THEATRE AND THE POLITICAL IN BLAIR'S 'GOLDEN AGE'

by

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Rebecca Katherine Daker, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to make an intervention in the debates surrounding the political significance of British theatre, and specifically playwriting, during the New Labour government. In an environment of austerity under the Coalition government, journalistic commentary has tended towards a nostalgic conception of the Blair era as a 'Golden Age' of the arts marked by abundant funding and artistic freedom for practitioners. I examine the flaws of such claims, asking whether the importance placed on social and economic value during this time may in fact have had a detrimental effect on the political efficacy of the form, and how the discursive closures created by the rhetoric of Third Way democracy can best be disrupted in order to make a reimagining of political theatre possible.

My central question is as follows:

What effect did New Labour, and particularly the influence of Third Way social democracy, have on the relationship between plays and the political?

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Introduction

Genesis

The departure point for this project was furnished by my experiences in 2006-7 of working as Marketing and Press Manager at Hampstead Theatre. I came to this role fresh from a similar position with a commercial concert promoter that put on hundreds of high-profile events each year and where a failure to meet sales targets meant placing one's own job, and that of one's colleagues, in real and immediate jeopardy. There was no social or political mission here, only financial imperative. I moved to subsidised theatre, therefore, in a spirit of somewhat naive excitement, expecting to find myself in an atmosphere of unbridled artistic courage and curiosity where risk-taking and dissidence were welcomed and where drama was understood as public good rather than pure commodity. Reality soon bit, however, as I arrived at Hampstead Theatre in a tense atmosphere of threatened funding cuts and struggling sales. My assumption that funding in subsidised theatre provided any kind of guaranteed security in which to take artistic risks was immediately called into question.

During this time I was also beginning an MA in Cultural and Critical Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London and enjoying my first encounters with the work of Adorno, Benjamin and Lukács. As I collated audience data for Arts Council England funding applications and attended meetings with potential corporate sponsors by day and discovered critical theory by night, I could not help asking certain questions. Did my current working environment have any more artistic or political integrity than my previous one? Was it any less beholden to late capitalism and neoliberal ideology? How closely was what happened on our state-funded stage tied to the professed aims of the cultural policy of the time, and was there any room for autonomy? Given the proliferation of definitions of 'autonomy', which - if any - are appropriate and helpful when reading theatre policy? Most importantly, how had I come to form the erroneous assumptions with which I had first joined the staff at Hampstead? These questions prompted me to cast a more critical eye over the cultural policy documents that reached my desk and over the suggestions and

prescriptions that governed our interactions with our funders. Over the next year these questions claimed more and more of my attention and eventually I left the theatre's staff in order to concentrate on developing my research. In the summer of 2008 I used Sir Brian McMaster's review *Supporting Excellence In the Arts: From Measurement To Judgement* as the backbone of my MA dissertation, in which I first began to interrogate the contradictions and inconsistencies of New Labour's cultural policy from my newly-acquired academic and professional perspective, and to prepare my initial thoughts on how this might develop into a doctoral thesis. Looking at the increasingly turbulent relationship between theatre-makers and arts funders, as exemplified by Equity's vote of no confidence in Arts Council England (hereafter ACE) in January 2008 and the peril in which the Bush Theatre found itself in the same week, the claims of a continuing theatre-friendly arts policy appeared increasingly problematic.

As I began my PhD in 2009, the likelihood of a change in government was already apparent, and one of the earliest questions I found myself fielding was how I would handle this. One possibility was to embrace an entirely historical methodology, using the imminent departure of New Labour from the government benches as the cut-off point and examining only the specificities of 'Blairism' and its relationship with the vicissitudes of theatre funding that I had already observed. This avenue had certain attractions; as New Labour borrowed so much of its rhetoric from its previous incarnations, mapping this rhetoric onto the difficulties of the British Left and its reflections in political theatre had an obvious appeal. The second option, of course, was to wait and see what the incoming government's cultural policy would offer to the British stage, whether a change of direction would be forthcoming, and how the stage would respond. After much consideration, I decided against the first option. There was already a wealth of thorough critique and analysis of New Labour policy, ideology and doxa, and the same was true of the theatre of that period (specifically the work of Aleks Sierz[1] and Jen Harvie[2] on British theatre, national identity and neoliberalism). This body of work on New Labour merited development and continuation, and has been of tremendous use throughout this project, but does not need to be duplicated. This is not to say that appraisal and re-examination of the existing work on New Labour has not proved to be necessary in the light of Coalition government policy; in fact, I hope to demonstrate the continuing relevance of points made by the critics of New Labour in relation to Third Way politics and governance.

In rejecting the route of historical excavation, I was committing to keeping up with and analysing theatre policy decisions as they happened and seeing what new directions, if any, emerged. I was also committing to observing changing perceptions of New Labour's legacy in theatre once the Conservative-led Coalition began to make its mark. The British Theatre Consortium's report, *Writ Large: New Writing On The English Stage 2003-2009*, provided a rigorously-researched snapshot of playwrights' and new writing theatres' extremely positive (although not uncritical) perceptions of the success of ACE's Theatre Writing Strategy (2003). Elsewhere, however, criticisms of New Labour's arts policy abounded as its perceived instrumentalism was attacked by commentators on both the right and the Left. The McMaster Review was hailed by some as a vital move forward to new and more effective methods of assessing cultural value and deplored by others as elitist, retrogressive and unrealistic. Journalists and critics had freely published their fears for the future of smaller theatre companies in the wake of cuts announced in March 2007, fears which in 2009 seemed likely to come to fruition. The diversion of Lottery money to the London 2012 Olympics caused alarm, with Lyn Gardner calling it 'a smash and grab raid'[3] on the funds that would otherwise have sustained small theatre companies, and the Conservatives, then in opposition, were quick to capitalise on this with a claim that arts had never genuinely been a priority for New Labour (*Future of the Arts* 1). The years during which my own research came together were likely to be the years in which historical perspectives on these events would start to form. Both Brian McMaster (in the foreword to the McMaster Review) and Tony Blair (in a 2007 speech) had dubbed the New Labour government a 'Golden Age' for the arts, and I suspected that whether this period would be seen later through critical eyes or through rose-tinted glasses would depend at least partially on which aspects of the New Labour arts legacy were developed and rejected by the incoming Coalition. Both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos had advocated a move towards greater dependence on philanthropy and corporate sponsorship in the arts and radical restructuring of funding streams. Some right-wing think tanks, as I discuss in Chapter 2, proposed extreme solutions and even agitated for the demolition of ACE, claiming that it was unfit for purpose. Artistic excellence was still cited as a priority, and a thriving arts scene was still regarded as highly desirable, but that scene's funding was to be 'based on the mixed economy and the arm's length

principle' (Future of the Arts, 1), with less intervention (both financial and, allegedly, ideological) from the state.

If these changes were to come into effect to the detriment of the theatres' government subsidies, it seemed likely that nostalgic memories of the relative abundance of state funding under New Labour might compromise any furtherance of the existing critiques. As I continued to familiarise myself with the work of the many thinkers who had contributed to the intense academic debates on New Labour, the importance of preserving the relevance of this work to cultural policy became increasingly evident to me. The problems unpacked by Janet Newman, Ruth Levitas, Luke Martell and other leading critics of Blairism had not lost their relevance following the change of government and still needed to be extended into cultural policy, a field in which many of the tropes observed by these scholars were so frequently invoked. The development of Third Way cultural policy throughout the New Labour years still deserved and required scrutiny if the ideological background and undertones of Coalition cultural policy were to be understood. As I had predicted, the nostalgic journalism soon began to appear. 2011's round of funding cuts, covered most comprehensively by *The Guardian*, saw leading BAME[4] and disabled-led theatre companies and access organisations lose significant amounts,[5] and commentators were quick to respond. Polly Toynbee, attacking the cuts, referred to the previous government having 'brought a golden era to the arts'[6]. 'Golden Age' rhetoric began to be questioned within the academy, as the phrase and its implications sparked a conference and special double issue of the journal *Cultural Trends*. The keynote speech at this conference, later published in *Cultural Trends*, was made by Robert Hewison and afforded a glimpse of the potential of reevaluating what Hewison explicitly refers to as a mythology, that of '"Creative Britain", that democratic space of egalitarian cultural consumerism where the tension between "access" and "excellence" would be comfortably resolved' (241). As Hewison, in this tantalisingly brief article, reviewed the trajectory of New Labour arts policy through changing terms like 'excellence', 'access' and 'cultural value' (this last pioneered by Demos in 2004), he began to open up some of the difficulties I had also noted in a policy area that offset relative financial generosity with ideological straitjacketing while claiming to heal social and conceptual divisions which in reality still gaped wide.

Development

Many of the questions with which I began this project have remained in play throughout the development of the thesis, the simplest and most important being that of how well political theatre was served by New Labour. In a recent speech opening the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Mark Ravenhill offered a nuanced and provocative critique[7] of the effect of the Blair government on British art and specifically the same rhetoric of the 'creative industries' that Hewison also identifies as being particular to the conjunction of New Labour and Third Way politics. Ravenhill's reminiscences are of a theatre that became 'safe and well-behaved' under New Labour and failed to identify the problems inherent in an ideologically-constructed alliance between art and industry:

> When New Labour came to power there was [...] for a few years a modest but real-terms increase in government funding for the arts. And we artists were so grateful for that relatively modest bit of attention and money that we changed substantially what and who we were as artists. Suddenly, we were talking about working in the creative industries, about the parts that the arts could play in urban renewal, about business plans and strategic thinking, about sponsorship relationships with the corporate sector that would allow us to fund educational work with our developing audiences, about the role that the arts could play in social inclusion [...] I think the arts sector as a whole went astray during the last couple of decades. Just as the Titanic was heading towards the iceberg, we were attending seminars and workshops, learning how to facilitate more effective refrigeration in our sector of the cultural industry when we could have been looking through the telescope and plotting an entirely different course. The bankers and the politicians weren't looking ahead to spot the approaching iceberg. But neither were we: we were entertaining the same bankers and politicians at our latest gala, corporate sector friendly, socially inclusive performance evening. As we were heading towards systemic collapse, the arts sector were teaching themselves to think and talk and act the language of the problem and not the solution.

Quoting at such length from Ravenhill's speech here is useful because of the number of problematic issues he manages to pinpoint in this dense paragraph: the need for funding and the propensity for securing it by whatever means necessary, the uncomfortably close relationship between art's social utility and its commodification, and the possibility of an unknown 'different course' that was missed by an arts scene consumed by the need to play the game or miss out on necessary funds. It is also interesting to note that Ravenhill was reported by the BBC as having attacked state subsidy and applauded cuts to the arts, despite explicitly stating the need to come up with 'a full-blooded, concerted defense of public money for the arts', which suggests the continuing presence of a knee-jerk reaction against any criticism of the terms on which the arts acquired their increased funding. Ravenhill's speech goes on to ask what position the imagined figure of 'the artist' might take up in the future, having been obliged to construct herself as both ally of the socially excluded and friend of the free market. Given the deepening social and economic divisions in Britain (Ravenhill goes so far as to use the term 'class war'), will the artist ultimately be forced to do that most un-Third Way of things, 'choose what side she is on'? For Ravenhill the subjectivity of 'the artist' is ultimately a political and a civic one and, in light of this, he makes a compelling argument against the use of 'the artist' and art itself as an agent of consensus between the privileged and the excluded. In response to Ravenhill, I ask what the ideological implications were of the purposes ascribed to art under New Labour, placing those purposes alongside existing discussions of other New Labour policy areas, and how some of the staged work of the period responded to those ascriptions.

Following directly on from Ravenhill's implied question of whether art (and theatre in particular) can flourish when the political subjectivity of 'the artist' is not sufficiently challenged and complicated by the policies that govern her, the question arises of how the autonomy of 'the artist' - of, for my purposes, the playwright - or that of her plays may be constructed. Is her autonomy to be purely oppositional, a state of refusal, or is something more nuanced that requires a fresh reading of the term and its various definitions? If, like Ravenhill, we accept the wholehearted commitment of New Labour cultural policy to an allegiance with the market and with philanthrocapitalism[8], we also have to accept the elements of contingency he introduces regarding the artist's position. Even if she were complicit in the

hypocrisies cited by Ravenhill, appeasing the market in the name of fighting inequality through her art and thus compromising herself both as an artist and as a political subject, could she have perceived herself as having any alternative? Government subsidy was available and, after all, those holding the purse strings claimed many of the same social goals as the theatres and artists themselves. Ravenhill's suggestion is that British theatre, financially beholden to the generosity of the New Labour government and needing to speak its language in order to secure its future, got caught in a familiar stalemate between the social efficacy advocated by cultural policy (that was tied to economic imperatives) and the political efficacy that could, he posits, have come from 'plotting an entirely different course'. I ask what the role the aesthetic, political and financial autonomies of playwright, play and theatre took during this period, and whether the diagnosis of a stalemate is accurate or helpful.

The notion of 'cultural value' has gained a great deal of traction in recent years. First brought into wide use in 2003-4 by the think tank Demos, the term derived from a perceived need to move beyond the binaries of intrinsic and instrumental value and of high and low art, and introduce a more rigorous methodology to the study of what constitutes 'culture' and what it does for those who participate in it. The values under discussion were both financial and more abstract, seeking also to criticise the primacy of monetary benefit and the meeting of financial targets in the battle for government funding. As John Holden writes in the 2004 Demos pamphlet, 'the identifiable measures and 'ancillary benefits' that flow from culture have become more important than the cultural activity itself: the tail is wagging the dog' (14). Due largely to the work of the pioneering Centre for Cultural Policy Studies at Warwick University, discussion of cultural value has blossomed over the last ten years, and at the time of writing Warwick University has just launched the Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, an initiative which will bring academics and practitioners into close contact with the policy-making process and will lead to the publication of a report in 2015. Work in this vein is what drives the third of my central questions: what role does academic research have in the future of theatre policy? By unpacking the manifestations of long-standing questions of political aesthetics in existing policy and seeking to set new terms for the interaction of theory and practice in this field, does 'the academic' (to borrow Ravenhill's device of the imagined archetype) have

the power to make a meaningful intervention in policy or is she more likely to fall into Ravenhill's stalemate?

Chapter breakdown and methodology

My approach to tackling these questions brings together accounts of theatrical practice, criticisms of sociological methodology and critical theory.

Chapter 1: Dissenting voices: Howard Barker, Edward Bond and the role of political theatre

In order to introduce the key concepts with which I will be dealing in the subsequent chapters, and their position within the recent history of British theatre, I begin with a discussion of Howard Barker and Edward Bond's proposals for the future of theatre. Barker's *Scenes From An Execution*, which stages the relationship between rebellious artist and tyrannical patron, was revived at the National Theatre in 2012, reopening the debate on what his work sets out to do and the thought behind his stance against the apparatus of the state. Similarly, the staging at the Lyric Hammersmith in 2011 of Bond's *Saved* and of his three one-act works *The Chair Plays* at the same theatre the following year prompts us to look again at Bond's remarks in the late 1990s regarding the corruption and trivialisation of drama present in British theatre. The extremely different (sometimes directly opposed) accounts set out by these two writers of their growing dislike of and estrangement from the British theatrical establishment provide a surprisingly - even worryingly - pertinent way in to the concerns I address myself; the conflicts between political efficacy and artistic integrity, the problematics of setting out deliberately to create accessible art, the role of theatre in creating community and consensus, and, of course, how to define autonomy. At this stage, I sketch in three possible types of autonomy - the economic, the social and the aesthetic - and prepare for a full exploration in Chapter 3 of the complex relations (following Adorno) between them.

During the Blair government, Mark Ravenhill and Dennis Kelly both used Third Way discourse as an index of ethical disintegration in their characters (in *Some Explicit Polaroids* and *Taking Care Of Baby* respectively) but have since spoken of a need to adjust their expectations of what political theatre can and should do, an issue central

to this project. I discuss Kelly's changing position in Chapter 3, but Ravenhill's Edinburgh speech also invites a mapping of his discontents onto those of Barker and Bond, particularly Barker's antipathy towards a British theatre that he saw as having been watered down and stripped of its radicalism as it sought to produce unity (as distinct from solidarity) and consensus. As Ravenhill talks of the need for theatre to start 'plotting a different course' which diverges from that favoured by the prevailing political and economic conditions, Barker's influence on Ravenhill's generation of playwrights is worth recalling.

Chapter 2: Contested terms and muddled methodologies: impact research and its critics

In this chapter I undertake a reading of the relevance to political theatre of impact studies and the criticism and interventions those studies provoked within the academy. I begin with Brian McMaster's controversial review *Supporting Excellence in the Arts; From Measurement to Judgement* (2008)[9] and his project of reclaiming the term 'excellence' as one able to serve as a descriptor for socially relevant art as well as forms more traditionally regarded as 'high culture'. My contention here is that McMaster's formulations around the term 'excellence' seek to construct a consensus between the competing demands of high-minded aesthetic ideals (as per Matthew Arnold's use of the word) and the social impact sought by cultural policy, and here I introduce the centrality of consensus to Third Way politics which I go on to explore in Chapter 4.

The body of work interrogating the flawed methodologies used in impact studies is substantial, and I give particular emphasis in this chapter to the publication *Cultural Trends* and its mission, particularly under the leadership of Sara Selwood, to provide an empirically rigorous approach to the analysis, be it quantitative or qualitative, of the role played by the arts in constructing and changing the lives of communities and individuals. The importance of this publication to my thesis recurs in subsequent chapters, most particularly Chapter 4 as will shortly become apparent. I am also greatly indebted at this point to the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, in which debates set up in *Cultural Trends* continue to be developed and extended; I refer particularly to the work of Belfiore, Merli and Galloway & Dunlop.

As a counterpoint to these accounts, I touch on some of the centre-right perspectives that emerged during this time, including those that militate against the continuing existence of ACE. I consider to what extent, if any, the 'art for art's sake' argument can be considered the property of the centre-right and, as some of these perspectives invoke versions of 'autonomy', I reiterate the need for the reexamination of the term that follows in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Community, autonomy, utopia: theoretical perspectives

Appeals to the concept of community featured heavily in many New Labour policy areas. The work of Ruth Levitas has been particularly useful in clarifying how this influenced cultural policy and discussion of art and, vitally, how this rhetoric also implied strains of utopian discourse. I discuss the problematic conjunction of utopian and communitarian rhetoric in this policy area and in Third Way rhetoric in general, and prepare the reader for my use in Chapter 3 of the different utopian formulations of Adorno, Bloch and Marcuse as a way into the difficulties of locating art within the political and the pitfalls of New Labour constructions of the social and the civic. In view of the instrumental approach taken by New Labour cultural policy, which attaches the idea of a healthy arts scene to an uplift in other areas related to community-building such as education, crime prevention and health, I look at how the utopian element in the communitarian claims identified by Levitas are subverted by readings of these Frankfurt School thinkers whose work posits both art and utopia as something fundamentally negative and unrealisable and thus troubles attempts at locating utopian imagination in policy while at the same time demonstrating the importance of such a project.

There is an abundance of critiques of New Labour's communitarian claims, and I will focus on Levitas with some reference to Stephen Driver & Luke Martell and Sarah Hale. All of the above discuss the philosophical and theoretical roots of New Labour communitarianism, but Levitas provides the clearest focus on the tensions it contains between the ideological and the utopian and how these pertain to cultural policy. Driver & Martell's criticisms, along with those of Janet Newman, take a more prominent role in subsequent chapters as I develop the challenges their accounts of New Labour issue to both the theatre policy of that time and some of the drama that emerged in response. My aim, as I move from the second to the third chapter, is to

set up links between the stated mission of New Labour cultural policy, Levitas' challenges and the Frankfurt School's different constructions of utopia and its relation to art.

Autonomy is a necessary consideration for this project because of the pivotal position it holds in how we consider aesthetics and in how we construct cultural value. Any discussion of the history and the future of arts funding in Britain will at some stage introduce some version of this concept; the tension between financial intervention, whether by the state or another arm of the mixed economy, and artistic independence is a constant presence. It lies at the root of the Arts Council's founding 'arm's length' principles precisely because the economic and aesthetic histories of the arts are inextricably linked and, as I shall argue in Chapter 5 with recourse to the work of Tracy C. Davis, this is particularly pertinent in the case of theatre. In these discussions, a false elision of 'autonomy' (a term with many definitions and functions) and intrinsic value (and similarly of heteronomy and social value) frequently takes place, positing instrumental systems of cultural value as antithetical to autonomy and vice versa. As I will demonstrate, this fallacious binary (much like the popular culture/high art binary) is now regularly set up as a straw man in cultural policy debates but never seems to be entirely demolished.

In the chapter I will continue the discussion begun in Chapter 1 regarding the unpacking of art and autonomy, primarily using Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* and his essays on the culture industry as well as Adorno & Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and some interventions from Marcuse, Jameson and Bloch. While presenting early versions of this chapter at conferences, I have frequently been asked by Adorno scholars why I insist that his work (and *Aesthetic Theory* in particular) can be read productively in the context of cultural policy when other readings would construct it as militating against the mere existence of such a policy area. I certainly acknowledge such readings and believe that question to be an important one. My response is that my arguments, and the arguments of leading contemporary cultural policy scholars, have at their heart a belief in the necessity of a theoretical approach to deconstructing the familiar false binaries I mention above (see in particular the debate between Tony Bennett and Jim McGuigan, towards which I gesture in Chapter 6) and it is the work of Adorno that is best positioned to enable that approach. *Aesthetic Theory,* a complex and apparently contradictory text, is particularly useful

here because of the subtlety of its formulations on the dialectical opposition between art's commodification and its autonomy. Reading it in this context opens up the cultural policy debate to the specificities of Adorno's development of Marxian dialectics, in which the tension between art as socially determined product of labour and as autonomous and lacking in social function creates the 'double character' of art as 'autonomous and *fait social*' (*Aesthetic Theory*, 5).

British theatre's position in a mixed economy, and once in which the market and the state have become close allies, makes Adorno's thought even more pertinent. As theatre depends - and is increasingly encouraged by successive governments to depend - on corporate sponsorship and philanthropic donation as well as public subsidy and ticket sales, it is viewed simultaneously as a public good, an agent of direct social change and an economic investment. ACE-funded research into the social impact of theatre during the Blair years attempted (with varying degrees of success, as discussed in Chapter 2) to locate its direct social function within a New Labour agenda of social inclusion and community-building, while - as per Ravenhill's speech - also tying it to a culture of social and economic division. This research and its findings have already been found to be vulnerable to attack on methodological grounds, but my aim in engaging with *Aesthetic Theory* is to mount a theoretical critique that uses the complexities of Adorno's version of autonomy to disrupt the dichotomy of intrinsic and instrumental value. Following on from the criticisms of New Labour cultural policy from academics, journalists, theatre practitioners and political advisors that I have laid out in Chapter 2, I explain the ideological implications of the various social purposes ascribed to theatre and art by this government and reframe, via Adorno's formulations on autonomy, the social character of art and by extension that of political theatre.

Chapter 4: Culture, capital and cultural capital

In the fourth chapter I make use of the recent popularity of Bourdieu's sociology of aesthetics as an initial way in to challenging and refining current constructions of the relationship between art and social mobility. I do this by charting the adventures of one particular term, 'cultural capital', which has entered the lexis of British cultural policy and enjoyed a convoluted journey as a result. My decision to use Bourdieu

here was prompted by the problematics, well-expressed by Levitas, of the Third Way normative assumption that class-based politics are now irrelevant. Levitas demonstrates (as I discuss in Chapter 3) the ways in which class, however buried in post-political terminology, remained at the root of the social problems that Blair's government sought to solve and that those solutions remained beyond its reach because of an unwillingness to recognise the continuing relevance of class-based politics. Here, again, I am indebted to Selwood and to *Cultural Trends* for devoting a special issue[10] to the then-growing relevance of Bourdieu and cultural capital to the analysis of cultural policy.

As I have already mentioned, the dichotomy of high and low art forms is still strongly in play even while being contested by new theories such as that of the 'cultural omnivore', and thus habitus still forms a large part (whether explicitly or implicitly) in discussions of who attends or consumes which art forms and why. I argue that the co-opting of the term 'cultural capital' in post-1997 cultural policy constitutes a misappropriation of Bourdieu's term not only in its conflation of cultural capital and the financial capital that derives from the marketisation of creativity, but also in its use as an index of social mobility. If the thesis of recent cultural policy is that in making a journey to the theatre people accrue more 'cultural capital', and should thus be encouraged to do so in the service of social mobility, this demonstrates in turn a co-opting of theatre to erode and disempower class positions - a long way from Bourdieu's use of the term as an index of precisely those positions. For the sake of clarity, I separate the original, Bourdieusian term from its Third Way cultural policy incarnation by laying out a definition of each.

Given that I insist on the relevance of class to a discussion of British theatre policy, I have been asked how I reconcile this with a later use of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's versions of discourse theory in which the organising of popular identities around a class core is dismissed. This is a fair question, especially when I discuss areas of British theatre history (namely the early history of documentary theatre) in which working-class identity emerged as a driving force. In answer, while my use of discourse theory draws on Mouffe and Laclau it is used largely in a descriptive capacity, as a way of clarifying how the rhetoric of Third Way social democracy uses certain discursive elements to constitute what it later presents as objective reality and how this has been reflected in the verbatim stagings of moments within that

democracy. I follow Driver & Martell in this use of discourse theory, and acknowledge that it is open to critique from other established scholars of theories of agonistic democracy. I also direct the reader to Sean Phelan's essay 'The Media as the Neoliberalized Sediment: Articulating Laclau's Discourse Theory with Bourdieu's Field Theory' in which he identifies some philosophical affinities between the two and makes a compelling argument against the dismissal of either in favour of the other.

Chapter 5: Staging the Third Way

In the fifth chapter, I return to the plays themselves in an attempt to locate the British stage and its playwrights within - or outside - the Third Way ideological landscape. Following Ravenhill's formulation on the necessity of artists taking sides, I discuss the difficulties of creating space for opposition in a post-political climate where the dominant rhetoric in policy is that of objective reality and pragmatism, a 'common sense' position that seeks to render appeals to Left and Right irrelevant and anachronistic. I begin by looking at the rise of verbatim theatre as a political form and the claims made by its creators, correctly or incorrectly, that verbatim theatre presents an objectively truthful account of the events it performs and uses this objectivity to undermine mendacious narratives created by the government and mass media. Reading this truth claim alongside Third Way thinking's own claims to objectivity, using Mouffe and Laclau's formulations on discourse theory to explain how the truth claims of Third Way discourse function, opens up both to a parallel critique: can theatre really effect political agitation and the disruption of the state's narrative if it uses the same forms of discourse as the state it seeks to expose?

I then move on to discuss some examples of the utopian and dystopian in post-New Labour theatre, with reference to the work of Jill Dolan. Dolan's argument[11], in brief, is that performance can create a space of community in which all participants (including the audience) may glimpse the utopian through a moment of collective imagination, and that this can constitute part of the practice of materialist politics rather than an escape from it. This provides a productive disruption of the discursive elements common to Frankfurt School thinking on the utopian in art as an expression of that which is unrealisable through political praxis.

Chapter 6: The Value of Theatre

As I have already mentioned, the term 'cultural value' and the cluster of ideas and formulations surrounding it take a prominent position in the final chapter where I discuss some of the current academic projects attempting to make sense of it. For a comprehensive review of these projects, I would direct the reader to the website of the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value and specifically to the mapping document 'Initiatives in Cultural Value'.[12]

In order to situate these projects within my own work and, in particular, my use of the Frankfurt School, I follow two of the foremost scholars of cultural value, Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, in attaching the problematics of the value debate to the legacy of the Enlightenment. In Belfiore and Bennett's writing[13], the schism between instrumental and intrinsic systems of value and its roots in Enlightenment thought is explored through Stephen Toulmin's work. Following Toulmin's narrative of the Enlightenment as both a scientific and a philosophical revolution that first began to construct the sciences and the humanities as two discrete and even opposed disciplines requiring incompatible forms of reason, Belfiore & Bennett postulate a link between the post-Enlightenment primacy of the sciences and the need for the makers of cultural policy to be able to produce empirical evidence of the value of the arts. This resonates in turn with Belfiore's concept of 'defensive instrumentalism'[14], a term which captures the extent to which the arts and humanities are constantly placed (and placing themselves) in a defensive position in relation to both the natural and social sciences. As the post-Enlightenment hierarchy of forms of reason - which has become hegemonic - prioritises empirical evidence, advocates for the value of culture have (as discussed more fully in Chapter 2) been required to use the rhetoric and methodologies of the social sciences to quantify impact.

My reading of the relationship between the problematics of cultural value and the Enlightenment develops this line of thinking, exploring the relevance of the work of Adorno and Horkheimer to the critique set up by Belfiore and Bennett and reframing it within Western Marxism. While there is a wealth of emerging scholarship tackling the cultural value debate, most of it does little to disrupt the systems of knowledge demanded by the legacy of the Enlightenment. Where accepted forms of knowledge

are restricted to those that can be supported by empirical proof, dialogue and dissent become less potent against the universalising force of factual evidence. This in turn resonates with the criticisms of neoliberalism and Third Way government I introduce in Chapter 3, where the 'common sense' character of New Labour and Coalition disquisition render it a post-political ideology rather than a genuine set of political positions. If political efficacy is still to be a possibility for British theatre then, as Mark Ravenhill argues, the terms of the argument need to change and move away from the need to use post-Enlightenment, easily-depoliticised systems of knowledge to define art's social and political potential.

Arts and government during the Blair decade- an overview

In order to prepare the reader for the moments within cultural policy to which I refer throughout, a few words are necessary on the changes and developments that took place within and around the Arts Council during this time. The decade between 1997 and 2007 was a turbulent one in terms of the structure of arts administration, as the apparatus of arts funding and management adjusted to a new government with a new vision for the relationship between art and society. Although the expectation of a period of financial growth for subsidised arts was met, the road was understandably not a straightforward one. The structural changes in both government and quangos that were deemed necessary before these expectations could be met were not universally approved, and their effects continued to draw criticism right up to the end of the New Labour government.

Three years prior to the beginning of the Blair administration, the Arts Council (until then the Arts Council of Great Britain) experienced what has been described by cultural historian Robert Hewison as 'the most humiliating (year) in its history' (264).[15] Since the publication of the Wilding Report in 1989 claiming the persistence of underfunding in the regions, the Council calculated that attempts at the report's implementation had cost up to £6 million in restructuring, redundancy and relocation costs and consultation exercises intended to assist the Council in presenting a coherent vision for its own future. Added to this, the appointment of Michael Portillo as Chief Secretary to the Treasury in 1992 signalled a political direction that resulted in a significant cut to the Arts Council's grant in 1993-4 and, although the 1993 National Lottery Act had created a new source of funds, the

Council was still under pressure to create a plausible future for itself. The year leading up to the dissolution of the Arts Council of Great Britain into its post-devolution parts – with the Scottish Arts Council and the Arts Council of Wales being funded directly by the Scottish and Welsh Offices – was marked by attempts to reallocate funding and reprioritise spending, leading to unrest and board-level resignations among those arts organisations who seemed likely to lose out. The National Lottery, as well as supplying a new funding stream, also rapidly became a source of public controversy as this funding was directed largely into capital campaigns.

The Arts Council that was inherited by the newly-formed Department of Culture, Media and Sport and its Secretary of State Chris Smith and by ACE's incoming Chief Executive Peter Hewitt in 1997 was structurally entirely different from that which had existed in the mid-Thatcher years. Apart from the obvious changes to the major panels (the old photography advisory group having been subsumed into Visual Arts, and the creation of full panels rather than advisory committees for education, touring and combined arts), there was substantial growth in terms of diversity. An Ethnic Minority Monitoring Committee had existed during the 1980s, but by the mid-1990s there were three committees and advisory boards dedicated to fostering greater diversity in the arts: the Cultural Diversity Advisory Board, the Arts and Disability Monitoring Committee and the Women in the Arts Monitoring Committee.

In Lord Gowrie's final Chairman's Statement (Annual Report 1996-7) after a four-year tenure, he celebrated the fruits of his turbulent time in the post, particularly the introduction of the National Lottery and the devolution of the Scottish and Welsh Councils. He remained unequivocally positive about the future of the Arts Council and of the arts in England, refuting claims made by the press that underfunding persisted away from the prestigious London venues:

> Whoever would have thought that the Arts Council would in the 1990s be a major economic force in the regeneration of cities? Or that jobs related to the arts should be growing so rapidly - and they grew, let it be said, during the recession now behind us. Areas like Gateshead, Salford, Stoke-on-Trent and Sheffield are seeing growth and development as a result of £804m. we have already allocated to more than 1,500 capital projects. There have been

criticisms that awards are weighted too heavily in favour of London. Ironically it is the national press, located exclusively in London, that is more vociferous in its criticism of imbalances than the regional press, which has given over 90% approval ratings to our awards. [16]

Significantly, the directors of the ten Regional Arts Boards (RABs) had for the first time become full members of the Arts Council – and, as such, these posts were now government appointments controlled by the DCMS although still subject to consultation at local government level. The position of the RABs in the cultural policy landscape was to remain as much of a pivotal issue going into the new millenium as it had been from the inception of CEMA and particularly throughout the 1980s.

Similarly, the need for a spending review of National Lottery money had already been recognised by the previous National Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, and plans had been released in early 1997 to extend the influence of the Lottery beyond the high-profile funding applications with which the Council had been inundated since the unveiling of the Lottery capital programme in November 1994. The illusion of additionality created by Lottery money was dispelled over the first year of the Labour government, as it became clear that the money was intended to replace rather than boost direct grants and that funding from the DCMS was to be cut.

It is apparent from the 1996-7 Annual Report that the focus of Lottery spending had stayed on capital grants during that financial year, and that the amount of money given to London venues and projects still accounted for nearly half of the total committed spend for the year ending 31 March 1997. This is almost the same proportion, interestingly, as the following year[17], although by that time a great deal of the spend had been allocated away from capital funding and channelled into new projects, namely Art for Everyone and a stabilisation grant scheme piloted in fifteen venues during the 1997-8 financial year.

The problems of the mid-1990s were not resolved instantly, and the first eighteen months of the Blair government remained difficult for the Arts Council. Hewitt and Chairman Gerry Robinson began to threaten reforms and staffing cuts, as well as a

shake-up of core funding. The Arts Council's unpopularity increased, particularly in the theatre world and among actors; the amount of money being spent on salaries and expensive consultation exercises rather than funding struggling theatre was unacceptable to many. In 1999 the entire Drama panel resigned and had to be replaced, and regional theatre was felt to be in worse trouble than ever. Actress Miriam Karlin is quoted by British Theatre Guide as having told the 1999 Equity Conference that the Arts Council should be scrapped: 'It isn't funny any more. Our regional theatres are dying.'[18] Shortly after Karlin's statement, huge staffing cuts at the Council were announced and a painful process of reform began to create a leaner organisation and a stronger chance of increased state funding.

The Arts Council, in public documents at least, retained an optimistic attitude to the Labour government, which it saw as being committed both to the arts themselves and to their cultural and geographical diversity, and in 2001 Hewitt was finally able to announce an increase of £100 million to the Council's grant-in-aid over the next three years as well as "the most radical structural changes in the arts funding and support system for decades"[19]. The extra £100 million was to be divided between the new 'Creative Partnerships' scheme (an initiative enabling arts organisations and schools to work together), extra core funding, and boosting British theatre. Although the 2001 report remains cryptic about what these radical structural changes might be, with Hewitt's statement mentioning only "a new, single organisation", the implications of these remarks became clearer the following year.

On 1 April 2002, the RABs were officially merged with the Arts Council (now renamed Arts Council England). The intention, according to Chairman Gerry Robinson, was to streamline bureaucracy and create a more cohesive organisation that would be able to make a stronger case for funding in the future. In November of that year, ACE held the first national summit with local government in order to draw up partnership strategies. Opinion among previous council members and cultural historians had been divided in the mid-1990s as to whether the RABs would be better off without the Arts Council or vice versa. While former Minister Tim Renton and Robert Hewison had both openly attacked ACE in the press, claiming that it should be dissolved and government funding handed directly to the RABs, the story according to Richard Witts in consultation with clients and even employees of the RABs was that they had been hiding their own problems between the higher-profile

difficulties of ACE:

> The high-profile problems besieging the Arts Council have hidden from
> public view the workaday weaknesses of the Regional Arts Boards, who are
> merely a third layer of bureaucracy and, as such, the most expensive with
> the least return. They employ in total twice as many employees as the Arts
> Council. Their staff and overhead charges amount to £11 million a year, or
> 17% of their public income. Yet as they sit in their provincial dugouts, the
> RAB directors can delight in the bashing the Council gets from the mass
> media... (525)[20]

British Theatre News reported that ACE received little or no cooperation from the
RABs, which were largely opposed to the merge[21].

The boundaries of the regions were also redefined, with the number of regional
offices being reduced from ten to nine by merging the South-East and Southern Arts
Boards into one. The changes were completed in 2004, as Sir Christopher Frayling
took over as Chairman, and by 2005 ACE was ready to report on the financial savings
it had made since the announcement of the scheme. As a result of the creation of the
new South-East region key administrative posts had been cut, and both offices were
closed and relocated to Brighton. Shared services for finance, IT and human
resources were introduced, and delegating responsibility for managing relationships
with funded organisations to the appropriate regional office made it possible to cut
staff in the central ACE office. The vast majority of staffing in the regional offices
continued to consist of relationship officers and their clerical staff.

However, in the climate which led to the highly critical McIntosh Report in 2008 it
was inevitable that arts funding would continue to be contested beyond the end of
the Blair era. Following the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, 185 Regularly
Funded Organisations had their funding terminated entirely while 27 further
organisations had their funding reduced despite the DCMS meeting the projected
rise in the grant-in-aid for that period. The decision-making process was regarded by
the organisations that lost funding as being as opaque. John Pick, criticising the Arts
Council back in 1988, maintained that because of their institutional design quangos
would always be regarded as having limited capacity for transparency: 'A body

which is accountable only to itself meets in secret to decide between applicants (who meet the published criteria) according to its own unpublished notions of priority (112).'[22]

The restructuring of ACE and the increased presence of cultural policy in both Westminster and Whitehall during the Blair decade, although effective in terms of the streamlining of bureaucracy and the prioritisation of cultural and geographical diversity, had not succeeded in entirely ridding ACE of its credibility problems. The criticisms made by McIntosh would be raised again, as I will discuss in Chapter 2; accusations of wastefulness, lack of accountability and an insular perspective were set to continue.

