



Crossing Conceptual Boundaries II

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Editorial Introduction: Derek Robbins

UEL
University of
East London

University of East London
Docklands Campus
University Way
London E16 2RD

University of East London
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
Stratford E15 4LZ

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries
PhD Annual Yearbook New Series Volume 2

Production Editor: Jamie Hakim

Design: Mark Foster

Cover Image: 'Crossing borders – Athena's voyage of discovery' by Sharon Gallagher

All Yearbooks (Yearbook I – PhD Research in Progress (2007); Yearbook II – PhD Research in Progress (2007); Yearbook III – PhD Research in Progress (2009); Crossing Conceptual Boundaries I (2009); Crossing Conceptual Boundaries II (2010)) are available to download at: www.uel.ac.uk/hss/research/yearbook/index.htm

School Of Humanities and Social Sciences

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries II

1. Derek Robbins: Editorial Introduction

Articles

Section I

2. Tim Jenkins: "Response to University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies, PhD Research in Progress, Yearbooks I, II, & III"
3. Marie Godin: Response to Jenkins: "Freedom, tradition and modernity"

Section II

4. Tahir Zaman: "Refugees and the Mobilisation of Religious Resources"
5. Anthea Williams: "Spirituality as Self-Constitution in Foucault's *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*."

Section III

6. Mary Fogarty: "Learning 'Old School' Social Dances: Musical Migration, Global Sociability and Newness."
7. Charles de Ledesma: "From 'noise' to 'glitch': Jo Thomas and electronic music composition".
8. Nicola Samson: Narratives of Women's Belonging: Life Stories from an East London Street

Review:

Madeline Clements review on 'Terror and the Postcolonial', edited by Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton, which was published in October 2009.

Notes on contributors

Editorial board

Chapter 1

Crossing Conceptual Boundaries II: Editorial Introduction

Derek Robbins

This is the second number of the new series entitled 'Crossing Conceptual Boundaries' which succeeded the three 'Annual Yearbooks of PhD research in progress' in the School which had been published between 2007 and 2009. 'Yearbook III' and 'CCBI' were both published in the autumn of 2009.

The three Yearbooks represented a collection of the work in progress of students registered for PhD within the School, and they did so in a framework which reflected the changing structure of the programme of supporting seminars offered to the students which had provided a forum for their discussions and exchanges of working papers. The intention was primarily that the publications would showcase the work of individual students in such a way as to indicate the diversity of research activity within the School but, additionally, that the framing of the contributions would raise questions about the contemporary conditions of production of new knowledge in an institution of higher education. This secondary intention was articulated through my attempts to represent the ways in which managing research activity and stimulating publication amongst a community of students might correspond with the strategies adopted by Pierre Bourdieu both in running the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Paris, from the end of the 1960s, and in editing the associated 'Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales' from 1975.

My introduction to 'CCBI' discussed the nature of the transition to the new series. It suggested that the framework adopted in the three Yearbooks could be thought to have circumscribed or prescribed the representation of the School's research. Without moving towards a routinised procedure of journal production, the challenge was to enable the new style Yearbook to become an instrument in the staff/student community's auto-legitimation. Contributions had never been selected according to predefined, abstract criteria, but only in as much as they were representative of the situation of their provenance. The challenge was now to make the production of the numbers of 'Crossing Conceptual Boundaries' into a process which would be immanently involved in defining that situation.

In order to stimulate reflection on this shift of emphasis, in November, 2009, I invited **Tim Jenkins** to offer an external commentary on the first three Yearbooks. He has kindly agreed that his paper should be reproduced in 'CCBII' and it appears as the first piece in this number.

He was able to make remarks which reflected both his early involvement at Oxford University in the production of a radical new journal of Anthropology and his current experiences as a Director of Research at Cambridge University. To sustain our emphasis of reflexivity, a new PhD student – **Marie Godin**, who has experience of studying cross-nationally in diverse institutions – was asked to reflect on Jenkins’s critique. These contributions constitute the first section of this number.

We have always resisted imposing thematic ‘coherences’ editorially. Nevertheless, as an intervention to invite dialogistic engagement, we think that there are advantages in ‘reading together’ the two contributions to the second section and the three contributions to the third. I need here to suggest the nature of the possible engagement and also to make clear the stages in the research process which these papers differently reflect.

Tahir Zaman and **Anthea Williams** deploy the work of recent French thinkers – respectively, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault – to reflect on the function of religious belief or ‘spirituality’ in relation to contemporary social issues. They differently raise the question of the transferability to the analysis of religious issues of thinking generated within an essentially secular intellectual tradition. Tahir’s paper is a position discussion prepared prior to his fieldwork. He is now carrying out that fieldwork. He is working on interviews with both Iraqi forced migrants who arrived in Syria following the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and officials and functionaries from religious networks and institutions who are engaged with refugee issues. By contrast, Anthea’s PhD is near completion. Her contribution stands alone as an argument for the value of ‘spirituality’, as expounded in ‘The Hermeneutics of the Subject’, for the project of self-constitution in general. In her thesis, she justifies its use in a narrower argument for the survival of this ‘spirituality’ among religious subjects in the Church of England today.

The third section tacitly continues the debate commenced in the exchange published at the beginning of Solveigh Goett’s contribution to CCB1 (chapter 5). The issue raised there concerned the status of cognitive analysis of expressive creativity and, by extension, the validity of affective communication as research or as work which can legitimately lead to what is socially recognized to constitute the basis for the award of PhD. **Mary Fogarty** is a member of staff in the School who is completing her PhD at the University of Edinburgh. Her PhD is an exploration of the relationship between musical tastes and dance practice in b-boy/b-girl (“breaking”) practices in various cities. She is considering how aesthetic judgments are made in breaking practices, including formal judgment at international b-boy/b-girl competitions, and how this relates back to musical criteria and meaning. Her article about the role of music in hip hop and funk dance workshops is one component of my larger multi-sited ethnographic project. **Charles de Ledesma** is a member of staff and a part-time PhD student in the School. His paper is not part of his thesis, ‘The Psytrance party’, which is on the electronic dance music

event. However, a profile of a glitch music composer like Jo Thomas runs parallel with a wider interest in digital music production. The 2010 collection, 'The Local Scenes and Global Cultures of Psytrance' (Routledge) includes his chapter, 'Pyschedelic Trance Music making in the UK', where he contextualises material from a number of producers specialising in fast, dance floor oriented digital music. He has found many overlaps in the aesthetics, technological imperatives and 'mindset' between these two camps and would like to explore further the articulation between these various stylistic modes in British electronic music practice. If these contributions suggest questions of judgement explored, as early as 1971, by Jean-François Lyotard in his 'Discours, Figure' (very recently published in translation as 'Discourse, Figure' by the University of Minnesota Press), **Nicola Samson's** piece generates reflections on the nature of 'narrative' as these were to be investigated by Lyotard in 'La condition postmoderne' (1979). Nicola is in the second year of her PhD which is exploring the nature of belonging through women's life stories and is based on interviews with up to 15 women of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Finally, **Madeline Clements**, a new PhD student, uses a review of a published text to reflect on her own research, detailed in the brief biography to be found in the notes on the editorial board, and on issues which are of common concern within the School.

Articles

Section I

Chapter 2

Response to University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies, PhD Research in Progress, Yearbooks I, II & III

Timothy Jenkins

I have been asked to respond to the first three yearbooks produced by the graduate students of the School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies in the University of East London, under the editorship of Derek Robbins. I am very pleased to do so, for some reasons that will emerge.

There are two major institutional factors to be taken into account. The first is the interdisciplinary nature of the project. The present School was created in 2004 from the fusion of two others, Social Sciences and Cultural and Innovation Studies. Interdisciplinarity is not then a form of intellectual stimulation that can be undertaken by individual members of the faculty according to taste (a kind of recreational amusement), but is an inescapable fact of common life that has to be explored and its implications comprehended in creating the productivity and success of the new faculty. This is an unusual and serious experiment.

The second factor concerns UEL being a 'new' University, arising out of the creation of polytechnics in 1970, committed to open admission and applied knowledge, being forged in a series of mergers and re-locations, and such redefinitions of mission as the abolition of the binary divide in 1992 (see pp.12 – 20 of Yearbook III). If there is a 'traditional' way of intellectual life in such an institution, it is born out of responding to repeated governmental and civil service inspired reforms in a pretty unmediated fashion, improvising responses. These improvisations create an authentic life on the basis of a bricolage of elements drawn from a pool of intellectual resources: not only from projects created in other parts of the British academic system, but also from European and American sources. This is potentially an exciting way of life (if you don't weaken), and contrasts with established University departments which tend to plough fields cleared by long-dead founder figures (I exaggerate for the sake of the distinction), and it may fit well with the first demand for interdisciplinarity (although there is no compelling reason why this should be so). But it does pose clearly the question of self-awareness or reflexivity: neither students nor teachers can afford to ignore reflection upon the changing social circumstances of the production of knowledge, and everybody has the responsibility to ask: 'what are the best forms of contemporary research to be selected and applied?'

This contrasts to an extent with my own experience – though only in a matter of emphasis. Certainly, we all live in a world where the government of the day attempts through financial means to impose directions and outcomes on University research. In older Universities, it is simply that the significant demand for academic freedom, or the need for self-direction in order to be intellectually fruitful, takes the form of a myth of a golden age when there was a far greater degree of institutional autonomy. But there are differences. I began postgraduate research in the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology in the early seventies, where we were educated within a common history taught by anecdote; a common set of intellectual objectives defined by a historical, empirical approach; and a common method – fieldwork and learning the native language(s). We were largely taught (by example) to ignore other approaches and methods. However, in the early seventies (and in the aftermath to the late sixties), the siren call of other approaches made themselves felt and, as a group, we not only set out to learn about other styles of working in the Humanities, but also some students (under the aegis of my supervisor, Edwin Ardener) began to edit a journal, a journal which combined postgraduate explorations of topics, authors and new ways of thinking with reflections on the history of the discipline written by more senior members. The journal was called JASO – the Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford¹ – and it existed remarkably from 1970-2000, suffering however (in my view) an inevitable routinization from avant-garde polemic to one of the less important journals in the field quite early in its trajectory. But I would say that, for I was part of the collective that produced the journal (under Ardener's guidance) from 1974 to 1976. You can see why, under these circumstances, I should have a considerable interest in and sympathy with the present project of the Yearbooks.

Nevertheless, while we succeeded in creating a loose research community, around a common pool of authors and a certain style, perhaps best denoted as a concern with 'theory', we were not faced to the same degree by the demand to reflect in a self-aware fashion about what we were up to. In fact, in retrospect, there were a series of features, cultural, intellectual and institutional, which lay behind the great days of our journal, but we were largely unaware of them. I would suggest that the task of sociological reflection upon the context of production of social research, both in terms of constraints and opportunities, is principally a feature of new institutions, born out of times of social upheaval and usually created by government initiatives to respond to such upheaval. That is, reflexivity is most often the product of state-led demand, directly or indirectly, and it draws on the experience of persons who experience the social upheaval to which the new institutions are a response. That is certainly the lesson of the parallel cases to which Derek Robbins draws attention and which he uses to aid our thinking: whether it is the case of Kant's responses to the 'conflict of the Faculties' (Appendix II to Yearbook I), or Bourdieu's and Passeron's work with Aron in the Centre de sociologie

¹ See Ardener's 'Ten Years of JASO: 1970-1980. A Retrospect'.

européenne, or later Passeron's work in Marseille; it is also true, in another register, in the work of the émigré Mannheim in his attempt to create a sociology of knowledge that might contribute to social order, and in the work of those teachers from the world of adult education who became the presiding intellects of cultural studies. Although in almost every case, because of their abilities these people gained an acceptance and often ended up pretty centrally placed, the essence of their originality – their sociological reflection on the social production of ideas – related intimately both to their origins and their initial sites of engagement. They in no way formed part of a conventional elite at the outset.

That much is by way of an initial orientation. Each Yearbook has taken a different focus, and explored an aspect of these intellectual resources, in order to cast light on the processes in which you are involved: the ongoing task of establishing and sustaining a research community in a 'new' University.

The first Yearbook drew principally upon Bourdieu and others' 'The Craft of Sociology' (1968/1991), emphasizing one particular facet: the business of developing a research community or collective mind out of the various personal and social trajectories that had brought a specific set of researchers to this setting with their specific topics of enquiry. The papers published brought out the variety of backgrounds and personal histories that had given rise to the different research projects. Within such an ethos, the task of developing appropriate research methods may be haphazard, and one wonders whether Bourdieu unconsciously relied too much upon the quite homogeneous research traditions of the French Academy, in a way that is not open to us in our present circumstances (cf. I:2) There is a related problem in this kind of work, of how to establish 'reliable' knowledge rather than giving what may be termed a 'journalistic' account. Bourdieu, drawing on Durkheim and Bachelard, looks to a break made with common sense categories as a starting point for a disciplinary approach, but an inter- or multi-disciplinary environment can easily allow the re-importing of common sense categories and concerns in shared enthusiasms that have a self-evident rightness to those involved. Interdisciplinary work reintroduces the question of distinguishing method from motivation. Against this concern, Bachelard suggests that interdisciplinarity can contribute to clarification through competition between explanations (cf. I:3), but here the issue is one of bringing developed disciplines into dialogue, rather than creating a new interdisciplinary institution and set of methods.

It is therefore unsurprising that the second Yearbook took as its focus 'the recent social history of the disciplines covered by the School' (III: p.2), looking in particular at the institutional context of the development of Karl Mannheim's work concerning the transformation of the sociology of culture into social administration and policy, and the very different institutional background to the growth of Cultural Studies. I particularly enjoyed these histories, for there is always a sense of something significant learnt when one understands the etymology – one

might even say the genealogy – of particular concepts and categories. And I appreciated the papers contributed by the students that year examining the institutional and disciplinary context of their particular topics. Yet again, we come up against a series of limiting factors, ones inherent in the history of ideas. It is always possible to list, on the one hand, influences in terms of potential sources or anticipations and, on the other, constraints and opportunities contained in contemporary institutional and cultural changes. But it is harder to demonstrate that a particular influence was in fact effective, and to explain the reasons for its effects. Some of these issues are well outlined in Althusser's early essay 'On the Young Marx' (1960), published in 'For Marx' (1966), though his proposed resolution to such problems (posed in a series of concepts such as the break, the problematic, the conjuncture, overdetermination, the concrete-in-thought and the real-concrete) bear the marks of Bachelard's thinking, and so resemble Bourdieu's categories and proffered solutions. The issue perhaps can be put in this way: in moving from considering the researchers' trajectories and interests to considering the disciplines as social constructions leaves the researcher as – in Althusser's term – a 'bearer' of a series of intellectual habits and concerns inherited from 'history', a bearer without initiative or hope of such. An improved state of self-awareness does not necessarily promote either the freedom to innovate or a better research community; knowledge of one's situation may not lead either to intellectual creativity or to solidarity. As Lenin pointed out, in these conditions, the task is to build the party.

Without drawing any embarrassing parallel, one of the marks of the quality of Derek's work is his readiness to engage in self-criticism and so to advance the project. These Yearbooks are marked by a steady dialectical rhythm. So in the third Yearbook – the one launched in 2009 – we have an examination of the differences that separate Bourdieu from his long-time collaborator, Jean-Claude Passeron, and Passeron's attempt to overcome the limits inherent in Bourdieu's position, one that Passeron sees as compromised by Bourdieu's move from the periphery to the centre. Here, the emphasis shifts from the disciplinary context to a concern with the language of research, with the production of texts and the transfer of concepts. This approach marks the relative independence of the life of the 'research mind' both from the biography and social position of the researchers and from the status and context of the research institutions.

The Yearbook includes the translation of Passeron's introduction to the French edition of Howard Becker's 'Writing for Social Scientists' (1986; 2007). Becker's work focuses upon a workshop method for freeing graduates up to write well, through improvisation and revision in a context of critical support. Becker asks 'what do I mean to say when I write that?' – a painful question even for an experienced writer and lecturer – and on that basis elaborates a sociological critique of the anxious world of producing theses and of academic writing more generally. Passeron comments that, in a French institutional setting, such a collaborative approach is impracticable; at best, the supervisor admonishes and corrects individual students,

and instead of engaging in seeking sociological explanations of difficulties, blockages, and the less desirable features of academic writing, resorts to psychological explanations that simply constitute a mystification of the existing situation.

If I can sum up the main implication of Passeron's approach, in my view it is this: the weight of sociological research should be placed upon specific case studies, and appropriate methods employed according to the case. More general issues will emerge from such studies, in large part because those issues are present in the materials. It is the materials that cause you to think. A major task for the researcher, and therefore for the developing research community, is then to learn appropriate forms of writing, in order to convey this truth and the truths it bears. If I have read him aright, he suggests that, rather than forming an interdisciplinary community, the task is to form a community of writers. This might be thought of as returning to an earlier preoccupation, before we (and our paymasters) began to think of ourselves as 'scientists'; the distinction could bear elaboration.

In this recent Yearbook, in addition to the papers, I particularly appreciated the brief reflections in Part 3 of the uses and limits of this concentration upon language and communication. A range of important issues were raised, among them: the usefulness or otherwise of notions of class and sub-culture, and how to make them more complex; the place of mutual misunderstandings between groups, and the kind of description needed to grasp this dimension; the curious resistance to theory of certain approaches which, by the same token, hold their understanding to be self-evident or even natural; and developments upon the idea of the situation of the researcher – not only his or her background and training, but also motivations and commitments in political terms.

In every case, there is a framework recognized and explored by these Yearbooks: in the first place, a tension between the personal trajectory and insights of the investigator and the institutional 'agenda' expressed in disciplinary concepts and vocabularies; and in the second place, a complimentary tension between idiosyncratic or personal understanding and the need for a common set of language and ideas in order for there to be communication, solidarity and the possibility of common action in the world.

Let me offer some concluding remarks. I have enjoyed the task of responding to this body of work, but it has been difficult to do so well, because the concerns of these Yearbooks, to create an interdisciplinary research community, raise some unresolved questions which structure my own context of work. These Yearbooks illustrate the basic (though often unadmitted) truth that the social sciences are a hard calling, probably far more difficult to pursue well than that of the natural sciences. This is for the simple reason that the investigator is of the same kind, and is caught up in the same kind of processes, as are the phenomena

under investigation. This is a kind of Maxwells' Demon problem – being of the same scale as the object under investigation.

That being said, the Yearbooks illustrate some very sound procedures for setting about such investigations. In the first place, the basic task is criticism. No position is fully achieved, but is always partial and open to further critique. There is no resting place. Thought works by criticism, sometimes by contradicting but more generally by supplementing and correcting. It is therefore the case that the movement of thought is as important as the gains made, although in general, one takes the gains as achievements, and ignores the laborious processes that underwrite them. The sequence of Yearbooks illustrates this process, laying out a position, exploring its implications, and then returning to complement its inadequacies or perceived limitations.

Two things follow from this understanding of the critical task. On the one hand, understanding is constructed, not found. The object of understanding is a product, not something 'out there', in the world. And on the other hand, given the restless movement of criticism, these products, whether considered at the level of an individual's trajectory or the history of a discipline, will be met with by others as errors to be corrected and overcome. All the obstacles to thought that we encounter are themselves the products of human intelligence. We are caught in a dialectic between active intelligence and the concretized forms of past thought, forms without which we could not even begin to think.

Third, the principle way such an active intelligence gains its energy is through paying attention to the world, to the forms of human activity that are encountered in ethnographic, historical, cultural and other case studies. That is, the researcher is made to think by the people he or she studies and, like any other human actor, brings back something of worth learnt in one situation to set it to work in another – that constituted by the enquiring community.

And last, the apprenticeship undertaken in this process, which is both individual and collective, includes the business of developing the skills to express this intelligence, this intelligence that belongs to the researcher and the investigating community on the one hand, and to those who are written about on the other. This is where questions of developing the appropriate literary forms and techniques belong, forms and techniques that will in every case take their starting point in some disciplinary conjuncture, but will have to be developed to express the particular nature of the understanding created.

I await the fourth Yearbook with considerable interest.

References

Althusser, Louis (1960), 'On the Young Marx', in *For Marx* (1969[1966]), Penguin.

Ardener, Edwin (1980), 'Ten Years of JASO: 1970-1980: A Retrospect', in *JASO Cumulative Index*, Volumes I-X, 1970-1979.

Becker, Howard S. (2007[1986]), *Writing for Social Scientists. How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*, Chicago UP.

Bourdieu, Pierre, Jean-Claude Passeron & Jean-Claude Chamboredon (1991 [1968]), *The Craft of Sociology: epistemological preliminaries*, de Gruyter.

Passeron, Jean-Claude (2009[2004]), 'writing, rewriting and "truth-telling" in sociology', in *Yearbook III*.

Robbins, Derek (2007a), 'Introduction. For a socio-genetic understanding of trans-disciplinary research', in *Yearbook I*.

Robbins, Derek (2007b), 'The Conflict of the Faculties', Appendix II to *Yearbook I*.

Robbins, Derek (2007c), 'The instituted capitals of intellectual disciplines: some exemplary socio-historical case-studies', in *Yearbook II*.

Robbins, Derek (2009a), 'The recent historical antecedents of contemporary interdisciplinary research practice in SHADyC and SSMAcS', in *Yearbook III*.

Robbins, Derek (2009b), 'Notes on Passeron's Foreword to Becker's *Writing for Social Scientists*', in *Yearbook III*.

Robbins, Derek (ed.), University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies *Yearbook I*. PhD Research in Progress. July 2007.

Robbins, Derek (ed.), University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies *Yearbook II*. PhD Research in Progress. July 2007.

Robbins, Derek (ed.), University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies *Yearbook III*. PhD Research in Progress. July 2009.

Chapter 3

Freedom, tradition and modernity: Response to University of East London School of Social Sciences, Media and Cultural Studies, PhD Research in Progress, Yearbooks I, II, III and Crossing Conceptual Boundaries, and to Timothy Jenkins's paper

Marie Godin

I recently took part in a conversation where it was argued that intelligence and thoughts do not exist without a body, understand: a physical body. Ideas are incarnated; they do not exist *per se* as separated entities, waiting in Plato's cave to be discovered. Instead, they are constructed within a living, laughing and self-reflecting entity: a man or a woman. This captivating dialogue reminded me of Professor Derek Robbins' suggestion that I should react to the four yearbooks ("PhD research in progress I, II, III & Crossing Conceptual Boundaries I") and to Dr. Timothy Jenkins's response to the first three. The way I personally conceive research, as a new PhD student, was inevitably shaped by my academic trajectory: an original encounter between three universities. I graduated in Sociology from the Université Libre de Bruxelles within the Social Sciences Department; I then specialised (a MSc in Forced Migration) at the University of Oxford within the Refugee Studies Centre and more recently, since September 2009, I signed up for a PhD program at the University of East London – School of Social Sciences and Humanities. In the same spirit as the work undertaken in the annual yearbooks, I will here reflect on both the context and the ethos of research practice of these three academic institutions and also on how these had an influence on both my studies and my so far short career in research.

In my opinion, University is to the creation of Knowledge what the Body is to the emergence of Ideas. The production of knowledge is nothing like the scenario of a prehistoric man accidentally dropping a piece of meat on red burning coal and finding that it tastes better. Instead, this is a scenario in which men and women spend years learning and studying, experiencing the world, copying each other's behaviours and bringing their own innovation and personality to global reflection. The world of each university interferes in this intellectual process, and so at different levels. Each institution has its own historical heritage, one incorporated in specific national contexts (here Belgium and the UK) and nowadays as much shaped by European policies as by international pressing demands.

In the following section of the paper, I am briefly depicting the main characteristics of these three academic environments that managed to alter my studying career in complex ways.

First of all, I was most impressed at the Université Libre de Bruxelles by the political dedication of some student groups and by the fact that the university tagged itself as 'free'. One of the main characteristics of the University, since its creation in 1834, is its revolving around its core principle of 'Libre Examen' – i.e. independence from dogmas of all kinds – and the ideals of philosophical and intellectual freedom that were advocated by liberals and 'franc-maçons' at the time. This principle was constantly used by student unions in order to lobby academic authorities and to raise awareness among the student community on different issues such as the rights of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. This philosophy was also strongly embodied by certain academics from the department of Sociology. Their opinion was also public, known to all and therefore influential. Building connections between theory and practice inside the University walls is therefore a common intellectual practice. It creates an important sense of involvement in society but also shapes the appropriation of sociological knowledge with an underlying purpose: to make sociological knowledge useful for fighting against social injustice. I am deeply convinced that my commitment towards asylum seekers and refugees derived both from my experience as an undergraduate student in Social Sciences and from certain components of my family history. In fact, this first academic experience echoed the one explored by PhD students in the Yearbook I, which explores the work of Bourdieu (*Les Héritiers*, 1964). As Derek Robbins writes in the introduction of the book, Bourdieu 'showed that universities are not the guardians of autonomous knowledge content but that, for instance, the choices made by students are choices which relate to their social trajectories generally'.

