

explores the ways in which theatre and performance functions at of contemporary local and global networks. Theatre and curs in time and space and exists between the audience and :communicative event. This local world of experience and human ot easily subsumed by global networks or commercial systems ot force of expression and, at times, resistance. The volume f critical viewpoints from which to evaluate the interrelationality nd the global, such as philosophical cosmopolitanism, post-inism, class, ethnicity, gender and the experience of the diasporic he anthology concludes with a reflection between Janelle Reinelt son upon the ideas put forth in the book and the broader f the local and the global. Reinelt and Carlson reveal that these d not be regarded in opposition but, rather, as entangled, h is reflected in this volume as a whole. A number of international l performance practices are discussed from diverse geographical spectives, illuminating the complexity of the local and the global. yests: "The global/local category as a hyphenated concept has n now, a cliché even. It first arose because the local was supposed cal from totalisation, but in fact the global/local concept became, nplex that this opposition was not useful anymore." Carlson's and ement with the essays, and with the broader issues of the global narks an important intervention into how we process experience : and performance in the world today.

clude: Marvin Carlson, Shamus Eldin, Lynette Hunter, Pirkko Koski, , Yasushi Nagata, Janelle Reinelt, Heike Roms, Nehad Selaha, jha Shvola, Joanne Tompkins, Denise Varney and Farah Yeganeh.

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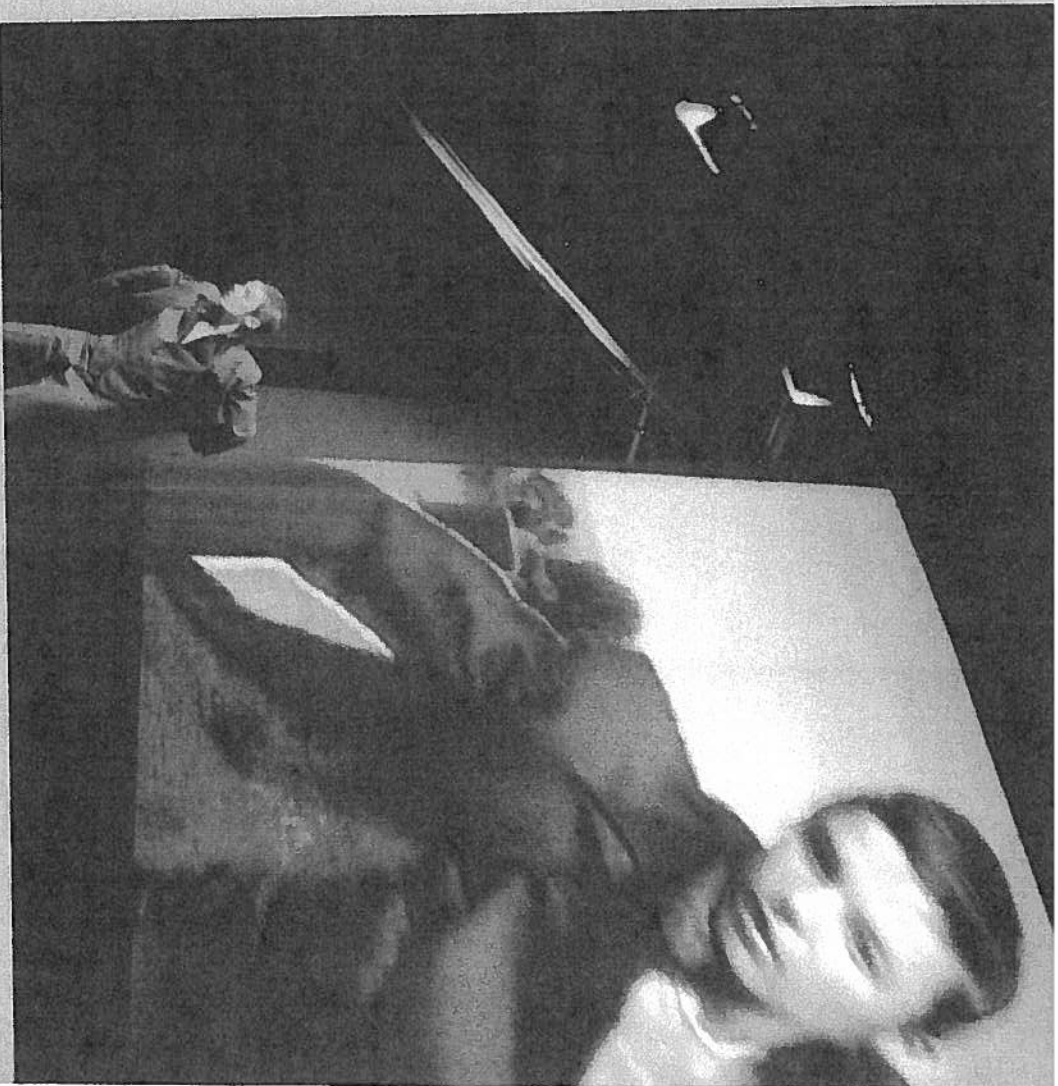


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KOSKI AND SIHRA

THE LOCAL MEETS THE GLOBAL IN PERFORMANCE

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# THE LOCAL MEETS THE GLOBAL IN PERFORMANCE