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[1] See Sierz, Aleks. *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today*. London: Methuen Drama. 2011

[2] See Harvie, Jen. *Staging the UK*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2005 and *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013

[3] Gardner, Lyn. "Olympic costs mean arts funding for the high jump". *Guardian Theatre Blog.* 20 March 2007. <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2007/mar/20/olympicspendingmeansartsfu>

[4] Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities

[5] The figures to which I refer are the following: Tamasha Theatre Company Ltd (-11%), Talawa Theatre Company (-21.9%), Graeae Theatre Company (-9.4%), Stagetext (-11%), Vocaleyes (-11%). Published by The Guardian, 30 March 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/mar/30/arts-council-funding-decisions-list>

[6] Toynbee, Polly. "A great act of vandalism that will impoverish us all". *Guardian Comment Is Free* 28 March 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/28/arts-council-funding-cuts>

[7] Ravenhill, Mark. "The Economy of the Arts: Rip It Up And Start Again" Edinburgh Fringe Festival. 3 August, 2013. Address. <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/aug/03/mark-ravenhill-edinburgh-festival-speech-full-text>

[8] See Bishop, Matthew and Green, Michael. *Philanthrocapitalism: How Giving Can Save The World.* New York: Bloomsbury USA. 2010

[9] McMaster, Brian. *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: from Measurement to Judgement.* London: DCMS, 2008. Hereafter 'McMaster Review'.

[10] *Cultural Trends* 13(2): 50, 2004

[11] Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at The Theater.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005

[12] This text can be accessed at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/resources/research/commission/map_of_initiatives_final.pdf>

[13] Belfiore, Eleonora and Bennett, Oliver. "Beyond the 'Toolkit Approach': arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy-making." *Journal for Cultural Research,* 14(2). 2010. 121-142

[14] Belfiore, Eleonora. ""Defensive instrumentalism" and the legacy of New Labour's cultural policies". *Cultural Trends*, 21(2). 2012. 103-111

[15] Hewison, Robert. *Culture & Consensus.* London: Methuen. 1995

15 Arts Council of England: Annual Report (1996-1997). London: ACE. 1997

[17] Arts Council of England. Annual Report (1998). London: ACE. 1998

[18] British Theatre News. "ACE must go, says Karlin". 30 May 1999 <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/news/library/news/bl053099.htm#karlin>

[19] Arts Council of England, Annual Report 2001, London, ACE, 2001

[20] Witts, Richard, *Artist Unknown: An Alternative History of the Arts Council.* London: Little Brown. 1998

[21] British Theatre Guide. "No cooperation from RABs". 6 May 2001. <http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/news/library/news/bl050601.htm#ACE>

[22] Pick, John. *The Arts In A State.* Bristol: Bristol Classical Press. 1988

Chapter 1:

Dissenting voices: Howard Barker, Edward Bond and the role of political theatre

In preparation for later discussions of the political purposes ascribed by scholars, practitioners and theorists under the New Labour and Coalition governments to British theatre, I therefore begin with a concise account of the ideas of two major dramatists who first came to prominence in the 1960s: Howard Barker's writings on theatre's unique potential as personal and political expression, and Edward Bond's accounts of staging democracy.[23] These two dramatists lay out different claims regarding what political theatre should set out to do and how to go about it. In moving through some readings of Barker's quasi-manifesto *Arguments for a Theatre* (1989)[24] and subsequently initiating a dialogue between this and Bond's volume of notes and correspondence *The Hidden Plot: notes on theatre and the state* (2000)[25], I demonstrate some early and particularly brutal manifestations of the discords between the politics of theatre as it is thought and practised by two renowned dramatists and as it is defined by its managers, funding bodies and policy. Subsequent chapters of the thesis will explore and theorise the development of these discords in the light of recent policy and developments on stage; this first chapter, however, by examining the ideological problematics indicated by Barker and Bond's very different propositions, serves to introduce the difficulties inherent in the central research question and the concepts that I bring into play to address those difficulties. Both Barker and Bond present perspectives on questions that have regularly troubled both critical theory and cultural policy. Does theatre have a duty to educate and raise consciousness? How hard should the audience have to work? What is the importance of aesthetic autonomy for the field of theatre, the theatre-maker and the performance itself, and how is that autonomy to be defined?[26]

It will be helpful to set out the reasons for beginning here, with Barker and Bond and their formulations on theatre, the civic and the social. While it is true to say, as is stated in the Introduction, that both dramatists open up discussions that will be immediately familiar to readers of cultural policy, this is not sufficient grounds for beginning at an ideological and chronological distance that may prove disorientating

to the reader.

My contention throughout this thesis is that Third Way discourse closes down the imagining of alternatives to itself by positing itself as an objective reality (subsequent chapters will demonstrate this with particular recourse to Mouffe and Laclau[27]), and that the effects of this discursive closure are made apparent not only in cultural policy but on the stage itself. If this project is also to address how one might disrupt this process, rather than simply accepting and defining it, it has to look outside the usual academic territory. The juxtaposition of Barker and Bond's differing but equally uncompromising propositions for political theatre with those of New Labour cultural policy is useful in that it serves to recontextualise said policy, decoupling it from the context of pervasive Third Way discourse and thus opening it up to different modes of critical intervention.

The modes of thought likely to create the widest openings in the discursive closure of Third Way post-political discourse will seem at first sight to be confusingly far away from the fields they ultimately address. These distances - the distances between Bond, Barker and Blair, for example, or between Tracy C. Davis and the cultural policy canon (with which I bring the thesis to a close) - are deliberately invoked in the service of disruptive recontextualisation.[28] In the case of Barker, we are asked to imagine a political theatre that rejects the primacy of post-Enlightenment rationalism. Bond invites theatre to embrace the rational in order to more convincingly reject the systems of normative morality and its underlying power relations in which political theatre can too easily become embroiled. These disparate invitations have in common a drive to disrupt norms and assumptions and reconfigure political consciousness in the spectator, and a recognition - if not an outright acceptance - of those invitations has the potential to force a reimagining of how a political theatre might operate.

While it is entirely unsurprising that Barker and Bond should have a radically different approach to political theatre from that espoused by Blairite cultural policy, the necessity of including them in this piece of research nevertheless consists in examining the mechanics of this seemingly obvious difference. Acknowledging the impossibility of any accord between Barker and Blair on the one hand and Bond and

Blair on the other in turn begs the question of how such an accord becomes impossible. To move this question beyond its most simple form, that of the relative political positions of these discourses, we need to ask how Third Way thinking - a mode of thinking predicated on the primacy of consensus and the erasure of oppositional dissent - has worked to exclude and proscribe the participation in that consensus of certain theoretical elements. The contention of this thesis is that such an exclusion has indeed taken place, and that it is illustrated within the recent history of British theatre and theatre policy.[29] In order cogently to examine the relationship between Third Way thought and the British stage, my intention is not only to identify modes of thinking that lie beyond the consensus but also to discuss how and why they are inimical to it, and therefore how they might open up a space in which new relationships between state, culture and theatre can become imaginable.

Howard Barker: conscience, consensus and Catastrophe

I begin this chapter with one of the most influential British playwrights of the post-War era, Howard Barker. As my central project in this thesis is to locate sites of disruption and resistance to the consensus created through Third Way discourse, I invoke Barker not only as a figurehead of the British political theatre tradition but as a bitter enemy of consensus and common sense. By working through his propositions for a Theatre of Catastrophe, I intend to demonstrate the productivity of of opposing some of the indices of value active in theatre policy in the Blair era: objectivity, accessibility and clarity.

> The well-intentioned children of the Welfare State have grown into cultural producers of social critiques for both mass and minority audiences. Behind their spectacular or routine dramatic methods lies the spectacle of relentless harmony [...] We swim a tepid bath of humanistic accord, writer, actor, audience, an alliance of foregone conclusions which diminishes the possibility of innovative practice. (*Arguments*, 92)

Barker's status as a prominent enemy of the British arts establishment is predicated on statements such as the quotation above, which not only question but openly attack what he constructs as a toxic ideology that works against the imaginative

potential of theatre. Reacting against accusations of pretension and elitism, Barker's writings here identify paternalistic impulses in the desire for accessibility[30], clarity of meaning and moral consensus. His response to truisms regarding the educative purpose of theatre and its duty to communicate a meaning and a moral position is a countercharge of 'social hygiene', described in terms of the morally-enlightened artist handing down wisdom to the unenlightened masses and turning theatre into a 'sticking plaster for the wounds of social alienation' (72). For Barker, clarity is an index of contempt:

> assuming that the audience requires the simplifications, recognitions and disciplines that constitute 'communication skills' in art forms. The infantile desire to 'communicate' conceals arrogance and patronage, I am thinking of imperatives to *clarify*, to *elucidate*, to *enlighten*, the prejudice that audiences are recruitable, molten masses in search of order and form which can be bestowed upon them by their intellectual masters. (136)

In Barker's view, a play that presents a clear, coherent 'meaning' demeans drama on the one hand and its audience on the other. Barker's account of drama with a clear message (especially a political one) is firstly that it constructs the relationship between dramatist and spectator as one of wisdom addressing ignorance, and secondly that it gives the spectator a position of primary importance that Barker refutes. The primary relationship in Barker's theatre is between 'the dramatist and the world' with actor and spectator as presenter of and witness to the resulting 'collision', and the spectator bears the responsibility of finding a way to receive this unfamiliar, painful and obscure dramatic experience. Tension, misunderstanding and hostility should be central to the dramatic encounter, which otherwise degrades into entertainment (a word always used in a pejorative sense by Barker). An absence of clarity and consensus is at the heart of Barker's response to the theatrical and political climate of the 1980s: his 'Theatre of Catastrophe'.[31] While Barker's ideas have shifted over time to more extreme positions, this early iteration of Catastrophism is presented most succinctly in the poetic manifesto 'The Humanist Theatre/The Catastrophic Theatre' (71). Where 'Humanist Theatre' promotes unity, agreement and enlightenment, the 'Catastrophic Theatre' is divisive, disturbing, riddled with misunderstanding, and demands that the spectator find her own way of

receiving the play rather than being granted access by dramatist, actors and text. Indeed, Barker is particularly scathing of what he calls 'the cult of accessibility' (85), devoting one essay to denouncing the 'sham democracy'[32] invoked by accessible drama and defending the political potential of an obscurity which acts as a radical, empowering challenge rather than a barrier. Such a challenge would 'honour the audience' (45-7), triggering argument and dissent rather than directing the spectator to assume a clearly-determined moral position.

Barker identifies as 'a moralist', which he defines idiosyncratically as 'one who is tough with morality, who exposes it to risk' (76), rather than one who claims moral authority and seeks to bring that authority to bear in the dramatic encounter. The theatre, for Barker, is not a space of morality but one that needs to remain external to it in order to maintain the audacity that is necessary to theatre's political potential. As such, he agitates for a 'theatre without a conscience' (72), that is to say without a conscience that acts as a restraint placed on daring and exploration. This renders this conscience incompatible with Barker's vision of tragedy, a form which demands a temporary rejection of social order and selfhood in favour of an atavistic moment of relief and release during which concepts such as consensus and redemption lose all relevance. He reserves much of his most trenchant criticism for the rhetoric of theatre as a means of education and 'social correction' (73), where playwrights and other theatre-makers set out explicitly to enhance public awareness and understanding of a particular political situation or stance and beckon the audience towards an enlightened moral consensus.

This is particularly relevant to a form that was to become one of the most dominant of the Blair era - topical documentary theatre. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the relationship between these performances and the political landscape that produced them has its own specific problematics in the context of New Labour, and Barker's critique of such works is prescient as well as particular to the time of writing:

> We have had for some decades now the spectacle of dramatists who haunt the newspapers for their inspiration, indeed are wholly dependent on it, as well as theatre companies of some distinction whose most significant activity is what they call 'researching material', an activity closely related to the

business of 'dramatising' things. The verb 'to dramatise' is part of the kitsch vocabulary of the theatre of issues, in which actors are employed as a means to a didactic end, the education of the ignorant audience, and by 'research' we are threatened with the spurious legitimacy of so-called facts. 'It's all right,' the actors seem to tell you in researched plays, 'everything we demonstrate has occurred', is in effect 'true'. (73)

In this reading of theatre (verbatim or otherwise) that draws on a meticulously-researched version of current events, theatrical performance is reduced to a meretricious form of pedagogy which uses claims of veracity to force a consensus between dramaturge, actors and audience, and in Chapter 4 I will explore the political implications of extending these specific truth claims to some of the many verbatim plays of the Blair era, particularly the Tricycle Tribunal plays. Barker here attacks the use of factual research as a means of asserting moral superiority over the audience, bringing the spectators to a greater knowledge and understanding of the issues at stake while ensuring that said knowledge results in a prescribed moral conclusion. This echoes his formulations on the dangers of 'clarity' of meaning in theatre, where the work demeans the audience by performing intellectual authority; here, that clarity is enacted through the assumed primacy of facts over the free play of imagination. He goes on to dismiss any claims of heightened political efficacy made by practitioners of researched theatre:

> But the theatre is not true, it is not a true action, its very power, its whole authority comes from the fact that it is not true, and the idea of accuracy, or reference to a source outside the theatre walls, is fatal to its particular unsettling and revolutionary power. The moment that an action on the stage asserts its veracity by reference to known and proved action elsewhere, theatre is overwhelmed by the world, the world reclaims it. It is a symptom of the lost faith in theatre as an art form that its practitioners require the credentials of authenticity. The audience of the theatre comes for what it cannot obtain elsewhere in any other forum. In other words, it comes for the false, it comes for the speculative and the unproven. The researched theatre says, the informative theatre says, 'we have demonstrated such and such a fact, and it will make you better to know it', a sham democracy behind

which lies a repugnant arrogance. (73)

Theatre as imagined by Barker would not attempt to perform the political by enacting the empirically provable. The deployment of factual credentials only serves to bring the theatrical performance, which Barker claims as a law unto itself, into the domain of the external world with all its attendant ideological and moral constraints. The invocation of an objective reality by means of factual evidence, far from enhancing the revolutionary potency of a piece of political theatre, deadens that potency by closing down the very space of speculation that Barker's theatre seeks to open. This in turn denies the audience the promised escape from orthodoxy into the uncharted moral terrains of tragic theatre, instead affirming theatre's subservience to the ideological climate which produces it while at the same time reinforcing the perceived link between this ideology and an objective, empirical reality.

If this reality is accepted as unassailable, Barker implies, then so is the 'meaning' and message being set out on stage - which is in turn implicitly subsumed into the ideology it claims to criticise. In later chapters I will introduce some discussions from the last twenty years (beginning with Stuart Hall) that explore the exact mechanics and wider implications of this phenomenon in terms of the mutability of New Labour's particular brand of neoliberalism and discuss its presence both in cultural policy and on the stage. A common theme among critics of Blairite politics is its post-political character and its propensity for co-opting and engulfing oppositional elements: Barker offers a compellingly prescient account of how this propensity might be staged, an account which I take up in my discussion of the relevance of post-political Third Way thinking to the meteoric rise in popularity of documentary forms during the period of Blair's government. Barker's central claim here is that attempting to bring an unmediated, empirically accurate, objective account of contemporary events to the stage closes down discussion that political theatre ought to open up. Even where the intention (as I discuss in Chapter 4 with recourse to the Tricycle Tribunal plays) is to speak truth to power, postulating a single objective truth is a problematic exercise. Political theatre, according to Barker, needs to engender a disruptive doubt and confusion in the audience, and forms of documentary theatre that claim to avoid the subjectivity inherent in political antagonism simply replace one monolithic truth claim with another. This closure of the space for doubt and

dissent maps on to a similar closure I will discuss in Chapter 3 which arises within Third Way thinking, whereby the discursive articulation of a post-political locus of government rhetoric beyond the divisions of Left and Right creates its own truth claim - an objective analysis of social realities that transcends political partiality. My claim is that this mapping of one truth claim (that of early twenty-first-century verbatim theatre) onto the other (that of Third Way discourse) enables a criticism of both. Where state and the stage use the same tools to create a discourse that is constitutive of objective reality, theatre's claim to disrupt the state is mitigated by the unacknowledged presence of that discourse.

Chris Megson, in the essay ''England brings you down at last': Politics and Passion in Barker's 'State of England' Drama', gives a lucid reading of Barker's political prescience by revisiting the 'State of England' plays written between 1975 and 1985, a body of work which Megson believes to be worthy of more widespread critical and scholarly attention than it has as yet received.[33] Placing these works, and the 1983 play *A Passion in Six Days* in particular, in the context of contemporary developments in parliamentary politics, Megson ties Barker's shift away from the doctrines of realism and towards 'more metaphoric and poetic performance registers' (126) to the Labour Party's 'irrevocable and controversial long march rightwards […] in its indefatigable quest for wider electoral appeal' (124) under the leadership of Neil Kinnock. He makes a particular point of reminding the reader that David Blunkett, later to become a key figure in the continuation of the rightwards march that culminated in New Labour, was present at the premiere of *A Passion in Six Days* and walked out of the performance.[34] For Megson, Blunkett's action provides the crucial link between the trajectories of the Labour Party and of Barker's theatre. As Labour courted the electorate with a dogmatic and pragmatic move away from Leftist orthodoxy and towards the neoliberal hegemony spearheaded by Thatcher's government, Barker's plays began to deploy excess, passion and moral speculation in the performance of a conviction that Britain's political debate was in the process of rendering itself banal and irrelevant and that social realism was no longer adequate to the task of destabilising it.

Barker and Adorno: arguments on aesthetic autonomy

In taking up this liminal space that evades the moral, the dogmatic (in the form of social realism) and the ideological, Barker agitates for a theatre which is not devoid of usefulness but is autonomous in the ideological and aesthetic senses of the word. Where this autonomy is absent, so is the unique political potential of theatre that relies on ambiguity, dissent and, as Barker puts it, 'the false'. Theatre which has at its heart a clear, explicit mission to diagnose and stage specific social and political issues cannot inhabit the territory of 'the false' and instead falls into an artistic aporia, adrift between the factual and the imaginative and thus unable to unlock the potential of either domain. This is one possible reading of the 'lost faith' in theatre Barker goes on to mention. A loss of confidence in the political relevance of dramatic imagination leads to a desire to reach out to the world as a source of inspiration, beginning the vicious cycle of 'spurious legitimacy' and deepening bad faith that Barker describes.

Karoline Gritzner argues persuasively for reading an aesthetic of the sublime in Barker's plays, bringing Barker into a productive dialogue with Adorno as well as Kant and Burke that brings deeper nuances to Barker's *Arguments*.[35] She goes so far as to say that

> [Barker's] art of theatre is Adornian in the sense that it places emphasis on the notion of aesthetic autonomy and its interrelated concept of subjective freedom. Precisely because it does not accommodate to the conventional tastes of the majority and refuses to communicate unambiguous moral messages, Barker's theatre can be considered as political *and* subversive. (85)

In Gritzner's reading, Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe intersects with Adorno in resisting the subsuming of theatre into a 'culture industry' in which entertainment, populism, economic viability and humanistic (in Barker's sense) social aspirations render art hostile to the individual subject. As the sublime is invoked through moments of physical and linguistic disintegration and the negation of the Eros/Thanatos binary (the fate of Helen in *The Bite of the Night* (1988) being a powerful

example), the simultaneous horror and ecstasy performed by the central characters wrenches Barker's theatrical project free of any illusion of a communal experience.[36] Sex and death, Gritzner postulates, are constructed as profoundly solitary encounters that not only evade reason and clarity but also trouble and galvanise the individual imagination and, as Barker puts it, 'return the individual to himself' (*Arguments*, 23). If Catastrophism is political and subversive, this is the site of its potency: in engineering an experience, not of togetherness, but of deep division and separation where the individual has no recourse but to her own imaginative faculties. The resultant state of autonomy is one of fragility, poised between affirmation and fragmentation and compromised - albeit, for Barker and Adorno, productively so - by the impossibility of resolution through the social.

Although Adorno draws on the principle of 'art for art's sake', this is not to say that his account of the aesthetic autonomy of the artwork accords primacy to aesthetic value over all other forms thereof or divorces art from the social. Rather, once something is designated as an artwork it retains, despite the separation conferred by this designation, a position *within* the social which in turn causes it to partake of forms of value other than the aesthetic, such as the social and the political. Moreover, once art becomes a commodity it gains an autonomy from what Adorno scholar Andy Hamilton terms 'direct function' but at the same time exchanges those constraints for the constraints of capitalism. As Hamilton puts it, referring to the link Adorno makes between the rise of bourgeois culture and decline of aristocratic and religious patronage in the eighteenth century and the emancipation of art from its direct functions:

> If artists no longer work for specific patrons in church or court, and offer their work for sale to those whose identities are not fully specified in advance – that is, they begin to function within the market – it becomes easier for them to produce works that embody their own values rather than those of their patrons, thus increasing their autonomy. Growing autonomy therefore goes hand in hand with the commodification of artworks [...] It is not such a paradox that capitalism emancipates, as Marx of course recognized. It emancipates from feudalism, but forges new chains of its own. (254)[37]

Even where the artwork is oppositional to society and rejects its moral and aesthetic norms, the dialectical relationship between artwork and society persists. This is not simply as a result of the context and means of its production, but more importantly, for Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory*[38]:

> art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful,' it criticises society by merely existing […] Art's asociality is the determinate negation of a determinate society. (226)

In other words, the artwork's resistance to society is both determined by and constitutive of that society, hence the dynamic and precarious nature of the aesthetic autonomy perceived by Gritzner in her Adornian reading of Barker. That said, whether aesthetic and social autonomy are different forms or are too closely interpenetrating to be considered as discrete is an important consideration which I will address in Chapter 3, where I pick up the discussion of autonomy in terms of the ways in which it has been deployed by critics of New Labour cultural policy.

It is worth remarking at this juncture that Barker's perspective on the autonomy of the aesthetic and the social diverge greatly from the thinking, not only of Bond, but of another theatre scholar who occupies an important position in Chapter 5: Jill Dolan. While Dolan, as we will see later, is also open to the liminal and the dissonant, she prioritises the very element of communal experience that is denied by Barker. Dolan's writing on the utopian potential of performance makes the claim that the moments of temporary community within an audience may in fact be sustainable beyond the fall of the curtain.[39] If the community experienced within the performance space has a utopian dimension (which, for Dolan, it certainly may), it can provide the impetus to recreate an affectively similar community in other public sites.[40] For Dolan, then, the border between the dramatic and the social, the 'false' (in Barker's term) and the factual, is far more porous than for Barker as her affective experience in the theatre is a function of momentary togetherness rather than unmitigated solitude. The utility of this dialogue - and the dialogue with Adorno

- to my project is in the discussion it allows of what political theatre can or should seek to achieve beyond the boundaries of the performance itself, and whether it has a direct role to play in effecting social change. My readings of cultural policy in Chapter 2 also address this question by examining issues of social and economic impact and the existing research in this area.

What lies at the heart of the rhetoric of social utility and moral guardianship is, according to Barker, an unconsciously defensive attitude towards one's own practice and status as a creator of drama:

> I must admit that for many years when people asked me why I wrote, I resorted to such dismal platitudes myself [...] I had a sense that art was a luxury and needed to be defended against charges of indulgence or privilege. In fact, I wrote because I needed to. I wrote for myself. But that seemed unforgivable. Only more recently did I understand that in writing for myself I also served others, and that, in not serving myself, I could not serve others. The more self-limiting an artist is, the less useful to his fellow human beings (76)

Here Barker identifies an issue that will take up many of the following pages: that of the need for artists to defend themselves against charges of social irrelevance by turning to instrumentalism. Instrumentalist defences, whether monetary or social, are the standard response to accusations of financial unsustainability of an arts organisation or artwork; the arts have value over and above the intrinsic qualities of any individual artwork, and it is on the strength of that value that any defence of state subsidy for the arts has to rest. Barker's text here sets up a Gordian knot that cultural policy has spent the next several decades attempting to unpick: if art is to have sufficient integrity and ingenuousness to be politically meaningful it needs to distance itself from any sense of political obligation, and the only effective response to an accusation of social and political irrelevance is a refusal to engage with that accusation. In order to serve, artist and artwork must be socially and aesthetically autonomous and reject any perceived imperative towards service. It is precisely this set of paradoxes that invites the dialectical approach I will be introducing in Chapter 3, where I also introduce the question of *financial* autonomy, and what ramifications

it might have for the **ideological** and **aesthetic** readings of the term. As a closer reading of will reveal, Adorno's configurations of autonomy do not permit different definitions of the term to exist discretely.

Barker, Bond and 'sham democracy'

Barker makes more than one use of the term 'sham democracy' in *Arguments*, inviting the question of what a democratic theatre would look like and whether it is even a viable or appropriate goal. Discussions of democracy and theatre frequently begin with an invocation of an earlier 'Golden Age', fifth-century Athens. David Edgar, in an article published in 2014 in *The Guardian*, suggested that theatre might still be 'as the Greeks thought, a fundamental part of the democratic process, as vital as voting',[41] and defences of political theatre often demonstrate an underlying cultural assumption that theatre - particularly tragedy - and democracy are symbiotic.[42]

While many different definitions and models of democracy are available to theorists, in the context of discussions of British theatre it is generally used in a figurative sense rather than referring directly to the formal institutions and apparatus of British representative democracy. There are also a number of examples of British theatre which can be said to blur the distinction between literal and figurative readings of 'democratic theatre':

> i) the process of creating the work reflects a democratic process by including participation from, or the directly-related experiences of, citizens who are not theatre practitioners themselves. Examples of this might include Alecky Blythe's *The Girlfriend Experience* (2008) or the documentary theatre of Rony Robinson, where the textual presence of the interviewees could be said to disrupt the power relations between actors and audience.

> ii) the work itself sets out to raise political consciousness in such a way as to explicitly encourage democratic participation from the audience members once they have left the theatre. Examples could include Tanika Gupta's *Gladiator Games* (2005), which dramatises a recent event with the aim of

encouraging audience members to take action against the political system that instigated or permitted those events.

iii) a recognised democratic process is either portrayed on stage or replicated in some other fashion during the performance (such as the audience being invited to vote). Look Left Look Right's verbatim play *Counted?* (2010), for example, was devised using interviews in which citizens discussed their thoughts and motivations regarding the voting process, and Tim Price's *Demos* (2012) juxtaposed two forms of democracy by staging a meeting of the General Assembly for Occupy London Stock Exchange followed by the next day's Prime Minister's Questions.

While Barker is scathing about the figurative use of the word 'democracy' by the dramatic establishment, his writings certainly do not indicate any intention to use theatre as a direct means to legislative reform; on the contrary, using dramatic performance to influence the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy (as potentially exemplified above) would certainly fall into the category of allowing theatre to be 'overwhelmed by the world'. If the democracy of democratic theatre is to be taken neither literally nor figuratively, and instead remains at best a nebulous ideal and at worst an empty cliche, how seriously are we to take its continuing presence in the field?

Both Barker and Edward Bond imply the possibility of a category of 'democratic' theatre, figurative rather than literal in character, which in their writings is notable by its absence from the British stage.[43] While the work criticised by Barker enacts a 'sham democracy' whereby audience members are offered an illusion of empowerment by being passively led into consensus, Bond states categorically that British theatre has been caught up in a more widespread corruption of democracy.

Our democracy sustains itself by systematically de-democratizing its people. [...] Consumer democracy saturates us in drama because it must coerce imagination into creating its fake reality. Once all stories allowed some freedom; consumerism allows less and less. Our drama - our theatre - is part of this corruption, deeply involved in the work of de-democratizing. It takes

the great questions and trivializes them. (*Hidden Plot,* 4-5)

Barker and Bond understand and present 'democracy' very differently. Barker's theatrical democracy is more absolute than Bond's, something that can be either 'sham' or genuine and which he only defines negatively as something that becomes impossible as soon as a form of authority is assumed by theatrical practitioners. As discussed above, this is part of the process identified by Barker whereby a performance addresses a political issue in such a way that meaning is predetermined and dissensus precluded by the invocation of factual research or moral authority. The trappings of the political and the democratic are present in the subject matter addressed by the performance, but the authority assumed over the audience renders the politics of the performance inauthentic.

Bond also invokes classical Athens when discussing the relationship between democracy and theatre, but makes a compelling argument against that relationship having retained any integrity in late twentieth-century Britain. The democratic character of Greek tragedy lies, for Bond, in its ability to comprehend the paradoxes inherent in human individuals and societies as they attempt to imagine and effect justice only to find that imagined justice, once actualised, is corrupted by the very institutions of power required to sustain it:

> The first society to understand this was Greece. It created the foundations of our drama and our democracy. The two go together, and the state of a democracy is shown by its drama [...] We live in crisis. We have weapons to destroy the world, and even when we are at peace we destroy it; that is the logic of the power that rules our economy. Faced with this crisis it seems fatuous to talk of drama and the Greeks [...] Greek drama was innocent, ours is corrupt. (67-8)

Bond argues for the possibility of a return to a drama that can restore theatre's democratic potential by reclaiming the 'radical innocence' (68) of the imagination and not only subverting but rejecting power. In a moment of intersection with Barker, Bond questions the usefulness of morality to the political and, by extension, the dramatic or tragic, as the moral becomes so easily intertwined with the elements of

power at work in economics and social justice. For both dramatists, the mechanisms of power and normative morality are deleterious to both the radical and the democratic potential of drama, and Bond links this explicitly to the capitalist economy and the state:

> The state seeks to penetrate the site of drama (as religion, law, and so on). It does so not only to repress the self so that it fits into the historically inevitable unjust structures that have administered society; it does so also to create its own justification [...] The state abhors a vacuum because opposition may shelter in it. (49)

Thus for even a social democracy to attempt directly to intervene in its own dramatisation is to impede the 'radical innocence' that might lead to the destabilising of its own power structures and normative moral constructs. This is an important consideration to bear in mind when dealing with cultural policy, and one which I will approach later when dealing with questions of autonomy and the staging of radical politics. If, as the impact studies I deal with in the following chapter claim, theatre has been successful in drawing marginalised groups into the mainstream of society, is this a success for the politicisation of theatre or an index of its demise?

Bond: theatre, reason and Utopia

Bond's discussions of the search for justice and the corruption of democracy centre on ideas of community and Utopia as functions of both the social and the imaginary, and - as I will discuss in Chapter 3 - these are both terms that have been extensively deployed in research into New Labour cultural policy and rhetoric.

Bond reads constructions of justice, community and drama as part of a network of ideas that are driven by an utopian impulse, and community is understood as

> the relationships between people which enable each of them to pursue their aim humanely. Community is founded on trust, friendship, and 'getting on together' and sharing a common life [...] In a community the poor and rich

may be equally pleasant and equally generous within their means. (60)

This places community at variance with a free market economy, which Bond describes as enforcing harsh differentiations of power between different customs, vocations, and social and political positions. While the community and its members may support justice in a spirit of radical innocence, the economy undermines that spirit as it 'does not depend on human virtues [...] It has a life and force of its own' (60) and that life and force are inherently divisive. For Bond, such an economy is entirely incompatible with equality, prohibiting it with laws of its own independent creation.

One of the central elements in Bond's understanding of drama and the social is one that places him at odds with Barker: that of reason. As Bond does not embrace the idea of theatre as an expression of something dark, primal and beyond the realms of the rational his formulations are immediately closer to Marxist - and of course Brechtian, although Bond's association with Brecht is an uneasy one - orthodoxy and the construction of a 'scientific' Socialism. Bond makes his dissonances with Brecht with regard to Utopia and reason known more clearly towards the end of the volume:

> Brechtism's Utopia - the site of its value - is in the future. Brechtism: 'Do not feel when you think' - as if action could be pure thought. This is the cause of Brechtism's reversals, recantations, contradictions. They are not expediency but attempts to find a value to act on instead of one to reach for […] (184)

He goes on to argue that Utopia and justice in the work of art must be implicit rather than described, as imagination is impossible without a symbiosis of emotion and reason. Utopia in drama, therefore, cannot be purely rational; it must have an affective dimension. This is the source of the political power of the utopian in theatre - as he continues, 'Marx decried the notion of Utopia: a politician must. A dramatist or poet cannot.' (ibid.) The affective nature of the utopian performative and its political potential is an area I will address in Chapter 4, again with recourse to Jill Dolan, and I will also return several times throughout this text to the usefulness of various determinants of value (of which utopian vision may be one).

The search for justice (which Bond regards as the driving force of the creation of drama and, indeed, all human language) has at its root the capacity for imagining Utopia, whether that Utopia is explicitly staged/spoken or not, as 'a time when the mind could speak justice without the corruptions and distortions that come from adapting to authority'. (7) As such, Bond's Utopia resists the laws imposed by capitalism and by a social democracy, such as that of Blair's Britain, that seeks to embrace the market. This is the claim that lies at the heart of Bond's acrimonious relationship with the British theatrical establishment: where the state is in thrall to a capitalist economy, that state's intervention in drama can only exacerbate the corruption already trickling down from a compromised democracy. Although Bond's community, with its emphasis on 'getting on together', implies a reliance on consensus, this consensus is not contrived or coerced but a direct result of shared 'radical innocence'. In subsequent chapters I will discuss the co-optation of the rhetoric of communitarianism and the utopian by the Blair government, with particular reference to cultural policy.

Bond's thesis, while lacking in the historical background of communitarian thought and its utopian dimension, still has considerable academic traction when read alongside current scholars of utopianism and New Labour policy such as Ruth Levitas and Luke Martell respectively. Where the market is the prime mover in the creation of community, the divisions it enforces inhibit any utopian impulse those communities might have enjoyed. The utopian gives way to the ideological in cultural policy, and communities that are created through this policy area will be unable to assume any role in the healing of the rifts produced by the economy from which the policies derive. For Bond and for Barker too the role played by the state in the workings, ideals and economics of theatre runs a risk of adversely affecting both what takes place on the stage and what takes place between stage and audience, and the aim of this thesis is to examine the questions and objections they raise.

In summary, while Barker's central claims about the nature and role of political theatre are rooted in an opposition to social norms and a need to disrupt moral logic on an individual level, Bond's are deeply inflected by the Enlightenment tradition

and invoke community, justice and the rational. Both, however, postulate a toxic relationship between political theatre and the state, reading the state as a site of ideologically-enforced consensus that is hostile to individual consciousness and dissent (Barker) or a corrupt, divisive power that is inimical to community and justice (Bond).

Reading Barker and Bond alongside the cultural policy of the New Labour years presents some productive challenges. In the case of Barker, his rejection of the primacy of the audience member clashes violently with a social democratic model of cultural policy in which the character of the arts as a public good is a primary driver of advocacy and subsidy. Where funding for theatre is largely dependent on establishing social impact, advocacy-driven research (as I will demonstrate in the next chapter) relies heavily on analytical assessment of the effect of theatre on audiences and their communities, not to mention the relationship between those audiences/communities and the wider civic and social goals of their government. Continuing education, employment figures, social inclusion and community all figure prominently in New Labour cultural policy and its accompanying body of research; there can be little room for the unmeasurable alienation and confusion of Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe which is inimical to normativity and cohesion. In the case of Bond, the greatest opposition is between the ideal of 'radical innocence' - which is eroded by 'adapting to authority' in any form - and any intervention of the state in the workings of the theatre. One of his chief claims is that where a democracy is compromised, so is the drama produced by and within it, and that where the state (read by Bond as a site of inequality and injustice) intervenes even indirectly in the conditions of the production of dramatic works it inhibits the radical impulses and imagination that constitute the political potential of theatre.

The impossibility of imagining a cultural policy which either Barker or Bond might find congenial to their aims is what necessitates the dialogue (or at any rate the juxtaposition) I construct between the two. Even where theatre opposes the existence of policy that seeks to govern and mediate it, recent works of scholarship on theatre and neoliberalism indicate that cultural policy *in toto* does not necessarily forestall the potential of political theatre. Most notably, two leading scholars - Jen Harvie[44] and Dragan Klaic[45] - have made important interventions that investigate a

reconciliation between the fields of theatre and social democracy in a climate of neoliberalism, and Harvie in particular points towards the necessity of locating cultural practices and policies that can genuinely enhance social welfare. My intention throughout this thesis is to speak primarily to the problematics of that potential reconciliation, and ask what political theatre sought to do under New Labour, whether a consensus between stage and state was possible or desirable, and finally whether the dramatists of the time achieved their aims or whether the political efficacy of their work was hampered by the economic necessity - as Mark Ravenhill suggests - of ideological compromise.

In the next chapter I will revisit the problematics of consensus I have introduced above with regard to the McMaster Review, a text which I read as attempting to create consensus between aesthetic and social priorities ascribed to the arts in cultural policy and, albeit implicitly, between intrinsic and instrumental value systems. While McMaster's claim is that artists require creative independence from the state in order to engage and inspire their audiences, he keeps the New Labour priorities of community cohesion and social inclusion firmly in view. By opening with the arguments of two major post-war playwrights who would, in their different ways, contest these goals, I aim to problematise and disrupt the familiar discussion of art as social good by having already allowed the dissenting voices of Barker and Bond each to identify a locus of political potential for theatre that is distant and distinct from those laid out in cultural policy and impact research.

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[23] For a comprehensive discussion of the perceived opposition between Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe and Bond's Brechtian emphasis on Reason see Charles Lamb. *The Theatre of Howard Barker.* London: Routledge, 2005

[24] Hereafter *Arguments*

[25] Hereafter *Hidden Plot*

[26] I use this term in its Bourdieusian sense, as will become clear in the third chapter

[27] Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso. 1985

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[28] See Chapter 5

[29] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of how this exclusion has been examined elsewhere by Blair's critics and how it operates beyond the field of theatre and performance.

30 An 'accessible play' is defined by Barker as one 'whose narrative is simple, whose characters are rapidly absorbed, identified and classified as 'good' and 'bad', and whose momentum can be contained within the 'issue'' (85).