There is little need to introduce Oxford University and what a student can feel when studying in one of the world's oldest and leading institutions, surrounded by ancient stones. These seem to testify to the overwhelming knowledge built in these very same institutions. Moreover, the University of Oxford's Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) was founded in 1982 and was the first research centre dedicated to the study of forced migration. Since then, this new field of study in the social sciences has become a recognised academic discipline. The proliferation of research centres dedicated to such studies proves just so. In fact, its leading role is still undeniable, as it was assessed in a recent publication released in April 2010 and called 'Forced Migration Research and Policy Overview of current trends and future directions'. This document maps out the contemporary issues and highlights the themes and topics that require further attention from researchers, policymakers and practitioners. The credit that the centre globally holds has an influence on the way research is conducted in different places on the world. Inevitably, it also proves to have a certain amount of leverage on the way I personally conceive my research orientation in this field, even if on a modest level since I feel I am part of this 'scientific community'. My academic experience made me grow increasingly more aware of the

social status of disciplines and the institutions in which they are practised. This dimension of knowledge production and its shaping of PhD student's research were investigated in Yearbook II.

The timeless golden stones of the Oxford walls certainly contrast with the University of East London, and seem to defy the ever-increasing pace of our globalized world. The University of East London is located in the dock area, formerly a central commercial hub. This feeling of interconnection can be strongly felt at UEL in its symbolic location but also in its diverse, modern and multicultural academic programme. Even more defying is the feeling of a university connected with the cultural reality of its time, offering diverse and updated programs to a new generation of students. The University of East London also offers a postgraduate MA course in Refugee Studies. When comparing the philosophy of the two Masters in Forced migration provided by these two different UK institutions, I was impressed by the commitment of the School to valuing dialogue between practitioners and academics. Practitioners committed to topics linked to forced migration are more than welcome to apply. This positioning is a fact once again not disconnected from the symbolism of the East London location. As a new university, the University of East London perhaps enjoys greater freedom in undertaking original and groundbreaking research, certainly more so than its more established counterparts like Oxford. The recent seminar series jointly organised during the year 2009-2010 by the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging and Matrix East (a unique new digital media arts centre) was called "Imaging Migrants". This is one instance among many other such examples. Different disciplines intertwine with one another in real dialogic relations instead of dialectic ones. For these reasons, undertaking a PhD research project in this modern university proves very exciting, however slightly frightening. In a more established institution, crossing conceptual boundaries may be harder to achieve. The philosophy underlying the last Yearbook "Crossing Conceptual Boundaries I" illustrates the spirit of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of East London rather well. The way articles are being reviewed swims against the actual current where reviewer and editorial board act as gatekeepers of discipline boundary divisions that prescribe intellectual uniformity and conformity in relation to their operational maps of learning (Robbins, 2010).

This brief and naïve description of the three universes – freedom, tradition and modernity – qualifying if not somehow defining each university is nothing more than a mere rendition of how a student perceives the scientific atmosphere, one that will more than likely shape the full experience of both the learning and the research processes. The way in which these three academic environments affected my studies and my so far short research career should also be understood in regard to personal biographic events. This intrinsic relationship was recognized and explored by the set of annual Yearbooks. As Timothy Jenkins points out (2009) in his critical response, there is 'a relative independence of the life of the "research mind" both from the biography and social position of the researchers and from the status and context of the

research institutions'. We are not simply the product of such institutions; we are 'agents' who both consciously and unconsciously reflect those academic experiences. Therefore, in order to fully see the picture of knowledge production from the perspective of a PhD student, one should look at the multiple interconnections between biographic events and the overall journey between the different academic environments that increasingly characterise the international student's trajectory.

As a result, the understanding of knowledge production by PhD students must be regarded in connection with the different intellectual traditions they have experienced, along with the relevant biographic events that emphasize certain important choices made in regard to their studies and, last but not least, framed in a context where pure chance plays a role; a combination of circumstances that may explain the route taken and its potential impact on the research pathway. This is the original and complex combination I have been trying to reflect on. This combination also justifies, at least partly, why I am currently writing in this new annual yearbook dedicated to PhD research in progress.

In general, the choice of specializations through Master and post-graduate programmes is wider in universities in the UK than in the Belgian French-speaking universities. The Bologna process, in making it easy for students to evolve within connected European universities either through institutional programs such as the Erasmus programme or on an individual basis, creates a new generation of students trained in and adapted to the European higher education market. Typical traditions of research are more and more in confrontation with each other due to the increasing mobility of students around the world. Beside research practice, the way knowledge is taught also influences the way knowledge is integrated in the students' mind. While it is commonly accepted that there is a big difference between the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon way of teaching, a trend towards a homogenisation can be observed. This European harmonization process in terms of study programs, research practices and ways of teaching is indeed taking place. However, recent research on the topic (Keeling 2006; Moens 2007) tends to demonstrate that heterogeneity is still very relevant. Universities tend to copy each other but since they compete with one another they also have to distinguish from one another. As a result, an ambivalent process is taking place: there is on one hand a tendency towards a homogenization and on the other hand a tendency towards greater diversification. Twenty-first century students are faced with more than one tradition of thought. This, it is to be hoped, will lead to new ways of appropriating knowledge, new ways of conducting research and *in fine*, new ways of producing knowledge.

References

Bourdieu, Pierre & Passeron, Jean-Claude (1964), *Les héritiers : les étudiants et la culture*, Paris : Ed. de Minuit, 183 p.

Moens, Frédéric, 2007, Concurrence et concentration dans l'enseignement supérieur en Communauté française de Belgique, Contribution to « Les Universités et leurs marchés, 1st International conference of RESUP, Sciences Po Paris, 1st to 3rd of February 2007

Keeling, Ruth (2006). The Bologna Process and the Lisbon research agenda: the European Commission's expanding role in higher education discourse, *European Journal of Education*, 41 (2), 203-223

Forced Migration Research and Policy Overview of current trends and future directions, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development; I University of Oxford, April 2010

Robbins, Derek (ed.) (2007, 2009), University of East London School of humanities and Social Sciences, Studies Yearbook I, II, III. PhD Research in Progress.

Robbins, Derek (ed.), University of East London School of School of humanities and Social Sciences, Crossing Conceptual Boundaries. 1st September 2010.

Timothy Jenkins's paper, University of East London School of School of humanities and Social Sciences, dated 30/10/2009

Articles

Section II

Chapter 4

Refugees and the Mobilisation of Religious Resources

Tahir Zaman

Abstract

The following is a theoretical paper concerning the role of religion in the lives of Iraqi forced migrants who were displaced following the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is my contention that Iraqi forced migrants are able to mobilise non-material 'religious resources' to help gain access to further material resources by virtue of positioning themselves in relation to existing religious institutions and networks. With this in mind, I will critically examine the utility of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to better understand the role of religious traditions, networks and institutions in relation to the practices and decision-making of Iraqi refugees in Syria. Moreover, I suggest that rather than merely consuming religious goods, social agents challenge the passivity assigned to them in the religious field by Bourdieu and in fact engage in the production of religious goods, competing against institutions which are regarded by Bourdieu as the predominant producers of religious goods.

The Mobilisation of Capital

Nicholas Van Hear (2006) has made the case that with the increasingly restrictive immigration policies pursued by countries of the Global North, migrants' access and ability to mobilise and transform various forms of capital is becoming increasingly fundamental to understanding patterns and consequences of migratory movements. A key question that I am concerned with is: How? How do Iraqi refugees convert non-material forms of capital into an appropriate volume and structure of capital which will allow them to pursue their strategies of choice? How do religious networks and institutions help or hinder in the conversion of non-material forms of capital?

In entering into key debates on the constitution and formation of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 1995, 2000; Portes & Landolt, 1996; Portes, 1998) I will develop a more nuanced understanding of how Iraqi forced migrants position themselves between religious networks and institutions in their attempt to secure material resources. In addition, by critically engaging with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (1986, 1989, 1990a, 1991), I intend to examine the significance of Islamic traditions of asylum in the life-worlds of Iraqi forced migrants and how they are able to mobilise non-material 'religious resources' to help gain access to further material resources, and alternatively to consider the extent to which Iraqi refugees are prevented from securing access to resources by religious networks and

institutions. Let us now briefly survey the literature on the various forms of capital; paying particular attention to social capital.

There are numerous definitions of what constitutes social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1994, Putnam 1995). For many commentators, the ubiquitous use of the term in a multitude of contexts over the past 15 years has caused it to lose any semblance of coherency; threatening any descriptive utility the term provides researchers with (Portes, 1998). With this in mind, I will heed the advice of Patulny & Svendsen (2007), who urge researchers to adopt a more transparent approach when considering social capital; clearly distinguishing any divergent concepts that have emerged from recent debates.

In *The forms of Capital* Bourdieu (1986) seeks to clarify what constitutes capital through a closer examination of social relations at the micro-level. Despite crediting economists with the introduction of the notion of 'human capital', he chastises them for having paid scant attention to the human aspect arguing that economists including Marx had failed to make the distinction between objectified and non-material forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). The taxonomy of capital introduced by Bourdieu includes *economic*, *cultural*, and *social capital*. The two latter forms are often misrecognised as not being capital as they are not *immediately* convertible into money. Cultural capital can take an embodied form in the form of habitus; it can also be objectified in the guise of cultural goods such as art, cinema, literature, or can even appear in an institutionalised state in the form of educational qualifications² (ibid). For Bourdieu, the embodied form of cultural capital is "predisposed to function as symbolic capital" (1986, p.245) and as such is often misrecognised. My inquiry will investigate whether Iraqi forced migrants have the necessary cultural capital to negotiate their position within a receiving country that may have constructed negative discourses around the figure of the refugee, thereby re-negotiating the label of 'other' as imposed by the state.

I will also examine the extent to which Iraqi forced migrants are able to transform objectified and embodied cultural capital in the form of religious traditions and practices into material forms of capital which are required in the economic field. Bradford Verter (2003, p.169) suggests that Bourdieu, in emphasising the relative autonomy of fields, had failed to see the wood for the trees; individuals occupy multiple positions in numerous overlapping fields and should not be viewed in isolation. He reminds us that:

'[b]ecause there is a fluid dialectic between the definition of a field and the activities of its inhabitants, and because people occupy multiple fields simultaneously, changes in one field

² Bourdieu's conceptualisation of non-material forms of capital was a result of an inquiry into the causes of academic success; tracing the academic success (or lack of) attained by students not to the aptitude and diligence of the students as was commonly thought, but to "the fact that the scholastic yield from educational action depends on the cultural capital previously invested by the family...the economic and social yield of the educational qualification depends on the social capital, again inherited, which can be used to back it up." (Bourdieu, 1989, p.244)

may affect another. Thus a change in the valuation of capital in the scientific field will have ripple effects on the valuation of symbolic capital in the fields of religion, education and politics.’ (ibid)

Bourdieu’s (1986) understanding of what constitutes social capital emphasises ways in which relationships enable individuals, families, and other small groups to influence access to resources. He defines social capital as being a “network of relationships [which are] the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (1986, p.245). Implicit in this approach, is the idea of inequality in power relations and opportunities. In the case of Iraqi refugees in Syria, Christian and Shi’i refugees arguably have greater opportunity for onward migration³ as the religious networks and institutions that cater for the needs of these particular groups have more extensive transnational connections than Sunni networks and institutions.

It is worth mentioning here also that although debates on social capital have only emerged in academia over the past two decades, it is a concept that can be crudely equated with *wasta* or connections, which is prevalent in vernacular discourses and a commonly accepted cultural norm in Arab countries. Interestingly, Bourdieu writing on the encounter between a largely agrarian Algerian society and the imposition of a capitalist economy through the French colonial adventure recognises the salience of this cultural norm many years before he had articulated his notion of the various immaterial forms of capital. He observes:

‘recourse to personal relationships is favoured by the whole cultural tradition which encourages and demands solidarity and mutual aid: the man who has succeeded must use his own success to help others, starting with the members of his own family; every self-respecting individual feels responsible for several more or less close relatives, for whom it is his duty among other things, to find work by using his position and his personal connections. Nepotism is a virtue here’ (Bourdieu, 1979, pp.35-36).

Here, I would also counter Bourdieu’s proposition that relationships are but products of investment strategies – for Bourdieu, self-interest is the defining trait of the human condition much like Sayyid Qutb’s description of man without faith being a “passionate self-lover” (Qutb, 1979, p.261) and yet the teachings of Islam provide man with a reconfiguring of human relationships where self-interest is subordinate to a more altruistic understanding of the human condition.

³ This is one example, access to education and healthcare services are another.

Elsewhere, Putnam (1995, p.664) – adopting a more institutional approach – defines social capital as ‘features of social life-networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives’. Portes (1998, p.6) clarifies this as essentially being “the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures”. Putnam provides us with a further useful distinction between the forms of social capital by introducing ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ social capital. Bonding social capital (BOSC) concerns the ties that people make based on homogeneity or that which “bolsters our narrower selves” (Putnam, 2000, pp.22-23) such as a shared clan membership or ethnicity, a corollary of which is the risk of communities becoming introspective and withdrawn (Cheong et al 2007). Bridging social capital (BRSC), on the other hand, looks to establish ties across voluntary organisations, transcending differences of language, ethnicity or religion and is considered more valuable in the promotion of social cohesion and as a sop against rising xenophobia and racism (Korac, 2005). Following Putnam (2000, p.21), we can define BRSC as social networks that are “outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages.” Mosques and churches are a good example of where there can be a convergence of both bridging and bonding social capital. Furbey et al (2006, p.51), writing in the context of a multicultural Britain, note, “faith buildings stand as physical markers of presence and diversity. In many instances they become places where community activity and development are focused, leading to opportunities for bridging and linking within, across and beyond faiths to wider communities”.

The binary of exclusive and inclusive social capital led Portes and Landolt (1996, p.21) to question the dominant ‘celebratory view of social capital’ and whether it could in fact have negative consequences as per Bourdieu. Portes (1998, p.21) concludes that ‘social ties can bring about greater control over wayward behaviour and provide privileged access to resources; they can also restrict individual freedoms, and bar outsiders from gaining access to the same resources through particularistic preferences.’ I would suggest that the normalising effects of religion are widely accepted and encourages behavioural conformity. In the case of Iraqi forced migrants in Syria, I would also contend that the sectarian dimension of the conflict in Iraq may have coloured the experiences of forced migrants thereby resulting in people expressing a tendency towards ‘particularised trust’ (Uslaner, 2002) characterised by a distrust of outsiders and little co-operation between groups, thus highlighting the very same cleavages where the access and provision of resources for refugees is concerned. Let us explore further, beyond the various forms of capital, the possibilities offered by Bourdieu’s theory of practice to better understand the strategies of Iraqi forced migrants.

Bourdieu and Religion

Having faith in a religious belief is not wholly an individual experience, age old traditions are re-negotiated, re-interpreted and filtered through the experience of living in the contemporary world. As such it is perhaps more useful to think of religious belief and practices in terms of

part of the cultural capital that an individual has at her disposal which is put to use to negotiate her position in society. Religion moves beyond being just a social institution, it becomes a cultural resource which is actively mobilised rather than passively consumed. This can cause to upturn the applecart of power relations as religion is disseminated through new technologies and occupies previously unseen spaces. Commenting on the deregulation of religion in a seemingly secularized world, James Beckford (1989, p.170) endorses this view. He suggests:

‘Religion has come adrift from its former points of anchorage but is no less potentially powerful as a result. It remains a potent cultural resource or form which may act as the vehicle of change, challenge or conservation. Consequently, religion has become less predictable. The capacity to mobilize people and material resources remains strong, but it is likely to be mobilized in unexpected places and in ways which may be in tension with ‘establishment’ practices and public policy.’

For Bourdieu, the decline of religion (in Europe, at least) in the past century has meant that the Church (religion) had become increasingly anachronistic and in the wake of modernity had been supplanted by the state as “the primary agent of consecration” (Engler, 2003, p.445), obfuscating the inequalities in society through legitimating the status quo. As such, it is the state that is most in need of critique. The *raison d’être* of Bourdieu’s project in his own words is to unmask ‘the self-deception, the lie which is collectively maintained and fostered and which in every society, is at the foundation of the most sacred of values’ (1982, p.21); thus for Bourdieu, the state, religion and all other powerful social institutions exist to perpetuate the myth that the powerless masses are dominated by the powerful few because it is a thing pre-ordained or more simply, the way of things.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice is perhaps best viewed as a methodological statement complete with a conceptual tool-kit which helps the sociologist to dissect society exposing the dominant power relations that lie beneath the surface of things. Put simply it can be surmised as thus: The actions of people, *practice*, unfold in a multitude of interconnected and occasionally coinciding *fields* that in aggregate comprise the multidimensional space that we call society. For Bourdieu, self-interest is the defining characteristic of the human condition and in particular the pursuit of the many forms of *capital*. This in turn, is conditioned by their *habitus*, which filters their perception of the world and gives people a sense of taste; a disposition. Life, however, is not a level playing field and through the mechanism of *symbolic violence* distinctions between individuals and groups are maintained which allow for the domination of one over the other, though this is not always recognised as such.

This mis-recognition of the constructed social world as something natural is brought about when the non-material forms of capital or symbolic capital are not recognised as such and are

put to use as mechanisms of indirect social control. Bourdieu (1990a, p.27), drawing on the works of Marcel Mauss, cites “all of the virtues honoured by the ethic of honour” that is, gifts, hospitality, obligations and duties, as examples of “gentle, invisible violence” (ibid). A corollary of such mechanisms for Mahar et.al (1990, p.14) is in Bourdieusian terms ‘symbolic violence’:

‘because those who do not have ‘the means of speech’, or do not know how to ‘take the floor’, can only see themselves in the words or discourse of others-that is, those who are legitimate authorities and who can name and represent.’

Forcibly displaced people are particularly susceptible to symbolic violence, as Roger Zetter (1991) has amply demonstrated – refugees inhabit a highly institutionalized intersection of social space where they are in contact with NGO’s, intergovernmental agencies and various state bodies and as such are subjected to a bureaucratic labelling process which is used instrumentally and demands conformity on the part of those displaced in exchange for much needed resources.

These observations are echoed in the work of the social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai commenting on the powerlessness experienced by slum-dwellers in India who, imbued with negative terms of recognition, gradually subscribe to norms “whose social effect is to further diminish their dignity, exacerbate their inequality, and deepen their lack of access to material goods and services” (Appadurai, 2004, p.66). Similarly, Iraqi forced migrants constitute a marginalised group recognised negatively in the official discourse as refugees. They too occupy a position in the social and geographic space of Syria wherein the struggle to appropriate resources may activate a network of hitherto unseen relations. In what follows, I briefly put forward the core concepts of Bourdieu’s analytical grid, paying particular attention to how Bourdieu suggests that the agency of individuals is constrained by external structures and how this better helps us understand the survival strategies of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

Key Concepts

The concept of *habitus* lies at the heart of Bourdieu’s “general science of the economy of practices”. Bourdieu offers a multitude of definitions of the term: In *The logic of practice*, he defines *habitus* as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures *predisposed* to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p.53). Echoing Edward Shils (1971) treatment of tradition, he tells us that the *habitus* is the “past which survives in the present” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.82). Elsewhere, he likens *habitus* to a “conductorless orchestration which gives regularity, unity and systemacity to practices” (1990a, p.59).

I contend that there is a particular *Islamic habitus* which needs to be considered. Indeed, although Bourdieu's writing on religion focussed almost exclusively on Catholicism, his earlier work (before he had fully formulated his core concepts) hints at the same. His ethnographic work on the Mزاب region of Algeria shows us that he found the extent to which Islam permeated the lives of his informants was more profound than he could have imagined. In *The Algerians* he writes:

'Everywhere in the Maghreb may be seen the imprint and the ascendancy of Islam... The set phrases of polite speech or the social gestures which are all so many affirmations of Islamic values, the daily conversation punctuated by eulogies of, and invocation to, the Prophet and many other traits illustrate the tight control that religion exercises over daily life. The whole of life from birth to death is marked by a series of Islamic, or Islamized, ceremonies, rites, customs and prescriptions... In short, it is the atmosphere of Islam which permeates all of life, not only religious or intellectual life, but private, social and professional life.'

(Bourdieu, 1962, pp. 107-8).

I am not suggesting that Islam is the only way to understand complex societies such as Iraq, but it is perhaps more useful to think of Islam as a 'master signifier' which unifies and totalizes a multiplicity of discourses in Muslim societies (Sayyid, 2003). Equally useful is Talal Assad's (1985) assertion that Islam ought to be considered as a 'discursive tradition' whereby social actors and the discourses they produce are historically situated allowing for a multitude of interpretations of Islamic practices. As such, religious texts and traditions are interpreted in relation to the various socio-political contexts in which actors themselves are situated. In other words, it is not only those with a particular political Islamic project in mind that draw from the well of such traditions but rather they are joined by the state itself and other secular actors in re-formulating Islamic referents with respect to a specific socio-political context (Ismail, 2006).

This is particularly significant in the case of Iraqis who have been forcibly displaced since 2003. Here, it is worth briefly considering the decade of crippling economic sanctions imposed on the people of Iraq which signalled the beginning of the retreat of the state from its welfare obligations to its citizenry, opening up space for tribal and religious networks to fulfil the role of welfare provider. Religion, as Marx had noted, was to be the 'heart of the heartless world' for millions of Iraqis in difficult times. Faleh Abdel Jabar (2003b, p.272) echoing this sentiment writes:

'Fear, dislocation, destitution, uncertainty and social ills drove masses to the warmth of religious charities and fraternities...Religious charities provided food, medical care, and more importantly, certainty in a world of macabre arbitrariness'.

Thus, I suggest that for many Iraqi forced migrants, religion has played a key role in various phases of the refugee process and in particular I hope that data gleaned from my fieldwork will help illuminate the extent to which the mobilisation of religion as a cultural and material resource has been transported from Iraq into Syria as a survival mechanism.

Building on the Weberian idea of an economy of salvation through which charismatic priests, prophets and sorcerers are able to impose on the laity a particular world-view through the control of 'salvation goods', Bourdieu arrived at the idea of *field*. Stephen Foster (1986, p.103) helps us to understand Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field by considering associated meanings of words such as 'force-field' and 'battlefield': thus, a field is where the struggle over the various forms of capital is located. It is within this field that the agents (often the consumers of capital) and the institutions (often the producers of capital) take their positions. These positions are contingent on the quantity and the form of the capital one has and as humans are motivated by self-interest, strategies are developed to improve the quality and quantity of capital in our possession. Bourdieu maintains we ought to regard a field as "a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97). As such, we are all invested in the capital *game*; whether we are producing capital; consuming it; seeking to accumulate it or striving to attain it. Moreover, the interlocking of fields- be they cultural, religious or political- is brought about by the "transubstantiation"⁴ (Bourdieu, 1986:242) of capital. Put otherwise, the ability of capital to be transformed from material to non-material forms allows it to move from one field to the next.

Critiquing Bourdieu's Sociology of Religion

At first glance, Bourdieu may seem an odd choice of social theorist for someone interested in religion to look towards for gaining insights into the practices of religiously-minded people; he wrote very little on the subject directly and his seminal works were more concerned with the sociology of culture and education with a particular emphasis on the study of power and its correlation with social deprivation, than with religion per se (Dianteill, 2003). On the few occasions he does articulate his position on religion he has been labelled as being 'Voltairean', 'unidimensional' and 'too insular' (Verter, 2003, pp.151-6); 'hostile', 'pessimistic and static' (Urban, 2003, pp.355-36). Others have suggested that his limited commentary on religion leaves nothing more than 'a sociology of Catholicism' (Dianteill, 2003, p.535) in which he fails to consider 'the possibility of a struggle towards a noncompetitively defined religious field' (Tanner, 2005, p.23). And yet paradoxically, in formulating his 'theory of practice' Bourdieu is hugely indebted to the canonical theorists of religion – Durkheim, Weber and Marx – and the philosophical insights of the devoutly Catholic Blaise Pascal, providing researchers with concepts and ideas that are immensely useful in better interpreting religious practices. Dianteilli (2003, p.530) notes: 'In Bourdieu's work, the notions of "belief", "field" or "habitus"

⁴ For a discussion on the use of religious metaphors in Bourdieu's writing in general see Rey (2007:8)

always result from the social sciences of religion (sociology, anthropology, and history). From this point of view, Bourdieu's work is almost a "generalized" sociology of religion'.

