

**Know Your Place: An investigation of site-specific performance as an exchange of hospitality between artist and audience.**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others

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## Abstract

The thesis offers analysis of a practice-research investigation of site-specific performance and its potential for supporting a reciprocal exchange between artist and audience, using hospitality as a theoretical lens and as a principle for artistic practice. Through engaging the laws of hospitality in the creation of four pieces of performance, the practice moves *away* from making work as an autonomous artistic action that is thereafter offered for consumption by an audience of strangers, and *towards* collaborating with the audience as people invested in the performance. The thesis engages hospitality to extend the possibilities for exchange between artist and audience. I draw on the discourse on audience experience, participatory processes, and cultural policy on public engagement in the arts to suggest that aspects of performance practice could be enhanced by a consideration of the relationship between host and guest. The thesis then offers worked examples of how hospitality can be placed as a central concern in the design of site-specific performance. I explore how far the audience can act as host to the artist, in an inversion of the usual order whereby the audience (individual member or collective) is invited into a frame for presentation provided by the artist. The research engages hospitality with performance practice towards contributing to the discourse on Cultural Democracy and the critique of participatory projects constructed by institutions that confirm the status quo. The practice-research is informed by post-colonial critique, whereby when viewed through the lens of hospitality, the arrival of the stranger – ‘the other’ - at the threshold is the drama that precipitates a difficulty. I suggest that the difference in the level of cultural capital held by the artist relative to that by the audience, individually or collectively, is at the heart of the difficulty, and that this can be interrogated through site-specific performance. The trajectory of the research moves through the presentation of a set of experimental performances towards exploring how artists might mitigate this difficulty. I propose that a beginning can be made through a consideration of performance form. As an entry to developing such a form, I work towards articulating a dramaturgy of hospitality.

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## Introduction

Not only is there a culture of hospitality, but there is no culture that is not also a culture of hospitality. All cultures compete in this regard and present themselves as more hospitable than the others. Hospitality – this is culture itself.

(Derrida, 2002, p. 361)

The introduction offers an overview of the project and of the four performance elements that form the basis of the practice-research. The concluding section of this introduction outlines how people were involved in the project, what their role entailed, and where the work took place.

The research was not focused on gathering and analysing perceptions of the *aesthetics* of the performances by those involved. It *was* concerned with finding a performance form whereby those taking part as audiences can act as hosts to the artist, and whereby the artist is hosted by the audience. The thesis traces the practice-research towards finding this form, and the problems and challenges encountered along the way and the artistic strategies developed to address these. I note that an individual's perspective on the work is likely to be informed by prior experience of performance as one of many factors. This observation is made explicit in reflections on feedback from participants in *Care Home* and *House*.

Towards working within the framework of hospitality as a mutual exchange between artist and audience, the practice-research was conducted with reference to the 'laws of hospitality'. These are outlined in the chapter setting out the research context and discussed as to how these can apply to site-specific performance in relation to the literature on hospitality.

The practical work took place over a period of 5 years, and the dates of the performances are noted with an acknowledgement of external events that were of significance within the general sensibility around hospitality, for example, the referendum on British membership of the EU and the discourse on immigration, and the lock-down due to Covid-19, which affected the hospitality industry. I offer a rationale for practice-research as the key methodology in Chapter 1, and analysis of

the performance work in Chapter 3.

The common-place expression 'know your place' used as the title of this practice-research project *Know Your Place* is consciously ambiguous. I engage the phrase 'know your place' throughout the thesis, whereby the expression is attached to the site-specific practice through which the research is conducted, and to the discussions of hospitality that form the theoretical lens for the research. The research took place in the space created by the ambiguity of the phrase, which is understood to suggest either or both:

- the imperative to understand the position in which one finds oneself, socially, culturally, to behave accordingly, shaping one's aspirations within the boundaries of a given status. Bourdieu's formulation of habitus is evoked, whereby social capital is both produced and gauged by reproductions of social structures and habitation therein. (Bourdieu and Nice, 1984) and
- an invitation to explore a geographical location, milieu, position, or site.

The phrase is attached to the site-specific practice through which the research is conducted, and to the discussion of hospitality that forms the theoretical lens of the research. In addition, the phrase evokes the protocol of seating arrangements enacted by the host of a formal dinner, or a business meeting whereby each attendee's place is variously coded according to cultural norms, and certainly usually has meaning at formal dinners in terms of an individual guest's placement at the table. I link ideas on place and space with discourse on domestic issues and hospitality, particularly as this concerns feminist critique of the labour of women in engendering and delivering hospitality, which Amy Olberding relates to the discourse on 'virtue' (Olberding, 2016 p257-258), and etiquette. The etymology of the word 'etiquette' is engaged in the analysis of *House*, where I include a discussion of whether 'ticketing' and making a charge for entry is appropriate in a performance event predicated on ideas of hospitality. This is done to explore how different kinds of performance of place come together. An example includes the phrase 'Below the salt'. This also evokes such etiquette as Margaret Visser discusses in her treatise on 'the mythology, allure and obsessions, perils and taboos of an ordinary meal' (Visser 2010 p 158). Visser gives an account of the role of salt and both its monetized value and by association its class value

for those able to afford it. Its symbolic value was engaged in a performance of place, whereby the position of 'cellar' (sel-ar) divided the status of those seated at the table between those near to the powerful host as indicated by the proximity of cellar to the host, and those furthest away. The expression 'below the salt' indicates one's place in society – and it is as well to know it. In the provision of hospitality made throughout the practice, I engage the theory on these matters in the aesthetics of the work created. As discussed in Chapter 1, 'feelings' are an aspect of methodology to be considered; how the affordances of the performance space work on audiences, towards their comfort and confidence. 'Knowing' one's place is therefore of significance, socially and commercially. Versions of the phrase in the thesis include 'know their place' and 'know my place' according to context.

'Place' is a concept attached to performance that asserts site. I report on the ways in which both audiences and artists come to know a place through working together at site, drawing on the practice-research over four explorations of specific sites through performance.

Through practice, I aim to create a locus where audience and artists can meet in a project of mutual interest, where hospitality forms the cultural framework for an exchange that is transformational for both parties, in order that they can invite each other to 'know your place'. I engage the words 'transformative' and 'transformational' in my discussion of the possibilities for exchange between artist and audience and exchange *of* artist *with* audience, referencing writing on subject/object relations, particularly as Erika Fischer-Lichte conducts this (Fischer-Lichte 2004). Her case study of *Lips of Thomas* details the mechanics of the transformation of the audience from spectator to actor, as the audience intervened in the action set in motion by the artist Marina Abramovic in this performance. By virtue of *some* members of the audience's intervention in bringing the action to a close, these (now by this token) *actors*, effectively defined the temporal parameters of the work and became integral to it. (Fischer-Lichte (2004 pp 11-23). The argument Fischer-Lichte advances on this transformational process – the exchange between artist and audience - is complex and engages a range of hermeneutic and semiotic approaches to aesthetics. The key point concerning transformational relations between artist and audience from the analysis of



*Lips of Thomas*, and drawn into this thesis, is that performance has the potential to be open, rather than closed, provisional rather than fixed. As discussed in the Conclusion, the aim of complete reciprocity between artist and audience is tempered for example by the very complexities identified in Fischer-Lichter's argument.

I investigate features shared with site-specific performance practice and other cultural practices and settings, particularly in hospitality, where the host/guest relationship is played out. An example lies within the heritage context of the National Trust. Here the premise in terms of the transference of property title from the (usually) private owner to the general public is that 'my place is now your place'.

I set out the rationale for *Know Your Place* as a practice-research project in the chapter on Methodology and refine this in the chapter on Research Context. The practice-research aims to create the circumstances for, and to test the results of, a creative relationship between performance and hospitality as cultural forms. Each piece is documented through still photographs or video. Two suites of printed material included in this submission relating respectively to *House* and *City* have the joint status of documentation and as outputs of the research. Recent developments in the scholarly debate in hospitality studies suggest an appetite to engage with disciplines beyond the business and management sector that appears to have been the primary focus to date. (Germann, Molz and Gibson eds, 2007, Lynch et al, 2011 p. 4). Here, performance is explicitly proposed as a productive field with which to collaborate and there is an overlap between the theoretical frameworks that underpin scholarship in both contexts. Hospitality is discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the etymology of a word that expresses both welcome and rebuff. This linguistic aspect illuminates the complex ways hospitality comes into play in human relations and is threaded through the thesis as an analytic tool. Derrida's portmanteau word 'hostipitality' encapsulates his observation that "Hospitality' is a word which carries its own contradictions incorporated into it'. (Derrida, 2000). This key idea is unpacked in Chapter 2, particularly in relation to hospitality and then applied throughout the thesis, as the contradictions evoked by Derrida are manifested in the four site-specific performance events that constitute the cycle of practice-research titled *Know Your Place*.

The project is underpinned by a range of thought that while not primarily concerned with performance, hospitality or site, place, and space, nevertheless *is* engaged with power relationships in cultural production. *Know Your Place* brings this literature into dialogue with artistic practice. Writing on post-capitalism and art, Dave Beech suggests that art has developed a range of critical practices but has yet to develop mechanisms effectively to efface existing social systems (Beech 2019 pp 1-13). Marina Vishmidt explores art that exposes both its own hidden labour and that of the activities that are fundamental to the smooth operation of society, but that have low status or indeed are invisible (Vishmidt 2015). This is of relevance to the practice-research discussed in Chapter 3, whereby the section describing and analysing the project *Garden*, and the performance of *Garden*, highlights my own labour (as a gardener) made explicit in the activity that brought the performance presentation into being, and is evident in the site. These writers are concerned with power. This research reflects on such concerns by mobilising hospitality as a critical lens through which to examine the (unequal) power relations at play between artist and audience. It does so in the context of performance.

The mechanics of hospitality, in relation to the invitation *to* and proprietorship *of* space – who is being invited into whose space – are examined. The distinction between ‘space’ and ‘place’ (Massey, 2007; Yuan, 1997; de Certeau, 2011) is enfolded into an exploration of hospitality whereby the roles of host and guest are both produced and perceived. Site-specific performance is engaged to illuminate the operations of hospitality as a cultural form that itself involves performance, for example *of* the role of ‘landlady’, or of ‘butler’ as well as the delivery of service to the customer (guest) at expected levels of quality. The research explores the ways by which the parties of artist and audience, and host and guest come to an understanding of their role in the proceedings of both performance and hospitality.

I propose that performance that asserts site-specificity has the potential to support a mutually transformative exchange between artist and audience, distinct from the relationship between these parties that pertains in the theatre building. To go further, I propose that site-specific performance produced under the laws of hospitality has the potential to enable both artist and audience to know their place – and this ‘knowing’ can support a productive shift in the power relationship between the producer and

consumer of art. I discuss the linguistic origins of hospitality, which contains within it some contradictions pertinent to my investigation of the relationship between audience and artist.

The methodology places site-specific performance in critical relation to the scholarly debate on the ways in which hospitality studies are informed and illuminated by engaging with performance practice and theory. Lashley, Lynch and Morrison assert that;

the host/guest transaction can be depicted as actors performing their respective roles, within a temporary time frame to a script governed by the prevailing 'laws', on a stage that is deliberately constructed to convey symbolism and meaning, and brings into play debates concerning authenticity.

(Lashley et al 2007, p. 175)

The authors express 'knowing' their fields of practice, industrial activity, and scholarship through engaging in an interdisciplinary conversation, in this case with performance. I understand the idea of 'knowing' a field as formulated by Lashley et al (2007) as a process of apprehending one's own discipline more effectively or deeply by identifying complementary insights in another field of enquiry. Through practice, I ask:

- To what extent can performance effect a transformational exchange between artists and audience through working at site?
- What can performance *do* in relation to our knowledge of the site and our place within it?

Each piece of practice produced a performance event that is documented. This is done variously through still photographs (*Care Home*), film (*House and Garden*) and through the presentation of seven short, illustrated play texts (*City*). The documentation moves progressively toward producing an artefact with autonomous integrity, such that *City* can be reproduced/reinterpreted by other artists. By this I mean that it is not documentation *of* a process – it is the *product*. Problems around documentation of live performance are discussed in relation to the etiquette of hospitality and the contract between artist and audience.

The text and photographs of a lecture-demonstration presented at Leeds University to an invited audience including internal and external examiners, distilling and reflecting on the *City* performances are also appended.

The thesis describes and analyses each piece of practice. I discuss the original plan of work and how this was impacted by the theoretical frame of hospitality as the research advanced. As the framework was applied over four pieces of practice, the complexities of bringing performance into dialogue with hospitality were a productive pressure that changed the original plan. The analysis of the practice-research tracks the productive failure of the attempt to bring a transformative exchange between host and guest into being. The problems encountered gave rise to the idea of a dramaturgy of hospitality explored as a performance form. This is discussed in relation to issues arising from documentation and how this relates to hospitality. The discussion of documentation in relation to performance's ontology of disappearance is well developed (Phelan, 1997; Auslander, 1999; Reason, 2004). I explore this in depth later in relation to the bearing that considerations of hospitality bring to the etiquette of recording/documenting the encounter between host and guest.

The research project began in January 2015. Since that time there have been significant shifts in how the UK relates to the rest of the world that are of relevance to a consideration of hospitality. The referendum of 2016 made visible deep divisions in society as to what constitutes 'the other'. Covid-19 had a unifying effect in some ways by virtue of its potential to endanger anyone. Meanwhile, deepening divisions along cultural lines emerged in other ways, evidenced by the contempt shown to the populace by those who made the rules designed to protect us all, while contemporaneously breaking those rules themselves.

The pandemic and lock-down had a significant effect on the practice-research in its latter stages and this is reflected in the description and analysis of *Garden* as a performance presentation of the findings. The lockdown impacted business in general, but the most obvious disappearance was that of the service offered to the guest by the hospitality industry. Restaurants, cafés, hotels, pubs and bed and breakfast establishments all shut their doors. We lost not only the provision of comestibles and shelter, but also social life in shared spaces – and significantly theatre and performance

spaces. Through viewing these shared spaces through the lens of hospitality, and the various considerations I attach to this about who is inviting whom into whose space, the practice-research contributes to the discourse on. As a contribution to the discourse on critical ideas around the invitation to participate (Hope, 2011; White, 2013; Harpin and Nicholson, 2017) were engaged with fundamental questions of authorship (who is speaking?), space (who owns it?) and documentation (who does it serve?). To situate my overarching research question alongside the foregoing, Richard Schechner's statement that

participation is legitimate only if it influences the tone and possibly the outcomes of the performance, only if it changes the rhythms of the performance. Without this potential for change, participation is just one more ornamental, illusionistic device: a treachery perpetrated on the audience while disguised as being on behalf of the audience.

(Schechner, 1994, p 24)

is engaged with hospitality, such that my aim is to offer a dramaturgical framework that can support a transformational exchange between artist and audience that is neither ornamental nor illusionistic, but that has the potential for reciprocal change.

Relating Peggy Phelan's observation that the disappearance of performance leaves us in a state of mourning, yet more able to understand the value of it by looking at the outline of what is lost, this would seem equally applicable to hospitality. Along with Derrida, I suggest that 'this is culture itself'.

### Details of practice elements

This section sets out details of the practice elements relating to the people taking part in either or both engagement work and performances, what their role entailed, and where the work took place. Performances within each piece of practice-research are indicated in italics. The practice-research was conducted within the 'laws of hospitality' as these are understood and applied within the thesis. The chapter setting out the research context outlines these laws as variously discussed in the literature on hospitality. Each piece of practice employed a different approach to the engagement of participants and audience, and the role played by participants and audiences. As described in the Chapter

on Methodology, the findings of each piece propelled the practice in new directions. Strategies were experimented with towards addressing the research questions.

### **Care Home**

This was an invitation to an 'At Home' performance event in a private house. Guests included five members of academic staff in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, six post-graduate research colleagues and three colleagues from my professional practice. I engaged a group comprising of two performing artists and one social work professional to provide specific actions during the event. These actions are described in detail in the section on *Care Home* in the Chapter on practice-research.

### **House**

Between August 2017 and January 2018, I worked with residents, businesses, and community organizations in Headingley, Leeds, towards a performance that connected aspects of the area's past with the present concerns and interests of the local community.

### **Walks and Workshops**

An invitation to engagement activities comprising of creative writing workshops and three themed walks 'House', 'City' and 'Garden' around Headingley was made through flyers placed at Heart Community Centre, local shops and networks including schools and the faith communities in the area. The invitation was given more widely across the city with support from the Library Service. The walks attracted people from a range of backgrounds according to their interests in the history of the city of Leeds. Overall, fifty people including children took part. A core group of 12 people attended all three walks. The walks were led by professionals with various specialisms in heritage and social history. The walks are described in detail in Chapter 3 in the section on House.

Writing workshops took place with ten participants, at the Headingley Methodist Church on Thursday evenings in October and November of 2017. Residents of Grove

Lane, Headingley, who live on the floor catering for people with dementia contributed to the research for the project through hosting us in their home, giving their time to talk about their lives and their thoughts on life in Headingley.

The purpose of this engagement activity was four-fold.

- To gather a range of material including factual information about the area, its heritage and current concerns to inform the planned performance.
- To explore the area for suitable venues for the performance.
- To establish relationships with local people towards generating trust such that I and my creative team would have a genuine invitation to produce the performance in the area.
- To inculcate an investment in the performance *House* in the locale from the full range of participants.

*House (an invitation to a conversation in the dark)* was created with contributions from individuals and organisations I worked with during the engagement process. Venues for the performance were established with the collaboration of residents in Headingley. After the performance, a selection of people who had indicated willingness to do so gave feedback through a semi-structured interview. An 'after party' held at the New Headingley Club as a thank-you to those involved elicited further feedback, some of which is included in the thesis, with permission. A publication, *The Headingley Postie*, is included as part of the submission. This was prepared as a creative documentation of the project, and as a celebration of the various ways people contributed to the project. It celebrates the contribution made by participants in the engagement process.

## **City**

The project was created with seven artists, including the researcher in August 2019. Using Leeds as a stage, artists from a range of backgrounds each invited an audience of one to experience the performance of their *City*. Each artist formed an audience for another's performance as an exchange of roles. Outputs were rendered in two ways:

- A performance-paper *City (taking an invitation for a walk)* presented by me to academic staff in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, post-graduate research colleagues, professional colleagues and examiners on 15 October 2019 and documented in Chapter 3. The presentation was authored by me and distilled elements of the seven performances created in August. This had the form of an afternoon tea, where refreshments were served to those present, whose seats were indicated by place cards. Analysis and photographic documentation are presented in Chapter 3. The text of the performance-paper is appended.
- A set of seven play texts presented in hard copy entitled *City*. These texts form part of the practice submission. As with other play-texts, these can be interpreted, produced, and presented by other artists.

### **Garden**

The practice-research took place over a period of 18 months, from Autumn 2019 to March 2020. This period included the lock-down due to Covid-19. 'Garden' was a solo durational work where the artist-researcher was present at the site, Sparrow Park, a piece of unadopted land in Headingley, Leeds. I undertook a process of gardening as an 'uninvited guest'. Presentation of the work took place on 28 May 2021 in the form of a performance-lecture. This was presented by the artist-researcher, and a performer who had a role in *House* reprised aspects of their role. The audience comprised of academic staff from the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, professional associates, and members of the Friends of Sparrow Park. *Garden* was designed as a summation of the practice-research, including elements of the preceding three pieces of practice. It was also designed to be rendered in video form as documentation and part of the submission.

Comments included in the description and analysis of *Care Home* have the status of remarks left in the guest book by departing guests. Comments included in the description and analysis of *House* were gathered through semi-structured interviews and also those left in the guest book by participants at the after party. In both cases, some comments were unsolicited and arrived through email via A Quiet Word's website



and are included with permission. In both cases the comments are applied to illustrate particulars of my reflection on the practice, rather than as data gathered about the audience or participants.

The core of this practice-research is an enquiry into performance form, and how considerations of hospitality can contribute to the development of a form that would enable an authentic exchange between artist and audience. Within this is an acknowledgement of scholarship around the move towards Cultural Democracy away from democratisation of culture and to develop my thinking in relation to the central theoretical lens of hospitality through performance. The original contribution made by this practice-research then is to engage with the challenge offered by Stephen Hadley and Eleonora Belfiore in their discussion of ways in which 'hierarchies of cultural value' (Hadley and Belfiore 2018, p 221) are imbricated in questions of power and authority. Their view that this will always be the case could be seen as negative, but there is an offer within the cited paper:

The question then arises as to both if and how, cultural policy scholars, arts managers and practitioners should find ways to act upon both the historical base and the potential futures of cultural democracy.  
(Belfiore and Hadley 2018, p 221)

The address within the question as it includes arts *practitioners*, then extended by implication to *scholars* of performance practice, is one this research contributes to in response. The practice-research works towards the proposal of a performance form that has the potential to elide the power relationship between artist and audience while preserving the distinctions in the roles as these may necessarily be identified towards supporting the creativity of both. The sense in which the word 'elide' here is used is towards merger and joining, rather than omission.

## Chapter 1 Methodology

‘.Because I know that time is always time  
And place is always and only place  
And what is actual is actual only for one time  
And only for one place ....’

*Ash Wednesday* T. S. Eliot (1930)

### Introduction

This chapter presents:

1. The rationale for practice-research as a methodology for the conduct of the enquiry
2. a set of methodological principles that underpins the process of the practice-research.

### Practice-research as methodology

I embarked on a practice-research enquiry with the view that practice is the most effective method of addressing my research questions and refer to Barbara Bolt, who takes Heidegger's' concept of 'handlability' as a premise. (Bolt, in Barrett and Bolt, 2009, p. 27). This asserts that 'we come to know the word theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling'. The very process of considering the theory around practice-research is generative in terms of articulating what performance can *do*. Following the argument made by Paul Carter in his book *Material Thinking*, I attempt through practice to 'account for the work as a structure for re-thinking human relations' (Carter, 2004, p.10). I return to these concepts in the Conclusion as I reflect on the practice-research overall.

The enquiry is based on the premise that research is the practice, and the practice is the research. This methodological approach sits within a cycle of practice, reflection and adaptation that operates as a process of knowledge production. The field of practice-research in the performing arts has been extensively discussed in relation to its validity and capacity to evidence new knowledge (Smith and Dean 2009, Freeman 2010, Barrett and Bolt 2010, Kershaw and Nicholson 2011, Nelson 2013). The literature cited here

addresses and advocates for artistic practice as a research method, placing it in context as the academy has from time to time accepted this as having validity and efficacy in contributing to knowledge in the performing arts. The methodology of *Know Your Place* responds and contributes to the body of work advocating for Practice as Research by demonstrating the relevance of performance practice in an interdisciplinary context. As stated in the introduction I have a body of professional practice in creation of site-specific performance, that is drawn into this research to be tested and refined. Other artists have similarly drawn on their own practice in scholarly research contexts, for example in choreography, where the aim of Claire Lidbury's practice-research project was to engage advanced aesthetic movement principles to the choreography of musical theatre (Lidbury, 2020). Looking across to the discipline of journalism, David Robie discusses the move to develop and recognise practice-based methodologies in journalism in a New Zealand context. (Robie, 2015). He questions 'the practice of exegesis as critical commentary being the sole mechanism for validating a substantial artefact, which could stand on its own as 'a creative work' (thus privileging the text)' (Robie, 2015, p 70). I relate this to my own practice-based methodology of Know Your Place, where the four performance works come into being *through* the practice. I acknowledge the influence of Melissa Trimingham's 'hermeneutic spiral' (Trimingham, 2002) as a theoretical framework that supports reflection on the practice throughout this research. Each piece of practice informs the next in relation to the research question/s, such that the original conception of the performances has been expanded to develop an appropriate form as the problems, failures and challenges of each piece emerge. The iterative cycle has been formulated and articulated around knowledge production in several creative arts contexts (Haseman, 2006).

Gathering data around audience response was *not* a primary part of the research. I aimed to **offer** critical reflections on the capacity of each piece of practice to support a mutual exchange of hospitality between artist and audience.

## 2. Methodological principles

The rationale for presenting the methodology as a set of *principles* is set out below. This is mapped on to the research context, particularly that framed by hospitality. The ethical

considerations of host/guest relations feature strongly in the literature and practice drawn on to support the practice-research. The practice - integral to the research method - was adapted and changed throughout the research, within the parameters of performance, as the findings emerged and were analysed. This reflexive process is essentially practice-based and could not have taken place through desk research alone.

The principles defined here are informed by my professional practice, whereby critical reflection on it propelled this research into being. Between the mid 1980s and mid 1990s, I was part of a theatre company producing performance pieces for touring around a UK circuit of small-scale studio spaces – commonly known as ‘black boxes’. This was undertaken without reference to the locale where the work was presented, and by extension, neither to the audience. I abandoned this work, considering that it ignored not only the specifics of the space itself (being often purpose-built and that purpose having significance) but that it also failed to address the potential to engage with each audience, as a set of individuals with a multiplicity of reasons for being there, as well as a wide range of expectations and thereafter responses to what had been presented. There seemed little point in offering the same performance in Cheltenham one night and Chelmsford the next in the absence of any process (beyond ‘marketing’) that could generate a connection with the audience.

I began making work that can broadly be categorised as ‘site-specific’, working in a range of sites: libraries, schools, on the street, in public parks and heritage sites. The methods of making the work are similar in terms of the production processes that are required to mount a production in a theatre building - management of a team, decisions about what ‘happens’ in the piece and so on, but the methodological *principles* in relation to the audience’s experience are different, because the *place* of the audience is different. Some of these principles are implied in the move to leave the theatre, and the practice-research makes these explicit. Here I acknowledge the connection with applied performance practices that as Sally Mackey and Nicholas Whybrow suggest:

effectively *create* theatres – places of doing as well as showing and looking – *elsewhere*, in ‘another kind of space’. Typically such practices seek out particular constituencies – or indeed *produce* them by identifying them as such in the first

place – and they *apply* themselves to the contexts or ‘homes’ in which those constituencies tend to operate.  
(Mackey and Whybrow 2007, p 2)

The connection with applied performance practice and this research then is in the idea of ‘home’, whereby the methodological principles I am engaging, informed by theories of hospitality, aim to produce the conditions for the audience for site-specific performance to (also) be the host of the work. The performance approaches were then tested against these as a criterion and refined as the research proceeded.

One of my aims as an outcome of the research is to write my way back into the theatre, and to take the (tested) principles of practice with me as part of a refreshed approach underpinned by the findings of the practice-research. I reflect on the relative success of finding my way back to the theatre building in the Conclusion.

**a) To engage the site-specific performance work that has formed the basis of my current professional practice and thereby interrogate and develop it**

I have developed a professional practice of performance ‘at site’, by which I mean producing and presenting work for audiences, outside the institutional frameworks of mainstream theatre production and that based in purpose-built theatre environments. The research context of this project offers an opportunity to extend and expand my practice to date, towards developing new knowledge. The methodological approach considers a range of critical discourse on theatre and performance, not limited to site-specific performance, and indeed including visual art and sculpture (addressed in the Research Context chapter). The rationale for this broader scope is to work towards an articulation of the limits and possibilities of working at site, with reference to my research questions. The motivations of theatre practitioners to work outside of the theatre building are various. I refer to selected artists and their engagement with site as part of the research context and throughout to illuminate findings as I report on the practice. In *this* research context, the motivation (mine) to leave the building relates to an interest in formal developments in performance that suggest new possibilities for audience and artist to ‘know their place’ in the production framework and thereby participate in future developments of such frameworks.

When I began this research in 2015, considerations about working at site included general health and safety protocols. These extended, for example to the state of the ground and weather conditions with regard to the safety and comfort of artists and audiences; permissions in terms of access, and provisions for ushering, amongst others. As of March 2020, the Covid pandemic and consequent restrictions on gathering in enclosed spaces have introduced additional considerations for performance that may prevail for some time and have given rise to lateral thinking among some artists about where and how performance can be presented. The impact of this is evidenced in the final piece of practice-research, which was necessarily extended in temporal terms, but productively expanded methodologically in other ways as discussed in the chapter on *Garden*.

T.S. Eliot's poem *Ash Wednesday* articulates the experience of being stuck, spiritually of course, but it also speaks to the experience of being stuck physically and artistically. Positioning myself in the research, one aim was to acknowledge and investigate my own sense of being stuck towards addressing and ameliorating this for myself and also towards developing conversations with other practitioners. This sensation related to the routine of creating performances for presentation in black-box studio spaces with an ever-retreating sense of how to make anything meaningful out of the 'place' - and my place within it, in relation to the audience. Performance deals with time and place in its ontology of disappearance - so it could seem therefore counterintuitive to engage performance itself as a method to address a sense of lack of meaning and purpose. That performance is a valid and effective method to explore and express complex, contradictory and contemporary issues of place and identity nevertheless prevails, and thus forms the basis for the practice-research.

I engage with an ethics of performance that asserts site-specificity and with how the practice and critique of such performance contributes to an articulation of cultural activity as crucial to social well-being (Tompkins, 2012, p. 4). As the debate continues about how the subsidised arts (in the UK) in general should account for its activity in exchange for support from the public purse, by metrics of instrumental value and/or 'excellence', and the value of participation in the arts in particular (Matarasso, 1997; Belfiore, 2020) and how decisions around funding are made (Jancovich, 2013), this is of

pragmatic importance as well as of significance in how the argument for the value of the arts is developed in future. I connect the matter of funding to that concerning formal developments in performance practice. The critical discourse in train that could be summarized as an exploration of 'Third Space' is employed towards suggesting new forms of performance. Edward Soja's work exhorts the reader 'to think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life: place, location, locality, landscape environment, home city region, territory and geography' (Soja, 1996, p. 1). This exhortation can usefully be applied to performance practitioners, to enable both audience and artist to 'know their place' as not 'always and only place', but as a site of exchange.

The spectrum of performance that asserts site-specificity is broad. I undertook the practice-research in relation to a range of approaches, artefacts, performances and critical reflection, representative examples of which are discussed in Chapter 2, outlining the theoretical framework for the research.

#### **b) To engage hospitality as the theoretical optic for the research**

- through which to explore the relationship between audience and artist as one of guest and host as roles
- as a model for the performance projects as exchanges of hospitality
- to work with performance in the 'third space' that is neither solely the province of the artist nor the audience

With reference to J.L Austin (1975) and Judith Butler (1997), hospitality is considered as a performative mode, producing identities. The performance of hospitality is engaged throughout the research to examine *whose* place is brought into being, by being assigned a role as host or guest through the illocutionary utterance of invitation. The essence of hospitality is to acknowledge and accommodate the stranger. This engages with ideas of those 'unknown' to 'us' by virtue of 'their' being not at 'the centre' (politically, geographically, culturally, or socially) thus placed at the margin. bell hooks distinguishes between the marginality 'imposed by oppressive structures, and that

marginality one chooses as a site of resistance – a location of ‘radical openness and possibility’ (hooks 1990, p 153). hooks’ decision to use these words (‘marginalisation’, ‘resistance’) towards renewing their meaning as powerful positions, informs the methodology of this research, which aims to articulate how ‘spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice’. (hooks 1990, p 152).