[31] See Charles Lamb, *The Theatre of Howard Barker,* London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 5-23 for a succinct account of Barker's changing relationship to the British dramatic establishment throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

32 Barker uses this phrase numerous times throughout Arguments

33 Megson, Chris. "'England brings you down at last': Politics and Passion in Barker's 'State of England' Drama." Theatre of Catastrophe: New Essays on Howard Barker. Ed. Karoline Gritzner and David Ian Rabey. London: Oberon Books, 2006

34 Blunkett allegedly left in protest at the brief nudity of the actors, a claim Megson finds baffling (125) given that Blunkett is blind.

[35] Gritzner, Karoline. "Towards an Aesthetic of the Sublime in Howard Baker's Theatre." *Theatre of Catastrophe: New Essays on Howard Barker.* Ed. Karoline Gritzner and David Ian Rabey. London: Oberon Books. 2006

[36] Barker, Howard. *The Bite of the Night*. London: Calder. 1998

[37] Hamilton, Andy. "Adorno and the autonomy of art". *Nostalgia for a Redeemed Future: Critical Theory.* Ed. Stefano Giacchetti Ludovisi & G. Agostini Saavedra. University of Delaware, 2009

[38] Adorno, T.W. *Aesthetic Theory*. London: Athlone. 1997

[39] Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2005

[40] I shall return later to Dolan's formulations on the utopian performative as a site of rehearsal of participatory democracy, having further clarified the relevance of theories of radical democracy to the topic of political theatre.

41 Edgar, David. "If we want theatre for the masses, we need grants to target audiences". Guardian Comment is Free. 12 July 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/12/theatre-grants-audiences-children-david-edgar>

42 See Peter Burian's defence of this position and a review of challenges to it in 'Athenian Tragedy and Democratic Discourse'. Why Athens?A Reappraisal of Tragic Politics. Ed. D.M. Carter. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2011. 95-117

43 Jill Dolan, with whose work I will engage in Chapter 4, develops this putative fourth term via Mouffe and Laclau to locate, in strategies of direct address to the audience, a site for the rehearsal of participatory democracy.

[44] Harvie, Jen. *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013

[45] Klaic, Dragan. *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre Between the Market and Social Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2012

Chapter 2

Contested terms and muddled methodologies: impact research and its critics

In my opening chapter we have heard from two key figures of post-war British political theatre who reject the primacy of the audience (Barker) and theatre which succumbs in any way to the authority of the state (Bond), and asked whether it is possible for stage and state to be reconciled in a way that allows space for politically meaningful theatre. Throughout this thesis I make several moves between stage and state, while recognising possible sites of reconciliation and resistance within the academy, and in this chapter I turn to the issue of state subsidy and its advocates. At the close of the first chapter I made reference to the need for subsidised theatre to demonstrate its credentials as a social good in order to continue to secure government funding. Here, I look at how that need has been met through research driven by the advocacy of state subsidy and at the criticism that research has received within the academy. I also open the discussion which will be pursued in Chapters 4 and 5 regarding the potential dangers of Third Way politics, its managerialism and emphasis on consensus, to political theatre, by looking at the slippage of terminology within the cultural policy sector as discussed by a range of scholars.

Advocacy of state subsidy for the arts under the Blair government was bolstered by a substantial body of work that set out to substantiate the positive social and economic impacts of the arts and, in the early years, a move away from 'art for art's sake' rhetoric. This raft of impact studies, following the seminal research of Francois Matarasso, supported an instrumentalist justification of state subsidy, in terms of both economic and social impact, and attempts to substantiate claims that state-funded art can lower crime rates, raise school attendance, create pathways to employment and improve the physical and mental health of participants and audiences, as well as feeding money back into the local and national economy.

Towards the end of the Blair government ACE and DCMS discourse, as exemplified by publications like the McMaster Review[46] and ACE's ten-year plan 'Achieving Great Art For Everyone'[47], attempted to reconcile instrumentalist advocacy with the

'art for art's sake' approach in which art stands or falls by a system of intrinsic value. Much criticism had been directed at the instrumentalist agenda from within the sector itself, as well as from the academy where debate flourished regarding the efficacy of instrumentalist defences of arts funding. The enterprise culture of the 1980s had seen a shift in cultural policy and its commentators towards justifying arts funding in terms of how it might boost economic prosperity. After John Myerscough's 1988 book, *The Economic Importance of The Arts in Britain,*[48] laid out the instrumentalist case in full, the backlash from the academy was rapid[49]. Although Myerscough's publication was influential and widely-cited, it was criticised on both methodological and theoretical grounds (Hansen, 1995[50]). Questions were raised regarding what constituted 'the arts', whether short-term and long-term impact was being accurately calculated, and indeed whether analysing the success of the arts in terms of a purpose (i.e. economic growth) not inherent in its creation was appropriate.

Economic and social impact studies continued to proliferate during the 1990s, as attempts were made to refine methodologies and to link the economic potential of the arts to the agenda of tackling social exclusion. The McMaster Review made an attempt to return artistic quality to the foreground where, he argued, it could and must coexist with the social benefits posited by social impact studies. One of the tactics deployed by McMaster in his search for a viable consensus between intrinsic and instrumental systems of value began to take the form of placing attributes of both intrinsic and instrumental value under the term 'excellence', which tried to resolve the binary by eliding the two sides rather than unpicking them. The term has a long and complex history and is notoriously resistant to definition, having been present as a keyword in cultural policy (along with 'access') since the post-War years and having acquired further problematically elitist associations under Thatcherism and the enterprise culture of the 1980s. McMaster attempted to reclaim it by using it to signify art that united intrinsic value with specific social aims compatible with other areas of New Labour policy.

Concurrently, critiques of New Labour cultural policy and ACE coming from those right-wing commentators and think tanks who were inclined to make a case for continuing arts subsidy focused on developing their own definitions of artistic autonomy and warning of the damaging effects of managerialism. The tendency in

this criticism was to express the extrinsic benefits of art in terms of national identity and the contribution of the creative industries to overall economic growth. These were the reasons why art, according to the Arts Task Force set up by David Cameron, 'makes life better'.[51] One of the main planks of this argument was that art, and artists, lose integrity and creative independence when tied rigidly to a political agenda, and that stipulating that all funded projects must demonstrate a social purpose would lead to aesthetically inferior and even disingenuous art produced simply to fulfil funding requirements.

In this chapter I will examine the purposes ascribed to art by ACE and the DCMS under New Labour and by their critics and the difficulties that have been encountered in evaluating the success of state-subsidised projects in fulfilling these purposes, and I will begin to trace the links between McMaster's attempts to construct a consensus on 'excellence' and the broader ideological climate. I will present some of the key arguments that came from cultural policy research and from the academy and look at how existing research methodology was developed and criticised. In so doing, I will firstly provide context for the plays I go on to read in Chapter 5 and secondly prepare the reader for my discussions in Chapters 3 and 4 and for the theoretical thinking I bring to bear on this policy area. The political (and, in Chapters 3-5, potentially post-political) roles of theatre remain central to the conversation I invoke.

Redefining terms: "Excellence" and the "cultural industry"

In January 2008, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport published the McMaster Review. The Review, compiled by former Edinburgh Festival director Sir Brian McMaster with the assistance of a number of arts practitioners and freelance advisors, was commissioned by the DCMS and ran beneath a title which summed up the official mission of the department: 'Supporting excellence in the arts'. By examining the roles of artists, practitioners and public funding bodies in the running of arts organisations, the document set out a series of recommendations for an overhaul of the assessment criteria for the output of these organisations, moving, as McMaster termed it, 'from measurement to judgement'. Heavily endorsed by the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, James Purnell, the Review proclaimed the dawning of a new cultural Golden Age, or 'another Renaissance' (5)

in Britain.

Taking as a central premise the Department's slogan 'Improving quality of life for all', the Review attempted a reclaiming of the term 'excellence', redefining it by injecting it with a cultural relevance and urgency that McMaster claimed had been lost in recent decades. The stated aim here was to reclaim 'excellence' as an all-embracing term which held within it many of the ideals McMaster set out as being necessary to a rich national culture, such as 'diversity' and 'innovation', and McMaster attempted to imagine a framework for assessing its value that did not rely entirely on financial targets and box-ticking. The creative freedom of artists is, he argued, of paramount importance, and should not be impeded by the economic self-preservation instincts of impoverished arts organisations; instead, both public funding and internal management should be geared to the prioritisation of what is "excellent" – both artistically adventurous and politically relevant to a diverse audience.

McMaster was not unaware of the problems inherent in the use of his chosen terminology:

> There is a fundamental mismatch between the way we talk about culture and the values we attach to it. The language we use has become tainted and the terms we use – 'art for art's sake', 'the right to fail', 'risk', 'innovation', let alone 'excellence' – have all acquired accretions of meaning in recent years that have blunted or distorted what we want to say. Excellence itself is sometimes dismissed as an exclusive, canonical and 'heritage' approach to cultural activity. I refute this. (9)

Cultural policy, according to McMaster, had been overtaken by terminology which had become resistant to definition, political classification and indeed understanding due to decades of contradictory use. This is a point of view that echoes Galloway and Dunlop's article of the previous year (2007), which extends the discussion of overdetermined and opaque terminology back to the terms 'culture', 'creativity' and the 'cultural/creative industries'.[52] Galloway and Dunlop's historiography of these terms (18-19) traces the subsuming of creative pursuits into the 'culture industry' back to the difficulties of the 1980s, when a rejection of the idealistic aesthetic arguments for state-supported art became necessary in the face of cutbacks in public

spending and the primacy of enterprise culture. This rejection was bolstered by the popularity of Myerscough's research (as I mention at the opening of this chapter) into economic impact. In Galloway and Dunlop's words, 'representatives of the creative arts were effectively lobbying to be included as part of the cultural industries.' (18) The earlier definition of 'cultural industries', that which underpinned 1980s cultural policy in France as well as the cultural policy initiatives of UNESCO (1978) and the Council of Europe (1980), was restricted to commercially-produced work and did not include the state-subsidised arts. Hesmondhalgh, writing in 2005,[53] presents a similar narrative and traces its development into the mission embraced by the DCMS at its inception: 'the fostering of the creative industries'.[54] To provide still further confusion, the term 'culture industry' is one also used heavily by Adorno and Horkheimer, and their definition and usage has great traction within critical theory and cultural studies. Both Hesmondhalgh and Galloway & Dunlop foreground the early research of Nicholas Garnham, whose presentations to the Greater London Council (1983, republished 1990) acknowledged (but did not celebrate) the centrality of commercial production and sought to harness it in the service of an anti-elitist democratisation of the arts and a stand against the deindustrialisation of 1980s Britain.[55] In Chapter 3, I will discuss the definition of 'cultural industry' in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer and its relationship with the policy and academic research that we see in play in this current chapter.

The well-documented history of the word 'excellence' in the area of cultural policy and arts funding dates back to the post-war establishment of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) under the leadership of John Maynard Keynes, who first began to use the term to signify intent to prioritise the funding of established arts organisations rather than regional and amateur companies or those still in their infancy. The Arts Council of Great Britain's initial Charter of 1946 contained aesthetic and ideological tensions, most obviously between the prioritising of artistic standards and 'excellence' - as previously espoused by CEMA under John Maynard Keynes - and the commitment to improving access to the arts. The Charter commits itself explicitly to 'the fine arts exclusively' (although these remain resolutely undefined) and to 'raising standards of execution', a move that Robert Hutchison[56] reads as being designed to maintain distance between the Arts Council and the amateur and community activities which, during the war, would have fallen under the remit of ENSA[57] rather than CEMA:

> '...like CEMA under Keynes the Arts Council directed its assistance almost
> exclusively to professional organisations; indeed there was almost total
> continuity between the work of CEMA and that of the Arts Council.' (47)

'Excellence' was also a cultural policy buzzword during the 1980s, and many of the difficulties McMaster attempted to circumvent in the Review were due to this term's associations with Thatcherism. During a period of great financial strictures for the Arts Council, when state subsidy had been intended to lead to financial independence and leading organisations were forced by necessity to pursue business sponsorship, the prevalent enterprise culture led once again to an emphasis on professionalism and the already established. 'Excellence' at this point was used to describe art that catered to a class that could support it financially and deemed it of sufficient quality to justify that support[58]. For McMaster, however, 'excellence' was in need of a redefinition that linked it with social impacts and the impetus towards changes in cultural perspective. It encompassed diversity, innovation, relevance, and a direct effect on the consciousness of audiences and participants:

> If culture is excellent it can help us make sense of our place in the world,
> ask questions we would not otherwise have asked, understand the answers
> in ways we couldn't otherwise have understood and appreciate things we
> have never before experienced. The greater its power to do these things the
> more excellent the cultural experience. The best definition of excellence I
> have heard is that excellence in culture occurs when an experience affects
> and changes an individual. (9)

The McMaster Review was embraced enthusiastically by Alan Davey in the introduction to the 2008 ACE Annual Review, his first as Chief Executive of ACE[59]:

> Governments and organisations in civil society have a duty to ensure welfare
> and opportunity for all citizens, and in the past this has been understood in
> terms of material welfare – improving wealth creation and ensuring poverty
> is reduced. But we must also pay attention to poverty of aspiration: an
> outlook on life and an ability to get on in the world (…) What is great about
> this review is that it highlights an essential debate for the arts: arts need to be

of the highest quality for people to engage with them, so how do we discuss and judge that in an appropriate way? (5)

The phrase 'get on in the world' is particularly telling; for Davey, the arts are a means of inspiring people suffering from 'poverty of aspiration' to improve their lives according to a set of standards that remain unspecified.[60] This unwillingness to elaborate on what might constitute 'getting on in the world', and indeed how much of the relationship between any given individual and the rest of the world might be attributable to his or her experience of the arts, reiterates the difficulties encountered elsewhere by people attempting to substantiate ACE's instrumentalist claims. It can also be read as placing an extra burden on the term 'excellence', implying that for art to be 'excellent' it need not only speak to and for marginalised audiences but also facilitate their relationship with the mainstream.

McMaster's version of 'excellence' is, in short, a term that constructs a consensus by eliminating the 'accretions of meaning' acquired during a long and complex history and through developments in impact research and policy during the New Labour government. As identified by Galloway & Dunlop and Hesmondhalgh, the accumulation of different and sometimes conflicting meanings around key terms such as 'culture' and 'excellence' is something that needs to be recognised as a problematising factor in research, policy and analysis as it speaks to anxieties surrounding elitism and class. For this reason, the defining and reclaiming of resistant terminology and the difficulties this presents is an important strand of my own project. In the opening chapter I have already sketched three possible definitions of 'autonomy', which I will develop further in Chapter 3 with recourse to Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, and in Chapter 4 I will address the word 'culture' once again, this time in the context of Bourdieu's 'cultural capital'. Eliding the conflicting meanings that have collected around key terms as a way of constructing consensus, as McMaster has done here with 'excellence', is a move I believe to be highly characteristic of Third Way social democracy and is one that I will discuss further both here and in Chapters 4 and 5 via Janet Newman's work on New Labour governance. McMaster addresses the issue of assessment and evaluation in the final third of the Review, which raises questions as to how 'excellence' is to be quantified. Adhering closely to the initial mission statement of moving away from the 'top-down' nature of funding policy, McMaster recommends a coupling of a new system of self-

assessment by practitioners and artists with one of peer review (one that would nevertheless be managed and led by the funding bodies). His ideal system of evaluation would move away from managerialism and offer artists greater independence from the state and, while ensuring that funded organisations remained accountable to their funders, this evaluation system would put less pressure on practitioners to quantify the unquantifiable. This begs the question of why a reimagining of the evaluation process was deemed necessary by McMaster, and in answer I shall now turn to impact assessment and its critics within the academy.

Cultural Trends and beyond: Matarasso, advocacy and bias

The publication *Cultural Trends* started life in 1989 as a successor to the double volume *Facts About The Arts* (of which Volume 1 appeared in 1983 and Volume 2 in 1986) with the aim of contributing rigorous empirical research to the understanding of the cultural landscape and related policy areas by collating and rationalising a wide range of existing data. In the introduction to the first issue, Robert Hutchison and Andrew Feist[61] rehearse the linguistic difficulties traced subsequently by Galloway, Dunlop et al, the importance of which I have just outlined above:

> the retitling of the series needs some explanation […] Raymond Williams explained that 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.' Despite this recognition of the complex multiple meanings of 'culture' the editors take the view that Cultural Trends is a more apt and accurate description of the contents of the new series than Facts About the Arts. (1)

Feist and Hutchison are ready to engage with the many meanings of 'culture' and the unease they perceive around those meanings, especially the divisions between 'high art' (1) and popular entertainment. The importance, indeed the necessity, of both and the role of each in sustaining the other is defined in their introductory remarks as being integral to the publication; according to Feist and Hutchison, the subsidised and commercial arts are interdependent.

One scholar and analyst whose contribution to the *Cultural Trends* project was, and remains, particularly influential is the journal's post-1996 editor Sara Selwood, to

whose work I will return frequently throughout this chapter. Under Selwood's leadership, *Cultural Trends* was reshaped to look beyond the collation of statistics and to include analysis from beyond the remit of the Policy Studies Institute, to which the publication (like *Facts About The Arts*) had been affiliated during its first decade. The publication relaunched in 1998, and the following year *Cultural Trends* published an article by Paul Allin, then Chief Statistician at the DCMS, addressing methodological flaws in existing studies that sought to measure public participation in the arts.[62] Allin was responding here to an American survey published in the same issue, The 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, which attempted to measure the level of participation in the arts among adults in the US.[63] The study used household surveys as opposed to audience data, which Allin agreed was the only viable way to conduct a national survey, but Allin still expressed concerns regarding sample size, the length of the reference period and the likelihood of non-response bias given the low response rate compared to other similar surveys of previous years. In the following issue, John O'Hagan published a response[64] to Michael Quine's comprehensive statistical review[65] of British theatre audiences during the 1998 calendar year which highlighted a weighting of data collection towards London venues, an absence of socioeconomic profiling of audience members and a lack of engagement with the possible distinction between audiences of commercial and subsidised theatre. While *Cultural Trends* was continuing to publish data, Selwood's editorial mission to set rigorous analyses and criticism alongside this data was gaining academic traction.

According to cultural policy scholars active in Britain during the early 2000s the immediate impetus for the growth in the field of impact studies during the Blair government was pressure from funding bodies and from government departments to justify the money being spent on fostering the arts and to prove its worth as a social and economic investment. Selwood, in her contribution to the volume *Culture Vultures*[66] – a book edited by Munira Mirza, whose own critiques of New Labour cultural policy have influenced Boris Johnson and David Cameron - comments on the dangers of 'bias being built into the research effort' (47), with reference to the work of prominent bodies such as the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, ippr, ACE and the DCMS itself whose research is described as being prompted by the purposes of advocacy. This motivation may sometimes be due to a political affiliation, but more often prompted by the imperative to secure funding. All of these,

she writes, have a tendency to be 'unquestioning in (their) acceptance of the arts' contribution to education, mental health and offender rehabilitation outcomes' (46) without recourse to an interrogation of the commonly-used methodologies. This echoes the work of Clive Gray and his identification of 'policy attachment', which describes the attachment of a policy area perceived as low priority (in this case, culture and the arts) to one perceived as higher priority (education or health, for example) in order to boost the profile and funding prospects of the former.[67]

Returning to Selwood and *Culture Vultures*, one of her major considerations here is the way in which the expectations and findings in the research she criticises map onto New Labour policy, a reading supported by the introduction to François Matarasso's 1997 study *Use or Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*[68], which is the first point of reference for most subsequent research into the social impact of the arts. Matarasso explicitly ties the study to the incoming government's manifesto:

> The election of a Government committed to tackling problems like youth unemployment, fear of crime and social exclusion is the right moment to start talking about what the arts can do for society, rather than what society can do for the arts. Unfettered by ideology, the new pragmatism can extend its principle of inclusiveness to the arts by embracing their creative approaches to problem-solving. (v)

Matarasso's presentation of this kind of agenda as 'unfettered by ideology' is at odds with Selwood's reading of a potentially problematic and overwhelming instrumentalism that is not as well supported by its accompanying evidence as its advocates suggest.

Selwood also touches on what she sees as the more intractable problems of instrumentalism and particularly its unpopularity with those arts practitioners whose position prioritises intrinsic rather than instrumental value (although, as we have seen with Barker and Bond, these positions are not necessarily entirely congruent with 'art for art's sake'). For these professionals the potential social benefits of their work may not be the primary motivation, and attempts to measure a return in terms of hard impact can be met with hostility where artists feel that the degree of impact

evaluation to which their work is subjected is antithetical to its original purpose (Selwood, 45). Coming from a different angle, both Matarasso and subsequently Helen Jermyn[69] agree that outcomes cannot be guaranteed, and that it is dangerous to regard a planned impact as inevitable – or, by extension, to regard a cultural project as worthless if it does not deliver in terms of pre-decided indicators.

Matarasso, writing in the first year of the New Labour government, identified fifty possible social impacts of arts participation, ranging from the pragmatic to the abstract, and places them into six categories: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, and health and well being. The two major theatre-specific impact studies to emerge during the period under discussion were both heavily influenced by Matarasso in their methodologies. Bill McDonnell and Dominic Shellard, in their ACE-commissioned report Social impact study of UK theatre, identify ten common factors of a successful participatory arts project amongst their case studies, but carefully stipulate that not all of them need be present for a project to be successful (3-4):[70]

- artistic excellence
- cultural partnerships
- accessibility
- participatory creative processes
- giving a public voice to marginalised experiences
- ethical practices (eg duty of care towards vulnerable participants)
- evaluation
- training (both informal development work and pathways to paid employment)
partner funding (notably from non-arts agencies)
- good governance

McDonnell and Shellard do not attempt to define what they mean by 'artistic excellence', but place it deliberately outside the sphere of measurable factors such as how the project is funded and whether it includes an element of education or training.

Their work is heavily influenced by Helen Jermyn's 2001 study, which was the initial literature review for her 2004 ACE report *The Art of Inclusion*, and examined the ways in which the arts could be used to combat social exclusion[71]. Her eventual definition of 'social exclusion', which she acknowledges as central to government policy, was as something 'complex and multidimensional in nature' (*Art of Inclusion* 24) that could be experienced as a result of poverty, disability, geography, crime or any other factor which resulted in individuals or groups feeling unable to fully participate in society. Many of the organisations with which she worked had had difficulty in defining or assessing social exclusion, but her eventual findings did not differ greatly from those of Matarasso or from the projections previously advanced by ACE[72]. The arts could benefit individuals by raising their confidence and teaching them new skills and ideas, and could benefit society by creating more cohesive communities, promoting cross-cultural understanding and creating pathways to employment.

As leading cultural policy scholar Eleonora Belfiore pointed out in her own contribution to *Culture Vultures*[73], many of Matarasso's impacts were difficult to evaluate, if not 'positively vague' (25), such as the claim that the arts can 'give people influence over how they are seen by others' and 'have a positive impact on how people feel' (xi). These concerns were shared by Paola Merli in her critique of Matarasso's survey, published in 2002 in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.[74] Merli also states that Matarasso's desire to produce research that would be relevant to (and have a direct impact on) policy-making had an adverse effect on the methodological rigour of his project and that, far from being 'unfettered by ideology', the survey was in fact flawed by several instances of ideological bias. Merli first attacks the survey's internal validity, demonstrating that the data collected by Matarasso does not in fact support his conclusions. The wording of the survey's questions, Merli argues, not only predisposes the respondent to answer positively but also casts doubt on whether Matarasso has in fact measured what he set out to measure or something else entirely:

> The wording of questions in Matarasso's questionnaire may actually have led respondents to biased answers. For example, the question "Was being able to express your ideas important to you?" (Matarasso, 1997, p. 101) implicitly assumes that everybody had a chance and was able to express his or her

ideas. In addition, from the respondent's point of view, answering "no" to this question means either not having been able to express one's ideas (this is bad in terms of personal development, thus some respondents may answer "yes" only in order not to look or feel undeveloped) or not appreciating the fact of having been able to express one's ideas (this is socially undesirable, thus some participants may answer "yes" even if it is not necessarily what they think) […] Under these circumstances, it is by no means certain that Matarasso is really measuring what he claims to measure. There is a distinct possibility that he is measuring something else, such as the social desirability of the abstract concepts of "happiness", "empowerment" and "confidence" used in the questionnaire. (109)

Another instance of built-in bias identified by Merli is the impossibility of the survey recording negative impact:

For example: "Since being involved have you felt better or healthier?" (even by answering "no" the respondent cannot at any rate mean that he is feeling worse, but only that he has not experienced any change); and also: "Since being involved have you been happier?" (even by answering "no" the respondent cannot in any case mean that he is more unhappy or miserable, but, at most, that he is just as happy as before attendance). The consequence is that the author of the research can rule out possible negative impacts. (109)

While Matarasso attempts to mitigate these inconsistencies by claiming the impossibility of assessing subjective or affective change according to predefined indicators, Merli points out that this should have directed him away from the use of a methodological tool that he has already dismissed as ineffective when addressing the arts. Moreover, she continues, the survey lacks external as well as internal validity due to the low response rate (25%) and the lack of justification given for the participatory projects selected for the survey; there is no evidence that these projects provide a representative sample of participatory projects either nationally or within specific geographical or socio-economic parameters.

The difficulty in confirming or evaluating the success of arts projects in delivering on

Matarasso's criteria is not simply their abstract and subjective nature, but also the length of time these impacts might take to make themselves felt:

> The five-stage proposed evaluation model could never capture long-term transformation. The five steps of the suggested evaluation method are: planning/setting indicators, execution, assessment, and reporting. The report advises us that the assessment stage should take place 'on completion of the project', whereas the different stakeholders should all compile reports on the results of the projects 'shortly after completion' of the project. (Belfiore 2006, 26)

Clearly, this would not make the assessment of long-term impact feasible. This criticism is echoed, in a wider context, by Sara Selwood (2006, 49-50), who questions whether the short-term audience research carried out by arts organisations and agencies is meaningful. The type of research to which Selwood refers is carried out in sync with funding cycles and is often geared to providing evidence of the existence of 'new audiences' experiencing the transformative power of the arts; whether the lives and communities of these new audience members are indeed transformed in the long term cannot be established by immediate measurement of audience figures and feedback.

Belfiore also states that another problem with Matarasso's report is the difficulty of establishing a direct causal link between a project and any positive changes that might be observed in individuals or a community as a result of participation in the arts. For example, one of the projects that particularly interests Matarasso, the V&A Mughal Tent Project, involved some women who suffered from clinical depression and were attending a psychiatric day centre, and he draws attention to a coordinators report which notes that the effect of the project on one woman in particular was strikingly positive:[75]

> 'She has come back to her own life,' reported the co-ordinator. 'She has started taking an interest in lots of things. Before she used to wear dark colours all the time. Now she comes in bright colours in her saris and puts jewellery on.' (65)

While a change in dressing habits can be one indicator of an upturn in the mental health of a psychiatric patient, the statement would hold more validity within the survey if supported by other evidence of an improvement in her condition (for example, a statement from a medical professional who had continuing involvement in her care confirming the observations of the project coordinator). It is, in any case, impossible to prove that the improvement was a direct result of participation in the Mughal Tent Project. There is no reference to any other treatment the participant was receiving, or to other events in her life that may have had a positive impact on her health. In Belfiore's words:

> Noting that a change has occurred against a predefined indicator after participation in a cultural activity is not enough to argue that the transformation was caused by the arts activity itself. For the arts impact argument to hold, it is crucial to establish a causal relation between the transformation observed and the cultural project or activity being evaluated. (30)

This, and the lack of financial content in the study, is at odds with Matarasso's assertion that:

> ...participatory arts projects are effective and cost very little in the context of spending on social goals. They represent an insignificant financial risk to public services, but can produce impacts (social and economic) out of proportion to their cost. (76)

As no long-term impacts were recorded, and Matarasso gives no indication of the implementation (and evaluation) costs involved, Belfiore's argument is that this claim – and others like it – cannot be substantiated and, therefore, cannot stand alone as evidence.[76]

Returning to McDonnell and Shellard, it is straightforward to see how some of their key indicators of success, particularly training and cultural partnerships, could lead to the 'hard impacts' that they highlight elsewhere. 'Hard impact' is a term sourced from Jermyn's study, alongside 'personal impact', 'civic impact' and 'group impact', and refers to situations in which a cultural project gives a participant the impetus to

apply the lessons they have learned in other contexts that benefit the community, the economy or themselves. The problem, once again, is that of establishing a causal link between an individual's participation and their subsequent actions, and the McDonnell/Shellard study does not make such links clear. It is also frequently unclear in the study whether these impacts were effected or just planned. One project, the multi-media *Yellow Brick Road* in which Year 10 students were encouraged to explore the nature, value and relevance of the creative process through a series of encounters with artists, had 'improved attendance at school' listed as a potential 'hard impact', but it is never established whether or not this happened (18).[77] This emphasises the problem of short-term evaluations; school attendance is typical of the kind of social impact that will be of tremendous and lasting benefit to both the participants and their community but which can only be tracked over a substantial period of time.

The lack of a methodology that delivers internally and externally valid conclusions on impact despite the impossibility of establishing direct, measurable causal links between experience of the arts and social change becomes a thorn in the side of Belfiore,[78] Selwood and Merli; the simultaneous demand for and lack of reliable quantitative and qualitative data acquired through sound methodologies complicates the case for an instrumentalist approach to arts funding, despite the seemingly obvious fact that people continue to experience and be affected by external factors while participating in arts projects. Selwood describes this as 'an intractable problem' (48); just as art itself is not amenable to measurement and statistics, its social role is slippery, difficult to determine and not easily substantiated by data the gathering of which has been affected by frequently unacknowledged cognitive or ideological bias.

While these early critiques of arts impact evaluation methodology have been developed alongside newer ways of thinking about cultural value (and I will discuss these in Chapter 6), they remain interesting for two reasons. Firstly, they offer insights into the genesis of new currents in cultural policy scholarship that look at the the potential of qualitative evidence and the nature of the relationship between academic research and the policy-making process. Secondly, the existence of this work demonstrates the growth within academic circles of distrust of New Labour's political framework. Despite the frequent statements of progressive, socially-

responsible intent in cultural policy literature, academics were focusing increasingly on the realities and problems of New Labour's managerialist policy-making and the need for a higher level of ideological scepticism to enable continued criticism of unsatisfactory advocacy-driven research that lacked either internal or external validity. Commentators as diverse as utopian scholar Ruth Levitas, members of the Chartist movement, and former City economist Chris Dillow have all identified New Labour's managerialism as being post-political; an ideology that elided equality and efficiency. The disquisitions of managerialism presented problems such as social inequality, poverty and mass unemployment as the results of poor management rather than political issues, glitches which should be efficiently managed away by an elite rather than having to be the subject of political discussion or cultural commentary. Rather than simply agitating for the primacy of intrinsic value, academic critiques of the first nine years of New Labour cultural policy established a resistance to the post-political aporia created by the reliance on questionable methodologies and advocacy-driven research in establishing the social role of art, and an opposition to art's use as a tool for managing social problems that have their roots in the political rather than in administrative weakness.

Centre-Right perspectives

In February 2010 Jonathan Holmes published a defence of state funding for the arts in *The Guardian* arts blog in which he outlined several major arguments for continuing subsidy; subsidy as financial investment, art as a catalyst for urban regeneration and as a way of enhancing Britain's international reputation, the importance of creativity in a mature democracy and the capacity of the arts for exploring personal and political identity.[79] While the article itself is an intelligent and interesting piece of journalism, some of the below-the-line comments it provoked are equally instructive. For example:

> State subsidised art is state art. It's not necessarily bad, but it is necessarily controlled and influenced by the state. The fact that the Arts Council is at arms length from the currently elected government is irrelevant - because they are all the same kind of people with the same kind of desires about how they want to change society, and the same unshakeable belief that they are right. ('afinch')

This response makes interesting reading because it mirrors, intentionally or not, much of the discourse on arts funding coming from right-wing think tanks and other bodies. Following on from David Sawers' report for the Institute of Economic Affairs in 1993, *Should the Taxpayer Support the Arts?*[80] a number of arts funding commentators from the right have continued to ask whether the arts in Britain could or should survive without the help of the state and whether the market alone should set the criteria for artistic worth, while others have accepted the need for state subsidy but question, like 'afinch', whether the 'arm's length' principle on which the Arts Council was founded is still workable or indeed desirable.

Marc Sidwell, another critic from the centre-right, has given a thoroughly-researched account of the politicisation of the Arts Council under New Labour.[81] His 2009 report was commissioned and launched by the New Culture Forum, an organisation that lists among its aims 'to challenge the discredited Left/liberal cultural orthodoxy and change the terms of debate', 'to provide a strong basis for mutual support and association for centre-right and other dissenting voices who work in the broad cultural arena of the media' and 'to promote a new flowering of excellence in the arts, motivated by aesthetic honesty, not box-ticking or political indoctrination'[82], and is accordingly dismissive of the use of instrumentalist arguments as a basis for cultural policy. Sidwell summarises his own understanding of the purpose of art as follows:

> Surely the capacity of the arts to transport individuals out of their everyday environment, rather than any imputed relevance, is a great part of their power. It breaks down boundaries of class, nation and (by celebrating the great artistic achievements of the past) even of time itself. (34)

Sidwell's report comes down in favour of the dismantling of ACE as it stands. One of his central arguments is that the Arts Council is no longer fit for purpose, having been devised in an entirely different cultural climate following a model which is no longer relevant or workable. Keynes' faith in an class of brilliant, discerning experts who would safeguard the nation's artistic values comes under attack for its naivety, as Sidwell claims that the original vision of an independent body, not subject to government interference, making frugal use of limited resources with reference only

to the highest standards of taste was not sufficiently robust or flexible to withstand the political changes of the latter half of the 20th century. For Sidwell, the appointment of Jennie Lee and the continuing increase of attention paid to culture by Westminster and Whitehall over the next three decades confused rather than clarified the relationship between the government and the arts, as it became unclear what level of intervention was desired or needed. His question is not what kind of arts policy is appropriate, but, whether it is appropriate to have one at all.[83]

Government intervention and the arm's-length principle are explored by Sidwell in the light of public choice theory, which he defines thus:

> Public choice theory examines political behaviour in positive or realistic rather than ideal terms. It finds that the individuals working in government agencies pursue their own private interests, and that the behaviour of these agencies can best be explained on this basis; and it argues that if government must act, institutional designs should reflect this reality. (35)

This theory, which as Sidwell points out did not exist when the Arts Council was founded, is the basis of his analysis of 'the expansion (…) of arts funding and the extreme dysfunction of the council in recent years' (35). In the light of public choice theory, Keynes' original intention that the Arts Council be a temporary measure to prime the pump of external support for the fine arts looks unworkable, because departments and the individuals within them will not work towards their own redundancy. By extension, Sidwell uses this claim to explain the growing closeness between the ACE and the DNH/DCMS:

> Designed to be operated by benign technocrats in the public interest, its purpose and goals inevitably become distorted, despite (or even because of) the political skills and high intelligence of those appointed. Even individuals with the best intentions must serve their immediate interests first: empires grow; special pleading is employed; pet projects get funds; politics intrude; no one ever gives up power and influence. (36)

Once government has become explicitly involved, through the creation and growth of a department, in arts funding, the other implicated bodies will begin to play

whatever games are required to sustain their own growth.

Andrew Brighton's contribution to *Culture Vultures* criticises the ACE for having allowed the creative independence of artists to become subservient to the demands of New Labour's political agenda.[84] In this climate, he argues, both the personal and the universal aspects of art are disregarded in favour of an overriding emphasis on a social instrumentalism that suggests that 'art had been stolen by its practitioners and audience' (119). Brighton's critique is far more straightforward and less cynical than Sidwell's; firmly rooted in the 'art for art's sake' camp, he expresses nostalgia for the ideological independence the Arts Council had prior to the appointment of Jennie Lee and the commitment to aesthetic ideals that he sees the organisation as having upheld in its early years. He is particularly hostile to New Labour managerialism, and the way in which it is used to uphold an anti-elitist discourse that he sees as deeply disingenuous:

> A sea change will have begun only when the DCMS's funding agreement with the Treasury has ceased to require increased arts attendance by 'priority groups', that is, C2DE and black and other ethnic minorities and the disabled. These are people defined directly by lack of education, social classes C2DE, or are people 'underrepresented' amongst the educated. The present funding agreement runs from 2005 until 2008. (...) Without endangering the current level of DCMS funding, Tessa Jowell cannot escape requiring of the arts institutions that attendance by these groups increase. (120)

Brighton does not regard these priorities as belonging solely to the Left, but rather inscribes them (albeit implicitly) into post-Thatcherism, claiming that they are 'a tool for embourgeoisment, a means for abolishing the underclass' (124). At other points in the essay, he defends the Conservative cultural policies of the 1980s, claiming that enterprise culture caused the arts to flourish and offered them, most importantly, 'more autonomy' (119), although it is unclear whether the autonomy he prizes is economic, aesthetic or social in character (this discussion will unfold in the next chapter). Both Brighton and Sidwell unwittingly demonstrate the possibility of approaching McMaster's consensus from either Left or Right; as Brighton's argument attacks a perceived elitist paternalism in New Labour cultural policy that smacks of

social engineering[85] Sidwell gestures towards the Leftist credentials of this position by quoting Roy Shaw's *The Arts and The People*, stating that his argument is not the sole property of the centre-right and can claim credibility elsewhere on the political spectrum. As I have already mentioned in this chapter, with reference to McMaster's use of a redefinition of the contested term 'excellence' to construct a rhetoric of consensus around the purpose of art, the problematics of an erosion of Left and Right have been rehearsed by theorists of radical democracy (most famously Mouffe & Laclau) and will be developed further by me in Chapter 4.

Having devoted considerable space here to some of the research which supported theatre subsidy under the Blair government and to the ways in which it was interrogated and critiqued by academics, it is important before I move on to some theoretical perspectives on the above to reconsider the meaning of this body of work for political theatre and for the propositions laid out by Barker and Bond (Chapter 1). As I have already stated in Chapter 1, the process of attempting to demonstrate the social impact of theatre in order to attract state funding is part of a move towards reconciliation between stage and state that is far from unproblematic. As Bond would have it, the possibility of 'radical innocence' in performance is vulnerable to erosion in a climate that demands the appeasement of policy-makers and governmental departments by those attempting to make their political interventions or provocations through the medium of theatre. In Chapter 5 I will continue to address the difficulties of locating political resistance within a subsidised theatre that has to share discourse and doxa with the state in order to survive, but that discussion will focus on the plays themselves i.e. what takes place within the performance space. The research I have discussed here, and the opposition to it, is focused entirely on what happens outside the space of performance, to how the effect (and affect) of the theatrical experience is interpreted and described by participants and spectators. This is where Barker's voice resonates again; if the primary relationship in the theatrical encounter (as set up by Matarasso, Jermyn and McDonnell & Shellard) is between the spectator and their community or *demos*, where does that leave the figure of the dramatist? For Barker, the spectator's position in political theatre is that of a witness, and a potentially hostile and unreliable one at that, rather than a mediator who carries the cultural and emotional benefits of a trip to the theatre out into the world with an increased readiness to participate in and enhance their

community.