EDITED BY  
PIRKKO KOSKI AND MELISSA SIHRA

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The Local Meets the Global in Performance, Edited by Pirkko Koski and Melissa Sihra

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## INTRODUCTION

PIRKKO KOSKI AND MELISSA SHIRA

The 15<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Federation for Theatre Research in Helsinki, Finland, in 2006 had as its theme the "Global vs. Local". This theme sought to explore the relationship between contemporary global and local experiences, and to consider how theatre and performance responds to and informs this interface. With regard to current globalized super-structures, the materiality and cultural specificity of theatre and performance can serve as an important counterbalance to world trade and communication which often has no local address. It is important to consider how globalization impacts in different ways upon every local context. Globalization can be regarded as a set of social as well as economic processes, where the two are inextricably linked in terms of cultural production and human subjectivity. Yet, however much globalization pervades contemporary experience, it is a notoriously (perhaps sometimes deliberately) difficult concept to define. Armand Mattelart refers to globalization as, "One of those tricky words, one of those instrumental notions that, under the effect of market logics and without citizens being aware of it, have been naturalized to the point of becoming indispensable for establishing communication between people of different cultures."<sup>1</sup> Capital, workers and other commodities are constantly on the move and the hegemonic market influences the distribution of resources both in national and international economic systems. Neoliberalism, the commitment to a particular "idea" of freedom in terms of the ostensible unfettered circulation of goods and trade and the liberation of capital outside of social contexts and their obligations is, unsurprisingly, a bedrock of globalization. Neoliberalism, that is, "freedom" in quotation-marks, privileges certain bodies, goods, cultures and economies through a naturalized process of selection. Globalization often operates through a deliberate neoliberal strategy of abstraction, predicated upon essentially unequal notions of "universality". Implicated in this is the problematic erasure and mystification of ethical consequences

<sup>1</sup> Armand Mattelart cited in Schirato & Webb, *Understanding Globalisation*, 1.

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## INTERNATIONALISM, PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC CULTURE

LYNETTE HUNTER

Global and nation-state structures are dialectically interdependent, and have been dialectically and antidialectically disrupted by issues of post/neo/colonial agency and culture. However, neither of these options focuses on possible strategies for agency outwith the dialectic/antidialectic movement. The approach taken here is part of the development of a democratic humanism, which discards the exclusiveness of liberal humanism based on the dialectic, partly in response to greater awareness of international contexts. Those contexts help us explore the implications for culture and performance of an enfranchised disunified aesthetics that I call public culture. In this I am particularly interested in looking at issues that arise from re-positioning a feminist approach alongside the Euro-American discourses of power.

What has motivated this essay is first of all a concern that with the current focus on internationalism and globalisation, people are forgetting the nation. Without nation state structures globalisation cannot work. Nation states are the medium through which global economics and ideologies are effected. Second, I have been interested in the growing awareness of an international context since the nineteenth century which has foregrounded the universalist representations of nation states, the activity of art and culture within them, and the increasing biopolitical impact of global power on national art and culture. Third, I am concerned to position the writings about colonialisation and its aftermath with respect to the first two issues. Theorists of the post/neo/colonial have been acutely aware of the impact of national art and culture as global power. Historically, many of the nations from which situatedness they write, emerged as postcolonial nation states into fully fledged globalisation, aware not only of the universalist assumptions of the nation state but also of global-state mechanisms. Some responses to this awareness are discussed in this essay in order to present the difference between relativism and partiality – the concept of partial knowledge being key to

recent developments in new democratic rhetoric. And finally, I discuss three kinds of partial knowledge structures evidenced in performance events and processes with which I have engaged. Each delineates a kind of public culture, and offers a different engagement with national and global state apparatuses.

## 1.

With a developing global economic structure, the work of the nation state, which in contrast to the work of the 'nation' is primarily economic, is changing. In an economically defined nation state in the west, culture has been traditionally split between 'art' and 'popular culture', sometimes including 'craft'. This split defines aesthetic objects in terms of production and reception/consumption rather than processes of making or interacting with them. It is a way of looking at aesthetics in general that has come about in western countries that have established democratic understanding via liberal social contracts. When this aesthetic changes, it intertwines with politics and economics and weaves in with internationalism.

Today the nation is not so economically defined because the economics of state institutions are often inflected if not organised by global corporate power. There has been a material shift to include not only Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), a phrase I use in a hegemonic rather than Althusserian manner, but also Global-State Apparatuses (GSAs) that enable the intersection of national and global interests. Parallel to the rise of GSAs is the growth of the franchise in most western nation states, generating many and diverse claims to political power. The parallel occurs partly because as the citizenship of a nation-state grows, the latter has to look elsewhere for someone to subjugate in order to maintain the unequal relations of power that keep national liberalism going. The nation state expands its financial and economic borders geographically because it needs more people and more resources to exploit, so it is not surprising that colonialism walks hand in hand with environmentalism.

Within the nation state, governments have struggled to work out how to handle the diverse groups that have arisen as a result of enfranchisement, and many countries are in the middle of a crisis of representative government. 'Representation' is a political strategy devised initially to aid a very small group of people with similar interests: the middle and upper-middle class, those that are male and white, and those with the same education and the same basic interest in capital and property. Such a structure is seventeenth century European. Representation depends on similarity and concepts of universalism and autonomy that do not sit well

with members of an enfranchised population who raise profound issues of difference. The international flow of people, materials and information, has the effect of foregrounding the limitations of representation.

