relates to the English 'much obliged' in its inference that 'I am now in your debt'; the French 'merci' is stronger, in that it states the gift recipient is now at the other's mercy. To complete the ritual, the original giver normally disavows these statements of indebtedness: 'de rien' in French, or the Spanish 'de nada' both translate to 'it's nothing'.

The performer's bow, a gesture evocative of gentle submission, seems to embody this final response to the 'thank you' of the audience's applause. The audience thanks the performer, and the performer, who is often smiling whilst bowing, makes clear that they have enjoyed the performance as much as the audience. As Graeber says, to reply to a thank you with 'my pleasure' is perhaps the most complete response in that it disavows the fact that a gift was even made; it is impossible to be indebted to someone who has not given anything up.

Thanking someone is a performative act; it sets up a particular relationship between those involved. To link its etymological root with the philosophical acknowledgement that the thanked for event has an infinitude of causes, thank you is a statement that I *think* this state I am experiencing is due to you and your actions; I attribute it to you and I will remember that you did this for me.

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reciprocation.

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An attempt to make a complete thank you that acknowledged more causes than the most readily identifiable was made, in the performance, by the reading of a list that included those such as 'The people working in the supermarket where my donor buys their food', 'The hospital Labrador' and 'The person who produced Cher's "Do you believe in life after love?"'.

Thank you is also used to mark the completion of the act of giving. It states that the gift has been received, and whilst this does not necessarily mean that that is all that will be received from the gift (for, as was discussed earlier, continued impact is an intrinsic quality of the successful gift), it acknowledges that the giver need do no more to launch the gift on its journey. In performance terms, applause, as a form of thank you, marks the end of the particular codification of space and time that the performance has created; it recognises the return to more usual conventions.

Thank you meets many of the criteria Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses to identify 'explicit performatives'. Unlike J L Austin's formulation of the performative utterance – which describes what one is doing ('I thee wed' for instance,) Sedgwick's explicit performative utterances actually do the thing they state. As she classifies them they 'are in (1) the first-person singular (2) the present (3) indicative (4) active; (5) the verb in each one names the act (in Austin's term, the illocution) that the utterance itself performs; and (6) the adverb 'hereby' could be inserted in each of them without distorting their form or meaning' (2003, p.4). An additional criterion that she omits is that of the need for the other to recognize it in order for its function to be performed. As Sara Ahmed says '... the addressee also has to read the utterance. The utterance is

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addressed to the other, whose gaze returns to the speaker, who is placed in a history that precedes the utterance. So the receiver has to judge whether the utterance is readable *as* an apology [or a statement of thanks]' (2004, p.115).

The utterance is read against a backdrop of what has come before, but just as the successful gift continues to give after it has been given, so does the thank you also need to be sustained in what comes after. It cannot be withdrawn.

Writing collaboratively with Peggy Phelan about gift, Adrian Heathfield highlights this when he tells the story of Lady, a toy spider given to him by his daughter Anna on a visit he had made to her and his estranged partner. He records:

That night Anna is upset, she comes on the phone: 'you have forgotten Lady'. Anna knows, better than I, the law of the gift. Accepting the gift, taking it away, is a form of return. 'Don't cry', I say, stupidly. Irreversible line, untouched by the re-stagings of the conversation in my head. What I want to say is that the failure to remember, to honour the past, to honour what has passed between us, may arise from an ignorance of the other and the other's knowing, more than it arises from an absence of love.

(Phelan and Heathfield, 2001, p.245)

For the occurrence of the gift to be successful, both giver and recipient need to be satisfied by the amount of thanks that is offered. In certain theatres, the relationship between applause and curtain calls is carefully negotiated between the audience and performer(s):

The number of curtain calls will generally relate to the applause generated and a balance between the two will provide the most

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satisfactory conclusion. Where curtain calls are overdone, the audience can feel impatient and the pleasure of the theatrical event may be diminished by the virtual imprisonment of the audience in their seats (Bennett, 1990, p.175)

The way in which the expectation for gratitude in such curtain calls acts to reduce the sentiment itself highlights the subtle, but decisive, difference between debt and gratitude.

In a study of people's reaction to situations in which a return on a favour such as helping to move house was either asked for or not, Watkins et al. (2006) note that '... as expectations of return favors from a benefactor increase, the beneficiary is less inclined to help' (p.235). They continue:

If gifts are given for the purpose of receiving return favours from the beneficiary, the beneficiary is less likely to feel grateful, and is less likely to feel like returning the favour. The more a benefit is received as a gift of grace, the more likely there will be a return of gratitude. (p.236)(p.236)

To return to the categorisations developed by Kolm, a debt occurs in an instance of delayed exchange, when there is an expectation of return, whereas gratitude is an expression of reciprocation. Gratitude, as with all reciprocal return, is not demanded by the original givee. Nevertheless, it is implicitly expected (or rather, if it is not offered its lack may be noted), even though an open acknowledgement of that expectation would shatter the reciprocal relationship. It is a complex dance of wanting without asking, of expectation mingling with genuine surprise.

A further difference between debt and gratitude is that, as the expectation

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for gratitude is hidden, it might not be performed. One form of gratitude is as thanks not yet given; it is to think on the cause of the gift without telling anyone "I think this is the cause". As I explain in *The Kindness of Strangers*:

I've never met the person who did this for me. Never told them how they saved my life.

I've never written to them, never sent them a photo of what I look like. Never told them any of the things I've done in the fifteen years since the transplant.

I've never said thank you.

I think about them now and then. And at certain times, I'm pretty sure they'll have thought about me.

This separation of gratitude from its expression means that 'gratitude binds not only the living, but connects the living and the dead as well', (Schwartz, 1967, p.9), whereas it is impossible to directly repay debts to the deceased.

Gratitude may be expressed through a thank you, but does not demand it. It is a state that can be maintained internally; meanwhile, a debt is not sustainable; it generates pressure towards being repaid. Commenting on their results, Watkins, et al, in an echo of Kolm's matrix, note that 'Perhaps one important distinction between indebtedness and gratitude is that indebtedness is an emotion of exchange, whereas gratitude is not' (p.236).

This suggests a solution to the dilemma that Derrida presents on the gift, that the gift is "That which, in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange' (1992, p.7). From this he infers that, in the purest gift, the recipient should give nothing back to the donor, '*it is necessary [il faut] that the*

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donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never... contract... a debt'. (p.13). Instead however, it is perhaps *the demand* for action that the gift escapes from; gratitude, as a state internal to the gift recipient, does not make any such demands and the return of an exchange remains unnecessary.

At the conclusion of *The Kindness of Strangers*, I marked the end of the piece with the theatrical convention of saying 'Thank you' to the audience. Normally, this is said by the performer as a mark of gratitude for the audience's attention, and acts as a trigger for the audience to start applauding. In this instance however, the direction of the gratitude was complicated somewhat by the preceding line, in which I said 'For donor number: 8/001929' and thus suggested a possible double meaning to my final words. Taken in isolation, the 'Thank you' will denote the usual gratitude towards the audience, whereas if it is taken in conjunction with the penultimate lines, it could be read as if I am thanking the donor. Neither understanding undermines the reading of these lines as signs that I am now finishing the performance, yet there is some complication to what would otherwise be read as a polite demand that the audience starts to clap.

The perception that all human interactions are rooted in exchange is deeply ideological, and can be traced back to the work of Mauss who, in his anthropological studies:

... argued that in pre-capitalist societies the community was held together by reciprocity. Thus, expressions of gratitude are viewed as simple exchanges for benefits to restore social balance in obedience to the norm

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of reciprocity. In the past, psychology appears to have followed his lead.

(Watkins et al., 2006, p.218)

However, as David Graeber remarks, this need not be the case, 'human interactions are not forms of exchange. Only some are. Exchange encourages a particular way of conceiving human relations' (2011, p.122). Graeber continues this line of thought by highlighting what he describes as 'baseline communism'; the way in which we offer 'small courtesies... - a match, a piece of information, holding an elevator' without expecting anything in return, and in a similar way, but at the opposite end of the spectrum, help 'if another person's need - even a stranger's - is particularly spectacular or extreme: if he is drowning, for example' (p.97).

If a transplant recipient feels the need to make the return demanded by a gift too strongly, then their gratitude towards the donor (and all that have facilitated their 'new' life) can become a debt. This, they may feel they have to repay through a 'responsibility to be well when one is not; to be healthy; independent; to be champions of donor campaigns; to fulfil a powerful medical narrative; and, in so doing, to mask and silence the debilitating consequences of immunosuppressive drug therapy, changes to body image, social and family life, future expectations, and so on, that are all part of organ reciprocity' (Kierans, 2011, p.1474). Commenting on this responsibility with a touch of sarcasm in *The Kindness of Strangers* I state that:

People who have been ill like I was know how to appreciate each day.

We're very thankful for every extra moment that we've been given.

*Pause*

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Now that's an absolutely lovely idea when it works; but it's quite a lot to take in. It's a lot to think about. It's a lot of pressure on those days when things are just a bit shit.

It is of course, possible to say thank you without feeling gratitude, to fulfil the cultural demand even though our hearts are not in it. Most people who go to the theatre with any regularity will be aware of occasions when they have applauded even though they did not rate the performance, or even resent what the performers have inflicted on them. A certain contradiction is presented in such instances which Slavoy Žižek identifies as the:

... paradox of willing or choosing freely what is in any case obligatory, of maintaining the appearance that there is a free choice when there isn't one, [such illusion of choice] is strictly codependent with the notion of an empty symbolic gesture. (2009, p.136)

It is also possible that such empty gestures can be a deliberate attempt to overstate the significance of the event just witnessed; it is possible to claim that what happened was an event, saturated in the Marionian sense (even when it is not), with the inference that the audience contributed to its status as such (simply by being there). Witnessing saturated phenomena grants cultural capital by association ('You were there!') and even when not overstated, to avoid admitting that such cultural capital has been purchased along with a ticket, the mechanics of the situation might be obscured by effusive applause. Just as by saying thank you we identify what has taken place as a gift, applause can act as 'an attempt to obscure the economic basis of the theatrical event' (Ridout, 2006 cited in Freshwater, 2009, p.20).

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It is interesting to note that those performances that have the most affective impact upon us, that are gifts most in excess of the frame that holds them, will generate a response that is, in some ways, the opposite of the 'empty symbolic gesture' referred to by Žižek. They escape the symbolic frame of cultural response, and become responses rooted in a more subjective reaction; we do not clap, we do not laugh in the socially proscribed manner, but instead, make gestures that, as identified by Andrew Quick, are '... astonishing, not through the reproduction of reality [or cultural norms], but rather, as a revelation, an opening on to, 'a discovery' of a situation *as a situation is occurring*' (2006, p.151).

This idea that Quick presents, of the discovery of a situation whilst it is occurring, returns us to the Marionian event – that which is in excess of its cause. It is this, the experience of the saturated phenomenon in performance, that leads to the gestures Quick identifies. As an audience receives a gift from which they are intuiting more than what was intended, and as any sense of anticipated indebtedness to the performer fades away, and before any feelings of gratitude for what they are witnessing may arise, these gestures are the only response possible.

***Beside Economy - Locating Gift and the Arts in Capitalism***

When applause (as gratitude) is understood as a form of reciprocation, when it is seen as a return gift given from the audience to the performer, then a question arises about how money, in the form of the ticket price, operates in the theatrical encounter. What room is available for finance in a closed system of reciprocation?

This chapter proposes that both art and gift sit uneasily within systems of finance; that each, when 'successful', refuses to be readily quantified and so escapes easy translation into monetary value. As I will explain, both possess the quality Ivan Illich identifies as the 'blessing'.

Nevertheless, art does exist within financial systems; artists do get paid for their work (sometimes) in order to survive under capitalism; and therefore the manner in which money interacts with these blessings needs to be considered. Just as the anthropologist Michèle de la Pradelle notes that there is much more than economics at play in financial interactions, 'that market exchange is itself a social relation of a certain type' (de La Pradelle, 2006, p.5), so does the capital that can be harnessed by the gift have a relationship to finance. To reiterate Bourdieu's interest in how 'the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47), the gift, as a vehicle for cultural capital, has a clear relationship to finance. As I will propose, the manner by which this relationship is understood, the relationship between the economy and the fundamentally non-economic, determines and is determined by the place that the arts hold in the broader culture; the way in

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which they are valued. Such analysis brings me back to Illich, in particular his thinking on waste, and how Bataille's writing on the 'accursed share' also provides insight into controversial expenditure that is 'wasted' on the arts.

Having taken a broad view of arts funding, the focus shifts to the specifics of how funding, in the form of sponsorship, operates. Drawing on ideas of authorship that were developed in Chapter 1, and introducing Margaret Davies' queer theory of property, I explore how the sponsor's gifts affect the authorship/ownership of artistic work and what is at stake for a corporation in such arrangements (namely capital, authenticity and propriety). Such arrangements are then considered from the perspective of the sponsored art institution, with Bourdieu's theorising on the plenipotentiary used to explain how key figures within the institution manage controversial sponsorship, and how activists counter it. My focus here is on contemporary disputes around oil sponsorship and what companies such as BP introduce alongside the money that they gift to arts institutions. In particular, the work of the activist group Liberate Tate is explored. The chapter concludes by tackling the problematics of blueprinting within funding systems; the manner by which each system demands that quantifiable results are proposed before the work is even begun.

### ***Finance Capital and the Blessing***

Since the financial crash of 2008, austerity has been the dominant UK economic strategy, bringing with it significant uncertainty around the arts.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Whilst some claim that the Conservative policy on austerity ended with the sacking of George Osborne after the Brexit vote, and the poor result for the Conservatives in the 2017 General Election has put further pressure on a shift in policy, to date the only confirmed change been the decision to abandon the goal of eliminating the deficit by 2020. (Ahmed, 2016)

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State support and local councils have repeatedly seen budgets cut, and artists and institutions have been put under growing pressure to seek out corporate and other forms of financial support to supplement state provision.

Although this means there may have been an increase in the range of sources for arts funding, what is striking about funding, regardless of where it comes from, is the clear demarcation expected between the giver, the receiver and the gift itself. Whilst these elements do still, as in any gift exchange, intersect, blur and become somewhat indistinct, the boundaries between the various gift components are more than typically marked in funding systems. Suspicion that a funder is interfering with an artist's process is met with disapproval; artists are expected to have a distant relationship with their funder. In arts funding, the gift is expected to leave the giver behind before it reaches the artist recipient, meaning that the artwork is unaffected by the funder's desires (even if, as I argue in this chapter, the manner by which the gift operates means that that will rarely be the case in practice).<sup>37</sup>

Both the arts and the gift prove something of an unwieldy fit within usual economic models. This is not to say that they cannot be found as commodities; it is common for both to be found for sale and yet, nevertheless, there are aspects of gift and performance (and performance as the successful gift) that prove problematic for capitalist systems.

Both a major contributor to the success of capitalism whilst also a significant flaw within it is the manner by which phenomena (experiences, goods

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<sup>37</sup> In comparison, the gift of performance allows for a relatively ready intermingling of the three entities. For instance, in *The Kindness of Strangers*, as an autobiographical work my own life and identity intermingled freely with the gifted performance, whilst the gift recipients – the participating audience members – also contributed in a direct way to the gift's formation.

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or services) are converted into the commodity form and thus, through finance, made interchangeable. Raqs Media Collective traces this equivalence back to Marxist notions of labour when they write that 'One could say that in a world where the division and hierarchy of labor functions as the dominant measure of life, we inevitably end up arranging various capacities and gifts as unequal but equivalent' (2011, p.4). The unavoidable reductivism within such 'unequal but equivalent' transformations inevitably leaves something out; certain aspects of lived experience are always discounted from economic calculation.

Ivan Illich, in a career-long critique of normative notions of value, progress and social advancement developed an idea of the 'blessing' to explore some of the affirmative aspects of life that economics normally passes over. Examples of the blessing that Illich provides include:

...the rediscovery of walking and cycling in lieu of transportation; of dwelling in self-generated space in lieu of claims to housing; of planting tomatoes on the balcony and meeting in bars that exclude radio and TV, of suffering without therapies and of preferring the intransitive activity of dying to monitored medicine. (1992, p.34)

Explaining his choice of signifier, Illich states that he uses 'Blessing' because any discussion of the concept at stake needs to be 'conducted in a language which is devoid of economic implications, of references to productivity, needs, resources, decisions, systems, feedback, and above all, development' (p.35).<sup>38</sup> Whilst it could be argued that much that the contemporary theatre

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<sup>38</sup> Illich also notes that any religious or 'sectarian connotations [of the word] does not worry me' (p.35)

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maker undertakes is potentially contradictory to Illich's call – their careers do have economic implications, they refer to 'needs' and 'resources', make 'decisions' based on 'feedback' and will look to 'develop' (new work, their skillset, a career), this does not feel integral to the experience of theatre itself, especially in the action of successful performance gifts as presented in the last chapter. Rather, these are the demands that capitalist cultural production makes of those who wish to make theatre. In a similar way it could (somewhat belligerently) be argued that the growing of tomatoes can be understood as an act rooted in productivity, and hence is also not a blessing. However, the affirmative affect of these acts (growing tomatoes and making the successful performance gift) does not lie in the productivity of the tomato garden or the performer's career path. Instead, these productive aspects are supplementary and, should they become dominant, act to actually diminish the blessing.

Illich does not provide a concrete description of what a blessing is, defining it through examples – as above – or by stating what it is not, 'something economic language cannot grasp but only corrupt' (ibid.). In spite of this, blessings feel readily knowable – they are the moments of joy, pleasure or affirmative reflection experienced in and of the moment. They refuse to be identified as capital for later use (or lose their status as a blessing if they are transformed in such a way); when conceptualised as gift, they have something of the saturated phenomenon about them (though Marion's excessive phenomena are affectively diverse, they need not be experienced as a 'good').

In Lone Twin's performance work *Ghost Dance*, two performers (usually, though not always, Greg Whelan and Gary Winters) dance a slow line dance,

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blindfolded, over a period of 12 hours, each of them wearing a cowboy hat and chaps. Although one of the company's earlier works, it was reprised for the *In Between Time* festival in Bristol in 2017. The following extracts are from a review of this version of the piece:

Two white men are dancing, and while they dance I talk. I talk with another man about futility. He is intrigued by the futility of this dance, its pointless circuit...

One man is dancing. The other is tired. He stops, shakes out one foot and then the other. They are not dancing on sawdust: they are dancing on concrete. He raises an arm. An usher approaches him, hands him water. That moment of tenderness, of basic care for another, breaks my heart...

Two men are dancing and I am dancing (stumbling, shuffling) with them. As my left foot crosses behind my right, I remember the vine dance that happens at family weddings. The rhythm of it so alien somehow; my body's resistance to the expectation to join in. Here there is no expectation. Only silent invitation...

'Three men are dancing, and so are 15 women. I am dancing with them. I am thinking about how restful it is to submit. To cede control. To know a rule and follow it. (Costa, 2017)

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Thoughtful and aware, it is clear from her writing that Costas's experience of the piece, both as spectator and dancing participant is firmly rooted in her *actual* experience of the piece. She does not encounter it as motivated by other factors, she is not placing it in relation to systems of gain outside of the performance space; it is not about 'expectation', just 'silent invitation'. It can be read as an act of 'futility', she is struck by a moment of 'basic care' and concludes by revealing how she overcame her hesitation to join in and 'cede control' to the work.

None of her writing denies the gains (financial and symbolic) made by the company and she may well have considered these gains at points during or after the piece, yet these are not what matters to her in what she chooses to write about. The difference between these different experiences of the work is the same as the difference between 'walking and cycling' for the feelings they generate, and 'walking and cycling' because of a perceived need to get an improved body shape. The same act might be experienced in both ways by the same person at different times, but only one experience will be of the Illichian blessing.