My contention is that the academics who have taken impact research to task for its lack of rigour and validity provide an important site of resistance, as they disrupt the reconciliation between theatre and policy by questioning the grounds on which this reconciliation is constructed. According to their criticisms, if we are to accept that subsidised theatre operates as a public good, that it enhances education, health, well-being and social inclusion, then evidence must be stronger, data sets must be broader and/or more carefully considered, and conclusions must hold internal and external validity. The relationship between cultural policy and those who research and criticise it is a difficult one, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, but I would argue that the role of cultural policy scholars in resisting the prevailing doxa of the arts as a means to an ideological end has been and remains an important one for political theatre. I have stated in my opening chapter that this thesis seeks to locate ways of re-opening the discursive closure created by Third Way discourse, and I include the sociological criticisms of cultural policy scholars in that project. Even while their research discipline is predicated on a relationship between stage and state, the debates they have encouraged surrounding the validity of existing impact research and therefore its utility both the policy-making and theatre contributes to a disruption of that relationship.

In the next chapter I will return to some of the perspectives presented here and their implications for how community, political participation and most importantly autonomy function in New Labour cultural policy. I will also, following the work of Ruth Levitas, look at the utopian strands that are present in the writings of both the policy-makers and their critics on Left and Right. Discussions and definitions of artistic autonomy, of the relevance of art to developing consciousness and pre-figuring social change, and of the inarticulable elements in art's cultural worth are all echoed in the writings of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Bloch and Jameson, and the intention in this next chapter is to use utopian thought to introduce the positions of these different perspectives on utopia, negativity and autonomy within the aesthetics debate and the relationship of those elements to contemporary cultural policy. This will pave the way for the intervention of Jill Dolan's thoughts on the utopian performative that will dominate the latter half of the fifth chapter.

[46] McMaster, Brian. *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: from Measurement to Judgement*. London: DCMS, 2008.

[47] Arts Council England. *Achieving great art for everyone*. London: ACE, 2010.

[48] Myerscough, John. *The Economic Importance of The Arts In Britain*. Policy Studies Institute, 1988

[49] Eleonora Belfiore gives a succinct account of these developments in "Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK". International Journal of Cultural Policy, 8:1. 2002. 91-106

[50] Hansen, T.B. (1995) 'Measuring the Value of Culture'. International Journal of Cultural Policy 1.2, 1995. 309–322.

[51] Conservative Party. *A New Landscape for The Arts. The Arts Task Force: Submission to The Shadow Secretary of Culture, Media and Sport.* London, 2007

[52] Galloway, Susan & Dunlop, Stewart 'A critique of definitions of the cultural and creative industries in public policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13.1. 2007. 17-31.

[53] Hesmondhalgh, David. 'Media and cultural policy as public policy'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 11.1. 2005. 95-109

[54] DCMS, *A New Cultural Framework*. London: HMSO, 1998

[55] Garnham, Nicholas. *Capitalism and Communication: Global Culture and the Economics of Information*. London: Sage. 1990

[56] Hewison, Robert. *Culture and Consensus*. London: Methuen, 1995.

[57] Entertainments National Service Association

[58] Hewison also notes the effect of this on the field of cultural studies, which during this period focused more heavily on film and television than live events in what he reads as a revolt against the perceived snobbishness and elitism of the fine arts prioritised by Thatcherite arts policy.

[59] *Annual Review 2008: The State of the Arts*. London: ACE, 2008.

[60] This phrase is also used by Tessa Jowell in her essay 'Government and the value of culture' (2004) which is often read as a defence of the 'art for art's sake' position.

[61] Feist, Andrew & Hutchison, Robert. 'Cultural trends – introduction', *Cultural Trends*, 1:1, 1989. 1-1.

[62] Allin, Paul. Commentary 1: Measuring public participation in the arts: Some methodological issues, *Cultural Trends*, 9:33. 1999. 105-106

[63] Bradshaw, Tom & Mosier, Olive 'Public participation in the arts in the United States: Summary of the national endowment for the arts 1997 survey', Cultural Trends, 9:33, 1999. 35-104

[64] O'Hagan, John. 'Commentary: Policy analysis of theatre in the UK: A need for a broader perspective'. *Cultural Trends*, 9:34, 1999. 25-29

[65] Quine, Michael. 'Audiences for live theatre in Britain: The presentsituation and some implications', *Cultural Trends*, 9:34, 1999. 1-24

[66] Selwood, Sara. 'Unreliable Evidence'. *Culture Vultures*. Ed. Munira Mirza. London; Policy Exchange Limited. 2006. 38-52

[67] Gray, Clive. 'Joining-up or tagging on? The arts, cultural planning and the view from below'. *Public Policy and Administration* 19:2 2004. 38-49

[68] Matarasso, Francois. *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*. London: Comedia, 1997.

[69] Jermyn, Helen. *The arts and social exclusion*. London: ACE, 2001.

[70] McDonnell, Bill, and Shellard, Dominic. *Social impact study of UK theatre*. London: ACE, 2006.

[71] Jermyn, Helen. *The art of inclusion*. London: ACE, 2004.

[72] Jermyn, Helen. *Addressing social exclusion: a framework for action*. London: ACE, 1999.

[73] Belfiore, Eleonora. 'The social impacts of the arts; myth or reality?' *Culture Vultures*. Ed. Munira Mirza. London, Policy Exchange Limited. 2006. 20-37

[74] Merli, Paola. 'Evaluating the social impact of participation in arts activities'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1, 2002. 107-118

[75] The Mughal Tent Project, established in the 1990s by Shireen Akbar, was a textile project in which Asian women and children worked in groups alongside those from other backgrounds to create textile panels inspired by the South Asian tent hangings in the V&A's collection.

[76] It is important to note at this point that such reservations are not restricted to Matarasso's study. Belfiore remarks that the policy-making world's wholesale acceptance of 'Use or Ornament', which was only intended as a starting point for more exacting research, as the benchmark of methodology has contributed to a flawed consensus on arts impact assessment.

[77] The researcher audited a group of 16 young men selected from inner city schools.

[78] The development of Belfiore's thought will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

[79] Holmes, Jonathan. "Why we must fund the arts". *Guardian*, 27 February 2010 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/feb/27/arts-funding-reasons-subsidise-creativity>

[80] Sawers, David, *Should the Taxpayer Support the Arts* (London: IEA, 1993)

[81] Sidwell, Marc. *The Arts Council: Managed To Death*. London: New Culture Forum/Social Affairs Unit, 2009.

[82] New Culture Forum website: <http://www.newcultureforum.org.uk/home/?q=node/3>

[83] This is a point of view also expressed by Munira Mirza: see Rupert Christiansen. "Munira Mirza: a blast of fresh air for London." *The Daily Telegraph* 2 Mar 2009.

[84] Brighton, Andrew. "Consumed by the political." *Culture Vultures*. Ed. Munira Mirza. London: Policy Exchange, 2006. 111-129

[85] Brighton is by no means alone in this: see Bennett, Oliver. (1996) *Cultural Policy and the Crisis of Legitimacy: Entrepreneurial Answers in the United Kingdom*. Centre for the Study of Cultural Policy, University of Warwick. 1996

Chapter 3

Community, autonomy, utopia: theoretical perspectives

In the previous chapter I discussed the difficulties experienced by researchers in devising ways of assessing the positive social impact of the arts that were able to take account of qualitative, subjective experience while maintaining a sufficient level of empirical rigour. At this point, it is vital to devote some space to the nuances of what these researchers sought to assess - what theatre can do for society in terms of social inclusion and well-being, and how well it currently does it - and how the dissenting claims of Barker and Bond are relevant here. For this I will make a theoretical move towards the thinkers I have already mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 1 - Adorno, Marcuse and Bloch - in order to address two central concepts in particular: 'community' and 'autonomy'.

Following on from my discussion of Howard Barker and specifically of Karoline Gritzner's use of Adorno in her reading, I will revisit the three possible types of autonomy I mention there and flesh out their definitions and how they map on to the autonomies laid out by Adorno. The word 'autonomy' has the potential to function in several different capacities - as part of the rhetoric of 'art for art's sake', as a descriptor for art that is created independently of state ideology, as a euphemistic synonym for private funding etc, and the autonomy of Adorno is itself far from uncomplicated.

Firstly, however, as many of the arguments present in cultural policy and advocacy-based research contain (as I will explain below) appeals to the idea of community, I shall engage with the much-criticised communitarianism of Blair. In Chapter 4 I will go on to look more closely at the problematics of the social inclusion agenda; if the creation of cohesive communities to combat social exclusion are to be accepted as a goal of subsidised theatre, however, it is important first to consider how a cohesive community might be constituted in Blair's Britain. I have already, in my opening chapter, introduced the work done by Jill Dolan in excavating the relations between theatrical performance, political participation and *communitas*, and these are strands of thought I will pick up once again in Chapter 5. In preparation for this, and for Dolan's thoughts on the utopian potential of theatrical performance, I shall develop

my discussion of community and its position in cultural policy to make space for the emergence of utopian strands of thinking. I will examine the different types and definitions of the communitarian that were in play during the Blair and Brown governments with a view to asking, in Chapter 5, how theatre and its political potential might work within, outside or against them.

New Labour communities - Blair and communitarian thought

The idea of community is central to the purposes attributed to the subsidised arts in social impact studies influenced by Matarasso. As well as Alan Davey's nebulous idea of 'getting on in the world', which implies the overcoming of social exclusion in order to leave the margins behind and participate in what the mainstream has to offer, three out of Matarasso's six categories of social impact refer directly or indirectly to community (social cohesion, community empowerment, and local image and identity) and this is mirrored by McDonnell, Shellard and Jermyn. To lay the ground for later discussions of the pitfalls of Third Way social democracy and how they have made themselves felt in the field of theatrical performance, I begin here with the much-criticised 'community' of Blair.

In 1997, Stephen Driver and Luke Martell attempted to map the communitarianism promised by Blair onto their own typology of communitarianisms.[86] The result was surprising in view of the influence New Labour claimed to have drawn from communitarian thought. Driver and Martell's typology is determined by three levels they identify in the communitarian:

> [...] there is a sociological strand in communitarianism which is *descriptive and explanatory* and about how humans become what they are-in a social context and not atomistically. Then there is an ethical communitarianism which is *normative* and says that community is a good thing. And finally there is a meta-ethical communitarianism which is about the *philosophical bases* for ethics and tends to say that it is not possible to find universal foundations for ethics and morals: these have to be relative to the communities in which they arise. (29)

From this, they work through six possible dimensions of communitarianism and

examine how those dimensions are reflected in Blair's propositions: (i) conformist-pluralist; (ii) less conditional- more conditional; (iii) progressive-conservative; (iv) prescriptive-voluntary; (v) moral-socioeconomic; and (vi) individual-corporate. Each of these dimensions is presented as a continuum rather than a binary. Driver and Martell find that Blair's communitarianism encounters particular difficulty on the 'meta-ethical' level, using as it does the rhetoric of universal morality and 'strong values'. The implication is that a moral agenda exists which transcends the community to and for which it claims to speak. When examining their proposed six dimensions, Driver and Martell conclude that

> Labour increasingly advocates conditional, morally prescriptive, conservative and individual communitarianisms at the expense of less conditional and redistributional, socioeconomic, progressive and corporate communitarianisms. It is torn between conformist and pluralist communitarianisms and this shows in its policies (43)

With recourse to their typology, Driver and Martell are still able to read Blair's politics as communitarian, albeit communitarianism of a conservative, conditional and individualist nature.

Sarah Hale responds to the dialogues and dissonances of Blair's frequent appeals to 'community' with an illuminating discussion of the fractures between New Labour and 20th century British and American communitarian thought, concluding that to refer to the 'communitarianism' of Blair and even to regard communitarianism as New Labour's defining philosophy is a mistake.[87] Like Driver & Martell, she acknowledges Blair's debt to the political communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni without positing 'a crude relationship of influence' (Hale, 93), observing instead that despite a common assumption that Blair's communitarianism derives largely from Etzioni's writings, his claims to communitarianism rest more on co-opting of Etzioni's terminology than a deep understanding and adoption of his political position. In her review of academic accounts of community and New Labour, however, Hale puts forward the view that even to claim Blair's rhetoric alone as communitarian is not sustainable. It shares a number of terms with the work of thinkers like Etzioni who are heavily influenced by communitarian philosophy, but those terms are articulated very differently. One example Hale chooses, to which I will return in Chapter 3

when looking at Janet Newman's work on Third Way governance, is the coupling of 'rights and responsibilities'. She outlines the New Labour position as follows:

> When New Labour talk about rights and responsibilities, although this is often couched in the language of community and/or civil society, the rights they refer to are usually welfare rights i.e. money, goods or services provided via the state, and the duties or responsibilities (the terms tend in this context to be used interchangeably) are those of individuals, frequently and most specifically individual beneficiaries of state action. (115)

Rights, here, are neither considered to be absolute nor to be claimed by an individual or a group but are in the gift of the state, and awarded at the state's discretion to those who are considered to have behaved responsibly according to that state's particular set of ideological positions. 'Communities' created along these lines, for Hale, are not communitarian as they are top-down power structures that have at their heart ideologically coersive elements. Etzioni's communitarianism, though explicitly Third Way, constructs responsibility in a more broadly reciprocal way which clashes with the realities of New Labour policy. Etzioni, quoted extensively by Hale, is more ready to accept some rights as absolute. These are primarily those associated with physical survival, although he also brings rights deriving from the social into play such as 'a fair trial (and) free speech' (quoted Hale, 116). In Etzioni's 'good society' it is the responsibility of the state to ensure access to those for rights for all citizens, not the responsibility of the individual citizens to earn them.

Ruth Levitas, in her 2001 article 'Community, Utopia and New Labour'[88] reads the role of community and social inclusion in New Labour rhetoric[89] as an idiosyncratic one, as it plays on ideas from both Old Labour and the New Right, attempting to create a consensus (much as I have argued in the previous chapter regarding McMaster and his use of the term 'excellence') while avoiding explicit dialogue between apparently antithetical constitutive elements. Rather than locating Blair's communitarianism within a typology like Driver & Martell's, which allows for intersections between different dimensions of the communitarian and seeks to pinpoint the position of policies on a sliding scale from conservative to progressive, prescriptive to voluntary etc., she depicts it as something deliberately nebulous,

created to identify and inhabit the spaces between Old Labour and conservatism. As she puts it:

> Blair sought to distance himself both from Thatcherism and Thatcher's claim that there was no such thing as society, and from 'old Labour' (everything from social democracy leftwards including state intervention, public ownership, equality and redistribution). 'Community' is used as a deliberate alternative to 'society', in order to signal difference both from the neoliberal New Right and from forms of socialism dependent on intervention by the state. ('Community' 191)

Community, ideology, utopia - Bloch and Jameson

For Levitas, New Labour's community is simultaneously ideological and utopian (188); the former in that it signifies a Third Way rejection of both the unrestrained free market of neoliberalism and the overbearing, interventionist state associated with Old Labour, and the latter in that it takes on the role of the 'something missing' of Bloch's utopian writings to which I will return during this chapter. While the notion of community in utopian socialism has historically been opposed to orthodox Marxism, in that utopian communities attempted to separate themselves from prevailing economic conditions and the class struggle (Levitas singles out Owen, Fourier and Saint-Simon in particular), they retain - for Levitas and other theorists of the utopian - a powerful presence because of the possibility they offer of an alternative to the alienated labour and distorted interpersonal relations of capitalism. She continues:

> Herein lies the essential ambiguity of appeals to community. They are perhaps always utopian in the sense of expressing what is missing. They are sometimes oppositional, laying claim to the need for a radically altered political economy and society. They are sometimes alternative, or defensive. When the economic dimension is missing, ignored or denied, the demand for community tends to become ideological in the strict sense of the word. That is, it masks the real economic relationships and conflicts that exist – or itself becomes the subject of conflict. ('Community' 190)

The community of New Labour, in Levitas' view, holds the rhetorical function of abstract collective in a discourse organised around 'community, opportunity, responsibility, employability, and inclusion' (191), and is used to designate geographic, ethnic, cultural or vocational commonality. She ties Blair's communitarianism more closely to Etzioni than Hale does, and maps some of her criticisms of Etzioni (who 'ignores economic inequalities' (192)) onto her problems with New Labour.

Levitas' reading, more explicitly than Driver and Martell's or Hale's, maps on to the 'community' of McDonnell and Shellard, and certainly that of Brian McMaster and Alan Davey, for whom 'excellent' art should provide the impetus to 'get on in the world' by rejecting the economic and social margins as lacking in aspirational riches. This can be seen as an example of 'a demand for community [that] masks the real economic relationships and conflicts that exist', in the sense that arts projects that attempt to foster community are, in fact, exacerbating false consciousness by making the culturally and economically marginalised feel or appear (at least for the duration of the project) less so. Following Levitas' line of argument, there is potential for regarding these projects as ideologically driven rather than utopian, as class divisions are papered over and the late capitalist status quo is reaffirmed rather than subverted.

In referring to 'what is missing', Levitas borrows a turn of phrase used by Bloch in *The Principle of Hope* (1986)[90], and although she does not provide a detailed reading here it is undoubtedly the presence of Bloch that enables her to locate a utopian dimension even in the ideological communitarianism of New Labour. By introducing this text Levitas demonstrates a reluctance to treat the ideological and the utopian as a binary, and this builds on her earlier work on Bloch in which she discusses the position of the ideological in the rehabilitation of utopian thinking. In her 1990 essay 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia'[91], Levitas presents Bloch's utopia as constituted by a range of dialectical relationships; the abstract and the concrete, memory and futurity, compensation and transformation. Bloch's project in *The Principle of Hope* was not simply the reclaiming of utopia but its rehabilitation as a category of Marxian thinking, which is why he devotes such methodical thought to the construction of the utopian imaginary; if utopia is going to become useful to the Marxist project then it needs to

be brought in to service with great care. Not all types of utopian imagining are as efficacious as others. Where purely abstract utopian imagining is presented by Bloch as an immature form of imagining, purely fantastical and concerned only with a transformation in the well-being of the individual subject (1. 33), it requires a dialectical relationship with a more concrete form - the presence of anticipation of an alternative futurity and the will, as well as the wish, to effect it (1.145) - in order to move beyond pointless wishful thinking. It is only through this relation that abstract utopian imagining, the desire for some change in one's own circumstances without the will to change the world such that the fulfilment of this desire may be practicable, can become useful to the Marxian project. In order to locate the utility of the utopian imagination, the concrete elements of hope must be found within their abstract context of wish and desire. This is particularly applicable when looking at what Marx might have considered to be merely ideological artefacts, as Bloch (as is corroborated by Levitas' reading) is cautious of dismissing as pure ideology that which contains any element of futurity and unmet need. This is a caution I intend to exercise when looking at impact research and policy. For Bloch, the critique of ideology should also be an act of excavation of any elements of hope, of anticipation of a better world, of anything genuinely politically progressive (as distinct from elements which seek to convince us erroneously that the change we seek is already in progress (1.148)) from which a concrete element of potentially transformative utopian imagining might be extracted (1. 148-9). Even where it might be tempting to regard the published output of ACE, the DCMS and advocacy-based researchers as largely ideological, I intend to follow Bloch in engaging with these documents in search of any utopian residue that might remain once the manipulations, mystifications and dominations of ideology has been stripped away.

On this note, I shall make a brief return to the participatory cultural practices that most impress McDonnell and Shellard, Matarasso, and particularly Jermyn (see Chapter 2). These often have a rehabilitative element which aims to help participants get into, or return to, work. Matarasso in particular writes movingly (50) about a small-scale regeneration project in Helsinki in which artist Ritva Harle worked with hard drinkers from a local pub to create public art; several of the men involved in the project used their new-found confidence and building skills to subsequently find paid work. The creation of 'community' and raised employment levels that includes these people may at first glance be read as a utopian aim that works against late

capitalism as it is described by Fredric Jameson:[92] 'a society unable to accommodate the productiveness of all its citizens' (38). Full employment, Jameson argues, is incompatible with late capitalism:

> As the economic apologists for the system today have tirelessly instructed us, capitalism cannot flourish under full employment; it requires a reserve army of the unemployed in order to function and to avoid inflation. That first monkey-wrench of full employment would then be compounded by the universality of the requirement, inasmuch as capitalism also requires a frontier, and perpetual expansion, in order to sustain its inner dynamic. But at this point the utopianism of the demand becomes circular, for it is also clear, not only that the establishment of full employment would transform the system, but also that the system would have to be already transformed, in advance, in order for full employment to be established.(38)

For full employment to be reached in a society, and for the potential of all citizens within it to be realised (presumably, as Jameson invokes a utopian discourse, in the form of unalienated labour), radical changes to the existing system would already need to have taken place. Artistic projects defined as 'excellent' in the McMaster sense because of their contributions to 'community' in the form of employment opportunities for the previously marginalised could be seen as having a utopian dimension in that they help to create the conditions under which people can imagine such a society, and imagine themselves being productive within it (that said, Levitas, Driver & Martell would undoubtedly counter with the argument that New Labour communitarianism, like the Big Society, was dependent on a high level of voluntarism (Levitas 193-4) which does not necessarily always lead to higher employment figures).

That notwithstanding, the perspective of practitioners and participants - as documented by Matarasso et al – who have found that their experiences of state-funded projects has raised their level of civic engagement (despite the well-founded scholarly reservations of Paola Merli) is sufficient to suggest that there may be a utopian impulse, even where it may be buried in abstract utopian imaginings that are contextualised within Third Way ideology, in the vehemence with which subsidy is advocated.

Negative utopias - Marcuse and Adorno

The choreographer Siobhan Davies is quoted in 'Achieving great art for everyone' as saying:[93]

> We all have the perception to play and work with our active imaginations.
> Artists help us to connect with ideas of making and destroying so that we
> may feel more confident about renewal rather than frightened of change.
> (27)

For Siobhan Davies the subversive potential of art resides not in its power to directly alter the prevailing reality but in its ability to lead spectators (in a move that Howard Barker would consider problematically paternalistic) towards the possibility of breaking with it. Participants and audiences are encouraged, on a personal and subjective level, to engage with ideas of a destruction of the 'established reality principle' and to move beyond that. This is a distillation of what, for Marcuse in *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), constitutes the utopian purpose of art; while art's relationship with political praxis remains indirect (at times frustratingly so), it can have a radical effect on the relationship between individuals and and the alienating system within which they live.[94] This happens even, or especially, when that art reflects that society's lack of freedom:

> The autonomy of art reflects the unfreedom of individuals in the
> unfree society [...] Art remains marked by unfreedom; in contradicting
> it, art achieves its autonomy. (72)

As Davies implies, art does not in itself effect the destruction of prevailing conditions, but it does simultaneously express the lack of freedom in the society that makes it and create within itself a space in which feeling 'confident about renewal' becomes possible. This is a space to which I will return in Chapter 5, using Jill Dolan's work in locating the utopian with specific reference to theatrical performance.

This assertion, along with Levitas' invocation of Bloch, invites a closer examination

of the relationship between financial and aesthetic autonomy (which I will undertake in the next section) and calls to mind the dialectical relationship between aesthetic and material that forms the central question of much of Adorno's writing.

As Adorno argues in *Aesthetic Theory*[95]:

> With the continuing organization of all cultural spheres the desire grows to assign art its place in society theoretically and indeed practically [...] Once art has been recognized as a social fact, the sociological definition of its context considers itself superior to it and disposes over it. Often the assumption is that the objectivity of value-free positivistic knowledge is superior to supposedly subjective aesthetic standpoints. Such endeavors themselves call for social criticism. They tacitly seek the primacy of administration, of the administered world even over what refuses to be grasped by total socialization or at any rate struggles against it (250)

Adorno reacts strongly against the application of sociological methodology to the justification of art, arguing that it contributes to the inscription of art into systems of commodification and exchange-value. Matarasso's assertion that participatory arts projects provide an excellent return on financial investment in the form of social capital (13) would be as problematic for Adorno as it clearly is for Selwood, but for entirely different reasons. While the impact research discussed in Chapter 2 may be too sociological to be brought into an Adornian reading of the relationship between art and the social, it has been insufficiently sociological, too lacking in rigour, to satisfy Selwood and her fellow cultural analysts. The question of what art can achieve socially, of its worth in terms of social capital, is antithetical to what Adorno regards as its utopian dimension; that 'art stands as plenipotentiary for the in-itself that does not yet exist' (252). Adorno's utopia, following the principle of negative dialectics, is entirely negatively constituted. The concrete utopian imaginings of Bloch have no place in Adorno's formulations, where the utopian moment is precisely the moment of dissatisfaction and disaffection, of feeling that the world could and should be other than it is. Adorno's utopian moment in art is affective, rather than planned or willed. That said, as 'utopia' for Adorno is a product of determinate negation, it follows that it stands in dialectical relation to the 'administered world' and thus the 'culture industry'. The utopian can only be located and unlocked through an

understanding of what is politically deleterious or unsatisfactory about these two constructions.

I shall take a moment here to clarify what is meant by the 'culture industry' in this context; having visited the slippage and contestation of terms within cultural policy in Chapter 2 via Galloway and Dunlop it is clear from those debates that such matters cannot be left to the imagination. Within the remit of this chapter and its theoretical perspectives, the definition is that set out in relatively straightforward terms by Adorno in his essay 'Culture Industry Reconsidered' (1991, 98-106) where he revisits his and Horkheimer's coining of the term in *Dialectic of Enlightenment:*[96]

> In our drafts we spoke of 'mass culture'. We replaced that expression with 'culture industry' in order to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves, the contemporary form of popular art. (98)

The 'culture industry' in Adorno and Horkheimer is not, and never was, an elitist term intended to denigrate 'popular art'; it is in fact the opposite of 'popular art'. The 'culture industry', Adorno goes on to explain (99-101), culture is a product made *for*, not *by*, the people, and its function is administrative in that it 'intentionally integrates its consumers from above' (98) through the use of industrial forms of organisation (even where nothing is produced) (101) and ideological domination. This conversion of individual subjects into an integrated, pacified whole is an impediment, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, to both emancipation and to aesthetic autonomy, which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

Coming back to negatively determined utopian moments, a teleological approach to its creation or measurement damages the role of the artwork as expression of the 'something missing'; as with Marcuse, art's relationship with social change has to be indirect because the authentic artwork (a term used by both thinkers) contains both indicators of the ideology surrounding its production and an undesignated space of what Jameson calls the 'free play' of the utopian imagination (44). The unique position of art in the utopian thought of Adorno and Marcuse comes from the fact that both art and utopia are inherently negative in that they identify and express a

lack:

> at the center of contemporary antinomies is that art must be and wants to be utopia, and the more utopia is blocked by the real functional order, the more this is true; yet at the same time art may not be utopia in order not to betray it by providing semblance and consolation. (32)

Paolo A. Bolaños elucidates this well[97]:

> Art creates a dimension of imagined freedom. Such freedom is sensitive to the negative position of critique toward both nature and non-nature. The dimension of utopia that art creates is not a positive one, in fact, it is a moment when a "lack" is realized. In this sense, art is negative; as a critique of a society damaged by reification, art amounts to the exposure of the "untruthfulness" of the whole. (30)

The factors that create the difficulties in evaluating the impact of art that so frustrate Selwood are exactly those that for Adorno give it its utopian potential. The value and impact of art, just like the precise workings of the utopian society, cannot be articulated in terms that are friendly to empirical research or managerialist policy-making that demands a concrete confirmation of return on government investment.

Locating autonomy

As I have laid out from Chapter 1 onwards, the concept of autonomy is a complex and slippery one that requires some unpacking. In the service of this, I shall review the three strands of autonomy I set out in the first chapter and show how they are intertwined:

> i) **Financial** autonomy, whereby the artist is not constrained by the precarity of funding or revenue and may do as she likes. Complete financial autonomy is, admittedly, rare, but degrees of it may be located in the subsidised arts sector and specifically within RFOs (Regularly Funded Organisations) during the New Labour period.

ii) **Ideological** autonomy, where an artist or arts organisation can operate in a way that is not subject to state intervention and is thus free to provoke, criticise and resist the prevailing ideological climate. This may sometimes emerge in application as a euphemistic term for non-subsidised commercial art that supports itself entirely through its own revenue streams, but I would argue that this would type of art is in fact highly ideological and closer to Adorno's 'culture industry'. I would therefore define ideological autonomy as being more closely related to the autonomy I observe in Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe (see Chapter 1), where the dramatist rejects conscience, morality and political normativity in favour of chaotic, open-ended dissent and confusion. I would also add, with reference to Adorno & Horkheimer's formulation on the relationship between ideology and economic coercion (Dialectic of Enlightenment, 167 - see below), that ideological autonomy in a pure form would also require an element of financial autonomy.

iii) **Aesthetic** autonomy, which is where Adorno must be invoked once again. The discussion of autonomy I have already undertaken in Chapter 1 with regard to Gritzner's reading of Barker and the sublime has already gone some way toward a definition, but I shall make it more explicit here. Aesthetic autonomy has some common characteristics with ideological autonomy as defined above, as it involves a rejection of prevailing norms (moral, political etc) on the part of artist and spectator. However, as I am using this term in an Adornian sense, more nuanced dialectical relations are also in play. Firstly, there is a difference between 'autonomous art' and 'an autonomous artwork'. The autonomy of art as a whole is always compromised, as it has always been tied to the *bourgeois* class and to heteronomous external developments in the social and political world. It is also, like Adorno's utopia, negatively determined; where art fulfils needs and functions that are inaccessible to other institutions it is at once separate from them and negatively constituted by them. The 'autonomous artwork' is subject to a similar process of negative determination in that it simultaneously affirms and criticises the culture in which it has been produced, and this dialectical process is constitutive of both its autonomy and its social dimension. I have already discussed in Chapter 1, with the assistance of Gritzner and of Hamilton, the social character of art in Adorno's writing and how the commodification of the artwork, which granting

it autonomy from its perceived direct function, simultaneously implicates it in the mechanisms of capitalism, but at that stage I left open the question of whether social and aesthetic autonomy are different forms of autonomy or not. For the purposes of this thesis, I shall follow Adorno's definition closely and, where I use the term 'aesthetic autonomy', I shall presume an understanding on the part of the reader that the term bears the weight of the internal tension between the artwork in its pure, aesthetically-determined form and its position within the social - resulting from its designation as artwork - that implicates it in other ideologically-determined forms of value.

As is clear from these three definitions, each of these forms of autonomy are in some sense constituted by the other two and they cannot exist discretely. Wherever possible, however, I shall clarify for the reader where I believe subsequent uses of the term to be situated within this precarious taxonomy.

Both Andrew Brighton and Marc Sidwell, as discussed in Chapter 2, cite 'autonomy' as desirable for the arts, and their various forms of autonomy are what they suggest has been removed either by pure self-interest among bureaucrats or by the enforcing of principles that claim anti-elitism but are too ideologically weighed down to follow through. Sidwell's deployment of public choice theory suggests a prioritisation of ideological autonomy, as his primary frustration is with the institutional design of ACE and the way in which it operates such as to ensure its continuing existence due to the growing involvement of the DCMS. The chain of command he perceives, with the DCMS initiating a top-down approach where the artist is at the very bottom, results in artists and arts organisations being subsumed into the discursive regime of the Third Way (which I shall describe in full in Chapter 4). For Sidwell, the resulting lack of ideological autonomy in art is what renders the ACE unfit for purpose.

Brighton's account moves closer to aesthetic autonomy, although it does implicate the ideological form as well, as he laments the way aesthetic ideals have gradually lost their importance to ACE (and thereby to funded organisations) since the appointment of Jennie Lee. Although Brighton does, as I say in Chapter 2, position himself in the 'art for art's sake' camp, it is also arguable - by engaging in a more disruptive reading of his text - that aesthetic autonomy is what he saw flourish under the enterprise culture of the 1980s. So long as artworks were of high quality the

artists and organisations were given free reign to disrupt and resist, and certainly in an Adornian reading disruption and resistance, being negatively constituted by or even directly oppositional to prevailing ideology, would embody the dialectical relationship between aesthetic and social autonomy.

The frustration over the encroachment of government upon creativity was shared, in a very different political context, by Brecht, who wrote in *Neues Deutschland* in 1953:[98]

> It was the Commissions, with their unfortunate measures, their policy of dictation-cum-argument, their unaesthetic administrative measures, that alienated the artists and stopped the Academy from taking up a sensible position in the aesthetic question [...] For administrative purposes, it may well be simpler to work out definite proformas for works of art. Then the artists have merely to fit their thoughts (or possibly those of the administration?) into the given form and all will go smoothly. But the living material so urgently demanded then becomes living material for coffins. (266-267)

Finding parallels between centre-right criticisms of Blairite British politics and accounts of working in the GDR is surprising, but there is no doubt that the concerns come from a similar conviction that autonomy from governmental bodies is a *sine qua non* of good and authentic art. Similarly, Adorno and Horkheimer conclude the famous essay 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'[99] with the thought that:

> the culture industry has taken over the civilising inheritance of the entrepreneurial and frontier democracy – whose appreciation of intellectual deviations was never very finely attuned. All are free to dance and enjoy themselves […] But freedom to choose an ideology – since ideology always reflects economic coercion – everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same. (167)

In the case of Sidwell and Brighton's arguments, the explicit 'economic coercion' would come from the governmental department (currently the DCMS) responsible for

allocating funds to the Arts Council.

The major question posed by all of this is to what extent an ideologically non-autonomous Arts Council necessarily means aesthetically non-autonomous art, or whether private funding genuinely leads to art which has greater integrity. The utopian strand of their argument is in the assertion that the purpose of art should not be to directly alter the structure of society by enforcing certain aesthetic experiences while withholding others, as this constitutes an ideological trap that is damaging to the aesthetic dimension of art. Sidwell is right to say that this kind of discourse is not sole property of the right, but it might have served his argument better to point out the prominence of Beethoven in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, the importance of the canonical novel in the work of Marcuse and Lukacs, or Bloch's abiding interest in Mahler. The major flaw in Sidwell's argument is his assumption that an 'art for art's sake' position is a) directly related to ideological autonomy or b) necessarily predicated on the free market or privatisation. Marcuse's definition of 'art for art's sake' in *The Aesthetic Dimension* keeps itself entirely separate from assumptions that state funding would make it any less problematic than support from any other part of the apparatus of late capitalism:

> Art is 'for art's sake' inasmuch as the aesthetic form reveals tabooed and repressed dimensions of reality: aspects of liberation […] which shatter everyday experience and anticipates a different reality principle. (19)

Again, the creation of art for its own sake is about radicalism and the emancipatory potential of works of art that challenge the established reality and, consequently, those who establish it.

Aesthetically autonomous art, according to Marcuse, would only be possible in a utopian society, as 'if people were free, then art would be the form and expression of their freedom'. (*The Aesthetic Dimension*, 72). In the 1969 essay 'Art as Form of Reality'[100], Marcuse finally attempts to articulate something of what this might be like:

> [...] it would then be creativity, a creation in the material as well as

intellectual sense, a juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment, a juncture of town and country, industry and nature after all have been freed from the horrors of commercial exploitation and beautification, so that Art can no longer serve as a stimulus of business. (147)

This vision of 'Art as Form of Reality', or the way in which art and the rest of life would become interchangeable given an entirely free society in which there was no struggle against alienation to which 'Art' as such might give aesthetic form, works against both the neoliberal position of art as part of a free-market economy and the way in which regeneration through public art has been funded under New Labour. ACE accounts of regeneration of towns through the arts, such as that of Ulverston in Cumbria,[101] seem in the light of Marcuse's vision to be putting the cart before the horse in an almost parodic manner. Cultural events and public art effect a change in the appearance of the environment, which then results in economic prosperity. The end result may look like what Marcuse imagined – a free society in which art is a part and even a by-product of living – but in fact it is the opposite; art being used deliberately to further the economic demands of late capitalism.

In conclusion, I hope to articulate something that has been implicit in the juxtapositions set up between arts policy, its critics and Western Marxist utopian thought: that the dialogue between Left and Right in discussions of art has always been a complex one and that those complexities have acquired further convolutions since the election of the Blair government. Much of the mission of the DCMS and ACE can be read, through Bloch, as having a utopian dimension, in that through developing innovation, participatory projects and public art it seeks to challenge 'poverty of aspiration' and stimulate the imaginations of disempowered individuals to work towards social change, but its utopianism is troubled by its ideological context and is hard to extract. Particularly when the importance of the aesthetic merit of the work is acknowledged, this utopian presence would seem to be in line with Marcuse and Adorno's claims regarding the emancipatory power of art and its effect on consciousness; and yet the emphasis placed on social capital and economic regeneration by these same policies are, as must only be expected, affirmative of the structures and hierarchies of late capitalism. Does this diminution of ideological autonomy, however, preclude aesthetic autonomy or might it even enhance it? As I

work through some plays of the New Labour period in Chapter 5, both possibilities are in play.

At the same time, those who criticise New Labour arts policy from the right have at times made an accidental crossing into the territory of Western Marxism when asserting that government policy is depriving art of its ability to express thoughts and ideas which are outside the dominant ideology. Their emphasis on aesthetic merit, taste, and the validity of 'high art' as something capable of altering an individual's cultural perspective certainly finds some parallels with Adorno and Marcuse, but the parallel only goes just so far; the economic perspective of critics wanting to take the arts entirely into the arena of commercialism is firmly rooted in free-market capitalism. The difficulty of deconstructing the binary of Left and Right in the context of arts policy without succumbing to McMaster's post-political consensus may turn out – in the words of Sara Selwood – to be 'an intractable problem', but nonetheless it is one I shall pick up in the next chapter as I begin my discussion of Third Way thinking and cultural policy in the context of Bourdieu and cultural capital.