Marginality is a key concept in the hospitality trope: who feels welcomed, who feels placed in the role of guest, perhaps on sufferance, and who defines the boundaries marking out the territory in question. Working with people on *their* territory (which is defined in a range of ways from a conversation in their own home, to being invited to their lunch club or being guided by them to their favourite park or walk) is key to this methodology within the frame of hospitality, and where ‘site-specificity’ comes to have meaning within this research. Acknowledging the experience of these interlocutors forms part of the process of this practice-research. In this regard, the discourse around ‘relational encounters’, modelled by Nicholas Bourriaud (1998) primarily in the visual arts, is in the background of the methodology. This methodological approach sits within a cycle of practice, reflection and adaptation that operates as a process of knowledge production. The field of practice-research in the performing arts has been extensively discussed in relation to its validity and capacity to evidence new knowledge (Smith and Dean, 2009; Freeman, 2010; Barrett and Bolt, 2010; Nelson, 2013). I acknowledge the influence of Melissa Trimingham’s (2002) ‘hermeneutic spiral’ as a theoretical framework that supports reflection on the practice throughout this research. Each piece of practice informs the next in relation to the research question/s, such that the original conception of the performances has been expanded to develop an appropriate form as the problems, failures and challenges of each piece emerge. The iterative cycle has been formulated and articulated around knowledge production in several creative arts contexts (Haseman, 2006). I offer critical reflections on the capacity of each piece of practice to support a mutual exchange of hospitality between artist and audience.

**c) To create the performance work within a set of place-based imaginaries**



These place-based imaginaries are 'House' 'City' and 'Garden'. These are distinguished from the similarly nomenclatured performances forming the practice-research which are italicised to denote them as artworks: *House*, *City*, and *Garden*. The spatial imaginaries, House, City and Garden are paradigms for thinking about hospitality. They form a thematic clutch to engage the practice of site-specific performance with the theoretical lens of hospitality. They can also be conceived as abstract spaces, as Yi-Fu Tuan would define them, and as frames in which to place ideas, not individuated, physical sites (Tuan 1997, p. 6). Throughout the practice-research, I have been mindful of Henri Lefebvre, (1991) who states that space is produced by social and cultural activity and is not first an empty container to be filled, and of Doreen Massey who argues for a concept of space as 'always in process, never as a closed system' (Massey 2007, p.11). I aimed to work in spaces to open their potential as creative and productive contexts for audience and artists to negotiate relations. Complementary discourses including post-colonialism, feminism, and the sociology of space also form part of the analytic mechanism.

Descriptions and analyses of three performances are prefaced by *Care Home* as a performance event that functioned as a 'proof of concept'. 'Care' is a unifying concept to underpin the sense of mutuality in the host/guest relationship and is a key methodological consideration throughout the performance practice of the research. 'Care' is here understood as an ethics developed by inter alia Nel Noddings (1986), Virginia Held (2006) and Joan Tronto (2013) and as a discussion of boundaries and consent that informs the performance practice of for example, Adrian Howells (Heddon and Johnson, 2016). The conclusion notes that adjacent to this research I have collaborated with Hamish MacPherson whose focus is on consent and care in the context of choreographic practices (MacPherson, 2022). We have also presented research at a Post Graduate Seminar in 2017.

The paradigmatic framework the research is built on has a basis in science, towards developing and articulating the 'conceptual, observational and instrumental' (Kuhn, 2012, p. 43) stages through which this research advances. The context of scientific research paradigms is useful here towards supporting a rigorous scholarly basis for the thesis and an efficient operational model for the four pieces of practice. Paradigms can

be problematic, being based on arbitrary assumptions that develop into polarised conventions. Neil Smallheiser discusses the limitations whereby 'a paradigm represents a failure of imagination – each side cannot imagine that the other explanation could possibly be true. He makes the point that 'What feels most natural in a paradigm is often the most arbitrary' and offers the example of the birthday celebration, where the expectation is that a cake with candles will be part of this, but where there is 'no natural relationship between birthdays, cake and candles' (Smallheiser, 2013, p. 868). In relation to public policy, Frank R. Baumgartner distinguishes between ideas and paradigms and considers the power of 'ideas' to 'undergird and justify powerful political positions' (Baumgartner, 2014, p. 475) and suggests that 'paradigms are ideas on steroids' (Baumgartner, 2014, p. 476). In considering 'House', 'City' and 'Garden' as paradigms within which I am conducting the practice-research, I approach these as containers of ideas, each and all of which can be explored in relation to hospitality. As an example that resonates with one of the specific paradigms outlined, Li Hongtu notes in a discussion of the history of ideas:

landscaping might appear to have no association whatsoever with ideas, but in fact, the constant transformation of landscaping patterns is caused by changes in people's thinking. It is the difference in people's ideas which result in gardens of different styles and form.  
(Hongtu 2020, p.138)

I apply the critical approaches noted above towards considering 'performance' itself as a paradigm, whereby there are assumptions about what constitutes performance, engaging hospitality towards interrogating these assumptions.

**House:** A spatial imaginary bounded by legislation and custom concerning the enjoyment of property, privacy, and ideas of family pride, security, leisure, and comfort. *House* can also evoke the inverse aspect of such ideas: deprivation, patriarchal control, secrets and shame. The novel *Bleak House*, (Dickens, 1853) and plays *Heartbreak House*, (Shaw, 1919) and *The House of Bernada Alba* (Lorca, 1936) for example speak of enclosed worlds that resonate metaphorically more widely. Audre Lorde's 1979 speech to the Second Sex Conference in New York *The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House* challenged women to stop tinkering in 'the house' in which they reside

under patriarchal oppression and get out and build something with those who, for example, have no 'house' in the first place.

**City:** A spatial imaginary holding relations that form the script around capacity to participate in civic life. The 'keys to the city' are offered as an honour, the gesture originating in medieval times when European cities were ringed by walls and a visiting dignitary might reasonably be supposed to be trusted not to misuse the key by opening the door to the enemy. The 'freedom of the city' has similarly ancient roots in terms of conferring status on an individual and is now enshrined in UK law in the Local Government Act of 1972. The ceremonial aspects of these awards confirm the geographical and political boundaries of the city, as well as operating under the power relations of who gives and who receives such freedom.

**Garden:** A spatial imaginary concerning cultivation, civilization, control, and colonization. Here, research involves an analysis of access to sites in which - while they can apparently be open spaces - a familiar rubric in both private and public gardens is to 'keep off the grass'. The research will take place in the context of the history of land ownership and of common land, taking account of the legacy of British colonialism with regard to constructs of 'the other' as played out in ideas of 'native' and 'hostile' species, the acquisition of rare material from other territories and its subsequent installation on domestic soil.

In addition, there is an aesthetic paradigm in play. This concerns feelings, I would argue, along with 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1986) and emerges through conducting the research in spaces characterised by domestic, local and community use. This paradigm 'site' is constituted by both physical characteristics of place (geographical) and also de Certeau's axiom that 'space is a practiced place' (De Certeau and Rendall, 2011), and through the practice of people occupying it in diverse, daily ways.

#### **d) To use a range of modalities**

As outlined in the Introduction the practice has been conducted using a range of modalities towards addressing the research questions:

- engagement activity with people including walking along routes of local significance, creative writing and craft sessions
- contextual research with people interested in local history
- conversation with members of lunch clubs, parents' and carers' groups
- performance for general audience
- one to one performance and
- presentations of performance as documentation

The aim was to create a framework within which the potential both *of* and *for* hospitality can emerge, in the context of performance. This is dependent for its realisation upon a methodology that draws on principles of site-specificity. The aspects of the discourse around site-specificity relevant to this methodology are concerned with the relationship of identity to place. When engaged with the discourse around hospitality, the methodology supports an exchange between host and guest as a performance 'at site' that if not entirely transformative, is one of reciprocal exchange.

The rationale for engaging this set of approaches is because this range of modalities is key to establishing a relationship with people, such that one can *be* invited as a guest, to undertake artistic practice in this role. This is developed in the chapter on hospitality and described in the sections outlining each piece of practice.

#### **e) To engage productive problems around documentation towards addressing the research questions**

Peggy Phelan suggests that the disappearance of the object of interest (the performance in this context) leaves an informative trace, an outline that can tell us something 'substantial' about what has been lost. (Phelan 1997, p. 3). The practice developed during the research is concerned with what *is* left after the performance is over. This can reside in the experience of those who encountered it, taking part as audiences. The comments of audience members for *House* attest to the ways the move to exit the theatre building and to create performance beyond both the physical and institutional boundary enables a clearer vision of how that physical and institutional boundary

operates. By working through the time-based process that leads inevitably to the disappearance of the performance, I engage documentation in two ways:

- to record and present outputs
- as part of the research methodology towards developing a dramaturgical form for an exchange of hospitality between artist and audience

The productive problems of recording live performance in the context of hospitality are discussed in the chapter on City as spatial imaginary and performance (*City*) and how the practice was documented.

### **Summary**

This section has articulated the methodology as principles by which the research was conducted. The approach developed as the work proceeded, and the original outline of the methodology has been refined accordingly to highlight these principles as part of the ethics of the work. This is appropriate in a research project that focuses on the problematic aspects of hospitality. The next chapter sets out the problems raised by using hospitality as a research lens towards finding a reciprocal relationship between artist and audience. This is done alongside presenting an outline of the context as developed through engaging with the literature and practice and how this has informed my thinking about where the research sits within past and current discourse.

## Chapter 2 Research Context

Hospitality may require that [...] both host and guest accept [...] the sometimes painful possibility of being changed by the other (Rosello, 2001, p. 170).

### *Introduction*

This chapter is divided into four sections that organise the literature and practice that forms the research context into themes. The preparatory work for this enquiry explored connections between the discourse on contemporary performance practice asserting site-specificity and that on hospitality and has a genesis which is relevant to this presentation of the research context and the application of this research in performance practice going forward. In 2010, I was preparing to leave my post as Performing Arts Officer in the Yorkshire Office of Arts Council England (ACE), where I had been supported to continue my own site-specific performance practice with periods of special leave. My portfolio at ACE included inter-disciplinary practice, carnival, street art and the work of a range of performing artists who identified their work as site-specific and organisations working independently of large cultural institutions in local communities. The mechanics of the work I oversaw often related to the need to be invited into those communities *by* the community. ‘Community’ is a slippery word in relation to arts practice, with a long history of critique of the efficacy of the work as an authentic reflection of the concerns and interests of the people involved. (Braden, 1978; Kelly, 1984; Kester, 1995; Matarraso, 1997).

During this time of transition, I attended two conferences that while complementary in focus, suggested to me the potential of engaging hospitality and performance together in a practice-research project that would contribute to the discourse of both.

*Transmission: Hospitality* at Sheffield Hallam in July 2010 brought philosophers, curators and artists into dialogue about how art is received. This was a grounding experience for me that set in motion a train of thought about how looking at performance through the lens of hospitality would give rise to a review of the basis on which relations between artist and audience are framed. A reflection I wrote on the conference immediately afterwards, published by Artists Network is appended. In the same summer, I attended *art-site-audience*: an interdisciplinary one-day symposium

exploring shifting relationships between, and definitions of 'artwork', 'site' and 'audience', organised by Tramway and Glasgow School of Art. In considering the questions and provocations posed during the symposium relating to issues of power, access and ownership that are raised when working 'at site' I found connections with the examination of hospitality by the *Transmission* event that resonated with the aims and challenges of my professional practice. These complementary concerns are enfolded in the questions posed in this thesis.

This chapter addresses the points where performance and hospitality connect. I reflect on hospitality as a broad concept, applicable in interdisciplinary contexts, as it is threaded throughout this research. Hospitality is centrally concerned with identity, where that of host and guest is illuminated through being mapped on to issues of migration, care, language in relation to translation, matters relating to human resources in the hospitality industry, emotional labour, tourism and 'destination culture' and by extension, climate change. I then address site-specific performance in relation to form, where this is highlighted in relation to the latter stages of the research as I work towards formulating a dramaturgy of hospitality.

It is also connected to other art-forms, and particularly to the origins in the early twentieth Century of the site-specific turn in the art gallery and in land-based art. This turn has been thoroughly rehearsed. (Kwon, 2004; Pearson, 2010; Smith, 2019). The origins of site-specific performance and the concerns of site-specificity in general, in Dada (Chaudhuri, 1995, p. 5), and then its manifestations in a wide range of visual art, sculptural strategies and live art practice in the twentieth century (Smith, 2019, pp. 5-7) prior to its emergence as a performance practice are noted. Also noted is the long history of theatre taking place in found spaces including the medieval market square, and prior to the emergence of dedicated buildings (Southern, 1961).

The research immediately encounters a productive challenge in identifying the differences and connections between the discipline of performance as an aesthetic practice and hospitality as a commercial enterprise. Both performance and hospitality have interests in attracting audiences and/or customers as part of their business model. Both operate within the symbolic realm; we know very well that the performer on stage

is not doing something 'real' (while of course they are indeed present and so therefore 'real'), we know very well that the maître d' is not personally delighted to see us in the restaurant (but is of course content to receive us as paying guests). Borrowing from theatre parlance, Erving Goffman frames host-guest interactions in a small hotel in Shetland as taking place respectively in 'backstage' and 'frontstage' regions. (Goffman, 1959). Applying dramaturgical and scenographic metaphors to the relationship between host and guest, Goffman develops a theory of presentation to engage with the tricky notion of 'authenticity' that has only offered theatrical performance a possibility of failure to measure itself by. Laurie Taylor refers to Goffman's study in his introduction to *In search of Hospitality* (Lashley and Morrison, 2004) and speaks to the connection between hospitality and performance that underpinned the research:

There is no more point in asking whether the motive behind the hotelier's successful performance of hospitality is genuine than in seeking to discover whether or not John Gielgud really was Hamlet. (Taylor quoted in Lashley and Morrison, 2004, p. xi)

I bring into play the portmanteau word 'hostipitality' coined by Jacques Derrida. This is set out in context below in the section on hospitality and the etymology of the word which contains both welcome and rebuff. This push and pull has a daily manifestation in images of immigration that engage us in the UK and in Europe more widely and is a foundational concept in the way the literature around hospitality was engaged in this research.

## **2.1 Points of Intersection between performance and hospitality**

The research addresses points of intersection, contrast and dialogue between hospitality, performance and site-specificity in the discourses that flow around and through these as concepts and as practices. Individually, each of these concepts and practices attract the heat of debate as to how they can be 'known'. By engaging the idea of 'knowing' I am applying the word in the sense that it has occurred in scholarship on both hospitality and performance respectively. Firstly, I refer to the essay that concludes the edited volume *Ways of Knowing Hospitality* (Lashley, Lynch and Morrison eds, 2007) whose authors draw on the chapters preceding exploring 'a rich cornucopia of ways of viewing, understanding, and *knowing* hospitality' (Lashley, Lynch and



Morrison, 2007, p. 173, my emphasis). Secondly, I refer to Richard Schechner who suggests that performance is 'known' through the iterative and reflexive conversation between its theorisation and practice – whereby the practice is also conducted as a behaviour within the wide range of cultural fields it itself acknowledges as 'performance' (Schechner, 1994). The term 'site-specific' in relation to theatre and performance practice has been defined and discussed variously and extensively towards examining the motivations of the artist, the status of the art object and concerns around the market. As Mackey and Whybrow (2007 p.3) suggest, the site-specific turn in visual and live art practices is 'principally associated with radical tendencies seeking, amongst other things, to redefine what art is by questioning where it occurs'.

Site-specific performance is a broad spectrum of practice that resists definition in relation to form, although there is a definable genealogy. This research is working towards contributing to this genealogy through engaging site-specific performance practice with considerations around hospitality. The literature addressing both site-specific performance and hospitality provides the context for this practice-research, which is seeking to give form to a dramaturgy of hospitality. Towards traction for these points of intersection, Melanie Beddie suggests that dramaturgy can be thought of as 'the midwife between theory and practice. It can provide a process for bringing ideas into concrete form' (Beddie, 2006, p. 4). *Know Your Place* contributes to animating this concept in site-specific contexts as it negotiates theory and practices towards finding the said dramaturgical form.

The problematic aspects of theatre buildings have been articulated by Baz Kershaw, who draws on Bourdieu's view of theatre as a means by which different constituents – playwrights, actors, critics, audiences – are organised according to hierarchical principles, and argues:

A theatre building is not so much the empty space of the creative artist, nor a democratic institution of free speech, but rather a kind of social engine that helps to drive an unfair system of privilege. The theatre achieves this through ensnaring every kind of audience in a web of mostly unacknowledged values, tacit commitments to forces that are beyond their control, and mechanisms of exclusion that ensure that more people stay away. Hence performances in

theatre buildings are deeply embedded in theatre as a *disciplinary system*.  
(Kershaw, 1999, p. 31)

Kershaw contextualizes his view in relation to his first experience of attending a theatre and encountering the play *Billy Liar* the scenario of which he recognised from his own upbringing, among an audience who he feels clearly received the story patronisingly as a charming *étude* in *nostalgie de la boue*.

In relation to hospitality and the etiquette that underpins its practice, there is a clear connection with the conventions of behaviour that attach to theatre: dressing for the occasion, separation of seating areas according to price and view - and the ability to be viewed, established during the Restoration – remain in force to a certain degree. Nevertheless, we cannot judge the reception of theatre, or the make-up of its audience, as having been uniform throughout history, or accurately apprehend it through a contemporary lens. Dawn Lewcock discusses the commercial imperative of Restoration theatre towards appeal across a wide social spectrum:

The dramatists undoubtedly aimed to please their royal master. Indeed the King is known to have actively influenced the choice of plays at times and to have encouraged Dryden, for example, to write *Mr Limberham* (1678), probably the most bawdy and obscene play of the period. But the playwrights relied to quite a large extent on the approval of the general audience who could 'cry off' any play they did not like, that is, make too much noise for the play to continue. Any one performance might be seen by royalty, by the current royal mistress, by government clerks and other officials, by tradespeople, by orange sellers, by apprentices, by family parties, and by whores plying for custom.  
(Lewcock, 2008, p 20)

Such a scenario would be unusual in contemporary theatres. Nevertheless, Lewcock paints a picture of warmth and energy in shared space. As Dorita Hannah suggests, the design of some performance spaces is not conducive to a feeling of warm welcome:

The conventional performing arts venue tends to persist as an isolated house-in-waiting – a cavernous space with calculated rows of ordered seats and sightlines, technical systems and a demarcation between those who perform and those who witness – anticipating the few fleeting hours when it fills up, is briefly animated and then empties out.  
(Hannah, 2019, p. 213)

The motivation to look beyond the building-based scenario is suggested by Daniel Libeskind who in an interview with Gerhard Ahrens surmises that:

...many people who are working in theatre [...] have been looking for a space which is not a space of theatre, but a space to be found, a space which has not been colonized by either planning, architecture, or by the history of theatrical production.  
(Libeskind, 2001, p. 68)

Mike Pearson's oft quoted and coruscating manifesto and rationale for leaving the theatre building (Pearson, 1998 pp. 35-41) is worth quoting at length here:

I can no longer sit passively in the dark watching a hole in the wall pretending that the auditorium is a neutral vessel of representation. It is a spatial machine that distances us from the spectacle and that allies us with subsidy, theatre orthodoxy and political conservatism, under the guise of nobility of purpose, in a way that literally 'keeps us in our place'. I can no longer dutifully turn up to see the latest 'brilliant' product of such and such in this arts centre, where I saw the latest 'brilliant' product of others only yesterday, a field ploughed to exhaustion.  
(Pearson quoted in Wiles, 2003 p. 2)

His discontents may chime with those of other practitioners, yet his concern is not so much with the relationship between audience and stage/artist that underpins this research in terms of how each party knows its place, but with the artwork and *its* status. Defining 'site-specific performance' as form, practice, manifesto, or in relation to other manifestations of live, theatrical events, can set up a binary opposition between performance that takes place in found sites, and performance created for presentation in theatre buildings. Such oppositions are not necessarily helpful to creative progress in artistic practice. Nevertheless, the attempt at a definition can be productive in offering a perspective on the broad spectrum of theatre as a cultural form. The field of practice resists being defined solely in relation to site. If work that takes place in (theatre) buildings can also assert 'site-specificity', it is not so much the *site* that identifies the practice as the *relationships* developed around, within and even against it.

A compelling definition of site-specific performance offers that it is 'conceived for, mounted within and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations both used and disused' (Pearson, 2001, p. 23). This complements that by Patrice Pavis who suggests 'a staging and performance conceived

on the basis of a place in the real world (ergo, outside of established theatre)' (Pavis, 1999, p. 337). The definition extends to examples of practice that with hindsight and in the light of contemporary practice, we can now understand as site-specific, such as Nikolai Evreinov's *The Storming of the Winter Palace*, a recreation of events in Petrograd in 1917. This engaged over 2,000 performers in a mass spectacle played out on the same site in 1920. An echo of this approach can be found in Jeremy Deller's re-enactment of the battle between striking miners and police at the Orgreave coking plant near Rotherham in 1984. *Orgreave* was staged in 2001 and engaged battle re-enactors as well as ex-miners who were involved in the original events. Deller's reflection on the project suggests a forensic strategy: 'I've always described it as digging up a corpse and giving it a proper post-mortem, or as a thousand-person crime re-enactment' (Deller, 2001). The piece relied for its impact on being presented 'at site', and on the possibilities that this allowed for the sheer volume of participants, in addition to any personal engagement those participants might have had with the history of the place. There may be a play yet to be written and produced for the stage presenting the events, or even a musical entitled *Orgreave!*, where the confines of the stage would require a symbolic approach to the story, and of course a very different audience experience. The visceral idea of a performance project as the digging up of a corpse relates to the highly charged social and political legacy of the events in this one place of course, but it propels the purpose and expressive efficacy of performance at site into dynamic relation with lived experience, with communities whose history might otherwise indeed be left buried.

The approach of designer Clifford McLucas can be connected to the theme of exhumation. Mike Pearson, with whom he collaborated for many years in the company Brith Gof, writes of the approach to the production design of the performance PAX (1990):

This overlay and interpenetration of the found (the site) and the fabricated (the production) he eventually characterised as the co-existence of host (the extant building with its fixtures, fittings, ambiance; that which pre-exists the work; all that is at site) and the ghost (that which is temporarily brought to and emplaced at site; that which remains spectral, transparent).

(Pearson in Aronson 2017, p 295)

The process of working at site here brings its history to life in conjunction with what comes to it during the process, including the guest, the audience. McLucas' sense of design included the audience as part of the scenography. Pearson continues: 'He regards performance as three-dimensional in the placement of components, including its audience, any one of which may, in any moment constitute a dramatic carrier' (Pearson in Aronson 2017, p 295). The frame that embraces host, ghost and guest is a scaffold for the process of coming to 'know' the places investigated in this research as the attempt is made to include the audience as 'dramatic carrier'.

Participation as a phenomenon of the 'Social Turn' (Jackson, 2011) in performance is asserting a shift in emphasis on the role of the audience as more than a witness to the artist's intentions. Participation as a measure nevertheless remains predicated on both product and process as instigated by the artist. This research is set in the context of social practice in the sense developed by Jackson who offers the idea of 'aesthetic conviviality'. As well as connecting and contrasting this attractive possibility with Lewcock's observation about the coldness of performing arts venues above, by this I understand the opportunities afforded by arts practice to probe the relationship between artist and audience, and further to re-consider what constitutes the nature of audience – as both noun and verb. The research engages with practice and theory that enables a shift in focus from concerns relating to performance product as the *closure* of an artistic process, towards *opening* the production process to concerns about how, where, for whom – and indeed *with* whom it is made.

The field of enquiry also includes the emergent practice of 'immersive' and sensory 'affective' performance environments. Practice that exemplifies immersive approaches in the UK includes work by Curious, Quarantine, Punchdrunk and Riptide, and is discussed in relation to aesthetics, to the putative agency of the audience (Alston, 2013) and to participation (Harpin and Nicholson, 2017). Earlier critical consideration of work that places the human body as the site of attention, in order to create an 'experiential' event is collected in Josephine Machon's edited volume on 'visceral performance' (Machon, 2009). Fiona Wilkie's 2002 survey on site-specific performance acknowledges that the work has 'been located at the intersection of a number of territories (those for instance, tourism, town planning, art, community, and social control) but the "new questions" then provoked are those relating to how and by whom

the work should be funded. All considerations are focused on the artist's motivations and concerns (Wilkie, 2002). Although Wilkie's survey notes Bim Mason's idea of 'audience specific' practice, the direction of travel is 'from the community' and 'to' the artistic creators – and the artist is to create something 'for' the specific audience (Wilkie, 2002, p.152. Even when the motivation is 'reaching new audiences', the emphasis is on acting *upon* an audience rather than *with*.

I examine *how* the work is made as well as *what* is made – and in doing this by making work *with* the audience. Further, I am interested in exploring the implications of the immaterial labour (Hardt and Negri, 2000) that audiences would undertake in this regard, such that as individuals or as a collective, the creative impulse shifts from the artist. Such an exchange is conceived in this research as one of hospitality, whereby the mutuality implied by this cultural form becomes a model for the artistic practice.

*Know Your Place* as a title embraces aspects of hospitality, including commercial and domestic operations, the etiquette of invitations and acceptance - place cards, social place - being 'below the salt' (Visser, 1986), reciprocity and regulation; and performance (understood more usually as a cultural form) as this has emerged and developed outside the theatre building and as a countercultural form in relation to theatre. Theatre as an institution is freighted with hierarchical tropes (particularly around management structures) that intersect with aspects of social convention and concerns of 'quality' and correct comportment. The irony is that theatre has often been concerned with disruption of the accepted order: Shakespeare is invoked here - Lear's fool speaking truth to power, the loss of 'city' inhibitions in the forest, a queen falling in love with a donkey. Theatre can also be a practice of order, an attempt to stabilise matters and has been appropriated by various regimes as a steadying rudder steering the rocked political boat back to safe harbour. The perception of 'mainstream' theatre housed in purpose-built buildings is that the measure of quality endorsed by career structures and funding bodies is to be found there. The critical discourse on theatre focuses on the product – even when the audience experience is examined, the focus is on what that audience thinks about the *product* as it is presented, rather than how the audience might be considered as *participants* in the work.

This research takes place within the critical discourse around participation, informed by Sophie Hope's (2019) problematisation of commissioned art projects (Hope, 2019). Hope engages with the difference between the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy, towards a critique of commissioning processes and informs my thinking about participatory art practices as ways of knowing place – whereby what emerges from this enquiry may be unexpected, unwelcome or unpalatable data and when the literal surface may give way to the release of unpleasant if relieving odours, from the figurative depths. The research context concerns performance processes created as an act of hospitality 'with' people, not 'for' people or making work 'about' them or the site as content stimulus for the autonomous artwork – but concerning that which *forms* the site and the nature of the relationship between artist and audience.

My assertion is that the creation of performance 'at site' has the potential to loosen and lift some of the cultural debris that has accumulated around theatre as an institution – noting of course that the stage within a theatre building (and the edifice as a whole) is also a 'site'. This is not to suggest that by leaving the theatre, and working at site, relational problems can be solved. The volume documenting the proceedings of a 2013 symposium at Goldsmiths University of London entitled *When Site Lost the Plot* (Mackay ed., 2015) examines whether the critical concept of site-specificity still has the potential to disrupt, or whether it has 'reached a state of exhaustion' as Miwon Kwon (2004, p.1) suggested it might have done in the previous decade.

There is a distinction between literal and figurative ideas of site. This is exemplified in the well-rehearsed controversy over Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*: in the literal sense of site, the sculpture was in the Federal Plaza in New York (Kwon, 2004, pp 82-84). In the figurative sense, the sculpture was in the heart of civic administration. The politics of the installation (it was placed without public consultation) and the politics of the administration were intertwined towards a performance of submerged social frustrations and debates about art that resonate still, long after the removal of the work from the site that was integral to its meaning, caused its 'destruction'. This distinction is useful for me as a researcher in articulating the idea of the 'paradigms' within which I am working– so 'House', 'City' and 'Garden' have both meanings – literal and figurative. I attempt to explore both the literal surface and the figurative underside of the site.

The defining theoretical framework is a fusion of three things:

- performance - as it holds the linked phenomena of disappearance, failure, the process of the attempt and the production of identity, space and place.
- hospitality - as a performance that can fail in the ways that performance can fail; and
- performance as an act of hospitality – that can fail in the terms that commercial, private, and civic hospitality can fail.

## **2.2 Hospitality**

This section introduces the insights of two figures whose work forms a foundation to this research. Jacques Derrida has written extensively on hospitality, distinguishing between ‘unconditional hospitality’ which he regards as impossible, and ‘hospitality’ which he suggests is always conditional. His thinking is comprehensively presented in a dialogue with Anne Dufourmantelle entitled *Of Hospitality* (Derrida, 2000). Of the many epithets presented in the dialogue, of particular use to this research is his conviction that hospitality must have limits, otherwise the guest becomes a parasite. (Derrida, 2000, p. 59). This idea has intersected with Mireille Rosello’s thinking about the problem of the immigrant as guest if ‘the guest is always the guest, if the host is always the host, something has probably gone wrong: hospitality has somehow been replaced by parasitism or charity (Rosello, 2001, p.167).

Applying this unattractive idea to an examination of the relationship between artist and audience, I explore whether the roles of host and guest remain fixed, or whether they can be reciprocal, such that audience invites the artist into *their* space. Charity and parasitism are no longer necessary or produced by being ‘always’ guest or ‘always’ host.

In the Preface of his panoramic work *Indo-European Language and Society* Emile Benveniste outlines considerations in the study of the interlinked roots that feed the branches of contemporary languages (Benveniste, 1973). Scholarly work in this field attends to the ways in which social practices occur in common across a geographical area and are expressed through languages with ancient foundations in common. As



languages develop, distinctly, separately but in parallel, in relation to the formation and reformation of national borders among other factors, nuances of expression emerge which 'assume new values within the oppositions by which they are created and which they determine' (Benveniste, 1973, p. 10). The section entitled 'Giving and Taking' that opens with a chapter on 'Hospitality' also includes 'Gift and Exchange', 'Giving, Taking and Receiving' and 'Personal Loyalty'. These ideas inform my thinking about the relationship between audience and artist as potentially reciprocal.