While 'representation' is a term that has come to signify political representation in the many representative democracies around the world, it also connotes the use of a medium to re-present, or present again, an experience in actual life. The latter sense of the term is closely associated with ideas about 'realism', and counts on the artist (in whatever medium) being able to generate an agreement with the audience about the referential 'reality' of the artistic product. This agreement can give both maker and viewer access to cultural power because the artistic product is recognised and legitimated. Representation is at the same time at the heart of universalist aesthetics and the concept of timeless beauty, and at the heart of the way culture and politics often come together in a nation-state context to ensure agreements about reality. In terms of its rhetorical effectiveness in society, representation is both a potential alert to the process of presentation, and at the same time a word that has come to signify repression of that process and a direct relation between a made object and a referential meaning.

Internationalism/globalisation contextualises these nation state issues around the relation between representation and aesthetics, and brings our attention to how the increasing movement of people and information around the world is calling this relation into question. Internationalism has many forms: globalisation, commodity-culture, the simulacrum, the WTO, NGOs and so on. The contexts that these conditions, structures and tactics offer to nation-state agreements about reality, can expose and/or reinforce the adequacy of representation to reality. They can insist on an exoticisation of representations of, by and for the 'other' versions of sociocultural reality outside the nation-state, yet can also open out radical possibilities for the not-represented/ational.

I argue here first that internationalism disrupts the perception of stability within the nation-state and undermines its claim to universality. In doing so it both establishes new representations that are often mediated by the nation state but are in effect stabilising global-state apparatuses, and foregrounds the aesthetics of representation as both an aesthetics of terror and sublimity for the represented and an aesthetics of terror and death for the unrepresented. I go on to argue that the effects of internationalism have also foregrounded the need for alternatives to 'representation', and an altered approach to aesthetics that I call public culture.

## 2.

Public culture is not a specific medium, technology or genre, but a rhetorical stance, a performance, specifically a performativity. There is no reason why theatre, dance, street performance or virtual presence could not be directed to each of the stances of 'art', 'popular culture' and 'public culture'. In any historical period with specific economic relations and socio-political pressures, any medium or practice may be directed toward one stance or another. In order to think about the performativity of public culture, I would like to extend the implications of 'representation' from global/national politics to aesthetics, and explore some of the ramifications that globalisation has had on how we think about 'art'.

Universalist aesthetics in the modern western world focus on what can be said about 'reality' and depend on the idea that no medium is adequate for complete or full representation. Media always fail to 'give' us reality, hence the artist has to transcend or transgress the limitations of the medium in order to represent. Agreements about the adequacy of representation have been discussed throughout the modern period from the birth of modern science and its debates between utopian linguistic representation and the complete inability to 'know' God's world, to both Kant (through the concept of the sublime) and Hegel arguing for a dialectical relation (conceived of as antithetical terms caught in a sublation that maintains each term) between the notion of adequacy and the opposition it spawns in transgression/transcendence (trans/trans).

However, this latter dialectic only works satisfactorily in relatively enclosed societies that define themselves with respect to 'others', and many critiques of Hegel derive from the racism and Eurocentrism of his dialectical thinking.<sup>1</sup> These societies form stable agreements about representations, and transgressions of them, which are in turn dependent on a highly controlled environment for the production, distribution and consumption of art. For example, art in western nation states has primarily worked with concepts of representation applicable to those defined as citizens: as in politics, property-owners, usually white, and predominantly male and Christian. Aesthetic objects made outside these representative agreements are called 'craft' or 'popular culture' or, as is often the case, are not even recognised as existing in relation to the category. Marx pointed this out from a class perspective.

Universalist aesthetics repress a recognition of art-objects made by the gender/class/ethnic/ability/age-based 'other'. These aesthetics can only

<sup>1</sup> Morton, "Poststructuralist Formulations", 162-3.

operate in societies where this violence can effectively be sustained. Within nation states, when hegemonic structures are not effective enough to control representations, the state usually turns to force. This provides a way of reading national revolutions as state-inspired violence, as well as a way of understanding the violence of the incarceration or eradication of the 'abnormal', meted out to those people who do not *fit* representations – for example Oscar Wilde. The response to successful and unsuccessful revolutions is to develop a hegemonic ethos that maintains the newly agreed-upon representations. Yet during the modern period, and especially with the turn into the twentieth century, the increasing mobility of class that broadened the middle class, has challenged the concept not only of political representation but of universal aesthetics. More and more working-class people, women and people of different ability recognised that the universalising qualities of representation, embedded into the dialectic of aesthetics, were not appropriate to their lives, and began to claim socio-cultural power.