Developing Illich's thinking to argue for a more inclusive system of cultural value, Simon Ravenscroft proposes that:

The underlying idea here is that cultural goods are, in certain important ways, different from purely economic goods, and that to submit the former to a mode of analysis tailored to the latter is therefore to indulge in a grand exercise in missing the point. (2012)

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He continues:

... there are forms of value which cannot be adequately quantified, counted, measured, or expressed in monetary terms. This is an ontological and an epistemological claim, of a particular sort, but it gets at certain key experiences of human life -- of beauty, for example, or of belonging, or of the sacred. There are reasons why it might be considered improper to build a Sainsburys on a cemetery, and these extend beyond the possible bumpiness of the ground, or that it might be cheaper to do it elsewhere. Similarly, the value of preserving ancient monuments extends beyond a calculation as to whether they are profitable as tourist attractions. (ibid.)

It is exactly this, the acknowledgement that there are value sets outside the range of conventional economic expression, that neoliberalism, as 'a set of economic, political and cultural policies and strategies deployed with the aim of strengthening the hegemony of capitalism' (di Bernado, 2016, p.10), denies. In George Osborne's 2015 spending review, whilst his decision to maintain Arts Council England (ACE) funding at current levels when savage cuts were expected could be welcomed (BBC, 2015b), what is concerning is that he justified this by noting that 'deep cuts in the small budget of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport are a false economy' (Robinson, 2015). Such an attitude is clearly a development of the position articulated two years earlier by then Culture Secretary Maria Miller that '... our focus must be on culture's economic impact... I need you all to accept this fundamental premise, and work with me to develop the argument' (BBC, 2013). Osborne continued with the somewhat surprising claim that for every billion pounds invested in the arts (or the more expansive

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'creative industries', in which areas such as computer gaming and advertising agencies would also be included), there is a return of £250 billion to the UK economy. Whether that is the case or not, and whilst it can be seen as encouraging that ACE will not suffer any funding cuts when almost every other aspect of state support for public life is being reduced, the refusal of central government to acknowledge the blessing within art and performance is a cause of significant concern.<sup>39</sup>

Somewhat facetiously, economist John Kay comments on such an understanding of the arts economy by drawing a comparison with an economic valuation of ill health – for, whilst perhaps not a 'blessing' in the sense currently under discussion, something significantly non-economic is also at work in health 'markets':

Many people underestimate the contribution disease makes to the economy. In Britain, more than a million people are employed to diagnose and treat disease and care for the ill. Thousands of people build hospitals and surgeries, and many small and medium-size enterprises manufacture hospital supplies. Illness contributes about 10 per cent of the UK's economy: the government does not do enough to promote disease. (2014)

In *The Moral Limits of Markets*, Michael Sandel develops – through the use of extensively researched examples – a strong argument for why it is essential that a culture should maintain areas of itself that are distinct from economic

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<sup>39</sup> It is also worth noting, as Mark Robinson (2015) does, that the impact on artist's lives of government economic policy extends beyond the ACE budget - savage cuts to local authority funding, the shift from various in-work benefits into the much more stringently assessed Universal Credit, and the continuing financialisation of Higher Education is limiting the development of artists in many other ways.

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valuation; just as I am proposing that a crucial element of the performance gift has to refuse conventional economic understanding. Many aspects of contemporary life sit awkwardly within capitalism, and Sandel explains that such resistance happens for two reasons.

Firstly, the market is not the impassive, value-neutral system that it is often presented as:

... markets don't only allocate goods: they also express and promote certain attitudes toward the goods being exchanged. Paying kids to read books might get them to read more, but also teach[es] them to regard reading as a chore rather than a source of intrinsic satisfaction. Auctioning seats in the freshman class to the highest bidders might raise revenue but also erode[s] the integrity of the college and the value of its diploma.

Hiring foreign mercenaries to fight our wars might spare the lives of our citizens but corrupt[s] the meaning of citizenship. (p.9)

Sandel describes this as the 'corruption objection', and in the current context, it could be seen if someone is paid to choose a gift for a loved one on another's behalf or when an oil company sponsors an artwork or performance series. The other moral limit to markets that Sandel proposes is 'the fairness objection', which 'asks about the inequality that market choices may reflect' (p.110). Such an objection is invoked when state support for the arts is justified by noting that the market alone will not support a healthy arts ecology: sponsors will prioritise sponsoring the largest theatres, only those in privileged positions will be able to access the training and resources necessary for a sustainable

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artistic career, and – in an extreme form - only profitable artistic ventures will be undertaken.

Writing specifically on the gift, Sandel explains that in standard economic reasoning, the best gift would always be cash. This would enable the gift recipient to choose their own gift, maximising their utility and joy from it, and ensure that their own preference is most completely met.<sup>40</sup> However, such monetary gifts fall somewhat short of how I have defined the successful gift. Whilst these gifts can be transformed into anything that the market might provide, the recipient decides what that transformation might entail. The standardised nature of money means such gifts are 'known' in advance, there is little possibility that the recipient will intuit something from such gifts that is in excess of what is intended; a monetary gift is unlikely to be experienced as a saturated phenomenon. If anything, it is the giver who is more likely to experience it as such, the gift is more unknowable from their perspective; in fact it is possible that it will be they who feel delight on seeing what the recipient actually buys.

Monetary gifts also disregard the intervention into identity that the successful gift instigates. Whilst a sum of money might be an appropriate gift for a distant cousin who is getting married, or a ten pound note in an envelope might be suitable when given by a grandparent to a child whose everyday activity and interests they largely have no awareness of, to give money to a partner or a close

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<sup>40</sup> In his critique of this notion, Sandel refers to the work of the economist Joel Waldfogel, who has undertaken significant research into what he describes as 'the economic inefficiency of gift giving'. He investigated this by asking 'gift recipients to estimate the monetary value of the gifts they've received, and the amount they would have been willing to pay for them. His conclusion: "We value items we receive as gifts 20 percent less, per dollar spent, than items we buy for ourselves.'" (Sandel, 2012, p.99)

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friend does not suggest the intimate knowledge that such relationships are assumed to entail.

Having established some of the ways by which theatre, in common with the gift, has certain key characteristics that are incompatible with the market, it is important to emphasise again that neither is entirely distinct from economy. In a society dominated by capitalist principals, it is inevitable that they will intersect with finance in a multitude of sites, not least because artists need money if they are to survive under capitalism.

Due to most theatre's resistance to market valuation, the usual way in which this money finds its way into the theatrical economy is via financial gifts, given in advance of the making of the work to those performance makers who best articulate their intentions once social and other forms of cultural capital have been taken into account. Often, at least in the UK, such giving comes from the state or various trusts/foundations, although recent years have seen a shift towards models of corporate sponsorship and philanthropy.

It is worth noting though that, in nearly all instances of arts funding, including that given by the state, in spite of the desire for artists to be autonomous, there will be a collision of agendas. The desire for the theatre-maker to make the art that they want to make has to be negotiated with the desires of the giver of the money; a corporate sponsor will want a particular kind of exposure, and the state may seek the 'soft power' of an international art programme.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Speaking in 2014, then Culture Secretary Maria Miller spoke of how arts and culture are valuable in the manner by which they affect '... our international standing – the 'soft power' it brings' (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2014). There is significant post-colonial

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It is also worth considering that this negotiation need not necessarily be negative. Artists and performers always have to fit their work within certain limits: the space or site in which they are performing, the amount of time available to develop the work, their own skillset and that of those with whom they are working. A frame is both inevitable and necessary. However when, as has been established, the artist's authorial subjectivity is porous and 'lets in' those whom it establishes a gift relationship with, the dynamics of these various relationships need to be considered carefully and in detail.

### ***Freeing the Gift***

In Chapter Two, it was established that a successful gift need not necessarily escape return, just be in excess of it. As with a thank you, there can even be an expectation on the giver's behalf that a return will be made, even though such a requirement will not be stated in advance and the gift is notionally freely given.

In many instances, as the particular relationship of performance to economy under capitalism necessitates a substantial (if not total) reliance on gift in the form of subsidy or sponsorship for the work to be made (even unfunded works require the artist to subsidise them themselves), then the mechanics of reciprocity can have significant influence.<sup>42</sup> What is unusual about these gifts to

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unease to be felt about the focus on national identity that Miller proposes – her subtle approval of a cultural imperialism that globally obscures other value systems, aesthetics and culture. When, as she does in an earlier speech, Miller talks of how culture ‘... *opens doors for UK plc* and makes it easier for businesses to export, and expand.’ (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2013, my emphasis) it becomes clear what kind of values she is looking to export. Again, governmental assessment of the arts refuses to acknowledge the blessings that Illich draws attention to, instead deciding that economic impact is of primary (if not sole) importance.

<sup>42</sup> This is obviously not the case in commercial theatres.

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the theatre though is that the recipient's responsibilities after the financial gift is made are not, at least in the first order, to the donor (or at least this is how the reciprocity is usually understood – as this chapter will go on to argue, the direction and siting of that responsibility is often more complex than how it is usually perceived). Although all gifts operate in excess of the donor/donee binary (since all those encountering the gift have a role to play in determining its status), when money is given to an artist or institution, the artwork made as a result is not primarily for the donor's benefit (if it were, it would simply be a market-based transaction). In fact, the work can – at times – disregard the donor, and is often expected to do exactly that. In theory at least, the principle is that the artist should accept the money in order to make whatever they want, even if the resulting work damages the funder's reputation. To use Marion's language, the artist should be the enemy of the donor:

Only the enemy makes the gift possible; he makes the gift evident by denying it reciprocity—in contrast to the friend, who involuntarily lowers the gift to the level of a loan with interest. The enemy thus becomes the ally of the gift, and the friend its adversary. (2002, p.89)

Staying with Marion, he also draws attention to the manner in which gratitude reduces the gift. Writing about the figure of the ingrate he says:

He refuses the charge not only of acquitting himself of this debt (which would remain within exchange), but of even having incurred one—of ever having been offered a gift. He suffers from the very principle that a gift affects him by befalling him. He does not refuse this or that gift with or

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without this or that objective support; he refuses indebtedness pure and simple—or rather the admission of it. (2002, p.90)

Whilst gratitude does not invalidate a gift, it does reduce the degree of excess. If the artist feels grateful for being funded, then they are less likely to produce a critique of the funder. If this gratitude should manifest too forcefully, and the responsibility towards the funder becomes dominant, then the work made will be indistinguishable from a commercial purchase of the artist's talents: its status will be reduced to either advertising or propaganda. For funding to operate as a gift, the artist's decision about what to make must remain with them; their responsibility should not be to the funder but, instead, to the artwork so that once made, the artist can offer it onwards, as a gift unaffected by the sponsor's concerns, to the wider public.

In the instance of state funding however, where the public receiving the work are, through their taxes, also arguably the funders, things become somewhat complicated. This is acknowledged in the manner that Arts Council England operates. At least in principle, ACE is independent of governmental influence and, by inference, that of the electorate. This proposition of 'arm's-length' operation, meaning that those in government who set the Arts Council's budget do not intervene directly in its running, has been integral to the Arts Council since its inception under the direction of John Maynard Keynes in 1946. As Christopher Frayling, then Chair of ACE, described it in a rather flowery quote of Keynes':

The artist walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself. But he leads the rest of us

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into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and to enjoy what we often begin by rejecting, enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts.

The task of an official body is not to censor, but give courage, confidence and opportunity. (Keynes in Frayling, 2007)

Whilst a description of the artist today would probably use slightly different language (and would hopefully be a little more gender-sensitive), the arm's-length principal remains core to the Arts Council. Nevertheless, even though the government is excluded from direct involvement in distributing funds, when it is public money – whether from taxpayers or lottery players – that is being spent, it is inevitable that there will be public interest and debate on how it is distributed.

Art-instigated debate is, of course, healthy, although if ACE should prioritise public opinion and make public accessibility its primary concern when deciding where to allocate funds, then it has lost its autonomy as much as if the arm's-length principal were abolished. As Manick Govinda states in his write-up of a 2013 debate entitled 'All Change in arts funding: crisis or opportunity?' there is something undesirable in 'reduc[ing] the artist to the role of public servant. The arts... must remain a challenging, provocative, anarchic and unfettered territory – they cannot be subservient to public good' (Govinda, 2013). When considering questions of arts funding, a precondition of any response to how money should be allocated (and where the money should come from) is to decide what place the arts should have in the wider culture, and what the priorities of that wider culture should be.

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### ***The Ethics of Waste***

In a society that disregards Illich's blessings in order to emphasise economic valuation, finance will nearly always be the prioritised element in the reciprocal exchange of arts funding. James Marriot from activist group Platform, in a talk at *Take the Money and Run*, an event about the ethics of funding, proposed an inversion of systems of reciprocation as they currently stand. Rather than the artist being grateful to the sponsor for facilitating art, Marriot proposed that '[w]e should expect sponsors to be grateful for our support' (Paterson, 2015). For such a radical inversion to occur however, our system of value would need to be profoundly rethought.

The beginnings of such a rethink might be found by reconsidering our understanding of waste. Illich's position is that the very concept of waste is culturally defined:

Waste is not the natural consequence of human existence. Professor Ludolf Kuchenbuch, who is working on a history of waste, has gathered the evidence. A concept that we take for granted does not appear before 1830. Before that date 'waste', as a verb and as a noun, is related to devastation, destruction, desertification, degradation. It is not something that can be removed. (1992, p.79)

Taking human waste as his example, he goes on to propose that there are significant social implications to how it is normally understood:

When people grasp that several times a day their physical needs for evacuation produce a degradation of the environment, it is easy to

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convince them that by their very existence they cannot but contribute to 'entropy'. (ibid.)

Illich argues that instead of seeing excrement as 'degradation', it can instead be seen as a fertilising material, a generator of life and contributor to biodiversity. Contemporary society has however been conditioned to see it as a problem and something to be disposed of. Being alive has become essentially linked to wastage; humanity is not seen as a part of a renewable cycle of life. Such an understanding of waste 'brings into existence the body percept of *homo* the generator of waste' (Illich, 1992).

The arts are often seen as a waste of expenditure – in the UK, it is not uncommon to hear the argument made that the money could be better spent on the NHS or other public service.<sup>43</sup> Whilst one reply to such an accusation could be a citation of George Osborne, that the creative industries act as a net generator of finance and hence tax revenues, I would argue that to accept that there is a binary choice between hospitals and artistic practice is to already lose the argument. The arts may be excessive, but that is precisely the point.

Those artworks and performances that are understood as successful gifts, that present themselves as saturated phenomena, have within them an element that fundamentally refuses economic calculation, that presents moments of generosity and surplus. It is these moments that generate an artwork's status, its

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, controversy recently arose when the artist Ellie Harrison was awarded a £15,000 grant from Creative Scotland. This award was to enable her to work solely in her hometown of Glasgow for a year as a response to the 'Glasgow Effect' (a term used to describe the poorer health and life expectancy of the city's residents). Publicising this caused some controversy, with many feeling that her work was a 'poverty safari' and should not be funded (McClellan, 2016). This was despite the work going on to include such community-minded works as a campaign into Glasgow's public transport system and a paper critiquing Higher Education (Miller, 2016).

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beauty, and its importance as a gift. A culture without the arts is a culture lacking in gifts. To measure the benefits of art against the monetary cost of hospitals and nurses' wages is to compare apples with oranges.

Nevertheless, financial considerations of the arts are necessary in a capitalist society of finite resources. And, although there might be a net profit across the creative industries, unnecessary or 'wasteful' expenditure can be identified in specific instances. Since state funding is, in theory at least, funded by everyone within society, such wastage is perhaps most remarked upon there (wastage in corporate expenditure is typically only of concern to shareholders). To return to Manick Govinda's funding debate write-up, he notes that:

Local authorities, Arts Council England, European Commission funds and regeneration strategies were guilty of investing huge public and Lottery funds into spaces such as the £29million firstsite gallery in Colchester. Opened in 2011, firstsite's building devoted more room to the restaurant, education and family friendly spaces than it did galleries for the presentation of artworks. (Govinda, 2013)

Other reasons for the failure of the gallery include the architecture of the building (Moore, 2011), whilst comments in the local Daily Gazette suggests the gallery's high culture styling never resonated with the desires of local people (Brading, 2015b). Whilst it is impossible to settle on the definitive causality for the success or failure of any gift, the fact remains that the gallery was nearly closed down: the Arts Council introduced special funding arrangement and removed the gallery from its National Portfolio, and was only saved when

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Anthony Roberts, the Director of the nearby and more irreverent Colchester Arts Centre was parachuted in to save it.<sup>44</sup>

Although, firstsite could not have been definitively identified as problematic ahead of time, I would argue that it is an expression of something inevitable: that there will be wastage and excess in any system. The prominent theorist on both gift and wastage, Georges Bataille describes such loss as 'The Accursed Share' or 'The Necessity of Losing the Excess Energy that Cannot be Used for a System's Growth' (Bataille, 1988).

Bataille's proposal is that surplus is a key constituent of life; that surplus is what enables life – both in general and in the instance of a specific organism - to grow. When growth is no longer possible, and 'the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically' (p.21). Examples provided by Bataille include the fat on a calf found because 'an organism has at its disposal greater energy resources than are necessary for the operations that sustain life' (p.27); and the war and death that arise as a consequence of a social grouping reaching points of saturation (with human sacrifice amongst the Aztecs being particular interesting for him).

The metaphor that Bataille adopts to make clear his meaning is that of an imaginary bullring, with a vast crowd waiting for a bullfight. Once everyone is seated inside, a pressure remains on the space since there are more people than seats available. Adding more seats might ease some of this pressure, whilst it will

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<sup>44</sup> Roberts' tactics for saving the gallery included, amongst other things, putting a white van up for sale in the gallery's foyer (a van that had been languishing at the back of the building for a while), asking artist Richard Dedomenici to install a crazy golf course in 'the acres of spacious but empty corridors' and inviting local artists to exhibit in the main gallery. (Brading, 2015a)

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be further reduced should some people gain a vantage point by climbing trees and lampposts outside (outcomes that would both see the bullring 'grow').

Developing this part of his metaphor, Bataille writes that '[s]imilarly, the earth first opens to life the primary space of the waters and the surface of the ground. But life quickly takes possession of the air' (1988, p.31). If the pressure continues and more people remain outside than can see the bullfight however, a fight may break out, and the loss of life will then act as an additional means of appeasing the surplus. Once saturation has been reached, Bataille's argument states, new growth will only occur when either new territory is found or as 'compensation for the destructions that are brought about' (p.33) by the very act of living. To adapt Bataille's proposition to the current discussion, in healthy, non-stagnate but stable systems of arts funding, this accursed share, typically seen as 'waste' (cf. firstsite in its initial form), is inexorable.

Amongst the insights she provides in her book on the eponymous link between *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas draws attention to the way in which 'Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements' (p.35). In much the same way, what is thought upon as waste is determined by its status as surplus to that which has value. Like dirt, waste is a manifestation of disorder, and as such is rejected, for it threatens to blemish what is desirable; 'disorder spoils pattern' (p.94).

Douglas goes on to observe that the state of order is a restricted state, it is a state in which, 'from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used' (ibid.). Therefore, by

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being willing to consider a broader system of ordering than that which is normatively presented, to look again at the dirt that we have discarded (the waste) then potential might be found within that disorder. Change comes when disorder is introduced into the established way of doing things; established patterns are reordered only when a degree of dirt, or waste, is reintegrated into them. In such instances, our value system is transformed and what was once thought of as waste is no longer seen as such.

In Chapter 1, Bataille's analysis of the potlatch was mentioned as an example of the return that anthropologists and theorists of the gift often emphasise. To explain the ritual more fully, the potlatch is the system by which certain native North American tribes demonstratively destroy wealth, in the name of gift. This is done in order to both honour a rival and, simultaneously, assert symbolic dominance over them. Once these blankets, animal skins and large copper ornaments have been destroyed, the recipient of the potlatch is then under cultural pressure to perform the same in return, but with even more gratuitous destruction (Bataille, 1997). Through such extravagant demonstrations of 'waste', the group giving the potlatch make gains of power and status. In Bataille's words:

... if he destroys the object in front of another person or if he gives it away, [he is] the one who has actually acquired, in the other's eyes, the power of giving or destroying. He is now rich for having made use of wealth in the manner its essence would require; he is rich for having ostentatiously consumed what is wealth only if it is consumed. (1997, p.203)

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This analysis of the potlatch is useful as a further example of the range of possible understandings of waste. My intention is not to directly compare firstsite and the potlatch (I am certainly not proposing that the gallery should have been ostentatiously destroyed as an assertion of power), but the potlatch does provide insight into how cultural understandings of waste can vary, whilst affirming Bataille's observation that within mature living systems there will always be surplus that has to be 'wasted'.