In 'Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field', Bourdieu (1991) demonstrates his indebtedness to Weber when he observes that with a move from rural to urban centres, human existence was explained in increasingly 'rationalized' terms creating "a body of specialists in the administration of religious goods' (Bourdieu, 1991:6). This is pivotal for Bourdieu as the monopoly held by such specialists – here, read the Catholic Church – helped maintain distinctions and legitimate the social inequalities between individuals and classes. Ever suspicious of religion, he writes:

'If there are social functions of religion and consequently, if religion is amenable to sociological analysis, it is because laypeople do not – or not only – expect from it justifications for existence capable of freeing them from the existential anguish or contingency and dereliction or even biological misery, sickness, suffering or death, but also and above all justifications for existing in a determinate social position and existing as they exist...'

(Bourdieu, 1991, pp.16)

In other words, through the ability to consecrate and legitimate the prevailing social order, the clerical class is able to convince the people that their social position is appropriate; inculcating their world-view into the perceptions and thoughts of people and naturalizing the status quo. However, this is a somewhat narrow understanding of the role or status of the clergy in the field of politics. There is an assumption here that the interests of the clergy are monolithic and closely correlated with those of the state. The recent history of Iraq has shown that the picture is far more complex.⁵

The exile of clerics has been a recurrent feature of Iraqi politics since the 1920 revolt which sought to eject the British from Iraq. Leading *mujtahids* were deported to Iran- only to be recalled from exile for fear of damaging British interests in that country, on the condition that they abstain from political activities and limit their roles to that of custodians of religious culture. In addition, Iraqi governments have continually made recourse to charging Iraqi Shi'i of being of Iranian origin as a pretext for deportation (Babakhan, 2002).

It was not until the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in 1958 that there appeared a robust Shi'i political party in the form of the *Hizb al-Da'wa* (the Party for the Call of Islam) founded by Hadi al-Subayti, Talib al-Rifa'i and Mahdi al-Hakim (al-Qazwini, 2002). From the time of its inception until the summer of 1979 following the epochal Islamic revolution in Iran, the

⁵ Indeed, it could be argued that tensions, between the majority Shi'i population of Iraq and the Sunni elites that have wielded political power over them date as far back as the early sixteenth century when the Safavid and Ottoman empires battled for control over Baghdad

members of Hizb al-Da'wa remained active in clandestinely propagating their message. Thereafter, they openly proclaimed their political vision, sparking an escalation of violent confrontation with the apparatus of the Ba'athist regime which culminated in Saddam Hussein's regime making membership of *Hizb al-Da'wa* a capital offence and the execution of Baqir as-Sadr (the leading cleric of the party) and his sister Bint al-Huda in April 1980 (al-Ruhaimi, 2002).

With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, many *Da'wa* activists including the incumbent Prime minister of Iraq, Nouri al-Maliki, fled across the border to Iran causing fragmentation in the ranks of the party as the war dragged on (ibid). It was also in exile in Tehran in 1982 that the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was formed. On the eve of the US-led invasion of Iraq, the religious parties including *Da'wa* and SCIRI had positioned themselves to fill the vacuum created by regime change (Abdel-Jabar, 2003). In an opposition congress held in London in December 2002, over a quarter of the members chosen to be on the Committee of Co-ordination and Follow-up were affiliated to SCIRI. The final communiqué of the gathering read *al-Islam masdar al-tashri'* or Islam is *the* source of legislation (ibid, p.14); giving a clear indication of the direction in which the conflict was to take.

Thus we can see that until the downfall of the Ba'athist regime in 2003, Iraqi, particularly Shi'i, religious networks had extended beyond national borders and had mobilised their capacities in opposition to the Ba'athist regime while in exile. It is hoped that my forthcoming fieldwork in Damascus will help uncover the extent to which Iraq religious networks had been replicated in Syria in addition to whether the particular experience of displacement and exile over the past three decades has shaped the reception of more recent arrivals.

A key collaborator and interpreter of Bourdieu's work, Loïc Wacquant, notes: 'to think with Bourdieu is of necessity an invitation to think beyond Bourdieu, and against him whenever required' (in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.xiv). With this in mind, it is worth mentioning that Bourdieu's attitude towards religion is not untypical of post Enlightenment thinking; the particular historical experience of Europe saw a shift away from a communitarian ethos to one of privileging the individual (Crooke, 2009), a consequence of which was the gradual removal of religion from the public sphere. According to Dianteill (2003, p.545):

'The end of the nineteenth century was thus a violent period of anti-clericalism, one that led to the 1905 law separating church and state. The Catholic Church lost its status of official religion at this time. It is in this anti-clerical context that French sociology is born. It constituted itself largely in opposition to the intellectual hold of religion, and singularly against Catholic influence in the university at the turn of the twentieth century. In one sense, being a sociologist necessarily meant not being "one of them".'

This is the context in which Pierre Bourdieu's own habitus was formed. Thus for Bourdieu, religion becomes almost synonymous with the Catholic Church and its attendant history of domination and accumulation of wealth and power. Herein lays the difficulty with Bourdieu's approach to religion; conflating religion with the institutions of religion he has reduced it to being an organisational means through which the interests of the few are able to dominate, exploit and oppress the many.

To single out the formation of Bourdieu's habitus while remaining silent on my own would be disingenuous at the least and contrary to the sociological project as envisioned by Bourdieu who encouraged reflexivity on the part of the researcher. I readily label myself as Muslim, though not a scholar of Islam in any sense; I have a familiarity with the history, culture and traditions of Islam having been brought up in some respects a conservative Kashmiri household in a working class neighbourhood of East London and have intermittently been engaged with faith-based community organisations. Consequently, I find it difficult to ascribe to religion as understood by Bourdieu. This is not to suggest that religion and religious institutions may not be mechanisms of 'symbolic violence', which conceal relations of domination as something legitimate, but that in dismissing religion as an anachronism and disregarding religion as disposition, Bourdieu's institutional emphasis on the production of religious goods (Martin, 2000; Dillon, 2001) has failed to recognise the agency of the subaltern who mobilises religion to improve the conditions of his/her life in this corporeal world and consequently – what appears to be in contradiction to Bourdieu's emphasis on agency – downplays the significance of the systems of meaning produced by those who ascribe to a religious belief (Rey, 2007).

Once again this goes to the heart of the matter, for Bourdieu and for Marx before him, religion's enduring appeal lays in its ability to provide people with justification for the social position they occupy. Yet, people do not understand this and it is the task of the sociologist to see beyond the meanings and representations social agents ascribe to their situation. Bourdieu (1998) likens the sociologist to the physician: Each deal with issues that are not apparent on the surface; with information that is held from them either because the patient/informant is unaware or simply forgets to mention; and with understanding what truly is causing the suffering. The patient/informant cannot diagnose and treat this condition alone; this, for Bourdieu, is the task of sociology: "[to] allow those who suffer to [sic.] find out that their suffering can be imputed to social causes and thus to feel exonerated" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.629).

Bourdieu's dichotomous approach to the religious field has been critiqued by Joan Martin in her discussion on the work ethic of enslaved African-American Christian women in which she

mobilises James Scott's (1990) notion of 'hidden transcripts'⁶ against Bourdieu's theory of practice to better understand the means by which the enslaved were able to construct alternative social spaces as an act of resistance against the dominant slave-holders. Martin (2000, pp.81– 85) cogently argues that despite the strident attempts of the slave-holding establishment to inculcate into the disposition of slaves the belief that the institute of slavery was the will of God and justified the social order, the slaves refused to yield to such religiously symbolic violence. Instead, they developed a syncretic theology which took into account their African as well as Christian heritage. Similarly, Dillon (2001, p.42) maintains that Bourdieu's Marxist borrowings predispose him "toward a structural, institutional approach to the production of ideology that underplays the relative autonomy and cultural agency of ordinary people... understat[ing] the ways in which people actively construct meaning in their everyday practices."

Such critiques may appear a little harsh given Bourdieu's insistence on bringing to light 'the self-deception, the lie which is collectively maintained and fostered' (Bourdieu, 1982:21) at the heart of social relations through the notion of distinction; we all exist within a social space wherein social agents take positions contingent on the composition and distribution of capital they have at their disposal thereby allowing for what he terms a "classificatory schemata" (1998:9) which result in inequalities, exclusion and the mechanisms to resist.

Having examined the literature on Bourdieu with respect to religion and the various critiques of his theory, I will now explore the possibility of extending Bourdieu's conceptual framework to see whether it is applicable to the subject of our concern; Iraqi Muslim refugees in Syria.

Islam and Bourdieu

Bourdieu's writings on Algeria were chiefly concerned with, on the one hand, the encounter between the twin juggernauts of modernity and capitalism – in the guise of the French colonial adventure – and Algerian society and culture on the other. Religion had become a casualty of this often brutal confrontation as Algerian society was confronted with problems that religion found difficult to counter creating a 'differentiated' society in the process. Echoing the oft-quoted Weberian aphorism: "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalisation, intellectualization, and the disenchantment of the world", he notes:

'The break with tradition, emigration, the relaxation of collective pressure linked to the anonymity of urban life, contact with a technical civilization entirely devoted to profane ends, the explicit and diffuse teachings of the school, all these influences combine to

⁶ Scott defines hidden transcripts in opposition to public transcripts. The latter are the onstage "open interactions between subordinates and those who dominate... [it] is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations [and] is frequently in the interests of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation" (1990, p.2). Whereas, hidden transcripts "characterise discourse that takes place 'offstage', beyond direct observation by power holders" (1990, p.4)

produce a thorough transmutation of values and to destroy the soil in which traditional religiosity was rooted' (1979,p. 70)

And yet, in the case of the contemporary Middle East, we find that the technology that was once railed against by the clerical establishment as being the hallmark of profanity, has now been embraced wholeheartedly by the very same clerical establishment; economies of scale available through the medium of the internet, where *mujtahids* offer *fatwas* on everyday living and disseminate their opinions to a diverse and international audience, and the mushrooming of satellite dishes on rooftops across the urban sprawl of cities such as Cairo, Amman and Damascus beams religion into the living quarters of tens of millions of people. In the popular Sayyida Zeinab suburb of South Damascus, streets around the shrine are lined with street vendors selling DVD's and CD's of popular preachers and sermons taken from the holy shrine cities of Najaf and Kerbala. Far from 'destroying the soil', technology today acts as a key fertilising ingredient for the production and consumption of salvation goods.

How hierarchical is Islam? Clearly, Bourdieu's treatment of religion was viewed through the lens of a laity dominated by a powerful Catholic Church that privileged certain religious actors over others. Does the same apply to Islam? Discussions on Islam often posit a neat taxonomy of 'urban' and a 'folk' Islam based on the dialectic between the scriptural '*ulama* led city and the mysticism of the tribes marshalled by a charismatic saint (Gellner, 1981). Under this model, the state leads a precarious existence in keeping the tribes at bay and maintaining the support of the '*ulama*, who authorise the legitimacy of the state, and unlike their Catholic counterparts were 'without a central secretariat, general organisation, formal hierarchy, or any machinery for convening periodic councils' (Gellner, 1981, p.56). For Gellner (198, p.55), traditional orientalist thinking is turned on its head and the state is no longer despotic; rather, Muslim society can be characterized as "[a] weak state and a strong culture". In addition, the power of the tribes has succumbed to modernity and been effaced while mass literacy and migration to urban centres has strengthened the hand of the '*ulama* who wield control over the symbols of legitimacy through a scriptural understanding of Islam.

Zubaida (1995) questions the validity of such a model, arguing that Gellner had over-generalised in putting forth a sociology of Islam, citing the example of the Ottoman state as the square peg which resolutely fails to fit into Gellner's otherwise neat theory. Hitting on the novel idea of paying the '*ulama*; the Ottoman state established a hierarchy of religious functionaries who held positions in the legal or teaching professions. Zubaida (1995, p.158) insists: '[a]t the heart of the Ottoman state, then, the ulama [sic] were organized: not as a church, but as a department of state and, as such, as full participants in the bureaucratic politics of the state' [emphasis original]. In addition, the '*ulama* were also organised through *awqaf* establishments, the Sufi orders and through their extensive networks that connected them to clan, guilds and the world of commerce (Zubaida, 1995, p.159).

Although Zubaida provides us with an historical treatment of Gellner's sociology of Islam, it is worth noting that for the purposes of our study there are salient points. The region we will be dealing with is Syria and Iraq, both of which were subject to Ottoman suzerainty for just under four hundred years. Following the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern states of Iraq and Syria, the governments of both countries adopted some of the bureaucracy bequeathed to them by the Ottoman legacy. Thus we can see that as a functioning arm of the state apparatus, religious authorities have been and continue to be used to endorse state position to legitimate the social condition of people and justify state policy. As per Bourdieu (1991, p.5), "the question of the political function that religion fulfils for various social classes in a given social formation" is a key concern. Institutions and social agents battle it out for the right to consecrate and legitimate the conditions of their existence.

Conclusion

With the fall of the Iraqi Ba'athist regime in 2003, came the neo-liberal experiment of re-fashioning Iraq as a beacon of laissez-faire economics. This entailed the wholesale introduction of a raft of reform measures aimed at curbing the role of government in the economic sector such as the removal of food and fuel subsidies and drastically reducing the wage and pension bill of government employees (IMF, 2004), resulting in the immiseration of millions of Iraqis. It is my contention that many Iraqis had turned to non-state actors including religious networks and institutions as part of their survival strategy. In addition, the *religious field* (within which Iraqi forced migrants struggle to pursue access to scarce resources) is a key area in which Iraqi refugees make sense of their situation and discover a framework that provides a continuity and uniformity to their lives which in turn informs their practices or as Edward Shils (1971, p.133) so aptly puts it:

"[they] are in search of traditional beliefs to which to attach themselves, to 'create a past' for themselves which will legitimate them in a way which just being themselves in the present will not allow them to do."

That this is perceived as being a familiar doxic world ought not to trivialise or disregard the meaning that an individual attaches to his or her experiences and behaviour. Indeed, by drawing Bourdieu away from religion as 'institution' and towards religion as 'disposition', we can deflect one of the common criticisms levelled at Bourdieu's analysis of religion; namely, his privileging of the researcher's account over that of the participant's, with little emphasis on agency (Martin, 2000; Dillon, 2001; Throop & Murphy, 2002; Verter, 2003).

To put the argument more succinctly, I suggest that Iraqi refugees, faced with an erosion of their basic capabilities as a consequence of their displacement, draw on non-material forms of capital at their disposal. In particular, the mobilization and re-energisation of key Islamic

traditions form a core component of the entitlements that are available to them as part of the wider strategy of improving their life-chances in their jockeying for positions in the social field.

References

Abdel-Jabar, F. (2003a), "The Worldly Roots of Religiosity in Post-Saddam Iraq", *Middle East Report*, (227), 12-18.

Abdel-Jabar, F. (2003b), *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books.

Al-Ruhaimi, A. (2002), "The Da'wa Islamic Party: Origins, Actors and Ideology", in F. Abdel-Jabar (ed). *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 149-161.

Al-Qazwini, J. (2002), "The School of Najaf", in F. Abdel-Jabar (ed). *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 245-264.

Appadurai, A. (2004), "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition", in V.Rao and M.Walton (eds). *Culture and Action: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on Development Policy*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 59-84.

Assad, T. (1985), *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies Occasional Paper, Washington, DC: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

Babakhan, A. (2002), "The Deportation of Shi'is during the Iran-Iraq War: Causes and Consequences", in F. Abdel-Jabar (ed). *Ayatollahs, Sufis and Ideologues: State, Religion and Social Movements in Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 183-210.

Beckford, J.A. (1989), *Religion and Advanced Industrial Society*, London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.

Bourdieu, P. (1962), *The Algerians*, Boston: Beacon Press

Bourdieu, P. (1979), *Algeria 1960*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1980), "The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods", Trans. R. Nice, *Media, Culture & Society*, 2, 261-93.

Bourdieu, P. (1989), "Social Space and Symbolic Power", *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.

Bourdieu, P. (1985), "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups", *Theory and Society*, 14(6), 723-744.

- Bourdieu, P. (1986), "The Forms of Capital", Trans. R. Nice, in J. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Social Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood Press, 241-258.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990a), *The Logic of Practice*, Trans. R. Nice, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990b), *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Trans. M. Adamson, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991), "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field", Trans. J.B. Burnside, in C. Calhoun and L. Florence (eds.), *Comparative Social Research* 13, 1-44.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L.J.D. (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourdieu, P. et.al, (1999), *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Trans P. Ferguson et.al, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Cheong, P.H. et al. (2007), "Immigration, social cohesion and social capital: A critical review", *Critical Social Policy*, 27(1), pp.24-49.
- Coleman, J.S. (1988), "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.
- Crooke, A. (2009). *Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution*, London: Pluto Press.
- Dianteill, E. (2003), "Pierre Bourdieu and the sociology of religion: A central and peripheral concern", *Theory and Society*, 32(5), 529-549.
- Dillon, M. (2001), "Pierre Bourdieu, Religion, and Cultural Production", *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies*, 1(4), 411-429.
- Engler, S. (2003), "Modern Times: Religion, Consecration and the State in Bourdieu", *Cultural Studies*, 17, 445-467.
- Foster, S.W. (1986), "Reading Pierre Bourdieu", *Cultural Anthropology*, 1(1), 103-110.
- Furbey, R. et al. (2006), *Faith as social capital: Connecting or dividing?* Bristol: The Policy Press
- Gellner, E. (1981). *Muslim Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

IMF (2004), IMF Country Report No. 04/325 *Iraq: Use of Fund Resources—Request for Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance—Staff Report; Press Release on the Executive Board Discussion; and Statement by the Executive Director for Iraq*. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.cfm?sk=17790.0> [Accessed 27 March, 2008]

Ismail, S. (2006). *Rethinking Islamist Politics: Culture, the State and Islamism*, London: I.B.Tauris..

Korac, M. (2005), "The Role of Bridging Social Networks in Refugee Settlement", in P Waxman and V. Colic-Peisker (eds.) *Homeland Wanted*, New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc. 87-107

Mahar, C., Harker, R. & Wilkes, C. (1990), "The Basic Theoretical Position", in R. Harker, C. Mahar, & C. Wilkes, (eds.) *An Introduction to the work of Pierre Bourdieu: The Practice of Theory*. London: Macmillan, pp. 1-25.

Martin, J. (2000), *More than chains and toil: A Christian Work Ethic of Enslaved Women*, Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Patulny, R.V. and Svendsen G.L.H. (2007), "Exploring the Social Capital Grid: Bonding, Bridging, Qualitative, Quantitative", *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 27(1), 32-51.

Portes, A. and Landolt, P. (1996), "The Downside of Social Capital", *The American Prospect*, 26(94), 18-21.

Portes, A. (1998), "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual review of Sociology* 24(1), pp. 1-24

Putnam, R. (1995). "Tuning in-Tuning out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America" *Political Science and Politics* 28(4), pp. 664-83

Putnam, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York: Simon and Schuster

Rey, T. (2007), *Bourdieu on religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy*, London: Equinox Pub.

Sayyid, S. (2003), *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*, London: Zed Books.

Scott, J.C. (1990), *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press

Shils, E. (1971), "Tradition", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13(2), 122-159.

Tanner, K. (2005), *Economy of Grace*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Throop, C.J. and Murphy, K.M. (2002), "Bourdieu and phenomenology: A critical assessment", *Anthropological Theory*, 2(2), 185-207.

Urban, H.B. (2003), "Sacred Capital: Pierre Bourdieu and the Study of Religion", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15, 354-389.

Uslaner, E.M. (2002), "Religion and Civic Engagement in Canada and the United States", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(2), 239-254.

Van Hear, N. (2006), "'I Went as Far as My Money Would Take Me': Conflict, Forced Migration and Class", In F. Crepeau, ed. *Forced Migration and Global Processes: A View from Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Lexington Books.

Verter, B. (2003), "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu", *Sociological Theory*, 21(2), 150-174.

Zetter, R. (1991), "Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(1), 39-62.

Zubaida, S. (1995), "Is there a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam", *Economy and Society* 24(2), 151-188

Chapter 5

Spirituality as Self-Constitution in Foucault's *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*

Anthea Williams

Abstract

In this article, I take up a particular usage of the term 'spirituality', employed by Foucault for the first time in his 1981–2 lectures The Hermeneutics of the Subject. I trace this new understanding of the concept through the lectures, as it becomes linked with the notion of the 'care of oneself' and with the wider project of self-formation/constitution. Having reviewed the contributions of Foucault and others to the discussion of possibilities for the self, I suggest that Foucault's characterization of spirituality as holding together the three elements of search, practice and experience, gives hope to modern subjects in our relationships with ourselves, others and the world. It is possible that this fresh understanding of spirituality gives us the tools to explore our lives without falling into superficial understandings of the self, and can inspire us to create ourselves as 'works of art', to borrow Foucault's visionary words.

The Elusive Key

In his 1982 lecture series at the Collège de France, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Michel Foucault continues to explore the question of the relationship between truth and the subject which preoccupied him towards the end of his life. This preoccupation coincides with his gradual entry into the genealogical domain of the historical ontology of ourselves '...in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents' (Foucault 1983, p.262). Early in the 1982 lectures, he introduces an intriguing new use of the word, 'spirituality', one which strongly implies the idea of self-constitution through personal transformation. This fresh approach to spirituality seems to offer hope of a new framework for modern subjects, as we look for a meaningful way to form our lives amid the complexity of the contemporary world. However, as will become apparent, Foucault does not dwell on 'spirituality' as an umbrella term for what he calls elsewhere 'technologies of the self'. Nor does he appear to develop the idea in subsequently published articles and discussions. Is this just another one of those uses of the words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' which Carrette suggests are invariably ambiguous, and which point to a relatively undeveloped area of Foucault's thought?

Just one clue makes it worthwhile, in my view, to trace this new appearance of the word 'spirituality' through *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, to see if it has real substance, and relevance for today. Introducing the concept of the 'cultivation of the self', in *The Care of the Self*, Foucault commends *Exercices spirituels et Philosophie antique*⁷, by the distinguished historian of philosophy, Pierre Hadot, for '...an interesting discussion of these themes....' (Foucault 1990, p.243). It is just possible, therefore, that Foucault adopts in his 1982 lectures Hadot's extended understanding of the 'spiritual', as used in this collection of essays, in order to highlight the transformation which is necessary for the subject to attain truth. Certainly, *Exercices spirituels et Philosophie antique*, originally published in 1975, is believed by Arnold Davidson to have influenced Foucault strongly: 'For Foucault himself, philosophy was a spiritual exercise, an exercise of oneself in which one submitted oneself to modifications and tests, underwent changes in order to learn to think differently' (Davidson 1994, p.70). Hadot, for his part, is adamant that the practices of the ancient philosophical schools, which he describes as 'spiritual exercises' in his essay by that name, cannot readily be called anything else. He maintains that the object of 'spiritual exercises' was to bring about real change in the individual: 'Each in its own way, all schools believed in the freedom of the will, thanks to which man has the possibility to modify, improve, and realize himself' (Hadot 1995, p.102). Certainly, in his sixth lecture, Foucault spends some time discussing Hadot's analysis, at a philosophical conference, of the meanings of 'conversion', finally identifying conversion with the transformation of the subject (Foucault 2005, p.216f). Further on, he is enthusiastic about a chapter on Marcus Aurelius in *Exercices spirituels et Philosophie antique* (ibid, p.292). He is also able to use the phrase 'spiritual exercises' or 'spiritual practices' when talking about ascetics (ibid, p.417f). There is clearly, then, some indebtedness to Hadot in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, opening up the possibility of finding in Foucault's argument a kind of 'spiritual sub-text'.

Spirituality Introduced

It is in his first lecture that Foucault consciously and clearly introduces the word, 'spirituality'. As a prelude, he says: 'We will call "philosophy" the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject's access to the truth.' He continues: 'If we call this "philosophy", then I think we could call "spirituality" the search, practice, and experience through which the

⁷ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Malden, MA, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell, 1995). It appears from Davidson's notes to *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that the contents of this modern English edition do not exactly correspond to those of the original edition, published in 1975. However, an essay entitled *Reflections on the Idea of the 'Cultivation of the Self'* is included at pp 206-213.

subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself⁸ in order to have access to the truth' (Foucault 2005, 15). More specifically, the name, 'spirituality' is given to '...the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence...which are...for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth' (ibid).