Within the nation state there are alternatives to the trans/trans dialectic, one of the most effective being resistance, or the aesthetics of working against and across the grain. However, resistance, because of its fundamental dependence on the grain, and the universal it represents, can with time elide into compromise. Another alternative is relativism itself, a term that preoccupied critics and theorists throughout the twentieth century as they wrestled with universalism. But the heart of relativism is the question 'what is this relative to?' that links it back into notions of similarity. The effect is cultural toleration, and while there is an important place for an aesthetics of toleration within political society, it often fails to get to the root of the issue: hence the focus on contradiction in the work of Marx and his colleagues, and in the neo-Marxist philosophy of the 1960s-80s.<sup>2</sup> Contradiction cannot be resolved. It is a marker of irreducible difference. Without that sense of radical difference, the action of all strategies connected to universalism – even though they may be the most effective in the short term – plays into the effect of rhetorical shift: the inextorable commodifying and totalising power of representation as it is played out through rhetorical stances of consensus, corporate agreement, authoritarianism and totalitarianism. Or, in other vocabulary, the shift that representation makes possible from the constitution of subjectivity in discursive structures, to the construction of the subject in determinist ISAs.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: an Introduction*.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

At the same time, growing international contact through colonialism, international trade, international war, and migrancy has introduced other factors. Representation became a way to exert control over people outside the nation-state and the violence of its universalising rhetoric lies at the core of colonial terror. Outside the nation-state, the initial power of its representations is usually enforced by the military, and while representation is sometimes co-opted into the social and political institutions of the colonised country, ongoing force is a frequent necessity. As Achille Mbembe has noted, rather than biopolitical repression, colonised countries can be seen to exist in a necropolitical vise.<sup>4</sup>

The largest political unit in which representation holds together is the nation state. Some international affiliations offer larger structures for political units, but of course global structures are not political in the sense of relating to a specific polis. Marx famously used the concept of the international to critique the capitalist nation state and its repression of those not included as citizens. However, the processes of globalisation have co-opted nation state representations for their own ends. The impact of internationalism has been ambivalent because it not only foregrounds the limitations of those representations, but also increases the violence of cultural colonialism. This ambivalent standoff is critically explored by Stephen Morton in an essay exploring the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri against the background of Ernesto Laclau's, Slavoj Žižek's and Robert J. C. Young's work on the potential for internationalism.<sup>5</sup> It is also fundamental to Graham Huggan's exploration of the 'exotic' as a term that has shifted from being determined by ISAs to being determined by GSAs.<sup>6</sup>

The exponential increase in the speed of transmission and the quantity of representations that derive from sophisticated national ethos strategies and move outside the nation state in a globalised era, shoves aesthetics toward mimicry, universalist masks, exoticism, multiculturalism. What these and similar approaches have in common is the experience of aesthetic work being recognised in and commodified by another's representative system/version of reality. The process is violent but not necessarily victimising. Exoticised cultures, for example, can use otherness against the originating source. And with globalisation comes also the concept of the simulacrum: a recognition of representation as a commodity in itself. This has a longer history than it is usually accorded

<sup>4</sup> Mbembe, "Necropolitics", and *On the Postcolony: Berkeley*.

<sup>5</sup> Morton, "'Workers of the World Unite' and Other Impossible Propositions", 290-98.

<sup>6</sup> Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*.

and is linked to innovations in information flow that are connected to the invention and role of the telegraph in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In Europe, the aesthetics of performance developed in the early twentieth century by Mikhail Bakhtin, Walter Benjamin and Bertolt Brecht demonstrate a concern to foreground the rhetoric of representation and discuss the implications of a more diverse population of aesthetic interaction. Bakhtin formulates the rhetoric of dialogism to move beyond the dialectical compromise, introducing heteroglossia or speaking difference/the speaking of different people, that opens out the work of 'not knowing', of 'speaking in tongues' that implies an audience that does not understand the significance of what is said in terms of representation as a stable and controllable entity. And representation as a term that defines an engaged performativity that recognises the repressive rhetoric of universalist aesthetics was found increasingly unhelpful because of the difficulty of differentiating it from those aesthetics.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere there was a growing understanding of 'representation' as an ideological tactic that defines/confines the conditions of citizenship and suppresses aspects of individual life that do not fit the 'subject', both ignoring (for ignorance makes possible the bliss of aesthetic sublimity) and violently destroying the value of lives outwith those conditions. Walter Benjamin's fascination with commodification is a way of thinking about the ways in which allowable representations define a subject that 'fits', and because so many people, or at least those members of what used to be called the bourgeoisie, are invested in a commodity-culture dependent on, for example, *The American Dream* (Engels' 'false consciousness'), that rhetoric of representational fit continues to effect enormous social and cultural power.

Commodification is a version of representation operating with an extra-national scope. Commodity flow, as Benjamin recognised in his Arcades project, is across state boundaries and is potentially, if not usually, international. The arcades of the nineteenth century were modelled on the Great Exhibitions, for example the 1848 Alexandra Palace exhibition that displayed the global power of the British Empire at

<sup>7</sup> The Prague School theorists of performance and theatre, working in the 1920s-40s, recognised representation as 'a direct perception' in which models 'stand for originals' (Quinn, 23). From this, representation becomes both ideologically predictable/predicating, but the theatrical sign becomes 'a coded representation of signs that already exist in codes, [and] draws attention to the double articulation of the theatrical sign' (Quinn, 63). The latter renders theatre experience a particular kind of aesthetic experience 'constituted in the minds of the receivers' (1941 Makarovsky).

a decisive moment between decades of working-class and labour uprisings and the emergence of a tamed urban middle-class and its servants. The arcades, like the exhibitions, were unselfconscious representations of excess and power, as are many United States' malls today despite the antiglobal activism targeting companies such as Nike. The foreign was viewed simply as an exploitable resource: nineteenth century nations were catalogued in the British Library under raw materials, for example Trinidad under 'sugar', Canada under 'fur'.