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Chapter 4:

Culture, capital and cultural capital

In the previous chapter, I have explored some theoretical interventions into my project of locating and developing possible disruptions to ways of thinking about New Labour and political theatre; as I have stated in Chapter 1, my contention is that Third Way discourse has closed down modes of political thinking, and in Chapter 5 as I make another move back from state to stage I will discuss in full how this discursive closure has been created and how it operates within dramaturgy and performance, with particular reference to verbatim theatre. The potential site of disruption I excavate in this chapter is one previously examined in *Cultural Trends* and concerns the potential productivity of using Bourdieu, and specifically the concept of cultural capital, as a way of framing the contribution of New Labour cultural policy to the project of combatting social exclusion. My own contention is that the term 'cultural capital' has been subjected to different readings and uses within the rhetoric of cultural policy and has become, as a result, highly problematised, and that the shifts in definitions of the term complicate attempts to use it in readings of where political theatre of the New Labour period stands in relation to its Third Way context. These complications, however, are not without their own productivity, as they are useful in returning us at the end of the chapter to Barker and his claims for a Theatre of Catastrophe; how do the concepts of inclusion, social mobility and cultural capital play out with regard to political theatre and the ability of its audience to bear witness to it?

As an example of the extremes to which redefinitions of 'cultural capital' have been taken, I refer to the publication 'Cultural Capital – A Manifesto for the Future'. This was a document distributed in accurate anticipation of an incoming Conservative government in 2010 in which the arts and heritage sector demonstrated its ability to embrace the rhetoric of the market. The document lays out the argument that 'investing in culture will build Britain's social and economic recovery' (1). This 2010 document, put together by a group of organisations [102] led by ACE, made the case for continuing arts subsidy in terms of its wider economic impact; aside from direct revenue and community regeneration, the economic potential of the subsidised arts

is also expressed in terms of the influence of the arts on other, more directly lucrative, areas including those which would fall under the remit of Adorno's 'culture industry':

> Creativity is the key to economic recovery. Public investment in the arts and heritage helps to generate the cultural capital that feeds the creative industries with knowledge, practical experience and inspiration. Every artist is an entrepreneur[...] (7)

In one section, the document's authors argue that 'The arts and heritage provide the training and the space to experiment that develops the creative skills the business world is calling for' (7). Casting the state as investor was not a new formulation for ACE; previous projects, such as Dominic Shellard's ACE-commissioned economic impact study of 2004 and the 1998 Wyndham Report, focused on the necessity of arts subsidy for the economy and the capacity of theatre to 'pay for itself'. The Cultural Capital Manifesto differs from this in several ways. Firstly, and most obviously, it does not contain any attempts at statistical analysis. Figures are used for the purposes of advocacy rather than investigation, taken out of context to support rather than to interrogate (or even prove) assumptions such as 'Culture is in demand' (3). Despite the presence of these figures, the language of the document is abstract and makes ambiguous use of words like 'value' and 'growth', which are used sometimes in a purely financial sense and sometimes more broadly. Secondly, and following on from this, the Manifesto makes use of a lexis that distances it from financial analysis and places it firmly in the field of social science – the Bourdieusian language of cultural capital.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the distance travelled between Bourdieu's original formulations regarding forms of capital and the meanings his terms acquired in late New Labour cultural policy parlance on their journey to this startling invocation in 2010. I ask how Bourdieu's construction of cultural capital as an index of privilege and social exclusion tallies with its use within New Labour's communitarian discourse, and what is at stake for playwrights and theatre practitioners. Locating theatre within various definitions of cultural capital is, I argue here, pivotal to an understanding of how the political worth of the form was constructed during the New Labour years. Having already, in the previous chapter, examined some of the

limitations of the methodologies used to attempt to establish impact and value - as observed by scholars of policy-making - I now focus on key theatre policy documents produced by ACE between 2000 and 2011, as well as making some returns to the Cultural Capital Manifesto of 2010, in order to develop the discussion of the shift from 'subsidy' to 'investment' and the implications for the politics of theatre of the repositioning of Bourdieu's terms.

Before applying Bourdieu's work to the specificities of post-Blairite cultural policy, it is necessary to take note of (and situate this chapter within) the turn towards to Bourdieusian thinking amongst cultural policy scholars. In particular, the work of Jeremy Ahearne[103] and Vincent Dubois[104] in excavating Bourdieu's turbulent interactions with the Commission des Affaires Culturelles following the events of May 1968 reveals some productive parallels to be drawn between the political landscapes of 1970s France and New Labour Britain. Elsewhere, Tony Bennett[105] proposed a reappraisal of Bourdieu in 2005 that contested Bourdieu's status as an 'icon of relativism' (142), asserting instead that a levelling form of relativism is antithetical to Bourdieu's sociology of aesthetics and focusing on his account of 'the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere' (141). A discussion of the relationship between the growth of neoliberal orthodoxy and Bourdieu's thought on culture and the state is vital to an appreciation of the ideological significance of the use - and, I will argue, the misappropriation - of Bourdieusian terminology within the cultural policy of a Third Way democracy.[106] Vincent Dubois observes in French cultural policy of the last fifty years 'the paradoxical situation of cultural capital theory [...]: it is often invoked, but to little practical effect' (143); I argue that such invocations in Britain have had far-reaching implications, both practical and ideological.

In 2004, *Cultural Trends* published a special issue[107] that set out to examine the relationship between the Bourdieusian concept of cultural capital and the use of cultural policy to combat social exclusion, with particular reference to the findings of Policy Action Team 10[108] published in 1999[109] and the setting-up of the Social Exclusion Unit[110] in 2001. In their editorial introduction[111] to this issue, Sara Selwood and Paul Allin cite these two events as 'the single most important statement about the arts and culture's ability to deliver social policy objectives' (2) and posit a possible reading of PAT10 as reviving interest in the benefits of the arts not only to communities but to individuals, and in the importance of the affective dimensions of

experiencing and participating in artistic and cultural projects. The legacy of PAT10, they postulate, can be productively read via the concept of cultural capital, and that this reading might contribute to a redefinition of cultural capital that takes it beyond its original applications to high art (a reading I embrace in this chapter). Tony Bennett and Mike Savage in their introductory article[112] remind the reader that although the vocabularies of cultural capital and social exclusion have a long history in France, they has only been meaningfully in play in Britain since the start of the Blair government in 1997 (9) and that even then only discussion of social exclusion played a major part in cultural policy, with discussion of cultural capital remaining largely the province of education policy. Diane Reay's contribution to the issue[113] centres on the position of cultural capital in an increasingly marketised education system and, while joining Selwood and Allin in encouraging a broader definition of cultural capital than the one then current in her field (Dumais, 2002; Sullivan, 2001), she uses the concept to show how class inequalities are played out and reproduced within said system.

Introducing reified cultural capital

For the sake of greater clarity later on I shall briefly revisit Bourdieu's original concept of cultural capital[114] in order to distinguish it from different uses that follow. Simply put, 'cultural capital' for Bourdieu is part of an extension of the concept of capital - the accumulation through labour of an investment and the security of a return on that investment - beyond the financial. In 'The Forms of Capital'[115] Bourdieu sets cultural capital alongside both economic capital and social capital (which is accrued through membership of social networks) and lays out three states in which cultural capital may be assessed and studied: the embodied, the objectified and the institutionalised. The embodied state of cultural capital is that which is present and discernible in the mind and physicality of the individual and is accrued through familial input, education and socialisation. Objectified cultural capital exists as culturally significant objects that can be owned, such as paintings, books and records, and the accumulation of institutionalised cultural capital requires the recognition of an external institution i.e. an accreditation or qualification. Transfer of cultural capital in these forms, in Bourdieu's theory, is a major contributor to the reproduction of class and its inequalities. As we have already heard from Reay (74) and Selwood and Allin (3), cultural capital has often been used in a narrow sense to

mean only the propensity for engagement with and participation in high-status cultural activities; when used more fully, however, it can unlock a nuanced understanding of social processes and their role in class reproduction. As I move through this section of the chapter, we will encounter deployments of the term that have limited validity within even the extremely broad definition I accept here, and this renders the coining of a new, Third-Way-specific term necessary.

While most contributors to the 2004 special issue of *Cultural Trends* make incisive use of the concept of cultural capital to analyse class reproduction within their area of research,[116] the term is treated with some scepticism by Ruth Levitas.[117] In Levitas' account of the relationship between cultural capital and New Labour policy, the term has diverged from its Bourdieusian origins in response to Third Way politics. Its proliferation at that time in economic and social policy (along with that of similar terms like 'human capital' and 'social capital') is something of which Levitas is wary:

> [The terms] seem to me to reinforce the normalization and naturalization of capitalism itself, and thus to be part of a discourse that constructs 'there is no alternative' without even having to say it' (50).

Levitas traces the shifts in meaning of 'cultural capital' via the vernacular of her own field, sociology, and in particular the sociology of education, to the rhetoric of inclusivity embraced by New Labour and the network of discursive relations which she terms 'moral underclass discourse' (MUD) and 'social integrationist discourse' (SID) (Levitas, 40). Her contention is that the ideological underpinnings of a new definition of 'cultural capital' were already in place within government policy before the term was appended to them. Indeed, her article displays a startling prescience in its use of the phrase, accurately prefiguring its use in 2010 in the Cultural Capital Manifesto by underlining its connections with New Labour constructions of social mobility, inclusion and community:

> The inclusion agenda of the DCMS also continues from a more long-standing concern with broadening access and participation [...] Demonstrating increased participation and 'inclusion' is also essential to the Department's bids for funding. [...] Clearly then there is a sense in which the cultural capital and social inclusion agendas map on to each other. (50)

and also individual entrepreneurship:

> There has been a slippage towards treating formal, accredited knowledge as educational or cultural capital, and to treating cultural capital as something that intrinsically resides in individuals rather than in groups, and can be acquired by them through participation in or consumption of the cultural and heritage industries. Cultural capital, then, becomes something that is individualized, commodified, and used as a resource in a competitive system. (53)

For Levitas, cultural capital in this context has a similar function to 'community' in New Labour policy: that of appearing to erase class divisions without interrogating them. Cultural capital, like 'community', had become a tool for papering over inequalities in the name of inclusivity, although Levitas is strongly aware of the original function of Bourdieu's idea as a useful heuristic for instigating an investigation of those inequalities and a society that produces and reproduces them. As Bourdieu writes in 'Forms of Capital', 'The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis that made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes […]' (244). In other words, the formulation was initially a way of understanding and explaining the way in which the class system is reproduced, rather than a solution in itself. The use of the term in New Labour education policy, and the then possibility (subsequently realised) of its extension into cultural policy, to mean a necessary commodity the accretion of which should be encouraged is precisely what makes Levitas nervous. Using cultural capital as a signifier of the solution rather than the problem is, as she writes, to 'normalise' capitalism rather than to subvert or interrogate it.

As with 'community', 'cultural capital' becomes a term that succumbs to the 'double shuffle' of Stuart Hall's reading of New Labour; a simultaneous acknowledgement of the social problems caused by capitalism and proposition of capitalism as their solution.[118] Neoliberalism under New Labour, according to Hall's model, adapted to oppositional demands to ensure its continued dominance. Following the General Election of 1997, which Stuart Hall (and many of the New Left) regarded as a

moment of immense political potential, the adaptive nature of neoliberalism enabled it to maintain its hegemony in the face of significant challenges and criticisms so that the potential for a turn away from neoliberalism remained unfulfilled. The way in which neoliberalism adapted was determined by the challenges and criticisms it faced, but in such a way as to defuse rather than respond cogently to those criticisms. This enabled it to absorb and assimilate disparate groups and their competing demands more easily than it could by claiming allegiance to the Left or Right, as it was able to justify concessions to contestations on both sides while the central ideology remained constant. New Labour maintained the primacy of the market while allowing a role for the state in addressing some of the most glaring inequalities created by market mechanisms:

> [W]hile free-market intellectuals criticize the Blair government on many grounds, they appear to acknowledge that the underlying commitment to a broadly liberalized economic management is a genuine one. (Peck and Tickell, 45).[119]

Policies and practices designed to appease more traditionally Left-wing concerns were also put into place. While policies bore the language of these concerns, their focus was on using them to efficiently quieten contestations rather than to address the concerns themselves. In this way, ideals and contestations traditionally associated with the Left, and corresponding political demands regarding equality and justice, came to be used as tools to meet economic goals. As society was reorganised and reshaped by the Third Way in order to further market efficiency, inequality was addressed by tackling pre- rather than post-market inequalities. Policy-making tended towards the creation of equality of opportunity to compete in a market-driven society, for example enhancing workplace skills and increasing training opportunities rather than bolstering the welfare state (Driver & Martell 1997).[120] As various theorists of radical democracy (most notably Mouffe and Laclau) have postulated, the result of the dominance of Third Way ideology was a post-political landscape in which efficiency and good management have come to be viewed as more effective weapons against inequality than debate, political action or shifts in ethical paradigms. This is Ruth Levitas' objection to the spread of the term 'cultural capital' – that it has been hijacked, distanced from its original purpose as an index of privilege and pressed into service as another piece of Third Way rhetorical apparatus whereby

the morally destitute 'underclass' of MUD can be identified and altered by skilful social management. Rather than indicating, as it does in Bourdieu's writing, the 'upper threshold' of privilege, the new incarnation of cultural capital now responds to the lower, thus losing its potency as an index of the preservation of cultural privilege and class reproduction.

In view of Levitas' reading and the theorising of the Third Way that supports it, for the purposes of this thesis I shall propose a term specific of this alternative reading of cultural capital and its context of Third Way discourse, and entirely discrete from Bourdieu; that of ***reified***[121] cultural capital. To be absolutely clear, I am not postulating reified cultural capital as a fourth state or related form of Bourdieu's cultural capital, as it does not operate as a useful concept that can be deployed in the investigation and analysis of social processes. Rather, it operates as a 'thing' that must be acquired by an individual or community in order for social mobility to occur. Reified cultural capital, as identified by Levitas, comes into being as a by-product of Third Way 'underclass' discourses rather than being produced unconsciously through social processes occurring with a class hierarchy. While functioning as a passport to a higher social class, reified cultural capital does not in fact disrupt the class system; the game continues, but the players change their positions.

By early 2010, six years after the publication of Levitas' article (and in the closing months of New Labour's government, just before the Coalition came to power), the term had undergone further changes. On top of the perceived benefits of the acquisition of reified cultural capital for individuals (and subsequently their 'communities'), it came to be portrayed as a transformative force in the marketplace. Cultural capital, as used in my opening quotation, can change the way business works and enhance Britain's power in the global market. A report by NESTA[122] in 2008, *The Art of Innovation*,[123] made a similar case for state 'investment' in the arts but without resorting to the term: 'The way artistic labour is organised makes artists arguably a prototype not just for work organisation, but for innovation in the rest of the economy.' (5)

This new development in government discourse demonstrates a new type of instrumentalism; moving on from the typically New Labour instrumentalism

criticised by Ruth Levitas, where policies aim to eliminate a perceived 'underclass' without addressing the underlying causes of inequality, the cultural capital (and related argument for government arts funding) of the 2010 Manifesto is a clear response to the economic crisis and likely change of government in that it is posited as the country's great hope for recovery. A later section states bluntly that 'cultural capital generates material wealth' (13) both for individuals and for the country as a whole, as business strategies receive a creativity injection from an increasingly healthy arts scene funded by combination of state subsidy and private philanthropy:

> Talent-enhancing, labour-intensive, export-earning, working nationwide, creative, stimulating, morale-lifting, and responding rapidly to investment, the cultural sector is ready to play its part in national recovery. (ibid.)

The contention is not only that the arts are a good investment because they pay for themselves, as research such as Shellard's has demonstrated, but also that they present good business models. The NESTA report cites the attitude of artists to innovation as something which businesses would benefit from emulating, and the Cultural Capital Manifesto follows suit with 'The arts and heritage provide the training and the space to experiment that develops the creative skills the business world is calling for. Culture provides the foundation and stimulus for the creative industries that give Britain its reputation for ingenuity and innovation.' (7)

This is another way in which the contemporary arts policy reading of cultural capital has distanced itself from its origins. In the Manifesto, cultural capital is presented as being readily convertible into economic capital, a claim that Bourdieu would certainly criticise. As he writes in 'Forms of Capital',[124] with regard to education:

> Economists might seem to deserve credit for explicitly raising the question of the relationship between the rates of profit on educational investment and on economic investment (and its evolution). But their measurement of the yield from scholastic investment takes account only of *monetary* investments and profits, or those directly convertible into money (248)

The relationship between cultural and economic capital, he maintains, is a complex and indirect one. While material wealth may be part of the production of the indices

of privilege to which Bourdieu's term originally referred, the process is not automatically reversed. The nuances of taste catalogued in *Distinction* as being indicative of a bourgeois rather than a working-class *habitus* are not, in themselves, able to generate financial advantage – nor, of course, is class division purely a financial phenomenon.[125]

I would argue that the cultural capital of the Manifesto is not distinct from reified cultural capital, but that financial prosperity deriving from the culture industry constitutes a particular state in which reified cultural capital may exist. It is capable of having a direct effect on individual financial prosperity and on the British economy as a whole, and for the individual it has the same role as the one ascribed to the arts by Alan Davey in the introduction to the ACE Annual Review in 2008 – to address 'poverty of aspiration' and thus give Levitas' 'underclass' 'the ability to get on in the world' (5), a strain of ideology which has attracted much hostility from the Left as, its critics say, it seeks to remove the autonomy of the working class and thus its potential as a force for political change.

Although Janet Newman, one of New Labour's foremost critics in the field of political theory, does not mention cultural capital by name in her influential 2001 book *Modernising Governance*, her work is helpful in demonstrating how neatly the 2010 incarnation of it maps on to Third Way politics.[126] As she addresses many of the ideological inconsistencies in New Labour policy, she stresses throughout the book the way in which the government shaped discourse to remake the identities of its citizens through welfare reform and policies claiming to combat social exclusion. In a move away from old Labour, the citizen of New Labour rhetoric is constructed in terms of duty and responsibility rather than dependency; the relationship between citizen and state is, as Newman puts it, 'quasi-contractual' (150), with the opportunities and rights offered by the state being matched by the responsibilities of the citizen. One of the problems Newman identifies here is that:

> The 'modernisation' of welfare was structured around the norm of the active, working citizen, availing him or herself of the opportunities to become part of the new information-based economy and equipped with the skills and capacities to do so […] The norm of active, working citizen differed from previous Labourist conceptions of work in that women as well as men, and

those previously marginalised through disability, single parenthood or long-term unemployment, were expected to become fully integrated members of the working population. (150)

Not only is the New Labour vision of welfare and social inclusion normative, she argues, it is also moral.[127] The rhetoric of rights and responsibilities, in demanding that everyone be a breadwinner and contribute to the economy, enabled what she calls a 'disciplinary' approach to social welfare; anyone resisting (for whatever reason) the training or 'welfare to work' schemes intended to get them off benefits and back into work would be guilty of a moral failing, that of refusing to recognise their civic responsibilities, which in turn justifies punitive measures such as the withdrawal of benefits. The duties of citizenship are defined here in terms of active economic responsibility, rather than simply (and more traditionally) obeying laws and paying taxes, and, according to Tony Blair himself, for this model of social inclusion to work those duties need to be enforced by the state:[128]

> Strong communities depend on shared values and recognition of the rights and duties of citizenship […] In the past we have tended to take such duties for granted. But where they are neglected, we should not hesitate to encourage and even enforce them. (quoted Newman 151)

This is backed up by John Hills and Kitty Stewart,[129] who criticised Labour's 1997 General Election Manifesto for making only one mention of tackling social inequality (9): the pledge to get more people off benefits and into work. Rather than addressing inequalities created by the existing economic and social systems and relations, the Blair government looked to create easier access to those structures. Exclusion, poverty and inequality were not seen as a result of the economic or societal hierarchies inherent in neoliberalism but as due to the inability of marginalised individuals to resist these hierarchies; 'Social democratic communitarianism has become more moral and oriented to obligations required of the individual and less socio-economic and geared to corporate obligations to the community.' (Martell, 1999 p.6). Welfare dependency, for example, was to be eradicated without any consideration given to how it was being produced by systems and relations, placing the responsibility on a lack of social capital - skills, education and opportunity - on the part of the individual. People were to be helped and encouraged to take part in

systems that had been, at least in part, responsible for that very lack of social capital, and not to participate in their own governance but to be complicit in the apparatus of their own exclusion.

Reified cultural capital as read in the Manifesto and in the earlier New Labour documents discussed by Ruth Levitas, is inextricably linked with this approach to addressing exclusion and inequality. As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the advocacy-driven research into the subsidised arts which came out of the new Labour era centred on objectives such as improving school attendance and creating pathways to paid employment in areas of deprivation, with the goal of increasing social mobility and assimilating those previously living in poverty into a growing middle class[130], and even complementing healthcare, which in turn would enable incapacitated people to return to work. Increasing one's 'cultural capital' in the New Labour sense thus becomes a moral obligation as it enhances the ability to carry out the civic obligations that are so central to Third Way politics and to New Labour in particular: serving your community, working for a living, providing for yourself and your family – or, as David Cameron famously put it in a debate leading up to the 2010 General Election, 'doing the right thing'. This is an interesting twist on the old Hegelian or Aristotelian argument that the arts make us better humans; here, one of the central purposes of art is to make us better citizens of a Third Way democracy. The Cultural Capital Manifesto argues that 'The arts and heritage are on hand to help those who lost out in the recession: with jobs, training, skills, experience, hope' (1); opportunities of which, Janet Newman would tell us, we have a moral obligation to take advantage or we let down ourselves, our communities, and the British economy. In using this language, the organisations responsible for the publication of the Cultural Capital Manifesto appeal directly to the outgoing Labour government's construction of the citizen (as well as to the soon-to-be-governing Conservative party), on which all cases made for government arts funding had depended since 1997. 'Cultural capital', when used in the sense of reified cultural capital sense, moves further away from its origins as an index of class difference and inequality and closer to the creation of a more homogeneous society in accord with Third Way ideology.

It is also vital to mention, at this point, the inherent difficulties in aligning cultural capital with social mobility. In many ways, the two are antithetical; Bourdieu's thesis

of cultural capital centres on the reproduction of existing class structure (Bourdieu, 2010) which, while it does not rule out social mobility, certainly complicates it[131]. Recent studies by sociologists following up John Goldthorpe's work on social mobility have confirmed that modern British society is characterised by high levels of social mobility, particularly upwards, and this has run in parallel with a re-examination of Bourdieu and discussions of what the ideas of habitus and cultural capital have to offer.[132] In contrast to Bourdieu's findings in 1980s France, contemporary British social mobility is not restricted to an inherently aspirational 'petite bourgeoisie' but has also been accessed by the working class, particularly in terms of making the most of educational opportunities and developing what Reay, Crozier and Clayton[133] call a 'reflexive habitus' that can operate across different fields. This has led to disputes in sociological circles about the validity of embodied cultural capital (the Bourdiesian theory that children from dominant social classes acquire the disposition of 'symbolic mastery' from their parents that is converted into more tangible forms of cultural capital in adulthood[134]). While some scholars have theorised that cultural elites can now be identified by their 'omnivorous' tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996,[135] Bennett et al, 2010) and capacity for consuming both 'high' and 'low' culture, others have questioned this theory on the basis that more subtle hierarchies of taste may be present in the consumption of 'low' as well as 'high' culture and thus that the dominant classes may not be as indifferent to aesthetic hierarchies as omnivore theories would suggest (Atkinson, 2011). This has reorientated sociological debate back towards Bourdieu. The presence or absence of embodied cultural capital or symbolic mastery affects the way in which *all* art, high or low, is received by its audience; whether an individual judges the artwork according to emotional 'interest' or takes the more formalist, 'disinterested' approach Bourdieu associates with cultural elites depends on the individual, not on the culture they are consuming. Habitus may not dictate what culture people consume, but it will influence the way in which they do so.

This being the case, using cultural capital as a measurement of social mobility is clearly problematic. The relationship between the two is a difficult one, and this difficulty has been acknowledged for some time, and this returns us to the reservations expressed by Levitas regarding the appropriation of the term. As I have noted earlier, the current use of 'cultural capital', in responding to the lower rather than the higher threshold of class privilege, is presented as being part of the

apparatus of social mobility as opposed to that of class reproduction. Although this could be read as a healthy development of Bourdieu's theory that enables it not merely to interpret the world but to change it, both Levitas and Newman's arguments would support the opposite contention; that the way in which 'cultural capital' is deployed now is symptomatic of its co-optation into those Third Way disquisitions on social inclusion which they criticise elsewhere as being managerialist, post-political and inadequate to the task of addressing the immense inequalities produced by global capitalism.

Reified cultural capital, theatre policy and the Third Way 2000-2010

The initial publication documenting ACE theatre policy in 2000 presents the main problems facing theatre as being financial, a result of underfunding during successive Conservative governments that resulted in a dearth of 'exceptional work' (Theatre Policy 2000, 1) being produced away from the main London theatres during the 1980s and 1990s. 'Transformation' is here deemed necessary in terms of reaching new audiences and fostering greater diversity within the industry itself to make possible the 'bold, relevant and exciting work' that will assure the future of British theatre. It also makes repeated reference to finding 'new ways of working', and to ACE making 'bold decisions' (2) as regards the withdrawal of funds. The announcement of this policy coincided with an uplift in funding for building-based regional theatres in response to the Boyden Report (an increase which was criticised at the time as being welcome, but insignificant in terms of impact[136]) and in line with one of the published objectives of all ACE theatre policy since 2000, regional diversity.

In terms of reified cultural capital, the most interesting objectives stated here are 'Develop new ways of working' and 'Address diversity and inclusion'. The 'new ways of working' hinted at include the use of environments other than building-based theatres, partnerships between different theatres, and also looking outside the theatre world for partnership opportunities: 'Theatre needs to engage with a wider range of artists and other partners. Theatre should also connect more proactively with the other creative industries, seeing them as an opportunity not a threat.' (5) This in some ways looks forward to later policy, particularly policy regarding the relationship between the subsidised and commercial theatre, and to the 2010 Manifesto's

insistence on stronger links between the subsidised arts and commercial 'creative industries' such as advertising. The 'opportunity' here is, arguably, for developing the 'cultural capital' of the Manifesto, which both derives from and can be converted back into economic capital. The language of the 2000 Theatre Policy is, unsurprisingly, that of investment rather than subsidy; if theatre is to be a sustainable investment, it has to take advantage of the opportunities offered by a mixed economy and, in turn, feed back into it by enhancing the country's prosperity and prestige (as exemplified, in later years, by the Olympic legacy). The money that connections with commercial partners outside theatre can offer to subsidised theatre companies, whether directly through co-productions, sponsorships or indirectly through influence on business practice, is used to purchase more 'cultural capital' for the country – and this 'cultural capital' feeds back into economic capital, and so on.

The section on addressing inclusion and diversity is brief, but interestingly states that theatre 'must connect with people who have been excluded, including those living in rural communities' (5). This is an interesting stipulation, given that alternative theatre companies (a great many of which received at least some subsidy from the Arts Council) have an illustrious history of working in precisely those rural communities which the 2000 National Theatre Policy claim have been excluded from theatre in the past[137]. The paragraph continues: 'We expect the theatre community to develop work that speaks to the diverse audiences who make up this country today' (5) This is, without a doubt, a commendable intention, and one that has been the focus of a lot of commentary on British theatre and particularly New Writing[138]. The importance of the diversity of the people who 'make up this country' and the changing meaning of Britishness was acknowledged considerably earlier than 2000 by playwrights, critics and academics. There is no need to rehearse the roots of New Writing here, as it has been done exhaustively elsewhere, and Aleks Sierz devotes several pages of *Rewriting the Nation* to a recital of accounts going back as far as 1959 (17 onwards) of how accurately theatre has documented social history.

In view of this, it is curious to see (alongside the policy on engaging rural communities) a policy written in 2000 making demands on British theatre that could be seen as redundant. While more can and should always be done to encourage diversity and a more powerful, engaging representation of national identity, the

British theatre portrayed by the 2000 ACE Theatre Policy is one that has not accepted this mission, or at least has not managed to deliver:

> Not surprisingly audiences for some kinds of theatre are falling. In many parts of the country theatre has failed to engage with a broad audience. It has certainly failed to engage adequately with young people and with multi-cultural Britain. The Arts Council of England believes that theatre should be one of England's most vital art forms. We want to see theatre develop and use its unique power and energy to reach a wider range of contemporary audiences. (1)

This, unsurprisingly, jars with the accounts given by white male practitioners and critics like Sierz, Baz Kershaw, David Edgar and the many others who have written eloquently about their experiences of the determination of theatre over the last five decades to represent disenfranchised and excluded British people. It is true that the previous paragraph refers to the funding difficulties of the pre-Blair years, and a connection can be made between this and the perceived inadequacy of theatre as a social force, but the ACE document places the blame firmly at the doors of the theatres themselves:

> Many organisations have become inward looking and territorial and there has been a drain on talent and resources resulting in an environment in which it is much harder for artists and managers to take creative risks. Large parts of our theatre have been caught in a downward spiral with less exceptional work being produced. (1)

It is difficult to map this depiction of British theatre as made up of paranoid, insular organisations that inhibit creativity onto the culture that produced companies like Graeae and Talawa, companies that struggled against financial difficulties to deliver highly-acclaimed theatre. The desire to engage with a changing national identity was certainly not absent from British theatre and, while the New Writing boom of the 1990s may have produced debate about the nature of political theatre, new plays (and the theatres that staged them) continued to explore social problems and crises. Even if 'political theatre' in the sense of agit prop and state-of-the-nation plays was no longer a driving force, theatre was still willing to make a political statement.

The next Theatre Policy was published in 2007, and proclaimed a 'renaissance' of British theatre that followed the £25 million increase in theatre funding which came as a result of the previous policy and Theatre Review. Some of this is copied directly from the 2000 document, including the section on the territorial, insular tendencies of theatres and the commitment of ACE to reversing this trend and making theatre more accessible and inclusive. More than that, the document claims at least partial victory in this battle, and subtly shifts the blame from the theatres themselves to the Conservative government and lack of funding:

> In 2000, Arts Council England published a national policy for theatre and undertook a theatre review that, with the support of government, reversed two decades of underinvestment. By 2003 an additional £25 million a year had begun to revitalise the sector [...[Theatre is an invigorated industry. The quality of work and morale in the sector has improved. Theatres are more financially secure and better able to plan ahead. More and better employment opportunities are available and employers are taking positive steps to diversify the workforce. The decline in audiences for subsidised theatre has slowed significantly and audiences are now increasing. (4-5)

The discussion of the role of theatre in tackling social exclusion has been developed (following Helen Jermyn's report in 2004), and here the move towards greater diversity is now tied explicitly to the uplift in funding rather than an ideological or ethical shift taking place under the new government. Newman and other theorists of democracy models (Driver & Martell, Leitner et al) have demonstrated and discussed the dedication of the Blair government to managerialism and efficient solutions in line with neoliberalism rather than changes in ethical paradigms, and this section of the 2007 Theatre Policy is an excellent example of that managerialism in context. Although theatres and their attitudes were initially held responsible for a lack of multicultural engagement (an ethical/political argument), it is the administrators, managers and funding bodies – or investors - who are given the credit for its growth (a managerialist, post-political argument). The impact of British theatre and the growth in reified cultural capital is, the 2007 Policy implies, a bureaucratic and financial success story rather than an artistic or a political one, the result of efficient management rather than engaged, committed practitioners building on the artistic

successes of the 1990s.

Elsewhere in the 2007 Policy, developments show a growing commitment to a mixture of state and corporate funding and entrepreneurial spirit. The emphasis on 'new ways of working' remains, but is more explicitly tied to the market and to the necessity of running theatres and theatre companies as businesses: 'We will continue to review the organisations we fund and prioritise those seeking to implement more sustainable business models and to develop partnerships' (10)

This development was prefigured by a document that came out in 2003, at the beginning of the period that was to fall under the purview of the 2008 Theatre Assessment, regarding the relationship between commercial and subsidised theatre was published by ACE. Written by Robert Cogo-Fawcett,[139] the document is an unusual blend of policy statement and user's guide, which combines information on finance and best practice for co-productions between subsidised and commercial theatre with material that makes the case for a closer and more amicable relationship between the two:

> A number of different motives underlie the creation and development of these mechanisms, but two main philosophical strands predominate. Whilst both are primarily inspired by the desire to provide art and entertainment, one is motivated by pecuniary motives and by the desire to create profit and falls under the description of what we term 'the commercial theatre'. The other is founded more on the philanthropic principle that the primary purpose of art is to improve man's understanding of himself and his fellows. (5)

The Arts Council's principles on subsidised/commercial co-production, as stated here, are to encourage cooperation between the two sectors without compromising either. Firstly, the artistic integrity of subsidised theatre, Cogo-Fawcett writes, should not be compromised by association with commercial partners, and secondly the Arts Council will not 'penalise' a subsidised company that generates income in this way by reducing its funding. Thirdly, the financial relationship between co-producing partners should safeguard the interests of the subsidised partner, so that the non-profit company is 'appropriately rewarded for the effort, cost and risk it took in

originating the work' (7).

This is possibly the most interesting document regarding theatre to come out of the Arts Council/ACE during the period under consideration. Repeated references are made to the existing hostility between the subsidised and commercial sectors, playing on the stereotypes of the bold, idealistic not-for-profit theatre company and the exploitative, cynical, mercenary commercial producer in order to subvert and ultimately reconcile them. The binary between the two, this document suggests, is anachronistic; we have moved beyond the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s and the enterprise culture of 1980s Thatcherism and reached a point at which there is no need for rivalry or hostility between those who make theatre in order to make money and those who require public money in order to make theatre. Indeed, the 'philanthropic' motivation of theatre can be furthered by the inclusion of commercial partners whose financial investments and business acumen can help to bring productions to a wider audience – thus, it follows, raising the country's Cultural Capital and subsequently its material wealth.

This recalls critical accounts of several elements of Third Way neoliberalism (Driver & Martell 1997), primarily the ways in which the roles of citizen and market are reshaped in order to render old political divisions obsolete. To quote Driver & Martell,[140] "'The 'Third Way' is, in part, about the reunification, in the centre ground, of old false divisions. It is very much aimed at overcoming conflict and building consensus.' (Driver & Martell 1999 3). New Labour's neoliberalism combined market-friendly policies with those of social inclusion and as such was able to appeal to a variety of disparate groups, thus enabling the neutralization of potential threats to its dominance. The market, rather than a specific social class (as in Gramsci's 'passive revolution'), holds the dominant position, and as such is presented as being benevolent and better equipped to provide the solutions to social problems than any alternative. For example, if subsidised theatre is in danger from the precarity of its funding and a history (genuine or perceived) of lacking relevance, then the solution is to be found in an alliance with the commercial sector. What the harshest excesses of capitalism damaged in the 1980s its new incarnation would fix in the Blair years, and theatre can be strengthened rather than undermined by the financial stability afforded by a commercial co-producer.

The Theatre Assessment undertaken in 2009 was the first major examination of subsidised theatre on a national scale since the Theatre Review of 2001[141], and investigates the period from 2003 onwards during which an extra £25 million had been invested in theatre. Close attention is paid here to the relationships between theatres, ACE, and other funding partners, as is the relationship between the subsidised and commercial sectors to which ACE remains committed. Commercial theatres are included within the scope of the assessment, and an intention to 'continue to champion collaborations between the subsidised and commercial theatre sectors and to increase our own understanding of and relationships with commercial theatre' is made clear along with a desire to encourage traffic of both productions and audiences between subsidised theatre and the West End: 'The majority of theatre performances in England take place without our subsidy and so we recognise the need to understand the context within which we make our funding decisions' (9).

All of this mirrors the universalizing rhetoric that placed New Labour 'in the middle' of the political spectrum, enabling it to absorb and assimilate disparate groups and their competing demands more easily than it could by claiming allegiance to the Left or Right, as it was able to justify concessions to contestations on both sides. New Labour maintained the primacy of the market while allowing a role for the state to address some of the most glaring inequalities created by market mechanisms: '[W]hile free-market intellectuals criticize the Blair government on many grounds, they appear to acknowledge that the underlying commitment to a broadly liberalized economic management is a genuine one.' (Leitner et al 2007, 45).

Political theatre, cultural capital and reified cultural capital

As Leitner puts it: 'Much contestation has emerged as a direct response to neoliberalism, objecting to its imaginaries and practices and its deleterious impacts, particularly on disadvantaged groups and locations.' (Leitner 2007, 5) 'First, contestations might be directed to specific negative outcomes of neoliberal policies, seen as barriers to realizing a particular imaginary, rather than the working of neoliberalism in toto.' (ibid, 13). This is where New Labour placed itself: in opposition to specific negative outcomes of neoliberal policies rather than to neoliberalism *in toto*. In addition, groups and individuals who engage in vocal

contestation of neoliberalism *in toto* appear to remain in the minority, and have become associated in both the discourses of the government and the mainstream media with anarchism and violent direct action; contestation within the mainstream centered around specific issues and concerns rather than overarching ideologies.

This is born out in the policy I have discussed here, and there are several factors which make theatre particularly vulnerable to the difficulties theorists have identified in Third Way policy-making. Firstly, British theatre has a mixed heritage that sets up a binary within its identity. Despite the strides that have been made in developing alternative dramatic forms in recent decades, New Labour theatre policy reflected concerns that potential audience members might still perceive theatre as being irrevocably tied to a canonical, conservative past. At the same time, theatre has created formal and aesthetic innovations which have become as much a part of its past as the proscenium, with the tension between the two acting as a source of invention, homage and subversion. Secondly, theatre more than any other art form can be said to function as a microcosmic expression of the mixed economy in that it comprises two institutions (the commercial and the publicly-funded) that once ran in parallel but have become increasingly interdependent.[142] Many commentators have made the case that the West End depends on the publicly-funded theatres to bring in new work and fresh talent, and current policy encourages publicly-funded theatres to seek alternative sources of income within the private sector. Capitalism is presented as being the new saviour of the arts, in pragmatic defiance of any hostility that artists and audiences might feel.