For Foucault, here, spirituality in the West '...postulates that for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become...other than himself' (ibid). Either by his own willed movement, or by the movement of truth towards him, he is removed '...from his current status and condition...' (ibid). Foucault calls this a movement of *erōs*. Alternatively or alongside, there may take place '...a work of the self on the self...a progressive transformation of the self by the self for which one takes responsibility...' (Foucault 2005, 16). This Foucault calls a process of *askesis*. Finally, once truth is attained, it has 'rebound effects' on the subject: 'The truth enlightens the subject; the truth gives beatitude to the subject; the truth gives the subject tranquillity of the soul' (ibid).

It is noticeable here that Foucault does not make any effort to explain what 'truth' means in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. However, it is apparent that truth is desirable and worth working for, and the 'necessary transformations' involved in this process are presented in a positive light (Foucault 2005, p.15). In access to the truth, '...there is something that fulfils the subject himself, which...transfigures his very being' (ibid, p.16). However, there is still uncertainty about the nature of this 'truth'. Hints may be found in the Dartmouth Lectures of 1980, where, commenting on Seneca's *De tranquillitate animi*, Foucault describes truth as '...something which is before the individual as a point of attraction, a kind of magnetic force which attracts him towards a goal' (Foucault 1999, p.167). In his autumn 1982 seminar, published as *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault states: 'For the Stoics, truth is not in oneself but in the *logoi*, the teachings of the masters' (Foucault 1982a, p.238). More generally, in an interview in 1984, Foucault asks rhetorically, 'Who speaks the truth? Free individuals who establish a certain consensus, and who find themselves within a certain network of practices of power and constraining institutions' (Foucault 1984, p.297). When asked the inevitable question, 'So truth is not a construction?' Foucault replies:

That depends. There are games of truth in which truth is a construction and others in which it is not. One can have, for example, a game of truth that consists of describing things in such and such a way... this does not mean that there's just a void, that everything is a figment of the imagination. (ibid)

⁸ For ease of argument, I follow in this article Foucault's use of the male pronoun when referring to the subject, in French the masculine *sujet*.

Interestingly, at the end of his exposition of the transformative process whereby truth and the subject are brought together, Foucault reminds his hearers that he is making a distinction between 'the individual' and 'the subject himself in his being as subject' (Foucault 2005, 16). Why is this important? The clue lies in the context: what is being discussed is the inadequacy of knowledge alone as a means of access to the truth. Knowledge's own conditions of access to truth '...do not concern the subject in his being; they only concern the individual in his concrete existence, and not the structure of the subject as such' (ibid, 18). Foucault concludes by stressing the link between truth and the transforming practices of spirituality:

If we define spirituality as being the form of practices which postulate that, such as he is, the subject is not capable of the truth, but that, such as it is, the truth can transfigure and save the subject, then we can say that the modern age of the relations between the subject and truth begin when it is postulated that, such as he is, the subject is capable of truth, but that, such as it is, the truth cannot save the subject.
(ibid, p.19)

The Care of the Self as the Bridge to Truth

The classical notion of the 'care of oneself' (*epimeleia heautou*) has already made its appearance right at the beginning of the 1982 lecture series. Foucault has posed this year's central question: 'In what historical form do the relations between the "subject" and "truth"...take shape in the West?' (ibid, p.2).

He then immediately introduces the notion of '...care of oneself, attending to oneself, being concerned about oneself, etcetera' (ibid). The implication is clear: in this concept lie the seeds for connecting the self with truth, even '...when everything in the history of philosophy...tells us that the *gnōthi seauton* ['know yourself'] is undoubtedly the founding expression of the question of the relations between the subject and truth...' (Foucault 2005, 3). As shown above, Foucault is adamant that knowledge of whatever kind, including of the self, is not enough to give access to truth. Knowledge may touch the individual, but not the 'subject in his being'. By indicating the importance of the 'care of oneself' for the relationship of the self to truth, Foucault implies that the diligent application of this principle *is* transformative, and that it therefore belongs to 'the search, practice, and experience' of spirituality.

This impression is confirmed when Foucault characterizes the 'care of oneself' firstly as '...a certain way of considering things, of behaving in the world, undertaking actions, and having relations with other people' (ibid, p.10). Secondly, the 'care of oneself' requires those 'conversions of looking' which figure in the list of possible 'researches, practices and experiences' making up spirituality (ibid, p.15). Thirdly: 'The *epimeleia* also always designates

a number of actions exercised on the self by the self, actions by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one changes, purifies, transforms and transfigures oneself' (ibid, 11). I have already indicated that it is to such actions that Foucault gives the name *askesis*, within the overall framework of transforming spirituality (ibid, 16). Clearly, the 'care of oneself' promises to be a fundamental ingredient in that spirituality.

Theology Without Spirituality

Exploring further the historical displacement of the 'care of oneself' by the Delphic precept, 'Know yourself', as decisive for the subject's access to the truth, Foucault locates the beginning of the divide in scholastic theology, where, he argues, God shares his omniscience with the faithful, so that knowledge forms a short-cut to truth without the need for *epimeleia heautou*, without the condition of spirituality. Henceforth, in a gradual process culminating in Descartes, the only limitations to accessing the truth are those of the subject's own knowledge, to the neglect of '...the spiritual necessity of the subject's work on himself, of his self-transformation and expectation of enlightenment and transfiguration from the truth...' (ibid, p.26).

Having identified this fundamental opposition, Foucault nevertheless finds evidence of spirituality, as he has called it, in the late sixteenth century notion of 'reform of the understanding', as typified by Spinoza in his *Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding*. Here, such questions as: 'In what aspects and how must I transform my being as subject?' and 'What conditions must I impose on my being as subject so as to have access to the truth...?' (ibid, p.27) are, for Foucault, 'properly spiritual' questions (ibid, 28). Furthermore, Foucault discerns the thread of 'a certain structure of spirituality' running through the nineteenth century philosophy of such giants as Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger, which, he believes, '...tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity, to a transformation in the subject's being' (ibid).

The Meaning of Care in the 'Care of Oneself'

In an examination of Plato's *Alcibiades*, Foucault asks, of what must the 'care of oneself' consist? The answer is readily given: it consists in knowing oneself (Foucault 2005, p.67). But, if knowledge on its own does not give access to truth, why is knowledge of the self crucial to the 'care of oneself'? In fact, it is the *way* in which this knowledge is gained which links with the transformation implied in the 'care of oneself', and makes it possible. Plato's metaphor of the eye is used here to suggest that the self, the soul-subject, knows itself through seeing itself in the mirror reflection created by the divine luminosity in its own seeing. This divine element, recognized by the subject as its own essential divinity, in turn endows the subject with wisdom: 'It will be able to distinguish good from evil, the true from the false. At this point the soul will be able to conduct itself properly...' (ibid, p.71). For Platonism, '...this condition of a

relationship with the self and the divine, with the self as divine and with the divine as self, was one of the conditions of access to the truth' (ibid, p.77). However, Platonism will inadvertently make way for the marginalization of spirituality by '...continuously and repeatedly raising the question of the necessary conditions of spirituality for access to the truth and, at the same time, reabsorbing spirituality in the movement of knowledge alone, of knowledge of the self, of the divine, and of essences' (ibid, p.78).

The Changing Content of the 'Care of Oneself'

Next, Foucault moves to consider the period of what he calls 'the renaissance of the classical culture of Hellenism' (ibid, p.81), roughly spanning the first and second centuries CE. For Foucault, this is '...a genuine golden age in the history of the care of the self...' (ibid), where the objective for individuals of all ages and conditions is to benefit the self without further qualification: 'Why does one care for the self? Not for the city-state, but for oneself' (Foucault 2005, p.83). There is also a general broadening of expression in relation to the 'care of oneself', suggesting to Foucault '...that actually an entire practice of the self is involved' (ibid, p.86). Moreover, in this period, the 'care of oneself' comes to be seen as '...an activity for the whole of life' (ibid, p.88). Consequently, it has to start taking forms of self-correction, of un-learning, as well as of training. In this way, we '...become again what we should have been but never were' (ibid, p.95). Here is yet another allusion to the transformation of the self implied in the 'care of oneself'.

Support Systems and the 'Care of Oneself'

Foucault notes that: 'Care of the self is linked to practices or organizations of fraternity, brotherhood, school, and sect' (ibid, p.113). However, the less sophisticated the social milieu, the more likely it is that 'practices of the self' are linked with organized religion, such as the cult of Isis (ibid, p.114). At the other end of the social spectrum, the 'care of oneself' may be supported by highly ritualized networks of friendship. Whatever social relation forms the basis of support, however: 'Only some are capable of the self, even if the practice of the self is addressed to everyone' (ibid, 126). Foucault links this observation with the notion of salvation: 'Salvation...is an activity, the subject's constant action on himself, which finds its reward in a certain relationship of the subject to himself when he has become inaccessible to external disorders and finds a satisfaction in himself, needing nothing but himself' (ibid, p.184). So, for Foucault, in this Hellenistic and Roman philosophical understanding of the 'care of oneself', '...the self is the agent, object, instrument, and end of salvation' (ibid, p.185).

Earlier, having stressed the need in the classical period for others to care about one's 'care of oneself', Foucault reminds his hearers: 'The other is indispensable for the practice of the self to arrive at the self at which it aims' (ibid, p.127). In the later period, the master, usually but

not necessarily a renowned philosopher, is ‘...the mediator in the individual’s relationship to his constitution as a subject’ (ibid, p.130). Discussing the specific role played by the Epicurean and Pythagorean philosophical schools in this process, Foucault pinpoints ‘spiritual guidance’ as an important element (ibid, p.136). Referring to the school of Epictetus, he uses the phrase, ‘spiritual direction’ to characterize the teacher’s duty ‘...to refute the other person and turn his mind...’ (ibid, 140). In both examples, in keeping with Foucault’s definition of spirituality, the aim of moving from one mode of being to another is presupposed.

Just as other people are indispensable in the attainment of the self through the *epimeleia heautou*, so others will inevitably benefit as a by-product of practices of the self: ‘The care of others is like a supplementary reward for the operation and activity of the salvation you exercise with perseverance on yourself’ (ibid, p.192). For Epictetus, taking care of the self includes asking oneself what is appropriate behaviour in response to whatever situations might present themselves. The result in the life of the disciple: ‘He will know how to fulfil the duties of father, son, husband, and citizen, precisely because he will attend to himself’ (ibid, p.197).

The Return to the Self and Knowledge of the World

Having earlier discussed the Stoic requirement to be free of what surrounds the self, in order to concentrate on the task of attaining the self, Foucault looks more closely at the teachings of the Cynic philosopher, Demetrius, who draws a distinction between useful and pointless kinds of knowledge. Useful knowledge is that which comes from the self’s relatedness to its surroundings: ‘It is by making us appear to ourselves as the recurrent and constant term of all these relations that our gaze should be directed on the things of the world, the gods, and men’ (ibid, p.235). This type of knowledge, another form of the ‘care of oneself’, delivers true precepts which, if followed, result in a transformation of the subject’s way of doing things, his *ēthos*. On the other hand: ‘Cultural embellishment is precisely something that may well be true, but which does not change the subject’s mode of being in any way’ (ibid, p.236). So, too, in the teachings of Epicurus, *phusiologia* is the knowledge of nature, ‘...insofar as this knowledge can serve as the principle of human conduct...and also insofar as it can transform the subject...into a free subject who finds within himself the possibility and means of his permanent and perfectly tranquil delight’ (ibid, p.241).

Here again is the theme of transformation, indispensable to Foucault’s understanding of spirituality, now incorporating transformative knowledge.

Moving on to consider the *Natural Questions* of Seneca, Foucault highlights the distinction made there between two forms of philosophy: ‘...one concerning men and the other concerning the gods...’ (ibid, p.274). While the first gives human beings light to discriminate

between the different paths we are presented with in our everyday lives, the second ‘...leads us to the source of light by dragging us out of the shadows...’ (ibid), a flight from the flaws and vices of the self. This movement, taking us to God, is described by Foucault as ‘spiritual’ (Foucault 2005, p.238). However, although it is a movement to the very summit of the world, where we humans can see clearly the smallness of our place within it, there is no suggestion that we have left our world for another. From this vantage point, we see that the world has to be as it is, and that we must accept it in all its aspects, or reject it completely. This attitude is entailed by what Foucault calls the Stoic ‘spiritualization of knowledge of the world’ (ibid, p.289).

By contrast, Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* point to a different way of knowing the world spiritually. This time, there is an immersion in the detail of the world, ‘...as if to focus the gaze of a near-sighted person onto the finest grain of things’ (ibid, 290). In a ‘spiritual exercise’ (ibid, 292), objects are analysed, named and evaluated for their usefulness or significance in the world to which they belong, as they present themselves to the mind. Foucault sees this ‘knowledge of spirituality’ (*le savoir de spiritualité*) being gradually overlaid by the ‘knowledge of intellectual knowledge’ (*le savoir de connaissance*) (ibid, p.308), culminating in what he has earlier called ‘the Cartesian moment’ (ibid, p.27). By contrast with spiritual knowledge: ‘The subject cannot expect anything by way of his own transfiguration from this [intellectual] knowledge’ (ibid, p.310).

The Return to the Self and Ascesis

Still concentrating on the development of the ‘care of oneself’ in the first two centuries CE, Foucault now asks: ‘...knowledge apart, what working practice is entailed by conversion to the self?’ He answers: ‘Broadly speaking, I think it is what is called *askēsis* (ascesis as exercise of self on self)’ (ibid, 315). It is important to remember, however, that: ‘...*askēsis* is a practice of truth. Ascesis is not a way of subjecting the subject to law; it is a way of binding him to the truth’ (ibid, 317). He elaborates:

I think the question the Greeks and Romans pose with regard to the relations between the subject and practice is that of knowing the extent to which the fact of knowing the truth, of speaking the truth, and of practicing and exercising the truth enables the subject not only to act as he ought, but also to be as he ought to be and wishes to be. (ibid, 318f)

Although ascesis in this sense may involve austerity, its aim is ‘...the constitution of a full, perfect, and complete relationship of oneself to oneself’ (ibid, 320). Within ascesis, Foucault gives the name ‘ascetics’ to:

...the more or less co-ordinated set of exercises that are available, recommended, and even obligatory...in a moral, philosophical and religious system in order to achieve a definite spiritual objective. By ‘spiritual objective’ I understand a certain transformation, a certain transfiguration of themselves as subjects, as subjects of action and as subjects of true knowledge (ibid, p.416f)

Here, finally, Foucault articulates the link between spirituality, as he understands it, and the self-transformation of the subject so as to be able to act and know truly, through the overarching ascesis of the ‘care of oneself’.

The Place of Thought in the ‘Care of Oneself’

Towards the end of his lecture series, Foucault draws his hearers’ attention to the wider meaning of meditation (*meletē*) in Stoic ascetics, where it is simultaneously a necessary prelude to action in real life, and also a way of deciding between different courses of action, as the focus of the ‘care of oneself’ shifts in the later period to the ‘...exercise of thought on thought’ (ibid, p.454). Crucially, meditation, in this wider sense, is designed to enable action to follow from the truth it uncovers, that we may become ‘...the ethical subject...of the truth that we think’ (ibid, p.460). In this way, meditation becomes one of the most important practices making up spirituality, ‘...through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth’ (ibid, p.15). However, in spite of Stoic optimism, the problem remains for Foucault: ‘How can the world which is given as the object of knowledge...at the same time be the site where the “self” as ethical subject of truth appears and is experienced?’ (ibid, p.487).

The Spirituality Sub-Text

It may be seen, from this selective survey of Foucault’s explorations in the course of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, that he does offer here a comprehensive account of ‘...the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth’ (ibid, 15). This, as I have pointed out, he calls spirituality. Moreover, the ‘care of oneself’ can be clearly identified in the lectures as a recurring theme giving form to these activities. However, it cannot be denied that the actual term ‘spirituality’ receives no systematic development within the lectures.

On the other hand, Foucault does not hesitate to speak of ‘...the spiritual necessity of the subject’s work on himself, of his self-transformation and expectation of enlightenment and transfiguration from the truth...’ (ibid, p.26). He describes Spinoza’s questions about self-transformation in search of the truth as ‘properly spiritual’ questions (ibid, p.28). In the same context, he sees ‘a certain structure of spirituality’ running through some nineteenth century philosophy (ibid). Summarizing the contribution of Platonism to the question of the relationship of the self to truth, he speaks of its ‘...continuously and repeatedly raising the question of the necessary conditions of spirituality for access to the truth and, at the same time, reabsorbing spirituality in the movement of knowledge alone, of knowledge of the self, of the divine, and of essences’ (Foucault 2005, p.78). Later, the Stoic concept of movement to the summit of the world is described by Foucault as ‘spiritual’ (ibid, p.283), and linked to what he calls the ‘spiritualization of knowledge of the world’ (ibid, p.289). He goes on to distinguish between ‘the knowledge of intellectual knowledge’ and ‘the knowledge of spirituality’ (ibid, 308), which alone can transform the subject. Finally, in discussing Stoic ascetics, Foucault expressly links transformation with spirituality: ‘By “spiritual objective” I understand a certain transformation, a certain transfiguration of themselves as subjects, as subjects of action and as subjects of true knowledge’ (ibid, p.417).

When these instances are gathered together, it can be seen that they all conform to Foucault’s novel definition of spirituality, rather than to more common understandings. In addition, I have suggested that Foucault assumes the presence of ‘spirituality’ as the reference point behind the many manifestations of the ‘care of oneself’ which he describes, and that he also creates early links in his lectures between the ‘care of oneself’ and the notion of self-transformation, so important to ‘spirituality’. It would, therefore, seem legitimate to trace further this thread of spirituality, rather than to treat it as a throwaway thought, not worthy of any possible application in other contexts. But first, does Foucault take it up again himself?

Looking for References: 1982-1984

The Course Summary for *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, written retrospectively by Foucault, gives a faithful account of the content of these lectures, and clarifies the new thinking he was trying to introduce to his hearers. Interestingly, however, in his summary Foucault declines to use the word ‘spirituality’ to describe the processes by which the subject gains access to truth. This seems strange, considering that they are described in exactly this way in the first lecture, as Foucault introduces the question of the relationship between truth and the subject. Moreover, no alternative umbrella term for these processes is offered. It is almost as if Foucault here imitates the ‘event’ by which, as he argues in his lecture course, Western

‘spirituality’ itself disappears underground at the Enlightenment, leaving the field to ‘the knowledge of intellectual knowledge’ (Foucault 2005, p.308) – in this context, theology.

However, in *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault describes these technologies as one of a variety of ‘...specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves’ (Foucault 1982a 224). As such, he explains, these techniques ‘...permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality’ (ibid, 225). These techniques, he maintains, arise from the classical Greek principle of the ‘care of oneself’, which he goes on to expound. However, in spite of this obvious conceptual link, nowhere in the course of this long seminar does Foucault take the opportunity to share his understanding of spirituality as defined in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*.

Interestingly, during the course of an interview in January, 1984, later published as *The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom*, Foucault is asked, ‘What is the relationship between the path of philosophy, which leads to knowledge of the self, and the path of spirituality?’ He replies: ‘By spirituality I mean – but I’m not sure this definition can hold for very long – the subject’s attainment of a certain mode of being and the transformations that the subject must carry out on itself to attain this mode of being’ (Foucault 1984, 294). ‘This mode of being’ is not elaborated upon, and access to truth no longer figures as the goal of self-transformation. Moreover, Foucault seems uncertain about the robustness of his definition, only proffering it when requested to do so. Indeed, Michael Ure, doubtful in any case as to whether Foucault’s valuing of ‘perpetual self-transformation’ is fundamentally compatible with the Stoic understanding of the care of the self, surmises that ‘...Foucault saw how problematic it is to think that Stoicism’s spiritual exercises are philosophically sustainable or psychologically plausible in the absence of the Stoics’ foundational belief in a providential or divine *logos*’ (Ure 2007, 46).

Self-Constitution and Spirituality

What has happened? It is quite possible that, shortly after giving his 1982 lectures, Foucault became cautious for some reason about developing the understanding of spirituality he adopts there for use in solving contemporary problems. Perhaps this understanding is so tied up with ‘truth’, that a careless appropriation of it could lead to that very objectification of the subject which Foucault deplors. If, therefore, it is to be salvaged in a constructive way, care must be taken to avoid this trap.

A legitimate point of entry, if Foucault's 'spirituality' is to be put to work fruitfully, is surely his concern for the subject as self-constituting, a concern which runs right through *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and is even implied in '...the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth' (Foucault 2005, p.15). But can the subject really do this?

Self-Constitution: a Problem in the Present

In the following discussion, the underlying view of the 'subject' in Foucault is that offered by Clare O'Farrell: 'To define it at the most general level, the "subject" is a philosophical category which describes an entity which is able to choose courses of action' (O'Farrell 2005, p.110). Referring to Foucault's project of a 'history of the subject', she later continues: 'The subject is a form, not a thing, and this form is not constant even when attached to the same individual.' Again: 'Thus the self that is created is a form that relies very much for its existence on its interaction with other people, history and culture. This is opposed to the notion of a true self that needs to be "discovered" in introspective isolation and can only be revealed once cultural and historical veils have been swept aside' (ibid, p.113).

In his introduction to *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Arnold I Davidson refers to Foucault's elaboration, in the final two volumes of his *History of Sexuality*, of '...a conception of the history of ethics as a history of forms of moral subjectivation and of those practices of the self intended to support and ensure the constitution of oneself as a moral subject' (Davidson 2005, p.xix). Just as these volumes analyse the different historical forms taken by sexuality, so the 1982 lectures trace the changing relation between the subject and truth, as it develops in the historical period under scrutiny, culminating in what Foucault calls the 'Cartesian moment' (ibid, p.xxii). Davidson recognizes the importance of the new distinction Foucault makes between philosophy and spirituality in the course of this venture, identifying it as the difference between a theoretical inquiry into how truth can be accessed, and a concentration on '...how we have constituted ourselves as subjects of knowledge and truth' (ibid, xxiii). The 'Cartesian moment' is when spirituality is driven underground, as knowledge, without accompanying transformation, begins to shape the subject exclusively. For Davidson:

To bring into effect the practice of thinking differently, to modify oneself through the movements of thought, we have to detach ourselves from the already given systems, orders, doctrines, and codes of philosophy; we have to open up a space in thought for exercises, techniques, tests, the transfiguring space of a different attitude, a new *ēthos*, the space of spirituality itself (ibid, p.xxviii).

Frédéric Gros, editor of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, provides a concluding *Course Context*, in which he reflects on the ethical theoretical framework of the lectures: practices of the self. He finds seeds of this new direction in the 1980 course, *On the Government of the Living*, where the idea of 'truth activities' appears, specifically in relation to Christian confession. Here, the subject is, in effect, subjected, instead of the truth being subjectivated in the subject, who ironically can only be the subject of truth while that truth is obediently being told to someone else. However, Gros points out that Foucault uses some of the same classical texts in 1980 as he does in 1982, to suggest an alternative to the truth which confines: 'The subject and the truth are not bound together here externally, as in Christianity...but as a result of an irreducible choice of existence' (Gros, 2005, p.511). Gros also sees in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* the idea that techniques of the self are available for the subject to constitute *itself*, as opposed to *being* constituted by power/knowledge. This is notwithstanding that, for the modern subject, there is no going back on the Enlightenment: 'For the subject of right action in Antiquity is substituted the subject of true knowledge in the modern West' (ibid, 523). According to Gros, what Foucault creates in his 1982 lectures is the possibility, even for the modern subject, of choosing '...to make of one's existence...the site for the construction of an order held together by its internal coherence' (ibid, p.531).

Mark Kelly, reviewing the English translation of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, highlights Foucault's introduction in these lectures of '...an idiosyncratic concept of "spirituality"' (Kelly 2005, 111). He concludes: 'If we are to have a new form of spirituality which does understand what it is, as by implication the ancient ones did...Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the Self* [sic] serves to widen the breach in which it might be created' (ibid, 112).