Benjamin's project foregrounded globalisation and capital, articulating the effects of commodity culture, the trash, the garbage. In contrast to this universalising effect, the Arcades Project is a performance of imperial globalisation, an extended 'dialectical image' which is defined by Benjamin not as sublation but as an allegory that encourages 'constellations' that foreground the imbrication of commodity culture, middle class life, exploitation, and the violence of capitalism. Brecht's 'Verfremdungseffekt' has an analogous rhetoric in that it specifically disrupts the power of representation, and enables the object as 'gestus' – a peculiarly theatrical reading of rhetorical stance as not only the moment in which the rhetor, audience and medium interact, but one in which they interact through the performance of difference in the space and time of gesture.

### 3.

How does this actually translate into performance within western nation states? One way of looking at this is to begin by recognising that most of the valued art forms in the modern period have been capital-intensive; and even that unless an art process is capital-intensive it is not usually valued. Theatre is no exception. Stage-based works in capital-bound buildings to which one can control access, and through which texts one can integrate with representative power, are the primary focus of aesthetic value in drama, while performance on the street, in circus, in music hall or in cabaret, has not traditionally been valued as art. Many of the performative media of the twentieth century have responded to this nexus of control. The alternative theatre that grew out of the influx of working-class men into university theatre after both WW1 and WW2 is one example. Happenings, improvised/devised work, contact dance, conceptual art and performance art, are some of the changes amongst many. The explosion of cabaret into one-person shows like *Krapp's Last Tape*, street activism, and the resurgence of circus are all ways of finding an alternative to the

biopolitical repressions of representation operating through the capital-intensive cultural ISAs of theatre.

However, it is rare to find a performative medium or genre that succeeds in maintaining its resistant and/or alternative work, and 'alternative' theatre or performance is not by definition resistant. Often it is transgressive and/or transcendent in itself, as it mimics the structures of work already recognised as 'art' and becomes subversively compromised in cultural fit. Resistant work, as noted above, is subject to rhetorical shift. It may well begin as a situated moment of disruptive energy, a performance I define elsewhere as site-particular. But repetition over a number of sites moves its effect/affect into the site-specific. The site becomes not the ecology of the contiguous elements that surround the performance, but the spatial coordinates of the performance itself. For example, the Utopia installation by Rirkrit Tiravanija has toured for several years. When it found its way to New York in May 2007, a reviewer commented,

seeing it at Zwirner adds alluring new layers. What some will take for a power gallery absorbing a more underground one, and a successful artist allowing himself to be eaten alive, is actually an exquisite symbiosis. Zwirner reveals his scrappy roots, Gavin Brown (who still represents Tiravanija) ups his ante, and Tiravanija, who no longer owns the piece, is just "acting" here.<sup>8</sup>

Tiravanija has been ironised, made specific to the site that can afford the installation rather than particular to his initial work that combined a variety of performance art forms and positioned the artist as nurturer or 'healer'.

It is important to recognise that nation-state ISAs do not only control through biopolitical constraints, and that many constituencies within the nation state are repressed through violence. Yet countries that have experienced colonisation and have total violence as a condition of their existence may have different insights into structures of public culture. Writing from the same chronological period as Bakhtin, Benjamin and Brecht, Franz Fanon addresses the effects of global-state representations mediated by nations in Africa that experienced colonisation by European powers. Faced by the colonised nation's culture, the structures of nation-state representation brought by the coloniser looked in a different way at art. Within the nation state, performance such as circus had a history of being disruptive, but effective biopolitical controls such as time limits on

<sup>8</sup> Saltz, "Conspicuous Consumption."



how long transients could occupy local space, existed to maintain order. In a newly colonised country, usually recovering from or in the midst of ongoing war, disruptive art forms were simply destroyed – for example the writings of the Aztec culture by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. This is the baseline modus operandi for establishing the representations of the coloniser. The necropolitical violence it encapsulates transfers to all other parts of colonised life. So for example, in a colonised country, ignorance of aesthetic value did not result in the kind of biopolitical obliviousness that can help to maintain the existence of an art form – you carry on regardless – but instead had the effect of erasing that art form. For example techniques for storytelling in Canadian indigenous communities were erased by the residential school terror as over five-hundred languages were reduced to five primary systems between 1900 and the 1960s.

The ultimate intent of the colonising representations was not to maintain a class boundary around art, outside of which many other forgettable things could go on, but to instantiate and incarnate those representations in and through the state apparatus established by the coloniser in the other country. This entailed not only the violent destruction of people and artefacts, but also a destruction of memory, a severing of the present understanding of the body from the bodies of the past. Frantz Fanon articulates this eloquently in *Black Skin, White Masks*, a book that can be read as a response to biopolitical control, and needs continual recontextualising within the terror that produced it.<sup>9</sup> At the same time Fanon argues for the agency of the black person, but as Stephen Morton notes, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon asserts that because colonial violence denies a reciprocal engagement with the coloniser's dialectic it yields a repetition of the violence as an agential strategy.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Morton, "Poststructuralist Formulations", 164-7.