Benveniste shows through analysis of the several Latin component elements of the word 'hospitality' (*hostis* and *hospes*) as it is now pronounced in the English language, that there are two distinct constructs (comprised of behaviours, social roles, and obligations) of guest and stranger that finally link up, and that this happens as the linguistic elements that illuminate both hostility and hospitality are shining on the same social activity. He notes the connection between 'guest' and 'stranger/enemy' to conclude that:

These terms, far removed from one another came back to the same problem; that of institutions of welcoming and reciprocity, thanks to which the men of a given people find hospitality in another, and whereby societies enter into alliances and exchanges.

(Benveniste, 1973, p. 83)

Complex operations of alliances and exchanges referenced by Benveniste include the gift. Marcel Mauss traces the shift in his own perception of the giving of a gift as being an action distinct from commercial transaction in his seminal work *Essai sur le don* 'The Gift' (Mauss, 1923, trans Halls, 2002). The rationale for including the essay in this review is not so much its place in the development of anthropology but its place in enabling a reconsideration of 'exchange'. (Moments of 'gift giving' occur in the practice-research and are discussed below in the description and analysis of *House*). Gifting is pertinent to an enquiry into audience/artist relations, whereby one particular focus is on the potential for mutual (and equal) exchange in a performance context. The book is centred on a survey of the 'potlatch'. This is a ceremonial custom manifesting in a range of indigenous societies that involves the giving and receiving of gifts. Mauss calls this 'an institution' and he analyses it as *total services of an agonistic type* (Mauss, 2002, p 8 emphasis in original). The essence of Mauss's anthropological study in the introduction

to the English translation, outlines the function of the potlatch as ‘the rule that every gift has to be returned in some specified way’ and that ‘the cycling gift system *is* the society’. (Mauss, 2002, p xi my emphasis). The obligations to give and to receive are intertwined in ways that have both malign and benign potential, being bound up with rank, honour and the need to avoid ‘slavery for debt’ (Mauss, 2002, p. 54) that might ensue in an escalating round of gift and counter-gift. Mauss’s work is the scaffold that supports a range of approaches to ‘the gift’ as a key concept across disciplines. Alan D. Schrift introduces *The Logic of the Gift*, (Schrift, 1997), a collection of essays that brings contemporary critique together with classic addresses (including Mauss himself and Waldo Emerson) on the subject of the gift. The range of approaches includes Luce Irigaray writing on women as an exchange commodity and Hélène Cixous’s emphasis on the difference between feminine and masculine economies examining the role of gift-giving as a way of establishing relationships. Cixous genders writing, to suggest that ‘écriture féminine’ (Cixous, 1976) emerges through the willingness of women to put themselves ‘at risk’, without the framework of reciprocal gift-giving, that is without a guarantee of any return.

Critical reflections on Mauss may also perhaps be produced through looking backwards at the concept of the gift, as if in a mirror. Gerald Moore surveys Lacan, Deleuze and Derrida, against each other and in relation to Mauss to offer that:

If every attempt to engage with Mauss is a repetition of Mauss’s initial engagement, the repetition is not one of sameness, but of a minimal difference that simultaneously preserves and transforms its meaning. Mauss’s work is no longer a gift because it generates a concept of the gift that resists such a description. It succeeds because it fails.  
(Moore, 2011 p 19)

Moore’s *Politics of the Gift* is introduced with his analysis of Lars Von Trier’s film *Dogville*. While not of course a ‘performance’, the film nevertheless has an overtly theatrical design, presenting a parable of perverse hospitality and gifting on a bare soundstage, whereby buildings and streets are marked out in chalk. The explicit artifice of its creation forms a backbone of the film’s theme, exposing relationships in the community as staged and calculated. A stranger on the run arrives in a small town and is given shelter. A vicious spiral of obligation and reciprocity underpinned by a

patriarchal sense of entitlement drives a story that ends with the annihilation of the town at the behest of the guest – the price of hospitality, perhaps.

The application of the literature on the gift in the context of this research is to indicate a conceptual bridge that engages the contradictions and tensions in the operations of gift exchange and points towards the appearance of contradictions and tensions in the operations of hospitality. These are signposted in the compendium of critical perspectives *In Search of Hospitality: Theoretical Perspectives and Debates* (Lashley and Morrison, 2002). Within the volume, Tom Selwyn offers a social anthropological view of hospitality, suggesting that 'In both the Highlands and the Amazon, hospitality is found at one pole of a continuum, at the other end of which is warfare.' (2002, p XX). This binary thematic is developed to address the main function of hospitality which is 'to make friends and familiars out of the strangers and enemies' and that 'this serves to draw hospitality's 'twin sister', hostility, out of the shadows' (Selwyn, 2002, p. 26).

The introduction to the volume surveys the social implications of hospitality, noting the influence of Ferdinand de Saussure, (language) Margaret Mead (anthropology) and Roland Barthes (semiotics) on contemporary research and approaches to hospitality. Of relevance to this research project is the unequivocal suggestion that there is a context to 'apply dramaturgical and theatrical metaphors and theories to analyse the performative dimensions of hospitality drawing on performing arts literature to conceptualise it as fiction, fantasy and an out of everyday life experience' (Lashley and Morrison 2002, pp 189-190).

Hospitality is now expanded as a subject of scholarly attention beyond matters concerning its commercial operations around service provision and management. It engages with post-modern critiques of commodification, consumption and globalization as evidenced in *Hospitality: A Social Lens* (Lashley, Lynch, Morrison 2007). Alastair William's chapter *Consuming Hospitality: Learning from Postmodernism* (pp. 217-234), addresses the ways in which attention to the questions raised by the post-modern debate relate to the theory and practice of hospitality. Characteristics of post-modern culture - erasure of distinctions between 'high' and 'popular' culture, eclectic mixes of aesthetic codes in architecture, collapses of boundaries between disciplines (science,

literature, for example) - can perhaps be summarized in Baudrillard's argument that we are in an era of simulation for which no original exists. As noted, (Tomlin and Jackson, 2006, pp. 23-30) and with relevance to hospitality, *Disneyland* is a creation to which we can be invited, not to see the 'real' America, but to experience how it might be - *if it existed*.

There is an appetite for interdisciplinary enquiry into the practices of hospitality as a cultural form. Noting 'some surprising connotations of the term: sacrifice, army, power, obligation, reciprocity and protection' (Lynch et al, 2011, p. 4), the invitation is to address hospitality beyond the economics of the provision of food, drink and accommodation and to engage with 'theoretical and politically laden questions about power, identity, violence and equity' (Lynch et al, 2011, p.4). These questions could appear to map on to the concerns of contemporary performance practice with a neatness that belies the complexity and urgency of the questions themselves. Conrad Lashley notes that hospitality can be addressed through the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and cultural studies. This last field is where performance theory can enter the discourse. As a lens through which to look at the relationship between artist and audience as mutual exchange, an enticing definition of hospitality has it as:

a set of behaviours which originate with the very foundations of society. Sharing and exchanging the fruits of labour, together with mutuality and reciprocity, associated originally with hunting and gathering food, are at the heart of collective organization and communality. While later developments may have been concerned with fear of and need to contain strangers, hospitality primarily involves mutuality and exchange, and thereby feelings of altruism and beneficence.

(Lashley, 2002, p. 4)

Hospitality is not a value free, belief independent social operation. It is implicated in power relations based on, for example, colonial arrangements that have supported the status quo. bell hooks offers anecdotal evidence of proprietorial assumptions in the feminist movement in America:

Many white women have said to me "we wanted black women and other non-white women to join the movement," totally unaware of their perception that they somehow 'own' the movement, that they are the 'hosts' inviting us in as 'guests'.

(hooks,1984, p. 53)

Of significance in the literature here is the framing of hegemony as an operation of hospitality. The direction of power in hooks' anecdote is from host to guest. While the scenario she describes relates to politics, performance can also operate along the lines of hospitality, as hooks expresses it above, and assume a power direction from artist to audience, where the artist is usually the host. A key point in hook's analysis directly relevant to my approach to site-specific performance practice is the action of 'casting' that is implied in the situation described. In normative artist/audience relations, the host (artist) is given - or takes - the role of 'Self' and the guest/audience is cast as 'Other'. Each piece of practice-research plays with the dynamics of the host and guest relationship in the attempt to create the circumstances for an exchange of hospitality. Threaded through the literature on hospitality, and specifically as Derrida formulates it below, is the difficulty of bringing this relationship into being, when the nature of it is 'not yet' understood. In the writing that introduces the portmanteau word 'Hostipitality' - drawn from 'hospes' and 'hostis' as Beneveniste explains, Derrida expresses the complexity of the relationship between host and guest in a statement and question:

We do not know what hospitality is.  
Not yet.  
Not yet, but will we ever know?  
(Derrida, 2000b, p. 6)

Derrida suggests that our ability to 'know' hospitality is deferred to some later date, until such time, we may infer, that 'we' demonstrate willingness to offer it to 'the other'. I refer to the epigram from Rosello at the head of this chapter and suggest that a connection be made between these expressions. There is the sense in Derrida's question that it is at once a question worth asking, that it is one not easily answered, and that by posing it, further lines of investigation are opened that will not be cul-de-sacs or close the enquiry but will propel the practice-research forward and may lead to mutual transformation between host and guest.

### 2.3 Site-specific performance and the other

I now apply Derrida's work in more detail in a consideration of how site-specific performance can reflect and support expressions of 'otherness', and the challenge of welcoming the stranger. As well as quoting him directly, I draw on the insights arising from other scholar's commerce with Derrida's work to demonstrate some of the ways in which hospitality has been applied in research contexts. Kevin O'Gorman explores the contradictions that Derrida uncovers in the language of hospitality, concluding that 'true hospitality is something of an enigma' (O'Gorman, 2007, p. 189). O'Gorman draws on post-colonial critical writing and theoretical debates on hospitality in commercial settings to apply Derrida's writing on 'the other' to the ethics of offering hospitality to guests within both private and public national scenarios. Derrida's suggestion that hospitality is an unknown makes an entry into the complex of power relations, between the 'stranger' and the 'known' person. He proceeds to play with the tension between the will to be hospitable and the demands on the host, should the precepts of hospitality be manifested in practice. Nevertheless, for Derrida, the precepts include the following strictures on the host:

Unconditional hospitality implies that you don't ask the other, the newcomer, the guest to give anything back, or even to identify himself or herself. Even if the other deprives you of your mastery or your home, you have to accept this. It is terrible to accept this, but that is the condition of unconditional hospitality: that If, however, there is pure hospitality, it should be pushed to this extreme. (Derrida quoted in O'Gorman, 2007, p. 53)

For the artist, the related action would involve giving up possession of what it is that identifies oneself as an artist – the privileged position from which one speaks, the autonomy of production, and working instead in a relational capacity, co-creating with the audience, and changing role from host to guest. The 'hospitality paradox' is discussed further as this informs the development of a dramaturgy of hospitality.

The challenge for artists who 'know their place' in the hierarchy of unequal power relations and who aim to address this in their relations with the audience for their work, is to follow through in any meaningful way, towards transformation of those relations through a consideration of form. Hal Foster's (1996) essay *The Artist as Ethnographer* illustrates this point. He investigates the politics of alterity, where the

site of political transformation is posited as 'elsewhere'. Foster argues that this gives rise to the artist projecting political truth on to a constructed 'other'. Discussing a project taking place in 1993 in Firminy, France, on a dilapidated housing project designed by Le Corbusier, Foster questions the treatment of the site as ethnographic, asking 'has such modern architecture become exotic in this way?' and criticizing a process which he regards as 'sociological condescension' resulting in 'a remaking of the other in neo-primitivist guise' (Foster 1996, p.165). He acknowledges that not all such projects have this (inadvertently) patronizing outcome. Nevertheless:

The quasi-anthropological role set up for the artist can promote a presuming as much as a questioning of ethnographic authority, an evasion as often as an extension of institutional critique.  
(Foster, 1996 p. 197, emphasis in original)

My observation- at second hand - would be that, as guests of the community in Firminy, the commissioned artists Clegg and Guttman had at best been insensitive and had at worst breached the code of hospitality that proscribes disrespectful behaviour to the host. The critical/colonial stance implied in presenting the inhabitants of Firminy as exhibits in their artwork would be such a breach.

To draw on theatre terminology, the process in this scenario is akin to 'casting' participants in a role, to play for the benefit of an unseen audience, and without their informed consent. This analysis depends on framing the relationship that gives rise to an artwork as one between host and guest and regards the community (of Firminy for example) as host and the artist/s (Clegg and Guttman for example) as guest. The unseen audience includes the community (depending on how their engagement is facilitated). It is more likely to be the commissioners and politicians with a vested interest in justifying how their money has been spent, and the critics, evaluators, industry peers and media that follow these projects like seagulls in the wake of a trawler. I cite this as an example of what I consider to be 'bad practice', towards informing 'best practice' in the design of my practice-research. The 'best practice' to which the research aspired is an ongoing exploration. The matter of 'follow-through' is raised in my discussion of the research within the 'House' spatial imaginary, where both the engagement work and the performance of *House* raised an appetite in the community for further input that it was not possible to satisfy.

## 2.4 Site-specific performance and form

Performance as a form evolves as the walls of taxonomies (naturalism, absurdism, physical theatre, visual theatre and so on) collapse and are found to be irrelevant in relation to the effective communication of ideas to an audience. Finding common ground for this communication between host and guest, artist and audience is a first principle of the research. My premise is that site-specific performance has the potential to enable both artist and audience to 'know their place' in the site where the performance takes place and in terms of their relationship to each other. The tentative formulation of this premise acknowledges that other presentational forms have this potential in terms of developing mutually detailed, even intimate knowledge of relational place – one-to-one performance for example. By virtue of its commitment to a geographical place individuated by the intertwining of cartographical and locally defined boundaries, site-specific performance overtly declares its interest in the place and the people who live, work, play, study or seek residence within these boundaries, and in creating material in relation to them. The form begins with the place. Experimental though site-specific performance may be in terms of working outside of institutional contexts, the work itself needs to bring people into relation with the place and with each other – in short, to tell stories through an accessible form.

Performance that asserts site-specificity is a broad spectrum of practice. This is reflected in the terminology developed to identify and critique performance that takes place outside of theatre buildings. Phil Smith has developed an extensive practice based on walking and which brings together the physical movement through space with a theoretical approach to ways of seeing the environment as mythogeography. (Smith, 2010). Stephen Hodge offers a 'sketch for a continuum of site-specific performance' (Hodge, 2000) that starts inside the theatre building, moves outside for example to include 'Shakespeare in the park, then is 'site-sympathetic' when existing text is physicalized in a selected site, becomes site-generic when performance is generated for a series of like sites, for example car parks or swimming pools, and is fully evolved as site-specific when performance is specifically generated from or for one selected site. At this end of the continuum, the site is directing the shape of the work, and this can



include reference to historical documentation about the site, the past present or future use of it, what is found at the site (text, objects, sounds) and 'anecdotal evidence, collected from members of the community' (Hodge, 2001).

Cathy Turner poses these questions:

What is a site?

Is it a space, a place, a symbol or a set of rules?

Is it a memory, a stage, a story or a mystery?

Is it a territory, a stronghold, an identity or a tenancy?

Is it a text?

A past? A future?

An objective fact or a 'shifting bundle of mirrors'?

(Turner, 2001)

Reflections on these questions can be found in Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins' edited volume *Performing Site-Specific Theatre*, engaging with theatre and performance that is 'grounded in an in-depth exploration and expression of spatial practice' (Birch and Tompkins, 2012, p. 1). The volume presents case studies of forms of practice that takes place in theatres and 'not theatres'. Of particular interest to this enquiry is the range of ways in which the performance work referred to engages with its audience, and the range of critical approaches taken to commenting on that work. For example, an account of Milton's *Comus*, a spectacle presented at Ludlow Castle, is critiqued in related theoretical terms to Adrian Howell's contemporary, intimate practice. The editing strategy here serves to support the knowledge generated by these complementary perspectives, in expanding the debate about what constitutes 'site' and how artistic approaches impact on ideas about performance form.

Theatre has often referenced 'site', even within its own purpose-built environment, with an effect on form. It could be said that theatre has made a study of itself. For example, the play texts *The Seagull*, *Our Country's Good* and *Hamlet*, all make reference to the possibilities and limitations of theatrical form and to varying degrees the drama presented in the text plays out *because* of theatre. Site-specific performance, as discussed in relation to the literature, has its roots in the exit of visual artists from the gallery and comes into being in collaboration with the operations of time (form) and

technical innovation (progress) as engaged and developed by theatre practitioners. In relation to Hans-Thiess Lehmann's formulation and discussion of post-dramatic theatre (2006), Piotr Woycicki (2014) develops a discussion of post-cinematic theatre as a body of theatre work informed by and referencing cinema – its spaces and techniques. (Woycicki, 2014). He relates the capacity of cinematography to 'frame' what the audience accesses to 'calibrate our sensitivities and expectations and guide our perceptions' (Woycki, 2014, p. 3). Engaging with Lehmann's notion of the politics of perception (Lehmann, 2006, p, 186) he draws on site-specific performance theory to discuss performance production strategies that attend to audience experience and enable participation of another order. In a discussion of Duncan Speakman's piece *As If It Were The Last Time*, (2009), he describes how what he calls 'the participants' were given instructions that included explicit references to cinematic techniques:

They were asked to look at the world around them through close-ups, camera zooms, pans and so on. Yet they had no cameras. It was as if they were supposed to film the city with their own eyes.  
(Woycicki, 2014, p.198)

As this thesis proceeds, I discuss the attempts to develop a related theatrical technique of enabling participation of such 'another order', as a shared exchange between artist and audience. My form is performance, but the dynamic of Speakman's cinematic piece is relevant in exploring what working at site can *do* to affect the ways in which the world is perceived through the process.

To summarise the presentation of research context, and as it concludes with a reflection on form, I return to Lehmann. He observes the need to read the 'new drama' with reframed expectations, but warns against the dangers of losing some of the scaffold of the 'old':

When it is obviously no longer simply a matter of broken dramatic illusion or epicising distance; when obviously neither plots, nor plastically shaped dramatis personae are needed; when neither dramatic-dialectical collisions of values nor even identifiable figures are necessary to produce 'theatre' ... then the concept of drama – however differentiated, all embracing and watered down it may become - retains so little substance that it loses its cognitive value.  
(Lehmann, 2006, p. 34)

Audiences for site-specific performance, whether or not habitual attenders of 'conventional' theatre can bring a set of expectations to the event in relation to those conventions. The normative idea of theatre form pertains, whereby clearly defined characters play out what Hegel identified as 'tragic collision'. (Paolucci and Paolucci, 1975). In other words, audiences are attuned to look for a story.

## Chapter 3 The Practice-Research

### Introduction

Description, analysis and discussion of the practice-research is presented in four consecutively numbered sections. Attention is drawn to the filmed documentation of the practice-research and to the printed material that forms the submission.

#### Overview:

1 The description and analysis of *Care Home* sets out a proof of concept. Photographic documentation is presented within the text of this thesis.

2 The description of *House* sets out the process towards and presentation of a performance, the analysis of which respectively propelled the research in a new direction. The film accompanying the thesis documents the performance and is presented as part of the submission. A booklet presented in hard copy, created with participants in the House project documents the engagement process and is presented as part of the submission.

3 The description and analysis of *City* includes documentation presented in two ways:

- The first is the appended script of the presentation at Leeds University on 15 October 2019 of *Taking an invitation for a walk*. Photographs recording the event are presented within the text of this thesis.
- The second is the set of seven play texts presented in hard copy and forming part of the submission.

4 *Garden* presents a summation of the practice-research in the form of a site-specific performance. The performance was designed to be filmed as documentation and is presented as part of the submission.

## Section 1: Care Home

### Introduction

This section documents *Care Home*, a performance event presented in my own house. The aim was to present hospitality *as* performance and performance *as* hospitality. Selected responses from guests are included. This feedback was gathered through unsolicited (though welcome) written responses and through eliciting responses post hoc prompted by the question: how did you feel about your visit? These comments are presented in italics and indented throughout. The event aimed to test the possibilities of engaging performance with hospitality and to explore theoretical concepts of hospitality as performance through practice. Through inviting people to a performance in my own home, I also placed myself within the research overall.

The invitation took the form of an 'At Home', with reference to the formal convention of the host being at home to receive guests on a given date, between the hours on the invitation. (fig.1)



Fig 1

Guests at an 'At Home' are invited to meet each other, to enjoy hospitality, and by their presence, to bring the event into being. In this regard, the host as curator of the event attends to more than merely summoning a group of people. The invitation was

personalised, and on receiving an acceptance, the individual guest was sent an envelope by special delivery, 'Care of' Hilton Place, containing an image, poem, set of song lyrics or other material in some way referring to their interests, insofar as I, as host, could discern this. The objective here was to underline the invitation with the sense that the guest is known, and to acknowledge that they bring their dispositions and agendas to the event, towards bringing it into being. This acknowledgement attempts to counter the 'data capture' of the conventional theatre box office procedure, which in my view does not seem to serve to enhance the experience of the audience member in any way, with a personalized approach that might be expected in a performance declaring itself as hospitality. The invitation to *Care Home* was for You, specifically.

*Post! I had post! This was intensely personal. You realise how much receiving a letter is important, personal. It made me look at the rest of the visit in a different way. (Feedback 2016)*

The question posed to guests afterwards in face to face or telephone interview was simply; Tell me, what do you feel about your visit?

### **1.1 *Care Home* as site-specific performance**

Nuancing the title of the research project, the invitation to guests of *Care Home* is for 'you', the guest, to 'know *my* place', and to make yourself 'at home'. In terms of the practice-research questions, my agenda was to 'know *our* place' in terms of how a joint occupation of the site was negotiated between host and guest.

Patrice Pavis's statement that 'the term (site-specific) refers to a staging and performance conceived on the basis of a place in the real world' (1998, pp. 337-338) is particularly apt in the context of a project that will in a sense invert the conventions of how theatre is experienced. Instead of the staging and performance of material drawn from the 'real world' being placed within a theatre building, the 'real world' (of the house) will contain the theatre. (fig. 2)



Fig 2

Sensitivity to a particular site as marked historically, socially, culturally, psychically and politically is an outcome of the process of creating performance that asserts site-specificity. As Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks' concept of 'theatre archaeology' suggests, 'the site' is already marked with the past and a performance created in relation to it is only 'the latest occupation of a place where previous occupations are still apparent and cognitively active' (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p. 150). This idea resonates particularly in the context of the private house, where the evidence of previous occupation is palpable. The boundaries or limits of the 'site' can be decided as part of the creative process, and as a function of being 'specific', but the space beyond and around will impinge. New and unforeseen cultural 'space' may open up within the site itself during the creative process, displacing or resisting material that the artist had intended to place there. In the context of performance, 'site' is a slippery term, and the adjective 'specific' attempts to fix it, as both a location and a spatial practice, towards defining the terms of engagement.

Towards attempting a response to these possibilities, and with reference to the overarching research question, *Care Home* engages with the philosophical work of Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre who both propose theories of Space. De Certeau distinguishes between place (*lieu*) and space (*espace*). In this, as noted by Nick Kaye he echoes Ferdinand de Saussure's distinction between '*langue*, the complex of rules and conventions which constitute a language, and the *parole*, the practice of speech in which these rules are given expression.' (Kaye, 2008, p. 3)

The spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre addresses the mechanics by which space is produced through a constant negotiation of social relations. As an analogy of how initial perceptions of a structure can be refined - and pertinent to this proposal - he offers the image of a house:

Consider a house, and a street, for example. The house has six storeys and an air of stability about it. One might almost see it as the epitome of immovability, with its concrete and its stark, cold and rigid outlines. Now a critical analysis would doubtless destroy the appearance of solidity of this house, stripping it, as it were, of its concrete slabs and its thin non-load-bearing walls, which are really glorified screens, and uncovering a very different picture. In the light of this imaginary analysis, our house would emerge as permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, as so on. Its image of immobility would then be replaced by an image of a complex of mobilities, a nexus of in and out conduits. (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 92-93)

The construction of the (his)story of Lefebvre's house then depends on being able to move around the space – in the widest sense of being mobile – bringing critical strategies to bear on 'reading' the space and engaging a wide frame of personal cultural reference.

*I kept seeing things I know, I was making comparisons with my own house. I wondered if we are the same age, whether we had the same kind of childhood, how you shared your toys. I wondered if there were small children in the house, that we weren't meeting. It was a strange feeling of familiarity in an unfamiliar place.*  
(Feedback June 2016)

## **1.2 The site in the context of hospitality and 'the stranger' as guest**

11 Hilton Place was built in 1911 and is therefore the site of over a century of changes in occupancy and in shifts in relation to how it will have been used, as mores around 'visiting' and hospitality in general have developed. The surrounding area has also undergone significant changes in the built environment and in the increasing cultural diversity of the population, because of immigration since the end of the Second World War. The house is an end terrace, although it shares a wall with the Baptist church, a lively hub that is an exemplar of offering shelter and solace to various immigrant



communities and asylum seekers, many of whom are destitute through being refused refugee status.

As part of the project, the household (comprising dependents and friends) took part in the Grace Hosting project operated by Leeds Asylum Seekers' Network. This involved hosting people who are destitute because of a failed attempt to seek asylum in the UK, having no entitlement to social security benefits and no right to work for a wage. People in this situation can be referred to the hosting scheme through the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The undertaking from the host is to offer a meal, a bed for the night and that amorphous concept 'hospitality'. The experience was enriching and humbling in obvious ways, bringing the idea of the welcome to the stranger and the complexities involved in (or impossibility of - see Derrida) providing 'unconditional' hospitality into physical and social form.

Attempts to ameliorate the situation of the destitute asylum seeker in 2016 and to date have in some sense seen a return to the Homeric custom of hospitality, whereby food and shelter are given to a stranger, whose name is unknown and who arrives at the door, is schematised in Leeds, designated a 'City of Sanctuary', for example, through the system of Grace Hosting. D, a colleague, who works with refugees, asylum seekers and destitute immigrants spent the afternoon in the garden shed writing a project report to Leeds City Council and chatting to guests about their work and the materials relating to the Roma community they had brought with them. Their place in *Care Home*, in an outlying part of the house, seemed illustrative of the place refugees and asylum seekers have in the collective psyche and in relation to policy decisions on granting leave to remain (fig.3).



Fig 3

Xenia is a guest-friendship relevant to *Care Home*. This Ancient Greek custom allowed for the safe passage of the traveller through strange territory and for this traveller to receive hospitality there. Apart from the motivation to be hospitable arising from the possibility that a stranger knocking at the door might be a deity, the reciprocal nature of the practice was embedded in the culture and cemented social relations outside of the immediate family. This hospitality was based on gift exchange, rather than commodity exchange, and thereby ensured that obligations ensued could be discharged further along the way. C.A. Gregory distinguishes between commodity and gift exchange thus:

Commodity exchange establishes objective quantitative relationships between the objects transacted, while gift exchange establishes personal qualitative relationships between the subjects transacting. (Gregory quoted in Schrift, 1997, p. 2)

The drama of the Greek myths is often driven by incidents where the code of obligation arising from Xenia has been breached, by both omission and commission. The story of the *Odyssey* is an example. The practice of Xenia was built into antique Greek culture and is related to the hospitality arranged by charitable organisations to deal with the personal emergency experienced by displaced people today. This hospitality operates in the context of lack of statutory provision for destitute asylum seekers, and a culture which has become suspicious of and unwilling to welcome 'the stranger'.

In the design of *Care Home*, I placed a range of texts in frames at points around the house themed on hospitality, alluding to the aphoristic self-improvement phrases often found in guest houses that exhort one to transform one's life, but do not indicate in any grounded sense *how* this might take place (for example, 'Life is not about looking for sunshine, it's about learning to dance in the rain').

A pair of watercolours entitled 'Crossing the Mediterranean' depicting a story of the desperate voyage to seek asylum, familiar from media images, was mounted in the entrance hall (fig. 4).



Fig 4

I took the interpretation text from Mireille Rosello's writing on *The Immigrant as Guest*. She asks, what is at stake if the (usually non-European) immigrant were considered as a guest? Her question is couched in the context of French society. The traditional role played by France as a land of sanctuary is shifting as the portcullis comes down around Fortress Europe. Those without papers (*sans papiers*) are then presented in the media as a threat to the indigenous population. I applied the text with a view to commenting on how such transformation might arise through host and guest accepting the 'uncomfortable and sometimes painful possibility of being changed by the other' (Rosello, 2001, p. 170). This engages with my aim of problematizing the notion of 'transformation' as a possible outcome of encounters with 'the arts,' as vaguely expressed in the rhetoric of arts advocacy documents promising for example that 'theatre changes people's lives'. John Bell interrogates this hopeful phrase in a paper surveying theatrical experiences including the catholic mass, carnival and sports events, with regard to the need for healing in communities experiencing the immediate effects, and then the wake of the deaths of individuals in police custody. He suggests that it is hard to say if and how the experience of theatre might change lives or serve a community (Bell 2016). He asks: 'Has theatre ever done so?' (Bell 2016 p 441), offering that certain kinds of shared 'theatrical' events ensure that 'existing values are reinforced and community and personal identity are confirmed in live, shared experience'. (Bell p 441). In relation to Eleonora Belfiore's pithy use of the word 'bullshit' regarding evaluation toolkits that promise to prove the efficacy of theatre in bringing about a personal, affective epiphany (Belfiore, 2008, p. 24), I aim to make a

constructive contribution to the discourse on what might *actually* be possible for theatre and performance to achieve in terms of transformative encounters.

### 1.3 Process:

The process was allied to my regular practice in working 'at site' as a producer and director, in terms of gathering data (which, etymologically, I understand to be *gifts*): exploring a range of possible scenarios, identifying the target constituency, engaging in consultation, and considering needs, designing the performance space, seeking funding, rehearsing, budgeting, publicising and evaluating. These aspects had an analogous aspect in the preparations for *Care Home*.

The difference of significance here is that the house belonged to *me* – I had title to it – so the data gathered (the gifts) in a sense were already mine. It is worth noting that in other working scenarios the data gathered at site are rightfully the property of the constituents and are a resource to be valued not exploited.