Although these commentators are united in seeing Foucault's 1982 understanding of spirituality as a possible basis for the self-constitution of subjects today, Foucault himself has sometimes shown less confidence in the possibility of self-constitution in general. As early as 1966, in *The Thought from the Outside*, he speaks of the 'disappearance of the subject' with the rise of discourse, and suggests that the only way to 'gain access to this strange relation' might be through a form of thought '...that stands outside subjectivity, setting its limits as though from without...' (Foucault 1966, p.149f). Similarly, in 1969, in *What is an Author?* he is pessimistic about a future for the subject, other than '...as a variable and complex function of discourse' (Foucault 1969, 221).

On the other hand, by the time he delivers his Dartmouth lectures, in 1980, Foucault is able to say: 'I think that if one wants to analyse the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, one has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self.' He elaborates:

One has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, one has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion or domination (Foucault, 1999, p.162).

Then, in 1982, in *The Subject and Power*, Foucault usefully reiterates: 'My work has dealt with three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects.' He lists these modes as: the subject's objectification by science, resulting in, for example, the speaking subject; by the use of 'dividing practices', resulting in, for example, good and bad subjects; and by subjects' fixing of themselves as, for example, sexual subjects (Foucault 1982b, 326f). Later, talking about freedom, Foucault stresses: 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are "free"' (ibid, 342). Thus, objectification is invariably the way to a new subjectification, a new seat of resistance to others' power.

More positively still, in a 1983 interview, published as *On the Genealogy of Ethics*, Foucault declares:

Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents (Foucault 1983, p.262).

By the time *The Use of Pleasure* is published in 1984, Foucault is able to reflect in the *Preface*: 'I felt obliged to study the games of truth in the relationship of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject, taking as my domain of reference and field of investigation what might be called "the history of desiring man"' (Foucault 1992, p.6).

Getting out from Under: New Possibilities for Spirituality

Carrette and King conclude their fascinating critique of the relationship between capitalism and contemporary understandings of spirituality with this suggestion:

In the context of the dominance of the materialist ideology of capitalism in modern western societies, what we need today are 'spiritual atheisms' for our time, and the world's religious traditions provide the richest intellectual examples we have of humanity's collective effort to make sense of life, community and ethics. (Carrette and King 2005, p.182).

McSweeney, too, finds in Carrette's *Foucault and Religion* that '...Foucault's thought does not simply provide a critique which might be applied in the study of religion, or to theology, but portrays a kind of post-religious and post-theological space to be construed nonetheless as the "religious" and theological space available to us in the contemporary context' (McSweeney 2005, p.132). He also notes the vision of Bernauer and Carrette that a 'Foucauldian spiritual sensibility' can lead to 'a way of relating to oneself differently from modern subjectivity' and can 'create new spiritual communities for us to inhabit', likely to be in critical tension with traditional faith communities (ibid, p.133f). Coming from a different direction, Fillion compares articles written by both Kant and Foucault in answer to the question, 'What is the Enlightenment?'⁹ and finds that both use the expression, 'self-incurred tutelage' to describe the mechanism by which individuals resist maturity, understood by Kant as autonomy (Fillion, 2005, p.53f). In Foucault's thought:

The genealogical investigations are meant to show how our tutelage to our particular discursive regimes is self-incurred and that to become mature adults (i.e. agents who do not merely think, say, and do as they are told) we need to test the necessities of our regimes by working out the *real* possibilities they contain...(ibid, p.63f).

Foucault himself is encouraging about the ways in which his work might be taken forward as part of the creation of a new order. For example, *On the Genealogy of Ethics* contains this reflection: 'Among the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures, and so on, that cannot exactly be reactivated but at least constitute, or help to constitute, a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analysing what's going on now – and to change it' (Foucault 1983, p.261). In *The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom*, he is realistic but hopeful about the settings in which all human beings have to operate:

⁹ Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?' in *Kant on History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1963), pp 3-10.
Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?' in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.1: Ethics*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 2000), pp 303-319.

I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the *ēthos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible (Foucault 1984, p.298).

Prior to this, Foucault has made clear: ‘...I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his own culture, his society, and his social group’ (ibid, p.291).

There is nothing here, therefore, to suggest that contemporary subjects, in taking responsibility for self-constitution, could not be helped by Foucault’s suggestion of a new way of seeing spirituality. Naturally, they would utilize the multifarious tools of their own culture, including any spiritual traditions they might have inherited. Taken together, then, could not the elements of search, practice and experience inspire a new spiritual journey for each individual, enabling all of us to find answers to our own questions and problems, whether related to ‘truth’ or not, and bringing us into a new relationship with ourselves, with others, and with the world around us?

Search, Practice, Experience

Under the heading of ‘search’, for example, we could be working to transform truth into a permanent principle of action, so as to be able to answer affirmatively the question posed by Foucault in *Technologies of the Self*: ‘Is this truth assimilated enough to become ethics so that we can behave as we must when an event presents itself?’ (Foucault 1982a, p.239). We might also be concerned ‘...with the problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity’ (Foucault 2001, p.169).

Regarding ‘practice’, faced with our society’s discouragement from giving real attention to ourselves, we might take inspiration from Foucault’s rhetorical question in *On the Genealogy of Ethics*: ‘But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?’ (Foucault 1983, p.261). As we embark upon this work, we

might remind ourselves that: 'Given a code of actions, and with regard to a specific type of actions...there are different ways to "conduct oneself" morally, different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action' (Foucault 1992, p.26). We might be slightly deterred by the fact that '...from Antiquity to Christianity one passes from a morality that was essentially a search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules' (Foucault 1996, p.451). All is not lost, however: Levy compares Foucault to today's virtue ethicists, suggesting that virtue ethics '...is widely held to be truer to the phenomenology of ordinary moral life, in which we are moved by concern for others, not principles, duties or consequences' (Levy 2004, p.21). Although possibly in receipt of expert guidance, we may be interested to find that, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, according to Harrer: 'Having internalised the master's gaze, the subject involved in self-practices now becomes his or her own supervisor' (Harrer 2005, p.95).

As for the final ingredient in this new spirituality, 'experience', we modern subjects will take note that, for Foucault, talking to Trombadori in 1978: 'An experience is something that one comes out of transformed' (Foucault 1978, p.239). As we in turn work at transforming ourselves, we may remember the sources of Foucault's own inspiration: 'The idea of a limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself was what was important to me in my reading of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot...' (ibid, p.241). Nevertheless, we will remind ourselves, with O'Leary, that '...running alongside this dazzling use of the concept [of experience] is a more mundane sense in which experience is taken to mean the general, dominant background structures of thought, action and feeling that prevail in a given culture at a given time' (O'Leary 2008, p.7).

As we dare to set out on this strange and unknown path, we may finally be encouraged by these words of Carrette and King:

The emergence of new forms of engaged spirituality grounded in an awareness of our mutual interdependence, the need for social justice and economically sustainable lifestyles, may yet prove our best hope for resisting the capitalist excesses of neoliberalism and developing a sense of solidarity and global citizenship in an increasingly precarious world. Our futures may depend upon it (Carrette and King 2005, p.182).

References

- Carrette, J. and King, R. (2005). *Selling Spirituality: the silent takeover of religion*. New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Davidson, A. I. (1994). 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought'. Pp 63-80 in J. Goldstein (ed), *Foucault and the Writing of History*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell.
- Davidson, A. I. (2005). 'Introduction'. Pp xix-xxx in M. Foucault (ed F. Gros) (2005), *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Fillion, R. (2005). 'Freedom, Truth, and Possibility in Foucault's Ethics', *Foucault Studies*. 3, pp 50-64.
- Foucault, M. (1966). 'The Thought of the Outside'. Pp 147-169 in J. D. Faubion (ed) (2000), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.2: Aesthetics*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1969). 'What is an Author?' Pp 205-222 in J. D. Faubion (ed) (2000), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.2: Aesthetics*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1978). 'Interview with Michel Foucault'. Pp 239-297 in J. D. Faubion (ed) (2002), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3: Power*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1982a). 'Technologies of the Self'. Pp 223-251 in P. Rabinow (ed) (2000), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.1: Ethics*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1982b). 'The Subject and Power'. Pp 326-348 in J. D. Faubion (ed) (2002), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.3: Power*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1983). 'On the Genealogy of Ethics'. Pp 253-301 in P. Rabinow (ed) (2000), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.2: Aesthetics*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1984). 'The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom'. Pp 281-301 in P. Rabinow (ed) (2000), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol.1: Ethics*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The Care of the Self: the history of sexuality volume 3*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1992). *The Use of Pleasure: the history of sexuality volume 2*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (ed S. Lotringer) (1996). *Foucault Live: collected interviews, 1961-1984*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Foucault, M. (ed and J. R. Carrette) (1999). *Religion and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Foucault, M. (ed J. Pearson) (2001). *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

Foucault, M. (ed F. Gros) (2005). *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Gros, F. (2005). 'Course Context'. Pp 507-550 in M. Foucault (ed F. Gros), *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982*. NY: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Hadot, P. (ed A. I. Davidson) (1995). *Philosophy as a Way of Life: spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Malden, MA, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell.

Harrer, S. (2005). 'The Theme of Subjectivity in Foucault's Lecture Series *L'Herméneutique du Sujet*', *Foucault Studies*. 2, pp 75-96.

Kelly, M. G. E. (2005). 'Review of Michel Foucault's *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*', *Foucault Studies*. 3, pp 107-112.

Levy, N. (2004). 'Foucault as Virtue Ethicist', *Foucault Studies*. 1, pp 20-31.

McSweeney, J. (2005). 'Foucault and Theology', *Foucault Studies*. 2, pp 117-144.

O'Farrell, C. (2005). *Michel Foucault*. London: Sage.

O'Leary, T. (2008). 'Foucault, Experience, Literature', *Foucault Studies*. 5, pp 5-25.

Ure, M. V. (2007). 'Senecan Moods: Foucault and Nietzsche on the art of the self', ¹⁰*Foucault Studies*. 4, pp 19-52.

Articles

Section III

Chapter 6

Learning Hip Hop Dance: Old Music, New Music and How Music Migrates

Mary Fogarty

Abstract

Teachers who tour and teach dance internationally, in many different contexts, leave traces of their musical tastes in every city through which they move. In this paper I investigate how the musical tastes of well known, pioneering hip hop dancers migrate with the dancers themselves. In this way, I acknowledge that musical tastes are an integral aspect of hip-hop dance practices.

From the other side, I argue that the students' musical tastes transform through their learning. In other words, the 'newness' and unfamiliarity of songs heard in dance classes, as material and as sonic objects, are central to teaching and learning dances cross-culturally. These social interactions between teachers and their students produce a shared understanding of aesthetic criteria that often bridges global differences. Yet the subtleties and nuances of this sharing also create a global sociability that is marked by a contradiction: the taste activity, practiced to acquire new music, is different for the teacher than for the students.

This multi-sited ethnography involves observations I have made while participating in master-class workshops, as well as formal and informal interviews with North American teachers and British students, made between 2007-2009. As a supplement, I offer some organizing principles and distinctions concerning the ideas of musical competence, musical taste and musicality based on my own teaching about the history and aesthetics of hip hop and funk dance styles at the University of East London.

“Born and bred in England (yeah man yeah man)
Down the road from the Docklands (gotta gotta go gotta go)
Slum of the Englishman (yeah man yeah man)
They paranoid over us Black men”¹¹
Jonzi D, *Aeroplane Man*

Introduction

At a recent meeting with Jonzi D,¹² the Artistic Director of Sadler’s Wells’ international hip hop festival, *Breakin’ Convention*, I told him how much my students at the University of East London had enjoyed watching his film, *Aeroplane Man*.¹³ Jonzi made the film, with director Alison Murray, in 2003, although he wrote the original version of this performance years earlier (1999). The opening of *Aeroplane Man* shows a bird’s eye view of the earth; a globe surrounded by stars, which gradually cross-fades through a map of the UK to the street where Jonzi’s character is walking towards the camera. The sound of an airplane zooming past accompanies the move from earth to street corner. The character Jonzi portrays is born in England and is silhouetted against a hyper blue sky as he is positioned above the camera for his opening address:



Jonzi D pictured onstage at the panel discussion, *Breakin’ Convention* 2007. Photo by Paul H.

“Born and bred in England (yeah man yeah man), down the road from the Docklands...Slum of the Englishman...They paranoid over us Black men.”

Everywhere the *Aeroplane Man* protagonist travels around the world, he meets people who tell him he does not belong and that his presence is found either threatening or unwanted. These

¹¹ <<http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&VideoID=4352831>> (Accessed April 8, 2010)

¹² personal correspondence, April 6, 2010.

¹³ *Aeroplane Man* was screened on British television, Channel 4. (source: <<http://www.breakinconvention.com/artist/jonzi-d?og=1199>>.

places include London, where he was raised, as well as Africa, where he is told by another character (also played by Jonzi) that he does not even know his mother's tribe. Although portrayed with creative licence, these events are based on Jonzi's own interpretation of his life experiences.

Jonzi suggested to me that *Aeroplane Man* is about experiences of migration, and in this way it links to a theme that is broader than what is often referred to as the "Black British" experience. He related his performance of travel, homeland and questions of identity to the everyday histories of most people in today's urban environment.

This film sets out some of the crucial themes of this paper, which is concerned with the relationship of musical migration to the teaching of hip hop dance practices. I discuss the experiences of dancers and DJs in the context of teaching and learning hip hop dance styles, and their encounters with issues of musical taste.

Jonzi's portrayal of the ordinariness of migratory experiences resonates with the ideas of cultural theorist, Paul Gilroy (2004), who argues that "'multiculture' is an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas and in post-colonial cities elsewhere..." (p. xi) Adding this to Raymond Williams' (2000) earlier observation that culture is ordinary, I suggest that the *ordinariness* of the exclusions that the Aeroplane Man protagonist faces in his journeys leads to an important redefining of home(land) as the body and the mind. Jonzi says, "stop running. Be still... [he closes his eyes for a moment] I'm never far from home when the body is my kingdom...". The character does so after having also travelled to America, where he finds that rappers there think he isn't real because he is Black and speaks with a British accent. Where cultural flows of media tend to be directed from America towards the UK, the experience of migration to the States can leave British hip hop fans feeling excluded from authenticity in cultural exchanges.

The ordinary or everyday practice of spectacular hip hop and funk dance style practices in the UK is in need of aesthetic judgments that arise out of sociological considerations.¹⁴ In what follows, I present observations from a multi-sited ethnography including engaged and grounded observations of the sorts of everyday interactions involved in a sustained dance practice that involves an influx of foreign teachers. I draw on research materials from a three-year study into global hip hop culture that took place in various cities of the UK, USA, Canada, Germany and France. I wanted to know if there were cross-cultural or cross-generational differences in dancers' musical tastes. To answer this question, I developed the following strategies:

¹⁴ cf. (Frith 1987) where he suggests that "the sociological approach to popular music does not rule out an aesthetic theory but, on the contrary, makes one possible" (133).

- Observing the musical selections of dancers at local practices where music was selected by the dancers themselves.
- Observing the musical selections of dancers who taught master-class workshops, as a way to get an indication of the musical tastes of dancers who toured internationally.

Both exercises of observation involved listening practices, note-taking and conversations about musical tastes with dancers and DJs. The categories of dance discussed are hip hop and funk dance styles such as popping, breaking (or b-boying/b-girling), rocking, social dancing and locking. For the purposes of this paper, I use some supplementary mediated sources, so readers can follow up with the online links provided.

This project is supported by the work of contemporary sociologists (Robertson and Lechner, 1984; Robertson, 1992) who share Gilroy's interest in ordinary multicultural exchanges, in a setting where local experiences are informed by "the past" which "refuses to stay in its place that is behind us, it is unstable" (Back, 2007, p.23). In this sense, I observed how the musical tastes of the past creep up on the present and provide meanings for participants that become deeper with time. Most of the contemporary sociological analysis about the current global exchanges addresses the need people have for a sense of belonging in the face of uncertainty (see (Kendall *et al.*, 2009) for an overview). However, I want to highlight another type of uncertainty; one with a positive connotation and related to questions of duration.

French sociologist Bourdieu (1990) suggests that friendship is built on uncertainty; the gifts and exchanges made between friends assert their loyalties to each other, *requiring* elements of surprise and uncertainty to have their full meaning felt. Likewise, he suggests that to reintroduce uncertainty is to reintroduce *time*. The uncertainty of gifts that bind friendship over time is also considered ordinary and routine:

The most ordinary and even the seemingly most routine exchanges of ordinary life, like the 'little gifts' that 'bind friendship', presuppose an improvisation, and therefore a constant uncertainty, which, as we say, make all their charm, and hence all their social efficacy. (Bourdieu, 1990, p.99)

Dancers in my study often exchanged music through mixtapes (described in older dancers' memories of how they came across new music), CDs and digital downloads. Thus, these gifts of friendship in breaking, often involve a belonging that is centred around shared likes and dislikes for particular musical genres and artists. Like any gift, exchanges of music mean moments of uncertainty; will the taste be shared or not? The musical tastes discussed here involve dancers' preferences for specific songs, broader understandings of genres, as well as activities involving music such as their dancing.

Musical taste has been described as an activity similar to rock climbing (Hennion, p.2007); one's preconceptions and everyday life are left behind as the social group sets off on a shared task to interact with the objects of one's desires (either the 'rock' in climbing or music, or a glass of wine). When thinking specifically about dance practices, Angela McRobbie (1997) points out that the relationship between social dance and musical tastes has been considered the domain of men, especially in the early accounts by sociological writers on popular music who mention dance. Here, what is not "left behind" in the activity of musical tastes is gender. This perhaps demonstrates the limits of an analogy built on a male-dominated activity such as rock climbing, although this image does provide some points of clarification and resemblance for a study about hip hop and funk dance styles that are also male dominated.

All of the testimonies provided in what follows were from male respondents and interviewees. As a female dancer, I tended to bond with the minority of other female dancers in various cities and gained significant insights into their musical tastes. However, this article focuses predominantly on male social bonding and taste. To complicate this rather narrow focus of analysis, this study deals with the differences between the musical tastes of younger and older adult males. In doing so, I later realized also that the ordinariness of global relationships and the migration of both dance and music contribute to a negotiated aesthetic that is not as locally secure as it is imagined to be.

Dance in a 'global' or 'urban' context

The opening example I set up, from Jonzi D's *Aeroplane Man*, presents the situation of someone searching for an experience of belonging. "Belonging" to hip hop culture has always been a source of tension, resistance and aggression. For example, an American ethnographer researching the Berlin hip hop scene observed that Turkish youth were among the first to dominate hip hop events emerging out of community centres, and that they felt threatened by new white German participants at hip hop events. The Turkish boys felt that they were there first, but couldn't partake in the same ways as more affluent contributors, or build the same kind of international reputations (Templeton, 2005). In this context, one of the first academics to write about hip hop culture, Tricia Rose, (1994) also asserted that the 'game' in hip hop culture is never really won. I would add that reputations are not only always contested, but also have to be continually refreshed and reasserted.

Belonging is actually quite uncertain and changes in each new context. For example, I observed that dancers in the UK reconfigure their social groups, or crews, at the local, regional and national levels, taking up different positions in the field in different circumstances. This is not necessarily a negative aspect, however it does raise issues of temporality: in particular how the culture has changed as dancers' initial friendships are transformed by technological communications. Also, as dancers age, some of them shift to professional careers, others quit

dancing or continue with an amateur practice, and new, younger generations of dancers emerge, eager and ready to learn, and to build and defend their own reputations.

Dancers from the UK who began their practice in the 1980s often looked to American dancers for inspiration and techniques. American dance companies, such as GhettoOriginals, toured France and the UK in the 1990s and occasionally featured European performers with international reputations such as Niels “Storm” Robitzky from Germany¹⁵ (Robitzky, 2000). I arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2007 to begin my PhD research. At that time, when I asked dancers in Edinburgh who their favourite dancers were, the majority of the dancers they named were from South Korea. By the time I left Edinburgh in 2009, Karl “Dyzee” Alba, a Canadian b-boy who had visited Scotland to provide workshops, had moved to South Korea. Dance careers are enabled by reputations that are built through the ease of international travel and the possibilities of the World Wide Web.¹⁶

One of the difficulties in cross-cultural analysis is the establishment of common meanings for shared language. I will spend a moment clarifying some terms. In the UK, ‘urban’ dance is most often an umbrella term to cover what are perceived to be ‘street’ dance styles.¹⁷ The term ‘urban’ is often contested, particularly in relation to music and dance. The Mercury Prize 2009 winner, Speech Debelle, recently voiced her misgivings about the word ‘urban’ in connection with Black British radio stations and the UK music industry more broadly, in an article:

The same cannot be said for the major labels she had visited as a teenager – or Choice FM, the London hip-hop station, whose failure to play her records was, she speculated recently, because they “weren’t black enough”. “And that’s a black station,” she sighs. “I mean, I knew Choice from the Brixton days, it’s part of my heritage, so it’s upsetting. It might not be true, but I said it because it’s the most extreme thing I can think of saying. But it doesn’t only apply to Choice FM. What I’ve seen of the music business in this country, it’s run by middle-aged white men. There’s been a word created called urban, and that didn’t come from a black person...”¹⁸

Similarly, in media accounts of “breakdancing” in the early 1980s, American writers would avoid making reference to ethnicity and race. Instead, terms such as “street” or “ghetto”

¹⁵ personal correspondence with Ken Swift and Storm (2009).

¹⁶ In our interviews in the summer of 2007, Karl “Dyzee” Alba from Toronto, Canada, recalled how he became known internationally not only through winning competitions, but also through people seeing clips of his dancing online and inviting him to compete in their countries.

¹⁷ On the induction day for the Dance: Urban Practice BA degree programme at UEL (2009), students were asked what their favourite dance style was to which most responded ‘street.’ Hailing from Canada, and specialising in social dance, I had no idea what they meant. When I said ‘b-girling’ the students, likewise, had no clue what I was referring to, as they would tell me later on.

¹⁸ Speech Debelle: homeless to Mercury nomination:

<http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/article6725086.ece> (Accessed April 8, 2010).

disguise problematic distinctions, with “ordinary” people or “Connecticut housewives,” implying white and middle-class identities (Rivera, 2003).

In dance scholarship, ‘urban’ tends to substitute for the city and relates most frequently to site-specific works. Here breaking is not considered. For my students, “urban” dance suggests “street” dance styles. I am not using the term “urban” here to define a musical genre and its matching dance styles, or to insinuate the ethnicity or race of music-makers, but rather to discuss dance/music practices that take place in large, multicultural cities. This term also alludes to the historical process of urbanisation whereby people moved from rural areas into cities with highly concentrated populations and was a direct result of social and economic changes that took place in the nineteenth century. The changes since this time, in terms of urban tastes, have most often been discussed in terms of preferences for either ‘high’ or ‘low’ art forms (Bourdieu, 1984; Peterson and Kern, 1996).

Similarly, popular dance is a field of study currently theorised in terms of a distinction between it and ‘high art’ or theatrical dance (Malnig, 2009). The dance practices of Black, Puerto Rican, and Irish migrants are understood as ‘low brow’ or popular in most discussions, whereas those practices of predominantly European descendants are labelled as ‘high brow,’ or even as an all-encompassing ‘dance.’ The sociability and participatory classification of such ‘low brow’ popular dance styles are also associated with particular venues, social classes and ethnicities.

Most theatrical dances have arisen from social dance contexts and any claims to fixed positions for high/low brow dance by theorists tend to reproduce the very dichotomies they are attempting to bridge. The class position of the participants has been widely acknowledged to be a feature in the likelihood that they will be consecrated as artists. This is as true for the history of British ballet (Carter, 2005) as it is for breaking history (Swift¹⁹). Understanding the context through which social groups construct meanings, etiquette and value judgments is crucial not only to aspirations of understanding, tradition and lineage²⁰ but also to full participation in the aesthetic and artistic debates surrounding these dances. My study is concerned more explicitly with analyzing taste distinctions across generations and cultures. In other words, I am concerned with the ‘old’ and ‘new’ musical tastes, established in geographical settings that are considered either ‘near’ or ‘far’ from the source of belonging to particular dance practices.

Many of the pioneering dancers I spoke with in Berlin were Turkish, and continue to teach younger dancers from Wedding and other areas to this day, participating in outdoor hip hop events as DJs, judges, dancers and emcees. While in Germany conducting research, I also

¹⁹ Personal correspondence with b-boy Ken Swift in New York City, 2004. Swift explained that there were many “nasty” b-boys in ghettos all around the US whose names will never be known.