Of course considerations of finance should not be disregarded and losses, such as were being made at firstsite should not be simply written off; it was right that the gallery was criticised and that significant changes were made in order to save it. Nevertheless, to know that no system will ever be perfectly efficient may diminish some of the scandal and outrage that accompany certain headlines, whilst leaving us alive to the possibility of reordering that which was considered wasteful into something more valuable.

Guy Schaffer proposes a radical rethinking of waste in an unpublished article entitled 'Camp as a Politics of Waste'. In this, Schaffer begins to develop a queer politics of waste, one which sets out to 'animate the ways in which the disposal of waste is never complete, that the boundaries created between waste and the social worlds that produce it are always partial' (nd., p.3). By blurring the boundaries in this way, Schaffer proposes that 'waste can be same and different, self and other, here and there' (p.1). Schaffer critiques more traditional attitudes to waste reduction, noting that attempts to create a zero waste system are often 'centrally designed and controlled, a design choice that can easily lend itself to systems that resist change or outside input' (ibid.). Such lack of responsiveness is

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anathema to a healthy arts system, whilst Shaffer's proposal for queer wastage suggests a more stimulating and innovative attitude in its call for 'a mode of reappropriating and revaluing "trash" [that] still broadcast[s] the "trashiness" of the things it glamorizes' (Schaffer, nd.).

To bring Shaffer's theory into a specifically artistic context, a funding system could be developed in which a proportion of the money is spent on projects whose 'wastefulness' is explicitly acknowledged. The amount of expenditure allocated to such projects would inevitably be controversial and widely debated, but when waste is inevitable, rather than aiming for a zero waste system we should perhaps instead, as Shaffer suggests, 'revel [...] in waste without forgetting its real environmental, social, and personal impacts' (p.5).

A more relaxed attitude towards waste would also allow the mistakes made in firstsite's initial incarnation to be seen as lessons that inform its subsequent development. To vehemently criticise the original expenditure, and to then utilise such criticism in an argument for reducing arts funding overall is to demand that success is always achieved on the first attempt. This will inevitably lead to only the safest choices being made.

Schaffer, in his critique of normative notions of waste management, states that 'in the mindset of zero waste, waste is possible to manage; all outputs are knowable' (p.2), whilst, as Sennett made clear, to blueprint so precisely dooms artistic activity to a stultifying and deadened existence. With this in mind, perhaps the first incarnation of firstsite could be seen as a sketch or a prototype for the more successful later incarnation. Of course, the sums of money involved are a factor, and financial abuse needs to be closely monitored (although there is

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no suggestion of that with firstsite) but the £29 million spent in Colchester does fade into relative insignificance when the estimated figure for uncollected tax in the 2012/13 financial year was £34 billion (BBC, 2014).

### ***Sticky Situations and Proper(ty) Ownership***

As the potlatch demonstrates, even waste, when presented as gift, can positively reinforce the bond between giver and recipient; it demands a future interaction for the reciprocal potlatch. This stickiness is an essential part of all gift action, and the bond made between giver and recipient is central to the critique of the funding mechanism that I am presenting. It is this that means that the funding is not unidirectional; that it is not simply a flow of finance to the funding recipient. Instead, as with all gifts, funding alters the identities of both giver and givee by blurring the porous boundaries between the relevant parties. To return to Sara Ahmed's terminology, in a sticky situation, all identities are sticky – they are formed by all that sticks as the result of the forces and flows that impact upon, affect and shape them.<sup>45</sup> Not all identities are necessarily sticky to the same degree, but something sticks whenever they encounter another. In spite of any pledges of artistic independence that might be made, corporate sponsorship, as with any other kind of funding, alters the fundamental nature of the artwork. It is not something additional, surplus, or 'outside', but becomes an essential element in the artwork's constituting form. Business consultants James H. Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II observe that: 'When a piece of art is placed on

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<sup>45</sup> To avoid presenting an essential core of identity that these elements 'stick' to, it is worth noting that the 'it' that the elements of identity stick to need be nothing more solid or permanent than other, previously 'stuck' elements.

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display in a business, or a performance of art is conducted in a business, the art becomes an object of that business' (2009, p.12).

It is too simplistic and, arguably, naive to suggest that this inherently 'invalidates' an artwork, the context of the specific artwork and sponsor need to be known before such conclusions can be drawn. However, as Rachel Spence notes in a *Financial Times* article on arts funding, when a substantial number of artists make work that, at least in part, offers a critique of society, such interventions into an artwork's identity are potentially very problematic:

[Professor at the Courtauld Institute of Art, Julian] Stallabrass points out that the tension between content and context creates a paradox. "Much avant-garde and contemporary art is actively hostile towards capitalism. If an artist who is critiquing corporate power is presented as part of this branded apparatus, the work is being betrayed quite fundamentally."

(Spence, 2014)

To expand on this, an artwork or performance often adopts an ethical position; it proposes an argument. A conflict therefore arises when the market, integrated into the artwork's identity by a sponsoring corporation, contradicts such a stance. When the primary interest is profit, the blessing becomes an impossibility and morality only comes into play when it might affect a sale.

Sandel writes:

'... market reasoning... empties public life of moral argument. Part of the appeal of markets is that they don't pass judgment on the preferences they satisfy. They don't ask whether some ways of valuing goods are higher, or worthier, than others. If someone is willing to pay for sex or a

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kidney, and a consenting adult is willing to sell, the only question the economist asks is, "How much?" Markets don't wag fingers. They don't discriminate between admirable preferences and base ones.<sup>46</sup> (Sandel, 2012, p.14)

Anamorphosis determines to what degree this potential conflict between artistic and corporate interests invalidates or reduces the status of an artwork. It is impossible to identify a definitive resolution of these issues in the abstract, but in order to think through what is at stake in a specific instance, it is useful to consider the mechanisms by which corporate sponsorship affects the ownership of the artwork, how such funding impacts on the status of the artwork as property.

Noting that property can act as a form of capital, Bourdieu identifies what he calls 'The Objectified State'. This is 'cultural capital objectified in material objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc.' (1986, p.50); it is capital made concrete in the form of cars, the latest mobile phone, a rare copy of a text. To capitalise on the objectified state, it is necessary to own the object, and such Ownership parallels the capitalised form of the Author that *The Horse's Teeth* revealed. Both Authorship and Ownership intersect with a non-capitalising subjectivity, that of the lived experience of the person who actually creates/owns the work and, just as *The Horse's Teeth* drew attention to this 'author', so is there an embodied form of material 'ownership' that is separate from the legal or capitalising states.

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<sup>46</sup> As explained earlier through another reference to Sandel's work, this does not render the market as somehow neutral or without impact, paying for something does change its nature. The point here however is that market economics, at their most elemental, need not incorporate any ethical considerations.

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The cultural capital objectified in material objects and media... is transmissible in its materiality. A collection of paintings, for example, can be transmitted as well as economic capital (if not better, because the capital transfer is more disguised). But what is transmissible is legal ownership and not (or not necessarily) what constitutes the precondition for specific appropriation, namely, the possession of the means of 'consuming' a painting or using a machine, which, being nothing other than embodied capital, are subject to the same laws of transmission [as the embodied form]. (Bourdieu, 1986, p.50)

Someone who has purchased an extensive art collection will be unlikely to harness its cultural capital unless they can appreciate it in a manner judged appropriate, or someone who has the latest iPhone is open to ridicule if they only know how to make telephone calls from it.

To be an author is to be identified as the source of an artwork and, as *The Horse's Teeth* illustrated, is a status that can only be passed on in its capitalising form. If it should be given or sold in this way, then the new owner can later present the work and claim ownership of a portion of the capital associated with it, though they can never truly gain access to the lived experience of making the work.<sup>47</sup> In a similar way, funders can be said to co-Author artworks – the artist gives something of their Authorial status to the funder meaning that, in a tangible sense, the funder then also Owns something of the artwork.

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<sup>47</sup> It could be argued that their lived experience of making a particular showing of the work grants them non-capitalising authorial status, in that they become a part of the work's ongoing narrative, although that is likely to be somewhat insignificant in comparison to the original creation.

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Such refusal to reduce ownership to a singular owning identity is theorised in Margaret Davies' queer theory of property. Framing her work by drawing on Judith Butler, she proposes that queer theory in the broader sense, 'does not "own" any particular conceptual terrain, any more than it is "owned" as a discourse by any group of people' (1999, p.331), whilst queer identity refuses the individualised notions of selfhood that are essential to private property ownership:

If identity is not just personal identity which we each own individually but an identity which is owned and developed in common with others, then it cannot provide a general basis for purely private ownership, because the self always owes its own identity to the community. (p.347)

Davies' queer property shares many characteristics with the ideas of authorship and the theory of gift that are presented in this thesis. It too states that identity boundaries are blurred and that multiple subjectivities have a stake in ownership. In this way, 'something which exceeds conventional oppositions between private and communal, and self and other' (p.347) is enabled, and being owned loses some of the passivity typically associated with such a state: 'we own the object, but it also owns us, in that it limits our behavior' (p.345). A person may bring their identity to bear and affect the authoring of a work, but through such authoring their identity will also be affected.

It is interesting to note that integral to systems of funding is the need for the multiplicity of ownership to be acknowledged. The sponsor, who in many other ways might be firmly entrenched in capitalism, cannot claim sole authorship since to do so would be to disregard the artist, and so must place

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themselves alongside the non-capitalised author and any others responsible for the artwork in order to access the Authoring capital. They neither demand (nor can demand) that authorship is reduced to a singular identity (theirs).

Nevertheless, whilst authorship might be granted permission to be multiple, this is the only challenge to conventional authorship that corporate funding makes.

The funder will still attempt to capitalise on the artwork (and in doing so, encourages all other authoring identities to do the same), whilst the boundary between who owns/has authored the work and who does/has not it is still clearly defined (protection of property rights are enforced).

Funding also acts to influence which artworks will be made. Under contemporary capitalism, artists will not seek funds for projects that they know will not get funded (or to phrase the inverse, only fundable works get made). Funders are only interested in part-Ownership of works that meet specific criteria (usually those concerned with audience reach, and being aligned with the funding body's own priorities) and so those works that meet such criteria are more likely to be made.

Even once made however, the work will only circulate according to conditions determined by those that own them. When it comes to funded works this often means that a work should be shown in as many places as possible, even when this might not be a priority of the creating artist. In this way, funding (like the intellectual property laws of which Coombe writes here), plays:

... a fundamental role in determining what discourses circulate in the public realm and achieve dominance, and how these "languages" are spoken, while providing both enabling conditions and limiting obstacles

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for those who seek to construct identities and compel recognition.

(Coombe, 1993, p.415)

As was noted in the first chapter, one of the ways by which theatre makers make gains in cultural capital is by showing their work in a multitude of places. Whilst I am not proposing that funding systems have instigated this relationship between touring and status, they do endorse such valuation with the logic that under capitalism, valuable work receives funding, and funded work should be seen to tour. The conclusion therefore is that valuable work tours.

By being seen to create/Author/Own that which is valuable, a person or institution gains a particular status in society, their property grants them a claim to propriety. Citing Carol Rose, Davies writes that 'the functions of property as propriety 'is to accord to each person or entity what is "proper" or "appropriate" to him or her' (1999, p.336). Beverley Skeggs develops this idea of 'propertizing' to explain (in a manner reminiscent of Bourdieu's analysis of the interchangeability of capital) 'how some people [or institutions] make investments in their cultural characteristics, which can then be used to realize value in areas (such as the economic)' (2005, p.972). Corporate funders may sponsor the arts because, by becoming stakeholders in particular kinds of property ownership, by propertizing, they gain an appearance of propriety that might otherwise be lacking.

### ***Purchasing Authentic Affect***

Although artists may try to resist such propertizing of their work, given time capital will often find a way of capturing even the most resistant works (and sometimes the artist's own attitude towards capital may change). The rise of

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performance art in the 1970s is often attributed to the desire of artists at the time to engage in creative acts that resisted market valuation, to refuse to produce works for consumption in the art market. Often the work made was too subversive to appeal to commercial interests, whilst the ephemeral nature of what was produced also resisted commodification. Such formal techniques granted an authenticity to the work that was then magnified by presenting high stakes action; what was given in the performance could easily be understood as vastly in excess of the gains made by the work's authors.

Works such as Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971) that saw the artist shot in the arm, and Marina Abramović and Ulay's *Rest Piece* (1980), in which the two artists held an arrow at tension, pointed at Abramović's heart, are granted authenticity by the way in which their bodies were damaged or put at immense risk. In their original context, in which the work could not be readily converted into financial capital, the risk becomes a phenomenon in and of itself; it presents itself as being present only for the artwork. It is not indulged in because these artists wish to make gains, or rather the gains that are made are read as insignificant in comparison to what is given by the artwork. Writing on the blood-letting performances of Franko B, a contemporary artist who has also employed risk and bodily sacrifice in his work, Adrian Heathfield comments on this excessive gifting in his written exchange with Peggy Phelan:

Blood rings alarms, it pushes us away, it calls for distance. But these palms unfurled, these open arms are also saying 'I give this to you', 'this is my gift to you'. He is weeping blood. 'Don't cry', I say, stupidly. But Franko B's blood runs through my instruction like it runs through my fingers. I cannot

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hold it and I cannot give it back. An impossible gift. (Phelan and Heathfield, 2001)

In the years since, these works by Abramović, Ulay and Burden have become identified as key moments in art history, enabling access to significant stores of cultural and financial capital, but – at the time the works were made – such consequences were unknown and, to some, may have felt as probable as an outcome as the artists' deaths. These works were not sponsored at the time they were made, as noted, they were part of an artistic movement that consciously resisted the market, but, in the time since, the documentation of these landmark acts will almost certainly have been shown in galleries that are supported in this way, granting a share of their authenticity to the sponsoring corporations (although this is not to say that that the work's original force is necessarily denied in its entirety).

To reiterate, the success or failure of such corporate tactics depends on the anamorphic perception of those encountering the sponsored artwork. If corporate gains are seen to outweigh the generosity of the funding awarded (perhaps by being overzealous with their branding), then the corporation will be refused its status as co-author of the work. Instead, it will be seen as purchasing a particular kind of advertising rather than magnanimously supporting the arts. Sponsorship has to be seen as a reciprocal relationship, one in which the sponsor funds the art and then sees its support acknowledged (it is thanked), whilst advertising is a market transaction based on exchange in which cultural output is purchased for a price.

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To access the authenticity of performance in a market-friendly manner is, from the sponsor's perspective, part of the appeal of bringing their identity into relationship with a performance or artwork. By keeping themselves one step removed by sponsoring the work, rather than buying it as an advert, the integrity of the artwork is not ruptured as would be the case if they were to commission an artist to make a performance directly for them.

As an example of how such a rupture can occur, in 2014 a much more commercially minded Marina Abramović made an advert for Adidas, a reworking of her 1978 work *Work/Relation*, that led Artnet to refuse it the status of an artwork '... let's call a spade a spade: this is a sneaker commercial' (Cascone, 2014). The rest of Cascone's article is even more disparaging. She writes that 'working with a corporate brand like Adidas seems a bridge too far', describes the performers as 'poor fools... [who are] forced to participate in this thankless exercise all in the name of Adidas' and, whilst reflecting on Abramović's early career, wonders 'what that younger woman would think of her older self cannibalizing her oeuvre to sell sportswear' (ibid.).<sup>48</sup>

By allowing a performance to maintain the frame of its identity as an artwork, sponsors can tap into forms of cultural capital that they cannot access in a solely commercial relationship. It allows them to associate with something of the blessing. Bourdieu writes that whilst 'there are some goods and services to which economic capital gives immediate access' (1986, p.53), he also notes that

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<sup>48</sup> It seems likely that Cascone would concur with Bill Hicks' blunt analysis of those who make adverts:  
"Here's the deal folks. You do a commercial, you're off the artistic roll call forever. End of story. You're another fucking corporate shill, you're another whore at the capitalist gang-bang. Everything you say is suspect." (Bill Hicks, in Sinclair, 2013)

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others cannot be so readily accessed. As an example, Bourdieu talks of 'a social capital of relationships' (the personal connection that an individual might have with a specific group of people, often with particular powers, to whom a relationship cannot simply be bought), but the powerlessness of economic capital to gain access to the Illichian blessing is equally marked; the blessing – at its core – refuses it.

This refusal, the way in which the blessing is destroyed if purchased, makes it incredibly appealing to the capitalist; its scarcity in the marketplace makes the market place immense value upon it. This appeal to sponsors of art has led to the development of an intricate system in which the blessing is converted into cultural capital and then, by corporate sleight of hand, is converted to finance at a later date.

Appearance is essential to this system. Although the cultural value of an institution or performance may exclude it from purchase by financial capital, it is only necessary for the wider public to anamorphically perceive that no purchase has been made. The blessing is to be found in its *apparent* exclusion of economy; if a purchase is made but is sufficiently well hidden, then the blessing will remain. At the time of writing, the scale of the problem is still to be conclusively resolved, but a series of arrests and investigations into FIFA in 2015 cast 'doubt over [FIFA's] transparency and honesty for the process of allocating World Cup tournaments, electing its president, and the administration of funds' (BBC, 2015a). Such scandal demonstrates that, as long as it remains undiscovered, it is possible for the blessing - in this case a host nation's joy at holding the football

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World Cup - to be sold; the corruption just needs to be hidden from the majority of those encountering it.

Appearance's potential for deception suggests another reason why authenticity has a particular resonance with contemporary capitalism. Carol Martin writes in the introduction to her monograph on *Theatre of the Real*:

With the unprecedented growth of virtual entertainment and personal communication technology, our ubiquitous cultural experience of the real results from both live and virtual performances of the self and others in a variety of media. Facebook, YouTube, and reality TV serve as personal performance vehicles. (Martin, 2013, p.5)

As she continues, 'What we understand as the 'really real' has its own continuum that includes the unmediated, the replicated, the staged, the reconstructed, and also, sometimes, the simulated' (p.15). Through new media, the self is (re)produced in a multitude of locations, with each reproduction making more obscure the possibility of locating an 'original self'. Simultaneously, digital reproduction of all forms presents a heightened manifestation of the issues Benjamin raises in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008); when so much can be so easily reproduced (and with increased adoption of 3D printing, this is only likely to get easier), the 'aura' of the original that Benjamin identifies grows more distant. This being the case, the desire for authentic encounters that goes some way to countering the hyperreality of life amongst the digital revolution is understandable.

In addition, as market-led capitalism has matured and consumers have become more aware of the profit-orientated priorities of corporations, they have

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grown more suspicious of corporate motivations. Consumers no longer necessarily accept things on the basis of appearance; the criteria against which corporations are assessed as beneficent have grown stricter. As this has happened, the consumer experience of the sale has become as important, if not more so, than the materiality of what is being bought (cf. Gilmore and Pine, 1999). In particular, the gift has been deliberately woven into financial transactions in order to minimise any suspicion that capitalism might be mercenary.

For instance, Arlie Russell Hochschild, in her analysis of the work and training of airline hosts and hostesses, identifies a form of work that she identifies as emotional labour - 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' (1983, p.7) – in which workers are trained to feel particular emotional states in order to develop desirable relationships with consumers.<sup>49</sup> Observing that a shift towards such labour was taking place in the workplace more broadly,<sup>50</sup> Hochschild notes that consumers were, in turn, developing 'a practical knowledge of the commercial takeover of the signal function of feeling' and so, when encountering emotional labour, would compensate:

All of us who know the commercialization of human feeling at one remove - as witness, consumer, or critic - have become adept at recognizing and discounting commercialized feeling: "Oh, they have to be friendly, that's

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<sup>49</sup> And not just consumers. Hochschild notes that whilst emotional *labour* will take place in commercial environments, emotional *work* will also take place outside the marketplace, in private contexts as well: 'The party guest summons up a gaiety owed to the host, the mourner summons up a proper sadness for a funeral' (1983, p.18).