Approaching my house as a site-specific performance venue, and with a view to engaging this as a performance-research laboratory, I surveyed the building as a scenographer, attempting an objective view of the interior and exterior spaces. Following Bachelard, for whom as Henri Lefebvre says, 'the House is as much cosmic as it is human' (Lefebvre and Nicholson Smith, 1991, p. 121), I considered each part of the house as having a distinct role in the piece. Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1994) offered a guide to the potential resonance each room might have for a guest visiting for the first time. Yi-Fu Tuan brings the whole edifice into view, including its evocative properties:

Home is an intimate place. We *think* of the house as home and place, but enchanted images of the past are evoked not so much by the entire building, which can only be seen, (sic) as by its components and furnishings, which can be touched and smelled as well. The attic and the cellar, the fireplace and the bay window, the hidden corners, a tool, a gilded mirror, a chipped shell.  
(Tuan, 2014, p. 144, emphasis in original)

This process was time consuming and took on the dimensions of a renovation project, editing objects and reviewing the layouts of rooms, the condition of the décor and the

contents of storage spaces. Feedback from guests indicate that the work of Michael Landy was evoked. His project *Breakdown* (2001) involved the collection and subsequent systematic destruction of all his material possessions. My work in the house was in a sense the inverse in that I was examining each of my material possessions for its use value in the *Care Home* project and its potential to communicate something meaningful to a stranger and re-siting it sometimes to evoke that meaning. This is an impossible task – it is not feasible to take control over every aspect in a performance site and certainly not to control what and how any particular element will be interpreted. It is also not possible to exclude anything. This offers research potential, towards articulating the qualities that distinguish the processes and form of performance ‘at site’. The move to work outside the theatre building is a gesture of intent that expresses the relationship of the artist to institutional structure, an approach to scenography, to administration and to the creative process, as well as the politics of working as a guest in an environment which does not operate as a ‘theatre’. Everything has potential significance, even activity that belongs in intention resolutely in the ‘backstage’ area:

*Who was that man carrying a dog into a nearby van?*  
(Feedback May 2016)

The above observation enters the interplay between backstage/frontstage regions, discussed further below. As a precaution, I had arranged for the family dog to be sequestered in the motorhome parked on the street. The drama of this move was captured by one guest, on their arrival and for them, became part of the performance.

These considerations were informed by the imperative to foreground, and activate, practical considerations around hospitality. The physical work undertaken to create a performance space within the house was also necessary to make the house ready to receive a guest in the Grace Hosting scheme. Furniture, personal possessions, and decor needed to be reorganized towards bringing the site into readiness.

I considered a range of thematic elements that would address the guest as an individual: provide comfort and refreshment, speak to the provision of refuge and asylum, manifest

'care' - towards creating a coherent experience for the guests. This was in a sense of process of casting. I invited my colleague M to curate a set of stories with some relation to hospitality, and to tell these during the afternoon, by the 'hearth' (although not having a fire in summer). This was where the stranger seeking hospitality would 'sing for his supper', by entertaining the host and other guests. (M was part of the hosting team; he was playing the 'role' of stranger). I placed my colleague D in the shed, where he spent the afternoon writing evaluation reports in relation to his work supporting refugees and asylum seekers. While the Wi-Fi does reach as far as the shed, D was resolutely 'outside', along with his subject matter. J, a performing arts colleague, placed at the top of the house was charged with inviting guests to share their thoughts about where they felt most comfortable either in the house or in general, and offering guests a hand or head massage.

To present a theoretical basis for the piece, I arranged the critical texts I have primarily worked with while developing my research questions from the cellar to the attic using the stairs as library shelves. These were arranged broadly schematically whereby dictionaries and anthologies were at the beginning of the 'bibliography' moving through philosophical works, political texts concerning feminism and politics, theory, texts about geography, walking, mapping, architecture and sociology, followed by treatises on theatre through to texts about post-theatre, live art and performance and onwards to those focusing on site-specificity. Texts on hospitality were interspersed throughout. This could have been an alphabetical arrangement by author, in the conventional way of presenting a bibliography. In this case, I wanted to present a journey of thought through the house. It was also a productive way for me to review sources in relation to themes in relation to the research overall (fig. 5).



Fig 5

I am aware of the paradox in inviting people to participate in this work as guests, and to expect them to feel 'free' since in effect as the 'author' of the work, I am in a position of power that is difficult to rescind. As Derrida says:

An author-creator ... absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or meaning of the presentations, letting this latter represent him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreter who [...] more or less directly represent the thought of the creator.  
(Derrida, 1978, p. 296)

Is the 'audience' in this situation part of the 'frontstage' in terms of having been 'cast' as guests? Or do they observe the 'frontstage' performance of the host as a spectacle? Or is it a matter of everyone participating (or collaborating) in an event that supports oscillation between backstage and frontstage?

Nevertheless, *Care Home* takes place within the frame of performance – as distinct to theatre - and thus engages with 'the impossibility of remaining coherent to a script or pre-conceived format' (Freeman, 2007, p. 11), so my position as 'author-creator' is tenuous in this context, or at least less authoritative. In this iteration of the piece, I aimed to encourage and investigate the interaction between guests, and to create a heterarchical relation between me and them. In relation to this, I am also aware of the doublings of my role – being Alison who lives in the house, Alison as the proprietor of a fictional place entitled *Care Home*, Alison giving the performance of host, and Alison as

a candidate for examination presenting *Care Home* as a piece of practice-research. The host is also subject to the judgment of the guest in terms of the success of the occasion, or the satisfactory provision of facilities, so I am under a double scrutiny. On some level the performance of at least one of these roles was successful:

*It made me feel that if you were my landlady and I was a migrant with a hundred stories to tell I would have finally landed on my feet, on solid ground. (Feedback May 2016)*

Researching the 'Landlady' as a particular feature of British hospitality in preparing for this project, I came across an ethnographic study that takes as its subject the Blackpool Landlady. This doughty figure 'was visibly involved in ministering to the customers' comfort'. (Walton, 1978 p 69). Walton's study makes clear how regulated and codified the culture of guest house provision was in this time and place. He goes on to observe that 'Personal friendships could flourish under these conditions, and a nucleus of regular visitors could be created' (Walton, 1978, p. 69), which suggests that a breach in the severe distinction between landlady and paying guest could enable this personal connection to be made. The scenario was significantly played out in the domestic home, as distinct from a hotel where the proprietor might in fact live elsewhere. In this regard I identified with the Blackpool Landlady as host, as I am also resident in *Care Home* as place – not that I recommend this as a name for a guest house - as well as presenting *Care Home* as a performance. The backstage region was constantly impinging, perhaps invisibly as far as the guests were concerned, when provisions needed replenishing, a colleague wanted further guidance on how to proceed, or I spotted some detail that required adjustment. I had in fact 'cast' *Care Home* along theatrical lines.

I placed Walton's book in an old leather suitcase in the attic room (fig. 6).





Fig 6

This was where my colleague J was installed, and where he asked those guests who found their way to the top of the house how they were feeling and offered to massage their hands. The connection I wanted to make in terms of care was between the stereotype of the 'landlady', whose care might be somewhat regimented, even draconian in nature, and a contemporary notion of person-centred care.

#### **1.4 The Audience as Guest**

Bourriaud rejects theatre as a relational form, since, along with cinema, 'it brings small groups together before specific unmistakable things' (Bourriaud, 2002 p.16) and furthermore 'there is no live comment made about what is seen' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.16) as opposed to the 'real time' encounter with the artwork to be experienced in the gallery. His position is contested, since it does not take account of the range of theatre practice that engages audiences as participants. Nevertheless, the motivation to create performance outside of theatre buildings is often to provide what Bourriaud calls 'a state of encounter' (Bourriaud, 2002, p.16). It may be that this 'state' is more easily arrived at when the 'stage' on which the performance takes place is ground that is shared by conventions of mutual exchange, such as those invoked by the laws of hospitality.

In a move away from the model of 'demand and supply' (of the performance respectively *from* the artist and *to* the audience) and towards performance that is co-constituted with the audience, my aim was to create a site-specific performance that has

a durational form as theatre does, but that enables the audience to collaborate in the rendition of the work and in relation to the place, and to their developing knowledge of it. In the context of an exercise in 'hospitality', the audience is explicitly invited as guest. This informs a set of questions regarding the ways in which this scenario can provide the 'space of relations' that Bourriaud suggests is evident in every site. These include:

- 1 Is the audience one entity – literally 'a party' - or a group of individuals?
- 2 To what extent is autonomous action possible for the guest – to make their own choices in where and how to engage?
- 3 What are the implications of an invitation to co-create? And can this be refused by the guest, and the 'party' continue?
- 4 What relationship do individuals in the audience have with each other?
- 5 What conventions of a 'visit' pertain: can the individual arrive and leave when they chose without compromising their 'experience'? Can the guest feel 'at home'?

**Point 8** Posing these questions as part of a conversation with some guests sometime afterwards elicited the following feedback (All Feedback June 2016):

*It was clearly a group of people in a related line of work. That's what you would expect at a party, generally speaking. It's not the same at the theatre, where you might know a few people, or a lot, depending on what kind of piece it is, but there you are among strangers.*

The reflection speaks to my aim of creating performance in a context where people feel connected to and comfortable in the environment.

*I wasn't sure about the boundaries. I think I'm bounded by social conventions in terms of behaviour. If we had been invited to discuss the ideas with you beforehand then I would have come up with things I wanted to do. But this was a finished product, to an extent. So I would have been a bad guest if I'd started my own party.*

*If you're asking me what I would have done, I would have proposed making a Ladybird book – the real one, not the ironic version – of 'How an artist lives in their home'. It's a trade, it's not recognized but I understand it. So that would have been my co-creation. You'd never be asked for your ideas in the theatre, unless it was Boal.*

The above two comments are connected, the second being elicited through a follow-up question. The process of co-creation is integral to site-specific performance as practiced in this research. The idea of being a 'bad guest' by bringing one's own ideas to the table, is diametrically opposed in site-specific performance where the aim is to enable a sense of ownership over the material.

*The terror of being touched! – so no I didn't want a hand massage, but I didn't feel I had closed anything down by refusing. Did I get it right?*

The implication here is that sometimes what is offered by the host in a spirit of generosity (a 'treat') can in fact be a negative experience for the guest. In the theatre, and particularly in 'immersive' theatre contexts, the developing guidelines are around idea of consent, especially concerning touch. There are works (for example Ontroerend Goed's *Audience*, discussed in the thesis) that deliberately transgress the etiquette of relations between artist and audience and thereby expose these conventions to scrutiny.

*When I arrived, I refused the Pimm's – and then I felt I had rejected an offer, then I was offered tea – the rejection was accepted in as grand a way that the original offer was made – the counteroffer was tea in a bone China cup and this made it a 'thing' that was an event of some kind. So I was then reacting to the bone China cup and the whole tea service and being part of performance of having afternoon tea, with the cucumber sandwiches – and then I realized that I could rise to the occasion and connected it to the invitation I'd had and then settled into being at home'.*

As per the previous comment, the grand gesture from the host can be overwhelming to the guest. The comment expresses a 'layering' of offers that are rejected by the guest and then escalated by the host. The use of the word 'performance' in this instance places in a negative light. Perhaps the host is showing off and doing this at the expense of the guest?

*Was I 'the audience'? I didn't feel that. I realized that you had made a lot of decisions to have interactive elements. The idea of people who might perform. I had some lovely conversations with D that started to unfold, but he wasn't performing as such and there wasn't anyone else there, so I wasn't in an audience relationship with anyone else.*

The group of people invited to be 'At Home' with me were of course well acquainted with performance tropes, as well as in any case being aware of the occasion as part of practice-research. The comment draws on ideas of who is performing, and identifies D as 'not performing' – so the interaction in that moment was not identified as between artist and audience.

*I wanted to listen to the story – which I did for a bit, then I felt myself drifting to sleep. Which I do feel I can do in the theatre – it's the end of the day, I'm tired, it's dark, what are you going to do? Yes, I feel comfortable doing that there. Would I feel comfortable doing that in someone's house? Well, if you're being told a story – it takes you back to childhood. So, I did, I must have gone to sleep. I must have felt 'at home'.*

Having presented my house as a venue with reference to theatre, the guest connects ideas of comfort and relaxation, or permission to relax, with the darkness afforded by being 'at the theatre', and also expresses a feeling of being 'at home'. These are feelings that are not universally associated with theatre, as discussed in the thesis in relation to theatre buildings and associations with theatre as an institution.

The feedback responds to the 'state of encounter' (with reference to Bourriaud above) created in *Care Home* that elicited both positive and negative feelings. As already stated, hospitality is not an unencumbered framework for human relations.

As already discussed, the concept and practice of hospitality is engaged in this research as a lens through which to focus on site-specific performance practice, testing its potential to support transformational exchange between artist and audience. In relation to *Care Home* I draw on Emile Benveniste's etymological work, as earlier outlined, noting the connections he activates between concepts concerning mastery, exchange and responsibility.

The complex history of hospitality is useful for me in considering the role in which I 'cast' myself within the performance of *Care Home*. As the host, I expect to take care of 'you' the guest. In selecting a title for the piece, I refer to curation, from Latin *cura* 'care', suggesting also effecting a cure, offering protection, solace, healing, refuge, hospitality. It can also refer to the creation of collections through selection and organisation, taking care of the property as a whole. Also evoked is the role of the caretaker, and the janitor.

(The latin root of janitor evokes Janus, the god of portals and thresholds, taking care of beginnings and endings and who looks both ways, inwards and outwards and perhaps both backstage and frontstage.)

### **1.5 Bringing the Host/Guest relationship into being**

In attempting to concretise the relationship between host and guest in *Care Home* I refer to Goldstein's framework of actualization. There is here a connection with a reading of Pierre Klossowski's *Roberte Ce Soir* (1997) indicating required behaviour by the guest, not 'social etiquette' as such but pointing to how the relationship between host and guest is brought into being by a shift in power. This short novel dramatises a ritual of hospitality and self-actualization, whereby the host must give up the very thing that defines himself as a host, in order to claim this identity:

..because the master of this house herewith invites the stranger to penetrate to the source of all substances beyond the realm of all accident this is how he inaugurates a substantial relationship between himself and the stranger which will not be a relative relationship but an absolute one, as though, the master becoming one with the stranger, his relationship with you having just set foot here were now but a relationship of one with oneself. To this end the host translates himself into the actual guest.  
(Klossowski, 1997)

The novel deals also with matters of theology, flesh, and the soul. The 'Rule of Hospitality' placed above the guest's bed is central to the drama that then plays out. This is, I note, played out within a bourgeois, heteronormative frame, but the idea of actualization through the exchange of identity between host and guest has powerful resonances. I placed the novel on the bed in the main bedroom, open at this point in the text. Might there be a suggestion of a bedtime story? The apparently paradoxical power shift between host and guest in Klossowski's fiction seems to point to the complex and seemingly unresolvable issues that play out in the discourse around immigration currently and have resonance in daily interactions that occur through for example the 'Grace Hosting' scheme. To fulfil the obligations of hospitality, the host must concede at least some part of the privileges of property, power and autonomy accorded to her/him, *qua* host (fig. 7).



Fig 7

I had a spatial trajectory in mind for the guests – that in some way, they would be ‘led’ through the house, embark on this willingly and therefore ‘actualise’ my vision. The issue of ‘affordance’ is relevant here, since clear affordances, not just in the design terms as discussed by Norman (1998) for example: this stairway is for climbing, this food is for you, is part of the responsibility the host has to the guest, and part of the invitation.

*How could I just go upstairs and wander, still less poke about in your cupboards?*  
(Feedback 2016)

The above comment relates directly to the experience of the guest where the terms of hospitality, or at least its limits, are not clear. Nevertheless there were some things I wanted guests to discover, rather than be explicitly directed to. There were elements in the site that could provide a ‘pay-off’ in terms of a narrative arc, so the skeleton in the wardrobe in the main bedroom became part of a story for one guest:

*In your bedroom I felt the most vulnerable – and then I opened your wardrobe and found the skeleton, illuminated, and felt comfortable again because this was clearly theatre – so it wasn’t your bedroom, it was a set. And I felt rewarded for my boldness in pursuing the task.*  
(Feedback June 2016)

An indication from a guest that they had in fact seen what I wanted them to see, defined me as a director, one that I had in some sense attempted to resist, but that returned as a familiar role:

*I felt satisfied, I felt I had succeeded in finding something out – quite what it was I don't know, but I guessed it had to be something to do with a secret or something shameful. You had something to hide, but you also wanted me to find it.*  
(Feedback June 2016)

The visit to *Care Home* took place in real time – in that the event was as long as the guests were present in the house. As with durational performance, there was no collapsed time, or representational space. I am interested in what distance or fictional space might exist between events in 'my house' and in *Care Home*, and how participants (guests) perceived this. The 'skeleton in the cupboard' remained there for quite some time after the guests had left – a real skeleton in a real cupboard (fig. 8):

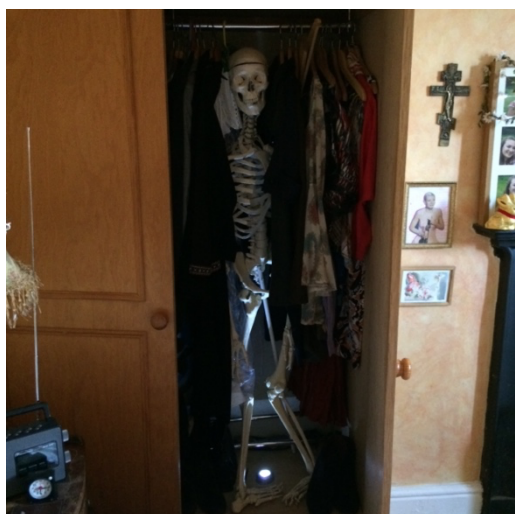


Fig 8

*When you accept an invitation to someone's house, of course you're interested in the space and what they've done to it, but really you've come to visit a person, not a place. This was different because I knew it was 'a performance' so my relationship to the house as a 'real' place was different – and to you as the person who had invited me. I was interpreting the space then and reading it as a fiction in some ways.*  
(Feedback June 2016)

The slippage between the site as experienced in a quotidian context and the site experience as theatre became evident here. The next comment reflects on another key aspect of theatre whereby the structure of a performance generally organizes the

experience for the audience in terms of the temporal: there is a clear beginning, and end:

*I didn't have enough time. The invitation was about time – between this hour and this hour. The invitation is always about the convenience of the host isn't it, not about the convenience of the guest. The invitation is a summons. It's my fault because I had something else to do, but I had to tear myself away. I'd just started to 'flow' and then I had to leave.*  
(Feedback June 2016)

Is it true that the guest is summoned at the convenience of the host? It is certainly true that the audience is summoned at the convenience of the artist in the conventional theatre setup. As part of the programme for the afternoon, my colleague M told stories at specific times. Calling on the Norse tradition of telling stories by the hearth, he referred to the *Poetic Edda*, and the need to 'sing for your supper' if arriving late at night and seeking a place by the fireside. In this scenario, the guest arriving late at night, cold and unknown, must negotiate for status by bringing something to the table. The guest will be judged in terms of the ability to entertain the host. In exchange for 'wit' evidenced by a good story or a song, the guest will be fed and kept warm (fig. 9)



Fig 9

The role of participants or collaborators in the documentation of the event, and their willingness, or resistance, to engage in this process opens further questions about the potential for the event to be a transformative experience – as opposed to a coercive one.



There is an etiquette that insists on interaction on a visit to a personalized space. The traces of this interaction were left in in the 'Guest Book', where participants in *Care Home* joined in the fiction of the piece to leave their addresses and comments. No one left any material object behind, but their presence during the afternoon is now part of the history of the house (fig.10).

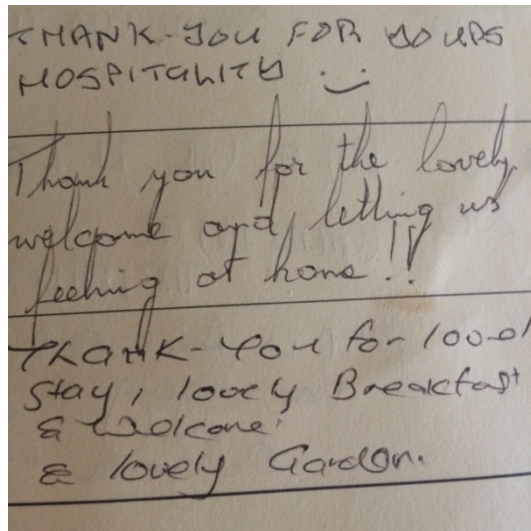


Fig 10

### 1.6 Documentation.

Photography is a documentary activity that can be seamlessly integrated into the host/guest relationship and can be undertaken by either party. Recording private parties or family gatherings and of course taking photographs of the guests at the openings of arts events in galleries and theatres is customary. I considered filming the proceedings, and the implications of covert surveillance, which would have had obvious implications in relation to the code of hospitality. As noted elsewhere, the performance genre 'presentation for examination' requires documentary evidence towards reflection and academic rigour, but I decided that filming, overtly or covertly would simply compromise the relationship between host and guest to no useful purpose. I chose to use a Polaroid camera and film, towards a visual record, because the business of using the equipment has a slight novelty element, suitable for a social event, and there is a sense of joint endeavour in the creation of the photograph. The image comes into being in front of the subject, in the moment of its making, rather than the lapsed time involved

in exposing conventional film stock and dark room development. The resulting Polaroid photograph could of course then be given as a gift – perhaps to departing guests.

## **Conclusion**

On reflection, some of the allusions that were driving the concept of *Care Home* for me as the artist were not legible to the guests. It is in the reflection here presented that these allusions are more effectively expressed, because they are explicitly articulated. The conversations conducted with participants (both guests and those present as part of the performance) confirmed that the possibility of exchanging the role of host and guest would require a more nuanced concept in the practice going forward. What had been achieved was a performance of hospitality but not a framework for mutual exchange. In fact, I had confirmed the positive aspects of being hosted, but the role of host remained mine alone.

The familiar gesture of opening the door to the guest, which is so simple in everyday life in relation to people we ‘know’ is difficult when we do not ‘know our place’ in this scenario. The arrival of the stranger precipitates an encounter with the ethical dilemmas inimical to hospitality as an open-ended unconditional obligation. We might receive the lesson in our obligations, and act on this, but remain unschooled in how to *feel* about discharging them. Hospitality and performance as cultural forms are robustly constructed as encounters between host and guest and artist and audience respectively. These constructs hold the form of the meeting in respect of the individual’s role in the scenario and support the participants to play out their roles. Conceiving of ways to entertain, to provide for guests, considering their comfort, is analogous to conceiving of a performance, and considering how to achieve the intended impact for the audience. The guests of *Care Home* were my audience and I wanted to perform well. The preparation of food and its display was part of this performance, and was (naturally!) recorded – for the benefit of the host, perhaps rather than the guests fig 11:



Fig 11

The ethics of documentation in this context engage directly with the ethics of the hospitality relationship per se. Since *Care Home* was clearly taking place within a performance or ‘event’ framework, were there any restrictions on *guests* taking photographs – and if so were there any limits on what might *be* photographed? On being observed taking photographs of the framed texts, a guest, seeing they were observed, asked if it was alright and wondered that they might perhaps appear ‘rude’. I assured my guest that this was perfectly in order. The house was open, and there were no limits on what could be experienced or recorded.

My discussion now turns to limits on recording the event within the laws of hospitality. Procedures of documentation introduce fundamental relational distinctions between participation and collaboration, spectatorship and voyeurism. The obligations of host to guest (or proprietor to customer in the commercial construct of hospitality) are paramount and sit in tension against the obligations an artist has to funders/sponsors and those the researcher has to the academy with regard to the record and articulation of outputs. This issue raises material problems around documentation of the encounter between host/guest audience/artist, discussed further in the chapter on ‘City’ and in relation to the documentation of the *City* performance.

Reflecting on feedback gathered from guests left in the guest book, in interview in person and by telephone, and as unsolicited feedback as documented above, it seems that the context of the event as *performance* seemed the least important aspect for guests. Even though I was aware of ‘performing’ the role of host, and I had recruited

colleagues to undertake various roles, there seemed to be little distinction between how the event was experienced as hospitality per se, and how it was perceived as 'performance'. This could be seen as a success, in that my performance of hospitality was seamlessly integrated into a pleasant afternoon where refreshments, entertainments, diversions and conversation melded into one.

*Care Home* as an event enabled a range of intersecting themes and practical ideas to be tested and therefore functioned as a 'proof of concept'. It allowed me to experiment with form and to conceive of the 'At Home' etiquette as performance, drawing ideas about hospitality – the provision of refreshment, comfort and entertainment - together with the problematic aspects of the power held by the artist (and in this case the artist-researcher and host). As discussed above in relation to Klossowski, the guest (in this case also audience) confers the status of host on those offering hospitality, in a performative act that brings the relationship of host and guest into being. It is only when the host has given up the power invested in *being* the host that the role can itself be actualized. Taken to its logical conclusion, the host is brought into being when the symbols of hospitality are given over entirely to the guest. This would include entrusting the guest with the keys to the house, which as Derrida suggests would be unconditional hospitality and is impossible to offer.

The practice-research within the next paradigm 'House' was planned to produce a site-specific performance, *House*, prepared in relation to a community engagement process along the lines that I have conducted my professional practice to date. The themes explored in *Care Home* are brought over, particularly the performance of hosting, that I had presented, that was enfolded into my private, personal identity as 'hostess', the lady 'At Home'. This was now to be given over to performers taking on four different iterations of the hosting role.

## Section 2 House

### Introduction

This section presents a description and analysis of 'House,' including engagement work and the site-specific performance *House*, presented in January 2018 in Headingley, Leeds, the whole set of activities forming the second piece of practice-research. The video forming part of the thesis submission records the performance and is clearly marked with titles that indicate how the performance is organised. I refer to the performance throughout this account with reference to the titles of the different scenes presented in the video. A publication *The Headingley Postie* is a creative documentation of the engagement process and is presented in hard copy as an output.

I describe how a key aspect of the principal research question that explores the mechanics of exchange *within* the relationship between artist and audience was addressed. The process overall was underpinned by the theoretical position I adopt in critiquing the normative relationship between artist and audience, whereby the audience is the guest of the artist, particularly in the theatre building or cultural space (museum, art gallery, opera house inter alia). Through site-specific performance practice I explore how this relationship might be affected according to the place in which the performance is presented. *House* the performance was centrally concerned with investigating how the concept of hospitality can inform the dramaturgy of a performance. *House* investigated hospitality as *performance*, and performance as *hospitality*.

*House* the performance was presented to a public audience subtitled as *An invitation to a conversation in the dark* and was created through a process of engagement in residency in the area. The story of Robert Arthington (1823-1900) formed a narrative arc for the piece. This biographical aspect is described in detail below and is related to the themes addressed in the research framework 'House' as set out in the methodological principles above. These connections are also drawn out further in the sections below. I describe how the engagement process was structured in part through three community walks, led by a specialist in aspects of heritage and social history. The

walks were entitled House, City and Garden. (I have underlined the titles of the works here to place the walks within the 'House' project overall and to distinguish the walks from *performances*) and were designed to map on to the paradigms of the research overall.

Responses from a range of people who experienced the performance and/or took part in the engagement process were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Selections of their feedback are interspersed throughout this section to provide perspective on their experience. The interviews aimed to identify some effects of engagement in the project as either/or/and participants in the engagement process, of their experience of the site-specific performance for audiences, and how *House* might affect ways they now 'know their place'.

*I can never walk past that house again without thinking about the performance – what I know now about Robert Arthington that I never knew before. I feel that I have a connection to that house, although I probably won't go in there again, unless I get to know someone there somehow and get invited.* (Interview July 2018) Audience member

*I have a problematic relationship to Leeds, due to family reasons. I don't like it. But there are some things I'm fond of – not Headingley though. I don't like the drinking culture. But then I come to this 'do' in a building I've never really looked at, this beautiful house .. and there is a different feeling ...* (Interview June 2018) Audience member

The two above comments are resonant of responses to site-specific performance that I have received before, particularly when offered by someone with prior knowledge of the site. The experience of the performance becomes part of their experience of the site at a point in the future. These comments evidence the reciprocal exchange, made possible by performance 'at site' in that the artist offers their reflection or 'take' on the site, and the audience offers their reflection on the affect. Gathering responses from audience/participants was part of the etiquette of hospitality underpinning the research and is reminiscent of the 'guest book', (which appeared in *Care Home*) where comments remark on the comfort, or otherwise, of the accommodation. I discuss this process below in part 5 of this chapter.

The research agenda is set out in the questions outlined below. I describe the community engagement process and the resulting performance in relation to the methodology of practice-research. Post-colonial theory is referenced in the narrative of *House* as integral to the process of coming to 'know your place' and informing the dramaturgy of the performance.

The fragmented structure of the description reflects the practicalities of the production management of the project. This involved developing and maintaining relationships over time, with a range of people in Headingley who either already had social connections and were engaged with various organisations in the area or were hitherto unconnected with each other. The project evolved over some twelve months.

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## **2.1 House themes and questions**

*House* developed themes initially addressed in *Care Home* whereby I engaged with the hospitality paradox. This paradox suggests that the guest confers the status of host on those offering hospitality, in a performative act that brings the relationship of host and guest into being. It is only when the host has given up the power invested in *being* the host that the role can itself be actualized. Taken to its logical conclusion, the host is brought into being when the symbols of hospitality are given over entirely to the guest. This would include entrusting the guest with the keys to the house. This scenario occurred at several points during the preparation and production process of *House* as the roles of host and guest were negotiated towards bringing the performance to fruition. *House* expanded the application of hospitality as a lens through which to explore this relationship. This was done by setting up a range of opportunities for people in Headingley to host the artist (the creative team, including me as practice-researcher) in their community. These encounters took place in homes, schools, social spaces and on the street, facilitated by professionals, but at the invitation of the community. A performance was then created for public consumption.

## 2.2. Subsidiary research questions:

These questions are formulated in relation to the development of the research project overall. I have applied these specifically to my reflections on *House* as both process and performance, and these have then formed the basis of conversations with participants.

### **a) What defines the guest and the host respectively in site-specific performance? How do participants define their role?**

This question acknowledges problems around terminology used to describe or self-identify roles in site-specific performance in relation to hospitality:

*In the theatre you're always the guest, as the audience. But I get it, the theme was clear. There was a lot of stuff being thrown at us - and I wanted to stay with it - but there was a sense of being rushed on and I had a little bit of frustration with the piece then - there was so much to take in. I was moving at your pace not mine and that... I don't know that it made me feel that I was being 'hosted' so much then, more 'managed'. (Interview June 2018) Audience member*

This quote suggest that the haptic experience of the performance was a significant factor in how the audience member defined their role. Here a further element emerged, that of being 'managed'. As a consideration in the adjacent field of 'immersive' theatre, the safe management of a mobile audience is a key to effective 'hosting' as well as necessary to ensure the aesthetic and structural integrity of the performance.

A narrative of how the site was identified and secured for the performance is presented below and documents the shifting roles of host and guest played by the artist/researcher during the engagement and production process and the performance itself. Extracts from interviews with participants present perceptions of their role in the performance.