²⁰ This is a feature of both theatrical stage dance and b-boy histories.

learned that in the early 1990s some dancers there were listening to a style known to them as “Britcore” rap. “Britcore” was made by UK hip hop groups such as Hijack and Gunshot who rapped and scratched over sped up breakbeats. At the time, they also weren’t listening to American rap.²¹



German dancer, Niels “Storm” Robitzky, pictured performing onstage at Breakin’ Convention. Photo by Paul H.

Some of these dancers continued to progress and hone their power moves, alongside pioneering UK crews such as *Second to None*. American dancers were listening mainly to West Coast gangsta rap and their styles of dance were evolving for these slower tempos until the resurgence of breakbeats in the late 1990s. All of these examples point to the influences of musical migrations, and to what they can afford dance practice and their centrality for developments in social dance movements.

For most of the dancers and DJs involved in the history of hip hop and funk styles, dance practices were initially motivated by musical tastes,²² feelings of an ‘outsider’ status and a desire to attract members of the opposite sex. Here the social purposes are clear. When formal dance classes and master class workshops began to be established, with the newfound popularity of dance, and support structures to sustain such operations globally,²³ musical tastes became a point of contestation for teachers and students, in new ways and in cross-cultural contexts.

Musical Migration

To discuss how music migrates, one must consider the activities that promote musical choices, from DJs to global exchanges of music like the ones in the above examples from Germany and the UK. Although the radio is one major way that music migrates (Frith, 1983), there is a less thought about and equally intriguing way by which music migrates through classroom exchanges. This is the role of musical material in the teaching of aspiring dancers in a cross-cultural, cross-class and multi-generational context. I focus on research materials

²¹ Personal correspondence with Niels “Storm” Robitzky, Erfurt, Germany, 2008.

²² I argue elsewhere that dance is a performance of musical tastes (Fogarty 2010).

that I collected by interviewing and conversing with dancers about master class workshops. These workshops were generally taught by American dancers and taken by UK students, and I will begin by recollecting an informal lesson I learned from Ken “Ken Swift” Gabbert. Ken Swift is a New York b-boy known internationally as “the epitome of a b-boy”.²⁴ He has influenced generations of dancers around the world through his involvement with the Rocksteady Crew and Seven Gemz. When I first met Ken Swift, in the lead up to an event in Ottawa, Canada,²⁵ I was twenty years old. During a night out clubbing, with him and pioneering ‘old school’ b-boys from the Canadian Floor Masters Crew, including Stephen “Buddha” Leafloor, Swift explained to me that certain music being played by the DJ wasn’t good to break to, and that there were other dance styles and movements that suited the music better. Trailing off, he then demonstrated some upright steps, doing some shuffles back and forth and then repeating them. As he was showing me the steps, he got an idea to double up one of the steps and exclaimed, “I just made up a new move!”²⁶

In this moment, what music affords dance creativity became clear. The compatibility, or incompatibility of dance movements to different musical rhythms and melodies was introduced as not only a movement exercise but also a listening practice. However, the implications of the lesson took years to understand in terms of global communications of dance. Years later in New York City, 2004, when I was discussing the Toronto b-boying styles and my personal preferences, Swift explained that when he first saw some of the dancers in Toronto from the 1990s, he knew right away from their movements that they danced to house music.

Every time a dancer enters the circle, their history is revealed to experienced dancers through their movements, from their musical tastes to their local and mediated influences. Not only that, but each dancer’s history is revealed to themselves in that moment where they are faced with their own individual performance in the state of heightened pressure and judgment that is the frame of bodies hovering around them in the circle. Anyone who enters a battle (slang for competition) for the first time can attest to the following symptoms: your feet get heavy like lead, the music disappears, all is a blur. Once the nerves settle, the music, and the full expression of one’s body and body practices, returns.²⁷

Unlike my early experiences, where I was taught about dance informally, dance classes have now become a more normalized way of learning. In the historical development of strategies to teach hip hop and funk dance styles, master-class dance workshops, taught by international

²³ This included in the case of countries like France (Shapiro 2004) and South Korea (Chang 2008), some form of government support.

²⁴ See Ken Swift’s video productions for more about this.

²⁵ Summer of 2000.

²⁶ In a recent workshop in Edinburgh, June 20, 2010, Ken referred to this practice of repeating moves as “doubling up.” He uses this as a part of his teaching practice.

²⁷ After that conversation, I began to develop a more self-reflexive approach to my musical taste preferences, and influences. In doing so, in some ways, I stopped identifying strongly as a b-girl. I was whatever the Toronto dancers

guests, are a rather late development in a type of education that has also involved informal gatherings, parties, battles and the sharing of music. In these classes, teachers are rated on their ability to deliver the goods to eager students. For example, one American teacher who taught in Edinburgh, Scotland did not receive good reviews from the students I spoke with. They complained that he wasn't teaching them technical moves explicitly, and that he spoke too much. However, when I witnessed him teach, I realized that some of the advice he was giving was simply not being recognized as dance teaching, and that this mainly had to do with issues of musicality. For example, he explained that, before entering a circle, it's a good idea, if the song is unfamiliar, to listen to the musical track for a bit to get a sense of where the music is going. In doing so, the dancer attempts to predict what will happen next in the song. This is a good approach for many of the spaces where this dance is performed, since the DJ, not the dancers, selects the musical tracks.

Musical timing and listening are not the only issues of musicality discussed and enacted through workshops with American teachers in the UK. In what follows, I want to make use of important distinctions between musical competence, musicality and musical tastes:

Musical competence: Rather than describing the role of dance for musical competence (Blacking, 1971), I am considering the musical competence that dancers have. The teacher whom I described above was giving some advice on how to be competent with music. Musical competence is always centred around listening, as a practice that enables the dancer to predict, anticipate, and select accents in the music, and to develop a sense of flow. When a dancer has a detailed knowledge of a particular song, in whatever terms, this is a sign of musical competence.

Musicality: Musicality isn't a feature of the performance of dancers, but is instead a judgement made about their expressive capacities. To put this in context, Lydia Goehr (2008) explains that when musicality ("das Musikalische" in German) was first reflectively used as a noun it became a value judgment, meant to provide approval or disapproval to both literary and painterly art works. Goehr (2008, p.50) writes:

At its broadest, "musicality" connotes some sort of pure *Innerlichkeit*, or powerful preconceptual or predeterminate expressivity, an emotional or sensuous energy or drive of deep aesthetic, moral, cultural, religious, and social significance. It bears a close relation to other developing terms of the period: "the lyrical" (*das Lyrische*) and "the aesthetic" (*das Ästhetische*). It captures the yearning toward collectivity, unification, or expressive

were, that hybrid form that fused house, underground hip hop, Canadian club culture and multiculturalism, and nights of listening to funk music in London, Ontario.

synthesis as it surpasses both in origin and effect the divisions brought about by reason, representation, and concept.

For dancers, this also involves a detailed judgement as to whether someone is dancing ‘in’ ‘on’ or ‘off’ the beat. It is important to note that hip hop dancers never describe themselves as ‘having musicality.’ It is a judgement made of them by others.

Musical Tastes: For dancers, social groups tend to be centered around agreed musical tastes. As Ken Swift recently pointed out, “if you don’t like the music it’s going to be hard to do this dance.”²⁸ This is complex, as the distinctions are also already multi-generational and music means different things to different generations of dancers. What was ‘new’ music for early dancers is ‘old’ (and thus, unfamiliar) music to newer dancers. A dancer in his early twenties, Tony “Y-Not” DeNaro, already internationally renowned for his toprock skills, claims that the reason he can dance so well is because, unlike other dancers, he will go home at night and listen to funk music from the 1970s.²⁹

Knowing a song, or being familiar with the musical material of a song (i.e. the break beat) can be thought of from each of these perspectives. If the song is part of your musical tastes you are likely to be familiar with it, which will aid your musical competence and musicality. Clearly, conditioning and training the body, alongside improvisation and creativity, are also significant factors in the performance of not only musical taste but also displays of musical competence and musicality.



Students pictured in a workshop at Breakin’ Convention, 2007. Photo by Paul H.

Dance classes are thus a key space where music migrates and is shared cross-culturally. For example, another funk-styles teacher explained to me how frustrated he gets when the students want to know the names of all the music tracks he plays during his workshop. He

²⁸ June 20, 2010 Breakin’ Conventions workshop, Edinburgh.

²⁹ YouTube – FLOW – Dj Skeme & Bboy Ynot, Rock Steady Crew’s Dynamic Duo
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMmn67eJ9MQ>> (Accessed June 20, 2010)

bitterly remarked that students should find their own music³⁰. This is an expression of musical tastes. For him, taste is an activity that requires a practice of exploration outside of the classroom. He does not appreciate students who simply attribute particular music to specific dance styles, because he considers that students' own musical taste should inform their dance practice. After the classes of another pioneering b-boy, a dancer explained to me how he used new mobile phone technology³¹ to find out the names of music tracks that were played during the class, by holding his phone up to the speaker and using an online, automatic database. This is a case of musical taste as an activity: an activity that involves snipping selections from workshops.

Both these cases demonstrate how dance classes are serving an integral function: revealing a taste for new music that is good to dance to. In doing so, they reveal what French sociologist, Hennion (2007), suggests, that: "taste is not an attribute, it is not a property (of a thing or of a person), it is an activity." To understand this, he makes an analogy with the wine connoisseur who pauses for a moment before sipping wine, reading this pause as both an ordinary gesture and an appreciation. I would suggest that, likewise, the activity of seeking new music is a central practice of taste "making" for dancers.

The most important taste distinction is often between the tastes of opposing hip hop dance 'crews.' Musical tastes are often a source of both tension and belonging. For example, one dancer from the UK recalled attending a practice in another country where everyone was training to heavy metal. He felt that he didn't have anything in common with the others when they were practicing together, and he didn't enjoy dancing with them to this music. In other words, belonging is about musical tastes as much as it is about dance practice.

The 'newness' and unfamiliarity of songs for students, as material and sonic objects, are central to teaching about dances cross-culturally. The area where tastes are most in a state of flux is in the interactions between teachers and new students, and this distinction changes over time as the students become more familiar with the songs, genres and rhythms most often selected to accompany each of the dance styles they are learning. In other words, the students' musical tastes transform both with their dance practice, and also through cross-cultural exchanges as music migrates. French sociologist, Isabelle Kauffmann, recalled that during her research on 'la danse hip hop' (Shapiro and Kauffmann, 2006) she was surprised at how old the music was that was played by the teacher during a popping class.³²

³⁰ Personal correspondence, Edinburgh, May 2007.

³¹ A sample of some of the new song recognition software here: "Find the Song Name Without Knowing the Lyrics" <http://www.labnol.org/internet/find-name-of-songs/12316/> (Accessed April 8, 2010).

³² Kauffmann (2004) writes more extensively about the relationship of music and dance in hip hop and funk dance styles in "Musique et danse hip-hop, des liens étroits à l'épreuve de la professionnalisation." *Volume!*, 2004, 73-91.

New stages of silence

Hip hop and funk dance styles performed onstage have been a grey area for the discussion about musical tastes, and one that I am going to avoid here. However, during a recent theatrical dance tour an American dancer asked of fellow performers who danced to music with no rhythm section, “How can you rock the beat when there is no beat?” That is to say, if music is part of the aesthetic criteria for judgments as to whether someone is a good dancer or not, then without the necessary rhythm the activity being performed is of a *different kind*.

One of the best-recorded examples of dance as a performance of musical appreciation in the classroom is a video clip³³ of Popin’ Pete, teaching at a pioneers workshop hosted by Breakin’ Convention in 2008. The video begins with Popin’ Pete describing how central music is to his practice as a dancer. He then dances to a track he has selected himself, “The Watcher” by Dr. Dre (2001). His performance demonstrates how immersed he is in the meanings and beats of the musical track. At times he is even lip-syncing to the lyrics, about ageing gangsters in a global game of rap and life. From Popin’ Pete’s description of his relationship with musical material in the opening, to his reflections, through dance, on the pace, meaning and embodiment of the sounds and lyrics, the dance becomes an explicit performance of musical tastes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ause0Sqdfg->

Even when he is finished dancing to the song, Popin’ Pete continues to listen in an engaged way and waits until the song is over to turn it off. This is a *listening* performance for his class, and one of the best ways to demonstrate how to listen to music is to show the students exactly what is meant by musical appreciation, as demonstrated through dance performance.

Popin’ Pete discusses in the clip how music is the inspiration for dance, and is often imagined in a dancer’s head, even if it is not heard. At a 2008 question and answer panel at the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts that I led, Jonzi D had a similar perspective on the relationship of music to dance, even in his “silent” hip hop theatre performances:

I don’t remember starting to dance. I’ve always danced. I’ve always danced and I think that the first beat that I danced to was my mom’s heart beat. I’ve always danced I can’t – I’m trying to think when did I start? Wherever there’s been music, [gestures] just do that. It’s a natural response to music, do you know what I mean? Yeah, I think dance is a natural response to music – it’s the same thing. So yeah, that goes on and on, I listened to calypso music, my parents are from the Caribbean. They listen to a lot of Soca, and the rhythm

³³ YouTube – Popin Pete Pioneers Breakin Convention 2008”.
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Ause0Sqdfg->> (Accessed April 8, 2010).

of Soca makes you dance a certain way [gestures] do you know what I mean?
So music is crucial to why we dance and why we dance a particular way.

Saying that, since exploring theatre I've realized that when it comes down to sit down and watch dance I don't need music to move to; I can move to lyrics in my head. Do you know what I mean? There is a piece I created in 95 called, "Silence the bitchin". I did a little some of that today, didn't I? That was dancing to text. Sometimes I've got an abstract soundscape that hasn't got any clear rhythm to it. And then you just hear that sound, 'clink' do some abstract to [gestures] 'clung' – end there. So its not necessarily rhythmically but more from a theatrical perspective. I think that there are so many different ways that you can use *sound*.

These comments, from a practicing hip hop and funk dancer and theatrical director, acknowledge the role of musical material in the imagination of the performer. On the one hand, Jonzi said, "I can move to the lyrics in my head." Obviously, the audience will not hear the sounds but potentially may see their movement equivalent. On the other hand, Wittgenstein (1980) once wrote in a journal that if he grinds his teeth he can hear the music in his head better.³⁴ Both are considering how music is experienced in the imagination, and both relate this to human movement.

Canadian aesthetic philosopher and poet, Francis Sparshott discusses the matter from the audience's perspective:

To say that music is one of the essentials of dance is not to say that every dance must have a musical accompaniment. It is rather that some music is expected, even if it be only a drum, and if there is no music, the dance is danced *in the absence* of music. (Sparshott, 1988, p.173)

In other words, there is a cultural expectation that dance is performed to music, so when there is no music, this is noticed as an absence. When I suggest that dance is a performance of musical tastes, the same can be applied even to performances without music. That is to say, dance conducted in the absence of music is a performance of musical tastes that typically express a preference for contemporary art-music motifs such as listening to people breath, move through space, or silently draw attention to auditorium sounds (cf. John Cage 4'33").³⁵

³⁴ "When I imagine a piece of music, something I do every day & often, I 'always I think' rhythmically grind my upper & lower front teeth together. I have noticed it before but usually it takes place quite unconsciously. Moreover it's as though the notes in my imagination were produced by the movement. I think this way of hearing music in the imagination may be very common. I can of course also imagine music without moving my teeth, but then the notes are much more blurred, much less clear, less pronounced" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.32).

³⁵ cf. (Gann 2010)

Often at out-door sessions, b-boys are found giving a “soul clap” to the silence to support their fellow dancers and this, like other possible examples, speaks to the place of music in this dance style.

Newness & Unfamiliarity

One of the contributions of recordings, and of their readily available copies, to popular dance practice has been that they have allowed dance styles to be maintained and practiced even if musical practice develops in new directions, bands break-up, etc. I’ve been discussing a familiarity that dancers, and the DJs and live musicians who appease them, have with musical materials and the popularity of these materials as common practice. As I have mentioned, tensions arise between different groups of dancers where their musical tastes differ. That sharing of musical tastes relies on exchanges, such as those that I mentioned take place in the classroom or workshop during tours. Such exchanges also happen before classes, through the informal hanging out and sharing of mix tapes and videotapes encouraged by the presence of traveling performers.

When I came across “Emo” breakers in Los Angeles, one of them explained to me that he prefers to dance to Björk and Dépeche Mode, but he doesn’t mind the music played by the DJ, with whom he is familiar on a personal level.³⁶ Thus, dance events are the levelers for the musical tastes of dancers as these are filtered through the commonality, as determined by the DJ’s selections. DJ culture has always consisted of a mix of the old (familiar) and new in terms of musical selection and digging. A great example of this comes from an excerpt of an interview³⁷ Konee Rok did with the late DJ Leacy:

Well definitely I mean, I bring the records... You know it’s like I’m thinking like before I’m even at the jam, what’s it going to be like, basing it on that....yo! Thinking whose gonna be there, what’s going to be thrown down. blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I’m also thinking about the music I brought last year. I can’t repeat bro, it’s like for a break DJ it’s the same as a b-boy bro, you can’t ... repeat. You can’t come to ... primers as a b-boy and do what you did last year in the circle. I can’t bro. I’m going to play what I played in the finals last year in the preliminaries and I’m gonna throw some new shit in the finals. But what my minds thinking up in there I’m going to look at the dancers bro I bring what I know is going to work, but then I look at the dancers while they’re dancing. And I’m thinking, ok bro, he’s going to react to this, I know he’s going to react to this. I mean there are certain cats, there were European cats here this weekend and I’ve seen them at the jam react to certain breaks

³⁶ personal correspondence. Summer 2007.

so I do try to tailor it and specialize it and drop it for them. Of course I've got to be careful because I don't want to show no favoritism. It's not like that at all I'd love to drop the right record for every ... dancer so he can bring out the best in himself but bro it's like I anticipate the dancers move bro I ain't gonna drop no ... disturbance while my man's in the middle of his toprock. I'm going to wait until he freezes and then I'm going to give him like the warning with the scratch and I'm going to bring that shit in on time. I'm going to bring in the new break. So it's all about anticipation for me and also just like reading the crowd reading the dancer especially the dancer because I'm there for the dancer man, it's like fuck the crowd. If the dancers feeling it then that's cool man he's going to bring out the best in him. That's what it's about for me. I mean I see myself the b-boy first and DJ second comes for me. So the b-boy comes first for me the DJ comes second. I'm just the audio he's the visual. Me playing music with no b-boys is like a b-boy dancing without music, it don't make ... sense man.³⁸ Note: this a very long quote...perhaps consider ditching?

DJ Leacy was a British DJ familiar with the musical tastes of dancers from different places, who saw his job as not only 'bringing the records' but also catering to the tastes of the dancers. He did this in a way that was perceived as fair, both to those dancers whose musical tastes he knew, and to those dancers whom he did not know personally. He saw his role as complementary to the dancers, however DJ and dancers could be seen to have a more reciprocal relationship. Leacy was concerned with a balance of newness and familiarity. There are musical tracks that the dancers are familiar with and will want to listen to while they are dancing, and there is also pressure on the DJ to produce new musical materials for the culture. This is both a part of DJ practices (Schloss, 2004), and a part of the demands of participants' desires for new experiences.

Many of the DJs I spoke with spent much of their time digging crates for new music, even while on tour with dancers. For example, VII Gems Rock Division, who recently headlined the UK *Breakin' Convention* tour, brought along dancer/DJ Forrest Getemgump who has toured with theatrical dance companies, judged dance battles and who also DJs for major international competitions. While Ken Swift was delivering dance workshops, Forrest Getemgump was hitting the local record shops. The advantage dancers have in bringing their own DJs on tour is that this prevents the touring dancers from being frustrated by what they see as lack of musical understanding on the part of local DJs, hired to play at the after

³⁷ "YouTube - DJ Leacy Tribute 1971-2004 - by Konee Rok". <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44d4UR6GW78>> (Accessed April 8, 2010).

³⁸ "YouTube - DJ Leacy Tribute 1971-2004 - by Konee Rok". <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44d4UR6GW78>> (Accessed April 8, 2010).

parties.³⁹ Hip hop and funk style practitioners see dancing in the club as an important moment for sharing with local dancers not only their dance practice, but also their musical tastes. The mix of newness and familiarity is then shared, by both the international guests (as the DJ continues to dig for new music on tour) and by the local dancers who have the opportunity to listen to new music through this “live” form of musical migration.

Conclusion

All of these examples, from teaching and touring dancers and DJs, highlight not only the importance of music for dance competence, but also the importance of musical tastes for dance performance. Even in a consideration of urban taste in general, music needs to be considered as a central component of dance practices. In presenting these examples, I have argued that all dance has a social component, and, just as centrally, that *all* dance, from the spectacular to the ordinary, can be considered sociologically. In doing so, the aesthetic considerations are revealed.

Music affords dance practices a variety of possibilities, both concrete and imagined. A study that considered the lineages of social groups that dance would resemble a map, both historical and geographical, of musical developments. Within these musical developments, the migration of people to urban centres and the types of music-making and circulation of music that happen there would match the new hybridizations and formations of both sound and movement. The history of the dance teaching is central to this, and needs to be acknowledged as such.

DJs provide the musical soundtracks for events, and dancers choose the music for their classes and practices. These musical choices reflect the tastes of the dancers. The example of the frustrated teacher who didn’t want to share his musical choices with students was about his concerns that the dancers themselves were tasteless when it came to music; that the development of their own musical tastes wasn’t a central part of their dance practice. Likewise, different social groups have different musical preferences and this skews the meaning of the dance in its global dissemination.

The music involved in b-boying, and even in the DJing practices related to the dance, is not static but is historically situated and culturally bounded. Likewise, contemporary dance’s taste for silence, like b-boys preferences for musical tracks predominantly from breakbeats of the 1970s, is indicative of a *musical taste*, and a similarly dated one.

Musical tastes are a dual display, of both the ordinariness of migratory experiences, and the

³⁹ I came across this as well in Erfurt, Germany, 2008, where Storm was teaching hip hop and funk dance workshops such as breaking, popping and locking in a small town. Storm and his students mentioned to me how bad the DJ was for the opening party.

spectacular bonds of friendship formed through shared practices. Where tensions arise, these are as a result of conflicts in taste that are centered on differing musical choices and appreciations. The aesthetic experience, or moment when this appreciation of a musical choice begins, is also the moment where different approaches to musicality become apparent. However, in the classroom environment, the 'newness' of the musical material chosen by the teacher provides a moment of unfamiliarity for the students, where tastes can be shaped by watching and listening in the presence of an expert of dance. The position of this dancer, in relation to the student, informs the development not only of their knowledge of movement, but also of their appreciation of particular types of music. Where social groups form around musical tastes associated with hip hop and funk dance styles, dance is one of the vital ways in which those tastes are actually performed. The uncertainty of friendship, then, in global hip hop culture, relies on those moments of not only shared practice, but also shared appreciation. This is never a given, and is always up for renegotiation as the quotation from DJ Leacy (above) displayed.

In terms of interdisciplinary practices, this sociological approach to dance meanings has not only foregrounded the centrality of music for dance competence, but also suggests an intellectual quandary at the centre of debates concerning the inclusion of more dance styles in Higher Education. Where will *music* fit in this education? How will musical choices and selections (that shift or remain static over time) be accounted for and assessed? Where will dancers get the experience to dance to music selected by DJs in an improvisatory way?

All of these questions seem to present new challenges. Thankfully, however, many of the agreed-upon experts and pioneers of hip hop and funk styles continue to tour and teach globally and they have been thinking about these issues already for more than thirty years.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Melissa Avdeeff, Kyle Devine and Simon Frith for looking at earlier drafts of this paper.

References

Back, L. (2007), *The Art of Listening*, Oxford, New York, Berg.

Blacking, J.(1971), Towards a Theory of Musical Competence. in: Jager, E. J. (Ed.) *Man: Anthropological Essays Presented to O.F. Raum*, Cape Town, C. Struik.