<sup>50</sup> A shift taking place at the time of her writing, some thirty years ago. It seems likely that the practice is even more commonplace today.

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their job." This enables us to ferret out *the remaining gestures of a private gift exchange*: "Now *that* smile she really meant just for me." We subtract the commercial motive and collect the personal remainders matter-of-factly, almost automatically, so ordinary has the commercialization of human feeling become. (p.190. my emphasis)

Although she doesn't use the terminology of the gift, it is clear that Hochschild is writing about excess; the generosity in that which the consumer identifies as the 'human feeling' has to be in surplus to the corporate return, the 'commercial motive'.

Smiling at someone, gladly marking someone's arrival with a pleasant greeting, the simple contentment that accompanies an agreeable encounter with another, these, I would argue, are further examples of that which should not be exploited in an economic transaction, they are phenomena to which Sandel's corruption objection can be applied. Nevertheless, contemporary capitalism does look to take full advantage of them through a complex and well-organised system. Hochschild writes:

... perhaps it does take a capitalist sort of incentive system to connect emotional labor to competition and to go so far as to actually advertise a "sincere" smile, train workers to produce such a smile, supervise their production of it, and then forge a link between this activity and corporate profit. (p.186)

Whilst sincerity is often also important in the arts, a different kind of affective marketplace can be seen to operate in the instance of funding. Rather than purchasing the emotional labour of the worker, in these instances the

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corporation is buying into the emotional response of the audience or viewer of the work. The work is of interest to the corporation because of the response it generates, the work itself can be disregarded.

To identify emotional response as a commodity to be capitalised on is described by Beverley Skeggs as 'affect stripping'. In her analysis of how certain forms of authenticity normally associated with working-class culture are repackaged as marketing strategies to the middle class, the manner by which 'masculine dirt, sexuality and alienation have long been used to sell music' (2005, p.971) she defines affect stripping as 'a process whereby affects are detached from the body of production and re-made as an exchange-value when re-attached to the body that does not produce the same affect but can capitalize upon it' (ibid.).<sup>51</sup> Although Skeggs' focus is on the repackaging of working class experience, the same principle can be applied in the current analysis. Authentic middle-class experience, in the form of theatre and visual art, is repackaged as marketing for the sponsor.

This emphasis on the authentic is, along with the experience economy, central to much current thinking on good business practice, with key texts on both authored by the aforementioned Gilmore and Pine.<sup>52</sup> In a report that acts as something of a how-to guide for injecting authenticity into business, they identify

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<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, Skeggs draws attention to the manner by which only certain kinds of authenticity are appropriate to be repackaged; 'the feminine, artifice, vulgarity and the frivolous must be expelled' (p.971) in the repackaging process, whilst 'white trash cultures that signify too authentic and too primitive (or too noisy and too sexual) can be put to work as a source of realistic and fantastical menace to the middle class, as the 'Chav' and 'hen party menace' demonstrate' (p.970); whilst 'white trash' can be presented as 'menace', it cannot be usefully repurposed as marketing tools.

<sup>52</sup> Gilmore and Pine propose that "rendering authenticity' will one day roll as easily off the tongue among executives and managers as 'controlling costs' and 'improving quality'... When consumers want what's real, the management of the customer perception of authenticity becomes the primary new source of competitive advantage' (2009, p.5).

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authenticity as that which is natural, original, exceptionally well executed, refers to another context or is influential on other entities (2009, p.5). They explain the importance of these qualities because, in a 'world increasingly filled with deliberately and sensationally staged experiences, consumers choose to buy or not buy based on how real they perceive an offering to be' (p.4).

Having created this list of characteristics that encourage the perception of authenticity amongst consumers (which, though not specific to art, bears close correlation to much artistic activity), they then propose a methodology for successful incorporation of the artistic 'product' into the corporate entity:

This above all: the art cannot be seen as being created solely, or even primarily, for the purpose of making a sale to adoring fans (even if such is the exclusive reason for production); the art must be for its own sake.  
(p.25)

Gilmore and Pine's only concern for the fragility of the Illichian blessing is that it is maintained whilst surreptitiously being capitalised on; the corporate brand is prioritised over the artwork, and appearances are of utmost importance. The tactics they propose are fundamentally deceitful. Whilst those encountering the sponsored artwork might believe that it is authentic, Gilmore and Pine acknowledge that 'nothing from businesses is really authentic. *Everything is artificial, manmade, fake*' (2007, p.87. original emphasis).

It is also telling, if unsurprising considering their market-led approach, that throughout their text, the only motivation for artists that Gilmore and Pine acknowledge is payment. They acknowledge that it is important that corporations examine the motivations 'behind your support of art, [for by]

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declaring these motivations, the less you will need to find art and artists to support and the more you will be sought out by artists with whom these motivations resonate' (2009, p.33), but other motivations of artists for making work – to engage in dialogue, to facilitate social change, to actively participate in society – are never considered.

### ***Institutional Identity***

Alongside the desire for authenticity and proximity to the blessing, the corporate sponsor will – in selecting whom to fund - have commercial considerations around the visibility, reach and public appeal of the sponsored artwork. For this reason, it will more often be festivals or institutions that are the targets for sponsorship than individual artists or performances. This being the case, sponsorship from the perspective of the institution will now be considered, with a particular focus on how art institutions operate within sponsorship arrangements.

Whilst an institution, by definition, has a recognisable identity (otherwise it would be unrecognisable as an institution) and it is this that the corporation looks to buy into with their sponsorship, there are a number of distinct parties, individuals and smaller groups that inform this identity (artists, board members, staff, the public, etc.). Each of these stakeholders will adopt a specific attitude; both inwards, towards the institution, and outwards, as the institution, and each of these positions will include a unique set of understandings, priorities and responsibilities for the institution's current state and direction. In some ways, the group psychology of the institution and its intersection with the individuals that constitute it is resonant with the differences between the group / individual

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perspective of the audience at a performance (cf. Chapter 2). Each individual has an anamorphically distinct perspective within the institution, which is then incorporated, and to a degree overlooked, when the institutional perspective as a whole is considered.

It is important not to overstate the similarities between audience and institutional psychology however – institutions exist in a different timescale to audiences, are more bureaucratic and formalised in their actions, and are typically hierarchical in nature. However, what is true of both institutions and audiences (as it is true of all groups) is that on receiving a gift all the individuals within the group adopt the identity that the gift imposes on them. If there should be different attitudes to the gift amongst individuals within the group then these are either disregarded or will cause conflict between the various interests and desires within the group as to whether the gift should be accepted. Bourdieu notes that there will often be ‘a single agent or a small group of agents’ (a plenipotentiary) that is charged with the responsibility to avoid such instability; they ‘...represent the group, [...] speak and act in its name and so, with the aid of this collectively owned capital, [...] exercise a power incommensurate with the individual’s personal contribution’ (1986, p.53).

Just as the performance works that an individual artist produces (their performance gifts) are contextualised by that which Melrose identifies as their artist signature (see Chapter 1), so is the specific quality of the gifts made by a sponsor informed by the sponsor’s history and background. The decision on whether this is problematic or not (as well as whether appropriate levels of funds are being donated) is the plenipotentiary’s (it will not normally be put out

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for consultation to all stakeholders) and, once the decision has been made, it is the plenipotentiary that tell the other stakeholders what is ethically correct and commercially necessary. They tell the rest of the institution what they should feel about the decision; that they should be grateful, that without the sponsorship the institution could not function and that the identities of the institution and the sponsor correlate comfortably (that the sponsorship deal is not a corruption of the institution's reputation.) Although such sentiments will often be explicitly encouraged through a statement announcing the deal, this need not always be the case. It is also expected that the plenipotentiary's own actions will define the appropriate affective response simply by example. As Hochschild states:

Authority carries with it a certain mandate over feeling rules. A parent may show a child how much fear to feel about the new bull terrier on the block. An English literature professor may suggest to students how strongly they should feel about Rilke's first Duino Elegy. A supervisor may comment on a cheer worn thin in a secretary's "Here's your correspondence, sir." It is mainly the authorities who are the keepers of feeling rules. (Hochschild, 1983, p.75)

Nevertheless, if the plenipotentiary should push the implicit command to feel a certain way too far, then the unified state of the institutional identity can break and other stakeholders will make a challenge, other voices from within the institution will make themselves heard and sometimes the plenipotentiary reverse their decision. This can be seen in a number of contexts around the world in recent years. In her *Financial Times* article, Rachel Spence acknowledges some such campaigns:

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... the São Paulo Biennial dropped the logo of the Israeli Embassy after artists and curators complained. A week earlier, the Gwangju Biennale's president resigned and various artists withdrew after its financial backer, the city's government, censored a work. Both Manifesta in Russia and the Sydney Biennale have been hit by boycotts. Frieze Art Fair in New York ran into trouble for using non-unionised labour, and the organisation has now agreed to employ only unionised workers next year. (2014)

Broadening the term 'corruption' to mean more than just illicit or illegal acts, Sandel proposes that: 'To corrupt a good or a social practice is to degrade it, to treat it to a lower mode of valuation than is appropriate to it' (2012, p.34).

Whilst the specific reasons for the various campaigns that are making these challenges are varied and complex, all can be seen to be a reaction to the perceived corruption of the blessings and the cultural capital within the artworks that the stakeholders' identify with.

Of particular contemporary concern, particularly in the UK, is the current sponsorship of art institutions by oil companies. Perhaps the most prominent target of this has been the Tate galleries, in part because the current Chair of the Tate's Board of Trustees (Lord Browne) was previously also Chief Executive of BP (Tate, nd). In a context where there is much critique of 'green-washing' and the way by which such sponsorship grants these companies a 'social license to operate' (Platform, 2011), it is often argued that the Tate is being utilised to shift the public's perception of BP, making their identity less about the damage caused by disasters such as 2010's Deepwater Horizon oil spill and climate change more

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broadly, and more one in which they are seen with propriety as kind sponsors of art.

### ***Challenges and Actions - The Gifts that Liberated Tate***

The material presence of a sponsor within an artwork will normally be achieved by inserting its logo into the exhibition / performance space and publicity materials. As a distilled form of a company's identity, its logo is of key importance; as the activist group Liberate Tate poetically describes it: 'the mark [of its logo] helps BP to seep into the fabric of the building, its organs, into the visitor's personal experience and out into the world as benign' (2015, p.5). This being the case, logos present a ready target for those who wish to voice their dissatisfaction with a sponsorship arrangement. If the logo is disallowed, made alien, and identified as something that does not belong in the institution, then the sponsor's status as co-author will be denied and the blurring of identities between sponsor and institution diminished.

In 2011, *Reverend Billy and the Church of Earthalujah*, a secular gospel choir and activist group, attempted exactly such an expulsion when they conducted an 'exorcism' of BP from the Tate Modern (Talen, 2011). After an evangelical sermon, "British Petroleum... destroyer of the Gulf of Mexico and so much else... the tar sands of Alberta, Canada... so much else around the world... CANNOT be sponsoring the Miró exhibit...", Billy Talen, the charismatic preacher and leader of the group was then 'anointed' with oil-like molasses whilst calling out that 'BP money is the devil'. With a full gospel chorus accompanying him, he approached an advertising hoarding and defaced the BP logo by smearing his molasses covered suit, hair and body over it. The bold humour and charisma of

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the piece invited reflection on the sponsorship arrangement (Vidal, 2011), it acted to bring members of the public in whilst casting BP out, and by staining the logo with the molasses went some way to breaking the wholesome evocations normally found in the green and yellow starburst that is the BP logo, bringing home the reality that oil is a dirty, sticky black ooze, nothing like the sunbeams suggested by the logo.

Another activist group addressing oil sponsorship are *BP or not BP*, a theatre troupe of 'actorvists' that make unauthorised 'guerrilla Shakespeare' interventions (in iambic pentameter) into BP sponsored events and institutions. Again, the BP logo itself is often the target; the group's own logo is a bastardised version of BP's (in which the green and yellow sunburst melt into a monochromatic oily splodge) whilst a recurring motif in their work is a call to the audience to rip the BP logo out of their programmes with a cry of 'Out, damned logo!'.

Whilst oil sponsorship of cultural institutions does continue, *BP or not BP*, working with other members of the *Art Not Oil* coalition<sup>53</sup> - who collectively 'believe that oil company logos represent a stain on our cultural institutions' (Art Not Oil, nd.) - have made significant steps towards their goal of breaking the link between oil sponsorship and the arts. At the time of writing, the situation is such that in March 2016, BP announced that, after 26 years, their sponsorship deal with Tate will cease in 2017, whilst other successes for the activists included the conclusion of the Southbank Centre's relationship with Shell (Art Not Oil, 2014),

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<sup>53</sup> Liberate Tate, PCS Culture Sector, Platform, Rising Tide, Shell Out Sounds, UK Tar Sands network.

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the Science Museum's decision to also end its deal with Shell (Vaughan, 2015),<sup>54</sup> and the Royal Shakespeare Company's statement that, beyond the World Shakespeare Festival (which concluded in 2014), they have no plans to work with BP (Jupp, 2012).

To counter these activist successes, in July 2016 BP announced a five-year sponsorship plan of the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Opera House and (in an about-face of the RSC's earlier announcement), the Royal Shakespeare Company.<sup>55</sup> Whilst this announcement showed a 25% reduction in the 5-year sponsorship spend that BP announced in 2011 (Brown, 2016a) suggesting that BP are less confident in such a strategy, the activists that constitute *Art not Oil* have pledged to continue making interventions in arts centres around the UK, giving talks and bringing indigenous activists to the UK from some of the areas most affected by oil drilling.

There are voices that are critical of the actions of the *Art not Oil* coalition and others like them, most commonly making the argument that dirty money has always been close to the arts, and that in times of austerity, the arts need money from wherever they can get it (Jenkins, 2010). Such arguments hold less weight since a 2014 freedom of information request revealed that BP only contributed an average of 0.5% of Tate's annual budget between 1990 and 2006 (Platform, 2015, p.1).<sup>56</sup> On occasions, it will be claimed that such campaigns against oil sponsorship or other controversial sponsors have no impact, and that the public

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<sup>54</sup> Although their relationship with BP continues.

<sup>55</sup> It is worth noting that this is an area in which significant change happens very quickly, and any attempt to report it will soon be out of date.

<sup>56</sup> In July 2016, an information tribunal ruled that Tate Britain should also release figures for 2007 to 2011 (Brown, 2016b).

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are fundamentally uninterested (Editorial, 2014). Nevertheless, there are significant numbers of artists, activists and other interested parties, that welcome and encourage these actions, that encounter them as saturated phenomena, that receive them as successful gifts.

As was previously observed, there is a link between cultural capital and the saturated phenomenon. Those whose anamorphic encounter with the phenomenon experience it as saturated will also grant cultural capital to those that are close to the phenomenon, that are witness to or are an active part of it (for these people are a part of the phenomenon, and it is a part of them; it becomes a story that they tell). Alongside the desire to implement political change, this desire to be a part of the story can encourage people to act, and it is interesting to note the intelligence of the tactics used by the activist groups to encourage this.

The recent Fossil Funds Free pledge, made by over 300 artists, organisations and culture lovers states that:

We do not take any oil, coal, or gas corporate sponsorship for our cultural work. We call on our peers and institutional partners to refuse fossil fuel funding too. (Fossil Funds Free, 2015)

All artists and organisations that sign up to the pledge are asked to display the *Fossil Funds Free* logo, a badge that announces the commitment to the scheme, that brings the pledge into their work in exactly the same way as the BP logo brings their corporate identity inside the work that they sponsor.

For the majority of those pledging (viewable as a list on the project's website), there is a minimal chance that they would be offered funding by Big Oil.

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Most lack sufficient public reach or cultural capital to be desirable to an oil company, and several have already made a very public statement against the oil industry (activist groups such as the *Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination* and the groups of the *Art not Oil* coalition have all made the commitment).

Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent lack of practical function, the pledge is still efficacious – it brings a focus, it demonstrates and generates cultural capital (in parts, the list of pledgers reads like a ‘who’s who’ of arts activism) and through its use of a logo, makes a direct intervention into the symbolic economy in which BP and other controversial sponsors operate.

One of the groups that instigated the *Fossil Funds Free* pledge, and a long-standing member of the *Art not Oil* coalition is *Liberate Tate*. Formed in 2010, the group came together in a workshop on art-activism that John Jordan of the *Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination* was leading at the Tate Modern. Prior to the workshop, Jordan had been informed by the Tate’s curator that ‘we cannot host any activism directed against Tate and its sponsors’ (Jordan, 2010), and so, after he shared this message with the group in the workshop, they decided to respond by doing exactly that.<sup>57</sup> The workshop culminated in an action that saw three-foot high letters spell out ‘Art Not Oil’ in Tate’s uppermost windows, and a pledge was made for the group to continue to work together under the name of *Liberate Tate*.

Over the years, the group has grown in size to make a series of illicit, but very public, interventions into the Tate – from freely downloadable audio tours

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<sup>57</sup> They enacted the funding principle discussed previously; that the work made should disregard reciprocation towards the funder (or in this instance, the host).

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to a number of highly visible performance actions within the space of the gallery (including at private BP parties hosted in the Tate). Throughout, they have shown a high regard for aesthetics: the presentation of their performance work, the vernacular of the writing used to describe it, and the contextual references to activist intervention and fine art histories that they utilize allows their protests to sit comfortably as art works alongside the art that Tate more deliberately presents. As they note in a *Performance Research* article introducing their work:

Freedom of information requests to Tate have made us aware of the institutional response to our work, which has caused much discussion at board level. Tate has kept a detailed record of all our performances and their coverage in international media, doing the work of documenting our practice for us and also revealing the concerns held around the impact we have. (Liberate Tate, 2012a, p.138)

In many ways, their work can be understood as a series of gifts to Tate - they meet the institution on its terms, using its language, and ask it to accept the identity that each gift proposes. They do not present an assault on the gallery system as a whole. There is – amidst the determined criticism of BP - something deeply respectful in Liberate Tate's attitude towards Tate; they retweet articles praising the Tate Modern's new director [*Guardian*, 2016] and offer congratulations to new board members on taking up their post (Liberate Tate, 2016). They do not allow themselves to be written off as nihilists or blindly hostile antagonists.

Whilst they have not articulated their position in her terms, Liberate Tate's attitude to the Tate can be conceptualised using Chantal Mouffe's theory

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around agonism. To use Mouffe's terminology, Liberate Tate are adversaries to the Tate, not its enemy. She explains what such opposition is by saying that:

... the central category of democratic politics is the category of the 'adversary', the opponent with whom one shares a common allegiance to the democratic principles of 'liberty and equality for all', while disagreeing about their interpretation. Adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation of the principles to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy of their opponent's right to fight for the victory of their position. (Mouffe, 2013, p.7)

Mouffe's distinction arises from her work on the inevitability of conflict within societal structures. Deriving this belief from observations that society is 'permeated by contingency and any order is... always the expression of power relations' and that there is 'a form of negativity that cannot be overcome dialectically' (p.xi), Mouffe's position is that the work of establishing a society of 'consensus without exclusion' should be abandoned, with ways of managing conflict providing a more appropriate goal to work towards. Therefore, she proposes that rather than being 'antagonistic', which risks leading 'to the destruction of the political association', opposition should be 'agonistic', a form of 'conflictual consensus - [in which those involved] agree about the ethico-political principles which organize their political association but disagree about the interpretation of these principles' (p.138).

Liberate Tate are not proposing that the Tate should be boycotted by those stakeholders that disagree with the oil sponsorship, the millions of visitors that constitute a significant part of its identity, the visitors that will inevitably

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include members of Liberate Tate itself: 'What is at stake is not any 'withering away' of the... variety of institutions through which pluralism is organized' (p.75). Instead, they are proposing a transformation of the existing institution into something more accommodating of social and environmental justice, a transformation that will see it move towards becoming 'a vehicle for the expression of the manifold of democratic demands which would extend the principle of equality to as many social relations as possible' (ibid.).