### **b) Who is the author of the performance in the exchange of hospitality in site-specific performance?**

*It's always reassuring to know that you're in the hands of professionals - I hate 'eggy' performance. So I think you did a good job - something about site-specific performance that worries me if I think the performers are 'community' is that I'm*



*going to have to be kind about the performances.* (Interview June 2018) Audience member

*It's good to facilitate voices from all over, but I want to see it made into something I can watch.* (Interview July 2018) Audience member

*People's participation can be privileged over the art itself. Artists have to take some responsibility over the quality of what you're asking people to look at.* (Interview July 2018) Writing group participant and audience member

The three comments above engage with problems around authorship and 'quality' when material developed with community participants is used in the performance. The issue of authorship holds a range of concerns shared by stakeholders: funders, production partners and community participants. These concerns include: responsibility (who is in charge?); quality (will this be any good?); and credits (will my investment of time be recognized by my name giving credit against a role?) and imply a process of measurement against externally applied values. Authorship is further discussed below regarding who is speaking and, in whose name a site-specific performance is presented – in relation to the laws of hospitality.

### **2.3 The Invitation**

Integral to *House* is the thematic potential for an invitation from the host to cross thresholds, literally and figuratively, in order that the encounter between artist and audience can take place. The connection between hospitality and site is effected through the invitation, with reference to speech act theory and performativity, as articulated respectively by J. L. Austin (1975) and Judith Butler (1997). Here, relationships are brought into being through utterance. 'I invite you' is the phrase that ushers the guest into the site and brings the host and guest into relationship. It is at the meeting point of ideas concerning the potential for the intertwined operations of host, ghost and guest to become porous, and to actualize the work as more than the sum of its parts, that this research takes place. I asked participants to reflect on their sense of their role in the experience and to what extent they felt they were the host of the event.

*As to the performance, I met up with friends. We came as a group. It was a fully rounded evening, and I guess it was about hospitality. All those snacks we had with you, and then I had my friends back to mine and fed them – so I was a guest and a host at that point. I ended up talking to people I hadn't seen for a long time, as well*

*as talking to people I hadn't met before. That might have happened in another situation, but it happened then because we came to see the show.* (Interview June 2018) Participant in walks and audience member. Included in *Headingley Postie* publication

## **2.4 House Performance - description**

This description complements the filmed documentation and begins at Robert Arthington's old home at 57 Headingley Lane, now owned by a property developer who has converted the building into twelve apartments. Audience members were greeted by a representative of the 'Arthington Estate Agency' and given refreshments as at a sales event for the agency's services, a conceit that aimed to set the theme of property and transactions of property in train. After hearing an outline of Robert Arthington's biography, the audience party was led by the 'estate agent' along the road to the garden of a small cottage, where details of the property were given, although there was no access to the interior of the cottage. The route then took the audience into a narrow ginnel, at the top of which was a sleeping bag on a pile of cardboard, before reaching the New Headingley Club, where the audience party was invited upstairs to a private flat above the bar area. Here the party was divided into smaller groups in order to visit four rooms in turn, where the themes of the piece were presented through contrasting interactive encounters. These comprised of:

- Miss Mayers' School Room, where a lesson on the history of Liberia was presented, and a playful offer of tea was made
- Mr Robert Arthington's Room, where visitors were received in candlelight, and a lesson on Scripture was presented in the dark before fish and sherry were offered.
- The Lady's Room, where the audience was asked to take a wedding gift and place it somewhere in the room. A tray with teacups and a pot of tea was to be found on a table in the middle of the room.
- Bobby Arthington's Room, where an outline of his upcoming gap year itinerary in Liberia was given while a meal of jollof rice was being prepared. This was offered to the audience.

The direction of travel around the rooms was clockwise and each of the four groups started at a different room, while being united as a party in the entrance hall of the flat after each encounter. The exit after the performance was through the Club bar, where the party could stay for a drink if desired. The experience of movement through the four rooms was noted in relation to the themes and how these were addressed from different perspectives:

*Each room had a different way of telling the story. The narrative element fragmented a bit in the journey from one section to another – but I could piece it together. It was in each case another ‘house’. Yes, each room was another ‘house’. You provided the overarching theme – where the audience doesn’t bother about the shortcomings – because there is enough good will... to make it happen. (Interview June 2018) Audience member*

## **2.5 House process - description**

Between August 2017 and January 2018, I worked with residents, businesses, and community organizations in Headingley, Leeds, towards a performance that connected aspects of the area’s past with the present concerns and interests of the local community. The narrative stimulus was the story of Robert Arthington (1823-1900), a rich but frugal evangelist who built a house in Headingley Lane in which he hoped to install a bride. The bride did not arrive, but he continued to reside there, adopting reclusive habits. Amongst other philanthropic gestures, his wealth resourced the establishment of the town of Arthington in Liberia as a gift, to accommodate emancipated slaves deported to the African continent from the Americas.

Robert Arthington was enriched through an inheritance from a family brewing business. He lived in one room in his house in Headingley. His parsimonious custom on receiving guests was to blow out the candle when they were seated, on the basis that conversation is held as well in the dark as in the light.

*House* proposed two related approaches to an examination of a site:

- A performance project produced in collaboration with a local community

- A paradigm that I describe in the section on Methodological principles above. Specifically in relation to post-colonial theory, the narrative arc of Arthington's evangelical mission imbricates the meaning of his physical house in the European colonial project, and with the construction of 'the other' whereby the stranger or the immigrant is identified as the object of suspicion and the subject of inhospitable treatment.

The performance dealt with the submerged colonial history of Leeds as a key thematic strand of the performance. Performers and audience were placed (or 'cast') in relation to the material towards articulating this complex story as offering and/or receiving hospitality. In the staging of the performance in the flat at the New Headingley Club, the aim was to close the distance between artist and audience through the intimacy of the encounters. Each room presented a situation in which the offer of hospitality was loaded with the weight of the power relations inherent in the story. The intention was to implicate both host (the performer as proxy for me as the artist) and guest (the audience member as proxy for me as the guest of the community) in Arthington's story and the wider contemporary resonances of colonial enterprise. As the work developed, these themes emerged with personal resonance for those involved in their various roles.

*...in terms of hospitality, when you're giving information, you are being hospitable throughout. You are trying to make your audience feel safe and welcomed and you want them to have a good time, but you want them to be informed as well. I tried to be careful with the history of colonialism. Heritage hidden in plain sight – it's not all a bunch of roses and there are many more thorns than roses.*

(Interview June 2018) Walk guide

*I have a long-term obsession with the Victorians and what happened in those countries that they went to, what they did that went on to change the world and not for the better always.*

(Interview May 2018) Walk participant

*I had no idea about the connection between Leeds and Liberia, not before getting involved with this (project). I guess it has changed the way I see Headingley, and if I walk past that house again, I will think about it.*

(Interview March 2018) Property owner

## 2.6 'Building' the 'House'

Two interconnected objectives underpinned the design of the project:

- A practical objective was focused on identifying the venues where the performance could take place.
- An operational objective concerned establishing our credentials as guests of the community, and by implication, the proprietary relationship of the community to the project.

Initial research included practical workshops in June 2017 to test the potential of Sonolope, a mobile phone application that enables the production of quadrophonic sound through the user's movement in space. Dr Maria Kapsali led a process at stage@leeds with Simon East, a sound artist, towards determining how the application could be used to give agency to audiences when moving around a space in the context of *House*. The dramaturgical vision was to engage Sonolope's capabilities to evoke an absent figure – Arthington's fiancée – by placing the triggers for sound in objects that the audience would move, thereby rendering them active agents in the drama at this point in the piece. This technology provided an unexpected dramaturgical emphasis to the performance through the problem it presented. The technology is unstable and finding a way reliably to trigger the sound by way of an Apple Watch proved challenging. Furthermore, the watch needed to be in motion for a sufficiently long period for it to operate like this.

Desk research investigating Arthington's story suggested that he had made an offer of marriage to a young woman, and that he had built the house to give a home to such a bride. An imaginative extension of this story provided the conceit that wedding gifts had arrived, and needed to be placed in the lady's room, although she was absent, leaving only the cooling teapot as evidence of her recent presence. The gifts were the vehicle for the watches to be brought into the room, and each audience member was invited to take a bag containing a gift which they were asked to place somewhere in the room. This was a serendipitous point whereby the theme of the gift could be folded into the activity in the flat.

Meetings were held with a wide range of local organisations including schools, faith

groups, lunch clubs and a local choir, and with individuals towards identifying potential participants. A programme of activity related to wider history of Headingley and Leeds and the interconnections with English colonial enterprise was developed in consultation with the developing group of participants.

**The Walks and Workshops:** After *Care Home*, which took place in my own home, *House* is the first manifestation of a three-part research project taking place in ‘other people’s’ space and as discussed above, engaging with site through performance and conceived as taking place within the three spatial imaginaries ‘House’, ‘City’ and ‘Garden’ as methodologies. Within the engagement process for *House* can be found a microcosm of ‘House’, ‘City’ and ‘Garden’ whereby the publicly advertised walking events are themed along corresponding lines. The participants on the walks were engaged through the initial research process as outlined above and through flyers placed at Heart Community Centre and local shops. The invitation to take part was given more widely across the city with support from the Library Service. The three paradigms are conceived in the first instance as abstract spaces, as Yi-Fu Tuan would define them, and as frames on which to hang ideas, not specific, individuated, physical sites (Tuan, 1997, p. 6).

First walk: ‘House’. The walking group was introduced to the story of Robert Arthington. His large house on Headingley Lane was presented as the key site of the exploration. This opened the discussion of the relationship that Headingley has to the world as a result of British colonial enterprise. The approach was mythogeographical, drawing on Phil Smith’s extensive development of walking as an investigative and creative practice. (Smith, 2010). We were ‘reading’ the environs through which we walked, beginning with observations of decorative details on buildings. We arrive at the parochial hall of the parish church of St Michaels and All Angels. Here we examined a frieze over the entrance, which depicts St Michael attacking a dragon with a spear. The background is a city scape that shows Eastern style architecture – onion domes and mosaic tiles. From this we surmised that St Michael is defending the Christian faithful against the Moorish dragon. This conclusion was reached from our collective knowledge of the Crusades. We discussed the arms of the Knights Templar that form part of the decorations on the building.

At the Carnegie Stadium, we gathered at the Sir Len Hutton Gate, where among notable moments in Yorkshire cricketing history rendered in wrought iron are depicted two women in hijab, enjoying watching a match. The design of the gates gave rise to outrage in some quarters (*Independent*, (2001); *Telegraph*, (2001)) in relation to the inclusion of two women wearing headscarves. We heard a recording of Michael Parkinson who on Radio 4 robustly protested against such views. *This walk was facilitated by historian and performer Joe Williams.*

Second walk: 'City'. We considered the civil engineering that has underpinned the growth of the city of Leeds, enabling its development from a collection of separate villages, connected only by dirt tracks, to an administrative area of some 800,000 souls. The sewerage works in Upper Headingley was the first stop, where the origins of the sanitation system were discussed not only as a boon to the health of the denizens of Leeds, but as a necessity for industrial growth - clearly, people who do *not* have cholera/typhoid/dysentery can work hard. We noted the transport system that was developed to serve the growing suburb of Headingley. The tram enabled easy connections to the city centre, to the railway and therefore to the rest of the country. *This walk was facilitated by Dr David Dawson, School of Civil Engineering Leeds University.*

Third walk: 'Garden'. We explored the periphery of an area that was once appropriated by an entrepreneur, who in 1838 cordoned off some 17 acres to create a 'Zoological and Tropical Garden'. The denizens of Leeds could visit the place on payment of an entrance fee. The venture was not a financial success, due in part to prohibitions on Sunday openings. Other entrepreneurs moved in and invested capital towards more reliable returns and now substantial houses sit in the site of this visionary though failed enterprise. Some of the garden walls of these residences have been fashioned from the stones forming the boundary of the Zoological and Tropical Garden, delineating new spaces. The area is now bisected by Cardigan Road, an arterial route supporting traffic from Headingley to the centre of town. *This walk was facilitated by artist historians Hazel Smoczynska and Rosie Parsons.*

Creative writing workshops took place at the Headingley Methodist Church on Thursday evenings in October and November and explored a range of themes emanating from Arthington's story around hospitality including 'the stranger', property and money. *Workshops were facilitated by writer Peter Spafford.*

When this part of the project was completed, the challenge for me was to hold the elements of community, locale, and artistic team in productive dialogue and to ensure that as artists, we were invited to continue the project as guests of those we had worked with. This approach to creating site-specific performance aims to do this as an act of hospitality, and to test out how far the conditions of hospitality can be sustained towards the creation of the artwork. Hans-Thies Lehmann, referred to again, goes further in suggesting that

What is namely staged through site specific (sic) theatre is also a level of *commonality* between performers and spectators. All of them are *guests of the same place*: they are all strangers in the world of a factory, of an electrical power station or of an assembly hangar.  
(Lehmann 2006, p. 152, emphasis in original)

## **2.7 Breaking into the House**

This is a narrative of the process of identifying and securing the site for the performance and outlines the shifts in my own role as host and guest in the negotiations for the use of private property. It is formed from entries from my field notes and is therefore in the present tense.

**15 June 2017.** *With Professor Mick Wallis and Dr Scott Palmer - A reconnoitre of the general area which forms the site of the next piece of my proposed Practice as Research.*

*Our party negotiates the constant flow of vehicles on Cardigan Road. Having looked at the entrance of the Bear Pit on Cardigan Lane, we go off track, stepping over a beaten down fence. Negotiating brambles, we find our way to look down into the circular red brick pit, from where our Victorian predecessors would have viewed the brown bear. We are not invited in, but we are there anyway.*



*We visit Robert Arthington's house, having identified the address from desk research. The building is under refurbishment. The Yorkshire stone of which it is built has been sandblasted, bringing out the original yellow tones, and contrasting sharply with its grimy neighbours. Portakabins form shelter for contractors in the grounds, which are a mudbath at this point. Encouraged by my supervisors, I pick my way through the mud to chat to the site manager, who knows the Arthington story, and kindly gives me the contact details for the present owner.*

**July, August, September 2017.** *I write to the owner, whose project it is to create 12 luxury apartments from Arthington's house. After two months of phone calls and texts there is finally an invitation for a hard hat tour. I visit in August, with my colleague Matthew. We explore the whole house, discuss with the owner our ideas to engage with the Arthington story through performance and make a proposal by email. I follow up with phone calls – the cycle begins again. I cannot realise this project without being invited in. I am persistent. I quickly begin to feel like a stalker: phoning the owner of the property on a daily basis and composing exaggeratedly polite emails, requesting a time to have a follow up conversation.*

*I am the guest who transgresses the laws of hospitality. Having developed a fixation on the host, in my imagination I appear at all times of night and day, peering in through the window, lurking by the front gate – albeit electronically. Having issued an invitation once, now regretting this intimacy, the host hides behind the front door at the guest's knock, waiting silently until her retreating footsteps are heard on the path. At least, he is not answering my calls. I have been 'ghosted'; that contemporary phenomenon of online dating whereby hitherto flowing e-communication is abruptly halted unilaterally, leaving one party bereft.*

*An objective analysis of my presentation to the owner would indicate caution on the part of the host. I am not surprised he is wary. In terms of a 'calling card', my credentials are sketchy. I do not appear to be buying anything; for example, a lease on one of the apartments he is refurbishing. I am not selling anything that might be useful to the host, except insofar as I am promoting an idea. I claim to 'work in theatre' but do not appear to be allied to any recognized theatrical institution in the city, for example West Yorkshire Playhouse or the Grand Theatre. I am not employed by either of the Universities in Leeds,*

*but I do some work at both, for a return. I do not have a 'place' of work, or even a regular context, such as that of a plumber or mobile hairdresser. While part of 'the precariat' by virtue of my employment situation, I also do not ally myself to the alienated worker, couched by Marx as 'feeling himself (sic) at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless.' (Marx, 1963, pp. 124-125). It is precisely within the work of creating a performance that I find my 'home' and this has been the place I 'know' for most of my career. In this instance I am attempting to find 'a home' for the performance itself.*

**October, November 2017.** *Meanwhile the community engagement process is set in train, with guided walks, writing workshops, sessions in the local primary school, visits with the residents in the Grove Park Care Home and sessions with the Headingley voices community choir. In each case, I am the guest of the group, and the work takes place while I visit their 'home'. However, I must always leave my identity as a stranger intact.*

*The 'House' project begins to identify and play with a set of problems and paradoxes around hospitality that are tools to 'break in' to the place that is Headingley. These tools are being honed and will also be used in the 'City' and 'Garden' projects. **Subsidiary Research Question One** is related to this act of 'breaking in' and to my own identity as transgressor of the laws of hospitality of an invitation to Robert Arthington's house. It also speaks to my status as stranger in the community.*

**January 2018.** *Having 'broken in' to the house, the concept of the piece can be developed in practice with confidence and will be shown in the week of 29 January 2018.*

*Softer negotiations within the host/guest relationship take place in **November and December** where this relationship was established along well established grounds. For example, an invitation to professional collaborators to be part of the project is formalised through contract. Here the host/guest tension dissolves in that the mutual benefits to me as the producer on the one hand and to the artists and technical team on the other are clear. Our long-standing collaboration has established trust, and the invitation to step into each other's territory is tacit.*

*The welcome by Shire Oak Primary School from teachers and children is warm. It is easy to establish dates and times to collaborate on writing a song about Headingley This is set to music and will eventually be sung at the school's summer fair in **June 2018**.*

*Negotiations with the New Headingley Club committee were frank and uncomplicated towards coming to terms for the hire of the abandoned flat above the main premises, where the more narratively representational and theatrical aspects of the performance will take place. Taking out membership of the Club at the same time rendered me an interested party, since of course extra revenue coming into the organisation is a benefit to members. The process of coming to terms on a space to perform is a familiar one to me from through taking performance work on tour. Artistic/programming directors have a gate-keeping role and a concern for the overall integrity of their presented season and the reputation of the venue in this regard. It can be very difficult to 'break in' and to provide evidence of artistic merit. Having secured the gig, a sense of being an unwelcome guest prevails whatever the financial deal. The New Headingley Club committee had no such concerns, although my proposal must have seemed outlandish.*

The remarks below emerged in a conversation with a committee member of the New Headingley Club who was also responsible for bar management. Reflected in the comments are a range of issues relating to site-specific work and to being a guest of the community in which you are working. Hospitality is conditional of course, and the comfort of both host and guest is often reliant on adhering to rules that are not explicit until transgressed. The matter of local members having regular seats that are tacitly understood to be theirs is a prime example of these invisible rules – unlike the rules of hospitality attached over the bed in Klossowski's *Robert Ce Soir*, cited above in the analysis of *Care Home*.

*When you first approached us, I didn't really understand what you were about. I don't go to the theatre because it just doesn't interest me, so when you were talking about not working in buildings it was neither here nor there to me. I was interested in the story about the miser though. Then you moved all this furniture and what not in to the flat, and we were all wondering what you were doing. You weren't in the way, but we did have that problem about the keys – because you'd only rented the flat, it doesn't cover the stairs, and I was getting really annoyed because you kept leaving the door open – the main door, and we keep the keys on the stairs. Then when I came up and you showed me round, I was really amazed at what you'd done. It looked really nice, and we were all saying you could live there.*

*I liked having that look around and hearing about what was going on in each room. I didn't feel I had much to do with it all really. It was good that you've joined the club and it was good to have so many people in the bar that week – although it was a bit awkward on bingo night, because there were the regulars who couldn't sit in their usual seats.*

(Interview March 2018) Committee member New Headingley Club

## **2.8 Subsidiary Questions as a framework to construct the 'House'**

The analogy of construction in relation to my research questions has resonance in terms of good practice, whereby strong foundations, quality materials, effective design and so on, are essential to good relations on a project involving the community. As well as being the focus of the enquiry, the questions were also in a sense a 'moral guide' providing a checklist for me in ensuring that due consideration was given to participants' experience.

### **Subsidiary Question One**

What defines the guest and the host respectively in site-specific performance? How do participants identify their role?

This question is posed in relation to problematizing normative relations in theatre in terms of hospitality where I suggest that the audience is usually the guest of the artist – as represented by the arts organisation or institution. In suggesting that site-specific performance has transformative potential with regard to these normative relations, *House* attempted to address the operational aspect of this exchange. The focus of this address was on the process of creation and on the content and dramaturgical structure of the performance. Consideration was given at every stage as to how the roles of host and guest were being played out.

In his day, Arthington opened the door to give entry to his guests and thereafter conducted his singular act of setting the stage for the conversation in the dark. During the performance week, we were able to let ourselves in to what was once his house, by the grace of the new owner. After many months of email exchange, meetings and phone discussion toward negotiating how the building might be included in the experience for

the audience, the moment when the key was given to me had symbolic importance. It meant that I and the production team were trusted. We were entitled to our place as guests by the host. This act of hospitality was not explicitly rendered through the dramaturgy of the performance, but it was fundamental to the shape of the piece, meaning that, as key holders, the audience could be invited at least into the hallway of 57 Headingley Lane. The intimate values of inside space could be explored through the performance, beginning with the conceit of a reception to showcase the services of the 'Arthington Estate Agency.' I could also enjoy freedom of access to the house at any time. The point at which I as the guest of the new owner was given the key, was the point at which I also became the host of the performance.

This returned me to my place in the normative relationship between artist and audience and to explore how this might be productively addressed. The key was a significant prize, the result of efforts to gain access to Arthington's house towards realizing an artistic vision, but also made me the proprietor of the site and host of the event. I also held the key to the flat at the New Headingley Club, where the third part of the performance took place, although this was a straightforward commercial transaction to rent the space, as a contract of residence, so the space was absolutely my own.

During the performance itself, along with one of the performers, I was also 'playing host' through helping to receive people into the flat. I also guided people into 'The Lady's Room'. This reception role was a matter of stage management and necessary to ensure the smooth movement of people between each room but also presented me as presiding over the performance. In rehearsal however, each room was named for the performers and was their domain as they worked on their material. I always knocked before entering 'Miss Mayers' Room', 'Mr Arthington's Room' and 'Bobby's Kitchen' to assume my role as director – but always as a guest.

After the performance, the exit was through the Club bar, where the audience could stay for a drink if desired, having been signed in *en masse* under my membership as my guests. Although I was technically the host of the audience, I was also a guest of the Club, notwithstanding my membership, since the Club was stretching a point on the terms of our tenancy. The performance dealt with the submerged colonial history of

Leeds as a key thematic strand of the performance. Performers and audience were placed (or cast) in relation to the material towards articulating this complex story as offering and/or receiving hospitality. In the staging of the performance, the aim was to close the distance between artist and audience through the intimacy of the encounters in each room.

*Each performer made us welcome in their own way. That felt like being a guest. And as it was a theatre piece, I identify as the audience. Without us it wouldn't happen. I didn't feel like a spectator. And actually with Miss Mayers I was definitely a participant. At this show X at West Yorkshire Playhouse I was definitely a spectator, and I dislike that more and more. You are passive as a spectator, you don't have to engage. Is being an audience more active? (Interview June 2018) Audience member*

The encounters were not designed to be confrontational, nor was the performance critiquing the idea of audience as consumption or voyeurism, as for example performance works like Forced Entertainment's *Show Time* (1996) or Ontroerend Goed's *Audience* (2011) explicitly set out to do. The aim rather was to engage the audience in an encounter with hospitality that would introduce the possibility of conscious agency in bringing the event in to being:

*You came and spoke to us in a completely different way. I felt slightly disoriented as until that point all I'd had to do was be an audience. Then I was in a position where I had to do something, make some choices. Do I talk to other people? Do I move things? I got given something to do, and I was part of the scene. Yes, participant. (Interview May 2018) Audience member*

*In the kitchen I was really thinking "this guy is unbearable". It was partly because it was so crowded in there. It was funny, but we've all met someone like that, and you wouldn't want to invite them to dinner at your house. I did feel I could refuse the food, whereas I didn't feel I could refuse the fish. Maybe because the Arthington character was more theatrical? So if I had refused it, it would have prevented the scene from happening? (Interview March 2018) Audience member*

*In order for me to participate I needed to assume the character of 'audience member'. But then – you're asking me how interactive was the evening? I wouldn't normally choose to do something like this. But in the moment I was full on. I ate the fish. I got into it. I was doing it because – well I had to perform. I was being a real guest. Keeping the party going like you do. I was still myself. (Interview June 2018) Audience member*

Several people alluded to the sense of being conscious of having a role, even of 'performing' the role of audience, and of having a sense of responsibility to 'make the party happen'. Performance theory exchanges ideas with Goffman (1959) on the mechanics of presentation of self and how interaction with others highlights the process of performing that self. In the various rooms in the flat, the possibility that a role other than 'audience' was available was unsettling for some. As John Freeman suggests

At this point in our history notions of self are no longer assumed to be secure ...It may be the case, as Goffman argued, that our daily selves are constructed and created in the same ways that a Stanislavskian actor assumes the characteristics of a fictional other. (Freeman, 2007, p. 19).

### **Subsidiary Question Two**

Who is the author of the performance in the exchange of hospitality?

This question considers the discussion of textual authority and authorship in train before Barthes (1978) and Foucault (1984) announced the death and subsequent autopsy of the author in 1967 and 1969 respectively. As noted by Jeremy Hawthorn in his essay 'Authority and the Death of the Author' the relative value of the (metaphorically) live or dead author has been contended since Plato. (Hawthorn, 2008). Hawthorn quotes William Hazlitt's essay 'On Thought and Action, first published in 1822, in which Hazlitt proposes that 'if authors are as good after they are dead as when they living, while living they might as well be dead'. Performance theory has offered a challenge to the authority of the written text as literature and developed critical approaches to the constitution and status of performance text/s. Performance practice has developed the idea of texts that resist presentation as literature, or that have integrity outside of the temporal space of performance. This has implications for documentation that have been extensively discussed (Phelan, (1993), (1997); Auslander, (2006); Reason (2006); Fischer-Lichte, (2008). Whose material is being documented – and what rights over it do those have whose biographical material is employed in the dramaturgy? Robert Arthington could be considered the dead author of *House* in respect of his own story. More pressing however is the issue of authorship

in the community I work with. As the work with various groups progresses, a wide range of material is produced that includes personal narratives, poetry, lyrics, texts to accompany the exploratory walks and the results of archival research, plus a swathe of administrative correspondence and the various versions of the description of the project prepared towards making connections with people in the area with a view to finding a suitable route. This multi-authored material forms the 'voice' of the project and will find its expression in the performance. The question is then raised as to how to credit the result. Who is speaking? Following Foucault, David J Gunkel asks 'What does it matter who is speaking?' (2012). His discussion focuses on 'the mashup' in rap music and DJ performance where sampling is key to the form. His conclusion is that this popular music form constructively challenges gendered ideas of authorship 'instituted and operationalised' around the authority figure of the (male) genius. His argument draws on and critiques the literary precedent 'that seeks an explanation for a work in the life experience of the man (or woman) who created it.' In the case of site-specific performance under conditions of hospitality, how authorship is established could be seen as a matter of good manners, whereby the property – of the host (the intellectual property of the community participant) is respected by the guest (the artist) and appropriately credited as formative material. Gunkel's discussion of the authorship is applicable to the process of constructing *House*, a work engendered as a concept only by the artist at the outset, and then given form through a process of discovery in collaboration with multiple authors, key amongst which were those inviting me into their homes as physical spaces and their stories as psychic spaces.

## **2.9 Discussion**

### **2.9.1 Articulating the spatial imaginary through practice.**

I posit transformation as a mutual exchange between the parties involved in the creation of site-specific performance (with reference to Mireille Rosello's reflection on hospitality above). The practice base of this research is a critical application of methods I have applied to working in site-specific contexts since 1997, and an exploration of how concepts of hospitality can develop a theoretical framework to support and validate



performance as an exchange between artist and audience. The move I made away from creating work to be shown in theatres and black box studios was prompted by a desire to engage more directly and individually with audiences, and to 'collaborate with' rather than 'show to'. Furthermore, administering aspects of cultural policy during my time as Performing Arts Officer in the Yorkshire office of Arts Council England informed a critical approach to the discourse on artistic quality and on audience engagement taking place under its auspices. Addressing the research question by practice away from the theatre building is not to reject 'illusory magic' (Lehmann, 2006, p. 123) but rather to attempt the process of '*unthreatening theatre as a social event*' (Lehmann, 2006, p. 121). This process of 'unthreatening' includes me as an artist/researcher. It affects perceptions of my place in the creation of theatre by the community where I work, and the research context enables me to experiment with where I place myself in the process. Lehmann is drawing on theatre practices developed principally in continental Europe and East Coast America over the last thirty years that reimagine the relationship between audience and actor, performance, and dramatic text, and that have proposed radical rethinking about what theatre looks like, who makes it and where it can be experienced. Such a non-auditorium performance environment can directly engage the audience in a sensory experience, defined by Mike Pearson, as phenomenological, where 'the emphasis is on bodily contact, corporeality, embodiment' (Pearson, 2010, p. 29). This response refers to such haptic experience, whereby a sense of being 'inside' the performance is articulated:

*The form of the piece surprised me, being organized into groups. This was a bit off-putting, but it wasn't the first clue that this would be something strange... seeing something of that old house that you can't see from the street. It was easy to interact with people both being an audience member and then when you felt you were in the performance itself. I was definitely inside the situation. I've seen something like this before, but not when there was such close contact. It brings it alive a lot more than sitting alone in the dark. (Interview June 2018) Audience member*

*House* involved physically entering and leaving spaces where boundaries were variously defined: by walls and doors, by leaving indoor spaces for the street, entering a garden, entering and leaving four different rooms, exiting via the bar of a private club – and in each case the journey was allied with textual content that addressed thematic issues of property. The people I worked with in Headingley towards the performance produced

this content with me as we operated variously as host and guest from time to time. This exchange of roles could only take place in the dynamic framework of the engagement process. In this enquiry, the research question was productively addressed within the whole life of the production process, as these oscillations of role occurred. The performance was the outcome of the engagement process, and thereafter produced a context for conversation with participants about our shared experienced of the process and our roles within it. In general the feedback indicated that for the most the part, on reflection, audience members considered themselves to be 'hosted'. There were nevertheless occasions when the performance design enabled agency, specifically in the 'Lady's Room' where objects were placed by the audience as they chose:

*Definitely audience, and then participant, and also guest – there was one room where we were participants in the action – I don't know if we moved the story along in that moment – but we were being invited to have an individual journey – including interaction with inanimate objects – so you took us through the gamut of all those things. (Interview June 2018) Writing workshop participant and audience member*

### **2.9.2 House as a story of exchange between hosts and guests**

Headingley's past contribution to the economic development of the city of Leeds overall is represented in significant business links made historically overseas, particularly in Africa and which resonate currently. The public engagement activities and design of *House* as performance both scenographically and dramaturgically was informed by these connections and the project was designed to address the power dynamics arising. These relate to the locally based matter of the patronage of the miserly evangelist and his gift to 'liberated' people. Naomi Anderson Whittaker outlines the history of Liberia in relation to such gestures of European colonialism. The process of 'white self-racialisation' whereby Americo-Liberians had internalized European racism, is played out today in the segregation and inequality of Liberian society (Whittaker 2015, no pagination). Arthington's town project was part of the co-optation of African-American immigration to Liberia by white colonialists, and the depiction of black settlers as 'mere vessels for transporting U.S. institutions to Africa' (Mills, 2014, p. 95). David Kazanjian presents the story of this displacement through correspondence between former slaves

to their family friends and former masters in the United States that reveal the contradictions and equivocations in this particular operation of 'liberation.' He analyses the visual elements of the seal of Liberia adopted at the country's 1847 constitutional convention, suggesting that it 'condenses a range of antagonisms and equivocations that threaten to break the seal itself' (Kazanjian, 2011, p. 863). The history of Liberia is that of a series of migrations whereby indigenous peoples were displaced in favour of settlers whose roots were neither in America nor in the African country forming their new home. The whole project was overseen by the colony's white governors, who imported the finance and values on which it depended. Some portion of this is the gift of 'the Headingley miser'. *House* played with the scenario of a man sitting alone in the dark in Leeds, who could by virtue of his wealth impose his moral, religious and cultural values halfway across the world. This quote demonstrates that the various styles of performance affected a sense of agency, while the themes being explored were the same:

*In terms of responding to hospitality your job, my job in receiving hospitality is to be cordial.. it positions you in that space  
The disciplinary aspect of both Miss Mayers and Arthington ..you dared not refuse – but with the 'new age' Arthington I felt I could choose. (Interview 2018)  
Audience member*

### **2.9.3 Ticketing hospitality – the invitation as commodity**

Arthington received his guests by appointment and set out the terms of the engagement by extinguishing the candle and conducting the conversation in the dark. In return perhaps for a financial donation to their cause, he subjected his guests to a performance of hospitality that set out the terms of engagement clearly. Similarly in the matter of the box office arrangements for the performance, hospitality came at a price. People were asked to pay to attend, as an administrative imperative. While my previous work has been free to attend on a 'Pay What You Decide' principle, experience has shown that people may initially book a free place through a platform such as Eventbrite, but then not turn up, compromising the box office arrangements and resulting in disappointment for those who would otherwise have been able to attend and frustration for the producer. Value theory suggests that if people have to pay for something they will value

it more (Shampanier et al, 2007). Considering this principle, as an experiment, a £5 charge for *House* was instigated via Eventbrite. It was the case that everyone who booked for *House* attended or cancelled for the refund, freeing up the place for someone else. Proceeds (after the charge back to Eventbrite and budgeted costs) were divided between St George's Crypt, a local Leeds charity supporting homeless people and the national charity Shelter. A charge to attend an event to which you have been 'invited' through direct contact or event general marketing is problematic in terms of hospitality. The commodification of the host and guest dynamic required consideration particularly in relation to those who had been involved in the project through the walks and workshops, and in whose 'place' I was working as a guest. Asking people for money to attend the performance they had contributed to with their time and ideas was clearly inappropriate. As a solution to this hospitality problem, a VIP ticket was allocated to these participants, although some people insisted on paying the booking fee, since we were applying the proceeds to make donations to selected charities working with homeless people. The hospitality paradox (Hultman and Andersson Cederholm, 2010) acknowledges the close relationship between the social and the economic relationship – how does this play out in theatre where the 'guest' has paid to be in the 'host's' domain?