There is something to be said here for the well-worn argument that creativity is fuelled by rebellion, which is in turn only produced by oppression. At first sight, it would appear that Blairite neoliberalism with its rhetoric of inclusion, diversity and fairness left little for a rebellious artist to get hold of, for exactly those reasons that Driver and Martell identify and that Mark Ravenhill alludes to in the speech I have discussed in the introduction. If the dominance of Third Way ideology is concretised by a consensus-driven view of society and democracy that claims moral and rational superiority, then the resulting post-political landscape produces an erosion of choice. Dissent becomes increasingly difficult when antagonism is cast as immoral or irrational rather than progressive or radical, and when choice is eroded then so are the decisions that can be made and, given that meaningful political participation is

about exercising decision-making powers, so is the potential for participation. Even as New Labour pulled away from both the New Right and the Old Left, the hijacking of terminology and minor concessions to both sides rendered criticism difficult. In the early years of the Blair government, while the possibility of a major change in political direction was still seen as a possibility (Hall 2004), the optimism of theatres, writers and scholars (Matarasso, 1997) did not seem unrealistic. The state seemed ready to give financial and ideological support to the arts on conditions that differed greatly from those imposed by successive Conservative governments, and the possibility of finally working under a government that might be on the side of the artists was bound to alter the tone of political theatre. Even now, the Blair years are still remembered by some as a 'Golden Age' of arts funding, although others - Ravenhill being a high-profile example - question whether it was 'ever really that shiny' (Burman 2012) and whether the effect of Third Way policies on the arts may be just as oppressive, if more subtly so, as the financial starvation of the Thatcher and Major governments[143].

Despite the decline in agit-prop theatre as New Writing rose, theatre had still been available to the practitioners and audiences as a way of exploring and understanding the crises of British society and identity in a climate of globalisation and increasing market dominance. The plays of Martin Crimp, Sarah Kane and other exponents of 'In-Yer-Face Theatre', despite their frequent verbal and physical violence, also demand a certain level of subtlety and understanding from an audience seeking to read them as political texts, a subtlety which would be in line with Bourdieu's embodied cultural capital in terms of the ability and desire to decode artworks. Work that raises one kind of cultural capital – that of the Manifesto, which implies an enhancement of both prestige and economic opportunity for the individual theatre and the sector as a whole – has another kind of cultural capital as its precondition. The presence of Bourdieu's embodied cultural capital and symbolic mastery in audiences is arguably what makes complex, challenging plays viable, especially as political provocations.

This is where cultural capital and reified cultural capital can create a political short-circuit. The role of theatre in Third Way politics is to act as a point of reconciliation and consensus between private enterprise and state funding, the establishment and the excluded, the bureaucratic and the artistic – and this, as demonstrated earlier, is

where reified cultural capital comes into its own as a tool for eliminating sites of contestation. ACE theatre policy since 1997 has demanded bold, relevant work that expresses British identity in all its diversity but does not demand any particular level of cultural capital; as we have seen in Chapter 2 with McMaster, 'excellence' in performance can be asked to embrace the kind of universality which is central to Third Way thought. A piece of theatre should be regionally and culturally specific and speak to and about its 'community', but it should also meet more essential aesthetic ideals that give it universal appeal and make judgement of its artistic merits possible. While reified cultural capital (according to Levitas) obscures class divisions with Third Way universality and essentialism, the social processes legible through cultural capital according to Bourdieu are those that assure class reproduction; but it was only symbolic mastery that enabled the deployment of the political theatre of the 1990s. The power of 'In-Yer-Face Theatre' to shock and provoke is where critics located its potential to catalyse political change, but for an audience member to move beyond the purely emotional response of shock and reach a place of political realisation requires a level of cultural confidence and symbolic mastery that Third Way discourse locates firmly within the middle class. A Blairite argument would state that a national increase in reified cultural capital could break this deadlock, but this ignores the difficulty of creating within a Third Way society the kind of startling, dissenting art that the 1990s produced.

Dennis Kelly, speaking at the opening of the Stückemarkt in 2012,[144] spoke in humorous and often ironic terms of his changing attitudes to the writing of political plays between his 2004 play *Osama the Hero* and the end of the decade:

> I knew that once people saw my argument, things would change. People would listen. The war on terror was essentially over and I fully expected a withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan by the end of the year. So. I sat back and waited. This didn't happen. I got some good reviews, I got some bad reviews, some people liked it, some didn't and I was commissioned to write a new play. Something was wrong, very wrong. I decided to try again. I wrote a play called After the End, a play about two people trapped in a nuclear fallout shelter after an appalling terrorist attack, only the attack hadn't really happened, and one character was using it as an excuse to

control the other. So pleased was I with the metaphor that I knew it was only a matter of time – Bush would be thrown out of the White House, Blair would be found dead hanging from a lamppost, a two state solution would be established between Israel and Palestine and the age of Aquarius would be ushered in. Again I waited.

In this witty, forthright and often comically hyperbolic account, Kelly charts the shift in his attitude to what political theatre can, and should, achieve. Having begun his career hoping that his work would cause a political storm that would bring the Blair government to its knees and finding that all it did was attract the admiration of those who already shared the majority of his views, he adjusted his expectations and ideals:

> I really do genuinely believe that theatre can change the world. I think it does it on a small scale by changing the lives of people who come into contact with it. I know this from personal experience – even if I hadn't become a playwright, theatre would have changed my life by being there for me. It opened my mind, it has led me on to knew ways of thinking and to enjoying thinking and the fact that I went on to get any education at all I owe to theatre. But I also believe it changes the world in a bigger sense, perhaps a more political sense. I just believe that it does it in conjunction with other things. That it is far more subtle than causing an audience to run out and man the barricades, and that to expect anything more than that is unfair to theatre.

The next step, which will be taken in the next chapter, is that of examining some key political works staged during the Blair years (including those of Dennis Kelly) and how they do or do not respond to the Third Way ideology that was present in the cultural policies of the time, which I have discussed here. Do the political plays of Tanika Gupta or Dennis Kelly's early works, with their head-on approach to specific issues, offer the most effective criticism of the status quo, or is it more productive to look to the growth of verbatim theatre for work that will fulfil Dennis Kelly's later, more moderate ambitions of using theatre to mediate between the personal and the political? Having used cultural capital, both together with and discrete from its

reified form, to locate theatre and theatre policies within New Labour policy, I shall ask how some of the plays on the stage at the time responded to Kelly's implicit challenge to continue the tradition of British political theatre.

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[102] The organisations listed as having participated in the document's production are as follows: Arts Council England, Association of Independent Museums Cultural Learning Alliance, English Heritage, The Heritage Alliance, Heritage Lottery Fund, Local Government Association, Museums Association, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council National Campaign for the Arts, National Heritage Memorial Fund National Museum Directors' Conference Society of Archivists, Society of Chief Librarians, The Art Fund, The National Archives, Visit England

[103] Ahearne, Jeremy. *Between Cultural Theory and Policy:The Cultural Policy Thinking of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau and Régis Debray.* Coventry: Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick. 2004. Research paper.

[104] Dubois, Vincent. 'Cultural capital theory vs. cultural policy beliefs: How Pierre Bourdieu could have become a cultural policy advisor and why he did not'. *Poetics* 39, 2011. 491-506

[105] Bennett, Tony. 'The historical universal: the role of cultural value in the historical sociology of Pierre Bourdieu'. *The British Journal of Sociology.* 56:1, 2005. 141-164

[106] I shall return to Bourdieu's relationship with cultural policy in my final chapter, where I draw on various perspectives on the tensions between policy-makers and the academy and the importance of theatre's economic history in this debate.

[107] 'Special Issue: Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion' *Cultural Trends*. 13(2): 2004

[108] Hereafter PAT10

[109] Policy Action Team 10. (1999). Arts & Sport. A report to the Social Exclusion Unit. London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport. 1999

[110] Hereafter SEU

[111] Allin, Paul & Selwood, Sara. Editorial. *Cultural Trends* 13 (2), 2004. 1-3

[112] Bennett, Tony and Savage, Mike. 'Introduction: cultural capital and cultural policy' *Cultural Trends*, 13(2), 2004. 7-14

[113] Reay, Diane. 'Education and cultural capital: the implications of changing trends in education policies'. *Cultural Trends*, 13:2, 2004. 73-86

[114] The definition I use is a broad one similar to that advocated by Diane Reay (2004)

[115] Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The forms of capital.' Ed. J. Richardson *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* New York: Greenwood. 1986. 241-258

[116] The volume owes a great deal to the work of Elizabeth Silva, Alan Warde and David Wright, whose Economic and Social Research Council funded project, *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: A Critical Investigation,* provided the jumping-off point for this issue of *Cultural Trends*. Silva, Warde and Wright used a mixed-methodology approach to investigate the relevance of Bourdieu's theory to social exclusion in Britain from 2003 to 2006, and published a summary of their findings: Silva, Warde & Wright, 'Using Mixed Methods for Analysing Culture: The Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion Project'. *Cultural Sociology* 3(2) 2009. 299-316

[117] Levitas, Ruth. 'Let's hear it for Humpty: Social Exclusion, the Third Way and Cultural Capital'. *Cultural Trends* 13(2): 50, 2004. 41-56

[118] Hall, Stuart. 'New Labour's double shuffle.' *Soundings* 24, July 2003. 10-24

[119] Peck, Jamie and Tickell, Adam. 'Conceptualising Neoliberalism, Thinking Thatcherism'. *Contesting Neoliberalism*. Ed. Helga Leitner, Jamie Peck, Eric. S. Sheppard. New York: Guilford Press, 2007. 26-50

[120] Driver, Stephen and Martell, Luke. *New Labour*. London: Polity Press. 2006

[121] I am using 'reification' here strictly in its rhetorical sense, rather than in a Western Marxist sense.

[122] National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts

[123] NESTA. *The Art of Innovation*. London: NESTA. 2008

[124] Bourdieu, Pierre. 'The forms of capital.' Ed. J. Richardson *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* New York: Greenwood. 1986. 241-258

[125] The tendency of DCMS policy since 1997 to elide financial and social divisions is worth exploration elsewhere; see also my discussion of the problematic elision of 'financial' and 'economic' in Chapter 6.

[126] Newman, Janet. *Modernising Governance*. London: SAGE. 2001

[127] It is important to bear in mind, at this point, the role of the 'moral' in the work of Mouffe and Laclau as a post- and even anti-political force as a field of essentialism that inhibits dissent and dialogue.

[128] This has been continued by the Coalition government, as evidenced by the many protests taking place at the time of writing against Welfare to Work and the determination of the DWP to bring people incapacitated by illness and disability back to the workplace, often against the advice of the doctors involved in their care. See the 2012 Responsible Reform Report: <http://wearespartacus.org.uk/spartacus-report/>

[129] Hills, John and Stewart, Kitty. Introduction to *A more equal society? New Labour, poverty, inequality and exclusion*. London: LSE Research Online. 2005. <http://core.kmi.open.ac.uk/download/pdf/93551.pdf>

[130] I have already addressed problems and criticisms of this approach in Chapter 2.

[131] Sam Friedman gives an excellent summary of recent challenges to Bourdieu's theories of habitus and cultural capital in British sociology in 'Cultural omnivores or culturally homeless'. *Poetics* 40 (2012) 467-489

[132] Goldthorpe is also involved in this discussion, but that debate is separate from his work on social mobility.

[133] Reay, Diane, Crozier, Gill, Clayton, John. "'Fitting in' or 'standing out': working-class students in UK higher education". *British Educational Research Journal*. April 2009. 1-18

[134] Bourdieu, Pierre and Passeron, Jean-Claude. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: SAGE. 1977

[135] Peterson, Richard A. and Kern, Roger M. 'Changing highbrow taste: from snob to omnivore.' *American Sociological Review* 61:5. 1996. 900-907

[136] Memorandum submitted by Charles Morgan to the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, 2005 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmcumeds/254/2542we08.htm>

[137] See Kershaw, Baz *The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge. 1992 and Ansorge, Peter *Disrupting the Spectacle*. London: Pitman. 1975 for a full account of these companies and their work in rural areas.

[138] See Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation*. London: Bloomsbury. 2011. I am borrowing his use of the term 'New Writing'.

[139] Cogo-Fawcett, Robert. *Relationships between subsidised and commercial theatre*. ACE: London. 2003. Policy Report.

[140] Driver, S. and Martell, L. "New Labour: Culture and Economy" Ed. Larry Ray and Andrew Sayer *Culture and Economy after the Cultural Turn*. London: SAGE. 1999

[141] As the 2008 Assessment responds closely, in both methodology and content, on this earlier review, I see no great need to examine the 2001 review separately.

[142] I turn to Tracy C. Davis for further discussion of this in Chapter 5

[143] For further discussion of the neoliberal turn in avant-garde British theatre and art see Harvie, Jen. *Fair Play - Art, Performance and Neoliberalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013

[144] Kelly, Dennis. "Why political theatre is a complete fucking waste of time". 10 May 2012. Speech. Full text available at <http://theatertreffen-blog.de/tt12/2012/05/10/dennis-kelly-opens-the-stuckemarkt/>

Chapter 4

Staging the Third Way

In *Rewriting The Nation,* Aleks Sierz engages in a lengthy discussion of the portrayal of class and racial divisions in the theatre of New Labour Britain. While (as discussed here in Chapters 3 and 4) New Labour disquisitions on 'community' and great art for all made rhetorical moves towards unity and cohesion, much of what was happening on British stages during this era told a different story, and Sierz's commentary suggests a reconfiguration of the 'state of the nation' play as being 'better at providing vivid images of social fissure [...] than at offering solutions' (162), specifically in England. While Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh theatre showed renewed confidence in national identity and a willingness to explore new independence, 'England often felt as if it was immobile, stuck in a rut of old ideas of a split nation' (ibid.). As Ruth Levitas and Janet Newman have both written, the language of inclusivity and community found in Blairite social and cultural policy obscured real, deep divisions in the society that New Labour ostensibly sought to heal, and this obfuscation (assisted by a culture of managerialism and efficiency) impeded political discussion.

The question implicit in Sierz's study is an important one: whether or not political discussion succeeded in making itself heard through theatre or whether, as Mark Ravenhill posited in his Edinburgh speech, the effects of Third Way politics damaged theatre's political potential.[145] As discussed in the introduction, Ravenhill's contention is that theatres were seduced by abundant funding into seeking a closer, less antagonistic relationship with policy-makers, corporate sponsors and the market, and that this ideological shift compromised the potential of theatre to challenge and change the systems in which it was becoming enmeshed. Ravenhill's Edinburgh speech, in fact, does not break new political ground but simply recontextualises an already familiar theme he had already developed elsewhere, both implicitly and explicitly. Peter Buse quotes Ravenhill thus: 'David Hare and the rest knew in the Seventies what they were against. Now nobody knows and nobody cares,' a succinct summation of his argument in the Edinburgh speech that the plasticity of Third Way doxa makes it difficult for theatre to locate and perform sites of resistance, especially when the theatres themselves are simultaneously seeking the friendship and speaking

the language of corporate sponsors and public funding bodies.[146] The hypothetical artist of the Edinburgh speech is asked whose side she is on in the full understanding that it has become almost impossible to locate a side, let alone choose one.

Some Explicit Polaroids,[147] the first of Ravenhill's plays to venture into the territory of conventional political playwriting, may not be sure what side it is on but draws the boundaries boldly in exploring the fault line between two paradigms of British culture; the tribal political culture of opposition to a clearly-defined adversary and the slippery post-political culture of neoliberalism. The strict Marxism of Nick, an activist released after a long prison sentence into a London that has become entirely unfamiliar, comes into conflict not only with the trash culture familiar from Ravenhill's earlier work but also the more modest demands of reform personified by Nick's formerly radical ex-girlfriend. While all of these come under satirical fire, the binary being set up here is not that of Left and Right but of political and post-political, whether the post-political manifests as well-intentioned managerialism or as thrill-seeking nihilism. Resistance is possible, as it is in the unconscious rejection of the market economy performed in *Shopping and F***ing*[148] (34-39) where Robbie gives away the best part of 500 ecstasy tabs, but this resistance is likely to be doomed when faced not only with the polymorphous character of the post-political but with the irrelevance of the political strategies that characterised the 1970s. Nick's encounters with the brave new world of his young girlfriend and her friends, narcissistic compulsive consumers of drugs and ephemeral enjoyment, leave him floundering, and his eventual meeting with his old capitalist adversary finds him sapped of any desire for revenge and unable to counter the argument that capitalism is, after all, the only option:

> **Nick:** Wish I had the strength left to hate you.
>
> **Jonathan**: I think we both miss the struggle. It's all been rather easy for me these last few years. And I start to feel guilty if things come too easily. But really money, capitalism if you like, is the closes we've come to the way that people actually live. And, sure, we can work out all sorts of other schemes, try and plan to make everything better. But ultimately the market is the only thing sensitive enough, flexible enough to actually respond to the way we tick.
>
> **Nick:** There's nothing better?
>
> **Jonathan:** Maybe in a thousand years but for now...

> **Nick:** It's the best we've got.
>
> **Jonathan:** Exactly. So. You can spend your time like Helen. Rush around, regulate a bit. Soften the blow for a few of the losers. All very necessary. Important work. Absolutely [...] Or you can say hey-ho - this is the way things are. So let's get in there and make the most of it. (311)

In this climate there is no place not only for Nick's particular brand of dogmatic unreconstructed Marxism but for political conviction *in toto*. Capitalism is not politicised; it is simply the only practical way forward, and those with ethical qualms must be restricted to mitigating the harshest consequences of the game rather than trying to change it.

More than any other play I discuss in this chapter, *Some Explicit Polaroids* stages the challenge posed to political theatre by a Third Way neoliberal social democracy. It is a play that knows exactly what it is against but has no idea what to do about any of it, and makes no secret of this. What is the best way to stage a resistance to something so hard to locate and define which counters criticism not by opposing it but by rendering it irrelevant? The story being told is that of the negotiating of fault lines, of the conflicts taking places at the edges of post-political aporia. Returning to Barker and Bond's dissenting voices and to the highly critical analyses of cultural policy that have formed the backbone of this thesis so far, the issue that emerges most forcefully has been that of an artificial, forced consensus that is perpetuated across various fields - policy, research, management, aesthetics, economics - and results in a deadening of dissent.

Verbatim theatre's political offer and its critics

The most obviously productive starting point for a discussion of whether theatre during the Blair era had a discrete political character that fostered resistance is the genre that arguably rose most prominently to the challenges posed by contemporary politics during the New Labour years: verbatim theatre. Andrew Haydon, who argues[149] for 'a qualified 'golden age' in the 2000s' (40), makes a convincing case for verbatim theatre in that decade as the form that 'touched on almost every possible way of working in modern British theatre' (48), tying together the different ways of working that were explored during this time[150] and creating a coherent narrative of

how theatre did what it did. My own contestation is different; that while the development of verbatim forms is indeed significant in constructing the story of theatre in the 2000s this significance is not purely formal but also ideological and/or discursive. It has a great deal to offer a discussion of how the intersection of theatre and the political was mediated by ideas of subjective reality and the relevance of this mediation to the Third Way and its critics in the field of political theory. As I move through key verbatim works of the period and the accounts given by the writers involved in their dramaturgy, my claim is that they share important characteristics with Third Way discourse in terms of their attempts to construct an objective reality for the spectator to believe and inhabit. I question the ability of the verbatim form to disrupt systems of power with which it has many discursive similarities, and whether it is politically problematic in ways that did not apply to earlier forms of documentary theatre that grew out of the tactics of activism and antagonism.

The developments and changes within verbatim and other documentary forms has been studied extensively, beginning with Derek Paget's[151] coining of the term 'Verbatim Theatre' in 1987 to describe the new manifestations of documentary theatre led by Rony Robinson and concentrating on the taped testimony of ''ordinary' people, done in the context of research into a particular region, subject area, issue, event, or combination of these things' (Paget 317) and leading to Janelle Reinelt's acclaimed 2006 examination of the growth of verbatim (and particularly tribunal) theatre in Britain. Paget's 1987 evaluation is class-based, focusing on documentary theatre's Marxist roots and the continuing relevance of Brecht and Piscator to British theatre - as well as the more recent influence of Joan Littlewood - to construct it as a specifically working-class form. Not only is it rooted in the oral history of the communities within which the performances take place and committed to the vernacular speech of those communities, it can also be read as Marxian in its construction:

> Through the systematic display in performance time of the source material
> (which becomes the *true* protagonist in the drama), the actor is freed not
> only from some of the burdens of conventional playwriting within the
> naturalistic mode, but also from some of those attendant upon the
> characteristic economic determinations of theatre production in this country.
> In common with other manifestations of documentary theatre, Verbatim

> Theatre can thus offer to actors a greater share in the means of production, in the Marxist sense. (318)

For practitioners like Robinson, Clive Barker and David Thacker, the participation of all the actors in the gathering of the material was 'a fundamental precept' (Paget 327) of their Verbatim Theatre, as it created links between all cast members, the community within which they were working and the oral history they were to narrate and ensured egalitarian relations between cast and characters; the source material, as Paget says, being the protagonist.

Both Paget and, later, Reinelt[152] make the point that successful documentary theatre presents the audience with a compelling narrative and theatricality rather than 'abstract opinion' (Paget 326). For Paget in particular, this means that the political potential of a documentary play is contingent upon the conditions of its production and the historical narrative it sets out, rather than the opinions and ethics of the practitioners who devised it. Reinelt, in introducing her discussion of the rise of documentary forms (and particularly tribunal theatre) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, fleshes out this key point by pointing to the theatricality of contemporary global society and of some of the events which made their way into the tribunal plays of the Tricycle:

> Everybody recognizes that we live in theatricalized times. The contemporary world, with the United States at the forefront, dramatizes its exploits and its romances, its wars and its diplomacy, its major crimes and misdemeanors, its sports and entertainment—these latter two, performances by definition [...] this time - our time - is aggressively theatrical. (70)

Recent developments in media technology, she argues, have accelerated the spectacularisation of the social and the political[153]. The growth of reality television and the quasi-theatrical presentation of the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent declarations of wars were symptomatic of a sensibility attuned to a 'distinctly American theatricality' (Kubiak 2002:2, quoted Reinelt 2006:70) and Britain echoed this theatricalisation of public life, as exemplified by the daily dramatic reconstructions of the Hutton Inquiry taking place on television the summer before the publication of Reinelt's essay and performance studies-based analyses of the

death of Princess Diana appearing in academic journals. This link between new media technology and new ways of theatricalising the public is unpacked further by Chris Megson[154] discussing the distance travelled between the original conventions of Paget's Verbatim Theatre and the newer form of the tribunal play, where the vernacular speech prioritised by Robinson, Thacker etc gives place to 'the intensifying culture of sound bites and 'spin' at the exact point of encounter between politicians and the institutions and media that hold them to account.' (204) The textual protagonist of the tribunal play, rather than mediating the voice of the 'ordinary' person, replicates the language of contemporary politics in the act of not only representing but defending itself. At the same time, as tribunal plays such as *The Colour of Justice*, *Half The Picture* and *Justifying War*[155] are based on transcripts of political proceedings edited by an individual the proximity of the actors to the means of production identified by Paget as potentially Marxist is dispersed.

The growth of verbatim and documentary forms has attracted criticism, most notably from Stephen Bottoms[156] who takes issue with the truth-claim of documentary theatre. Bottoms is highly critical of documentary theatre as a political form, using the example of David Hare's play *Stuff Happens* and his short essay '...on factual theatre' to illustrate a set of perceived political contradictions, and claims that 'the current 'verbatim theatre' trend in London has tended to lionize plays that he reads as both manipulative and problematically unreflexive regarding the 'realities' they purport to discuss' (67). Hare's writing on verbatim theatre practice here and elsewhere provides plenty of ammunition for Bottoms' critique; his contribution to the volume *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*[157] makes emphatic claims that the public has been let down by journalism in the search for the truth and that the role of documentary theatre is to do 'what journalism fails to do'. For him, verbatim theatre is there to 'fill the void' left by the mendacity of contemporary politics and mainstream journalism and 'let real life in the door' (Hare 118) to give a more honest account of the world. Bottoms finds this approach both disingenuous and problematic:

> His masculinist rhetoric casually obscures the fact that realism and reality are not the same thing, and that unmediated access to 'the real' is not something the theatre can ever honestly provide [...] the kind of theatrical self-referentiality Hare appears to decry is precisely what is required of

documentary plays if they are to acknowledge their dual and thus ambiguous status as both 'document' and 'play'. (57)

Bottoms is also perturbed by the way in which Hare, unlike most makers and scholars of documentary theatre, neglects the issue of mediation and aligns the truth-claim of the form with factual rather than dramatic or political truth even when interspersing fictional content with documentary material, as in *Stuff Happens* (a combination of interview and press conference transcripts and imagined scenes) where Hare's authorial note claims that 'what happened happened' and that nothing untrue has knowingly been added to the text:

> There is nothing wrong, of course, with a writer presenting history as imaginative fiction, but the claim that "what happened happened," that the events depicted are all "true", is surely questionable when upwards of 80 percent of *Stuff Happens* takes place [...] in a series of conventionally realistic scenes depicting reimagined meetings [...] it becomes impossible to tell with any reliability where factual reportage stops and political caricature starts (60)

Hare is not entirely alone in taking this position; there are hints of it in other contributions to *Verbatim Verbatim*, particularly Nicolas Kent and Richard Norton-Taylor's accounts of the creation of the Tricycle's tribunal plays.[158] Richard Norton-Taylor, himself a highly-respected journalist as well as compiler and editor of many of the Tricycle's tribunal plays, writes of *Half The Picture* that: 'during our staging we exposed the truth about the Arms to Iraq scandal (...) Exposing the truth has been the goal of each of our tribunal plays' (106). For Norton-Taylor and Kent, those involved in the staging of any verbatim play are taking on an ethical responsibility, and that in the case of a tribunal play they assume the burden of delivering justice to the people, speaking against the frequently mendacious mechanisms of power. Robin Soans,[159] too, writes in the same volume that

> [...] the audience for a verbatim play will enter the theatre with the understanding that they're not going to be lied to. They may be unsettled by the unusual way the play is constructed, but they will be compensated for

the lack of convention by the assumption that what they are looking at and listening to is revelatory and truthful (19)

Bottoms, once again, finds this stance problematic, as - like Janelle Reinelt - he locates the political importance of documentary theatre in its capacity for expressing, through dramatic narrative, an important and recognisable part of the audience's experience of public life. As Reinelt says of *The Colour Of Justice*, the key to the dramatic credibility of the play lay in how the murder of Stephen Lawrence was 'perceived by the public as the symbolic staging of other, recognisable, features of their national or local lives—to embody a certain kind of analogical critique of their ways of living' (74) and so the play could be experienced by the audience as a recognisable dramatisation of national, as well as individual, identity. Bottoms takes issue with the precise nature of Hare's truth claim (and, by extension, the creators of other tribunal or verbatim plays who have made similar claims) rather than the integrity of the form as a whole, arguing that in their determination to lay the bare truth before the audience they disregard the political importance of interrogating the 'reality' they present (67). It is in this sense that Bottoms sees Hare's dramatic strategy as manipulative; it discourages any inclination on the part of the audience to be wary of the objectivity of the account they are receiving or to recognise the 'editorialising hand' at work (Megson, 198): "Like the politicians he satirises, Hare insists he is shedding light on hidden truths, but then fabricates his own evidence.' (Bottoms, 14).

Discourse and the construction of objectivity

The parallel Stephen Bottoms locates between the verbatim theatre he criticises and the politics of the Blair era is less glib than it appears at first reading, as it can be pursued beyond the straightforward accusations of mendacity familiar from the political repercussions of, for example, the Iraq War. Bastow and Martin[160] touch on this as they seek to construct an understanding of Third Way politics which moves beyond attempts at ideological classification, seeking rather to analyse it as discourse. As discussed in the previous chapter, Third Way politics has been constructed both as an alternative to the class politics of the Left and to the harsh excesses of unbridled neoliberalism on the right, and while it is often read as an ideology in itself, Bastow and Martin argue that it is better understood as 'a mode of ideological reasoning' (2) which, in moving towards a politics 'beyond

antagonism' (1), co-opts various discursive elements from existing, ideologically distinct areas of political thought. As such, it can be read most effectively as *discourse*, which allows for a deeper and more careful analysis of the way in which it is produced and constituted - and, most interestingly, how it is *constitutive* of its own conditions. Reading Third Way as an ideology assumes that it arises as a response to a set of external, objective conditions; to read it as discourse, however, is to comprehend it as also constructive of those conditions:

> [...] the way the doctrine helps *constitute* the very objectivity of the world it is supposed to represent. The Third Way automatically positions itself as a more objective account of social conditions than the (first and second) partial views it claims to transcend. The latter can then be dismissed as insufficiently objective, one-sided and therefore limited. Thus the Third Way rhetorically invokes a 'clearing' between these one-sided views in which the full objectivity of social conditions can come into view. [...] the Third Way itself is bound up with defining what the objective constraints of the social world are. (6)

Bastow and Martin's explanation of the difference between ideological and discourse analysis is based on that set up by Mouffe and Laclau in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.[161] In the introduction to *H&SS* the genesis of their reading of 'discourse' is laid out in terms of its roots in analytical philosophy, phenomenology and structuralism. In all three of these currents, Mouffe and Laclau trace a movement away from an illusion of unmediated, immediate relations between signs and that which they signify (to use the Structuralist terminology) and towards a recognition of discursive mediation. The central particularity of their account of discourse is the way the concept of political articulation[162] is situated within it; this concept separates their formulations from those of Foucault in that it makes it possible to reject the idea that anything is 'non-discursive', situated outside discourse. For Mouffe and Laclau, articulation describes the process by which elements which have no intrinsic political or class position (Laclau's earlier works take nationalism as an example) are brought into proximity within a discourse. It is the way in which those elements are combined, their relative positions in a discourse, that creates ideological significance; the articulation of elements is always political in that it demonstrates participation in one discursive field rather than another. While a

structuralist analysis would posit a closed discursive totality, in which each element is transmuted into a necessary 'moment' within a system of structural positions, Mouffe and Laclau's account owes more to poststructuralism (particularly to Derrida and the concept of the undecideable), and constructs the discursive as a system which is never entirely closed and in which the transformation from 'elements' to 'moments' remains incomplete, thus affirming the continuing possibility of articulation.

This clarifies Bastow and Martin's assertion that the efforts of New Labour's Third Way politics to create a synthesis to which centre and Left can subscribe is best understood in terms of theory that can comprehend an assemblage of apparently disparate political elements which, being brought into discursive proximity, acquire a new ideological significance. Rather than reifying ideologies by casting them as sets of immutable core concepts, like some of the earlier critics they identify, Bastow and Martin read New Labour's version of Third Way discourse as a configuration of dislocated elements which, as they are articulated, modify the previously existing principles as per Derrida's 'logic of supplementarity' (60).

Moreover, the discourse theory of *H&SS* operates independently from the philosophical debate around the existence of a objective external reality. If, as they theorise, all knowledge is constituted by discourse, then the means by which it is known is constitutive of its reality:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/ idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence. (108)

Here and earlier in the same chapter Mouffe and Laclau establish their opposition to Foucault's idea of the non-discursive, which is echoed by Bastow and Martin in the passage quoted above. Bastow and Martin's view brings an extra theoretical nuance to Bottoms' statement that verbatim writers who claim objective veracity are remarkably similar to the political systems they accuse. In setting up a true/false binary between their own accounts and those of government, or those present in mainstream news coverage, they make a move which is comparable to that theorised by Bastow and Martin between ideology and discourse in Third Way politics. To return to the point made by Chris Megson in his analysis of *Half The Picture*, the later Tricycle tribunal plays and David Hare's verbatim work point to a perceived 'democratic deficit' which they try to remedy by seeking an objective truth which, once revealed, will change the terms of any future debate on the matter. For an audience member of *Stuff Happens* or dramatisations of the Scott and Hutton Inquiries, discussions of the circumstances leading to and surrounding the Iraq War will always be inflected by those plays, as is the case with any memorable theatrical experience (documentary or fiction) pertaining to historical or current events - with the important difference that, as Robin Soans has said, the audience has been encouraged to bring to it a new set of expectations involving objectivity. As with Bastow and Martin's critique of Third Way discourse, a 'clearing' is created which enables the dismissal of 'insufficiently objective' accounts and acts as a boundary to the audience's perceptions, thus becoming constitutive of a reality which defines itself (and so comes to be defined by a hypothetical audience) as objectively true. So, while Bottoms' argument that David Hare's process in creating *Stuff Happens* mirrors that which it criticises by 'inventing evidence' is certainly sustainable, the line which he does not take is more interesting: that even where nothing is invented, Hare's truth-claim creates a link with the political processes being attacked on the stage. The version of events presented by Hare, or Kent and Norton-Taylor may differ entirely from that presented by Blair and Bush, but it has been produced in the same way and to the same end, that of defining objective reality.

Subverting the objective subject - Kelly and Crouch

The most notable subversion of verbatim theatre to be staged during the period under discussion was one which, although it did not touch on the specific questions of tribunal plays, is still highly relevant to the issues set up by Bottom, Bastow and

Martin. Dennis Kelly's deconstruction of the verbatim play, *Taking Care of Baby*[163] - first co-produced by Birmingham Repertory Theatre and Hampstead Theatre in 2008 in a production by Anthony Clark - presents itself initially as a verbatim play based on the case of a woman convicted and then acquitted of the murder of her two children and drawn from interviews with the accused, her family and her psychiatrist. In accordance with the playwright's stipulations, none of the publicity material released prior to the opening of the play revealed the fictional nature of the characters and dialogue (although no direct claim was ever made to the contrary). At the opening of the play, an on-stage screen presents the audience with the following words:

> The following has been taken word for word from interviews and correspondence. Nothing has been added and everything is in the subjects' own words, though some editing has taken place. Names have not been changed. (5)

which by the beginning of the second act have become

> The following has been word from taken word for interviews and correspondence. Everything is in the subjects' own words and place, nothing has been added though some has taken editing. All names have been changed. (31)

and finally

> The taken word for following word has been correspondence from and interviews. Nothing has been everything and words added in the subjects' is own, though taken editing has pomle sace. Chamed nanges heeve ban all. (61)

Meanwhile, the characters' versions of events collide with and subvert each other, luring the audience and the off-stage character of the author into a relentlessly disorientating kaleidoscope of reevaluations, recontextualisations and shifting perspectives. Subjected to revelation after contradictory revelation, both narrative and characters begin to collapse, often (especially in the confined, claustrophobic

space of Birmingham Rep's studio theatre) causing extreme emotional discomfort in the audience. Much of the power of the performance resided in the feelings of complicity with one perspective or another that were repeatedly aroused in the audience only to be complicated or derailed by a new revelation which turned the audience's loyalties on their heads and placed them abruptly 'on the wrong side'. When the traumatised Donna McAuliffe (the accused) screams incoherent abuse at her mother Lynn, who in turn begs the 'writer' to stop recording (58-60), audience members at the first performance squirmed in their seats and even covered their faces, made deeply uncomfortable by their own sudden move from compassionate observers to unwelcome voyeurs.[164]

Kelly uses the assumption posited by Robin Soans, that of objectivity on the part of the text, to bring the audience to a deeper, more radical state of questioning. The elision of 'revelatory' and 'truthful' suggested in Kent and Norton-Taylor's remarks on tribunal theatre is exploded by Kelly's pseudo-verbatim technique; in the course of a narrative which, following Reinelt, the audience recognises as congruent with our social and political experience, the audience comes to the gradual realisation that the material is entirely fictional. Revelations, of which there are a great many in this play, are constructive. They shape the narrative and direct the audience's perceptions, and are constitutive of what the audience perceives, from moment to moment, as the objective reality of the play. Truth, therefore, is constructed rather than constructing; from the disjunct revelations of Kelly's text a discourse emerges which, dissonant though it is, the audience is invited to accept. In the first act of *Taking Care Of Baby*, the character of the psychiatrist - presented first as a source of unassailable rationalism and later as a discredited drunk - explains the (fictional) diagnosis he has reached, a mental illness which causes mothers to murder their children because they cannot simultaneously endure the raw emotional state motherhood produces in them and collude with the lies that have hitherto protected them from a full understanding of the horrors of the world. The treatment of this condition, he tells the imagined interviewer, consists of retraining these parents to understand that: 'truth is relative... I mean it isn't. But we have to think that to live, don't we.' (23)

This way of constructing reality, now familiar from Bastow, Martin, Mouffe and Laclau, takes on an explicitly political significance as the play progresses. The same character, Dr Millard, produces an analysis of the gap between the effects of late

capitalism and the rhetoric of compassion that echoes Ruth Levitas and Janet Newman:

> You, me, politicians, newspapers, celebrities, we all care about the beggar, oh God, we really care about the beggar. But the beggar is still there. And, in fact, there are more and more beggars, and the more beggars there are the more we care, we really do, gosh, we care so much, yet the beggar is still there [...] It's the contradiction. It's the disparity between what society says it thinks and what its actions tell us it thinks [...] (22)

and later explains the disorientating effect of the information saturation caused by new media technologies:

> we *watch* the famine, we are *in* Darfur, running from the militia, we *see* the polar bear drowning in the arctic, we *are on* the British street with the beggar, yet this is something our social, economic and political systems weren't designed to cope with, they are rooted in a different time. They're left floundering in the wake of all this information, gasping, dying, really. But they just carry on because we haven't yet figured out another way. (22)

Taking Care of Baby reads at the outset as an illustration of Reinelt's Aristotelian breakdown of the necessary ingredients for a successful piece of documentary theatre. A serious yet colourful situation that will engage the public, a comprehensible narrative which maps onto the narrative of the society or community from which the audience will be drawn, clear unambiguous characters who play recognisable roles: the tormented victim of a miscarriage of justice, the supportive and selfless mother who campaigns tirelessly on her behalf, the expert who seeks to exonerate her. As the play continues, those characters and relations shift, subverting the conventions the audience expects from verbatim theatre, and - most revealingly - Lynn, the mother of the accused woman, moves from Old Labour idealist to Third Way archetype as she rejects her political roots to eventually seek office through an alliance with the Conservative Party, constructing her own political discourse from discrete elements in a way that recalls Laclau.