In the specific instance of Liberate Tate, these tactics did prove eventually successful, the relationship between BP and Tate has been dissolved; a small but not insignificant victory in the green movement's fight against fossil fuel reliance and climate change. They made a total of 19 interventions over a period of nearly 4 years before the sponsorship deal with BP was concluded, and it is apparent that the pressure was building for some time before the actual end of the deal in March 2016 (Khomami, 2016) . As was noted by the group Platform as early as 2012, a Tate internal rebrand saw 'The Oil Tanks', a space dedicated to performance work since launched by the Tate, renamed as simply 'The Tanks'. (Platform, 2012)

As an example of both the collective's respectful concern and their uncompromising direct action, an action entitled *The Gift* is, in many ways, typical. A performance intervention made in July 2012, it saw the collective install 'a 16.5 metre, one and a half tonne wind turbine blade in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall' (Liberate Tate, 2012b). As a sculptural form, there is a keen sense of aesthetics to the slim elegance of the turbine blade itself, and a site-specified poetics identifiable in its installation (in a sense, its return) to the space that used

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to hold the massive generator when the gallery was Bankside Power Station. As a forbidden intervention, an unwanted intrusion that literally claims space back from the Bourdieusian plenipotentiary for a broader group of Tate 'owners', it makes concrete Liberate Tate's mission, albeit with unfailing politeness towards the security guards blocking their path from the black clad activists - 'It's quite heavy, watch your toes' (Vice, 2012). Amidst the politeness however, there is determined force, a sense of controlled violence in the pushes past the security that are necessary for the success of this kind of challenge; as another member of the collective tells a security guard who lies down in the path of the blade: "It is happening - it is happening. It's an art project." (ibid.)

Its legal status as a gift is also interesting. Offered to Tate under the provisions of the Museums and Galleries Act 1992, the Trustees were obliged to debate whether to accept the sculpture into their permanent collection or not. Through this debate, the activists brought their criticism to the highest level of the organization (directly to the plenipotentiary), who then had to decide whether to accept the gift, and all that this signified in terms of their identity, or to actively refuse it, which had no less significance in defining their status and priorities as an organization. To a degree they were offered a choice between the gift of BP sponsorship and *The Gift* from Liberate Tate. By offering their gift through such formally legitimate channels, Liberate Tate ensured that their gift was of equal status with BP's and that official records would need to be taken. The Tate trustees were forced to act with more than just contemporary eyes upon them, it was clear that future historians would reflect on the inevitable testament to their identity and ethical position that their decision would entail.

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Nevertheless, at least in this specific instance, the trustees decided to refuse the gift. In a letter from director of Tate, Nicholas Serota, it was stated that 'In line with the current strategy, commitments and priorities for the Collection and the size of the object in relations to existing pressures on collection care — the offer of *The Gift* is declined' (Miliard, 2012). This refusal to accept Liberate Tate's offering (and thus the identity that the activists wished for the Tate) continued beyond the specific instance of *The Gift*. Even when the cessation of the sponsorship arrangement had been announced, the role of Liberate Tate in determining this was denied. Instead, Tate continued to express gratitude for the gifts they had received from BP, identifying them as 'an outstanding example of patronage and collaboration over nearly 30 years' (Clark, 2016).

How funding is presented is of prime importance in maintaining the integrity of cultural capital. Writing on the university system, and how honorary degrees will sometimes be bestowed on philanthropic beneficiaries, Sandel proposes a hypothetical situation:

Suppose the citation at commencement read: "We confer honorary degrees upon distinguished scientists and artists for their achievements. But we award you this degree in thanks for the \$10 million you gave us to build a new library." Such an award would scarcely count as an honorary degree. Of course, citations are never written that way. They speak of public service, philanthropic commitment, and dedication to the university's mission – an honorific vocabulary that blurs the distinction between an honorary degree and a bought one. (Sandel, 2012, p.108)

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The relationship between BP and Tate also had to be discussed in very specific language. For BP to admit that they broke off their funding because of the negative attention generated by the actions of Liberate Tate would imply that positive attention instigated their original funding decision, and such motivations act to substantially diminish the gifts that they wish to make. To avoid this, BP stated that their 'decision wasn't influenced by [the activism]. It was a business decision' which 'reflects the extremely challenging business environment in which we are operating' (Clark, 2016).

### ***Funding Blueprints***

Whether controversial or not, the vast majority of funding systems currently operating in the UK ask that the proposed artwork be well articulated beforehand (or will prioritise those projects with a defined outcome over those that are more expansive or research orientated). The only exceptions are typically when an artist has very substantial stores of pre-existing cultural capital arising from their previous work, their education and their identity more broadly. In these rare instances, the pre-existing capital can be used to access the resources of a funder that trusts that they will 'produce the goods'. Aside from these instances, there are few opportunities for artists to access funding for anything other than a project clearly defined ahead of time.

In a system where there is increasing emphasis on specified outcomes and the economic benefits of the arts, more subtle and less quantifiable aspects of the work made might be missed. Frank Cottrell-Boyce, writer of the 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, observed in 2013 that the then:

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'[c]ulture secretary Maria Miller has in recent months suggested that there should be some criteria for measuring the "worth" of culture. She described British culture as "a commodity worth buying into". The trouble is, culture can be an enormously powerful vehicle for change, but it's a vehicle with no steering wheel. It's unpredictable.

You could easily argue that the Beatles played a crucial role in the winning of the cold war. But Lennon and McCartney never did a PowerPoint presentation with an extensive list of the aims and objectives. (Cottrell Boyce, 2013)

Such unpredictability is integral to the gift of theatre, it cannot be calculated or known ahead of time. When funding proposals demand that a work is articulated clearly and with precision ahead of time, they diminish what the work could be. They refuse its possibility to be a blessing. Illich writes that the reward from the blessing cannot be anticipated, that it is found in 'the rediscovery of the present as it moves out of the future's shadow' (Illich, 1988). As was argued in Chapter Two, when the gift is demarcated before it is given, when it 'delimits itself' (Derrida, 1992, p.91) it disallows the possibility for excess, and when it looks to transmit 'information' it becomes a tool for 'business or power' (Lyotard, 1984, p.86). In the most fundamental sense it diminishes its ability to function as a gift. The blessing spurns conventional economic thinking and normative ideas of progress, it is 'the non-economic boon which surprises us when hope in development fades' (Illich, 1988).

It is this disavowal of the need to develop that is key to the funding argument I am proposing. This is not to say that development will cease – it is

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most likely inevitable in some form or another. Rather, the argument I am making is that it is not something to be aimed for. Current systems, and the direction in which they are changing, mean that there's a risk of stifling the creative process in a manner akin to the blueprinting discussed in Chapter 2. 'Strategic' funding, whether by a corporation, the state, or a philanthropic individual does, by its very nature, have an eye on the financial, social or reputational gains which the funder might make.

Finite funds do of course need to be distributed with an eye to what will be produced by artists; I am not arguing for free distribution of the Arts Council budget to anyone that asks for it. However, the current emphasis on strategic gains, whilst apparently insignificant, does nevertheless create subtle change in what is made – it is not the same art as would be made without such additional criteria. Just as sponsorship alters how an artwork is experienced, so do these criteria alter how artworks are made.

Sometimes, this change can be positive. Well-thought out and carefully run schemes that address imbalances in the ecology of cultural capital do have a place in the art world – of course they do. But when it comes to funding artwork, many of the criteria imposed on artists that define 'success' (sometimes by the artists themselves) have negative impact, and alter what's made for the worse. Such change, Illich describes as 'disvalue'. Developed alongside his concept of the blessing, Illich uses disvalue to describe what is lost through the activity that destroys the blessing, a loss "that cannot be gauged in economic terms" (1992, p.44). It is a term that acts to challenge conventional notions of valuation and progress; disvalue is 'the wasting of commons and culture with the result that

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traditional labor is voided of its power to generate subsistence' (p.76). Giving the example of the domination of the car, the way by which 'vehicles have established a radical monopoly over locomotion', he notes that there is no way by which the economist can 'gauge the experience of the person who loses the effective use of his feet' (ibid.) with the changes in perception and capacity such loss implies.

When funding looks beyond the art that it is funding, when it is about more than enabling the successful gift, the increase in disvalue is marked, even if an economist is unable to quantify what is lost. This can be seen every time an artist develops a project and feels they need to shoehorn engagement with a disadvantaged or minority community in order to increase their chances of securing Arts Council funding. Or each time a young theatre company surrenders to the belief that getting a particular organisation's logo on the flyer for their show somehow makes their work better. Or when festivals insert the nationality of the artists that are performing there next to their name, as if to suggest that this increases the global import of the work shown.<sup>58</sup>

Without wishing to argue for a utopian idyll in which all forms of capital are meaningless,<sup>59</sup> a shift away from the emphasis on capital gain does seem necessary. Investing (energy as well as finance) without any obvious return may

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<sup>58</sup> In a Facebook post, artist Brian Lobel addresses some of the political implications of this habit by writing: 'Now more than ever (although it's never not been the case), borders are real, horrifyingly impervious things, and I think we could all think more critically about what it means to identify ourselves - and the work we create - with a relatively-unremarked-upon (USA/UK) (or the like)' (Lobel, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Bourdieu notes that capital is necessary for a society of varied existences than does not rely solely on chance for their formation. It ensures that the social world is not 'reduced to a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles' and is that which 'makes the games of society - not least, the economic game - something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle' (1986, p.46).

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feel like 'wastage', but from another perspective, this wastage is, in fact, excess, the same excess that constitutes the saturated phenomenon. Such wastage is an inevitable accompaniment to the successful gifts that will be found in a vibrant arts ecology, a vibrant society.

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#### **Conclusion**

Gift, in both the context of theatre and more broadly, is complex, contextual and multi-faceted. To position it as somehow inherently opposed to economy and capital is misguided, for not only are both present in a market transaction, but the gift can also be a means of asserting power and privilege, a way of accessing propriety when none would otherwise be due. To avoid a polarised, 'Gift is good, finance is bad' polarity, it is also worth noting that the anonymity of currency can be beneficial in its ability to allow a transaction to stand independently, to avoid the need for an ongoing reciprocal relationship. In a complex, globally orientated world, if an ongoing bond had to be formed with everyone we did business with, it would soon get tiring.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, whilst not existing entirely outside of capitalist systems, both the gift and the theatre sit uneasily in relation to capital. The Illichian blessing can be found within them, and Sandel's corruption and fairness objections demonstrate the negative effects when such blessings are purchased for a price. Gifts of sponsorship and funding enable corporate access to authenticity and generate positive affective response to their brand identity, but the gift can also be used, with no small measure of success, by activist groups such as Liberate Tate and others within the Art not Oil collective who set out to challenge such misrepresentation.

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<sup>60</sup> Although it is worth noting that capitalism and finance isn't the only system that enables the avoidance of such return. Cooperatively owned services in a technologically advanced society where labour is largely automated and universal basic services ensure people's basic needs are met (fully automated luxury communism) is one ideal that many on the left are currently working towards (Novara Media, 2015).

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However, away from contexts that demand an ethical position, the gift can still prove useful. By giving away that which is normally held close, distance can be gained on what is otherwise taken for granted, thus allowing scrutiny from a different perspective. The gift can be a tool for analysis. Through examination of the gift's operation in *The Horse's Teeth*, Barthes was challenged and the author shown to be not entirely dead. This is true of both the capitalising Author in which the stores of reputation and cultural capital are to be found, and the non-capitalised author, the identity who lived and made the work. Together, they are the authorship that signs Melrose's 'artist's signature', thereby providing their background and context as a key element in how the work is read.

Analysis of the gift itself enables insight into identity and subject-formation. To accept a gift is to accept a particular identity. What is given determines selfhood; it fundamentally informs our subjectivity. Whether the status of an artist's work in a performance programme or the grades on an undergraduate essay, the name given at birth or a jumper given last Christmas, what is given informs who we are, how we are encountered and what we (believe we) are capable of. For this reason, there is sometimes value to be found in rejecting a gift; the gift horse should have its mouth examined, for what is inside informs who we are.

A return to Mauss's 'institution of total services' with which the thesis began, in particular the 'obligation to receive', provides further opportunity to see how gift determines identity. The identity of Ansuman Biswas, in the dependent state that he chose to place himself for the duration of the performance of *Present* at Stanley Picker Gallery, was in many ways determined

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by that which he was given throughout the performance. When he put on a skeleton costume that he had been given (as he did in a later performance of the work, at the University of Essex's Art Exchange) he became a performer playfully enacting a skeleton, when he was given a sleeping bag, he could experience a more comfortable night's sleep. Whilst there were inevitability aspects of his physicality and his identity that had been given to him (or he had given himself) prior to entering the space (including the privileged status of the artist that he utilised in order to survive the week), in a very fundamental way, what Biswas could do and who he could be for the duration of the performance was determined by that which the audience chose to give him.

For a gift to be successful, for it to affirmatively increase the capacity of the recipient, it needs to be appropriate to them and their situation, and it needs to be excessive, of both cultural and individual expectation. Each gift can also be said to have multiple recipients; all who encounter it subjectively assess this excessive quality, receiving the gift differently and with varying significance according to their anamorphic relationship to it. *The Kindness of Strangers* would have had a particular resonance for someone who had also been given a bone marrow transplant; the pieces presented in *The Horse's Teeth* would have been very different if given to other artists.

Nevertheless, whilst received differently, anamorphosis acknowledges the commonality in a gift. The individuals within an audience who attend a particular performance all see it inform their identity in a particular way, for giving a gift to a group grants them a common identity. Different audiences will have their political preference, level of education and aesthetic preferences assessed, and to

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a degree informed, according to whether they go and see *Cats*, *Coriolanus* or *Curious*. In actuality there will be vast difference in the individuals who make up an audience, and yet, the gift grants them a mutual identity that they collectively embody in no less real a way (even if no one individual actually personifies such embodiment).

As well as encouraging common experience, gifts combine identities in other ways too. They remind us that we are not as individual as we might think. The gift shows that the borders between selves are both permeable and sticky. The giver of the gift impresses themselves onto the gift, they stick to it in some way, and then when the gift is received by the recipient, and then each time they re-encounter it afterwards, the giver is present. Just as the gift contributes to identity-formation, so does the element of the giver that is stuck to it. The gift giver gives of themselves, and should the gift be successfully received, the recipient integrates what was given. Which is not to say that what is integrated is what was given, that is not the case. Anamorphosis means that what is received will never be what was given. Nevertheless what is given does affect the recipient in some way, and with a successful gift, they are brought closer to the gift giver.

Mauss's 'obligation to give' is therefore found in the willingness to affirmatively pass on, in an appropriate and considered manner, that which comes into our identity, the forces and flows articulated so clearly by Braidotti. The emphasis here is on affirmative and appropriate passing on; the obligation is not just to give but is to give *successfully*. Sometimes that which is painful or difficult has to be held onto, to pass it on too soon is to simply pass on the pain or difficulty. As proposed in Chapter Two, this negative experience needs to be

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given in the right form if an audience is to receive it as a gift, and by giving it in this way, by enabling the audience to see the value within the experience, then the giver also sees the value of it. This is where gift theory interfaces with affirmative ethics:

[t]he ethical subject is the one with the ability to grasp the freedom to depersonalise the event and transform its negative charge... This shift makes all the difference to the patterns of repetition of negative emotions. (Braidotti, 2010, p.50)

Whilst what is received is not the same as what is given, the gift-giver nevertheless has a responsibility to ensure that the gift is received appropriately; they cannot give whilst disregarding its effects and maintain their ethical position. To quote Braidotti again, 'A subject's ethical core is not his/her moral intentionality, as much as the effects of the power (as repressive - *potestas* - and positive - *potentia*) his/her actions are likely to have upon the world' (ibid. p.45).

To reconsider Sara Juli's *The Money Conversation* in this light, whilst she does appear to give away her life savings in the show, the performance can also be read as activating a debt in the audience (thereby turning the central premise of the show into an exchange), rather than the gratitude that should result if it is a gift. By presenting a box marked 'Deposit only' Juli exerts significant pressure on the audience to return the money at the end of the show, the gratitude that they might feel for being given the money becomes a debt that they need to repay. Some will, of course, resist such pressure and keep some of the money, but the fact that the Chelsea Theatre shows were the 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> outings of the piece suggests that the piece was at least breaking even, if not actively making a

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profit. If that is the case, then the excess of the piece is arguably almost objectively lacking .

Another work that, arguably, more successfully explores the obligation to receive is the Vacuum Cleaner's work *One Hundred Thousand Pieces of Possibilities*. In this 2007 work, the artist changed the €1000 fee that the Anti Festival was paying them into 1 cent pieces, and piled them up in the lobby of the Kuopion Osuuspankki Bank in Kuopio, Finland. Then, at a pre-announced time, the public were invited to come and 'take away as much as they needed or could carry' (The Vacuum Cleaner, 2007).

In this piece, not only does the Vacuum Cleaner actually give away the entirety of their fee (they don't ask for it to be returned, nor are they paid from elsewhere whilst giving it away), but they also offer a critique of how their generosity is received by offering such small change. For, as well as being cumbersome and hard to deal with practically, the 1 cent coin is, whilst legal tender in Finland, not actually used (Suomen Pankki, Finland's Bank, nd.). This being the case, the lack of decorum in the way that the public rushes to collect the money, pushing each other, lifting off drain covers, even apparently spilling blood (as the lingering final shot of the documentary video suggests) is made ridiculous and futile. The piece articulates something powerful about both scarcity within capitalism and people's attitude towards money, and it gives the audience this message on top of any generosity that the artist might demonstrate in giving away their fee.

Both of these performances utilise normative notions of individualised authorship in the presentation of the work and so encounter the problem that

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awkwardly lingers within any such performances that utilise gifting in their aesthetic or action. The cultural capital that artists gain when they present generosity as performance acts as a return on the gifts they give and so reduces them towards potential invalidation. Nevertheless, the invalidation is only potential. It can be overcome.

When beginning this research that did not feel as if it that was necessarily the case; the returns that artists make on their work presented the possibility that no performance could be understood as authentically generous. Whilst it feels as if Juli is buying cultural capital with her slightly artificial generosity the notion, demonstrated by The Vacuum Cleaner's work, that it is possible to create work that is sufficiently evocative so as to be in excess of the return demonstrates some of the nuance in understanding what generosity might be (even though he may actually then go on to make more significant gains in cultural capital due to his perceived generosity).

Kim Noble is another artist whose work can be understood to be in excess of the return made. Utilising a combination of video projection, pre-recorded sound and live action, the themes he addresses are often deeply personal; his mental health history and sexual, familial and professional relationships are common subject matter. Along with giving insights into his life, he also presents documentation of interventions he has previously made into social space (often purchasing consumer goods in order to modify and surreptitiously return them to the shops in their original packaging).

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He has a high profile within the live art sector, and also has a significant presence in the broader cultural landscape. When working with Stuart Silver (as Noble and Silver) they won the 2000 Perrier award, and were then co-commissioned by E4 for a 6 part television series. Since working as a solo artist, he has won both a Chortle comedy award and a Total Theatre Award and appeared in television series such as *The Mighty Boosh*. He has substantial stores of cultural capital, and makes work for which he is financially reimbursed. He is undeniably embedded in systems of capitalist gain, yet his work also suggests a way out of the dead end which resistance risk running down when it focuses too closely on reducing performance work to systems of capitalist accumulation.

There are numerous examples of gifting within Noble's work. In his show *Kim Noble Will Die* (2009), he handed out pots of his sperm to the single women in the audience and gave a microwave to someone selected for eviction by the rest of the audience, whilst a video he has made shows him throwing a handful of five pound notes into the Citizen's Advice Bureau (Noble, 2009). There is not the space here for a comprehensive analysis of each, but a common thread is that the generosity shown is complicated by dubious ethical positions<sup>61</sup>.