Bourdieu, P.(1984), *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Bourdieu, P.(1990),*The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity.
- Carter, A.(2005), *Dance and Dancers in the Victorian and Edwardian Music Hall Ballet*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Chang, J.(2008), 'So you think they can break-dance?' *Salon.com*.
- Dre, Dr.(2001), *The Chronic 2001*, Interscope Records.
- Fogarty, M.(2010 unpublished), 'Shane Mercado does Beyoncé: "Single Ladies", Dance Practice and Musical Taste'.
- Frith, S. (1983), The Pleasures of the Hearth, in: Bennett, T. (Ed.) *Formations of Pleasure*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Frith, S. (1987), Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music. in Leppert, R. & McClary, S. (Eds.) *Music and Society: the Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Gann, K. (year?), *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*, New Haven [Conn.], Yale University Press.
- Gilroy, P. (2004), *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*, Oxfordshire, Routledge.
- Goehr, L. (2008), *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory*, New York, Chichester, Columbia University Press.
- Hennion, A. (2007), 'Those Things That Hold Us Together: Taste and Sociology', *Cultural Sociology*, 1, 97-114.
- Kauffmann, I. (2004), 'Musique et Danse Hip-hop, des Liens étroits à l'épreuve de la Professionalisation'. in *Volume!*, 2004, 73-91.
- Kendall, G., Woodward, I. D. & Skrbic, Z. (2009), *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Malnig, J. (2009), *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: a Social and Popular Dance Reader*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- McRobbie, A. (1997), 'Dance Narratives and Fantasies of Achievement', in Desmond, J. (ed) *Meaning in Motion: New Culture Studies of Dance* London, Duke University Press.
- Murray, A. (2003), *Aeroplane Man*, UK. Performer Jonzi D.
- Peterson, R. A., Kern, Roger M. (1996), Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore, *American Sociological Review*, 61.

- Rivera, R. Z. (2003), *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone*, New York, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Robertson, R. (1995), 'Glocalization: Time-space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity', in Featherstone, M. E., Lash, S. E. & Robertson, R. E. (eds), *Global Modernities: 10th Anniversary Conference: Revised Papers*. Sage.
- Robertson, R. F. L. (1984), 'On Swanson: An Appreciation and an Appraisal', *Sociological Analysis*, 45, 184-204.
- Robitzky, N. (2000), *Von Swipe zu Storm: Breakdance in Deutschland*, Hamburg, Backspin.
- Rose, T. (1994), *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press.
- Schloss, J. G. (2004), *Making Beats: the Art of Sample-based Hip-hop*, Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press.
- Shapiro, R. (2004), The Aesthetics of Institutionalization: Breakdancing in France, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 33, 316-335.
- Shapiro, R., Kauffmann, Isabelle (2006), 'Le Vocabulaire de la Danse Hip-hop'. In: Gruaz, C. (Ed.) *A la recherche du mot: de la langue au discours* Limoges, Lambert-Lucas.
- Sparshott, F. E. (1988), *Off the Ground: first Steps to a Philosophical consideration of the Dance*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.
- Swift, K. & Mr Wiggles, (1990s), *7 Gemz Video Magazines 1-3*, USA, www.mrwiggles.biz.
- Templeton, I. (2005) 'What's so German about it? Cultural Identity in the Berlin Hip Hop Scene'. *Film and Media Studies*, University of Stirling.
- Williams, R. (2000) 'Culture is Ordinary', In: Levinson, B. A. (Ed) *Schooling the Symbolic Animal: Social and Cultural Dimensions of Education*, Lanham, Md., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Wittgenstein, L., Right, G. H. V., & Nyman, H. (1980), *Culture and Value*. Oxford, Blackwall.



Courtesy: ICA, London

Chapter 7

Jo Thomas: electronic musicking, glitch and the digital Cyborg

Charles de Ledesma

Abstract

Electronica composer Jo Thomas works with the extremes of the sound spectrum. She concentrates on three main aesthetic and semi-formal styles, glitch, microsound and human voice with her favoured domains the studio, consisting mostly of laptop and additional sound applications, and performance spaces such as art houses, theatres, university workshops and warehouses. Her much-lauded work with footholds in popular electronica styles like techno, breaks, the art field and minimal composition is less known to wider audiences.

This paper opens a window on this quite abstract sonic world long thought of as inhabited by male music makers preoccupied by machines and processes, and assesses the feminine ingredients in Thomas' foremost 'acousmatic' constructions like Girl, Angel and Alpha. The paper follows a lead offered by Thomas, and considers what type of music may emerge from a 'digital cyborg'; a music making 'creature' from Donna Haraway's (1985, 2000) 'post genderworld'.

The piece is structured to cover three bases: Thomas as performer; compositional processes and the end-product – the sonic texts themselves. I employ a number of concepts to help explore these strata: the 'postgender cyborg' (Haraway 1985, 2000) in articulation with the digital music performer; how Andrew Hugill's (2008) 'digital musician' is embodied by Thomas; and a consideration of a process I call 'affective listening', again referring to Hugill (2008) and to Claire Colebrook's (2002) concern with the inclusive nature of affect; and to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) theory of becomings.

The methods combine analysis of Thomas' music with description of live events. I apply fieldwork techniques including observation of compositional techniques and semi-structured interviewing. Lastly I contextualise Thomas' oeuvre within the recent history of glitch electronica as a little acknowledged but vibrant, cross-national musical world.

Digital music and the Cyborg: tension, chance and agency

Andrew Hugill's analysis of the digital musician in the 21st century draws on the concept 'emergent'. 'Emergent: work...is not entirely predesigned by an artist or composer but rather involves the conscious use of the shifting boundaries between the consumer and the maker' (2008, p.145). Laptop electronica composer Jo Thomas explores this articulation vividly in her dramatic technological soundscapes which work with extremes in the sound spectrum. She is concerned with agency and communication, and eschews preconceptions that computer music

has a 'soul-less core'. As Christopher Small argues, 'The essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action' (1999, p.9).

Thomas sees herself as 'a cyborg' in that 'the computer and micro music devices are part of my everyday existence' (Thomas, 2009, p.2). Donna Haraway in developing Rachel Grossman's analysis on cyborgs and gender, draws attention to the 'situation of women in a world so intimately restructured through the social relations of science and technology' (Haraway, 2000, p.304). Thomas attempts to shift Haraway's 'postgender' cyborg beyond the 'metaphoric' and into embodied performance as 'the technology form(s) technological veins which stream deep into my blood and my musical imagination' (Thomas, 2009, p.2).

The main elements in Thomas' 'musicking' (Small, 1999) – composing, collaborating, performing and artefact – further illustrate the digital cyborg-in-action. I explore her work against a backdrop of debates and practice in laptop electronica within and beyond the sonic communities known as *glitch* and *microsound*. I portray one composer's immersive love of sound, her twin commitments to the ethereal yet deeply tactile possibilities of laptop (digital) music creation as a woman, and her urge to bond in performance settings through artist collaboration and audience response. I develop the concept of 'affective listening' proposing that experience helps 'open out' Thomas' soundscapes.

I begin with a sketch of performance territories Thomas has carved out for herself to better locate 'the digital musician' (Hugill 2008) – Thomas' performing cyborg – in space, time and agency. I then define her chosen sonic area, the complex, demanding end of the glitch spectrum, while contextualising this recent development with other niche genres like microsound, academy computer music, and some electronic dance modes. Next, I focus on how Thomas constructs her compositions, covering technological processes, sources of inspiration, editing and the finished text. I also look at how Thomas's music is best mediated and preserved beyond the ephemeral, noting her desire for it to be 'made immortal' by vinyl pressings of her work. To conclude, I consider her sonic texts, and apply affective listening to her five chief works, three of which were released on vinyl in April, 2010.

Cyborg in club gear: Jo Thomas at London's ICA and Shoreditch Church

Thomas often wears club gear, miniskirts and high heels, with her hair punk-ified on stage. She is invariably totally absorbed – eyes, hands, and mind seemingly glued to the machinery surrounding her. Although her music for performance is usually built around pre-formulated sonic strands, she tries to make her shows as 'live' as possible, with space for an ethics of chance and malfunction. More on 'malfunction' later.

Here's a snapshot of Thomas, the embodied cyborg. At the ICA, central London on 20th February 2010 she is 'supporting' author Tim Lawrence as he promotes his new book, *Hold*

on to your Dreams (2010) on the life of rhizomic New York downtown musician, Arthur Russell. Lawrence reads extracts while Thomas underpins the words with industrially spiky and smoothly sensual computer-treated rhythmic noise, melody fragments and ambient drones. These are mostly generated from snippets of Russell's voice and cello strokes drawn from some of his little appreciated 70s-early 90s discs.

At times the music rises in volume and charge but never swamps Lawrence's narration. There are moments too when the stage is all Thomas' as she manoeuvres fractions of Russell encased in multi-treated electronically modified samples, accessible in a split second on her Apple Mac's Ableton Live interface. A large crowd cradle plastic glasses of beer and applaud regularly, clearly grateful for the opportunity to experience this blend of music and spoken word.

A month on, Thomas is alongside avant-garde trumpeter Fulvio Sigurta at a *Tierias Collective* night at Shoreditch Church, East London. This time the audience is small, seated in the pews, and far more inscrutable. While the evening premieres solo works for soprano, piano, flute and a chamber string quartet piece, their composition *Cross Fade*, consists of Sigurta's live and processed trumpet in taut dialogue with Thomas' electronic sample world of growls, chimes, buzzes, voice fragments and rhythm. The affect is otherworldly even spooky, but warm and inspiring too. The August church setting feels right for this knowingly post-industrial, but hardly dystopian type of contemporary electronic glitch music. But what precisely is glitch?

What is glitch?

To label oneself a 'glitch' composer is to admit to a type of affray, a technologically-obsessed scrum of possibilities, argument and contrary conceptual definitions. Kim Cascone (2000, p.13) identifies the first glitch electronica composers and performers within the backdrop of folds in technology.

While technological failure is often controlled and suppressed, its effects buried beneath the threshold of perception, most (digital) audio tools can zoom in on the errors, allowing composers to make them the focus of their work.

Glitch for Cascone is primarily an 'aesthetics of failure'(2000, p.12), a sonic environment made possible by the ever-present capacity for machinery to fail or malfunction, allowing for glitches to be caught, given autonomy, and explored like alterations in binary code logic.

Cascone does not privilege agency in the digital re-working of glitch elements, the sense of ownership so central to Thomas' endeavours. Torben Sangild suggests glitch's malfunctions and 'spurious signal(s)' are not just 'a collapse of the machinery' (2004, p.258), but rather the 1990s laptop composer generation enthused about the new field's radical potential. 'Most of

them are not satisfied with random unmediated glitch, but instead (set out) to synthesize the sounds; to actually construct music out of the clicks, squeaks and fragments' (2004, p.262). Other authors have sought to locate glitch historically within the ever-shifting terrain of 20th century music styles and trends. Janne Vanhanen (2003) sees a continuous line of sorts from phonographic technology's freeing of music from the thralldom of sheet music to glitch's textual revolution. The development 'from the symbolic order of the score to the sonic matter of recording technology' (Vanhanen, 2003, p.48), glitch represented a pioneering shift – from the unitary material of the recording to deterritorializing sound itself.

Usually viewed as leftfield, art house or – wrongly – experimental, glitch emerged in the early 1990s as an identifiable genre, drawing from popular dance music styles like hip hop, ambient, house and techno, as well as computer music workshops and the academy. Leftfield producers were excited by glitch's technical possibilities and conceptual approaches. But as Elliott Bates reminds us 'glitch music may appear to be new, since the label was coined in the late 1990s, but it echoes paths of compositional exploration already taken by *musique concrete*, dub, drum and bass, as well as 1980s acid house composers' (2004, p.288).

Either populist in foregrounding dance beats and melody, or fiercely abstract, this fresh sonic culture clearly possessed roots in post minimalist 20th century music conservatory practise. Cascone (2000) points out that there has often been an urge among composers and musicians to experiment with and expand upon the conventional sound possibilities of established instruments' citing American minimalists such as John Cage and Steve Reith. Exciting ideas also came from avant garde artists. Laszlo Molohy-Nagy (1895-1946) who 'experimented with scratching record surfaces and marking them in order to produce sounds and therefore turning the gramophone an instrument of mechanical reproduction, into a productive machine' (Vanhanen, 2003, p.49).

As electronic dance music styles grew in number and cultural influence in the 90s (Reynolds 1998), Thomas started going to hardcore techno club nights in Wales and London. Within techno lies glitch mannerisms, such as Roland 303's acid sound and its wide range of compositional possibilities in analogue synthesiser malfunctions or DJs Jeff Mills and Richie Hawtin's wide gamut of turntableist techniques.

Whilst at City University London, Thomas explored the electro-acoustic discipline microsound, built of sonic collages with fractions of sounds shorter than musical notes. She was drawn to working with fragments of human voice where the effect may be ethereal, chilling, or paradoxically warm and comforting. The main challenge of her PhD completed in 2005 *Composition Indicative of Human Agency* was to develop a rigorous intellectual language for her compositions. She engaged with concepts of geology and biology to make better sense of the rich seams of meaning of her compositional journey.

As an electronic composer Thomas has distanced herself from the perceived limitations of microsound and gradually moved closer to glitch. What attracted her to glitch was the combined approaches offered: compositional structures working in a totally new terrain where the discipline of microsound was thoroughly deterritorialized; and working with loops, beats and samples as a way into the exciting more populist, world of electronic dance music.

Thomas' musicking curve reflects the last decades' quantum shift in laptop technology. Plug-ins now offer a staggering range of sound dimensions and memory has rapidly expanded. Cascone (2000, p.16) suggests that glitch composers embody the digital world heralded by the rise of the World Wide Web.

The artist completes a cultural feedback loop in the circuit of the Internet; artists download tools and information develop ideas based on that information, create work reflecting those ideas with the appropriate tools and then upload that work to a World Wide Web where other artists can explore the ideas embedded in the work.

In the last few years glitch has split into various factions. One sub genre of dance floor-oriented electronica (that is still called glitch) is concerned with more accessible and functional uses of an 'aesthetics of failure' by building tracks around loops of hypnotic regularity. The other that Thomas' work emerges from, conceives of glitch as one of the extreme forms of laptop music experimentation.

Studio/lounge; lounge/studio: compositional space and the laptop composer

This paper is as much about the tactility of music invention and production as actual sounds, as it is about positioning one music style or another in a crowded, digitally deterritorialized soundscape. Before considering Thomas' actual texts, the end product of a musical quest which begun with hardcore techno, travelled through the austerities of microsound, to currently inhabit glitch's demanding freedoms, I first visit Thomas in her 'sonic laboratory'. I arrive at Thomas' 'sound lab' on a rainy afternoon in March 2010, her home in north London. Her conflation of home and music making zone reflects Hugill's concept of the digital musician's studio as 'a creative tool *and* a means of musical expression' (2008, p.47 my emphasis).

Peering into her laptop's monitor, Jo shows me the Ableton Live interface used during Tim Lawrence's *Hold On* session at the ICA. She identifies a cluster of vertical 'ladders' dominating the upper half of the interface. Each one is colour-coded and identified by name. By clicking any rung on the ladder, a selected segment becomes a sine wave of samples and loops. Thomas activates one or other ladders and hits 'run' consecutively, thus building a dense sound world from fragments of notes, voice and electronic noise across multiple samples and

loops. The loops loaded in Ableton Live are not static electronic signals and can be manipulated further in live time. Thomas' favourite technique being to apply the pitch control 'clock' to the lower left hand side, which can radically alter the grain of a sample or loop. Thomas then shows me the first stage in her compositional space. The Logic Pro 9 program contains a formidable arsenal of sound design parameters. It is in the seemingly infinite expanse of sound tool possibilities that she creates unique noises, which can be treated further and added to, building samples of varying density and length. She can start with a naturalistic source usually the human voice, a note from keyboard, a snippet from the acoustic environment, or a fragment from a recording, to 'treat' in the Logic program. She tells me she is on the hunt for textures which can 'give pleasure' but which can hold her attention, amuse or shock. She is part alchemist or trickster, in pursuit of the new through the subtle and adept use of a wide palette of technological tools.

The search for the unheard does not stop there. For Thomas glitch differentiates from its more disciplined brother microsound, in that chance and fallibility are key principles for constructing sound at all stages of the process. Her working method is a form of detailed holism which keeps serendipity and spontaneity open.

Once sound files are built in Logic they are transferred to audio editing software for overhaul and integration. Techniques used here are many and include time-stretching, timbre distortion, tempo alteration, frequency-bending, filtering and graphic equalizing. These treated and multi-textured sounds are often conjoined to others to make samples and loops, or blended with 'pure' electronic noise, treated voice or other sources, and loaded onto the Ableton Live interface for 'live' mixing.

The final stage is when the finished piece leaves the room to go to cyberspace. Thomas is concerned with artefact longevity which is understandable for a digital musician in an age of post-mechanical reproduction. Bit-sized files in MP3 or WAV can be as tactile as it gets, easily deleted or filed away on an unlabelled external drive, soundcard or USB. Moving somewhat against the grain, Thomas explained in an email dialogue (2010) that she was overjoyed three of her works were now publicly accessible in a vinyl format.

I love the warmth that vinyl offers my digital works. The control of the digital medium is something I aspire to and the human process of placing the needle on sound is stunning. I also have a deep respect of the commercial object although I am very un-materialist. When I first heard the test pressing of 'Dark Noise' I knew that working with anything other than vinyl would be very difficult. I felt like it had been a long journey but my shard like glitches had found their home amongst the spontaneous crackles of the black record from Berlin.

There is a compelling tension here. The mole-like attention to highly precise micro-tone detail, characteristic of avant garde glitch, seldom engenders warmth and immediacy. Thomas' complex compositions with the potential of malfunction intertwined in fissured loops and noises, urge us to absorb them emotively, *affectively*.

Reading affect in Jo Thomas' audio texts: crushed samples in multiple terrains

Hugill (2008, p.177) notes that affective analysis of music:

'focuses upon the way in which the music affects the listener, but also to some extent on the way in which it achieves that effect. This can be linked to the perceived intentions of the artist, or to the cultural context of the work.'

I would add that affective listening includes both intensive and extensive processes. Claire Colebrook pinpoints key differences in these terms when discussing how affect in a general sense is theorised by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). 'Affect is *intensive* rather than *extensive*. Extension organises a world spatially...(A)ffect is intensive because it happens to us, across us' (2002, p.38-39). The intensifying quality of affect is fundamental to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theory of becomings (p.256). Affect is a vitalist, creative, and porous process. Considering Thomas' sonic texts in this light, affective listening allows for shifts in perception, understanding... and becomings.

I will return briefly to my earlier point on the cyborg. There is an extensive aspect to affective listening which does not need to be antithetical to 'becoming-cyborg'. Thomas' work embodies the technological extensions that bind person and music in which affective listening deterritorializes the sound field imaginatively and kinetically. Spatial framing – a physical undertow as we listen in space and time – is inherent in these creative acts. Thomas' sonic texts embodies a degree of 'difficulty' characteristic of more esoteric sonic languages, computer glitch and electro-acoustic composition. Affective listening is an approach which calls for a moving forward – a moving beyond – potential obstacles. Thomas' aesthetic continuum, although intricate, is not necessarily laboured. She works fast and can complete a 'first pass' on a piece in one long session. The end product can take some assimilating. As Ken Hollings (2010) aptly comment on Thomas' musical texts.

'Be prepared to take your time, however, because these are not works that give up their secrets too readily. Motion and dynamics are revealed as weightless. Forms shift at the speed of thought' (This is) the sound of the future whispering in your ear with quiet assurance. All you have to do is listen.'

In order to respond affectively I preferred headphone listening to Thomas' work where less daily ambient noise intrudes. Over a succession of evenings I listened to the pieces both

actively and passively, sometimes scribbling notes or meditating, letting my mind drift inside and around the sounds and textures. The pieces are ordered from the earliest to the most recent.

Glitch (8'.39"; 1999)

Glitch is an exercise in micro sound construction where Thomas gives full reign to as wide a variety of sounds possible in the conjuncture between imagination and computer program mastery. The dramatis persona is a whimsical trickster, or a conjuror, juggling a melee of treated noises of varying lengths and impacts. Released on the album *Alpha* (Entr-acte) in 2010 Thomas' sleeve notes explain:

'The sounds collected are sounds that should have been thrown away – sonic indiscretions in the form of hisses, digital clicks and distortions. An old, flawed recording of a C trumpet formed the primary source for this material. The grain levels in the recording are low and in places there is an impractical amount of distortion.'

The piece starts with an earthy and sustained low frequency undertow. A menagerie of chirping, scattling sound shapes emerge from a burrow/home, as if pointing their noses upwards. Short, metallic flaps of grainy, multi-treated noise samples darken the vista while the squeaking, mice-like family, travel across the band width, giving *Glitch* a sense of speedy movement. A harsh, loud sound – like a sonic full stop – adds hesitancy to the high micro-frequencies before the piece climaxes with sustained, ascending, high frequency sound collages atop a bed of wobbling, unearthly noises. The dramatic, draining conclusion is akin to carving glass with hesitant prods.

Dark Noise (10'.36"; 2000)

On Entr'acte vinyl album, mastered and produced by Berlin-based Rashad Becker (2010), 'Dark Noise' is a deeply atmospheric soundscape. The cyborg composer in dreamlike mode. Thomas in the sleeve notes for album the *Alpha* (2010) explains:

'Dark Noise is a subterranean sound world based on the female voice. Within this imaginary body of sound there is a deeply embedded idea of motion, expressed in the sound gestures that resonate throughout the work, and in the spoken utterances of air, light and space that are heard at the end. Glitches and micro-sounds are precisely placed, creating subtle triangles, circles and lines that provide a structure for the overall form of the work. '

My affective reading brought out feelings of fear – the piece is quite scary, with a sense of brooding presence throughout. I visualised a slow-waking sub-aqueous presence, like a refrain from early childhood, both restful and disquieting.

The piece opens with a low frequency wash of muted sounds, evoking a colourless field, or a large mass gradually awakening. A surrounding environment responds. They are pitched up, phased, flutter like moths wings, with noises that rise then drop suddenly, cutting off sharply. Mid range spectrum noise samples fill out the tapestry, and a sense of echo and oppression is created by hollow sample shapes. The sound world elements gradually multiply and quicken, as if climbing on top of each other, and sounds fold too within crevices in the compositional space. At this midway point in the piece you can understand what Thomas (2009, p.3) means when she writes:

‘Foreground and background perceptions are extremely important to give the perspective of switching into alternative musical spaces. Noise-based micro-sounds are used rhythmically to propel the work forward.’

It is now that utterance appears. Imperceptible voice residues deep in the sound field, try to penetrate like ghosts with urgent scrambled messages. Part of a melody – perhaps a treated violin sample – swims into view, like a century old pirate vessel on a mythical high sea. We return to the earlier sub-aqueous, the ‘presence’ retires, and night returns to this swampland of monochrome twilight. The piece is brought to a close with decreasing snippets of twinkling shafts of noise.

Angel (18’.43”; 2002)

Her longest work to date *Angel* is the closest Thomas has come to an overtly rhythmic work. although micro sounds lay the groundwork as before, with the listener left imagining connections in the spatial spectrum. One technique used forcefully is ‘cut offs’ on noise samples and treated voice, giving an odd affect of vertiginousness, as if Thomas’ ‘Angel’ is positioned on a cliff edge or a steep hill path.

Early in the piece there is a sense of rhythmic balance provided by a bed of reassuring, mid frequency drone and a curvature of fizz, squawk and hiss. Again, it seems as if a presence is felt, the dramatis persona caught between dark and light, the cosmic dance of an angel perhaps, a journey taken amidst extremes of smooth and hard. Sonic tissues signalling give -an inward movement – and then recoiling back outward.

The Angel dance subsides a quarter of the way in, and the sound design elements slowed, as if an ‘Angel’ is considering her way or scratching her head. The empty spaces in the sound world let us imagine and re-connect the colours of the spray-painted sound palette. Then, as if slowly flapping wings, the subject re-awakes, humming snippets of tunes from deep memory, micro-lullabies to her cosmic dance. At other times the utterance shards could be long lost fairground tunes of childhood, or an ancient wind organ from a grandparent’s attic.

Much of *Angel*'s penultimate section explores sonic contrasts. Long and short samples interplay melodically in the final section, in a form of reconciliation. But surprise and shock hasn't disappeared. The rat-a-tat fencing between groups of elements persist, then *Angel* recedes to the forlorn tune of fractured bells.

Girl (8'.19"; 2005)

Of the compositions considered *Girl* is the only sound piece that persistently articulates a linguistic element in a pronounced way. The word *girl* emerges more as an utterance, than a word with a very precise meaning. In her thesis Thomas defines what she means by utterance:

'The communication of a sound from deep within the body, which may not directly carry vocal traits but can communicate attributes of sonic utterances through intuitive and unconscious gesture movement' (2005, p.22).

Girl is somewhat representational as it is inspired by the Simon de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* and loosely conveys in sound a 'girlness' which continues through a woman's life, an essence of youth and associated memories which helps re-connect with the creative, internal self, if not the innocence of youth.