Kelly's choice of the verbatim form at once supports and troubles Reinelt's analysis of its recent success as a political genre. Documentary evidence provides a bulwark against the chronic uncertainties of a postmodernist world in which everything is understood to be a copy of a copy, and the rehearsing of factual evidence, of materiality, has political potency when set against a hypertheatricalised contemporary culture dominated by mimesis and fiction (Reinelt 81). At the same time, reading public events through performance analysis and linking them with narrative tropes can, paradoxically, make their reality more legible (83). While *Taking Care Of Baby* demonstrates an understanding of all of this and uses it to great effect, the play also disturbs the reassuring facticity of the document by using the imagined authority of its sources as elements of a discourse which is perpetually in flux, alternately building, reconstituting and eventually dismantling realities. Rather than accepting the faith of an audience in the promise of documentary, Kelly uses it to persuade the audience to reveal the constitutive discourses of the plays' narratives and ideologies.

Megson's observation regarding the similarities between the later tribunal plays and modern journalism gains even more weight in the light of these subversions of other verbatim forms; the denial of the illusory element, which is rendered both increasingly powerful and increasingly well-hidden by the artistry involved in the tribunal plays he critiques, has acquired a post-political dimension highly characteristic of Third Way discourse. Even where the intent is to disrupt (as Hare assures us it is) a mendacious version of events which, coming from a position of power, has initially been constructed as truth, the tactics being used are drawn not from antagonism or activism, like those of the Living Newspaper projects of the 1930s, but from Third Way discourse itself. What is presented to the audience is something which, despite being seamless and immaculately-crafted, still lays claim to objective truth. The politically vital 'promise of radical presence' (Megson, 207) is compromised from two directions - firstly by the visual aesthetic of 'seamless coverage' and, at a deeper level, by the post-political discourse produced by a performance that places itself, like Third Way politics, 'beyond antagonism'.

In a similar vein, Esther Leslie,[165] via Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility*, writes that the political has been spectacularised to the point of

irrelevance by the slick, reifying constraints not of fascism but of the media under late capitalism:

> Walter Benjamin's closing statements to his Artwork essay, on 'the aestheticisation of politics' and the 'politicisation of art', have taken on a new validity. It is easy to observe an aestheticisation of politics everywhere today. We live in a world of mediated political spectacle that enforces passivity and knee-jerk reactions. Politics is a show that we are compelled to watch and where the 'sides' on offer are simply divisions within the essentially identical.

The later Tricycle tribunal plays, then, are vulnerable to criticism not only from theorists of democracy such as Bastow, Martin, Mouffe and Laclau but also from the perspective of Marxian aesthetics. Here, as Megson has theorised, the political spectacle is so carefully mediated that the mediation becomes invisible, rendering audience members passive and accepting and constructing them as consumers rather than citizens - and, as Benjamin predicted, the preferred viewing matter for consumption here is war. As Leslie explains:

> War has become the ultimate artistic event, because it satisfies the new needs of the human sensorium, which have been remoulded technologically. This was the completion of l'art pour l'art, or aestheticism, as seen in 1936, which means that everything is an aesthetic experience, even war. Humanity watches a techno-display of 'shock and awe' proportions, which amounts to its own torture. It revels in it.

From Esther Leslie's Benjaminian criticism, made in 2006, of the way in which war is covered and consumed by Western mainstream media, it is a small step to Chris Megson's point regarding the reifying effect of the later tribunal plays not only on the media but on the subject matter itself. The truth-claim of tribunal theatre, verbatim theatre and other documentary forms is an important stage in this process as without it the audience might be prone to analyse and question the facts (rather than the dramatic validity) or what they hear, in the way that they are encouraged to do by *Taking Care Of Baby*. Instead, in consuming a constructed version of objective reality regarding the events and circumstances surrounding war, the audiences of the later

tribunal plays are invited to submit to a distortion of consciousness whereby subjective positions are seen as political weaknesses (rather than necessities) and objectivity is the only valid determinant. Where more overtly polemical documentary pieces like *Half The Picture* might, through unapologetic use of archetypes and composite characters, come closer to the criteria of Benjamin in providing an impetus towards activity and towards a melding of art with the everyday, a performance which presents a reified, post-political version of reality to a pacified audience begins to look less and less like a powerful political provocation.

The idea of the pacified audience, already familiar from Barker's *Arguments* discussed in the opening chapter, is explored and then exploded by Kelly by conflating (in what can be read as another nod to Barker) the real and the 'false'. Tim Crouch, performing a similar conflation in *The Author*,[166] moves a step closer to explicit examination of the anatomy of the pacified audience by mobilising playwright, actors and audience as characters as Crouch, playing a fictionalised version of himself, participates in a discussion of the writing and staging of a play which has led to him making a suicide attempt. Aside from the immersive nature of the piece, which calls for 'two banks of seating, facing each other, comfortably spaced apart but with no 'stage' area in between' with the actors (also using their real names) who speak the scripted dialogue sitting amongst the paying audience members, the staging directions encourage the audience to relax and to feel 'cared for' (18) despite the emotionally brutal content of the story they are hearing.

Gruelling material, as one of Crouch's characters makes clear, is no guarantee of a profound and disturbing theatrical experience. Chris, a caricature of a London theatre addict, enthuses to a fellow audience member:[167]

> I get here and I go flop! I go, phew! It feels like in here anything is possible and it's safe. It's all safe! I've seen everything imaginable here. I've seen bum sex and rimming and cock sucking and wankings and rapings and stabbings and shootings and bombings. Bombings and bummings!! […] And nobody knows […] we're here, in here, safe in here, enjoying our Maltesers and our bum sex. (48)

As a serial audience member, Chris constructs his spectatorial role as one of cosy voyeurism. He consumes theatre much as he consumes his Maltesers, in a manner that does not threaten his personal or political perspectives, and while he speaks of theatre as 'such an education' (48) it is unclear what form this education has taken for him. The actors in Crouch's fictional play, however, have found themselves and their lives altered by the deeper level of immersion demanded by the writer and director; for them the theatre has ceased to be a safe space for viewing atrocities in comfort. By immersing these 'actors' and the writer in the audience (rather than the other way round, as immersive theatre audiences have come to expect), *The Author* reconfigures the role of the spectator, rendering it more ambiguous. Not only can the spectator choose to become a participant, a participant may also spectate, and even while the company is soothed and nurtured by the beautiful lighting and musical interludes called for in the stage directions each individual audience member is free to choose between comfortable detachment and traumatic engagement.

This is the choice that the fictional Tim Crouch relates in the play's final reveal, where he describes masturbating to images of child pornography in the same room as his colleague Esther's sleeping baby:

> **Tim:** I have the choice to continue.
> I have the choice to stop.

His choice to continue and the discovery of that choice by the baby's mother precipitates his suicide attempt (an attempt the success of which, as 'Tim' here is a fictional character, we cannot determine) and closes the circle of participation and spectatorship. He watches, but in watching he also acts and is in turn seen to watch/act by Esther, who chooses to leave the performance space - refusing to watch or to act - immediately after these events are related. At this point the pacified audience personified by Chris ceases to be a viable option. The theatre of *The Author* is no longer a space for watching others but a space in which we make choices and bear witness to those choices. As Crouch writes in the introduction, 'The request the play makes is for us to be okay about ourselves, to gently see ourselves and ourselves seeing.' (18) The safety sought by Chris is not part of the play's request or its offer; if safety is to be found it is through an acceptance of having chosen to continue or to stop, to be a part of a story of trauma, violence and abuse or to withdraw from it.

Here as in *Taking Care of Baby* there is no room for complacency or assumptions regarding objectivity, but Crouch brings this about by removing rather than heightening elements of spectacularisation. With no formal beginning or end to the play, minimal distinction between actor and spectator and all participants using their own names, the mediation of theatre itself becomes the focus of scrutiny and interrogation as an informal discussion of an imagined theatrical experience becomes itself the performance. The theatre of *The Author* is the lens through which it observes its own dissection, and every aspect of it invites questioning from the multiple perspectives invoked by its structure. Despite the binaristic language in which 'Tim' couches his own decision, the identities forming within the performance space are anything but binary; they are fluid and multiple. This plasticity of identity and perspective does not, however, invite an amorphous consensus in the manner of the Third Way. Instead, the necessity of choosing, from moment to moment, how to inhabit (to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari) a self that is several has the potential to produce a spectatorial and performing identity that is perpetually new, raw and radical in its pluralism. Where the subject implied by Third Way discourse is pacified, homogenous, mired in a consensus she consumes rather than creates, Crouch's theatrical subject is heterogenous, agonistic, perpetually in the act of choosing.

In this, perhaps, we can locate something of the 'radical innocence' posited by Bond as the only means by which theatre might rebuild its relationship with democracy, justice and the utopian.[168] To invoke Mouffe and Laclau's distinction once again, the subjectivity of *The Author* is an ethical rather than a moral one, existing as it does in the perpetual liminal space where one moment's choice falls into the next and thus escaping the constraints of anything as absolute as morality. As Bond reminds us, morality and innocence are uneasy bedfellows; innocence must be corrupted for unjust societies to flourish as they require not only behavioural conformity but also conformity of belief, and this corruption takes place at the intersection of morality and power. The fugitive subject of *The Author*, running the fault lines between one moment of ethical potential and the next, performs the possibility of evading the moral through her constant reinvention in the space between innocence and corruption, continuing and stopping. 'Where are you with hope?' Chris asks his fellow audience members (22), and this continuous and undecideable instant, hinted

at by Bond as a source of utopian potentiality, is where Jill Dolan begins her search for hope at the theatre, for the eponymous *Utopia in Performance*.[169]

Ideological policy, utopian performance

I have already examined[170] some of the utopian strains present in New Labour cultural policy, with its particular Third-Way-inflected approach to addressing the social divisions observed by Sierz, and the inadequacies of New Labour rhetoric to addressing the aesthetic dimension of politics in performance. I now turn back to the more complex and nuanced constructions of utopia adumbrated in Chapter 2 with recourse to Adorno, Marcuse and Bloch, and make another move back to the stage to investigate, via Jill Dolan and her concept of the utopian performative, whether forms of theatre other than the verbatim might be better placed to tell and politicise stories about national identity while opening up spaces where the utopian impulse might emerge more fully than it does in the compromised communitarianism of Blair.

Returning briefly to Howard Barker, it is pertinent to recall Michael Billington's criticism of *The Loud Boy's Life*: 'Mr Barker offers us superior melodrama when we hunger for tangible fact'.[171] Billington needed answers, strategies, a concrete proposal for a way forward in order to find the hope that Karoline Gritzner, content with more nuanced and less determinedly empirical encounters, finds in Barker's manifestations of the sublime.[172] Dolan's quest for the utopian performative (via J.L. Austin) is, like Gritzner's location of the sublime in Barker, not dependent on explicit stagings of what a utopian society might look like. In an earlier essay[173] she quotes Dragan Klaic:

> Theater has trouble presenting utopia convincingly without making the spectator yawn [...] Utopia is, by its very nature, without conflict - a state of stasis, harmony, and balance. These are not ingredients for exciting theater, which is always based on conflict, opposition, and contradiction, or at least tension.[174] (Klaic, 61)

There is an important distinction for both Dolan and Klaic between the staging of utopia and utopia in performance, and it is a distinction that Klaic explores at length

by creating his own basic taxonomy of the intersections between utopia and theatre. In this taxonomy he includes the overtly dystopian (a genre particularly familiar to British theatre audiences) as well as the didactic, the mystical and the nostalgic. Dolan's approach, by contrast, is unapologetically driven by the affective dimension of performance, one that can only frustrate the need of policymakers to categorise, concretise and quantify:

> I write about my experiences at performances as ones of both intellect and affect; at a performance, I watch performers and audiences think and feel, and do the same along with them. Part of my project is to describe the performance's effect on the audience as a temporary community, perhaps inspired by communitas to feel themselves citizens of a no-place that's a better place, citizens who might then take that feeling into other sites of public discourse. (14-15)

In *The Author* we find a liminal quality common to many of the performances and moments explored by Dolan, as well as a final injunction to 'look after each other […] creating an imperfect act of love and hope' (60). The audience is invited and encouraged, after an isolating and individuating experience that has turned each individual subject's gaze upon herself, to come together in a *communitas* that has been renewed by its brush with separateness. The audience meets itself again at the close of the play in a different, more hopeful and loving configuration that is a powerful example of the utopian moments sought by Dolan, 'moments of liminal clarity and communion, fleeting, briefly transcendent bits of profound human feeling and connection' (168). Dolan is also in search of ways for the utopian performative to extend beyond the curtain call and make itself known to the social in other forms (34); *The Author* leaves that challenge in the hands of the audience by dispensing with the final curtain entirely. The audience's affective response, its decision to cohere in communitas or remain estranged from itself, *is* the ending - and, as the published script often reminds its reader, the ending is free to be different each time. The audience, in unwitting support of Dolan's contestation that the utopian performative may rehearse participatory democracy, decides how the performance will end by choosing whether or not to accept its invitation to the utopian moment.

Dolan, like Bloch and Benjamin before her, is preoccupied with the relationship between hope and temporality and the role that the Benjaminian simultaneous instant can play in allowing a glimpse of an alternative futurity. Her own relationship with events of recent American history and specifically 9/11 is comparable to Adorno's with the Holocaust in that it demands a radical reevaluation of what art can mean in the aftermath of terror. Three of the performances Dolan chooses to explore, in a chapter entitled 'Militant Optimism' (139-166)

> […] address life and death, transformations wrought publicly by history and privately by age; they evoke, in singular ways, a rather melancholic yearning for a different future, fueled by wistful but persistent hope, all three travel an axis of time in which the most powerful emotions become ephemeral, evanescent moments of feeling; all three performances trade in imagistic and semantic anachronisms (142)

This is a description that for the British theatregoer immediately recalls one of the most critically and publicly acclaimed plays of recent years: Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem*.[175] The phenomenal success of *Jerusalem* coincided with a time of turbulence for British theatre and its political context; as *Jerusalem* opened at the Royal Court Theatre in 2009, the arts world - and theatre in particular - was still raw from the previous year's events in which the strained relationship between ACE and the theatre had come to a head.[176] As the play transferred to the West End, Britain prepared for the General Election that would introduce a Conservative-led Coalition government. Throughout all of this Johnny 'Rooster' Byron's reign of misrule continued to flourish on various stages, characteristically untrammelled by the vicissitudes of parliamentary politics. As Charlotte Higgins wrote, 'I've been presented with a vision of Englishness that doesn't make me want to spew […] I began to think about the levellers, the diggers, the wonderful and outre sects thrown up by the English revolution'.[177]

In answer to Aleks Sierz's questions, reiterated at the opening of this chapter, the astounding popularity of *Jerusalem* with London audiences[178] resonates with Higgins' enthusiasm for a performance of English identity that is raucous, rebellious and rude. Dolan's 'axis of time' is heavily and subversively present, dispelling sentimental ideas of 'Olde England' in favour of a carnivalesque temporal riot where

the mysteries of England's past and present enjoy a boisterous, playful and sometimes dangerous meeting. The community evoked by *Jerusalem* is, as Higgins intimates, one of solidarity with England's history of insurrection framed as a party in which the audience is forcefully invited to join, leaving ideological consensus at the door.

A contrasting invocation of mythology and national identity was in play in Tanika Gupta's 2002 play *Sanctuary*, in which a cross-section of multicultural Britain re-enacts the Fall of Man in a London churchyard.[179] The peace of the garden, over which benevolent vicar Jenny and her close friend and gardener Kabir preside, is gradually eroded by the intrusion of capitalism (in the form of redevelopment and gentrification) and eventually exploded by the aftershock of the Rwandan genocide. Here, hopes of coexistence without conflict are dashed as the proposed utopia of the garden is torn apart by the personal and political histories of its inhabitants which make it impossible for the violence of their pasts to recede into peaceable consensus. Klaic writes

> Following Manheim's opposition of ideology and utopia, one must conclude that much of theater peddles ideological constructs in a utopian coating, that many of theater's most blissful elements stem from pseudo-utopian constellations which, in fact, rationalize current modes of existence (67)

Sanctuary strenously avoids falling into this trap, allowing the flaws in contemporary ideology to take centre stage. Multiculturalism and diversity, as in much of Gupta's political work (particularly *Gladiator Games* and *Sugar Mummies*), are not comfortable and easy; committing to them means confronting elements of cultural, racial and economic difference which are deeply painful. These problematics recall Levitas' scepticism regarding New Labour communities; the rhetoric of togetherness is ideological rather than utopian in character when it fails to take up the challenges implied by *Sanctuary* and ignores the real social divisions that are enacted in everyday life.

Sanctuary's garden performs national identity as a dystopian, disrupted Eden from which we are expelled when the violence between other, opposing constituents of our identities can no longer be suppressed. However, Klaic's claim that 'Even when theater portrays dystopian circumstances of utter bleakness and terror, utopian hope

looms in the background' (61) holds true here, as does Dolan's militant optimism. While *Sanctuary* acknowledges what humans have expressed through mythology, that there can be no Eden without a serpent, the horrors it enacts do not preclude an alternative future. The triumphant departure of school-leaver Ayesha, who ends the play in an effusive outpouring of enthusiasm for her own imagined future, can be heard as naivety but also as a radical innocence that contains utopian power:

> **Ayesha:** I've been institutionalized all these years. It's like breaking free form prison. I've got the key in my hand and I've opened the door. Step out into the light and breathe the fresh air. My life begins today […] oh, and little banana tree, how small your leaves seem but one day you'll be able to poke your head up higher than that wall. Then they'll really notice you. (114)

With her formal education over, Ayesha is ready not only to shed the constraints of her unsatisfactory home life but also to leave the illusory peace of an Eden which faces imminent physical as well as spiritual demolition. To an audience that has just witnessed the exposure of Michael as a man complicit in genocide, his subsequent murder by Kabir and the concealment of that murder by Jenny and her conservative, middle-England mother Margaret, Ayesha's explosion of joyful futurity is jarring, but productively so. As in Dolan's account of Fiona Shaw's performance in *Medea*, the affective dissonance is what creates the space for the utopian performative to emerge.

All the plays and modes of performance I have discussed here bring their own responses to Ravenhill's provocation; the empirically confrontational, the cognitively dissonant, the humorous, the playful and the traumatised. All of them also, perhaps inevitably, hold open Dolan's question of whether the utopian performative needs to have a concrete, observable follow-through outside the context of the performance in order to be judged as politically efficacious. This intervention by Dolan is vital firstly in that it returns us not only to Barker and the primacy of the dramatic encounter over any future development's in the spectator's subjectivity, and secondly in that it disrupts the project discussed in Chapter 2 of measuring the political potential of theatre with recourse only to what happens outside the performance space. In my next, and final, chapter, I examine recent developments in how

academic research and policymaking is reevaluating this question and how existing scholarship on the history of British theatre can point towards a more agonistic theory of economic, intrinsic and social value.

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[145] As discussed in the introduction (11-13)

[146] Quoted by Buse, Peter. <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/mark-ravenhill> 2003

[147] Ravenhill, Mark. *Some Explicit Polaroids*. Mark Ravenhill Plays:1. London: Methuen 2001. 227-314

[148] Ravenhill, Mark. *Shopping and F***king*. Mark Ravenhill Plays:1. London: Methuen 2001. 1-92

[149] Haydon, Andrew. 'Theatre in the 2000s: Verbatim'. *Modern British Playwriting 2000-9*. London: Bloomsbury. 2013

[150] '[...] verbatim theatre includes everything from small studios at the BAC or Arcola, and workshops at The Actors Centre, 'new writing theatre' like the Bush and the Hampstead, to the National Theatre's largest space [...] everything from 'physical theatre companies' like Frantic Assembly to the ensemble of the National Theatre. It was performed in traditional and 'found' spaces. It covered topics from the urgent, pressing and national, to the minute, personal and unconsidered. The pieces were edited by a single hand or assembled collaboratively; minimally directed or shaped into lavishly produced musical theatre.' (48)

[151] Paget, Derek. 'Verbatim Theatre': Oral History and Documentary Techniques'. *New Theatre Quarterly*. 3:12. 1987. 317-336

[152] Reinelt, Janelle. 'Toward a Poetics of Theatre and Public Events: In the Case of Stephen Lawrence'. *The Drama Review*. 50:3 (2006) 69-87

[153] I shall return to this point in Chapter 5 via Esther Leslie's discussion of the Frankfurt School and the aestheticisation of politics.

[154] Megson, Chris. "*Half The Picture:* 'A Certain Frisson' at the Tricycle Theatre". *Get Real: Decumentary Theatre Past and Present*. Ed. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2009. 195-208

[155] I am deliberately separating these from *Called To Account: The Indictment of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair For the Crime of Aggression Against Iraq,* the material for which had a different genesis.

[156] Bottoms, Stephen. "Putting the Document into Documentary." *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3(2006) : 56-68.

[157] Hare, David. "David Hare and Max Stafford-Clark" *Verbatim Verbatim: Contemporary Documentary Theatre*. London: Oberon. 2008. 45-76

[158] Kent, Nicolas. ibid 133-168 and Norton-Taylor, Richard, 103-132

[159] Soans, Robin. ibid 15-44

[160] Bastow, Steve and Martin, James. *Third Way Discourse: European Ideologies in the Twentieth Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2003

[161] Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso. 1985

[162] Mouffe and Laclau define the relation between articulation and discourse as follows: 'In the context of this discussion, we will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated.' H&SS (105)

[163] Kelly, Dennis. *Taking Care of Baby*. London: Oberon Books. 2008.

[164] *Taking Care of Baby*. Dir. Anthony Clarke. Birmingham Repertory Theatre. 3 May 2007. Performance.

[165] Leslie, Esther. *Add Value to Contents: the Valorisation of Culture Today*. European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies. Nov. 2006. np

[166] Crouch, Tim. *The Author*. London: Oberon Modern Plays. 2009

[167] Originally 'Adrian' (played by Adrian Howells rather than Chris Goode as indicated in the printed script)

[168] See Chapter 1, 39

[169] Dolan, Jill. *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2005.

[170] See Chapter 2, 62-67

[171] Billington, Michael. *Guardian*, 28 February 1980

[172] See Chapter 1, 35

[173] Dolan, Jill. "Performance, Utopia, and the "Utopian Performative"". *Theatre Journal*, Volume 53, Number 3, October 2001. 455-479

[174] Klaic, "Utopia Sustained".Theater 26.1/2. 1995. 60-69

[175] Butterworth, Jez. *Jerusalem*. London: Nick Hern Books. 2009

[176] See Introduction, 9

[177] Higgins, Charlotte. *Guardian Culture Blog*. 12 February 2010. <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2010/feb/12/jerusalem-jez-butterworth-mark-rylance-englishness-shakespeare>

[178] The reactions of American audiences to play's Broadway run, while equally enthusiastic, have a different cultural context and thus fall outside the remit of this discussion.

[179] Gupta, Tanika. *Sanctuary*. London: Oberon Books. 2002

Chapter 6:

The Value of Theatre

In this chapter, I return to the question of policy. Previous chapters have touched on the issue of autonomy and whether funders and philanthropists have 'purchased' cultural privilege and, by extension, political theatre, and looked at the plays themselves – here, I will look at some ways to align research with cultural policy-making that have lately been explored and make use of some historical context regarding the economics of theatre, as well as developing some of the ideas set out by current cultural policy scholars - most particularly Belfiore & Bennett - and how they can be interrogated and refined with recourse to Adorno and Horkheimer. This will also involve a brief account of the existing debate within cultural policy studies as to the relationship between cultural studies and the study of cultural policy, invoking the different positions of Tony Bennett[180] and Jim McGuigan. Given that the politicisation of theatre is particularly vulnerable to Third Way discourse (for reasons discussed in Chapters 4 and 5), can the proposed new systems of assessing cultural value continue to support the financial prosperity of subsidised theatre in the face of government cuts to the arts while simultaneously helping its practitioners to resist ideological influences that reproduce Third Way discourse on stage?

I also make use of the historiographical projects of Tracy C. Davis in giving some context to the economics of theatre, which requires some explanation. As with the presence of Barker and Bond at the opening of my thesis, it is necessary to bridge the chronological and disciplinary gap between Davis' scholarship and the issues pertinent to political theatre under New Labour. As I shall discuss, Davis herself sketches parallels (although she does not develop them fully) between the relationship between market and social good in the 1800s and that between stage and state under the New Labour government. In both, considerable tension is observable between financial imperatives and the public good and the reconciliation between the two is problematic. Not only does Davis gives a compelling account of the shift from aristocratic patronage to state funding, she also makes a particularly useful intervention in theatre scholarship regarding the economics of theatre. The different strains of economic theory Davis brings to bear on the questions of theatre as 'service' or as 'public good' and of the various value systems in which theatre may participate provide a nuanced reading due to Davis' interdisciplinary approach; she

reads the economic history of theatre as a political narrative in which ideology and discourse, as well as finance, play a part, and this is where I locate her particular utility in opening up the closed systems of discourse surrounding the nexus of stage, state and society in Third Way disquisition. Reviving her formulations and modes of thought here will supply a fresh perspective on how this nexus functions and remind us of the fluidity it has historically enjoyed (or endured).

'Testing times' - economic impact and austerity

On 24 April 2013, the then Culture Secretary Maria Miller delivered a keynote speech at the British Museum[181], her first major speech since her appointment to the job. The title was 'Testing times: Fighting culture's corner in an age of austerity', and it was reported widely in the national press as a defence of the commodification of the arts that demonstrated little commitment to fighting for culture. Peter Dominiczak in *The Telegraph* called the speech 'a broadside bound to provoke anger in the arts world' while Kiran Stacey of the *Financial Times* summarised the text as telling arts leaders to 'stop moaning about government cuts and start making the case for how their organisations can boost economic growth'. Miller's speech, coming before a public spending review in which 10% cuts for the arts were predicted, argued for arts funding taking a position at the centre of efforts to restore economic growth, claiming that it has economic potential over and above its direct impact: 'British culture is perhaps the most powerful and most compelling product we have available to us' and 'culture should be seen as the standard bearer for our efforts to engage in cultural diplomacy, to develop soft power, and to compete, as a nation, in both trade and investment'. The central and somewhat paradoxical claim of the speech was that, although cuts to the arts are inevitable during a period of austerity, she would fight to convince the Treasury that government money spent on the arts remained a sound investment in Britain's national identity and therefore in its economy. Commentators were quick to point out the inherent contradictions; arts organisations need to make a good economic case, but nothing would protect them from losing their funding.

April 2013 had already been a busy month for cultural policy research, and if the speech was intended to galvanise arts professionals and the creative industries into

opening their work up to new evaluation criteria it was less than successful. Martin Bright of *The Spectator* noted that 'she, or her advisers, clearly didn't know that the evidence she seeks is already out there a hundred times over. She came to praise the arts and ended up sounding like a philistine'; economic impact research has, as Bright implies (and as I have already discussed), been at the forefront of cultural policy-making and the arts funding debate for decades. Most of the arguments for and against plentiful arts funding and the importance of its economic and social impact had already been given a public airing in the preceding three weeks, and were fresh in the mind of the British press. NESTA had just published the *Manifesto for the Creative Economy*[182] (hereafter 'Manifesto'), in which it was mentioned that 'funders in the UK's arts sector have been dazzled by the blizzard of economic impact studies' (72) before casting significant doubt on the rigour and consistency of the methodologies of these studies and thus the value of the data gathered. Fin Kennedy and Helen Campbell Pickford's report on the effects of cuts on theatre, *In Battalions*,[183] had just been delivered to culture minister Ed Vaizey (who had previously denied the existence of any of the deleterious effects discussed in the report) along with an open letter signed by 82 prominent figures of British theatre and calling for a detailed and considered response to this evidence of the damage that had already been done.

The economic benefits of the subsidised arts were front and centre in pro-subsidy arguments during the New Labour years, and this preoccupation was reflected in research. As Dan Rebellato wrote in his response to Miller's speech: 'It's not a matter of choosing between funding the arts and funding schools and hospitals; the arts generate money that pays for schools and hospitals. Blah blah blah. We've said all this before; we've said all this for years.'[184] Far from being contentious or even surprising, Miller's speech was old news long before she delivered it and many of the theatre-makers who might have offered a public response had already effectively done so by supporting *In Battalions*. Jack Bradley's introduction to the report states:

> In any other industry R and D is a given [...] You don't know where the next *Billy Elliott* will come from, so occasionally you take risks. But with decent development and training the risks get smaller! I have seen a generation of writers – that being my specialism – evolve from pub theatre scribes to award-winning screenplay writers. They benefit, the exchequer benefits and we as a nation benefit. (4)

On one level, this familiar argument is identical to those used by Miller - subsidised theatre is necessary as a 'research and development' department for the commercial sector, for productions that enhance British theatre's international reputation, and for lucrative, high-profile national events such as Danny Boyle's widely-praised Olympic opening ceremony. Bradley's point, however - and that of *In Battalions* as a whole - is that, while Miller and the Coalition government wait for economic impact statistics they judge to be credible, the damaging effects of the cuts are already demonstrable. The 'key findings' section of *In Battalions* (9-10) cites significant reductions in areas of new writing that relate directly to future economic impact: fewer new play commissions (14 out of 26 respondents), reductions in new writing Research and Development (11 out of 26 respondents), cutbacks to unsolicited play reading services (10 out of 26 respondents) and cancellations of productions (16 out of 26 respondents). This understandably raises concerns about not only the immediate but also the long-term future of British theatre and its impact, as programmes to encourage young people into writing and acting also suffer (the closure of Hampstead Theatre's immensely acclaimed youth theatre, Heat & Light, which in the last ten years has launched the careers of playwright Atiha Sen Gupta and actors Daniel Kaluuya and Selom Awadzi, is a prime example). As discussed in previous chapters, such programmes are cited as beneficial not only to the artistic future of theatre but also to social and economic impact, creating educational opportunities, pathways to employment and prosperity; helping people to 'get on in the world', as Alan Davey has it.[185] Miller's implication that further evidence of economic impact must be produced before the government will invest in the arts sets up a vicious circle; cuts mean reduced budgets for new writing and education initiatives, reductions in these initiatives mean decreased economic impact, decreased economic impact means less government investment in theatre.

The growth of alternative value research

Attempts to break out of this vicious cycle under the Coalition government have already led to new initiatives in theatre and cultural policy scholarship that look for new approaches to assessing the value of the arts. The AHRC-funded Cultural Value Project (hereafter CVP), led by Professor Geoffrey Crossick and Dr Patrycja

Kaszynska and supported by a team of researchers[186] from universities, arts organisations and NGOs, initiated dialogue between practitioners, academics and audiences to establish the value of the direct cultural experience:

> The starting premise of the Cultural Value Project is that we need to begin by looking at the actual experience of culture and the arts rather than the ancillary effects of this experience. The Project will take as its starting point the different forms of cultural experience, such as, for instance, the aesthetic and cognitive dimensions of our cultural encounters. This might be seen as analysing the phenomenology of cultural experiences in order to understand better the benefits uniquely associated with cultural activity. This significant approach will be conducted alongside exploration of the many other economic and social benefits conventionally associated with cultural activity. The ambition underpinning the second part of the framework is to articulate a set of evaluative approaches and methodologies suitable to assessing the different ways in which cultural value is manifested.[187]

The CVP team, while clearly aware of the importance of social and financial impact, are prioritising a shift in focus from 'ancillary effects' to direct effects - what happens during the artistic experience rather than beyond it. The Project Advisory Group includes Eleonora Belfiore, whose critiques of the social and economic impact studies of the New Labour era are discussed in the first and second chapters of this thesis, Hasan Bakhshi, the Director of Creative Industries at NESTA and one of the authors of the aforementioned *Manifesto for the Creative Economy* which also criticises the inconsistent methodologies of those studies. Bakhshi also co-authored (with Alan Freeman and Graham Hitchen) the 2009 paper *Measuring Intrinsic Value: how to stop worrying and love economics*[188] that provided the theoretical grounding for the launch of the CVP. Belfiore also curates a blog and online resource on cultural value research and is one of the lead researchers in the Understanding Everyday Participation (hereafter UEP) project led by Andrew Miles at the University of Manchester, which began in April 2012 and 'proposes a radical re-evaluation of the relationship between participation and cultural value' by looking qualitatively at the ways in which participation in quotidian cultural practices creates and underpins communities. UEP is also linked to doctoral research projects on cultural practices,

participation and well- being [189] and the construction of civic identity[190], as well as making use of participant groups in various regions.[191]

NESTA's *Manifesto*, unsurprisingly given its authorship, is immensely supportive of the CVP and its mission, seeing it as 'a most welcome initiative' (72) that will encourage interdisciplinary thinking and, presumably, fresh input for the development of new research methodologies. The closing recommendation of the chapter on arts and culture is that the DCMS and Treasury use the methodologies and findings that will emerge from the CVP as the basis for a new and thorough assessment of the value of the subsidised arts and cultural spending, and make future funding decisions accordingly. The *Manifesto* does not, however, sideline the financial side of cultural value, but situates it within an imagined whole the parts of which have not yet been assembled:

> After years of unproductive debates where cultural and economic values have been pitched against each other, it is time to accept that the arts do produce value that can be meaningfully assessed, and measured, by economists, but that they of course produce cultural value that cannot be expressed in monetary units. Funders need a much better understanding of the relationship between these economic and cultural values, not least because in some cases the former – which can be measured – may do a very poor job at signalling the latter. (77)

In view of these new trends in cultural value research, it is unsurprising that the 'Testing Times' speech drew some angry, disappointed and even bewildered responses. As academics, practitioners and administrators had so recently begun to work together on moving beyond purely monetary definitions of value and devising alternative systems for its assessment (financed by public funding from Research Councils UK), for the Culture Secretary to issue a high-profile demand for a return to economic impact research represented a startlingly retrograde step.

Indivisible links and invisible hands: Tracy C. Davis' cultural economics and theatre

In order to offer some historical context for the various contemporary preoccupations with the intrinsic, instrumental and economic value of British theatre, I now turn to the work of Tracy C. Davis and her extensive research into the relative positions of these elements in Victorian theatre. The existence and the extent of Davis' research renders the assertions in the *Manifesto* that cultural economics has little traction in the cultural policy debate (71-73) even more frustrating, as it is highly pertinent to current discussions and in fact makes decisive moves towards assembling the parts of the whole towards which the *Manifesto* and *Measuring Intrinsic Value* gesture. As Bakhshi, Freeman & Hitchen write, having given a brief literature review of European cultural economics: 'There is a rich tradition to be called on. The problem is that it is not.' (6). Rather than duplicate their work, I shall focus on Davis' writing (which is not included in *Measuring Intrinsic Value*'s review), as she concentrates specifically on theatre and also follows a line of argument regarding the reconciliation of different research disciplines that resonates well with the material I will introduce subsequently.

In the introduction to her 2000 book *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914,* (hereafter EBS)[192] Davis refers to the writings of 18th century theatre manager John Philip Kemble (qtd. in Davis 3) as 'an apt reminder of the theatre industry's indivisible link between economics and aesthetics, and the complete subsuming of art to successful commerce' (4). The book goes on to provide a thorough historical background to 20th century debates on the roles of the state and the market in theatre. As the society that first gave voice to classical and neoclassical economics, Davis argues, an understanding of Victorian Britain's culture of philanthropy and entrepreneurship is essential to the narrative of contemporary British theatre. She follows Jacques Barzun's claim that it was during this time that the era of aristocratic patronage of the arts began to shift towards that of public funding; the debates which eventually gave rise to the end of British government's laissez-faire tradition regarding art and ultimately to the formation of the Arts Council in 1945 are grounded in this period of theatre history, and the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843

provokes the possibility that 'centralized cultural policy is born under Victoria' (155).

Davis refers to 20th century examples on both sides of the Atlantic, in the form of Bill Clinton's State of the Union address at the start of his second term and Tony Blair's 1997 pre- election communitarian promises, of how the economic theories that governed Victorian theatre still have considerable power in contemporary cultural policy debate:

> Clinton and Blair's premise - to put the support of the state behind the arts and humanities in order to better service the *state's* ideology - is a Marxian take on utility that has its origins in classical economic thought. How the theatre is to be utilized in the interest of the state as a choice between state intervention and free enterprise was precisely the dilemma perplexing nineteenth-century Britons contemplating both market regulation and the social good. (5)

It is clear that for Davis the history of theatre (and by extension its present and future) is inseparable from that of economics, but also that this is not restricted to the purely monetary. She also brings into play other areas of economic theory, discussing the precarious position theatre takes up between the concepts of 'service' and 'good', how its utility was constructed, and its role in disrupting the then-current British tradition of *laissez-faire*. Davis addresses the perennial question of whether theatre produces surplus value, starting from John Stuart Mill's theory that theatre is pure waste as nothing material is produced by or gained from the worker's labour. This contrasts with Davis' own observations regarding theatre's position within economies of desire, and 'the delight experienced in consumption' (155).

Following the 1843 Theatre Regulation Act, the conditions of the production of Victorian theatre revolved around the potential oppositions of the desires of the spectator to the desires of the state. Davis devotes a full chapter of EBS ('Marginal economics, national interest and the half-naked woman', 115-155) to illustrating this point through the examples of sexism and racism in theatre of the time; while tropes of sexualisation and female semi-nudity that might have seemed to be at odds with Victorian morality were tolerated by the censors, many shows were deemed to be performing race in a manner that was diplomatically ill-advised. Offering pleasure to audiences in the form of sexual titillation did not threaten national interests; offering

it in a form that might prove detrimental to diplomatic relations certainly did. Davis, in the same chapter, links this to the emergence of marginalist economics circa 1870, demonstrating a move beyond classical constructions of value that comprehends marginal utility, one to which monetary quantification is not essential. It is worth recalling at this stage that Davis' earlier work on the economics of theatre establishes an approach to cultural economics that refuses to fixate on the monetary. In 'Reading for Economic History' (hereafter 'Economic History') she writes about a growing rapprochement between economics and the humanities, particularly from the side of economists such as Donald McCloskey who began to use deconstruction and discourse to decode the rhetoric of their own discipline. She reads this turn as having a particular potential for theatre scholarship, as follows:

> accessing the economy of a play (...) is in harmony with the *verstehen* doctrine in the social sciences, which rejects the primacy of 'scientific' knowledge derived from laboratory experiments in favor of first person knowledge confirmed by human experience. Economists' objection to the *verstehen* doctrine is reminiscent of the   traditional schism between the historical and literary disciplines: the first strives to describe something that supposedly happened; the other studies what is immutably an assertion or product of the imagination. In the literary denotation of economics as an aspect of human organization, the *verstehen* doctrine can be extended to a personal-as-political/ political-as-personal approach to ground abstract economics in human activity, including its dramatic renderings. (487-488)

For Davis, then, the study of theatre's past and present can be understood as a valid approach to economics and even as an index of its development. While this thesis may at first seem familiar to us from Frankfurt School thought - that the work of art cannot be separated from the conditions of its production - Davis is in fact following a different theoretical trajectory in directing her critique at the fallacy of the 'traditional schism'. Her emphasis is on resisting the breach between the disciplines of economics and the humanities that obscures the 'indivisible link' between the dramatic work and the conditions of its production. The definition of economics she embraces is highly specific in that it pre-dates the classical economists she quotes so widely throughout her work: 'One denotation of economics - the sense used by Milton and Dryden - involves the structure, arrangement, or proportion of parts of any product of human design, including poetry or drama' ('Economic History', 487),

and in this she includes the economies of desire that play such a large part in the marginal utility of theatre.