<sup>10</sup> Even after colonising powers leave a country, they leave not only their footprint stamped in the earth, but also retain a sense of cultural ownership over the art objects that country produces. For example, England is inordinately proud of many of the English-language poems, novels and plays, produced from various parts of the Commonwealth, while it is not all that keen on non-English language products from the same countries. When Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o returned to writing in Gikuyu, his assertion of a cultural difference running alongside western capitalism was interpreted as a kind of reverse violence, as was Quebeoise writer Gail Scott's use of French in the supposedly Anglophone novel *Heroine*. And the economic colonisation of global corporate power, such as that exerted by the United States over Canada, can produce similar kinds of ownership: not content to take over the national publishing industry with the NAFTA agreements in the early 1990s, the United States occasionally takes over the authors. Writers such as Margaret Atwood and Douglas Copeland are frequently described as 'Americans', ie from

When your own national culture is destroyed or shamed out of existence, and replaced by another national culture being used by global interests as a weapon to stand in for the actual deaths happening on the streets, your participation can easily be trapped in that necropolitical move.

Edward Said's criticism from *Orientalism* onwards has more in common with Bakhtin's dialogism and Benjamin's dialectical image, than Hegel's sublated dialectic that underpins the determinist structures of ISAs and GSAs, because it works to locate all those events that lie outwith the orientalist representation. And more recent critics and theorists of colonialism, postcolonialism and neo-colonialism, including Achille Mbembe have explored other locations of agency in the necropolitical aesthetics of performance. Homi Bhabha's short but profoundly affective essay on mimicry written in 1984 mutated Fanon's mirror.<sup>11</sup> Colonised subjects looked at the coloniser as an image they tried to mirror, something they worked to emulate at the same time as feeling the tension of another, unrepresentable existence, and the continual violence of its erasure. But Bhabha's postcolonial subjects have grown up in limbo. They have no unrepresentable other, only an image that is already dislocated and refracted through the coloniser's lens. When they see themselves/each other they do not see selves, but mimics of someone else's potentiality. Bhabha goes on in later work to a productive rhetoric of the postcolonial, but this terrifying image always remains a possibility. In his later work he develops the idea of the unrepresented as no longer as part of a dialectic but as a site for antidiialectical movement.<sup>12</sup>

An example of an antidiialectical strategy might be Walid Raad's 'The Bachar Tapes' video in The Atlas Group archive.<sup>13</sup> The video documents the narrative of Souheil Bachar, a hostage in the Lebanon crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s. Bachar is the unrepresented hostage, the person who, because he was Lebanese, was never accorded any recognition, publicity, or post-hostage published memoir. The tape calls attention to its artefactuality at the start, subtly throughout, and in its conclusion, but nevertheless uses the visual and verbal rhetoric of hostage narrative and documentary interview to construct an intervention into those media. Rather than working only dialectically to expose the limitations and injustices of a particular situation – the forgotten Lebanese hostage – it works to locate moments of disjuncture, to create visual effects that have

the United States, a cold irony especially for Atwood, who is highly critical of NAFTA.

<sup>11</sup> Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Men", 125-33.

<sup>12</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/data/TypeA.html>

nothing to do with the hostage issues and remain elusively unreadable. The fact that the video can play with issues of representative gender and masculinity to establish the dialectic is necessary for the antidiialectical impulse toward unrepresenting masculinity, confusing the narrative. This dislocation into the unrepresentable replicates in his 'Fadi Fakhouri File, Notebook 38' in which the cars exploded in Lebanon are carefully detailed thus erasing the actual remains of human bodies, and in the 'Secrets in the Open Sea' file in which monochromatic images of 'blue' are accompanied by text that informs us that they are pictures of human bodies found dead in the Mediterranean. The power of these images comes partly from the superstructure of discursive media elements in which Raad embeds them, yet which they elude by being present in an unpredictable way.

Many postcolonial critics are engaged in identifying and containing the terror of postcolonial representation. Some also and honestly write and speak about the positive interactions that have occurred. And some explore the viable alternatives. As Morton has pointed out, the concept of subaltern studies is also split between those working with a structure that relies on a Hegelian sublation of dialectic, and those working antidiialectically such as Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Spivak is particularly interesting for her suggestion that subaltern individuals do not simply replace the outgoing colonisers in postcolonial governance, but are radically part of a different geopolitical space that operates alongside the structures of governance, whether they be ISAs or GSAs. For Spivak the argument is an ethical one: because of the radical separation of the subaltern from the postcolonial, there is an impossibility of full ethical engagement. But rather than remaining trapped by the universalist dialectic of Fanon's repetition of violence, Spivak suggests working on the partial structures that claim universality. The ethics of the subaltern as she defines it are always partial, always potentially interruptive, eruptive and disruptive, because there is little common ground.<sup>14</sup> This perception, coming from a context of postcolonial studies focused on disrupting the universalist dialectic of representation, leads directly to the concept of public culture with which I am concerned, because much of our lives runs alongside the representational and that portion can also generate culture even if it is not recognised as such by nation-state structures.

In the three examples that follow I focus on people like me who work both with those in power, those relatively empowered, and those who power does not see. In this I am particularly interested in looking at issues

<sup>14</sup> Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and The Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 12.

that arise from re-positioning a feminist approach 'alongside' ISAs and GSAs, not denying their impact but working to formulate rhetorics that generate long-term effects alongside the Euro-American discourses of power.