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61 It should be noted that this assault on morality is moderated by many other elements of Noble's work; he is not solely concerned with the transgression of ethical standards. Whilst rarely, if ever upbeat, there are many actions that could be described as sincere, humble and comedic. At a show made for the ICA in 2010 a man and woman from the audience self-identify as not being in a relationship before they are invited to quietly engage in conversation whilst Noble performs the rest of the lecture; a flat pack chair bought from IKEA is transformed into the 'All New Ivar Safety Chair' (complete with rape alarm, seatbelt and lowered legs), whilst the lecture at the ICA concludes with an award being given to 'The best audience member'. Such moments, as well as acting as respite from the transgressive acts, bring the audience into Noble's world, helping to establish a logic for those actions that are more difficult to engage with.

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Hans Thies-Lehmann places the transgression of taboo central to the role of art and theatre, following Kristeva in arguing that the political defines the 'socio-symbolic law [as] the common measure, the political is the sphere of its confirmation, affirmation, [and] protection' (Lehmann, 2006, p.178). When art mounts a challenge to the established political order, it cannot help but transgress boundaries and break taboos. Such transgression is as fixed and as flexible as morality itself; a definitive coding of such violation is impossible, but Noble's work nevertheless presents acts in excess of most ethical subjectivities. He shows a video of a woman self-harming (a woman he had met whilst he himself was in an institution being treated for mental health problems), he asks the audience to send abusive texts to his ex-girlfriend after playing a recording of the phone call with her in which she revealed she was having sex with his best friend, he follows a man for four hours (videoing him all the time) after his target had been to see *Mama Mia!*, and then, when this previously unknown man is having dinner in his hotel, asks him what he thought of the show. To continue the analysis of such transgression, it is useful to return to ideas of sacrifice and examine the role potlatch might play in understanding this.

In Noble's work, it is not material wealth that is at stake, nor is it a sacrificial offer to the gods, but his is a secular sacrifice, one in which he immolates his status as a conventionally moral being. By means of this sacrifice, he challenges the audience into choosing to either accept or reject the transmuted morality he presents.

Just as with an excessive potlatch, which as Mauss (2002, p.41) recognises need not be repaid when the differentiation is too great between parties, so does

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the transgressive excess of Noble not demand that the audience adopt the same standards and attempt to exceed his violation. Although there are occasions when such a response is attempted; cf. the challenge made by another comedian after discovering Noble had slept with his girlfriend (Daniels, 2010), it would not appear that this is typical. Nevertheless, those audiences that do encounter the work are forced to evaluate their own position, and give Noble an appropriate degree of respect.

What the appropriate degree of respect might be is inevitably down to the audience's anamorphic perception of the work. In an article about the run of *Kim Noble will Die* at the Edinburgh festival in 2009, Noble tells Brian Logan that, 'Critics called it "An hour I will remember for all of my life" and "A sublime [and] profound work of art." "But all my posters [...] were ripped up and graffiti'd with 'absolute toss', 'rubbish', and 'insulting bollocks'. So my show isn't just a great success, it's also a pile of shite." (Logan, 2009)

Clearly Noble's work is not distinct from the capitalist system of production in which his work sits. He earns money from this work, he performs internationally in bourgeois institutions, he has an agent and a publicity strategy that includes engagement with the mainstream media and the reiteration of his website address on all the videos he distributes on YouTube. He lives within a capitalist system, and as such he needs to do what is necessary to survive within it. And yet, by maintaining an excess of generosity on the returns gained from the secular sacrifice made within his work, he challenges convention and he poses questions that, in order for a response to be traced, demand alternative logics. Of course, these responses may be rejected, there is always a point at which

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transgression destabilises any subjectivity, but nevertheless, alternatives are suggested, and such suggestions must always be the first steps towards formulating strategies for change.

In order to remove accumulation entirely, authorship would need to be presented in a radically different manner. Whilst *The Horse's Teeth* demonstrated that capitalised Authorship can be distorted and to a certain degree undermined, it is clear, not least by the submission of this thesis, that I am still claiming, to a very significant degree, capitalised Ownership of it. Whilst I would argue that gains in capital need not inherently be a problem, and that a degree of reward – in the form of finance or reputation – is appropriate for labour undertaken, in its reliance on previous accumulation (and promise of future reward) authorial identity is still fundamentally capitalist and therefore will always manifest inequality.

Collective naming is one tactic that makes a challenge to normative authorship, and it has a rich history of usage by artists and activists; from the Luddites who would 'preserve[...] their anonymity by assuming the multiple-use name 'Ludd' (Ayers, 1997), through to Rose Sélavy, a name shared by Marcel Duchamp and the poet Rober Desnos, whilst more contemporary examples being provided by the online anarchist group Anonymous and the Luther Blissett phenomenon.<sup>62</sup> However, other strategies must be possible and further research into possible distortion of authorial attribution may suggest ways of resolving

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<sup>62</sup> Luther Blissett, although a footballer who played for England and AC Milan in the 1980s, from 1994 had his name adopted 'by hundreds of individuals in Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries [in order] to dupe the press into reporting non-events, hijack popular TV programs, sell dubious and radical books to publishers, conduct psychogeographic urban experiments, fabricate artists and artworks' (Deseriis, 2011, p.69), as well as by the four authors of the highly successful novel Q.

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questions around fair attribution, the multiplicity of identity and the significance of naming.

To return to The Vacuum Cleaner's and Sara Juli's work however, whilst they provide a clear demonstration of Mauss's obligation to receive, it is important to emphasise that, for a performance to be encountered as a successful gift, it does not need to actively incorporate gifting into its action, it just needs to affirmatively increase the capacities of those encountering it. In such instances, the artist presents a performance work that positively affects their audience, increasing, even if only temporarily, their capacities for action, for affective response, for understanding. This affective dimension, whilst an important aspect of any political or ethical phenomenon, is particularly present within the gift. Whilst successful gift might enable many things, positive affect will nearly always be among them.

The third of Mauss's obligations is the obligation to reciprocate and, whilst it may not be as 'pure' a form of generosity as the other obligations, in that it is positioned closer towards exchange on Skågeby and Pargman's scale, it is nevertheless no less central to the gift's operation. If an initial gift acts to establish a bond between identities, then that bond will be strengthened further by return gifts. Such reciprocation describes the action at a micro level within a successful performance gift: the performer gives, the audience reciprocates with their attention and other appropriate responses, the performer gives again, as do the audience, then again the performer, again the audience, and so on, until the curtain.

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Adrian Heathfield asks 'What kind of gift is the act of performance? What might such a gift give?' (2001, p.253) before suggesting that the answer might relate to 'the gift of love'. To expand on Heathfield's tentative answer, the link between love and gift is evident. Whilst the terms are not interchangeable, there is significant overlap between them. Love is often thought of as a gift (we give love and affection to another) whilst the most successful gifts are 'given with love'. A loving relationship is, at least in part, the ongoing reciprocation of successful gifts; by which I would mean more than just material gifting, but also the positive affective states that are given. Through this ongoing exchange (that, as it is reciprocal, cannot be recognised as such), a relationship grows between the giver and givee(s), one that gradually brings the subjectivities into each other. If this activity is not interrupted then that which Aristotle defines as 'the friend' appears, that is "One soul abiding in two bodies" (Diogenes Laërtus, 1853, p.188).

Again further research would be necessary to formulate how the gift might differently present itself in different forms of love (including the relationship of the gift to narcissism) and how these might manifest in a performance, for performance is not normally described in such terms. However, if it is remembered that, as long as there is a core of concern for the other's wellbeing, love doesn't exclude being tough, challenging or the sharing of uncomfortable truths, this is perhaps exactly what, in the most successful of gifted performance works, the relationship between audience and performer is.

Love may not be an appropriate relationship for a funder to have with the artists that they support, the dispassionate assessment of how to best fulfil their

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criteria would appear to prohibit the development of such relationships.

Nevertheless, just as love and reciprocation are diminished if there is too much consideration of future return, so do funders and artists reduce the gift within artworks when their attitude creates those losses that cannot be measured economically, the disvalue that is noted in the closing comments of Chapter 3. To refuse such disvaluation, Illich argues it is necessary to forgo development, or at least its intention. Just as the principles of Sennett's craftsman enables a performance-maker to prepare the framework for a good performance without fixing ahead of time what they are going to make, so can a funder utilise Sennett's work in order to ensure that they give grants appropriately. The gift, as has been repeated by many of its theorists, has to be unknown. It cannot be excessive if what is given is pre-formed.

This relationship of a funder to the unknown, the techniques that can be utilised that enable funding bodies to engage with the gift's excess without just giving money away in a lottery, needs careful consideration, though as proposed in Chapter 3, a re-evaluation of waste through a collision of queer theory and waste studies feels potent. Perhaps, as suggested, a percentage of the Arts Council's budget could be explicitly directed towards waste, spent on projects that don't meet any pre-determined criteria but are instead selected according to the preferences of a rotating panel of interested stakeholders (both artists and the broader public), though what other tactics are possible? How else might a system of funding produce work that acknowledges, in a positive manner, the system's inevitable wastage? This is a rich and complex question, and one that feels particularly responsive to investigation in practice-led research.

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Practice also suggests itself as the appropriate methodology for further enquiry into questions of debt and gratitude, with organ transplantation presenting a ripe context for such work. There is a tension between the usual understanding of organ donation as something extraordinary, as 'the gift of life', and the more prosaic, mundane, and sometimes painful experience that life actually is. When there is such focus on the extreme positive within these gifts, there is a risk that the gratitude of the recipient will be transformed into a debt that demands the living of an exceptional life; a demand that will rarely be satisfactorily fulfilled. Research into alternative narratives to the current, quite restrictive, understanding of transplantation feels both fruitful and important.<sup>63</sup>

Narratives are also shifting in much broader social contexts. Recent months have seen a significant spike in the rate of both political and economic change in the world. Whilst Theresa May's government may not have publically announced that they are turning away from austerity as domestic economic policy, the Brexit referendum and the rise of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party after the 2017 General Election has seen a significant shift in its emphasis (Ahmed, 2017). Further afield, even the Deputy Director of the IMF has written an article questioning the efficacy of neoliberalism as an economic strategy (Ostry et al., 2016). It seems likely that, in the new political terrain that is currently being mapped, there will be a shift away from battling austerity as one of the most pressing concerns of those on the left.

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<sup>63</sup> Such research is the focus of a current project, *Not Just the Incredibles*, in which I am working with organ recipients to explore the relationship between their transplant and the everyday.

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Where that shift will be towards is inevitably uncertain, but listening to the discourse of leaders from a range of states, the protection of capital appears to still remain a priority. The dismantling of borders was integral to late twentieth capitalism; the post-cold war globe saw what Robert Gilpin identifies as a 'worldwide shift to greater reliance on the market in the management of economic affairs, and what many call the "retreat of the state," ... integrating national economies everywhere into a global economy of expanding trade and financial flows' (Gilpin, 2003, p.294). Paradoxically however, this research makes clear that borders are also an essential element of capitalist accumulation. Capitalism needs clearly determined boundaries, both physical and conceptual, in order for individualism to prosper, for notions of identity – self and other – to remain fixed in place, for accumulated capital to be kept safe.

I am reminded of another apparent paradox of individualism, that the '... ruling class propagates ideologies of individualism, while tending to *act* as a class. (Many of what we call 'conspiracies' are the ruling class showing class solidarity.)' (Fisher, 2013). Capital's operation is specific, variable according to the situation in which it is encountered. Capital relies on some borders and needs others to be dismantled, just as it publically calls for individualism whilst acting collectively behind the scenes.

The shifts in political reality that accompany Brexit, the Trump presidency and the refugee 'crisis' (itself a loaded descriptor) is seeing the building of walls and the raising of barriers that will be key targets for those with an interest in social justice over the coming years. The role of the gift in this is as yet unclear, although what is apparent is that the gift, as an act of generosity and shared

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humanity, acts to cross boundaries and blur identities. This is core to the challenge it makes to capital and broader systems of oppression.

The theatre is one place in which, through the giving of successful gifts, boundaries between individuals can be broken down and challenged. I am hesitant of claiming that this challenge to individualism inherently grants it utopian potential as some have done (cf. Jill Dolan's book, *Utopia in Performance* (2008)). Whilst there is some truth in this, there is also the potential to take something profound from a performance whilst being singular and alone whilst watching. Here the anamorphic reception of the gift is not shared by others in the audience, and yet it has no less inherent power to affect social change.

What is certain however is that in either instance what does hold is that when the gift of performance is given by its authors to its audience, a bond is made between those authors and those reading it. When theatre 'works', when it is a successful gift, it is through this bond that the theatre's power to change the world can be found. And if changing the world sounds too grandiose a proposal, then, to paraphrase Chris Goode (2015), it is through this bond that the theatre has found the power to change me.

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## **Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice**

### **Appendix A**

#### ***Online Documentation of The Horse's Teeth***

**Project Summary** - <http://tinyurl.com/HorsesTeethSummary>

**Project Breakdown** - <http://tinyurl.com/HorsesTeethBreakdown>

**Project Budget** - <http://tinyurl.com/HorsesTeethBudget>

#### **Works presented**

Each work was documented in two different ways, chosen by the presenting artist from a range that included photographic, video or drawn documentation. The making process of each piece was also documented in a blog, individual to each work.

##### *Richard Layzell - Fě̃n Hóng Sè*

- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/LayzellDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/LayzellBlog>

##### *Mamoru Iriguchi - Hand Wash with Similar*

- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/IriguchiDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/IriguchiBlog>

##### *Rachel Gomme - Bodies in Space*

- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/GommeDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/GommeBlog>

##### *Taylan Halici - Work Fair*

- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/HaliciDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/HaliciBlog>

##### *Britt Jurgensen - Gifts to the Dead*

- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/JurgensenDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/JurgensenBlog>

##### *Jordan McKenzie - The Perfect Gift*

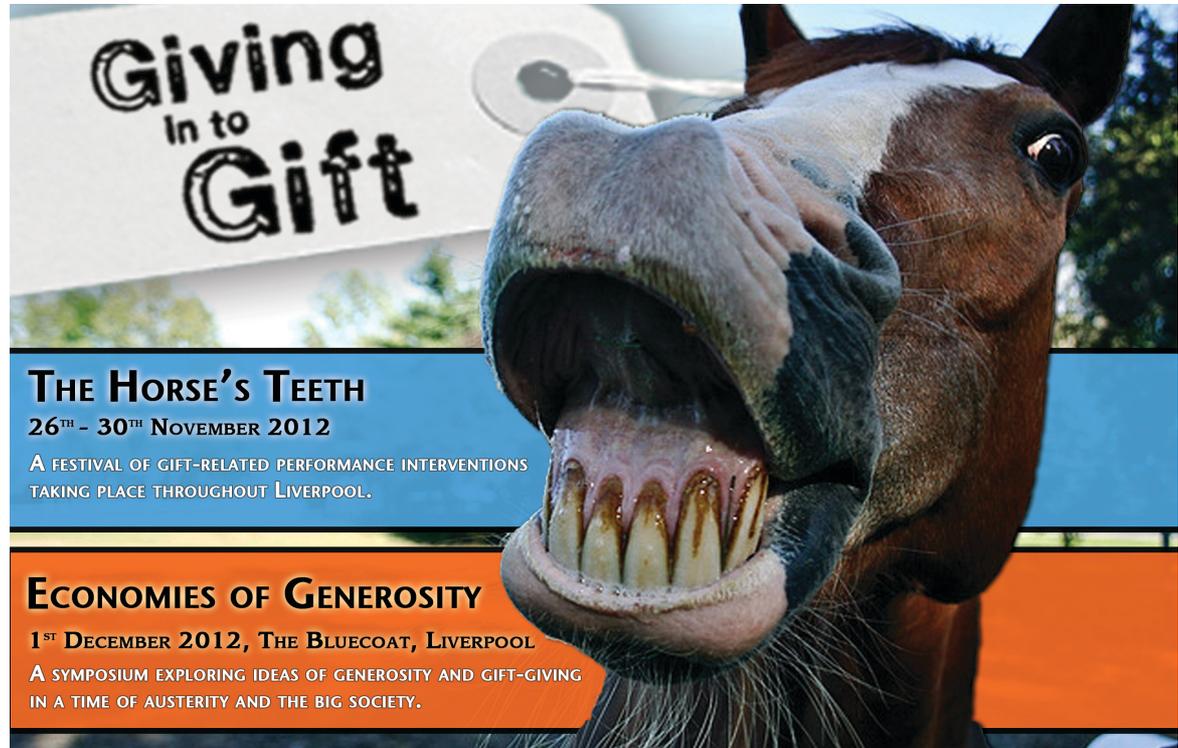
- Documentation - <http://tinyurl.com/McKenzieDocumentation>
- Process blog - <http://tinyurl.com/McKenzieBlog>

# Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

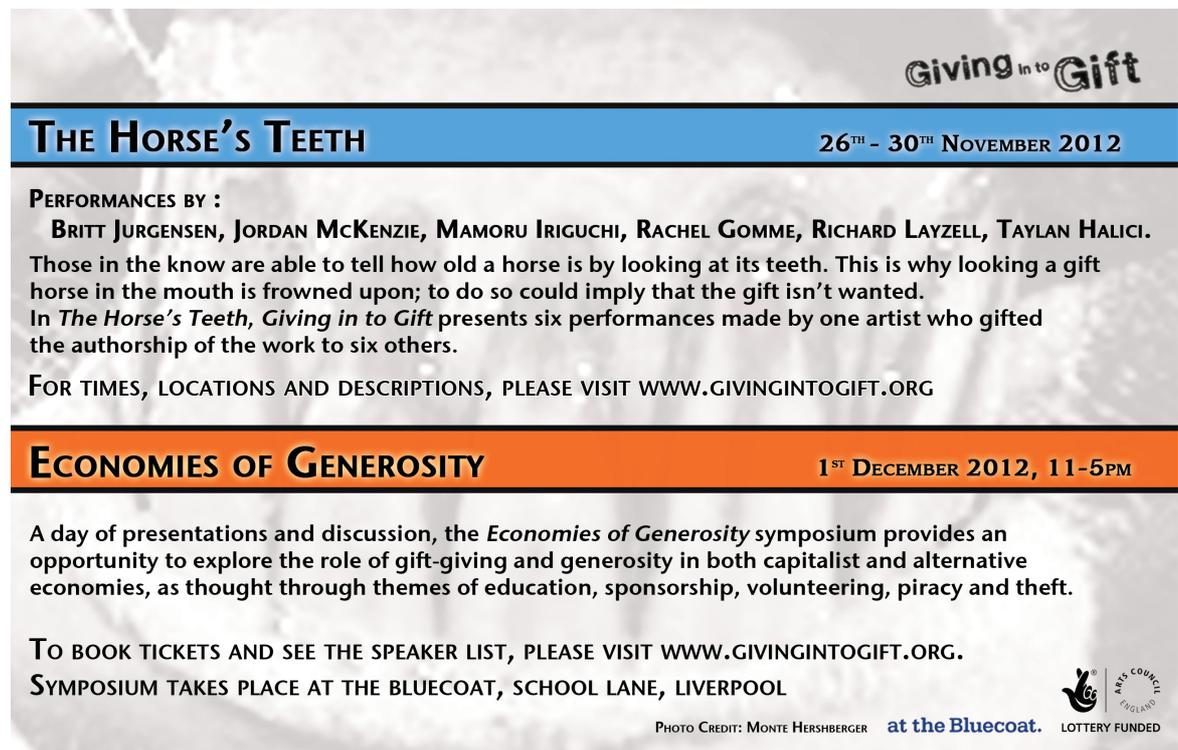
## Appendix B

### *The Horse's Teeth Project Flyer*

#### Front



#### Back



# Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

## Appendix C

### E-mail sent to SCUDD e-mail list, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012

Reply Reply All Forward        



## Giving in to Gift - The Horse's Teeth Performances

Jeeves, Tim

To: SCUDD@JISCMAIL.AC.UK

22 November 2012 22:44

### The Horse's Teeth

*26<sup>th</sup> November to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (and into 2013)  
The Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool and throughout the city.*

A series of 6 performances, each providing a different perspective on ideas around gift. All of the presented works are free, but two are ticketed events at The Bluecoat.