In the context of Victorian theatre, Davis argues, it was this marginal utility that mediated between the interests and desires of the audience, those of the state, and those of the theatre managers, and also caused the *laissez-faire* tradition to be disrupted from all sides. The invisible hand theory went just so far, in that the self-interest of theatre managers ensured that the paying public was provided with the spectacle it desired, but the desires of the state to maintain both the market and the public good provoked intervention on matters of morality, diplomacy and safety (to which Davis devotes an earlier chapter, 'Industrial regulation and safety, [EBS 70-114]). At the same time, the most prominent managers themselves in their capacity as entrepreneurs disrupted perfect competition by becoming identifiable economic actors and directing the market. Economic concerns, whether they were those of accruing revenue, directing the entertainment market, ensuring the public good or seeking satisfaction of desire, are what shapes Davis' account of the evolution of British theatre, rather than the more sublime considerations of aesthetics.

This account is worth reviving in that it troubles current approaches to economic impact, and provides a counterpoint to the CVP project. It is interesting to compare Davis' use of the *verstehen* doctrine to the previously-cited passage from the *Manifesto* where the economic and the monetary are elided and are kept separate from the 'cultural'. The economic forces invoked by Davis as constitutive of theatre's history are not mathematical (except in the most abstract sense), and indeed in 'Economic History' she is critical of economists' frequent recourse to mathematical formulas, saying that 'Most economic writing - including economic history - is punctuated with mathematical formulas in an effort to convince readers of its scientific validity in divining the future from the past' despite being as determined by ideology and discourse as any other form of political narrative. In fact, the elision of 'economic' and 'monetary' is a common one in 20th and 21st century discussions of cultural value and impact, with Dominic Shellard's thorough and highly-praised study of the 'economic impact' of British theatre being a surprisingly strong example. Shellard focuses entirely on the monetary worth of theatre to the economy, with 'social impact' being located within a separate survey of its own. The mission of the CVP, by contrast, determinedly avoids the financial and seeks ways of defining value

as sited within the immediate cultural or artistic experience. When placed in the context of Davis' analysis, this can be read as an example of the imagined schism she points out in 'Economic History' between the factual and the imaginary.

Schisms and the Enlightenment legacy

This schism is what concerns Belfiore and Oliver Bennett in their 2010 article 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making'.[193] Unpacking the often fraught relationship between 'research, advocacy and the actual realities of policy-making' (121), Belfiore & Bennett point out a similar schism to that indicated by Davis and Bakhshi, Freeman & Hitchen between a mathematical and a humanities-led approach to the economics of culture, one being constructed as the realm of hard empirical proof and the other as that of theorisation and rhetoric. With evidence-based policy-making (hereafter EBP[194]) so central to the New Labour agenda, the same emphasis on wrenching the required conclusions from inconclusive data by any means necessary that led to much of the advocacy-based research that Belfiore and many others criticise elsewhere (as I discuss in Chapter 2) has also become constitutive of the linear discourse prevalent in discussions of policy-making. The assumed narrative in this discourse, Belfiore & Bennett argue, is that there is a direct, mono-directional, linear relationship between 'the identification of a problem, research into its nature, causes and possible solutions and policy formulation' (131), and moreover that this relationship is apolitical. Until this narrative is questioned rigorously the expectation of a linear progression from research to empirical proof to policy development remains, and that expectation impedes understanding of how policy- making really functions as a political and ideologically-mediated process.

As discussed in preceding chapters the depoliticisation of policy is a recognised trope of Third Way rhetoric, and both Belfiore & Bennett and Davis gesture towards this (Belfiore & Bennett 128-9, Davis 5-6). Belfiore & Bennett, however, move this critique forward in a provocative direction by linking it to a discussion of the legacy of the Enlightenment, via the work of Stephen Toulmin. While Davis roots her reading of this schism in classical economics, Belfiore & Bennett (via Toulmin) take it back to the mid-seventeenth century when, Toulmin posits, 'that tension between different methods of enquiry — that of the natural or exact sciences on the one hand,

and that of the humanities on the other (...) first began to develop' (Belfiore & Bennett, 132). They link the embedding of EBP into the dominant social democratic discourse (especially in New Labour Britain) to this tension. The marginalisation of the humanities in the development of EBP is read by Belfiore & Bennett as a symptom of the post-Enlightenment reification of the schism between these methods of enquiry and the data they yield. Just as Davis writes in 'Economic History' that 'drama's rendering of human behavior is no less "quality data" subject to validity tests based on comparative quantitative verification' (488) than economists' mathematically-derived projections, Belfiore & Bennett argue for an

> ...arts impact research agenda which is not confined to the demands of an instrumental rationality: a critical approach that aims at an open enquiry of the problems, both theoretical and methodological, which are inherent in the project of understanding the response of individuals to the arts and trying to investigate empirically the extent and nature of the effects of the aesthetic experience. In this kind of scenario, the humanities would certainly have a role to play in the production of knowledge [...] This would go some way, we think, towards the reinstatement of that complementariness of logic and rhetoric, of the exact sciences and the humanities, which characterized the human pursuit of knowledge before the intellectual and scientific revolution of the 1600s (139)

Belfiore & Bennett's contention, much like that of Janet Newman or even Mouffe & Laclau (see Chapter 3 and 4's discussions of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*), is that to construct the results of one particular type of research as facts that are then transmuted into 'common sense' (to borrow Newman's terminology) is to inoculate them against political reading. The ultimate legacy of the Enlightenment in policy-making, for Belfiore & Bennett, is the prioritisation of research methods that can be prevented from comprehending the political and the marginalisation of those methods that cannot. EBP, in the Enlightenment- driven narrative, is derived apolitically from factual data which feeds directly into a policy that is also, by extension, ideologically unmediated.

Belfiore & Bennett's critique of the policy-making narrative in terms of Enlightenment legacy raises some questions regarding my earlier discussions of instrumentalism in cultural policy and the challenges that post-Marxism and Western Marxism can bring

to Third Way thinking about art and theatre. Firstly, if resisting the separation of scientific and humanities-led policy research is a means of resisting depoliticisation, then could the creation of a new and more integrated approach as advocated by Belfiore & Bennett and by the CVP lead to cultural policy that would be a site of genuine political potential? and, looking at Davis' points regarding the history of the form, what specific effects would this have on theatre?

In addressing these points, I will first return to a paper I have touched on briefly in the previous chapter: Esther Leslie's *Add Value to Contents: The Valorisation of Culture Today*, before working through the issues raised by Davis, Belfiore & Bennett (with reference to the cultural policy debate between T. Bennett and McGuigan) and with recourse to Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment.

Co-operation or co-optation?

Leslie's article presents a scathing Frankfurt-School-based critique of cultural policy and of the academic research that informs it. For Leslie, the rapprochement between the world of Cultural Studies with that of cultural policy (which she sites in the early 1990s) constituted an ideological pollution of the former. She gives examples of people who have moved between the two:

> Numerous cultural theorists reinvent themselves as wannabe policy makers in the 'cultural industries'. Still echoing terms from the cultural theory they absorbed, they marshal the language of market research and niche marketing, capitalism's tools for product placement in competitive industries.

The (re)integration of different academic disciplines in service of cultural policy reform, put forward by Belfiore & Bennett as a possible way back from depoliticisation, is the opposite for Leslie. What current cultural policy scholars put forward as politically urgent and radical, she attacks as being part of the apparatus of 'the aestheticisation of the political', and she accuses those cultural theorists who collaborate with policy-makers (she names T. Bennett in particular) of being complicit in the industrialisation of culture in the service of capitalism and turning art into 'the universal grease relied upon to make the cogs of business turn better.' She, like Belfiore & Bennett, is highly critical of entirely monetary and mathematical systems of determining cultural value, but for different reasons. Leslie's argument is

that when the term 'value' has lost any meaning beyond the ideological constraints of late capitalism. She goes considerably further than Davis, whose critique is compatible with Leslie's up to a point in that it is concerned with sites of power as determinants of value; for Leslie, late capitalism holds no alternatives for artistic value beyond commodification:

> Culture is quantified – witness the graphs on the UNESCO site of world imports and exports of cultural goods. This point is banal. Of course an industry, in a capitalist world, produces commodities. This particular industry produces art as commodity variously. Art-buying is commodified for broader layers by the encouragement of well sponsored and marketed 'affordable art' fairs, which generalise ownership of small art objects. Art experience is commodified through exhibition sponsorship by corporations and in policy-makers' quantification of social benefits derived from exposure to culture. And the art institution markets itself as commodity.

This leads to Leslie's ultimate point, which she makes via Adorno's discussion in *Aesthetic Theory* of art and utopia:[195] that it is futile to attempt to redefine cultural value when the structures that are constitutive of value (those of capitalism) remain unquestioned, and Cultural Studies debases itself when it apes Third Way ideology by involving itself with policy-making in an attempt to ameliorate the harshest excesses and inequalities of neoliberalism.

Before going any further, I shall explain the long-standing debate within cultural policy studies surrounding this issue to which Leslie is referring, to which T. Bennett's defence of the engagement between cultural studies and cultural policy is central. A thinker who had already created an important body of work on Marxian aesthetics and on Gramsci, T. Bennett made a move away from Gramsci and towards Foucault in the early 1990s arguing that Gramsci's concept of hegemony had (somewhat ironically) gained such dominance in the field of cultural studies that it had obscured more potentially productive modes of thinking. T. Bennett's contention was that cultural studies had become too rarified, too divorced from the mechanisms of the cultures it sought to analyse, and needed to develop strategies for engaging with those mechanisms whereby cultural engagement altered public consciousness (his term for them being 'cultural technologies' (T. Bennett 1992, 31)).[196] A new relationship between cultural studies and policy was needed, according to T.

Bennett, one in which the discipline of cultural studies would take a greater role in the formation of 'cultural technologies' and the policies that guided them. This, he argued, was the way in which cultural policy could be imagined and shaped so as to foster and maximise its potential as an agent of social change. Students of cultural studies should be involving themselves in the administration of culture with a view to reforming it, rather than criticising it from the ivory tower of academia.

This provocative stance met with criticism from many in the field of cultural studies, most significantly Jim McGuigan. McGuigan regarded his political position as being to the left of T. Bennett, but more importantly he was critical of T. Bennett's claims that Foucault provided the most useful theoretical framework for disrupting the policy arena. McGuigan instead found the formulations of Habermas to be most productive, specifically the concept of the 'public sphere' in which individuals come together as a public to create rational debate and political opinion. Although Habermas' original concept was specific to 18th-century bourgeois society, McGuigan is one of the many contemporary theorists who have argued for its continuing relevance, specifically with regard to the criticism of cultural policy. While acknowledging that Habermas' 'public sphere' was a theoretical norm for democracy rather than an observable current phenomenon, McGuigan still argued for its deployment as a 'critical ideal' (McGuigan 1996, 28) which would supply a much-needed counterpoint and resistance to the top-down structures of government from the outside.[197] Trying to change the system from within, McGuigan argued, was less likely to result in true reform than in the co-opting of cultural studies, which would risk being subsumed into the mechanisms of the administration it sought to disrupt. Leslie's answer to my earlier question regarding the imagining of a cultural policy that would act as a site of genuine political potential might, although her theoretical framework is entirely different, work along similar lines to those of McGuigan and his fellow Habermasians; that a reconstitution of cultural economics along Belfiore & Bennett's lines would be more likely to depoliticise the research in question than repoliticise arts policy and that, for this reason, the project would be of limited political worth.

T. Bennett invokes Adorno in an argument in a 2000 paper[198] in a manner that tallies with Davis' assertion that an integrated approach to cultural economics does have political potential. Citing the essay 'Culture and Administration' (1991), he reads Adorno as letting cultural policy off the hook (by contrast with Leslie's more

uncompromising reading):

> This tension suffuses the essay: culture cannot but be administered, but it cannot help but suffer as a consequence. But what Adorno does not do [...] is seek to extricate the intellectual from the contradictions this generates; to the contrary, he thrusts the intellectual into their centre in the demand for an administrative praxis that will exhibit a Kantian self-consciousness of these contradictions by lodging that self- consciousness in the processes through which culture is administered in the form of the expert – the enlightened aesthete - who serves as the only force capable of protecting cultural matters from the market (...)

In T. Bennett's reading, what 'Culture and Administration' advocates is the use of artists and thinkers as buffers between art and the market, softening the clashes which capitalism creates between them. This way of understanding Adorno is far from invulnerable to criticism. T. Bennett is referring to a passage towards the end of the essay, which states

> The relation between administration and expert is not only a matter of necessity but it is a virtue as well. It opens a perspective for the protection of cultural matters from the realm of control by the market, which today unhesitatingly mutilates culture. (129)

The terms that give trouble here are 'relation' and 'necessity'. T. Bennett's reading implies the kind of relation that Leslie criticises, a definition of 'relation' which is worryingly close to co-optation, in which 'experts' (which Adorno points out are hard to define, let alone locate) become part of the apparatus of policy-making and government. An earlier passage from 'Culture and Administration' runs as follows:

> The major factor [...] is the dismissal of such concepts as autonomy, spontaneity and criticism: autonomy, because the subject, rather than making conscious decisions, both has and wishes to subjugate itself to whatever has been pre-ordained [...]   criticism is dying out because the critical spirit is as disturbing as sand in a machine to that smoothly-running operation which is becoming more and more the model of the cultural. This critical spirit now seems antiquated, irresponsible and unworthy, much like 'armchair' thinking. (123)

The denigration of the critical spirit, here, takes place because it troubles the mechanisms of power but cannot gain sufficient momentum to destroy them, and autonomy is damaged by the relentless running of those ideological mechanisms that give 'the freedom to choose what is always the same'. ('Enlightenment as Mass Deception' 167) The virtuous 'relation' Adorno posits between experts and administrators of the culture industry, therefore, makes more sense if read as an antagonistic one rather than one of meek collaboration, as the latter (as the cited passage from T. Bennett implies) would be designed to oil the cogs of administration rather than damage them. Leslie's critique of T. Bennett performs the site of resistance that an intellectual intervention can create in the cultural policy debate. Her contention is not that nothing should be done unless it effects radical and complete social change - for, as Adorno writes about such uncompromisingly radical impulses, 'Excessive demand is a sublime form of sabotage' (126) - but rather that academic interventions into cultural policy should be less cosy and more combative than those currently taking place under the remit of the AHRC and NESTA.

T. Bennett's reading also presupposes that in using the term 'necessary' Adorno is positing this tension as inevitable and inherent in any culture that produces art, which - certainly in 'Culture and Administration' - is not entirely the case. The tension he explores here is peculiar to capitalism and derives from those specific conditions of cultural production which, to borrow briefly from Gramsci, has such hegemonic dominance that even a theorist (and former Gramscian) such as T. Bennett may not find any immediate utility in looking outside it. For T. Bennett, writing in 2000 when not only capitalism but its neoliberal incarnation is the only game in town, it is difficult not to universalise its rules.

The aesthetic experience and Enlightenment critiques

Arguably, this difficulty is largely constitutive of Leslie's extreme wariness of interaction between scholars and policy-makers. Given the current ideological climate, which makes political integrity notoriously hard to maintain,[199] Leslie fears that the hegemonic domination of neoliberalism will inevitably trump the honourable intentions and thorough theoretical formulations of those scholars of cultural studies like T. Bennett who advocate the development of a closer relationship between their own research and the making of policy.

As I have just laid out (with reference to T. Bennett and to 'Culture and Administration', it is not the fact of a relation between the two that is in question, but the nature of that relation. In order to look briefly at the current, practical possibilities of that relation, I return to Belfiore & Bennett's discussion of the legacy of the Enlightenment and how it could interact with that of Adorno & Horkheimer. Although Belfiore & Bennett do not explicitly reference *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in their paper, the two texts have some common ground that can be developed productively in order to elucidate how the relation between scholarship and policy can avoid a Third Way post-political aporia and, returning to Davis, how this might be beneficial to theatre policy and practice.

In the opening essay of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'The Concept of Enlightenment'[200] (hereafter 'Concept'), Adorno & Horkheimer write:

> [...] enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system. Its untruth does not consist in what its romantic critics have always reproached it for: analytical method, return to elements, dissolution through reflective thought; but instead in the fact that for enlightenment the process is always decided from the start. When in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation, this marks it as the well-known even before any value is inserted. (24)

The rigidly formulaic character of the post-Enlightenment construction of knowledge not only places constraints on how things can be known, but also on what can be known. This is something that is echoed by Belfiore & Bennett's paper, where it is argued that these paradigms create problems for researchers in devising the kind of 'complex, exploratory and genuinely open-ended questions' (136) that would produce new perspectives on the old cultural policy debates and new forms of knowledge, and that as universities are also tied to market forces, funding requirements and contemporary economic thought they may not be able to produce the autonomous, rigorous policy research this requires. The cited passage from 'Concept' provides a different but not antithetical angle on this by using algebraic formulae as a point of comparison; once a discourse (or equation) has been set up, the position and context of its solution determined, that solution is already constructed as inevitable and in some sense transcendent. The methods of enquiry Adorno & Horkheimer (and Belfiore & Bennett) criticise are constitutive of an

unknown that is external and immutable, and towards which the terms that surround it ineluctably lead.

One of the major contentions of 'Concept', and of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a whole, is that in attempting to destroy mythological modes of thinking in order to create liberation, the Enlightenment fell into the trap of neglecting to interrogate its own doxa and thus reproducing it as a new strain of mythology, and so continued to put in place a system of domination over the natural world and over individual human uniqueness. The mythologising of knowledge is what I have described in the preceding paragraph; in seeking to demolish humanity's fear of the unknown or unknowable, the Enlightenment as narrated by Adorno & Horkheimer constituted all things as potentially knowable within a unified semiotic system in order to achieve dominance. Adorno & Horkheimer give this a political dimension by theorising that it demands conformity in that it 'excises the incommensurable' (12). As post-Enlightenment thought is suspicious of that which cannot be enumerated, it seeks to subject everything to the unifying principles of a single rational system of knowledge construction - 'the calculability of the world' (7) - and, they argue, the way in which social relations came to be couched in mathematical terms (they refer particularly to justice here) has been constitutive of the reduction of social relations to commodity exchange. Anything that falls outside this unified system of positivist knowledge is dismissed.

Belfiore & Bennett and T. Bennett are in accord regarding the difficulty of measuring the aesthetic experience, and the necessity of developing more rigorous methods of doing so (for example, T. Bennett, as an established Bourdieusian, deploys his knowledge and experience of the methodologies of *Distinction*). What they do not address, and Adorno & Horkheimer do, is how the legacy of the Enlightenment might have a direct effect on that aesthetic experience and the ability of the artist or the audience to create or participate in that experience:

> With the clean separation of science and poetry, the division of labor it had already helped to effect was extended to language. For science the word is a sign: as sound, image, and word proper it is distributed among the different arts, and is not permitted to reconstitute itself by their addition [...] As a system of signs, language is required to resign itself to calculation in order to know nature, and must discard the claim to be like her [...] only authentic

works of art were able to avoid the mere imitation of that which already is. (18)

By deploying structuralist terms, Adorno & Horkheimer make the case that the aesthetic has been fractured by a scientific, mechanistic approach to language and semiotics that makes it difficult for any art outside the *avant garde* to avoid mimesis or even cliche. Once language has been divided from itself, and subjectivity has been compromised by the conformity demanded by the Enlightenment's false opposition to mythology, the conditions of artistic production are similarly compromised and culture - particularly, in this context, mass culture - becomes aesthetically and politically void. This effect is noted not only with regard to art's production but also to its consumption. As workers are dominated by this enforced conformity and the erosion of subjectivity which is necessary to their self-preservation as a work force, so their self-alienation damages their ability to participate in the aesthetic:

> The regression of the masses today is their inability to hear the unheard-of with their own ears, to touch the unapprehended with their own hands [...] Through the mediation of the total society which embraces all relations and emotions, men are once again made to be that against which the evolutionary law of society, the principle of self, had turned: mere species beings, exactly like one another through isolation in the forcibly united collectivity. (36)

This strengthens Leslie's implied argument that the relation between research and policy needs to be an antagonistic one that creates a site of resistance if policy is to reflect the criticisms offered by the CVP. If, as Adorno & Horkheimer argued in 1944, the legacy of the Enlightenment has a critical impact on artistic production and the capacity of people to experience that art, this is something that needs to be comprehended by fresh approaches to the measurement of cultural value. It is not only the tools of measurement that suffer the effects of the primacy of the sciences over the humanities, but also the materials being measured, and attempts to resist the depoliticisation of cultural policy by undermining its Enlightenment roots will find greater power and coherence if this is recognised and challenged.

Theatre policy, interdependence and the interdisciplinary

As Davis has demonstrated, British theatre creates for itself a peculiar and potentially problematic position within this debate. Its history simultaneously mirrors that of the discipline of economics and that of numerous other sites of contestation: the relationship of the state with the arts, the interdependence of subsidised and commercial entertainment, the conflict between aesthetic and financial imperatives. This interdependence is also something picked up on by Dragan Klaic in his final book *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre Between the Market and Social Democracy*,[201] in which he articulates a theory of the complex network of interdependent forces at work in subsidised theatre (funders, policy-makers, competitors, the commercial sector, audiences and so on) being constitutive of those theatres' autonomy. For Klaic, autonomy is 'not a given status and not to be confused with independence' (163) but something fragile, relational and always in flux because it depends on the constant negotiation of the position of subsidised theatres within this network. Rather than being granted by external forces, it must be claimed by the theatres themselves. Throughout this book, Klaic argues fiercely for 'a firm demarcation' (ix) between subsidised and commercial theatre, and for subsidised theatre to sustain its position and its social and aesthetic remit without allowing itself to be appropriated by commercialism requires it to continually stake out its shifting territories through constant deliberation and negotiation.

The way in which Klaic and Davis address the difficulties of cultural policy-making is inflected by their status as scholars of theatre, rather than of cultural policy or sociology. Firstly, both have a clearly-defined interest in the survival of the form and in the political significance not only of its content but of its existence. For both Klaic and Davis, the position of theatre in the context of its economic and political determinants is what sets it apart from other art forms; both scholars scrutinise the past and present of theatre in these terms. Klaic provides a broad political context for the development of subsidised theatre in post-WW2 Europe, locating its political potential in Western Europe as 'a legitimate beneficiary of the welfare state and an instrument of cultural democratisation' (16), as well as discussing its contemporary position at the fulcrum of debates on the public worth of the arts. Davis charts its development from Victorian England and emphasises the fact that it has always been a contentious form with the capacity - both in its institutional structures and in its

performances - to highlight inconsistencies in political and economic thinking. Secondly, theatre scholarship is for both of them a field that not only invites but demands some degree of interdisciplinarity. In arguing for a rereading of cultural economics that can comprehend drama, Davis explicitly recognises the ways in which theatre has historically disturbed, altered and directed economic developments in a way that is hard to quantify in monetary terms but which is open to readings from other theoretical perspectives such as marginalism.

In Battalions provides a recent and pertinent demonstration not only of theatre's extreme vulnerability to funding cuts and the deleterious effect these have already had, but of the necessity of developing approaches to evaluation that can lay out the highly specific narrative of contemporary British theatre rather than that of the arts in general. As I have demonstrated, Belfiore & Bennett's approach and that of the CVP has the potential to develop a productive relationship between artists, researchers, audiences and policy-makers in which outdated research paradigms can be reformed and the depoliticisation of cultural policy can be resisted, but as Klaic, Davis and now Kennedy have shown, theatre provides a particularly complex case especially where new writing is concerned. As is argued by the many contributors to *In Battalions*, the position of theatre in Britain's cultural infrastructure means that a threat to subsidised theatre and new writing constitutes a more generalised threat to the cultural landscape.

Klaic's argument that subsidised theatre organisations need to claim autonomy[202] through their interdependence with other parts of the cultural infrastructure resonates both with *In Battalions* and with Belfiore & Bennett's work. *In Battalions* draws on the commercial sector as well as the subsidised for testimonials on the necessity of government funding and the damage that will be sustained as a result of its withdrawal, but it is always clear that while the two are interdependent their artistic and financial territories are clearly demarcated. In Chapter 3 I examined allegations made in ACE's National Theatre Policy and subsequent documents that theatres became paranoid and insular during the Blair government during the 1990s and needed to engage more with commercial theatre and the creative industries. There is both a discursive and and ideological difference between the engagement encouraged by the ACE documents I have examined and that discussed by Klaic. The first is constructed as apolitical and non-antagonistic, an appeal to the post-Enlightenment self-preservation mentality Adorno & Horkheimer explain in

'Concept'. It is in the interests of subsidised theatres to participate in the mixed economy and reach a consensus with it, and so they have a moral obligation to do so. The second recalls Rancière's concept of dissensus in that it requires that subsidised theatres engage with and participate in the rest of the infrastructure in order to claim autonomy and challenge, rather than seek, consensus so that subsidised theatre may maintain its clearly-demarcated aesthetic and political roles. This leads back to Belfiore & Bennett's claim that the relation between research and policy-making has been misconstrued as linear when it is in fact complex and often chaotic. In the light of Klaic's work, it is arguable that this is even more true of theatre policy given the intricacy of the relations that already govern theatre. If the new approaches developed by the CVP are to represent subsidised theatre and help to ensure its survival (and thus, as *In Battalions* lays out, that of a number of other cultural institutions) then they need to reflect the multiplicity of economic, political and aesthetic relations that constitute it, and this renders the argument set out by Belfiore & Bennett that linear, Enlightenment-driven logic has some limitations in the making of cultural policy even more important. What is needed is not only, as they and Davis assert, an open-ended and humanities-led approach to studying the economics of theatre that can comprehend its status as a political and economic force in itself, but a relationship between that research and the policy-making process in which theatre can give a more radical and agonistic account of itself.

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[180] Hereafter 'T. Bennett', to distinguish him from Belfiore's co-author Oliver Bennett.

[181] The full text of the speech is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/testing-times-fighting-cultures-corner-in-an-age-of-austerity (accessed 25/04/2013)

[182] NESTA. *Manifesto for the Creative Economy.* London: NESTA. 2008

[183] Kennedy, Fin. *In Battalions*. April 2013

[184] Rebellato, Dan. "Maria Miller: a mind already made up?" *Guardian Culture Professionals Network.* 24 April 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2013/apr/24/maria-miller-cultural-value-economic>

[185] See Chapter 2 for a full discussion of this argument and its ideological problematics.

[186] A full list of those involved can be found at http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funded-Research/Funded-themes-and- programmes/Cultural-Value-Project/Pages/Project-Advisory-Group.aspx (accessed 2 April 2013)

[187] Cultural Value Project mission statement. 2013 <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funded-Research/Funded-themes-and-programmes/Cultural-Value-Project/Pages/default.aspx>

[188] Bakhshi, Hasan, Freeman, Alan and Hitchen, Graham *Measuring Intrinsic Value How to stop worrying and love economics*. London: British Council. 2013

[189] Undertaken by Susan Oman http://www.everydayparticipation.org/introducing-our-phd-researchers-susan- oman/ (accessed 15 March 2013)

[190] Undertaken by Sarah Hughes http://www.everydayparticipation.org/introducing-our-phd-researchers-sarah- hughes/ (accessed 15 March 2013)

[191] A full list of the regions involved can be found at http://www.everydayparticipation.org/eco-systems/

[192] Davis, Tracy C. *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007

[193] Belfiore, Eleonora and Bennett, Oliver. "Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": arts impact evaluation research and the realities of cultural policy–making." *Journal for Cultural Research*, 14(2). 2010. 121-142

[194] Abbreviation used by Belfiore and Bennett.

[195] I offer a reading of these same passages from *Aesthetic Theory* in my second chapter, so I will not repeat it here.

[196] Bennett, Tony. 'Putting Policy into Cultural Studies'. *Cultural Studies*. Ed Grossberg, Lawrence, Nelson, Cary and Treichler, Paula. London and New York: Routledge. 1992

[197] McGuigan, Jim. *Culture and the Public Sphere*. London and New York: Routledge. 1996

[198] Bennett, Tony. *Cultural Policy Beyond Aesthetics*. University of Chicago Cultural Policy Center, 2000. Working paper.

[199] See my discussion of Janet Newman's work on Third Way ideology and governance in Chapter 3.

[200] This opening essay, which introduces their critique of the Enlightenment's stranglehold on Western thought, is more helpful at this point than the more widely-discussed 'The Culture Industry - Enlightenment as Mass Deception' which I have already used elsewhere.

[201] Klaic, Dragan. *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre Between the Market and Social Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2012

[202] Klaic's definition of 'autonomy' is a highly specific one that refers to the governance of theatres: see Klaic, 163

Conclusion: In the Republic of Happiness?

> there's no place for politics in this or in any other work of art
> DON'T GIVE ME THAT SHIT (53)[203]

A year and a half after the departure of New Labour from government, Martin Crimp's *In the Republic of Happiness* received its premier at the Royal Court. The play opened to mixed reviews, some of them openly baffled; *The Telegraph*'s Tim Walker called it 'impenetrable [...] an utter mess'[204] while Michael Billington, writing a more positive review for *The Guardian*, confessed:

> his play left me puzzled [...] while we know what Crimp is against, it is hard to say what he is for. [...] Crimp, after depicting a morally bankrupt world where even the sanctuary of personal relationships is insufficient, offers no clue as to how we are going to survive.[205]

Crimp's harshly satirical, abstract depiction of contemporary Britain as a society driven by isolating technologies and an obsession with self-actualisation leaves Billington perplexed by its lack of moral or political resolution, exactly as he was left perplexed by Howard Barker thirty-three years earlier.[206] While the sheer stubbornness of Billington's incomprehension, producing identical responses of frustrated bemusement a third of a century apart, is initially amusing, it also begs the question of what else, while appearing on the surface to age or alter, has also remained in a state of intransigent, dogmatic empiricism. Have expectations of the power of theatre shifted, or is there still an assumption that political performance, if done correctly, will produce a hitherto-unforeseen solution to society's ills? Did Blair's 'Golden Age' change the relationship between playwriting and politics, and if so was the change productive or detrimental? The answer to the second question is contingent on the answer to the first: whether we believe political theatre is doing its job any better depends entirely on what we understand its job to be. In the terms set out by Ravenhill, whose side is it on? or is it, like Nick and Helen in *Some Explicit Polaroids*, bound to cut its losses, accept its post-political fate and limit its efforts?

The mythology of the 'Golden Age', so prevalent after the change of government, has certainly shown itself to be open to contestation from the perspective of cultural

policy research, and I have demonstrated the ways in which advocacy and assertions of social utility fell short of the rigorous standards of their readers and critics. In the first half of the 2000s it was by no means clear that, as Rebellato was able to assert by 2013, the theatres had all the necessary numbers and they all added up.[207] Attacks on a methodology that had failed to move beyond the seminal stages of Matarasso's work were certainly justified, as were the resulting concerns for the future of theatre subsidy. If all that mattered were the numbers, and the numbers did not bear the scrutiny of the DCMS or of critics within the academy, the future looked bleak. This being the case, the challenges of those on the Right who advocated the abolition of ACE could be seen as valuable in encouraging the defenders of theatre subsidy to reassess existing methodologies and consider changing the terms of the debate. It is apparent from the developments in discussions of cultural value that I lay out in Chapter 5 that many in the field of cultural policy research are indeed ready to accept this challenge. In addition to the initiatives already mentioned, the Warwick Commission on Cultural Value has lately worked alongside many prominent figures of the arts establishment to re-examine the ways in which value can and should be assessed.

From the point of view of challenging the hegemony of the forced consensus on 'excellence' exemplified by the McMaster Review,[208] this is an encouraging development in the relationship between research and policy. The research of the early 2000s fell into the Ravenhill trap of allowing contemporary ideology and neoliberal rhetoric to dictate the terms, to accept that social transformation and cultural economics (and therefore theatre) had first and foremost to make their case to the market. The work of the Cultural Value Project and the Warwick Commission represents a step forward in changing definitions of value and, potentially, in reviving neglected approaches to cultural economics that move, as I discuss in Chapter 5, beyond the purely monetary and work towards the more holistic approach examined by Tracy C. Davis. It is important, too, in challenging the existing power dynamic between research and policy which previously followed a top-down model; earlier researchers made the case for arts funding by playing by the rules made in Whitehall and Westminster. Newer initiatives are seeking to build a different and more agonistic, robust interaction between policy-making and the academy, an approach that, while fostering collaboration, ensures that the deliberative process continues to question ideology and that accountability goes both ways.

Throughout this project I have kept in play ideas of autonomy that frequently demand an elision which, despite the inevitability with which it occurs, is neither simple nor unproblematic. The importance of returning at intervals to Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and through them implicitly to Kant has been to prevent this elision becoming too simplistic and beholden to any specific doxa or dogma. The idea of financial autonomy and artistic freedom from governmental control can easily collapse into that of aesthetic autonomy, in that both refuse to speak to questions of value and thus, as Chapter 2 illustrates, can be claimed by advocates of 'art for art's sake' who are then able to let the primacy of the free market in through the back door. By keeping the Frankfurt School and its various readings of aesthetic autonomy, readings that are able to comprehend the complex relations between the material and the aesthetic, in view, it remains possible to imagine a future for the idea of value that is not compelled to denigrate the aesthetic as being without use. While purely financial autonomy and its 'art for art's sake' connotations is easily claimed by the post-political aporia of Third Way doxa (as is so adeptly satirised in my opening quote from *In The Republic of Happiness*), the recurring presence of Adorno's aesthetic autonomy continues to challenge that claim by restating the importance of the material and the constant tensions at work between art, individual artwork and the conditions of its production. As Dragan Klaic intimates in *Resetting the Stage*, this leaves room for a progressive definition of autonomy that is distinct from independence and recognises the problems of making theatre in the increasingly liminal and highly-contested space between the state and the market.[209]

Maintaining a dialogue throughout this project between different theories of class production, from Western Marxism to the discursive formulations of Mouffe and Laclau, from Bourdieu via Levitas to more recent ideas of the cultural omnivore, has kept in view the centrality of class not only to cultural policy but to the past and present of British theatre. As the certainties posited by Ravenhill[210] have given ground to frustrating uncertainty and disillusionment with the British Left, cultural policy has mirrored this uncertainty in its approach to issues of class and social mobility. In terms of contemporary ideology the importance of theatre to addressing social inequality seems (in the typical manner of Third Way doxa) to be accepted as a fact, but the political ramifications of this are still open to contestation from both the academy and the stage. Similarly, ideas of 'community' are constitutive of said doxa but also of many of its contestations, and a community that comprehends class

differs radically from one that rejects it. If theatre fosters community, whether in the form of a participatory project for young offenders or a performance of *The Author*, it is vital to remain aware of how that community is constituted. As Levitas reminds us, appeals to community are not as unequivocally benign as they appear if they invoke post-political communities that ignore the material and inhibit difference and dissent.

Herein lies the importance of the discussions I undertake in Chapter 4 of various moments from the British stage under and immediately after the New Labour government. All of them create forms of community and attempt forms of resistance. Some choose to stage the democratic process explicitly, while others take a more oblique approach to the ethics of participation. The latter, in my reading, are the more successful in terms of political efficacy because of the space they allow for the development of the individual subject within the emerging community. These communities resist the Blairite communitarianism criticised by Martell, Hale and Levitas in a manner particular to live performance by insisting on the affective and the personal as constitutive elements. The community of these plays is more congruent with participatory models of democracy because of the centrality of difference and plurality, and this is at the heart of their resistance to the post-political insistence on an objective truth and reality that is universal, self-constituting and immune to individual subjectivity.

These performances, along with the illuminating meditations of Jill Dolan on the utopian performative and the work of academics who are currently re-examining the relationship between culture, value, research and policy, are what permit me to conclude a piece of research that begun in a spirit of disillusionment on a note of hope. The 'Golden Age' and the ideology it reflected may have been flawed, and living and attending the theatre in its aftermath we are reminded by Crimp that we are not 'the happiest that human beings have ever so far been', nor are we necessarily inclined to 'Hum hum hum hum the happy song.' (89). The abundance of theatre funding under the New Labour government may not have had a seismic effect on the production of class, the understanding of national identity or the devastation caused to many by economic and social inequality. In spite of this, and in spite of the reservations voiced by Ravenhill in Edinburgh in 2013, British political theatre has continued to produce performances that resist, challenge and provoke, to examine precisely those lacunae that New Labour sought to paper over or conceal.

To return to my earlier question of whether political theatre in Britain has continued to work effectively, its role has undoubtedly changed. That which it seeks to diagnose and resist has become more plastic, less certain and clearly-defined, but its strategies have shifted in response allowing audiences and theatre scholars to perceive a legitimate future for its various forms. While we may not live in the Republic of Happiness, British theatre can still provide elements of political performance that, as Dolan would no doubt agree, grant a glimpse of it to its audiences.

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[203] Crimp, Martin. *In The Republic of Happiness*. London: Faber. 2012

[204] Walker, Tim. *Telegraph*. 20 December 2012 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/9759387/In-the-Republic-of-Happiness-at-Royal-Court-review.html>

[205] Billington, Michael. *Guardian*. 13 December 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/dec/13/republic-of-happiness-review>

[206] See Chapter 4, 117

[207] See Chapter 5, 125

[208] See Chapter 2, 45 onwards

[209] See Chapter 5, 142-143

[210] See Chapter 4, 97

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