The question concerns my own role, as the instigator of the enterprise, having several roles as the host to the audience, to colleagues, and also the researcher, setting up the conditions for a party that is designed to produce new knowledge. This could be conceived as that of 'collaborative entrepreneur' as neatly described by Laermans (2012, p.100). I am also an ethnographer – with the caveat that I am bringing with me 'an encumbered persona', the threat to objective observation noted by Brian Hoey (2014). In his 'simple introduction' to writing ethnographic fieldnotes, Hoey relates that Malinowski's posthumously published diaries showed how deeply the great anthropologist was personally affected by his practice, while his early ethnographies 'were written in a voice removed and utterly unrevealing about the nature of the ethnographer and his relationship to people studied.' (Hoey, 2014, p. 3). A good guest would not presume to opine about the host, but of course I cannot do my job (as artist) without forming a clear view of the material I am gathering. My 'encumbered persona' with all its prejudice is part of my identity. While I was not conducting an ethnographic study of the community in Headingley I was drawing on material from a range of local

contexts towards the performance. This eventually informed the performance and without it, the work could not have been created as a meaningful expression of the site. I was clearly responsible for creating a coherent structure to hold this material, but was I the author of *House*?

#### **2.9.4 The language of participation: Hospitality and the guest book**

As Helen Freshwater suggested in 2009, a tendency of theatre studies to speak on behalf of 'the audience' as a *whole* required review (Freshwater, 2009, p. 8). Kirsty Sedgman notes and addresses this in her account of capturing audience response to *Outdoors*, a site-specific piece presented in Aberystwyth by Rimini Protokoll. (Sedgman, 2017). The methods she applied to capture *individual* audience experience have informed an approach to discussing responses with the audience for *House*. The aim in the construction of the project was to formulate a range of ways in which people could take part and to facilitate individual engagement according to their capacity and disposition. They were able to reflect on their engagement with the project accordingly. The capture of reflections was also conducted according to individual aptitude and willingness to discuss their experience. As an example, the residents of Grove Lane, Headingley, who live on the floor catering for people with dementia contributed to the project through hosting us in their home, giving their time to talk about their lives and their thoughts on life in Headingley, but for practical reasons could not experience the performance itself.

The vocabulary I used with respondents to capture individual experiences of *House* regarding perceptions of role is familiar in institutional critique across the full range of artistic and cultural contexts where producer/consumer relations are discussed. Both my principal research question and the practice by which it is articulated place centrally the potential for exchange between the role of artist and audience. The practice aims for that exchange to be transformative in relation to where expressive power resides – host or guest? *House* was structured to enable those attending to experience a range of roles during the performance. As well as host and guest, these include performer, spectator, customer, audience and participant. Claire Bishop traces the emergence of 'participation' as a critical artistic position occupied and defined by the Italian Futurists

and the provocative gestures that tested and expanded the conventions of theatre in the early twentieth century. An essential aspect of this provocation was the inclusion of the audience before, during and after the events (defined clearly as performance) that brought the Futurist Manifesto into being (and that were therefore *performative* events). These spectacular and interactive experiences engaged audiences in this new role of 'the participant' (Bishop, 2011, p. 10).

*House* was supported by public funds from Leeds Inspired and Arts Council England. Both funders base their decisions about what projects to support on a judgment of value for money in terms of public benefit. A key measure of this is 'participation' in terms of numbers: How many people will be 'engaged'? How many times will 'sessions' take place? There is no explicit invitation to present the details of *what* might be taking place, or to supply qualitative reflections from participants. Nevertheless 'participation' is valorised as an end in itself. This research engages the participants in a discussion about the *nature* of their engagement in the project, (which might be perceived as 'participation') expressed in anecdotal terms, whereby I aim to support them to reflect details of their perceptions in terms of hospitality, and as part of a conversation between host and guest.

As a general idea, participation collapses the distance and the distinction between subject and object and inculcates individual responsibility within collective contexts. The rhetoric of participation can be applied to agendas from challenging oppressive power structures to encouraging engagement in neo-liberal economics. Sherry Arnstein formulated the often cited 'ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein, 1969) suggesting where problems may lie if 'participation' is regarded in and of itself as a significant indicator of the citizen's constructive engagement in civic life. Towards establishing a critical framework for the approach taken in forming the relationship with the community in Headingley, I drew on the work of Miwon Kwon. Focusing on site-specific art practice in North America in the 1980s and 1990s, she notes a 'fundamental re-thinking of how art is to (or should) engage with its public', in her discussion of contrasting approaches to public art projects in Chicago and Seattle. (Kwon, 2004, pp.100-137). The key aspect of her analysis is the way in which 'site' is displaced by notions of an 'audience', as a progressive move towards authentic, locally individualized

engagement of the audience. It is the audience for the work that constitutes the specificity by which 'site' is understood. Thereby, the instrumental, political use of public art projects catapulted into spaces without meaningful engagement with the people who will subsequently have to accommodate the work is called out. Kwon poses a set of questions about identity in relation to 'the community', quoted here in full, which neatly dovetail into the concerns of this research:

How does a group of people become identified as a community in an exhibition program (*sic*) as a potential partner in a collaborative art project? Who identifies them as such? And who decides what social issues(s) will be addressed or represented through them: the artist? The community group? The curator? The sponsoring institution? The funding organisation?

Does the partner community pre-exist the art project, or is it produced by it? What is the nature of the collaborative relationship? If the identity of the community is produced through the making of the artwork, does the artist's identity also depend on the same process? How does the collaboration unfold, and what precisely is the role of the artist within?

Does the partner community coincide with the audience?

(Kwon, 2004, p. 116)

Kwon's problematising questions speak to the tacit assumptions regarding the 'transformative potential' of community arts projects in terms of the agenda of administrative structures behind such projects, and the direction of benefit. They also offered a useful framework to reflect on *House* overall and how people identified their own role within it. In terms of her questions, I had clearly identified a group of people as 'a community' for the temporary concerns of *House* as a research project. The thematic arc was certainly provided by me towards addressing the 'social issues' I had already linked to the 'House paradigm' (property and colonial legacy). The collaborative aspect of the project lay in the opportunity offered in the walks and workshops for 'the community' (which included the professional collaborators) to consider their response to the theme proposed and to generate material that could be incorporated into the performance, directly or indirectly.

Responses to *House* were gathered from people who had seen the performance, not all of whom had been part of the engagement process. They were invited to reflect on their role within the project. Semi-structured interviews elicited responses that raised issues

both surprising and expected. The feedback process raised a hermeneutic problem in relation to the production of new knowledge in that a) I was inevitably asking leading questions, in exploring people's own sense of their relationship to the piece, and b) I already knew that the interviewees had a range of relationships to the project in particular and also to performance practice in general depending on their experience of attending performance and/or professional work. I was well acquainted with some of my interlocutors in terms of their experience and disposition, by virtue of getting to know them during the engagement process, which of course was the point of this phase of 'building the house'. In the writing workshops, in particular, and on the walks, discussion about the project highlighted hospitality, establishing the thematic territory prior to the performance.

Formulating questions that would generate useful data was framed by my agenda, in that while I hoped that taking part in the project and/or seeing the performance had been a positive experience, my interest was in the perception of participants of their role in relation to it, rather than their opinion of it as an artefact. The mode of scholarly enquiry in relation to audience/participant experience of performance sits in contrast to the process of garnering feedback from audiences through applying 'quality metrics' as recently piloted and reported on by ACE (Bunting and Knell, 2014). This approach, much criticized by arts practitioners, determines what is to be measured in list form and suggests that there are known parameters that define audience response, and that meaningful data can be drawn from where on the scale a mark of approval is made. The process involves asking audiences immediately after a performance to indicate their rating of the following using a sliding scale on a tablet wielded by an interviewer:

- **Concept:** it was an interesting idea
- **Presentation:** it was well produced and presented
- **Distinctiveness:** it was different from things I have experienced before
- **Challenge:** it was thought-provoking
- **Captivation:** it was absorbing and held my attention
- **Enthusiasm:** I would come to something like this again
- **Local impact:** it is important that it is happening here
- **Relevance:** it has something to say about the world in which we live



- **Rigour:** it was well thought through and put together
- **Originality:** it was ground-breaking
- **Risk:** the artists/curators really challenged themselves
- **Excellence:** it is one of the best examples of its type that I have seen

While there is nothing exceptional about the statements in themselves as stimulus for reflecting on an experience, in relation to hospitality there is for me something uncomfortable about posing such pre-formulated phrases in front of people in whose milieu one has been operating. Unlike the gentle invitation to leave a comment in the guest book, which is the sense in which I hoped those I invited responses from would regard my approach, the act of thrusting an iPad in the face of someone exiting an auditorium feels rather rude. Also, I was researching what I could *not* know in terms of my interlocutors' experience. Mindful of Umberto Eco's observation that 'you cannot use a text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it' (Eco, 1997, p.9), I had to relax my 'proprietary' (or authorial) hold on the performance of *House* towards accepting that perceptions might differ from directorial intention and that what I perceived as clear in terms of the theme might not have been communicated at all. I decided to simply begin the conversation with an open question on their memory of the performance, and to proceed with an invitation to talk about hospitality in general, before prompting a connection between this and their role in the proceedings.

#### Questions

- What do you remember about the performance?
- What does hospitality mean to you?
- What role did you play at any one point in the project or performance? Prompts included host, guest, performer, participant, audience, spectator and customer.

The comments elicited from the interviews built a picture of an experience whereby the themes as a whole were apprehended and engaged with through both the engagement work and the performance. The move towards the reciprocal (transformative) exchange between artist and audience was yet to be achieved:

*What can I remember? Quite a lot, which in some way is a comment on the piece (..) I have a sense of awkwardness when someone addresses me in character, but I*

*didn't feel that at this point. There was a very normal kind of welcome from the young people. I remember not feeling uncomfortable. Then I remember these people from China in the audience and wondering what did they think? I was a number of those things you have suggested, definitely audience, participant, guest. There was one room where we were participants in the action. I don't know if we moved the story along in that moment, but we were being invited to have an individual journey through interaction with inanimate objects.*  
(Interview June 2018) Audience member

I pursued elucidation on comments from some respondents. This felt uncomfortable to the extent that I was pushing my own agenda, although the intention was to support the conversation to continue. Further conversations raised issues of affordance – as discussed in the chapter on Research Context - that is to say, how might the performance event be designed such that audiences/participants are enabled to reflect on and articulate their role in the event?

*OK. You want me to talk about that particular room? (The Lady's Room). I felt I was in someone's private, personal space. I was being asked to do something, that there were clues, some of which I understood, others not. For example, it was only in the bar afterwards, when someone told me that the New Headingley Club was known as 'Bleak House' that I realized the book I had been given to place (Bleak House) was significant. So it depends how important that was to you, that I knew that. It was sort of there but sort of not. I felt there were rules, but I didn't know what they were.* (Interview June 2018) Audience member

The relationship of artist as host, and audience as guest, appeared to remain stable. No one identified themselves as a 'host' in the performance, although several people identified themselves as 'participant'.

*No I didn't feel like a host – not in the performance anyway. To be honest I don't think you could ever get that feeling in a theatre piece – not unless you've hired the company to come and perform in your living room or something. What I did feel was that I was very welcome.* (Interview July 2018) Writing workshop participant and audience member

Those who had been involved in the engagement workshops, and particularly when they had some responsibility for arrangements could perceive their role as host:

*I was the host in the writing workshop, I think because I had encouraged other people to come along. I feel faithful to Headingley. Something like this gets people to join in more. Church can be a bit separate, not like it was 100 years ago. It was*

*nice to think that the Church can be part of the community. It was good to invite you into our space.* (Interview July 2018) Writing workshop participant and audience member

A sense of ownership/feeling of comfort was expressed in relation to both the engagement process and the performance:

*In the walks between venues we were moving as a group. When you are doing that you are clearly 'doing something' that is framed as a special activity. Looking after the group. I was making sure nobody gets stranded – in those kinds of moments, I like the message it sends – we are together – it's that sense of identity that we all value* (Interview June 2018) Performer

*You are in someone else's environment and being welcomed in a very authentic way. When I sit with the establishment audience you feel in competition with them – I am thinking why am I enjoying this/not enjoying it – I was thinking how interesting this is – a different sort of bond.* (Interview June 2018) Walk participant and audience member

## **Conclusion (After party)**

Although clearly the instigation of the project came from me as the artist, I was working on someone else's territory, by invitation, throughout the activities comprising *House*. The engagement process created the space to be a good guest, and to offer the gift of the ideas, skills and production capacity of my company A Quiet Word, and that of the University of Leeds, to the community.

The technicalities of the arrangements at 57 Headingley Lane rendered me a guest of the new owner and his tenants, and those at the flat at the New Headingley Club gave the role of host to me. Nevertheless, those audience members who had been part of the engagement process acted as host to their friends and associates in inviting them to the performance. The passing over of keys at both properties was symbolic and practical. On the symbolic level as noted above, the key was imbued with trust, particularly at 57 Lane where no money changed hands. At the New Headingley Club, as anecdotally noted, the question of keys was more problematic, as there was a confusion over the boundaries of my rights to the property. There was also a disruption to the routine of the club's manager, whereby the security of arrangements for other keys was

compromised by my entry and exit. I intend to develop the concept of the key in the two next projects, *City and Garden*, and explore ideas of the key as access (who has the key to the city?) and the key as unlocking secret places (for instance in *The Secret Garden*) including repositories of knowledge and how these are accessed.

Activity after the *House* performance included a House Party, held on 20<sup>th</sup> March in the Function Room of at the New Headingley Club, Invitations to this were sent to all the participants in the engagement activity and other selected audience members. The criteria for invitation was local residence, membership of the New Headingley Club and people who had been unable to get a ticket for the performance, but had contacted us asking how they might otherwise get involved. At this event and subsequently, several individuals and groups came with invitations to work with them further around the themes of the piece. This presented an interesting and welcome challenge in relation to hospitality. A group at the church wanted more writing workshops. The local primary school invited the children to sing the *Song of the Shire Oak Tree* at the Headingley Music Festival in June 2018. The Friends of Sparrow Park were keen to have the song sung in the unadopted triangle of land at the Northern point of the old Tropical Garden site. The Lunch Club wanted to see their stories in print. The Memory Café team proposed more visits to continue reminiscence work. The potential for legacy is one of the criteria used to judge the quality of proposals by ACE and Leeds Inspired, who part funded the project. That a legacy outcome can be evidenced from these invitations suggested that the *House* production team were either good hosts, good guests, or both. Having been invited, (back), how is it possible to refuse? The challenge presented was in no small part financial, since all the resources raised for the project had been disbursed. Making a charge for further activity would have been possible, but inappropriate - on accepting an invitation to a party one does not, after all, ask for payment to turn up. Remuneration comes through the exchange of stories, the pleasure of people's company and in tea and biscuits. The extensive efforts to achieve an invitation into the community in Headingley were successful on these terms, and the consequences of this must now be addressed with good grace:

*Hospitality – that is coloured by my church upbringing. Maybe hospitality is unobtrusive, so you don't notice it. You don't have to be thankful for it. The work A Quiet Word does feels like Church. It's about building a community, similar*

*processes. And that can be overwhelming, so time-consuming and open ended*  
(Interview June 2018) Writing workshop participant and audience member

*I don't like the word 'Hospitality' I find it a bit corporate. Generosity, that's a nicer word. Being available. Something about sharing ..*  
(interview June 2018) Audience member

These last two reflections from participants/audience members offer additional frameworks for engaging hospitality in designing performance processes that test and develop the relationship between audience and artist beyond the status quo. The first is the acknowledgement of the time frame required for such processes. The second points towards the tension between hospitality as a social principle and hospitality as an obligation, and monetised, in corporate contexts.

The observations presented at the conclusion of this analysis also suggest further productive avenues for investigation in relation to other ways of 'knowing' hospitality in the context of site-specific performance. These avenues are discussed further in the conclusion to the thesis.

On leaving the 'House', and preparing to walk into the 'City' the hospitality paradox prevails, and the question remains:

How can site-specific performance support a mutually transformative exchange between artist and audience?

After having returned the keys to the 'House', restoring those of the house at 57 Headingley Lane to the owner, and to the flat at the New Headingley Club to the proprietors, I reflected on the failure to enable the audience to exchange the role of 'host' with me. The aim of the research was to explore site-specific performance for its potential to support a reciprocal, mutually transformative exchange of hospitality. While 'House' as a research paradigm supported the exploration of a wide range of aspects of hospitality and the performance of *House* demonstrates the application of the research context in terms of making connections between the theoretical framework I have drawn on and the practice, it was a productive failure.

There were nevertheless achievements. I had produced an effective piece of site-specific performance, as evidenced for example by some of the comments from the audience in relation to the impact of the piece on their view of the site going forward. I had related form to content in engaging post-colonial theory with Arthington's story, and staging this in different ways in the four rooms of the 'house'. Although the theme of hospitality was threaded through the piece, for example in the offer of food and drink, and the coda in the bar of the New Headingley Club, it was a performance *about* hospitality, rather than a performance *of* hospitality. To find a form that could bring an exchange between artist and audience into being, required the design of the next piece of practice-research to be reconsidered. I had originally planned to embark on a project that would advance the research through creating a performance, *City*, for a public audience, addressing the issues and themes articulated in the paradigm *City* as outlined in my methodological principles.

In continuing to address the overarching research question, it was clear that engaging the city site as 'content' through a similar project model to *House* would not answer the question. It would simply recreate the circumstances that failed to answer it. The next section of this chapter reflects on my approach to finding a form that could explore the question from a different starting point.

### **Section 3 City**

"Did you ever happen to see a city resembling this one?" Kublai asked Marco Polo, [...] "No, sire," Marco answered, "I should never have imagined a city like this could exist." (Calvino, 1997, p. 85)

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I give a description and analysis of how *City* developed as a radically different performance from that of *House*. I engage hospitality with the problem of the documentation of live performance. This problem emerged as a direct result of attempting to address the productive failure of *House* to support a reciprocal exchange between artist and audience. In experimenting with a different performance form for

*City*, namely one-to-one performances that are described below I encountered a challenge in terms of how to present the practice for examination. I discuss how this problem worked productively with the overall 'City' project as it developed to work directly on the form of the work and its subsequent documentation. I set out some of the themes in relation to literature around 'the city' that informed my early thinking about a performance that would be presented in relation to the 'City' spatial imaginary. The writers and practices referred to remain compelling ideas in relation to cities in general and the themes relating to hospitality that I set out in Chapter 2.

Having reflected on the productive failure of *House* as a performance form that would support a transformational exchange between artist and audience, I changed the format. There would not be a performance entitled *City* for a wide public audience, produced through the processes engaged to produce *House*. What was needed was not a performance 'about' something, but a performance that 'was' something. I aimed to develop a dramaturgy of hospitality to move away from making hospitality the *subject* of the performance and towards creating a performance that would be an operation of hospitality.

I record how seven individuals including me, prepared a performance as artists, that invited an audience of one into *their* city. The performances took place within a timeframe of the artists' choice on a day in August 2019. This usually, although not always involved taking the audience in person to places of significance within the city of Leeds.

*City* is a set of seven performance texts that are the result of this approach that engages reflections on *House* and responds to findings in the imperative to find a form that would speak to the research aims. These texts are provided in hard copy and form the output of this part of the research. The seven texts are presented as a suite of work prefaced with a piece of editorial writing. They are presented in a slip case in the suggested order that are read. Each text is also introduced with notes that offer an insight into how each artist responded to the proposition. These texts may be read prior to engaging with the analysis below.

### 3.1 Aims and context

My aim, having returned the keys to the house, considering the failure to enable the audience to exchange with me the role of host was to find a form that could bring such an exchange into being. In continuing to explore the overarching research question, it was clear that simply producing a performance entitled *City* and engaging the city site as 'content' within a similar project model to *House* would not answer this, as I would simply be replicating the processes whereby I would be the artist and therefore unable to give up the role of host. As a way of moving away from my role as artist/producer of a 'piece', I devised a project that would have the potential to give a platform to the authentic expression of several different voices. The roles of artist and audience would be exchanged. Each artist was to perform 'their' city. Each artist was to be reciprocally the audience for another's performance.

While the initial vision of making a performance 'about' the city was set aside, there are compelling aspects of 'the city' that attract the attention of writers who in a sense accompanied me in my exploration of *City* as a spatial imaginary, and which are drawn out in the notes to the seven texts that are presented as outputs of the practice-research. We might expect that an address to the city would acknowledge Benjamin's contribution to the discourse on urban tropes: the *flâneur* and his (definitely 'his') habitat, the Arcades. (Benjamin 2002). M. Carmen Africa Vidal Claramonte applies ideas of hospitality to language translation. This is of particular relevance in the city, where typically many different languages are spoken – marking out the borders within borders. (Claramonte, 2014). Leonhard Euler set out the mathematical problem of the Seven Bridges of Königsberg, in the story of the citizens and their attempts to finesse a route around the city that brings together walking, city politics and mapping. (Hopkins and Wilson 2004).

Robert Harbison takes us on a journey through the streets of European cities, focusing on the grand architectural projects that have impact on individual lives, and on the journeys made possible or impossible through the necessity to negotiate the built environment in the city. (Harbison 1989, pp 54-72). Henri Lefebvre critiques the city as a privileged space that is 'only an object of cultural consumption for tourists, for aestheticism avid for spectacle and the picturesque' (Lefebvre, 1996 p 148). His idea of



*Le Droit de la Ville* (the right to the city) (Lefebvre 1968) has engendered ongoing discourse on the co-creation of public space. (Purcell, 2002, Attoh, 2011, Middleton, 2018).

Sophie Nield comments that parades taking place in cities (such as Queen Victoria's in 1887, marking her return to public life) and protests, such as that by one million people who marched in London in February 2003 to protest the imminent attacks on Iraq, and the protests against the rise in university tuition fees in 2010 present iterations of nation, public and state and

raise questions about spectacle, witnessing, and participation. They are all expressed through symbolic or theatrical performance (Nield quoted in Tomkins and Birch 2012, p.220)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau structured a set of reflections on his life as ten walks in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. This was originally published in 1792. He does not describe the physical territory through which he walks, but rather the mental journey undertaken through perambulation. Wrights and Sites' *Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: Dealing with the City* was performed, as documented in Whybrow (ed. 2010, pp. 69-86) at a conference for 'urban planners, architects, activists and others interested in walking'. The form of this as a creative exploration strategy speaks to my own interest in developing approaches to the presentation of 'site-specificity' at this point in the research, and how artists engaged in site-specific practice are found to be in dialogue with other disciplines. Geography is clearly one such. Edward Soja presents insights into Los Angeles as 'everywhere' towards analysing the effect that immigration has on cities. The two chapters relating to Los Angeles in *Post-Modern Geographies* (Soja, 1996) are presented within his argument for attention to the spatiality of social life. Bradley L. Garrett invites us to 'explore everything' and not to wait for an invitation to visit the hidden or forbidden spaces of the city. Going physically 'underground' as well as scaling the built environment and photographing vertiginous views, he places abandoned, marginalised spaces at the centre of his often-illegal journeys in the city (Garrett, 2013). Finally, Laura Levin and Kim Solga ask: 'When we set out to 'stage' a city, whose vision of the city do we rehearse as "real" or "true"? Who benefits from that staging and who pays the hidden costs?' (Levin and Solga, 2009). These questions speak directly to the issues raised by the laws of hospitality in terms of mutuality and benefit.

The ideas expressed by these writers are pertinent in a consideration of the city as a paradigm of relations that map on to hospitality and engage the script around freedom to participate in civic life. The 'keys to the city' are offered as an honour, the gesture originating in medieval times when European cities were ringed by walls and a visiting dignitary might reasonably be supposed to be trusted not to misuse the key by opening the door to the enemy. The 'freedom of the city' has similarly ancient roots in terms of conferring status on an individual and is even now enshrined in UK law in the Local Government Act of 1972. The ceremonial aspects of these awards confirm the geographical and political boundaries of the city, as well as operating under the power relations of who gives and who receives. In terms of hospitality in this scenario, the direction is clear:

he who receives, who is master in his house, in his household, in his state, in his nation, in his city, in his town, who remains master in his house – who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be no unconditional welcome [...] the one who receives, lodges, or gives asylum remains the *patron*. (Derrida, 2000, p. 4)

The prescription suggests a declension of patronage – Derrida has it as emanating in the house, then the household (presumably distinguishing between fabric and occupants), thereafter moving out into the political arena of the nation state, the administratively contained civic spaces of city and town before returning to the domestic setting. The responsibilities of receiving the guest, lodging them, and giving asylum resonate with the designations some cities have taken up as Cities of Sanctuary. Derrida's assumption of 'the master' is presumably a considered one, albeit reflecting the temper of the times of writing, as the patron is etymologically the father figure, who has always been seated at the head of the table.

The productive failure of *House* to engender an authentic exchange of the roles of host and guest – in the way that I was seeking at least, indicated that a different approach was needed. While the writers I refer to above inform *my* thinking about cities as sites of performance and would have formed one of the frames of reference for a performance piece along the lines of *House*, I wanted to leave the stage clear for other

ways of thinking. The practical enquiry is set in train here in relation to Derrida's definition of the patron in relation to the city:

- Is it possible to be *both* host and guest?
- As the instigator of the project, how can the role of 'patron' be resisted?
- What strategies can be engaged towards this resistance?
- As the artist/author of the work, we may come to 'know our place'; how can site-specific performance articulate this knowledge to an audience?

### **3.2 The Invitation.**

The invitation to the artists creating the performances was of course still in my gift in terms of the host/guest relationship – there seemed to be no way around this! I am ever the instigator of this research and therefore 'hosting'. Nevertheless, the integrity of each exchange as it is presented in the *City* texts is intact. They are legitimately responses to an artistic proposition, through site-specific performance.

While it was not possible to predict how individuals would respond to the proposition, there was an aspect of 'casting' in the sense that this might be understood in a theatre/performance context. In approaching potential artists, I aimed to engage a range of personal lenses on the city from a cross-section of society. These were individuals known to me, so of course there is bias in the selection. I was not however researching the individuals' response to the brief, in terms of artistic critique, nor content analysis, nor what their response would reveal about the city, although this would all be of relevance in another research framework. In this regard, I did not therefore make an open call for 'participants', since I wanted to move away from the hierarchy thereby established.

### **3.3 A Day in August 2019**

Over the month of August seven artists presented a performance of 'their' city to an audience of one. These performances took place usually over the course of a day. The artist arranged to meet the audience at a pre-arranged place. Thereafter, the artist took

the audience on a theatrical journey that sometimes involved moving from point to point, where the movement between was not of significance, and sometimes presented a journey that formed part of the content of the piece. The roles of artist and audience were exchanged, such that each artist also saw a performance presented by the audience for their own piece.

As noted above, I was of course the instigator of the project, but I attempted throughout to frame the project as collaborative. While the individuals approached understood that the context for their performance was a PhD research project, it was crucial that each artist understood they had complete control over their performance. The terms were those that would pertain in a performance presented in a theatre building. There was to be no audio/visual recording except by photographs as mutually agreed. These would be of the 'set' only, not the artist. The audience could take notes, as might be done by a critic during a show. The problem of documentation in relation to the etiquette and practice of hospitality is discussed below.