**Mamoru Iriguchi** – *Hand Wash with Similar (an investigation into the Utopian potential of clothes-swapping)*

*Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 7:30pm*

*The Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool*

Simultaneously a performative clothes swap party (for men and women) and an investigation into utopian thought (of women and men)

*This event is free but booking is advised, please contact Tickets and Information on 0151 702 5324 or [info@thebluecoat.org.uk](mailto:info@thebluecoat.org.uk) to reserve tickets.*

**Rachel Gomme** – *Bodies in Space*

*Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> November; Performance slots available every 20 minutes from 5:00pm-9:20pm*

*The Bluecoat, School Lane, Liverpool*

A 1:1 encounter that, through a series of interactions between viewer and performer, marks the changes in space when two people meet.

*This event is free but booking is required, please e-mail [info@givingintogift.org](mailto:info@givingintogift.org) to reserve your preferred timeslot.*

The remainder of the work takes place in a variety of locations around Liverpool.

**Richard Layzell** - *Fěn Hóng Sè*

*Monday 26th November*

A durational piece in which all the litter in Liverpool's Chinatown is spray-painted pink in tribute to the hundreds of Liverpoolians who grew up without fathers after hundreds of integrated Chinese immigrants had their residency status revoked after the war.

**Taylan Halici** – *Work Fair*

*Thursday 29th November*

An inversion of the normal employer / employee dynamic. The employer is paid for providing work.

**Britt Jurgensen** – *Gifts to the Dead*

*Friday 30th November*

In a forgotten cemetery, 80 gifts are made to 80 dead individuals.

**Jordan McKenzie** – *The Belated Gift*

*Sunday 27th January (date tbc)*

Sometimes, for any manner of reasons, a gift is not given at the anticipated time.

This performance is one such gift. It will not happen at the time at which it should (and anyway, obligation and gift make awkward bedfellows).

Over the course of the project, Tim Jeeves (the donating artist) developed these 6 pieces, before offering the authorship of each work, as gift, to the artists credited above.

By accepting the gifted work, the recipient has assumed all future rights of representation and adaptation of the work.

For more information please visit [www.givingintogift.org](http://www.givingintogift.org)

**All events are free.**

Please click [here](#) to download an e-flyer.

**Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England**

# The Kindness of Strangers

Bluecoat Performance  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2013

And so it was I entered the broken world  
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice  
An instant in the wind [I know not whither hurled]  
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

HART CRANE  
*The Broken Tower*

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### Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

#### ENTRANCE

*As the audience enter the performance space, the PERFORMER welcomes each of them individually, though once they're all in, he takes one person off to a table and chair by themselves and offers them a glass of whisky and cola. He makes sure that this person is comfortable and asks if they're ok to sit there, enjoying the drink, until he tells them otherwise.*

*Elsewhere in the space, there is a projection screen on one wall, a number of chairs, and an assortment of different objects - some flowers, balloons, a bone, etc. - on small orange tables throughout the space, along with four blue, triangular foam plinths.*

*Once the space begins to settle, the following two texts appear simultaneously on the screen, one letter at a time whilst Ray Heindorf's 'Streetcar Theme' is played into the space.*

In the summer of 1997, whilst travelling around Europe with a friend I developed a malignant tumour in my right thigh. On returning home, the chemotherapy I underwent wasn't able to control the deadly growth, meaning that by the time I had surgery to remove the tumour from my leg, the cancer – to no small degree of horror - had spread to my lungs and liver.

Thanks to the incredible work of the doctors, nurses, and all those involved in the Teenage Cancer Trust ward I was on, the changes to the treatment regime that were then introduced proved effective. Once the tumours had been treated a bone marrow donor was located, an individual that I still, even now have never met, whose marrow replaced mine after courses of high-dose chemo and radiotherapy. Of course, everyone was hoping for the best from this transplant – they don't do such treatment if they don't think it'll work – but even so, although the doctors and nurses were positive as I went in, they could give no guarantees.

In the summer of 1997, before travelling around Europe with a friend, I took A-Level exams in, amongst other subjects, English Literature and Theatre Studies. On reflection, the effort I had put into my studies was somewhat erratic, although by the time I had submitted my coursework and taken my exams, I was working hard, and – to my surprise and delight – got good grades.

Thanks to the incredible work of some of my teachers, particularly those who taught me English and Theatre, some of what I learned in that time has stayed with me since. One such lingering memory is of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, a play that when I read it, even now leaves me wishing that the end might be averted and the tragic Blanche Dubois deviate from her fate. Of course, that never happens, it's a play - words on a page don't change - and so, as her brother-in-law and eventual rapist, Stanley Kowalski, says 'Her future is mapped out for her.'

## Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

### Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

#### SCENE ONE – Beginnings

*The performer is stood next to the projection screen, as the music finishes and the slideshow fades away he begins to speak.*

*Throughout the performance he reads his lines from a series of cards placed on a stand. Once read, each card is dropped on the floor.*

**PERFORMER:** Hello.

I'm Tim. I wrote the words that you've just been reading.

I'm what you might call the protagonist in the story that's being told here this evening.

Hi.

Although I'm what you might call the protagonist in the story that's being told here this evening, it's not just my story that is being told. The events that are about to unfold as a part of that story wouldn't take place in the way that they're going to if you weren't here. In fact, if none of you were here, they wouldn't take place at all.

You're an essential part of the story that's being told here tonight.

So thank you.

Thank you for coming.

Thank you for being essential.

And thank you for doing what you're doing that makes this, what this is.

Thank you is something that we're going to come back to throughout our time together this evening.

Which isn't to say that the story that we're telling here tonight is about being polite; it's not about being polite.

It's about something else, something that isn't tidy, complete or finished, but rather is something that isn't any of those things.

In part, it is about thank you though.

I'm going to begin, in a minute, by showing you a short movement sequence.

I have been thinking about singing a song as I do that but I've even less of gift for singing than I do for movement, so I probably won't.

First though. A spoiler.

If you don't want to know the score, look away now...

*The performer turns round a series of cards that he is holding.*

***The transplant was successful.***

***I didn't die.***

***In fact, the last 15 years have treated me pretty well.***

## Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

### Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

*The PERFORMER puts down the cards and moves through a sequence of four poses. This SIGNATURE SEQUENCE, a physical reconstruction of images below, will be repeated at various times throughout the performance.*



## Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

### SCENE TWO – Hosts

*The PERFORMER arranges a tripod on a stand, and – throughout this scene and using the camera timer – takes a series of photos of the person who was given the whisky when they came in. He starts off on the opposite side of the space, and gradually – as each photo is taken – moves closer to the person where they are sat.*

**PERFORMER:** I want to take a couple of minutes and think about hosts, and hosting, and how sometimes things can get a little uncomfortable between the host and the hosted.  
I'm going to give 4 examples of the kind of thing that I'm talking about.

*They take a photo of the audience member.*

**PERFORMER:** Example 1. Stanley and Blanche.  
Now, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is centred on the character of Blanche Du Bois. She, and her younger sister, Stella, come from what was, historically, a very wealthy family and they grew up in Belle Reve, a large house in Mississippi. At the start of the play though, we discover the family's fortunes have been declining; this downturn in finances has seen Stella move away from the family home, marry a second-generation Polish immigrant, Stanley, and set up home with him in New Orleans. In the meantime, Blanche had tried unsuccessfully to hold onto Belle Reve and all it stood for, until - with the loss of the house to pay off debts - she has to go and stay with Stella and Stanley as a guest, bringing the sophisticated lifestyle she is used to into direct conflict with the vibrant, earthy passions of their world.

*They take a photo.*

**PERFORMER:** Once in New Orleans, despite being reliant on Stanley and Stella's hospitality and having no where else to go, Blanche repeatedly reminds her sister of their shared past, and tries – unsuccessfully - to take her away from Stanley.  
Through this tension, Tennessee Williams creates a rich metaphor for the way in which the America of the past, of plantation owners and grand inheritances, was giving way to a different American identity, one in which immigrants and the working classes were more to the fore.

*They take another photo.*

**PERFORMER:** Example 2. A bone marrow transplant.  
In any other type of organ transplant, but not bone marrow, there's a risk that the new organ – the heart, kidney, lungs or whatever - will be rejected. To minimise the risk of this, the person receiving the organ – the transplant host - takes drugs to inhibit their immune system, and by doing

## Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice

### Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

so, hopefully stops their body recognising the new organ as foreign and rejecting it.

Things are different when receiving a bone marrow transplant from another person though. In these instances, immunosuppressant drugs are taken for the opposite reason.

*They take a photo of the audience member.*

**PERFORMER:** In a bone marrow transplant, immunosuppressant drugs are not taken in order to prevent the marrow being rejected. Instead, since it's in bone marrow that the cells are made that make up the immune system, the drugs are taken so that the new marrow doesn't create cells which attack the transplant recipient. The drugs are taken to prevent the marrow rejecting the host.

In a bone marrow transplant, if these drugs should prove ineffective at controlling the new immune system, a potentially fatal condition - Graft versus Host disease - can develop.

*Another photo.*

**PERFORMER:** Example 3.

*Another.*

*And another.*

**PERFORMER:** Fourth and final example. Blanche's body. As her way of life slowly collapsed around her, and after the tragic death of her first love, Blanche, prior to arriving in New Orleans, had sought comfort by sleeping with – playing host to - a number of men. Whilst it's unlikely that even today such actions would be met with approval, in a small town in 1950s America, her actions were deemed intolerable, and were a major factor in her departure to New Orleans.

*Another photo.*

**PERFORMER:** When Stanley, although distrustful towards Blanche from the off, is antagonised even more by the continued challenges she makes on his way of living, he unearths gossip about her promiscuous past, uses it to quash the budding relationship between her and his friend Mitch, and then finally, in the penultimate scene of the play, forces himself upon her. He rapes her when they are alone in the house together whilst Stella is in the hospital giving birth to their son.

*They take another photo.*

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### Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

**PERFORMER:** Conflict between the old and the new, between hosts and the hosted can have disastrous consequence, but I've had luck on my side. Although I became very sick from the treatment that necessitated the transplant - the treatment that killed off the marrow I was born with and left me in need of someone else's - I had only minor symptoms of Graft versus Host disease, and those I did have acted as a spur to creativity. I remember writing a poem about green shit at one stage, although sadly those words have been lost to time.

*The PERFORMER gives the bottle of whisky to the audience member where they're sat and invites them to stay where they are and drink it – without disturbance - throughout the rest of the performance.*

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Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

### SCENE THREE – Stanley Kowalski

**PERFORMER:** To celebrate the birth of his son, Stanley gets out the pair of silk pyjamas he wore on his wedding night. As he does so, he says:  
*(in a dreadful attempt at Marlon Brando's accent)* Here's something I always break out on special occasions like this.

*The PERFORMER takes out a set of clothes kept from the time when he was ill.*

**PERFORMER:** Now, these are clothes I wore when I was in hospital. I'm taking them out for something that will take place in a couple of minute's time.

**STANLEY (on recording):** You know what luck is? Luck is believing you're lucky, that's all. Take at Salerno. I was lucky. I figured that 4 out of 5 of us wasn't going to get through but I would... and I did. I stick that down as a rule. To hold the front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you're lucky.

**PERFORMER:** You know what luck is? Luck is believing you're lucky, that's all. Take with the transplant. I believed I was lucky. I was told that 1 out of 10 would not come through, but I thought I would... and I did. I stick that down as a rule. To hold the front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you're lucky.

*The performer has ten bottles of beer. He vigorously shakes one of these, moves another to one side for himself, and then by moving the others around, mixes the remaining nine up so no one in the audience is sure which has been shaken.*

**PERFORMER:** I used to have a cousin who could open a beer-bottle with his teeth. That was his only accomplishment, all he could do - he was just a human bottle-opener.  
And then one time, at a wedding party, he broke his front teeth off!  
After that he was so ashamed of himself he used t'sneak out of the house when company came...

*The PERFORMER gives nine of the beers, with bottle openers, to members of the audience.  
He then moves across the space, and writes the following text on a large piece of paper at the side of the stage:*

**What have you heard about me?**

**What have people been telling you about me?**

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*As he writes.*

**PERFORMER:** Blanche asks these question, when Stanley hints that he has found out about the men she has slept with in the past, and knows that this is why she had to leave her job as a school teacher and come to New Orleans.

*The PERFORMER takes off his shirt, revealing a white 'wife-beater' vest that he is wearing underneath, and then goes back to get his beer from the other side of the space. As he walks it is with a particularly masculine strut. When he returns to where the sign he has just written is, he sits down and opens the bottle of beer for himself.*

**PERFORMER:** As I said earlier, I'm really pleased you're here. The story that's being told here tonight wouldn't be the same if you weren't. But I'm also interested in what you thought you were coming to? What you imagined tonight would be? I can't help but wonder if tonight will be what you believed it was going to be?

*Pause.*

**PERFORMER:** If we were to stop now, and I was to say – 'What do you want to happen?' – would you know how to answer?

*The PERFORMER begins to undress down to his pants.*

**PERFORMER:** You have to believe in all kinds of things to make it through a transplant. Thinking back, I had a certain focus on the life I anticipated living once I left the hospital. The things I was going to do. I remember talking with a friend about some of these things. I was twenty years old and they were quite simple plans: we'd work in a bar together; be very cool; wear cool clothes; impress girls. Nevertheless, they were probably some of the most significant plans I've ever made. Now... in the time since making those plans, I've never worked in a bar. I've had the odd moment of cool, but probably not as many as I anticipated, and as for impressing girls... hmm...

*The PERFORMER stands by the two questions that he'd written earlier, and begins to change into the old hospital clothes.*

**PERFORMER:** It's the first night in the hospital. I'm obviously a bit nervous, but my positivity from the car journey hasn't gone yet. In the room next door to mine, there's the sound of someone who must have been given bad news. Probably news of the worst kind. Incomprehensible news. News that tears something inside us if we try to take it all in; news that reminds us of just how short temporary is.

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I'm unsure whether he's drunk or in an inconsolable rage.

I do know that he's smashing the room up.

There seems to be something ridiculous, mundane even, in the way that security is called to deal with this man who can't deal with the news that he's been given in any other way than this.

That man - I never knew his name, but let's call him Stanley - didn't stay in the hospital long, and I suspect he must be dead now.

Sometimes, I wonder about Stanley and all those other people I knew who died in that time; I wonder what it was that they believed?

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### SCENE FOUR – Shep Huntleigh

*The PERFORMER takes the blue plinths and orange tables from where they are holding up the various objects in the space, and places them in relationship to each other in four different places in the space. He then asks four members of the audience how they feel about lying down; if they're happy to, they then lie down within these prism / cube arrangements in a manner approximating the image below.*

*A cuddly hippopotamus is placed in the centre of the semi-circle that these four make and the performer goes and stands at the back of the space.*

*The photo below comes up on the projector, and the PERFORMER then stands with the hippo in the centre of the circle.*

*He then moves through the four poses of the SIGNATURE SEQUENCE whilst speaking the following lines.*



*The PERFORMER adopts POSE 1.*

**PERFORMER:** It's not a bed, when I was on a bed, I'd be sick.  
Every time. Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

This is after: the food was through a tube, straight into the bloodstream, food, blood and marrow. Through a tube, straight in to the bloodstream. There was nothing in my stomach. But still I'd manage to find something from somewhere to throw up.  
Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

'I don't like a bed that gives much', said Blanche. What did this one give?

That was after, but at the beginning of this time that we're looking back to, fifteen years ago – why are we talking about this now? - fifteen years ago, I'd lie down each day, on a clinical receptacle that wasn't a bed.

It had a mattress and it was flat, it didn't have wheels and on the horizontal it was longer and wider than a large person's body, but still it

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shouldn't be called a bed; the robotic angles of the supporting structure, the sharp point of the footplate, the orange cube that went around the head took it into some other, non-bed like place.

There was a refusal to be a bed in other ways; there was little domestic, restful or caring about this thing for lying on - this stand for holding bodies up to invisible rays that took aim and passed through, that destroyed some, but not all, that they came across.

It would make me sick, horizontal sick, but that was after.  
This was before.

*He changes pose.*

Later still... *(he pauses)* they keep you waiting.  
There's daily routine.

Bloods taken, early, loudly, blood is taken. Not by force, they can't take it by force, but there's little chance to say no.  
Then you wait. Then. You. Wait.

They tell you that your counts haven't come up yet. But that's not bad, because they wouldn't expect them to.  
No, not yet. Need to keep waiting.

Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

I faint as I sit on the commode, 12 inches from the bed.

"I don't know what happens if you don't get any sleep but I think it's happening to me."

They keep you waiting.  
You wait. And you wait.

*HE changes pose.*

And then one day, there's news. Good news. You're not going to die like this, stranded and stuck, watching the wait for an immune system that isn't going to arrive change into the wait for an infection that certainly will. You're not going to die like this, there's hope for you yet, and you're watching a David Attenborough documentary about bloody hippos when you find out.

Hippos? This moment, the moment that means the rest of your life stands a chance of actually starting, this moment is going to be forever stuck to hippos.

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That was after, and before there was this...

But after is horizontal sick and nothing is able to help.  
Nothing stops the sick.  
Everything stops but horizontal sick. Horizontal sick.

And then I get a message - a wire if you like, a Texas oil millionaire if you like.

He's palliative care; a bit of a celebrity; he's been on telly and that must mean something.

He can't come yet.  
Horizontal, sick. Horizontal, sick.

My gentleman caller can't come to save me. Not yet.  
It's not the time yet; there's other people that he needs to see first.

Maybe he needs some time to himself?

My sores are eyes, my mouth is falling apart, my pillows are slick, and I'm horizontal sick, horizontal sick... and then in he comes.

He's not Shep Huntleigh but he is the gentleman I'm expecting.

He doesn't have a bag. He's not with a nurse. He doesn't say 'How do you do?'

But he's with me. He gives me a tablet.  
He leaves and I sleep.

*As the PERFORMER gets up from where they have been lying in POSE 4, he – quite brusquely – tell the 4 audience members 'You can go now', and then moves to a space below the projector.*

*He invites a member of the audience to come and sit opposite him.*

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**SCENE FIVE – Blanche**

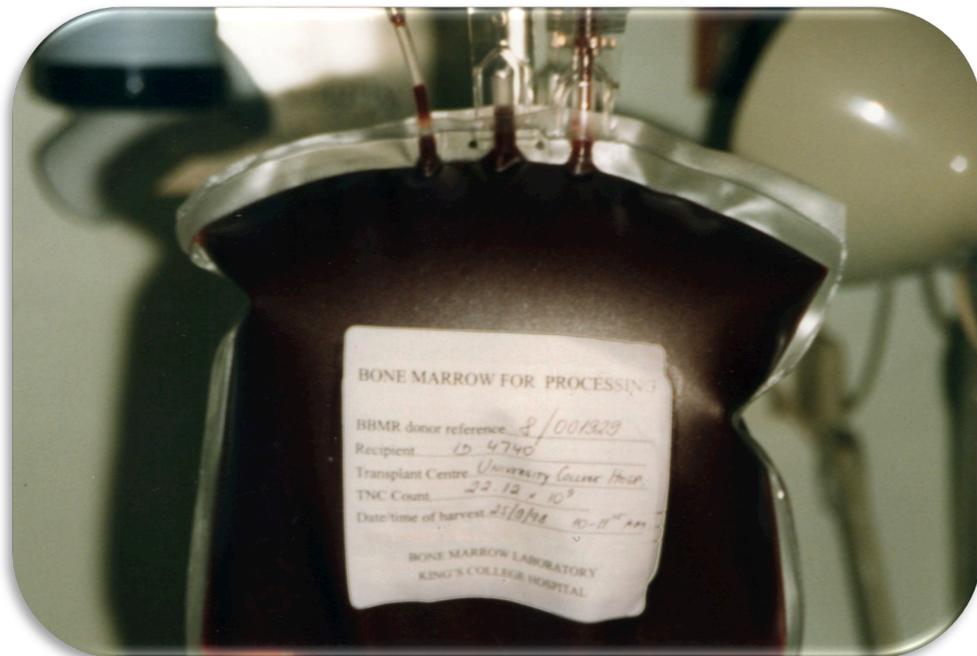
*The PERFORMER takes off the jumper and T-shirt he wore when he was ill and sits opposite an empty seat. He invites a member of the audience to sit there with him.*

**PERFORMER:** This is all I'm going to undress right now.

*Ella Fitzgerald's 'It's only a paper moon' is heard, and the PERFORMER begins, with his hands, to trace where a Hickman line would be found on his chest. After some time, he begins to speak.*

**PERFORMER:** To be given bone marrow isn't a technical undertaking. It's not a complicated procedure.

*An image of bone marrow in a bag is shown on the screen.*



**PERFORMER:** It's not a complicated technical procedure. But it is magic.

*Another slide is shown; on this we see a Hickman line running in to the PERFORMER's chest.*

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**PERFORMER:** The marrow drips from its bag, through the Hickman line that was previously tunnelled under the flesh of the chest, and enters the blood stream via the jugular vein. Once in the blood stream, it finds its own way into the bones.