#### 4.

Public culture is here defined as the culture that recognises diverse cultural power. 'Art', as noted at the start of this essay, has been the culture of the empowered and relatively-empowered group accorded special rights by the social contract of liberal humanism. For the whole of the modern period, valued and recognised art has to do with those who have the money both to consume and produce, to disseminate and to market. In contrast, public culture is the culture of large numbers of people from quite diverse backgrounds at last included in 'rights', including the right to cultural agency. Dialectical sublation, whether it works with ideological or hegemonic representation, supports 'Art'. The descriptions of antidiialectical work in both European philosophy and postcolonial theory have developed partly through the lens of growing international and global movement towards process-bound and partial knowledge concepts that can help delineate public culture as a disunified aesthetics.

To respond to a diverse constituency, public culture has to be able to recognise and encourage the valuing of differentiated voices. Specific strategies for the kind of recognition needed for public culture have been developed in the field of situated knowledge, the braided way, and in advocacy – among others. Situated knowledge (Lorraine, Code, Donna Haraway, Patricia Hill Collins, Lynette Hunter) offers an alternative to the universal/relative split of the liberal social contract. This split is only liveable-with if you come from that very small population of privileged people with roughly same-interest backgrounds. Instead, there can be recognition of partial knowledge that acknowledges that 'difference' is not something that pre-exists, to be 'tolerated' in others, but is instead something we make in our interrelations with other people, recognising their and our own partiality that collapses the positions of producer/consumer/owner. The situated generates an acknowledgement of partial knowledge, and a celebration of difference.

I worked for a few years with a group of Somali women refugees living in Sheffield. They needed a copy-editor for a book they were publishing<sup>15</sup> and I was interested in their storytelling practices. Oral

<sup>15</sup> Souleiman, MAMA, Footprint: Recipes for Life.

storytelling is a medium that intrigues me because it is quite precisely situated, and changes with every shift in the makeup of teller and audience. Working with the Somali organisation MAMA, I have rarely met a more welcoming and friendly group of total strangers. Their stories were elusive, at times made no sense to me, and the women were not overly interested in mine. But they were interested in having me among them, possibly from curiosity. I did the copy-editing over a period of a year, and then offered to work with them on a movement program, because they rarely got any exercise and were often still wearing traditionally long garments that made aerobics and yoga rather difficult.

This second project, which was two years long, was tied into the work of a teacher of English as a second language, and work I wanted to do on stories about healing foods and medicine. The process was intriguing because I had not entered it with any idea of 'understanding' the women, nor had they any wish to get to know me personally. But we were engaged in thinking about the same issues. I was able to offer my approaches to movement and health, and they offered theirs. The points of contact were few and the beliefs were quite different, and this became the substance of our interaction. We were learning about our quite separate and different attitudes and in this lengthy process they found out a lot about negotiating with British culture, and I found out a lot about how my initial research objectives were inappropriate. Yet knowing the difference between us was fundamental to the cohesiveness of the situated community we made up. The process of constructing that community was a process of marking the differences between and among the individuals in the group, literally articulating them within a particular context so that the differences rather than common ground became the linking factor.

Other alternatives to representative strategies based on common ground are also found in the concept of the 'braided way', and in advocacy. Three-braid teaching, a Mohawk learning strategy, speaks of braiding three quite different strands of living together, to form a stronger way of life.<sup>16</sup> I find this suggestion thought-provoking because it retains the elements of each discrete strand of the braid, while weaving them together into a contiguous and engaged whole. The analogy could help understand how people work in a collaborative manner yet maintain their

<sup>16</sup> Peter Kulchyski, then working in the Native American Studies Department at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, told me first about this way of thinking and knowing. He had learned it from Sylvia Maracle, recently President of the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. See also Elder Tom Porter's account of the analogy of sweetgrass braiding as a way of thinking about life, at: <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/mohawk.pdf>

particular characteristics, when making performance – or any other – work. It can also offer a structure for the way that hegemonic discourses run alongside not only subjectivity, but also radically different materiality as in, for example, the performance of the whale festival in Pamiqtuq in 1999.

Pamiqtuq, Nunavut, in the eastern arctic of Canada, was chosen as only the second community in the entire circumpolar region for decades to be allowed to harvest one bowhead whale in the traditional manner. The event was tied to different socio-political aims in the international structure of the circumpolar conference; the national government of Canada in Ottawa, the territorial government of Nunavut in Iqaluit (established that year), the network of Inuit villages throughout Nunavut, the local hamlet council, the fishery in the hamlet, the traditional way of Inuit life, and the individuals living in this traditional hamlet – not to mention the church, the tourist industry, the crafts centre, the fast food outlets, the grocery store and so on. Yet what was at stake was a way of living. The previous community entrusted with this task had not succeeded in carrying out the promise to circulate boxes of whale meat around the circumpolar countries. Ancestral skills not used generally since the 1950s were being tested out again with younger and less experienced generations. The ecological integration of the whale hunt into every aspect of life from hunting and sewing to shelter to fuel to tools to food, was about to be materialised in a way unseen for decades.