Moving through even the most familiar territory to revisit its meanings could be seen as a revolutionary act. Certain places hold memories we may wish to reject. The motivation may be to refute the forces of discipline represented by schools, offices, libraries, bus routes, museums, statues. We may wish to inscribe an updated autobiography on the psychic map created as denizens of the city. The invitation here is to step into the city, by whatever means, as on to a stage, to re-think relationships to place. The central concern was to propose a form that might support a mutual exchange between artist and audience in the context of site-specific performance and under the laws of hospitality. I have called this form a dramaturgy of hospitality and this emerges in relation to issues of documentation. In the following section I discuss the issues in more detail and how I attempted to resolve them.

### **3.4 Discussion: The problem of the documentation of *City* in relation to the laws of hospitality**

The performance of *City* raised a problem around documentation in relation to the laws of hospitality. A further related matter was how to present the work for examination.

This emerged alongside and in addition to the potential of site-specific performance to elicit an authentic and mutual exchange of hospitality between artist and audience. It is relevant to discuss this here since the problem directly gave rise to the findings of *City* as a spatial imaginary engaged in the practice research. I assert that the status of the performances created by seven individual artists each for an audience of one, presented on the 'stage' of the city is of same order as that of a performance presented on a theatre stage for an audience of many seated in an auditorium. While there may be records of the audience member's presence at the performance such as ephemera (tickets and programmes, a selfie taken in front of the poster), there would not be a mediated record of the audience's presence in the auditorium created by a third party during the performance. Beyond this, there is the issue of etiquette as an aspect of hospitality. There would not be an appropriate place for a third-party witness to a one-to-one exchange – unless the efficacy of the exchange were predicated on there *being* a witness. The exchange of vows in the marriage ceremony is one such scenario where a witness is required as a legal aspect of the proceedings in addition to the performative utterance 'I do' by the principals. This is not a scenario premised on hospitality, however. I now turn to examples of performance practice where documentation implies the presence of such a third-party, as can be identified in the material recoding such practice. Adrian Howell's *Foot Washing for the Sole*, (2008) a one-to-one encounter of care has been documented in still photographs. Rosanna Cade's *Walking: Holding* (2011) was an interaction in which a series of solo audience members walked a route while encountering and holding hands with a series of local inhabitants. The piece has been documented in a film of the same name. These artworks, while bearing some similarities in form to *City* are fundamentally different in intent, in that they both preserve the authorial status of the artist and do not expect to effect a reciprocal exchange with the audience in terms of who is the host and the guest of the interaction. The documentation of the work under the name of the artist as author, underlines the role of the artist as host, wherever the interaction takes place. The audience as guest brings about the role of the artist as host by their participation in the piece, and in this respect adheres to Klossowski's 'rules of hospitality' above the master's bed, discussed above in *Care Home*. The artist will not however be leaving the metaphorical keys of their house to the guest.

Documentation in performing arts practice has been problematised from a range of perspectives. A compelling critique relates to documentation as a tool of distribution in a capitalist system that appropriates the work and distorts its meanings and qualities through inappropriate reproduction that only aims to 'sell' the work to large audiences at any cost. Peggy Phelan (1993, 1997) argues that documentation of live performance works against its very nature – that being the processes of its own disappearance. Discussing the ontology of performance, Phelan formulates what could be read as a manifesto:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. (Phelan 1993, p.146).

Phillip Auslander (2006) writes of the 'performativity of performance documentation' suggesting that 'performance documentation *produces* the performance' (my italics). He proposes 'that performance documentation has been understood to encompass two categories, which I shall call the *documentary* and the *theatrical*'. In the documentary category 'It is assumed that the documentation of the performance event provides a record of it through which it can be reconstructed [...] and evidence that it actually occurred' (Auslander, 2006, p.1). The theatrical category is exemplified by photographs of 'staged' events that are presented as records of a presentation to an audience – although none was there. An example is Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971).

In the context of building a platform *for* and raising the status *of* formal developments in artistic practice, documentation forms part of the critical discourse. The mediating apparatus has an effect on how the work is framed and received – I wanted to take account of this and to build into the 'City' project a consideration of this whereby the documentation became a central focus. *Performance Magazine*, as a journal of record, in its day was of significance to me in developing a knowledge of live art and performance and a critical approach to practice in the 1980s and 1990s. The photographs, interviews, reviews, and debates on its pages were a glimpse into a world of enquiry and understood as adjacent to witnessing the work itself.

As outlined above, the concept of *City* as the third piece of practice-research underwent a significant change as part of the hermeneutic research spiral referred to above in

relation to methodology. *City* was initially conceived as a performance ‘about’ the city as site, and thereby a further iteration of hospitality in relation to site-specific performance. In dialogue with the findings of *House*, the research focused on finding a dramaturgical form that would encapsulate and *practice* hospitality itself. The form I decided upon had the conventional relational characteristics of theatre – a presenting artist and a receiving audience. In this scenario there is no documenting of the relationship by a third party, although the performance itself might be recorded through a range of mediating apparatuses. Individual audience members might record their visit to the theatre with a selfie in front of the poster, memorabilia might be kept – ticket stubs, a programme perhaps. Theatre performances generate secondary material such as reviews that evidences the production as a whole – although often in relation to a single performance of it. But the performer(s) would not record the audience watching the play, and the audience would not record the performance, not would there be a ‘sideways’ view of the auditorium and stage together produced by a third party. This would only occur as part of a generic marketing exercise and would probably be specially ‘staged’. This does not apply at live music gigs of course, where the culture of such events increasingly involves the use of mobile devices to record the experience – and the audience itself is often recorded from the stage – although not by the artist(s). The function of this is distinct from that of documentation in the sense that performance seeks to establish what Matthew Reason identifies as the ‘authoritative’ archive, which he suggests consists of absolutely anything relating to the performance. (Reason, 2006, p. 83). There is moral dimension behind the archival endeavour that he suggests needs no other justification beyond the aspiration to preserve the disappeared performance for the future. (Reason, 2006, p. 84). The ‘archive’ of live performance is of course distinct from the documentation of the outputs of practice-research in the context of the academy, where it is essential to make this available and accessible to others. Herein lies the productive problem I encountered in *City*. I wanted to find a way of documenting an ephemeral one-to-one performance whilst adhering to the laws of hospitality. So, there is no third party recording the performance, and of course neither artist nor audience would do this from within the performance itself.

Working with Auslander’s suggestion of the performative function of documentation I prepared *City, Taking an invitation for a walk*. This was presented to an audience of

academics and artist-scholars as a performance paper. Selected photographic documentation of the event is presented below. The script of the presentation is appended. The presentation distilled some of the anecdotes, materials and themes that emerged in the one-to-one performances of August 2019. I initially considered the presentation of the performance paper *as* the documentation of *City*. However, what I had done was restore myself to the role of the (sole) artist again, appropriating the other artists' material to bring the performances to a secondary audience.

Nevertheless, the presentation of *City* as a lecture-demonstration drew out some of the themes of the practice-research in relation to site-specific performance and hospitality.

I was in effect impersonating the artists who invited me to their performances of *City*. In the context of practice-research, and in the examination of this work within the academy, rendering the performances as documentation is valid, although it remains problematic for me. The rules (or etiquette) of hospitality are transgressed (or compromised) in this process of appropriation. While the integrity of the performances in August 2019 was held intact, it is still necessary to make these accessible as research, and to render them reproducible by others.

### **Illustrative Figures**

Fig. 1 shows a view of the table, set for guests, from 'backstage' where the lighting desk and the rig itself are visible.





The presentation was made in a theatre space, which is evident from this point of view, although not necessarily so from the guests' point of view. The technical 'work' of creating the event is captured here.

Fig. 2 shows the artist/researcher/host washing the hands of the guests before refreshments.



This is a ritual with resonance in many cultures, as a gesture of hospitality. In recent times hand washing has taken on a more practical aspect in relation to Covid-19. The offer of facilities to wash was carried over into *Garden*

Fig. 3 Preparations for refreshments. This is an offer repeated in all of the performances



Fig. 4 The guests are served



Fig. 5 The table becomes a theatre set as objects are placed on it to illustrate aspects of the story being told.



These objects appear in the presentation and are subsequently referenced in the *City* play texts

## Conclusion

The practice-research within the 'City' paradigm has produced a set of play texts entitled *City*, each artist denoted by a letter. This follows the conventions of both the

creation of a performance script such as might emerge in devising process post hoc, and/or a final text to be produced as written. The work in both cases is authored by each artist, and presented in the form of a play text, the performance is reproducible by another artist. This possibility comes with the proviso attached to any 'play' that emerges first on the printed page. The playwright's intentions are open to interpretation (unless it is a play by Samuel Beckett). The seven *City* plays are presented as documents rather than 'documentation', nevertheless I feel I have found a form of presentation that demonstrates what the practice-research consisted of and integrated this in the address to my overarching research question. In rendering the performances as printed play texts, I reinserted myself into the material as 'editor' and produced a note reflecting on the themes that emerge in each play and where it seems relevant, these are related to the literature around hospitality, tourism and cities. This does not seem to compromise the relationship of trust between host and guest (artist as host, artist as guest/audience as guest, audience as host).

At this point in the research, I had produced two highly contrasting pieces of work as outputs of the practice. *House* was in many ways a conventional piece of site-specific performance. *City* departed from this model and resulted in a set of texts that in some ways adhere to conventions in terms of their presentation as plays. Both sought to address my questions about the possibility of mobilising the potential of the relationship between artist and audience to be reciprocal and mutually transformative. I wanted to bring these apparently disparate outputs together in one place to develop a coherent account of how they both together reveal something useful about what site-specific performance can do. Rather than proceed to make a performance 'about' a garden, the 'Garden' as paradigm suggested itself as a framework to revisit the territories of *Care Home*, *House* and *City* and to examine what they might produce together on shared ground.

## **Section 4 Garden**

### **Introduction**

*Garden* was presented in May 2021 in Sparrow Park, Leeds. The site has a history relevant to themes of hospitality. The site is a piece of unadopted land, whereby title was not ascribed to a legal entity. No-one seems to have ownership of it, so the issue of 'invitation' to step into it is at once simple and complex. I discuss the significance of this in the analysis of the practice-research. As suggested in the conclusion to the previous chapter, the aim was to gather the ideas, processes, and findings of the practice-research together in one place and at one time, within the form of site-specific performance and in the context of the laws of hospitality as they are explored in this thesis. *Garden* was presented to an invited audience consisting of members of the Friends of Sparrow Park, colleagues from the School of Performance and Cultural Industries University of Leeds, other professional colleagues, and participants in the House project including the engagement work and *House* the performance. The video of the performance that forms part of the submission and that should be viewed alongside this writing, was designed in conjunction with the plans for the live performance to provide as authentic an experience as possible of the piece for those viewing it who were not present. *Garden* is in part a summary of *Know Your Place*. It is the fourth and final piece of practice-research, presented as a performance that returns to the central research enquiry. This is namely the investigation of site-specific performance and its potential to bring into being an act of hospitality. It attends to the question of how a dramaturgy of hospitality might be achieved, within the conventions of performance. It returns to this question from the perspective of the insights acquired throughout the research process, as this has advanced, piece by piece.

#### **4.1 Aims and context**

As will be seen when viewing the video, the event takes place on a small piece of land in the inner city of Leeds. The audience is invited into this space in a scene of welcome that echoes the opening of *House*, and the piece proceeds to draw on textual material, scenographic elements, performance tropes and engagements with the audience that

reference materials and themes respectively of *Care Home*, *House* and *City* as well as the performance lecture reflecting on *City* delivered on 15 October 2019 at the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds.

As discussed in relation to *City*, and the way in which the form of that performance changed in relation to the findings of *House*, there was an earlier concept of *Garden*. This might have been presented in a garden space, co-created with people who had a vested interest in a particular site, worked on to create a space that could be recognized as a garden, and produced through performance processes. Possible scenarios included working with a shopping centre in an area of Leeds scoring high on the deprivation index. This might have been developed as a project to create a garden through drawing on public engagement strategies familiar to me over many years of experience working site-specifically. The pandemic had the unexpected consequence of making any such project involving community engagement unfeasible, but in any case, following *City*, I wanted to further investigate, test, and articulate the possibilities of a dramaturgy of hospitality that built on the findings of the research to date, and extended my practice.

The formulation of a dramaturgy of hospitality is an output of the investigation, through the practice-research undertaken throughout. This was explicitly manifested in the design of *City* whereby I developed a framework that, as discussed above, enfolded an analysis of issues around documentation regarding the exchange between artist and audience in the context of hospitality – these may be one-to-one events designed to address intimacy (Heddon et al, 2012) or other configurations. Sub-questions emerging through the practice and towards developing a compelling model of a dramaturgy of hospitality include:

- Which formal issues require attention?
- Who needs to be considered in the concept towards its execution and how?
- How might an exchange of authorial power be achieved between artist and audience?

The seven *City* texts prepared as outputs of the third piece of practice-research are the documentation of the attempt to address the sub-questions above. They are also a

template for the practice which can be taken forward by practitioners in the future. *Garden* takes forward the productive problems of performance as hospitality and hospitality as performance, to both investigate the possibilities of and offer a framework for how a dramaturgy of hospitality might be conceived and subsequently produced. As a concept and as a performance, *Garden* attempted to enfold the process, products, and problematics of documentation of the research overall in a live event. The event was designed to be recorded, so that an audience encountering it through digital means, after the fact of the live event, would have as coherent an experience as those attending in person, in Sparrow Park. This was a key concern in the planning of the project and emerged directly from the findings of *City* in relation to the documentation of live performance under the laws of hospitality, how it is done, who it is for and what it tells us post hoc.

## **4.2 Presentation**

*Garden* was presented on 28 May 2021 in Sparrow Park. This took place in the context of the extraordinary situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, whereby social gatherings had become a luxury, having accrued a particular value, in the sense that planning for such events was contingent on prevailing regulations, and invitations can be cancelled at short notice. The matter of hospitality has entered the public discourse through having been made uncertain. As economic driver (pubs, cafés, restaurants, nightclubs), as part of social fabric (lunch clubs, religious gatherings, coffee mornings, domestic/family events), as sporting activity – the invitation to participate as audience has had to be withdrawn. In the case of the performing arts, much has been made of the difficulties of venue-based organisations in maintaining business viability. As a site-specific work, *Garden* was always planned to take place outside of the proscriptions applicable to building-based cultural institutions and in the open air, and therefore the likelihood of hosting the event was relatively realistic. Nevertheless, a significant piece of work was required in the planning of the presentation to take account of safety protocols above and beyond what would normally be required to take care of invitees to the event.

The pandemic has highlighted the significance of hospitality in daily life, through its withdrawal as a regular social possibility. Performance theory has long articulated that

the outline of the absent body (of work, of physical presence) is revelatory about the thing we lack (Phelan, 1997 p 3, Auslander, 1999) and the notion seems relevant here in relation to hospitality as a set of practices and opportunities for social intercourse that is no longer always available. Certainly, the body is highlighted within this in terms of the live presence that makes meaning in the connection between host and guest.

*Garden* engages with this idea insofar as the practice referred to, and represented within it, is no longer available except as and through its documentation, and is therefore an act of mourning for live engagement, as has been so keenly felt during the pandemic. As discussed in the previous chapter, documentation presents ethical problems in the relationship between artist and audience where hospitality is invoked. In this case, *Garden* as presentation was designed as documentation of the practice-research as a whole and to *be* documented through video recording as a permanent record of the event.

In relation to this research, the piece functions both as a formal presentation of the findings of *Know your Place* in being a summation of the practice, and as a development of approaches to the performance of hospitality. The presentation included scenographic elements from all three previous works: *Care Home*, *House* and *City*.

The presentation re-iterated and reflected on recurrent themes in the practice-research through various means, for example:

- The provision of food and drink (*Care Home* and *City* presentation)
- The element of 'playing at hospitality' using toy tea set (*House* - Miss Mayer's Room)
- Reprise of the role of 'estate agent' – introduced in *House*
- The presentation of bibliography as the physical presence of literature referred to (*Care Home*)
- Reprise of properties and scenographic elements from each piece
- The presence of the 'host'.

This last aspect is key to the articulation of a dramaturgy of hospitality. I have observed that my role within the practice has developed over the course of the research. I have always been present in the constant role of researcher within the practice, and with the dual role of host. *Care Home* engaged me as the 'chatelaine' of my own home, but without the theatrical frame of 'performing' (although I have discussed 'performance' in relation to being an effective host in that context in Section 1). *House* required me to perform a stage management role. *City* saw me as both host and guest in the performances taking place in Leeds in August 2019, and then as performer/researcher in the digest of the work presented as a lecture-demonstration in October 2019.

*Garden* placed the researcher 'centre-stage' as a performer, taking on multiple roles as gardener, doctoral research candidate, director and host. With reference to Deidre Heddon's analysis of the performance of self (Heddon, 2002) there is no engagement with autobiographical material, other than the acknowledgement of the research context in which the presentation takes place. The analysis given within both the presentation and this writing discusses my dual role as both uninvited guest during the labour process of gardening, and as host. I also had the responsibilities that any host of any event would have, to take care of guests. These responsibilities were represented by the provision of compasses towards guiding the audience around the space if required (symbolic) and the Risk Assessment prepared prior to the presentation (functional).

#### **4.3 The site**

Sparrow Park was chosen as a site for its unique feature in relation to land title. It was originally owned by the trustees of the company formed to realise the Zoological and Botanical Gardens in Headingley Leeds, in the mid 1800s, though not included in the plans drawn up and presented, but rather classified as waste land, thus 'sparable' land. – or land belonging only to the sparrows.

Once sold, the entire estate of the Zoological Gardens was eventually developed into a mixture of properties, leaving only two extant features, The Bear Pit on Cardigan Road and the sparable land, known as Sparrow Park. The ownership of Sparrow Park is still



something of a mystery. This is a key factor in the choice of site, in relation to Hospitality. In all previous pieces of practice-research, I have had title to the sites engaged:

- *Care Home* – took place in my own home, to which I hold the title deeds
- *House* – took place in venues where access had been granted by permission of the owner, and a contract to that effect being in place.
- *City* – took place in various sites in the city where all participants are registered as denizens of Leeds, paying the requisite council tax charges and thereby devolving the responsibilities of upkeep of the site to the City Council.

*Garden* emerged as a further development of a dramaturgy of hospitality in my being an uninvited guest. This is by virtue of there being no place to apply for permission to take up residence. I joined the Friends of Sparrow Park at the outset of the work on *Garden* as paradigm, whose other members have been kept informed of the plans of and who attended the presentation. The Friends is a non-hierarchical interest group yet to be incorporated such that it could hold title to any property. (As an aside, the City Council has ratified the site as within its ‘property portfolio’ such that the Park can be identified as an object in relation to any funding bids towards its upkeep.) The opportunity to be an uninvited guest in the site is a key to addressing the problems encountered in the practice-research. Finding an authentic mechanism to support a transformational exchange between artist and audience is impossible when the artist has title to the space. The artist will always be the host. The audience will always be the guest. The power relationship will remain in place. Working in a space to which I have no claim to occupy also highlighted issues of precarity which are pertinent to artistic labour in a wider sense (Bryan-Wilson, 2012).

*Garden* extends the framework developed in *City* in a range of ways:

- Temporally: The research developed over a period of eighteen months.
- Spatially: The work takes place on a piece of unadopted land, into which I placed myself - without invitation.
- Formal considerations: The event functions both as a formal presentation of the

findings, and as a party. It is a summation of the practice that includes text, physical properties and scenographic elements from all three previous pieces of practice-research. For the invitees who have no interest in the scholarly/academic basis of the event, it is a social occasion – a party to which they are invited on the basis of their prior interest in the space, in the conversations with me, by virtue of domestic proximity to the space ... and so forth.

- Analytically: The aim is to engage the discourse on the labour of the artist in relation to themes of site-specific performance and hospitality. This includes themes of precarity – as this relates to the employment prospects of both artists and those working in the Hospitality industry

*Garden* is the final paradigm engaged in the research. There is a sense of the presentation being a harvest, in keeping with the nature of the activity (gardening) that engendered it, as bringing the fruits of the research to the table.

As with *House* and *City*, *Garden* works as a social imaginary (Taylor, 2007, pp. 159–165), evoking a set of inter-connecting ideas and values that are institutionally as well as socially produced, emerging within a particular time frame, and then further developed within it. The overarching rationale for the research is here advanced in concerns that attend to boundaries – what is within and without the ‘garden’.

This is where the research comes together in one *place*, which is unique in Leeds in relation to its nature as being a territory which no-one owns, thus nuancing the idea of ‘invitation’, and where I attempt to articulate the findings of the work through practice.

#### **4.4 Garden as the performance of work**

As noted above, the preparation for *Garden* took place over a period of eighteen months, beginning in October 2019. This required work, as physical labour, and as application of kinetic energy, to move matter from one place to another. After *City*, further refinement of the research strategy was required towards developing a dramaturgy of hospitality. My aims for the final piece of practice-research were reconsidered as

outlined above, and in some ways could not be articulated as a plan beyond the idea of 'gardening'. A useful enquiry at the outset of the 'Garden' project in October 2019 in relation to my plans was couched simply as: 'What will you actually be doing?' The answer to this emerged through the regular labour required to bring the site into a state such that it could safely host others as well as myself.

Theron Schmidt notes that after Marx, there are two kinds of work involved in the production of value: alienated labour such as we understand produces both material and immaterial goods that can be sold and from which the labourer is then estranged, and the commodity form 'a work' of art, which he suggests evidences a second degree of alienation as it circulates independently of its creator. (Schmidt, 2013, p.15). He asks: 'what may be made of works of art that collapse the two, in which the 'work of art consists of the ordinarily hidden labour that goes into producing it?' (Schmidt, 2013, p. 15).

I was certainly working towards a work of art insofar as the *Garden* presentation was concerned with artistic practice. I engaged contractors to undertake specialist chain saw work, to chip the wood that would form the paths I wanted to create and to remove stumps that would have constituted a trip hazard around the site. This work was required at the site in the same way that any other specialist work might be required towards a theatrical presentation. I was working on a regular basis to prepare the site. In documenting this for the purposes of the research, perhaps I was making the 'ordinarily hidden labour' of gardening part of the work of art. This resonates with the hidden labour of theatre in relation to the backstage work that is the key to any production in a theatre building. In this, the hidden labour I undertook was possible because of the strange nature of Sparrow Park. It is 'uncanny' because unknown in the sense that other spaces understood as 'parks' are known. It is a tiny triangle surrounded by roads and house and requires a significant shift of imagination to place oneself in a 'park' while hearing the sounds of lorries and inhaling their emissions as they roar past very nearby. But I had a freedom to make scenographic choices in the space and to render it 'cared for' in this regard precisely because it lacks the curatorial attentions of any official body. The work of weeding, clipping, planting and maintaining the paths was undertaken on a monthly basis, depending on the weather and lock down

conditions. Nevertheless, the 'hidden' work of gardening was visible to passers-by. I was present at regular intervals. I had tools with me. I wore safety boots and gloves. I wore a hi-vis jacket. This last was in effect a costume and has become an ubiquitous symbol of being 'at work'. (Martin 2014)

*Garden* photographic images: Sparrow Park Leeds



Fig 1. Autumn 2019



Fig 2 Spring 2020



Fig 3 Spring 2020



Fig 4 Gardener Summer 2020



Fig 5 Nettles Autumn 2020 These were included in the scones provided as refreshments for the performance.



Fig 6 Blackberries Autumn 2020 These were made into jam that accompanied the scones.



Fig 7 Tools Winter 2020-21



Fig 8 Path created May 2021



Fig 9 'Backstage crew'

While I was present at the site as Covid regulations allowed, people continued to drop into the park. I was usually ignored, or sometime briefly acknowledged. Engagement was not part of the research methodology for this part of the project, so there was no imperative to develop a conversation. On occasion I would explain that as a Friend of Sparrow Park I was helping to maintain the site. I was not 'acting' during the process – the work was not symbolic. It was physically demanding, and sometimes demoralizing in that nature is adept in undoing the efforts applied to the process, simply by re-growing what has been pruned. Weather also plays its part in undoing the work of clearing and tidying. In addition, the work could not have been undertaken in any other site, with a view to preserving the integrity of the operation in relation to the research aims. It was work specific to the place and time. Having said that, I felt connected somehow to the labours of those who constructed the walls of the earlier Zoological Garden who worked with the building material known as 'Meanwood grit' (leeds.gov.uk 2008). Although the Zoological Garden was a commercial venture, it was designed to have public benefit. The small triangle of land that constitutes Sparrow Park is all that remains of that publicly available space.

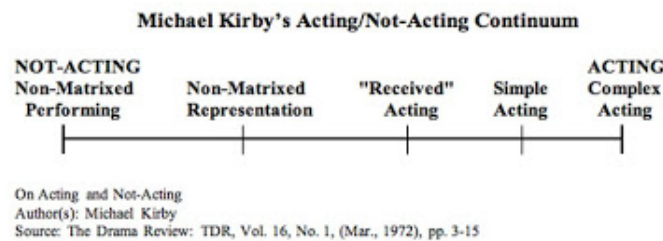
Particularly in the last month before the presentation, as the plans for it developed, it occurred to me while I was creating beds for *planting*, I was also in some way creating beds for *guests* – flower beds that would have to be maintained regularly in much the same way that divan beds would have to be made-up regularly in a guest house. As part of the conceit of this performance, the ‘estate agent’ invited the audience to view a number of sites within Sparrow Park that had been prepared through the physical work of clearing the vegetation. These were marked off by boundaries of various kinds. At the first site, a prototype of a house, indicated by a wooden frame, with walls and a roof, was pointed out as an indication of what a finished dwelling might look like in the environ. Next to this, a square of land was marked out by a miniature white picket fence. In one corner, miniature tools could be seen to indicate readiness to start work on building and on creating a garden within the boundary. The fence was a reference to the ‘American Dream’ – the homestead neatly presented with white palings that mark the space within, orderly in both aesthetics and morality and what is literally ‘beyond the pale’.

The imperative for engaging in the discourse around work emerges from the question ‘What will you actually do?’ and has a connection for me with the question ‘What can performance do?’ as I express in the text of the *Garden* presentation. I addressed this question directly to the Friends of Sparrow Park during the event, inviting them to bear witness to the difference that my work has made at the site. As both performer and gardener and always - uninvited guest - my *work* has answered the question – ‘what will you do?’ In this instance, performance can create a garden, one that can be engaged with at a specific time for the purposes of academic research, and one that can also be accessed by *anyone* at any time. I suggest that the *physical* work of performance can at the very least make a material (positive) effect on the site alongside the ‘doing’ of a research project on site-specific performance entitled *Know your Place*. The work of gardening was engaged with themes around access to culture, proprietary rights, enclosure, private and public space, problematic aspects of hospitality, issues of native and hostile species in relation to immigration. I return to the attention drawn in the Introduction to the discourse on labour, particularly as this relates to emotional labour.



## 4.5 Performing hospitality – Performing the self

Included in the items brought into the space for the presentation at Sparrow Park was a Pollock's toy theatre. This underlined the theatrical nature of the presentation. I note in the introduction to this thesis that one aim of the research process is to 'write myself back into the theatre', and to do this through considering the performative aspect of hospitality. The 'writing in the space' – as I offer as an aspect of scenography – is both the marks on the land itself that was inscribed by my work as a *gardener* and my work as a *performer* of gardening, and additionally my work as the 'director' of the presentation, substituting a rake for the traditional broom, to sweep the 'stage'. *Garden* is resolutely a 'non-matrixed' performance – after Michael Kirby (Kirby, 1972):



whereby I was literally the host of the presentation, and also 'performing' as host, but clearly not 'acting'. There is however a further level of performance, concerning the genre of 'presentation with the academy', and this was acknowledged in the spoken text and the attention drawn to the bibliography, for example and the engagement with aspects of theoretical material.

*Garden* played in the small spaces between the different modes of presentation, rather like the gaps between the stones of a garden path. As John Freeman notes,

Few if any of the distinctions between performance and acting are watertight and where they leak, the leaks are deliberate. All that we can rely on are indications, absences and an assessment of intentionality. Performance is related to theatricality without being reliant upon it. (Freeman, 2004, p.56)

I have discussed above the characteristics shared between hospitality and theatre in terms of their common backstage/frontstage ontologies and the presentational shifts

required to be displayed by 'performers' in the different spaces. As such there is an onus on both the 'host' and the 'matrixed performer' to fulfil their roles well, and to rise to the expectations of the 'guest' and the 'audience' – who in this case were in both roles (guests of the 'Friends of Sparrow Park' and an audience for the presentation). Perhaps this is a feature of the dramaturgy of hospitality – the acknowledgement of the productive oscillations between the roles of host and guest, audience and artist, that enable the codes of the spaces they occupy to be unlocked and negotiated, and thereby shared.

## Conclusion

This practice-research demonstrates that site-specific performance, if conceived and realized through the precepts of hospitality can support reciprocal exchange between audience and artist. As the practice-research developed from the initial concept, and the form of the performances developed towards addressing the research questions, I conclude that it is the exchange of *roles* between artist and audience that brings the reciprocation into being. *City* presents the material form of this exchange in the texts of the seven plays that were produced within the 'City' spatial imaginary. I acknowledge that the aim of complete reciprocity is perhaps impossible, with reference to the (im)possibility of unconditional hospitality posited by Derrida, and discussed in the Chapter on Research Context. (Derrida, 2000, p. 59) The binary of host and guest is nuanced in Derrida's portmanteau word 'hostipitality', as I discuss this in relation to the etymology of hospitality. This research contributes to the discourse on hospitality by animating the duality of *hospes/hostis* thus enfolded by Derrida. This is done through performance practice and through recording and analysing the challenges of enacting hospitality between artist and audience as I worked within each spatial imaginary to explore content and thereby develop performance forms and documentation that moved towards my articulation of a dramaturgy of hospitality.