*As a final slide - of a nurse flushing the Hickman line in preparation for the marrow - fades from the screen - he stops the movement sequence.*



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**PERFORMER:** Times change.

Nowadays, it's normally a lot easier, but - at the time we're talking about - to donate bone marrow was a lot less simple...

At the time of my transplant, the donor would be hospitalised, anaesthetised, and the bone on their hip penetrated with a very large needle.

The marrow would then be sucked from their bones with a syringe leaving them feeling bruised and tired for a couple of weeks.

I've never met the person who did this for me. Never told them how they saved my life.

I've never written to them, never sent them a photo of what I look like.

Never told them any of the things I've done in the fifteen years since the transplant.

I've never said thank you.

I think about them now and then. And at certain times, I'm pretty sure they'll have thought about me.

Perhaps, like I do, they wonder why I've never said thank you.

*He picks up an envelope from the floor beside him, and hands it to the person opposite. As they read the letter, the performer moves away and changes back into his previous outfit.*

**RECORDING:** Dear Blanche.

You were born into a world you weren't equipped to deal with, and in some ways, I think the same was true of me. I was lucky though; someone stepped forward to save me. The person who came for you locked you away.

I think on our stories, and I think about the ways things could have been different.

I remember that you were told to take a streetcar named Desire, transfer to one called Cemeteries, ride six blocks and got off at Elysian Fields.

My journey isn't finished yet, though yours is, and you never arrived at the Elysium you were promised.

You know more than most that the words on the page are fixed, that once they've been written the shape of the play is determined.

People might read it differently, but your fate remains essentially the same.

But what about when it's performed? You've made your entrance tens of thousands of times, and each of those moments was created anew.

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Performers are able to do things differently; they're not slaves to the text they've been given, and sometimes – when they've forgotten their lines, or the director has chosen to do things differently – things do change.

But we never see you smash the bottle in Stanley's face, or Mitch accept your apology, or Stella report Stanley to the police.  
The story is always told the way that it's always been told.  
Because we want it to be told like that.

We want your story to end the way it does. It would spoil Tennessee Williams' play if it ended any other way.

Somewhere within the story that is being told here this evening, our two stories meet; they become attached to one other, bonded with what I think you might call a deep, sincere attachment.

I want to thank you for that deep, sincere attachment, even as I apologise for wanting your story to end the way it always does.

Thank you Blanche DuBois.

All my love,  
Tim

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**SCENE SIX – Beautiful Dreams**

*The performer tunes in a radio to a broadcast of a pre-recorded loop from the film. Simultaneous to this, a video, showing the bone marrow being withdrawn from a donor, is shown in slow-motion on the projection screen.*

*On the recording, the following lines are repeated.*

**FEMALE VOICE 1:** I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.

**FEMALE VOICE 2:** Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going.

*Whilst this media is played, the performer uses a gimlet to bore a hole into a large bone. He then threads a ribbon through this, ties a bow, and makes out an address label to Belle Reve, Laurel, Mississippi.*

*The bone is left on the table.*

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**INTERLUDE**

*The performer performs the SIGNATURE SEQUENCE of movements to a member of the audience. He then relaxes, and casually addresses a nearby member of the audience.*

**PERFORMER:** In Scene 7 of Streetcar, Blanche and Mitch are out on a date. Things are slightly awkward at first, but they relax as the evening progresses. Soon, Mitch begins to make small talk.

Guess how much I weigh?

*Perhaps the member of the audience answers.*

**PERFORMER:** Guess again?

*They answer again.*

**PERFORMER:** No. More.

*They answer.*

**PERFORMER:** I weigh one hundred and forty-three pounds and I'm six feet and a half inch tall in my bare feet – without shoes on. And that is what I weigh stripped.

*He stands proudly for a moment.*

**PERFORMER:** My weight is not a very interesting subject to talk about.

*Pause. He continues to a different member of the audience.*

**PERFORMER:** What's yours?

*Perhaps they answer.*

We're now a little over halfway through the story that we're telling here tonight.  
Is it what you thought it was going to be?

*He smiles.*

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### SCENE SEVEN – The Grey boy

*The PERFORMER picks up a copy of A Streetcar Named Desire and starts to read.*

**BLANCHE:** Afterwards we pretended that nothing had been discovered. Yes, the three of us drove out to Moon Lake Casino, very drunk and laughing all the way. We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few minutes later – a shot! I ran out – all did – all ran and gathered around the terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then someone caught my arm. 'Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!' See? See what! Then I heard voices say – Allan! Allan! The Grey boy! He'd stuck a revolver into his mouth, and fired – so that the back of his head had been – blown away!

**PERFORMER:** This event, the death of Allan Grey. Blanche's husband, who killed himself after she'd told him how his homosexuality disgusted her, haunts her throughout the play. The character – who had died something like 15 years prior to Blanche's arrival in New Orleans at the start of the play - is only ever referred to obliquely, and never explicitly named – and yet it's obvious that he's rarely far from Blanche's thoughts and is perhaps as significant as Stanley when it comes to Blanche's eventual breakdown.

*He stands.*

**PERFORMER:** We all have certain people that are never far from our thoughts. And we all have certain people that might not be in our thoughts very often, but when they are there, they fill our minds.

The words think and thank share a common root.  
That's why the two words are so similar.

Think.  
Thank.

When it comes to surviving cancer there's a lot of people to thank.  
It wasn't just my donor that gave a lot to me in that time.

There's also, of course, a lot of people to think about it in Streetcar.

At the start of the 1951 Streetcar film, when Blanche – played by Vivien Leigh - first arrives in New Orleans, there's a fantastic framing shot; one that gives a sense of the vibrancy and the life within the quarter, and one

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that marks the character of Blanche as both disorientated by and slightly uncomfortable with the raffish charm of the neighbourhood.

As she makes her way down the street, there's a man walking the other way, carrying a chicken by its feet. She barely notices him – she's checking a piece of paper for Stella's address when he walks past her – but it's a lovely moment, and to wonder about the sequence of events that led to that man, with that chicken, being introduced in to that sequence of the film is intriguing. Who's job was it to find the chicken for the actor?

I also find myself wondering what happened when the camera stopped rolling. Did the actor make a joke with another extra about his slightly ludicrous role?

Did he put the bird down or hold on to it whilst he waited to hear if Elia Kazan, the director of the film, had anything to say?

Is the bird actually alive, or is it just a feathered corpse?

Even if it does sound like the start of a joke – a man walks across a film set holding a chicken – it's a simple act with little consequences, one that took only a matter of seconds to perform over 60 years ago, and yet, here we are, thinking on it now.

**PERFORMER:** The writing on the back of the sheet you were given before coming in, is a slightly shortened version of something I wrote a few months after completing my treatment.

Around the time I wrote it, I was very aware of how thankful I should be. Through stories told by people I saw on TV and read about in the papers, I knew that after coming so close to death, there's a particular poignancy added to life.

People who have been ill like I was know how to appreciate each day. We're very thankful for every extra moment that we've been given.

*Pause*

Now that's an absolutely lovely idea when it works; but it's quite a lot to take in. It's a lot to think about. It's a lot of pressure on those days when things are just a bit shit.

*Pause*

Even so, there's a lot that contributed to the particularly poignant days, the value added life that I've had since.

*He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and begins to recite a list of names, pausing for a couple of seconds after each one.*

The parents of my donor.

Those people on the roads that drove a little more carefully when they saw the hospital car that was carrying my new marrow.

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Dom.

Tom.

Amelia, Sam, Sophie, Alan, Michael and Paul.

The other nurses whose names I can't remember so easily.

The nurses whose names I never knew.

The lab staff I never met.

My mum and dad.

Carol, Monica and Chris Nick.

The woman who came in with that bloody hospital Labrador.

Jeremy.

Vikky.

The cleaners.

Steve Mackinnon.

Stanley

Dr E. Donnall Thomas - who pioneered bone marrow transplantation in the 50s and 60s.

The agency nurses.

Tinky winky, Ipsy dipsy, La-La and Po.

Julia.

My brother Paul.

The man in the weird food hall on Oxford Street that gave me the radar key so that I could use the disabled toilet.

David Attenborough and the hippos.

Stanley.

All those people that helped develop Cyclophosphamide, that identified ways of controlling x-rays, gamma rays, and electron beams, and found the antibiotics that keep people without an immune system alive (at least for a short while).

These people's boyfriends and girlfriends, husbands and wives.

Their friends.

The people working in the supermarket where my donor buys their food.

The hospital Labrador.

The person who produced Cher's 'Do you believe in life after love?'

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**SCENE EIGHT - Harold 'Mitch' Mitchell**

*It becomes darker in the space. The PERFORMER moves to stand beneath the projection screen, which then displays the following text.*

**Blanche and Stella arrive home after watching a show; Stanley and his friends are playing poker. The women go into the back room whilst the game continues.**

*Blanche's lines are recordings of Vivien Leigh's from the film. The relevant scene is projected on the screen above the performer (the screen goes blank when the performer speaks).*

**BLANCHE:** Yes? Oh... hello.

**PERFORMER:** Excuse me.

*He crosses to the other side of the projection screen, echoing Mitch's movements on the film.*

**BLANCHE:** Er... er... the little boys room is occupied right now.

**PERFORMER:** Oh, excuse me.

*He crosses back and goes to leave.*

**BLANCHE:** Have you got any cigs?

*The PERFORMER stops.*

**PERFORMER:** Oh, sure.

**BLANCHE:** What a pretty case. Silver?

**PERFORMER:** Yes. Yes; read the inscription.

**BLANCHE:** Oh there is an inscription? Why, I can't make it out. Oh! 'And if God choose, I shall but love thee better – after death!' Why that's from my favourite sonnet by Mrs Browning.

**PERFORMER:** Why, you know it!

**BLANCHE:** Sure I do!

**PERFORMER:** Well, there's a story connected with this inscription.

**BLANCHE:** It sounds like a romance.

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**PERFORMER:** No... no. It's a pretty sad one. The girl's dead now.

**BLANCHE:** *Oh!*

**PERFORMER:** She knew she was dying when she gave me this. A very strange girl, very sweet – very.

**BLANCHE:** She must have been very fond of you. Sick people have such deep, sincere attachments.

**PERFORMER:** That's right, they certainly do.

**BLANCHE:** Sorrow makes for sincerity, I think.

**PERFORMER:** It sure brings it out in people.

**BLANCHE:** The little there is belongs to people who have experienced some sorrow.

**PERFORMER:** I believe you're right about that.

*There is a pause. A freeze-frame on the video.*

**PERFORMER:** What do you want to happen now?

*There is a pause, and perhaps something happens....*

*When it completes, the performer puts up a series of signs that read:*

- We light up a cigarette and wait for the smoke alarm to go off.
- We play computer games until we have only one life left.
- An unexpected death.
- You look up where the Middlesex Hospital was on Google Maps and realise you know where it is after all.
- Survivor guilt.
- A poem cleverly demonstrating a range of contexts for the word 'give'.
- The phone rings and you really need to take it (sorry).
- Silence.
- We decide that we want to die without any regrets.
- I find another lump whilst having a bath.
- We got the pub.
- I repeatedly cry 'I don't want to be 18 and in a wooden box'.
- Blanche sits in a chair very stiffly with her shoulders slightly hunched and her legs pressed close together and her hands tightly clutching her purse as if she were quite cold.
- The rape.
- We learn to whistle.
- We notice opportunities.
- And find that that is sometimes difficult.

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#### SCENE NINE – Arrangements to rest in the country

*The lighting state changes.*

*Music comes in.*

*The performer begins to give envelopes to people within the audience. Inside these are maps of the performance space and a request for to go to a marked location. Once at these locations, each person picks up an additional card that then directs them to perform a particular action. Some actions require props, others don't. The actions include:*

Task	Number of people
Being given a life size photo of the inside of my leg. There are 3 tattooed dots on my leg, put there to ensure the radiotherapy remained targeted on the right area. Some of the audience will be invited to develop this into a more complete design.	3
Cutting out a paper moon and sticking it on the wall.	1
Player poker in a group	3
Dropping £150 into a bucket, one pound coin at a time	1
Blowing up balloons, tying them off and releasing them in to the space.	3
Someone will put on a Tom Cruise mask, and read a story about a panic attack I had whilst watching Mission Impossible.	2
Separate out a bunch of flowers and lie them in a line across the space.	1
Bring chairs in the space, so as to create a more traditional, end on arrangement between performer and audience.	3
Press play on a hippopotamus speaker. The soundtrack of a David Attenborough documentary will be played.	1
Putting on a white doctor's jacket and standing still in the space	1
Move around the space, touching each person in the space once. Don't be shy.	1
Write on paper and stick up in the space; "Like terrorist attacks and natural disasters we wish physical ailments to be terrible whilst fearing that they mean nothing"	1
Walking around the space using the crutches. (1 clockwise, 1 anti-clockwise).	2
Put on the clothes from when I was ill.	1
Go have a drink with the person whose been drinking whisky from the start of the piece.	1

*Whilst the AUDIENCE perform these actions, the PERFORMER speaks the first line of the next section before reading the following short texts, selected from a series of cards that are visibly shuffled before this sequence begins.*

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**PERFORMER:** It was an evening at the end of summer, and...

**PERFORMER:** You watched a film by a Spanish director. You paused the film once to visit the toilet, and in that time also got a bar of Dairy Milk from the fridge. For the rest of the film, you sat in front of the screen with a notebook and pen, and when it ended were disappointed to find that the notebook was still blank.

**PERFORMER:** You wrote on twitter that 'My bf just complained that he does "the bulk of the tweeting about our relationship"'

**PERFORMER:** You had an appointment. The doctors weren't concerned, they were almost glib, but you were somewhat stunned to be told that the growth you had had removed from inside your cheek had been identified as cancerous.

**PERFORMER:** "In the state of Louisiana we have what is known as the Napoleonic code according to which what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa. For instance, if I had a piece of property, or you had a piece of property..."

**PERFORMER:** You contemplated making a series of candid photos of people's shoes. You've heard it said that someone's shoes say a lot about them and the couple of photos you took seemed to prove that right. You stopped the project though when you heard someone else was already doing it.

**PERFORMER:** You worried that you don't do enough for other people.

**PERFORMER:** "It looks to me like you have been swindled, baby, and when you're swindled under the Napoleonic code I'm swindled too. And I don't like to be swindled."

**PERFORMER:** You had an argument. It was about something stupid and you weren't actually arguing about what you were really upset about. What you were actually upset about is that you were tired, and you didn't know when you were going to get any rest.

**PERFORMER:** You were told that it was going to be ok, but you weren't sure whose benefit those words were for. You wanted to ask how they knew.

**PERFORMER:** You got a text message from a friend's wife telling you that their phone has died. For the briefest moment you misread it and thought that it's actually your friend who had died. In that moment you didn't find it strange that his wife was telling you this news by text.

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**PERFORMER:** You wrote on the milk you'd bought 'Mine', before you left it in the office fridge. Next week it was all gone, so you bought another bottle and wrote 'Yours' on it.

**PERFORMER:** You get some work as a film extra and are asked to carry a chicken by its feet, in a busy street scene.  
After your scene you joke with a friend about why the chicken crossed the road.

**PERFORMER:** You had an interesting conversation with someone about geese. He told you how different members of the flock take it in turns to fly at the front of the V formation. You pointed out that, whilst they had a clear sense of leadership within their group, it was nice that they never fixed on one bird as leader.

**PERFORMER:** You hear about a man who had three personalities in his one body; at times he believed that he was Jesus, at others, the devil, and at others still he thought he was Darth Vader.  
He had a plan and his plan was to fly to New York, buy a gun and take a boat to India. From there he would sail out to Sri Lanka and, as he smoked a huge spliff on his boat, he would watch the sky and wait.  
The first shooting star that he saw crashing down through the heavens would be his cue. He would take his gun and blow his brains out.  
Unfortunately he bought a ticket for Newark in New Jersey rather than New York on the East Coast, and in the ensuing confusion (for as well as this, he had no luggage and made many mistakes filling in the required forms) he was sent back to London and locked up for the rest of his life.

**PERFORMER:** You wake up in the middle of the night from a bad dream. You weren't terrified or in a cold sweat or anything like that; but it was a bad dream and a relief to wake up.  
In your dream you had poured petrol on yourself and set yourself on fire. You remembered intense heat from the flames on your back, and the way in which your sight failed.

*As the text concludes, the audience are invited – via the projection screen – to take up a seat in the new arrangement that has been created in the space.*

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#### SCENE TEN - Now

*With the audience now seated in an end-on arrangement thanks to the prompts for arranging the chairs in the previous scene, the space grows dark and the performer sits in a spotlight centre-stage.*

**PERFORMER:** Some moments are anticipated more than others. We spend time practising them, imagining details and fleshing out other people's reactions.

This time... the time that is passing now... is - for me - a series of such moments. Meeting my donor would be another.

I've tried to imagine who would be here that I knew.  
And who would be here that I've never met before.  
If I don't know you, I've wondered about what you look like, what you might think of what I've told you about myself, whether you're someone I'd hit it off with straight away if we met – say in the pub in half an hour's time – or, if we spent any time together, would things simply get a little uncomfortable.  
I've wondered what it might mean for me if I think you're self-obsessed, or racist, or even just a bit dull.

When I've imagined these moments that make up this time that is passing now, I've wondered what it would feel like to be with you.  
Whether or not I'd be able to gauge your mood; whether you'd be smiling, or have your eyes closed, or whether you'd have another expression on your face.

I've spent time practising these moments; imagining the details and fleshing out your reaction, although of course, only a little of what I imagined actually felt like what we're feeling now.

*Once this is done, he gathers up some of the balloons from where they were blown up in the previous section, and sits down with them in a pile next to him. He empties his lungs, blowing out as hard as he can. He breathes in by sucking the air in from the balloon. This air he breathes into a larger balloon. He repeats this from a selection of balloons whilst the following text is displayed on the projection screen above him.*

Can I ask you a question?

Yes. What?

How old are you?

Why do you want to know?

I talked to my mother about you and she said, 'How old is \_\_\_\_\_?' And I wasn't able to tell her.

You talked to your mother about me?

Yes.

Why?

I told my mother how nice you were, and I liked you.

**Tim Jeeves - Towards 'Economies of Generosity' in Contemporary Live Art Practice**

Appendix D – The Kindness of Strangers script

Were you sincere about that?

You know I was.

Why did your mother want to know my age?

Mother is sick.

I'm sorry to hear it. Badly?

She won't live long. Maybe just a few months.

Oh.

She worries because I'm not settled.

Oh.

She wants me to be settled down before she -

You love her very much, don't you?

Yes.

I think you have a great capacity for devotion. You will be lonely when she passes on, won't you?

I understand what that is.

To be lonely?

I loved someone, too, and the person I loved is lost.

**RECORDING:** You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be – you and me?

*A slideshow of the images from which the SIGNATURE SEQUENCE has been drawn is shown.*

**PERFORMER:** What do you want to happen now?

For donor number: 8/001929.

Thank you.