The whale was successfully hunted and killed and brought in for harvesting. The festival centred upon long tables piled with different kinds of whale meat from which people were free to help themselves, and at which many Inuit were shaving wafer thin pieces of flesh or blubber with long sharp knives or ulus. At the same time there was a raised platform on which the visitors from the south, the government officials and media workers, were welcomed, along with members of the territorial assembly, village elders, and hamlet councillors. And then friends and families, and a band. These elements were significantly different from each other yet were involved in the performance of a radically separate cultural continuity, embedded into which was a millennium or more of whale hunting, the history of European whaling which had left its mark on Pamiqtuq, and the contemporary fact of a fish-packing plant that exported fish all over the world and could make good the promise of sending whale meat to other communities.

The government people from the 'south' may have felt it was their affair: they had 'allowed' the hunt, they had visited the hamlet to celebrate its success, they had brought their national media to disseminate images –

and they were clearly a part of the event. But it was as if they existed in a firmly delineated relationship alongside quite different values and interests that were not trying to change them, but to coexist. The event was a set of braided circumstances that formed a strong sense of purpose among people with quite different agendas. I would argue that this way of life is not tolerant of the other braids but mutually strengthened by them and critical of them, to the extent that each strand is aware of the significant differences between them all.

A third possible alternative to universalist representation is advocacy. This work has a long and venerable history, especially in the legal world. It came more into cultural and political studies during the 1990s with Nina Yuval-Davis' work on transversal strategies, and was brought self-consciously into play during Cynthia Cockburn's work with women in war zones in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel-Palestine, and Protestants-Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Yuval-Davis was specifically trying to explore alternatives to political representation and suggested advocacy as a way to deal with a diversified polity. Working from the concept of 'transversal politics' developed by Italian feminists, Yuval-Davis speaks of the political activity of a person 'rooting' in their identity at the same time as 'shifting' "in order to put herself in the situation of exchange with women who have different ... identity".<sup>18</sup> In common with situated knowledge theory, transversal politics recognises the particular position of individuals and the inevitability of partial knowledge, and hence the constant need to negotiate difference. As Cynthia Cockburn writes, there is a "difference between mere "dialogue groups" and true collaborative projects whose success hinges on facing up to difference and constantly renegotiating the terms of solidarity".<sup>19</sup> Hence there needs to be a way of democratically agreeing to move forward even though people come from quite different motivations.

Advocacy, suggests Yuval-Davis, offers strategies for group action that depend on difference and recognise the rhetorical work of stance, which is the integrated performative context of the political event. Advocacy speaks to and to some extent is a particular experience and/or life. It does not usually have a coherent representative function because those who advocate build on the fact that they are not the same as those being

<sup>17</sup> Cockburn worked with me on a research grant from Gresham College that marked a turning point in the project, and resulted, in among other productions, in Cockburn and Hunter, *Transversal Politics: an issue of Soundings* 12, 88-190.

<sup>18</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*.

<sup>19</sup> Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, 211, quoting Sharoni, *Gender and the Israeli-Palestine Conflict*.

advocated for. Nor do the individual elements in the group being advocated for necessarily have much similarity, although there is usually a common end they wish to achieve. The advocate may indeed not personally agree with many in a group, but want to bring this particular experience/life into visibility and claim value for it. Cynthia Cockburn's action research project on women in war zones used photography to provide an advocative strategy.

Cockburn describes her action research work as making these images "directly available to the projects, furthering... a seeing of themselves through my eyes, and a seeing of me through the way I was seeing them". Second, the photos were used to help them develop publicity and fundraising material. Third, they were used in her research publications to provide an "alternative narrative accompanying the written text".<sup>20</sup> The photographs became an exhibition called *Women Building Bridges* that travelled over eighteen months to many venues and was translated into several languages. The material presented women working on alternatives to force, on viable and positive ways of dealing with difference that were being worked out at the same time as the men in these women's lives went out every day to kill each other. Cockburn addressed the ethics of the project by fully involving the women with whom she worked in collectively choosing the photographs for the display. Each part of the action research project involved women from communities at war with one another, and this involvement ran parallel with the involvement in the joint community project at which they worked. What the display did was advocate for an alternative to war, but not for any one side or another. It became part of the process of living together in a war zone.

## 5. Alongside

Running alongside hegemonic structures, whether they be employed in the interests of the nation state or global power, are strategies for living and agency that are not primarily inflected by those structures.<sup>21</sup> Situated knowledge foregrounds partiality and difference and emphasises the processes of collaboration that run alongside hegemonic agreements. The braided way highlights the possibilities of common strength from contiguous but quite different aims and agendas, and can include those of

<sup>20</sup> Cockburn, *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> See Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* for a related concept of 'beside', that opens out the potential for agency parallel to discursive structures.

national and global governing structures. And advocacy, in Cockburn's terms, faces up to difference, continuously negotiates solidarity, and works to implement its collective intervention into the state. These rhetorical strategies are a few among many that have in common a focus on difference and a recognition of partiality, although they all work in different ways with respect to dominant discourse. They acknowledge the drawbacks of universal representation and the limitations of relativism in an international world where diverse populations have claims on power, including, in these examples, cultural power. What I would like to suggest is that they are not 'antidialectical', but that they run alongside both global and nation state representations, offering thought-provoking ways of developing approaches to public culture that suggest a disunified aesthetics.

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