While engaging hospitality as the principal theoretical lens through which to discuss and develop the practice-research, I have also gathered a range of other perspectives as analytical tools. As well as identifying the connections between performance and hospitality in the importance of identity, for example with regard to backstage and frontstage personas, I have placed post-colonial theory in relation to the performance of hospitality as it occurs on the world 'stage' and drawn on these ideas to place my practice-research in this wider critical context. For example, Peter Sloterdijk (Sloterdijk, 2013) offers an account of globalisation that traces its beginning from Columbus' first voyage and the European project of colonisation of the world based on technology and capital. He offers dramatic images of uninvited guests performing grand gestures of conquest:

Theatrical projects such as the conquest of the North Pole and South Pole in particular were entirely guided by that mania of immortalisation for which going down in the annals of discovery history was the highest distinction. Alpinism was also a variety of the vanguard hysteria that wanted no eminent point on the earth's surface to remain unconquered.  
(Sloterdijk, 2013, p.107)

The arts are not innocent in this Eurocentric, totalizing project of globalisation. Patrice Pavis (Pavis, 1991) suggests that

Never before has the western stage contemplated and manipulated the various cultures of the world to such a degree, but never before has it been at such a loss as to what to make of their inexhaustible babble their explosive mix, the inextricable collage of their languages (Pavis, 2013, p.1)

He develops the metaphor of the hourglass to examine the relationship between 'source' and 'target' culture hoping that

The fact that other cultures have gradually permeated our own leads, (or should lead) us to abandon or relativise any dominant western (or Eurocentric) universalising view (Pavis 2013, p. 5)

This complements Mireille Rosello's anticipation of painful, though mutual change within the frame of hospitality (Rosello, 2001, p.170) referred to at the beginning of Chapter 2. To summarise, Rosello asserts that hospitality may lead to both host and guest accepting the need for such change. This applies directly to the terms on which I conducted this practice-research, whereby I accepted that my original concept for the performances, when implemented in practice, merely reinforced the status quo with regard to the roles played by those involved. In my analysis of the individual projects, I have shown how the findings of each led to the form of the final piece *City. House* highlighted the mechanisms that retained me in the role of host. This was not the case with *Care Home* which explored the theoretical context of the research in a setting designed to present the signs and activities of hospitality, authorship, participation, the stranger or 'other', one-to-one encounters, 'casting' in relation to roles of host and guest and the hospitality paradox, whereby it is only by giving up what defines the host as host that the identity comes into being. The detailed description and analysis of *House*,

including the preparatory work that enfolded key concepts of hospitality in the process, demonstrates that the model I used for the House project is inherently geared to preserving the role of host for the artist and the role of guest for the audience. Even when the process engaged that audience as participants in an engagement process, the power relationship remained stable.

Each project informed the plans for the next such that the original concept was re-conceived to mobilise the learning from each piece of practice as the research proceeded. At the outset of the project, it was necessary to justify the methodology of practice-research as appropriate to address my research questions. As outlined in the Methodology, I embarked on this with the view that practice is the most effective method of addressing my research questions and refer to Barbara Bolt, who takes Heidegger's' concept of 'handlability' as a premise (Bolt quoted in Barrett and Bolt, 2009, p.27). This asserts that 'we come to know the word theoretically only after we have come to understand it through handling'. The very process of considering the theory around practice-research is generative in terms of articulating what performance can *do*. Following the argument made by Paul Carter in his book *Material Thinking* (Carter, 2004), I have attempted through practice to 'account for the work as a structure for re-thinking human relations' (Carter, 2004, p.10). I found that my initial 'ideas behind the work' became unproductively resistant to, and put a brake on, the open enquiry about the relationship between artist and audience that I wanted to operate as one of hospitality. The more I adhered to my original plan, the less productive the work became in terms of addressing the central research question. Applying Carter's idea enabled me to re-think the structure of the human relations that were central to the work, namely that of host and guest, whereby the paradigms returned to being productive frames within which to explore ideas. I did at last succeed in relinquishing my role of host by becoming a guest as the audience for a set of performances (*City*) that were authored entirely by the artists (with the proviso that of course I had instigated the project within the frame of research).

I found that the environment in which the practice took place affected the nature of these 'human relations'. On reflection, it is not perhaps surprising that 'knowing one's place' in terms of legal title to the site where the performance was 'staged' was

significant to host-guest relations. As noted above, *Care Home* took place in my own home to which I have title, and I was resolutely the host throughout. *House* was sited in a range of places where title to the property was nuanced by a set of contracts. For example I had keys to Arthington's house, but not title and here the owner was clearly the host. Although the audience was welcomed as guests to the performance by the creative team, we were all in fact 'guests'. I had rented the flat above the New Headingley Club where the four rooms staged the main part of the performance, so I returned to being host. The Club committee were hosts of the performance in opening the bar to non-members. None of the artists had proprietary rights over the site of *City*. The performance of 'their' city was an invitation to share in, and exchange, a perspective on experience in relation to it. What was revealed in the material presented in the *City* texts concerned the relationship of the artist to the city as place, and their choices in how to express this to the audience. *Garden* was presented in a space to which no-one can have title, because it is unadopted land, and where all attending the presentation, including myself were on an equal footing in this regard.

In my attempt to articulate the need for, then develop and further work within a dramaturgy of hospitality, I have stretched the performance form to the most extreme point at which I felt it could still hold its essential shape, within the framework of the production and reception of signs created by bodies in a live, time-based context. Each output of the research process has a clear relationship to performance while differing in form. These forms emerged in response to viewing the practice through the lens of hospitality and through my developing apprehension of its ethical implications, as outlined in relation to cosmopolitanism for example, referenced in the Research Context (Fanon Rundell 2016). In the ways that David Roesner (2010) offers that 'music makes statements about music' with reference to John Cage's work, (Roesner, 2010, p. 295), I suggest that 'performance makes statements about performance' and thus shifts and develops our understanding of it ontologically. Within this dynamic proposition the concept of a dramaturgy of hospitality has been developed through the practice-research methodology. Each project informed the plans for the next such that the original concept was re-conceived to mobilise the learning as the research proceeded. The hermeneutic spiral (Trimingham, 2002) was a further dynamic research principle that enabled me to move away from the original concept whereby - prefaced by a proof-

of-concept *Care Home* - three 'pieces' of performance would illustrate the paradigms of 'House', 'City' and 'Garden'.

As discussed in the section on 'City', I conceived of the city as a stage, on which would step an artist who would invite the audience to a performance of 'their city'. A conventional documentation of the *City* performance whereby a third eye somehow witnesses the audience engaging with the artist on the stage, which I suggest would never happen in the theatre building, would impinge on the expectations of both parties, and break the laws of hospitality that are implicit in it as a cultural form. In addressing this difficulty by rendering the performances as texts that can be produced by other artists, I offer a (partial) solution. I also found that I had indeed returned to the theatre in some ways, having left it to work 'at site' as I outline in the Introduction. A text that allows the reproduction of a performance is more likely to be found within the framework of the theatre building, although in this case I would hope the performance could be created to take place using the city itself as the stage, either in the original city (Leeds) or another.

The conditions that prompted me to leave the theatre remain in force with regard to the design of a space that re-enforces the division between artist and audience. This research also contributes to the engagement of object design considering issues of accessibility, whereby the idea of affordance can be applied to theatre spaces:

The perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just now the thing could possibly be used [...] Affordances provide strong clues to the operations of things .... Knobs are for turning, slots are for inserting things into. Balls are for throwing or bouncing. When affordances are taken advantage of the user knows what to do just by looking, no picture, label, or instruction needed.  
(Norman, 1988, p. 9)

The 'fundamental properties' of the auditorium offer these strong clues as to operation. Seats are for the audience to sit in, and from where to look at the stage. The politics of these coded arrangements can be discerned in their insistence on the passive reception of the audience of the action on the stage. Nevertheless, the idea that audiences are passive in the sense of being uninvolved is contested, particularly in relation to the

liveness of performance and the audiences' participation in constructing the live experience. (Auslander, 1999; Reason, 2004)

### What has been achieved?

A proposition is offered as to what constitutes the auditorium to bring this 'participation in constructing the live experience' into being. The proposition has been to exchange my place on the stage with that of the audience. *City* went further in exchanging roles as well, through making the role of host and guest commensurate with that of artist and audience.

The thesis presents a productive dialogue with scholarly work on the relationship between artist and audience, offering a perspective developed through practice on this that develops site-specific performance as fundamentally different from performances created for presentation in a theatre building for the price of a ticket. My practice-research began in each case with a critique of the performative utterance 'I invite you'. The utterance was problematised through the practice, whereby the affective limits of the invitation as one to be reciprocated emerged and could be apprehended. I distinguished this invitation from that made in practices that aim to be participatory, whereby the roles of artist and participant remain distinct and are unaffected by the process, particularly in the aspects of authorship I have discussed in the description and analysis of *House*.

An example of this latter practice is the invitation to participate as offered by Gareth White, for example. (White, 2013) Nevertheless, he presents a discussion of audience participation in terms that speak to the concerns of this research, and which have been helpful in enabling me to define where what I am doing differs from and I hope extends the discourse. His definition of audience participation is as he states, simple: 'the participation of an audience, or an audience member, in the action of a performance' (White, 2013, p. 4). He addresses the significance in the discourse that distinguishes between theatre and performance, suggesting that the differentiation is 'provisional and strategic' (White, 2013, p. 6) whereby such distinctions may shift and change according to the use value they have for various interests in applying it. This is useful in loosening



some constraints in considering the relative potential of 'theatre' and 'performance' as more or less available to participation. The point is that conventions around participation shift and change in a productive relationship with audiences as their ideas and expectations of the possibilities of this develop.

White focuses on the *invitation* to participate and asserts that the process whereby audiences are engaged in so doing constitutes the production of aesthetic material, because the experience of the audience becomes the artist's medium. (White, 2013, p. 10) The idea that participation in artistic work by audiences has a strategic value to the artist is of interest when explored through the lens of hospitality. If the engagement of audiences in a 'participative' exchange is analysed through this lens, then the host (artist) is inviting the guest (audience) into a situation whereby the latter is providing data for the former. I have discussed data as 'gifts' in the chapter on research context and return to this in the conclusion to underline the problematic aspects of the invitation and provision of hospitality as it relates to participation and any benefit accruing to the participant. The benefit to the artist seems evident.

Through this practice-research I have investigated whether it is possible to make the provision of such data a mutual exchange, rather than a one-way provision of 'aesthetic material' with use-value to the artist in their identity *qua* artist. *City* is a practical address to this investigation that is not designed as an invitation to participate in the performance *as audience*, but to exchange the role of audience with that of artist – to *be* the artist, to *be* the audience. I developed a dramaturgical form for *City* in response to the findings of *Care Home* and *House*, as outlined in the concluding remarks of the descriptions and analyse of these projects.

The context of research within the academy has enabled me to respond to the findings of the work as it took shape and experiment freely with form. Establishing methodological principles in relation to hospitality and following these through in the practice has resulted in a model of performance that is easily reproducible. While this bears a close relationship to conventions of theatre writing at first sight, the process whereby it emerged is rooted in the theoretical context that brings hospitality and performance into dialogue. In the case of *City*, the ephemeral performance, created in

order to disappear, has in fact been rendered material object, a play text to be held in the hand, by virtue of the impact of considerations of hospitality in the relationship between artist and audience.

The findings of the research have direct application in planning creative work in community settings regarding considerations about agency and how to empower participants to host the work, rather than their being invited into someone else's concept. In imagining a relationship between artist and audience that is transformative and unconditional, it is the aspect of material practice that this research has addressed, within the paradigms that have provided thematic context. I have imagined a performance project which is not 'about' hospitality – or even hostility - to 'the other', but which *is* hospitality, and by its coming into being, refutes and dissolves hostility. This possibility seems to me to counter the polarized discussion around the instrumental or intrinsic value of artistic practice by offering a third paradigm that encloses both.

In relation to change, Suzi Gablik offers 'a sustained meditation on how we might restore to our culture 'its sense of aliveness, possibility and magic' (Gablik, 1985, p.1). Outlining what she identifies as the prevailing framework of compulsive and oppressive consumerism within which (Western) society operates, she draws on both Jean-Paul Sartre's and Colin Wilson's expressions of existential angst. In a call to counter the buzz of individualism, freedom, and self-expression, she presents the collective task of 're-enchanting' our whole culture as one of the crucial tasks of our time. Arguing for 'that change in the general social mood toward a new pragmatic idealism and a more integrated value system that brings head and heart together in an ethic of care' she asks whether artists can be a positive force in transforming the prevailing paradigm of alienation. While Derrida senses that we do not know what hospitality *is*, we may know what it is *not*. It is not demonstrated in artistic practices that maintain 'the distanced formality of aesthetics' (Gablik, 1985, p. 100). In a chapter discussing models of partnership, *Making Art as if the World Mattered*, (Gablik, 1985, pp 96-114), she cites a project by Krzysztof Wodiczko undertaken during January 1988. Wodiczko designed a cart, based on the shopping cart, that could be used for transport and storage, and even a temporary shelter, for people compelled to live on the street. The design included

special extensions enabling it to be used to store personal belongings, as well as scavenged materials exchangeable for cash. While the carts were not in the end put into production, the design was co-created with those who would be most likely to use it and took into consideration a range of environmental factors. The concept seems to me to present a powerful model of site-specific practice, where the autonomy of the artist is not compromised by applying skills to a real need. Gablik argues for a move away from 'the ego-logical, fixed self of the Cartesian and Kantian traditions' and towards another kind of art 'which speaks to the power of connectedness and establishes bonds, art that call us into relationship' (Gablik, 1985, p.114).

This practice-research is a contribution to that call to move artists and audiences in closer relationship together, through playing out hospitality.

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## Appendices

### 1 Transmission:Hospitality Review

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"*Transmission: Hospitality* aims to address the relation between the various modes of analysis and communication that seek to comprehend art. This conference will be set in a transdisciplinary and transcultural context where dialogues between artists, writers, critics, curators, and academics will be welcomed as a method for generating, mediating, and reflecting experience and knowledge about the way art is received."

Transmission: Hospitality took place in July 2010 at Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

## Review

Reviewed by: [Alison Andrews](#) »

This review was first published on **Interface** July 2010 [www.a-n.co.uk/interface](http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface)

**Transmission:Hospitality Sheffield Hallam University**

I was invited to a great party .. and I didn't even bring a bottle. Transmission: Hospitality was hosted by the Arts and Design Research centre, Sheffield Hallam University 1-3 July 2010. This interdisciplinary conference was an invitation to interrogate the codes and duties implied in the relationship of host and guest. Convened by Dr Jasper Joseph-Lester and Dr Sharon Kivland, Transmission is an ongoing project conducted in the mode of hospitality. In association with Site Gallery, staff from the department of Fine Art invite a friend as speaker and interlocutor in a series of enquiries into art practice. The conference in July launched Transmission:Annual, a new journal reflecting the proceedings of the project. Themes of mutuality and reversal in relations were explored over three days of presentation and discussion which acknowledged the ironies, contradictions, and progressive potential of the host/guest paradigm.

These early July days in Sheffield were warm, really warm. We were sheltered from the heat in the air-conditioned environs of the conference venue, and as a delegate at a conference, ever the guest, and a stranger in town, one is sheltered too from the preparations and from the details of the wider context in which the conference takes place. Yet the theme of Transmission:Hospitality was immediately animated as the stranger/traveler/delegate (me) arrived, welcomed to the city by the sight and sound of running water in Sheaf Square. This is a new public space situated outside Sheffield Station. The area was previously used as a car park and was surrounded by a major road network – an unwelcoming vista. Sheffield design team, Si Applied and international glass artist Keiko Mukaide collaborated in the development of the Cutting Edge Sculpture, which combines the city's famous material – steel – with water and light and makes a definite statement of civic pride offered as a gift from the City to the visitor. Largely well received, the controversies over the development of the area overall are easily tracked on blogs, and address ongoing issues surrounding public art and the host/guest relationship with which Transmission:Hospitality engaged. Keynote speakers, at once guests and hosts, invited us to their investigative parties. Michael Clegg's work with Martin Guttmann is often hosted in public spaces, commemorating the past and challenging the future. Through the process of negotiating the installation of the work, a range of questions are raised: Whose voice is being heard through a public artwork? Who is 'programming' the space, when the stage is open to the public? What is it proper to represent? And who is being 'quoted' in the act of creating a memorial. It is after all, very impolite to misrepresent your guest.

In 1795, Immanuel Kant published an essay entitled 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' – the context was the signing of the Treaty of Basel by Prussia and revolutionary France, which Kant condemned as only the suspension of hostilities, not a prescription for Peace. Kant denounced "the inhospitable conduct of the civilised states of our continent, especially the commercial states and the injustice which they display in visiting foreign countries and peoples". He rejected European imperialism as a violation of the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility on strange shores. Such treatment breaks the laws of hospitality, which apply to both host and guest. Dany Nobus explored these laws as prescribed in Klossowski's *Roberte ce Soir* – the best host is the one who gives away the most, even that which defines him as Master of the House. Blake Stimson placed

hospitality against fundamentalism, as a process requiring engaging deep and openly with another's world – towards learning and turning a critical gaze upon ourselves – treating the object as a guest.

We are even guests in our own timeline, Ahuvia Kahane suggested, if we understand the present as our home, yet we must 'host' the past in the present as the moment moves immediately into history. Esther Leslie charted the friendship between Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin as a space in which they developed their methods and philosophies. Compare this to Facebook 'friendships' and instantly effected changes to one's 'status'. The host/guest relationship requires an investment of time, which Esther suggested is occluding space in on-line environments – 'space' for friendship is a product of hospitality. Juliet Flower MacCannell considered the falling stock of the stranger, once an honoured identity in a society geared for hospitality. The stranger brought new insights to the community, but now manifests as the character whose lethal freedom drives the narratives of films like 'The Hitcher' and 'Dead Calm'. Yet, dispensing with distance brings us too much information – how much do we really want to know about Britney Spears? Estrangement and intimacy are the poles between which pornography – sex with a stranger – operates.

Having just completed a site-specific performance project at the invitation of a national institution, I attended the conference with the image of my host etched on my memory, with all the sharp edges which a challenging relationship forges. The inspiring keynote presentations and compelling and provocative panel presentations on ongoing research have softened these edges and overlaid it with other, more complex propositions. One might expect that a conference with 'Hospitality' as its title would attend overtly to the guest/host relationship, and as delegates we were handsomely and graciously entertained. The invitation also to consider our responsibilities to our hosts in such a creative context made the experience particularly rich. Whether or not it is better to give than to receive, I must remember to say – "thank you for having me".

2

Text

## **City – Taking an Invitation for a Walk**

**Presented 15 October 2019, 5.30 pm**

**University of Leeds**

**A distillation of performances presented in August 2019  
City of Leeds by**

AG

P

F

M

W

D

H

Additional performers – an elder and a student,

**These performances were for an audience of one.**

At this presentation paper, all performers are represented by **Alison** – a PhD candidate conducting research into site-specific performance as an act of hospitality.

Set – a circular structure, around which are chairs, with a hollow centre. The audience is seated as guests at a Dinner.

In the centre, a small serving table with various objects. These are brought to the ‘table’ throughout the presentation to gradually create a place setting for the guests.

FX – lighting state moves from East (dawn) to West (sunset) over the 45 minute duration of the presentation

Lighting designed by Dr Kelli Zezulka

Catering organized by Dr Sally Brown

**Alison:**

Are we all here?

Can we all fit in?

Do we know our place?

Your place has your name on it.

Are you comfortable? – if you’re cold you can wrap up



It can make a difference, where you're sitting  
Some of you are in Politics and Space – over here is the Types and Sites area  
Here we have Inclusion/Exclusion  
Law  
and  
Performance – which is my area

At the core is the host/guest transaction – and two places where this is played out: in domestic or commercial contexts.

*Theme: Hospitality*

This is based on Lashley's conceptual lens of hospitality – and it's interesting because it's all about relationships and connections.

On examining 'diagrams of hospitality – it can be observed that hardly any of them mention the word 'guest' – it's all about flow charts for managing laundry or food safety, or management training.

Place –The Queens Hotel,

run for maximum efficiency.

Objects: TEACUPS AND SAUCER WITH TEABAG, BISCUIT, SUGAR and SOY MILK distributed amongst the guests.

I'm going to work with *Xenia* – the Ancient Greek concept that allowed for the safe passage of the traveller through strange territory, and for that traveller to receive hospitality:

There are two basic rules:

1 The respect from host to guest – the host must offer food and drink – and a bath. And no questions until the guest has finished eating – and a gift when the guest leaves

2 The respect from guest to host – don't be a burden. Don't be rude to me - or kill me. And a gift if you have one, but it's not obligatory.

The idea was that you were nice to strangers, because they might be gods in disguise.

*Theme: Care*

You may be gods.

So I offer you a bath –

Objects: EWER and BOWL, HAND TOWELS –

Action: Hand washing takes place

and there is food...( ... indication of buffet to follow)

In 2002 – I left the theatre – well, the building. I walked out because I couldn't see the point of me taking up space in there. I didn't know the people I'd come to perform to. They hadn't invited me. The theatre had invited them, well, for the price of a ticket, and neither of us were being treated very well as far as I could see. I knew nothing about their city, really, Cheltenham, Chelmsford, Chester. I'd probably never get to know what had been taken from the piece. So I started to work outside, with people, where they live and work and play.

Creating site-specific performance – and through this method asking:

- Can artists and audiences engage in a mutually transformative exchange?
- Can we Know our Place?– both the site and our place within it
- Is the lens of hospitality helpful to explore ways of knowing place?
- Is it useful in developing forms of performance that mobilise the artist and the audience in their different roles as equals in the creative process?
- What problems are still in play?

This piece is called: *City: Taking an invitation for a walk*

Let's go for a walk, side by side as it were, to take turns to invite the other into their city, as performed through reminiscence, through revisiting places, evoking places no longer existing, through anecdote. Of course it's *my* idea – and therein lies one problem immediately. But someone has to go first.

*Theme: Artist and Audience*

So we begin. "Did you ever happen to see a city resembling this one?" Kublai asked Marco Polo, .... "No, sire," Marco answered, "I should never have imagined a city like this could exist." This is from *Invisible Cities*

Who does the city belong to? Welcome to Leeds – Thanks ..

**As P**

Place: Café (Chapel Allerton and University)

Early morning. I am sitting in the café called 'Opposite'. Waiting, wondering whether to order a coffee now or wait for my collaborator - my guest or my host.

I am sitting in the café called 'Opposite. Waiting – but I do order a coffee. At ten past, I ring, because she's always on time

At ten past I pick up my phone just to text and say 'I'm here'

'What.. in Chapel Allerton?'

'No .. at the University.'

There are two cafes called 'Opposite'

It's as if the city has decided to double itself.

It's funny.

On the bus down Chapeltown Road

RJC Dance, Northern School of Contemporary Dance

Do you know what I've done..?

You know where I trained – do you know what they said about my black body..? That I could not be a dancer? That 'ballet 'and 'Black 'was not a thing..

And now look at this city that claims dance for itself.. as the centre.

When Phoenix Dance began, the choreographers were the guests of the dancers.

Now the dancers are voiceless.

### **As M**

Place: The market

Object: OYSTERS

This is what I would do on my day off .. I start off with Oysters and then I know the City is mine. £1.30 a pop

### **Alison**

I hated the Market

The Half Crown I was given to secure all the shopping

### **As H**

Place – Leeds train station

I was worried in case we wouldn't recognise each other.

But there is a certain way people move when they are looking - and when you are both looking.. you find each other..!

This is such a beautiful city – I love it

I've come all the way from Canada and yet I'm at home!

### **As F**

Object: MINIATURE PUSCHAIR

Place – Deer Shelter Yorkshire Sculpture Park

I don't feel seen by the city. Having small children means your life is contracted around where you can take them, where they won't bother 'people'. Where they won't be inconvenienced because you've brought your children in to 'their' space

## **As Elder citizen - anonymous**

Object: MINIATURE BICYCLE

Place – street outside the home at Grove Road

As a teenager I was limited. I knew the city in relation to bus routes or walking distance. There was no question of riding a bike - that would have been so uncool. Now they are digging up the city centre for buses and footpaths and cycle lanes – and I can't get anywhere anymore. I just don't know my way around, I feel like a stranger, in my own city.

*Theme: Performance and Identity:*

## **As P**

Place – Northern School of Contemporary Dance

I live on the margins of the city – the places where the money's not being spent, where the performance of identity is not watched by an informed, curious and appreciative audience. Where this performance is feared, is suppressed, is criminalized. This performance of my black body.

## **As W**

Objects: MINIATURE CAR and BLAKEY'S SEGS

The performance begins in a car in Armley – with a poem that has its roots in the city - but not the one that is mapped by 'Welcome to Leeds.'  
It tells the story of relations who worked in factories in Leeds – during the war, making parts for weapons that would kill their counterparts in Germany – cities connected in a deadly way.  
Or more cheerfully – in Blakey's Foundry

'Boots never want soling or heeling if these protectors are used' – Blakey's advert..

Blakey's Segs are sold all over the world - 'Beware of expensive imitations.'

## **Alison**

When I was at school in the 70s, all the lads' shoes had Blakey's Segs – they made a distinctive sound on the concrete floors in the corridors.

## **As W**

Place -St Bartholomew's Church

where Miss Gregg directed the nativity play – I was Joseph

Music – the house where the band Chumbawumba once squatted – they had a donkey and we could feed it carrots. The history of the music scene in Leeds encapsulated in one small house.

It's the kind of place Mark E Smith wrote about for The Fall.

Object: THE FALL VINYL copy of *GROTESQUE* – track: 'Containers (and their Drivers)' and JUMBO RECORDS BAG

Armley – where the washing is still hung across the street, but with international connections through trade

Armley - where if you make enough money you can move to Wortley – or up near Charlie Cake Park, the posh bit.

## **As D**

Object: HORSE CHESTNUTS

Place: Woodhouse Moor

The walk from the University to my future .. I knew I'd failed the exam .. so I walked across the park, it was Autumn

## **Alison**

How might this approach to performance as an exchange of hospitality be applied outside our discipline? I say 'our' because I am among friends and I am your host, and I have taken the liberty of making assumptions.

Well, it might it might impact on how the audience is perceived – not as an object of study but as collaborator – not as performed to but performed with. Perhaps a return to what Richard Schechner was arguing for as long ago as 1968 – for participation to impact on the performance itself, to effect change. Agency that the audience carries as embodied power into the city when the performance has come to a close.

Or are you hosting me – I have been invited to speak – that's the protocol is it not? Just as Hamlet summoned the players to the court, and briefed them to play *The Murder of Gonzago* towards entrapping his Uncle to reveal his guilt.

You're all here

Methodology – a sharing of data – datum, etymologically: a thing given. In other words a gift. So we shared our data, exchanged gifts on walks and bus rides and on journeys around the city.

Place - Park Lane College

**Alison** - A dialogue with W and Alison

Worst year of my life

Objects: PENCIL, SHORTHAND NOTEBOOK

I did theatre studies

We studied Brecht

Stanislavski

Artaud

Gordon Craig

Chekhov

It was that course that made me realise that I could make something of my life. Me mam would never have thought that a lad from my background could have a place at the table. I went on to be part of a world that I never knew about before. I was inviting people in to make work with me. They wanted a slice of my pie.

**As Anonymous Student**

Place – Ash Road, Headingley

*Theme: DeDyking*

Objects: K.D.LANG POSTER, TRACY CHAPMAN CD

I'm gay – and I was not 'out' to my parents. They came to stay. The night before I was looking at my place.. the posters on the wall, little objects, books, my music. I went around taking things down, putting things into draws. Hiding them, hiding 'me'.. hiding me from them, shielding them ..it's some kind of weird politeness to your guests. It's also fucked up. I wouldn't do that now. It's my place, you come in, you accept me ...

*Theme: Hating School*

OBJECT – Cigarette packets

I

**Alison**

Place: Sky Bar, Granary Wharf

At the end of the day, we sat in the Sky Bar of the Hilton, overlooking the city to the West, and to the East, watching the tiny people below. It's a partial view of course – we can't see the details – but we are pretty sure that each tiny figure has a different city to invite us into.

Italo Calvino's character Marco Polo describes 55 fictitious cities – and we understand that he was really talking about only one – his hometown of Venice.

Calvino suggests:

'Arriving at each new city, the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places.'

And some of those foreign unpossessed places are to be found in Leeds. Over the summer I have been invited to travel to and through some of those places, to explore them as a guest, and in turn I have been the host in others. These have presented the city as a site-specific performance of discovery and of mutual exchange.'

This has not been an account of those performances. It has been a first attempt to walk back into the theatre.

And in the terms of the laws of hospitality I have to say 'thank you for having me'.

FIN

## Point 11

### Applications of the research

My research into hospitality as a mode of thinking about performance and the relationship between audience and artist, has been engaged in research projects and events both within the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds, and externally:

- In May 2016, Yorkshire Dance invited me to organize an 'Artist's Takeover Day', with a brief to engage the ethics of Care in the relationship between artist and audience. With Hamish MacPherson I organized a daylong programme exploring ideas of radical care with a focus on the body as a site of performance.
- In Autumn 2019 I worked with Dr Lou Harvey, School of Education, University of Leeds on a LILA (Learning at the Intersection of Language and the Arts) project. I devised a series of arts activities that would support a group of refugees and asylum seekers accessing ESOL support at St Vincent's in East Leeds. The aim was to manifest 'welcome' and to support a mutual exchange of cultural interests between service users and researchers. Dr Harvey then organized dissemination events throughout Leeds, and in February 2020, I presented a paper entitled *Know your Place: Making a show of yourself* as part of an event organized in partnership with Leeds Libraries to share the findings of the project.
- In May 2021, in relation to the City paradigm, I presented a paper entitled *City: Taking an invitation for a walk* at Central School of Speech and Drama as part of the 'Intersections: Border-Crossings' conference, exploring the processes through which borders – physical, social and cultural are constructed in performance - and how they might become porous.

With post-graduate research colleagues in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries, and as part of the Place and Performance research group, aspects of *Know Your Place* have been shared:



- In December 2016, I presented initial findings in a joint paper entitled *Care:Home* with Dr Emma Gee. This discussed areas where our interests in the problems of authorial power intersected. We had both used our own homes in early stages of our research to explore ideas of ownership and power. Gee's PhD thesis (Gee, 2018) argues that 'authorial power is often covert and tacit and therefore difficult to challenge' (Gee, 2018, p. 218). We found we have complementary interests in examining the role of director-artist through attempting to effect its disappearance or redundancy and through an examination of the power structures that preserve the role within process of cultural production. We have a shared experience of the 'productive failures' of our practice-research that has led us to explore unexpected avenues of enquiry towards addressing our research questions. We have each concluded that we cannot succeed in securing our own redundancy but we can examine the structures that preserve the authorial 'place' at the performance table and propose new ways of working.
- In May 2017 I presented a paper on participation for a colloquium entitled *We want you to Participate!* drawing on my research to discuss the ways in which the participatory 'turn' has been engaged in the debate on the value of the arts.
- In December 2017, I invited Hamish MacPherson to present with me a series of provocations on Care and Consent.

Externally, my research has been applied in a collaboration between A Quiet Word and Bristol University. Dr Jessica Hammett, a social historian, is PI on a research project entitled *Wellbeing, support networks and expertise on the Seacroft Council Estate, Leeds 1950s-90s*, examining changes to health and wellbeing of British working-class communities in relation to social housing provision. I was invited to create a rationale and materials for the engagement process that would capture the experiences of people in Seacroft, Leeds. My work contributes to the development of the aim to undertake a 'radical re-consideration of ethical practices' (Hammett, 2020) when working with marginalized groups on sensitive topics.