The discernible word 'girl' is voiced from the outset then immediately 'treated' – dissected, re-arranged and pitch-altered – as if Thomas is simultaneously exploring the nature and function of gender and language. She collects an array of noise samples around her utterance, which serves as grammatical exclamation, a compositional search for identity and a bracing meditation for the listener. Any sense of balance, however, is soon dispelled with the eruption of a fizzing stridency – clearly this is no girl to trifle with! A furious sound bed of treated noise textures and shards of utterance follow. This is akin to how some producers in the avant garde EDM (electronic dance music) drum 'n' bass, use time stretching and micro edits to communicate power and fury. When Thomas says rhythm (and melody) is embedded in her works, we can look to *Girl* as an obvious example.

Subsequently the tempest dies down and the sound world softens. Droplets of mid frequency noise repeat like Morse code from an ethereal transmitter. A multiplicity of 'girl' snippets return in consort with further sound sample arrays, as if shaken through a kaleidoscope. The voice fractions persist, sometimes ahead of the sample bed, other times towards the back, as if watching from afar. *Girl* has now become interrogative, raising question on intimacy and identity. The sound world descends, gradually shimmering away. Girl has left the sound chamber.

Alpha (17'; 2008)

Alpha is Thomas' most complex, multi-layered and *conceptual* piece to date. It has a strong, elegant motif – a haunting, chime refrain – but is subdivided into different parts with contrasting densities. Thomas explains that in composing *Alpha* she was concerned with an inquiry into intimacy and distance with her starting point being micro fragments of treated voice. In a later email exchange Thomas (2010), says she hoped 'this created vast and intimate spaces...spaces (which) could reflect both a sense of the microscopic and the distant imaginary environments and sounding spaces of quickly changing depths'.

Alpha premiered at the Cutting Edge Series, London in 2009 as an audio-visual work and presented some months later at the Orhechoch Sound Gallery, East Berlin. Beginning with a cascade of sounds *Alpha* explores sound spectrum capacity. The first few minutes offer a panoramic vista of filtered noise and voice samples. A third of the way into the composition, the sound bed empties – Thomas calls this 'spectral limitation'. Gradually a more febrile, energetic mood is asserted, with a wide range of sound shapes and treatments from hard to soft, from fuzzy, filtering to a clean echo. With the refrain again asserting, *Alpha* concludes with a dramatic cacophony of sonic ideas, a scramble of overload, phasing and filtered shapes, as if pushing a smorgasbord of wriggling creatures along a tunnel. Thomas ends with a long sustained single note which gently peters out.

Conclusion: Music, agency and performance: glitch's 'aesthetics of chance and disturbance'

My analysis of Thomas' major works to date has sought to complete a portrait of a practising digital musician in three ways: actual performance; the creative and compositional process; and the moment when the sonic texts leave Thomas' control to be affectively consumed by listeners (or dancers). I conclude the paper by discussing one glitch technique Thomas applies in live performance, indicating how the digital cyborg keeps on 'her' toes.

Computer cross-wires and malfunctions are deeply embedded in Thomas' compositional process. Sangild describes the glitch producer's palette rather more lovingly: 'fragile sensibility, avant-garde experiments and a different kind of beauty' (2004, p.257). I have referred to chance and fallibility as central drivers in Thomas musical vision but have not explored an occasion when these key components of the glitch oeuvre come into play in her work. They occur as sound construction proceeds, but occur more dramatically when performing especially in collaborations. The inaugural rendition of *Cross Fade* at the Tiresias Collective evening.

Shortly after the performance started, the distortion pedal patch co-artist Fulvio Sigurta triggered his computer's Ableton Live interface which appeared to overload, bathing the sound world in more distortion than either Thomas or he had intended. To make the malfunction

‘work’ in the glitch sense, Thomas re-set her sound element pitches to soften the distortion pedal’s timbre. This alteration in sound ecology lasted for less than ten seconds and would not have been detected by most of the audience. It represented a challenge fundamental to the glitch endeavour. In grasping the opportunity of the technical obstacle, the unfolding of a pleasing and absorbing performance was made more enthralling with its live electronic sample beds, in dialogue with ‘live’ trumpet, treated trumpet samples and effects from a patch like the distortion pedal.

Cross Fade continued with no unforeseen ‘glitches’, with sustained trumpeting at various frequencies in duet with low electronic sample growls, tinselly flickers and persistent chime-like noises. The affect was thoroughly absorbing the lush soundscape reaching out into and filling the historic church’s roomy cavities.

The ‘a-subjective modernist’: glitch and the expressive self

Vanhenen ends his paper on glitch by noting an interesting dilemma for laptop music in the 21st century. He points to the ‘subjectless structure’ at the core of glitch, where the composer utilizes ‘the a-subjective, machinic mode of production’ (2003, p.51). Correspondingly, he observes ‘we have the subject/artist controlling this process, which, however, is essentially...a virtuality’ (ibid). He concludes that despite the cyborgian, futuristic qualities of glitch, laptop music forms ‘are yet evaluated mainly inside the modernist context of artistic expression and mastery’ (ibid). Is there a contradiction here? I would suggest there is not. Thomas (2010, p1), on the one hand says:

‘I see myself as a Cyborg. The computer and micro music devices are part of my everyday existence. The technology forms part of my everyday existence...technological veins stream deep into my blood and my musical imagination.’

While on the other she keenly reflects a modernist impetus to express herself. She wants to be recognised as a physical woman sound designer as much as ‘becoming-girl’ avatar. The results are durable, bold sonic structures redolent of identity and statement. Thomas’ musical and personal journey emerges from an immersive world of laptop sound creation, and travels along lines of flight to agency, where pleasure, wit and intelligence forcefully communicate. Ethereal cyborg, or sassy female performer, Thomas explores the cutting edge of contemporary music practice.

References

- Bates, E. (2004) 'Glitches, Bugs and Hisses: the Degeneration of Musical Recordings and the Contemporary Musical Work' in Washburne, C. & Derko, M (eds.) *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, pp 275-93. London: Routledge.
- Cascone, K. (2000) 'The Aesthetics of Failure: "Post-Digital" Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music'. *Computer Music Journal*, 24:4, pp 12-18. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Colebrook, C. (2002) *Gilles Deleuze*. London: Routledge.
- Deleuze, G & Guattari, F. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Athlone.
- Haraway, D.J. (2000;[1985]). 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s. In Kirkup, G et al (eds) *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Hugill, A. (2008) *The Digital Musician*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Reynolds, S. (1998) *Energy Flash*. London: Picador.
- Sangild, T. (2004) 'Glitch – The Beauty of Malfunction'. In Washburne, C & Derko, M (eds) *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, London: Routledge. pp. 257-74.
- Small, C. 1999. 'Musicking - the Meanings of Performing and Listening. A lecture'. *Music Education Research*, Volume 1, Issue 1 March 1999 , pp. 9 – 22.
[http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t713438964~tab=issueslist~branches=1 - v1](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t713438964~tab=issueslist~branches=1-v1), Issue 1 March 1999 , pp. 9 – 22.
www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a739570221; accessed 10th March, 2010.
- Thomas, J (2010) 'Alpha' sleeve notes. Entr'acte Recordings, Berlin.
- Thomas, J (2009) 'Alpha', in *Artech 2009* conference journal, San Francisco: Leonardo Press.
- Thomas, J (2005) 'Electroacoustic Composition Indicative of Human Agency'. PhD, City University School of Arts, Department of Music, London, UK.
- Vanhanen, J. (2003) 'Virtual Sound: Examining Glitch and Production'. *Contemporary Music Review*, Volume 22: 4, pp. 45-52(8). London: Routledge.

Disc releases

'Alpha'. 2010. *Entr'acte*. (Includes 'Alpha', 'Dark Noise' and 'Glitch').

Web sites/ blogs

Jo Thomas:

www.jothomas.me

www.myspace.com/jothomaselectrosound

www.soundandmusic.org/resources/collection/composer/jo-thomas

Ken Hollings:

kenhollings.blogspot.com. Accessed 1st April, 2010.

Rashad Becker's 'Dubplates and Mastering': <http://www.clunk.de>.

Chapter 8

Narratives of Women's Belonging: Me and My PhD

Nicola Samson

Abstract

How do people belong? What gives people a sense of belonging? And, in the light of Tobias Jones' (2009) recent description of belonging as the 'holy grail of modern life', how important is belonging? This paper introduces how my personal experience as a second generation Jewish refugee led me to my research focus of women's belonging and briefly sketches my earlier research explorations on the subject. In greater detail the paper outlines my PhD research project on the changing nature and multiplicity of women's experience of belonging as revealed through narrative interviews with women living in one East London street. The paper offers my working definition of belonging and explains how I apply Yuval-Davis' analytic framework of belonging to explore women's subjective identifications and social locations. Also explored are some of the methodological and ethical issues of interviewing women of diverse cultural backgrounds living in the same street as myself. The second part of the paper examines sections from the transcript of one specific interview and considers themes that arise from the analysis, particularly ideas of community and cultural difference, and those of citizenship and belonging. It discusses some of the complexities and contradictions that emerge within the interviewee's subjective identifications and social locations, and considers my own reflexive response to them.

One of those

So where do you work, I said
At the solicitors in Mare Street, she said.
Which one? I said
Baxters, she said.
Oh, is he the Scots bloke, I said.
No, she said, he's one of those
and made a large semi-circle in front of her nose.
Oh yes, I said.
I'm one of those
and I made a large semi-circle in front of my nose.

Oh my God, she said
I had no idea
it's never occurred to me
all this time I've known you
and I never knew
I would never have guessed
oh I am so sorry
really I didn't mean any harm
I'm not prejudiced
really I am not
Oh my God
what have I said?

Michael Rosen, 1993

(NB: For anyone unfamiliar with colloquial British gestures, to make a large semi-circle in front of one's nose is a derogatory way of denoting a Jew.)

Michael Rosen's poem is an amusing, if not somewhat shocking portrayal of the sort of anti-Semitism that I, along with many others, have experienced in Britain. The poem simply and cleverly depicts a form of insidious anti-Semitism that, I have no doubt, helped fuel my own childhood sense of not belonging. And the story of how I came to have an interest in the issue of belonging begins there.

Undertaking a PhD around ideas of belonging was therefore not an abstract theoretical idea but was arrived at through a process, a coalescence of decades of my own experiences. As a child born in 1950s Britain of refugee parents, our Jewishness was not a secret but neither was it an

overt part of our lives, and we had no Jewish religion or culture that defined us. Yet out in the worlds of school and later, work, anti-Semitic remarks and jokes rendered me 'other', despite being told by my friends that these didn't apply to me – I was all right. That they thought we ate strange food and my mother in particular had a 'funny' accent added to my niggling sense of not quite fitting in; of not really belonging. Was it my somewhat olive-tinged skin that has caused people to ask throughout my life, 'but where are you really from?' Or was it my nose?

Much later, as a middle-aged adult, the experience of having to leave my East End home of 22 years was traumatic, forcefully rekindling earlier feelings about belonging. For, as a home to immigrants for centuries, the area had been a fitting and comfortable place for me to be. Not long after leaving Tower Hamlets for the neighbouring East London borough of Newham, I began a BA in Psychosocial Studies at the University of East London. After decades of assuming my issues around belonging were my own, personal idiosyncrasy, my late-in-life start in academia taught me that belonging was a meaningful subject to study, and gave me the freedom and a framework to explore it.

Had I not known better, I might have thought Molly Andrews' words were written about me. She wrote,

Most often, the questions which guide our research originate from deep within ourselves. We care about the topics we explore – indeed, we care very much. While our projects may be presented with an appearance of professional detachment, most of us most of the time are personally involved in the research we undertake.

(Andrews, 2007, p.27)

This paper very briefly outlines my undergraduate and MA degrees and their foci on belonging, prior to summarising some of the current theoretical debates on the issue. I explain how my PhD both expands on my earlier work and how it offers new perspectives to the current body of work on belonging. I offer a working definition of belonging and set out how I use Yuval-Davis' analytical framework of belonging in my analysis. I discuss methods employed in 'meeting the street', some of the emerging issues and my ethical considerations. The second part of the paper analyses sections of a transcript from my first PhD interview looking at ideas of community and cultural difference, and those of citizenship and belonging. I consider aspects of the analysis in the light of the interviewee's subjective identifications and social locations, and my own reflexive responses.

Opportunities within my BA to look at issues around 'refugee-ness', identity and belonging within my own family, particularly from a life history perspective, led me to consider the lives of other women who, like me, lived in the ethnic mix of East London. Both my undergraduate

and postgraduate dissertations concentrated on the subjective nature of belonging.

In the first I explored the lives of two Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets, Rasha, a nineteen year old teenager born in Britain, and Safiya, a middle aged divorcee who had come to Britain as a married woman in her twenties with two children. Significantly, the analysis revealed the overarching complexity of individual belonging and certainly gave no credence to stereotypical generalisations of Bangladeshi women in London. A similarity the two women shared was a lack of religious piety but on the whole their common ethnic origins highlighted more the differences between them than any shared understandings. Safiya for example strongly differentiated between being Muslim and being pious and made clear her deepest belonging was in her profound connection to her Islamic roots and culture. The younger Rasha made no such distinction between religion and culture. She conflated them yet made it clear she was not religious, and found little belonging in her Bangladeshi origins.

The MA dissertation was entitled: "If it hadn't been for Hitler I wouldn't have been born": Second Generation Jewish Refugee Women in East London reflect on their belonging'. Thus it followed the theme of belonging but from the perspective of a single generation of four British-born daughters of refugees. By now I was intrigued to find out whether my issues around belonging were shared by other women with similar family backgrounds to my own, who had chosen to live in East London as I had. It transpired that not only our background and location were shared but also left of centre politics, lack of religion and employment in or around education.

In spite of these similarities there were pronounced differences in the women's sense of Jewish belonging. Both their childhood understanding and practice of their Jewishness, and what extent of Jewish involvement they had chosen as adults, were clearly significant in their sense of belonging or not belonging, in their later lives. Joanna, whose childhood was steeped in Jewish religion and culture, and Isabel, who despite her lack of Jewish upbringing had chosen to raise her sons with a practiced understanding of their Jewish heritage, were both very confident in their Jewish identities. Conversely, Hannah and Rachel's experiences left them with a complexity of confusion, contradiction and difficulty in their understanding and acceptance of their Jewishness. Hannah's Jewish father had lived his Jewishness only with other refugees and completely outside family life, and Rachel knew nothing of her Jewish background as a young child only discovering her heritage over many years "...in tiny, tiny, tiny bits. Just, [...] a fragment here and a fragment there" (Samson, 2008).

Such complications highlight the intangible distinction between identifying as, or feeling Jewish, and having a real sense of Jewish belonging. For according to Bell (1999) one cannot simply belong without some form of performance, and Fortier (1999) argues that belonging is achieved by the active participation in and reiteration of the norms of custom and tradition.

Thus, there is no ontological state of 'being Jewish' – or presumably being anything – that bestows belonging; it is the committed engaging in, in this case, Jewish practice, that creates belonging.

Now, in this twenty-first century dominated by globalisation, ever-more sophisticated technology and multiculturalism, the nature of belonging becomes increasingly difficult to define. What does belonging mean for people in this changing world? Where, to whom, to what, *how* do we belong?

Over the past 20 years there has been growing theoretical debate about belonging around issues such as citizenship, migration and transnationalism such as work by Geddes & Favell (1999); Castles & Davidson (2000); Westwood & Phizacklea (2000) and Yuval-Davis (2006). Ideas about place and location related to belonging have been discussed within sociology and cultural geography by for example Savage et al (2005) and Urry (2000); and, as I've mentioned, research on performativity and belonging particularly by Fortier (1999). However little of this work has directly addressed the complex and shifting ways in which belonging is configured in people's everyday lives.

I want to take this further. I want to find out how the complexities of ethnicity, generation and class shape women's sense of belonging. I want to explore what impact day-to-day aspects of women's lives such as family, language, food, work, religion have on their sense of belonging. How do these very ordinary aspects of women's existence contribute to, or determine how they make sense of their lives? In a similar vein, I want to examine the extent to which location and community affect women's belonging. And, as life is not necessarily constant and is rarely fixed, how can belonging be understood given that changing, fluid and temporal nature of women's lives?

To achieve this aim, my PhD extends the approach I developed in my previous studies by including a larger and more diverse group of women to produce a more inclusive model of subjective belonging. Applying narrative methodology to the study of belonging, through semi-structured life history interviews and hermeneutic thematic analysis, will enable me to explore the multilayered complexities of belonging within the realities of women's whole lives. Such a holistic life story approach has not yet been applied to considering the nature of belonging and this approach therefore offers a new perspective to the growing body of work.

At this point I should elucidate what I actually mean by belonging. It is important to note that what I am offering here is a working definition of belonging, a starting point. So, I perceive belonging as relating to deeply felt attachments to identities, groups or places that give meaning and security to people's lives. What I mean, is the internal sense of affective attachment, a visceral belonging, analogous to the visceral cosmopolitanism Mica Nava (2007)

describes as understood and experienced in the emotion and attachment of everyday lives. In this way, belonging can be seen as the very core of one's self-understanding and identification, the multiplicity and confusions of who one is that demand insight, self-perception and self-knowing, and can be understood as a process that shifts and changes as life progresses (Samson 2008). I see belonging as complex and multilayered much as Hall (1996) conceives of identity as identifications, 'constantly in the process of change and transformation'.

Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) has developed a three-category analytical framework for studying belonging. These categories are firstly, social location for example gender, class, ethnicity; secondly, identifications and emotional attachments; and thirdly ethical and political value systems. I am not going to attempt to explain Yuval-Davis' framework in the space available here. Suffice to say that the initial focus of my research will be her second category of analysis of subjective identifications. My previous research has shown that it is in the commonplace experiences of home, family, work, religion, food, that the primary affective attachments of belonging are felt (Samson 2007, 2008). Such attachments, at the core of one's belonging and changing through experience, are therefore fundamental to my study. However the research will also explore Yuval-Davis' other two analytic levels of social location and political value systems. Through the subjective lens of the individual women, my analysis will consider how they locate themselves, particularly through their ethnicity, generation and class, and how these locations relate to their affective attachments. To a lesser degree I will also consider Yuval-Davis' third level of ethical and political value systems, again, as they relate to the women's emotional attachments. Although I do not intend to look at the politics of belonging per se, I will consider how meaningful institutional ideas and political norms of belonging are to the women's lives. For example how far citizenship offers a sense of belonging, which I will discuss in more detail later.

My current research is based on narrative life history interviews I am undertaking with women in the East London street in which I live. The residents are mixed both in generation and class and are of a wide range of ethnicities as the street is home to women born in Africa, the Caribbean, South and East Asia, East and West Europe as well as Britain. Limiting the geographical location to one street offers a more focused exploration than arbitrarily choosing women from across East London, a vast area of the capital city. The diversity of women within the street allows the perspectives of ethnicity and class to be explored in relation to social location and place which offers the opportunity to consider how these differing aspects of the women's lives intersect and create their experience of belonging.

The street is one of six developed at the end of the nineteenth century to provide homes for the growing middle classes. Many of the houses are double- and triple-fronted which offered space for families with servants. While many of the houses remain or have reverted back to single family homes, others been divided up into bed-sits, flats and maisonettes, and

ownership is diverse with owner occupiers, social housing and private tenants living side by side.

Although I had lived in the street for some years prior to starting the PhD, I knew few people and there were no obvious community foci within the estate through which I could make connections. I began some preparatory fieldwork, 'meeting the street', requesting the few people I had met to introduce me to their neighbours, an approach I call neighbourly snowballing. I rejected cold calling or using a letter outlining my research as initial approaches; I wanted it to be more personal. Miller's (2008) recent research is concentrated in a single street, and in a private conversation he criticised my neighbourly snowballing for not being inclusive. He said one *should* go knocking on doors so that everyone in the street has an opportunity to participate (Miller, 2009). However, I am interested in the social mapping of these neighbours. Who will introduce me to whom? How ethnically mixed will the introductions be? And how do such connections and disconnections affect the neighbours' sense of belonging?

My subsequent 12 lengthy conversations have helped to identify some of the questions that inform my research. Since few women seem to know many others beyond their immediate neighbours how meaningful is it to talk of the street as a community? Given the tangled complexity of some women's sense of belonging, how important to them is any sense of national or ethnic identity? Is the street a microcosm of post-war multicultural society that in reality exists only in separation?

I am conducting interviews with up to 15 women, recording and transcribing the interviews myself. I plan to interview each woman at least twice where possible to follow up issues and explore ideas that arise from the reading of interview transcripts (Andrews, 2007). As I get to know the women, there is the possibility that more informal conversations may take place through impromptu meetings in the locality or over 'a cup of tea'. I will make notes of such encounters and consider them 'as adding perspective to our recorded discussions' (Andrews, 1991). So while I am not engaging formally in an ethnographic project in that I am not immersing myself in my neighbours' day to day lives, as I do live in the street, I am participating in an established tradition of being within my own research focus (Reay, 1998; Miller, 2008).

The realities of interviewing are not of course as straightforward as one might imagine when first talking with potential interviewees. People are often happy to talk, not necessarily so happy to be recorded. Also, their lives have not stood still since those first meetings some months ago. How will such changes affect the range of women who might participate? One young single mother has been re-housed elsewhere, one who has lived in the street for nearly fifty years has decided she does not want to be interviewed though she's still happy for me to

go round to visit her. Another, very sadly, suffered a stroke and has since died. The latter two are in a minority of elderly women who have spent many years in the street. How possible will it be to find others like them? The transient nature of individual lives will inevitably shape and transform my research. How easy it is to wish one had recorded from the beginning... And of course, that is where the ethics come in...

How to behave ethically in my research is of paramount concern to me. I am following standard ethical procedures; gaining written informed consent, and in the spirit of Frisch's (1990) idea of shared authority, will incorporate interviewees' meanings and perceptions as far as I am able. Yet being a neighbour brings its own particular 'tension between involvement and distance' that Tamboukou & Ball (2003) discuss in relation to ethnographic research. How will I separate my relationships as neighbour and researcher (Plummer, 2001)? Where does one draw a line between what is told to me as a researcher and what is said as a neighbour? Thus it is especially important that the interviewee has power of veto over her own words. In addition, the neighbour element poses particular challenges to issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Interviewees who know each other will undoubtedly be able to identify each other. While names can easily be changed, people's employment and relationships are often intrinsic to who they are, thus simply changing them could alter an understanding of what is meaningful to them, indeed, alter who they are. It is clear therefore that to guarantee anonymity is both unrealistic and not viable, and after discussing it with interviewees I am not including anyone who expects total anonymity.

On reflecting on her research with members of a kibbutz, Lieblich (1996) found other issues that could well impact on my study. Will I for example, offend neighbours by not including them? Would neighbours vent their grievances about others through my research? Or will my research become a means of communicating between mother and daughters "breaking taboos of secrets and silence"? Riessman (2005) also highlights the compelling need of western researchers to be sensitive to cultural norms. For the very reason that my research is purposefully involving a number of ethnicities requires that I be attentive and sensitive to perspectives other than my own. Can I ensure that I am always aware of issues that may arise? Can I mitigate against all potential hurt or offence? No, I cannot, but invoking Plummer's (2001) description of situational relativism into practice of re-evaluating situations and renegotiating with my interviewees through the process of the research, I can hope to remain aware and sensitive to issues as they arise, and balance the situation so that I do not find myself with no research data whatsoever (Riessman, 2005).

In the second half of this paper I will now consider some aspects of one interview applying both the narrative methodology and Yuval-Davis' framework of belonging to my analysis. This uses my first PhD interview which was with Tendo (a pseudonym), a mother of five in her mid thirties who was born and brought up in Uganda. I first analyse sections of her transcript and

discuss issues of community and cultural difference, and those of citizenship and belonging, and then go on to consider the analysis in the light of Tendo's subjective identifications and social locations, and my own reflexive responses.

Tendo came to England aged 17 with her uncle's family with whom she had lived since her mother died. She later married a Ugandan in London. I had met Tendo by knocking on her door about two years ago to ask if I could buy some garden tiles that appeared to be abandoned in her front garden. I did not see her again for about a year until I began this research and decided to call on her. In the past 12 months we have talked over a cup of tea in her house maybe three or four times. Tendo has lived in the street for three years and says that apart from one elderly neighbour who she rarely sees, I am her only connection in the street. Her four-and-a-half hour interview with me is revealing of the multiplicity of one person's shifting belonging across cultures and time. I am going to consider extracts from her interview particularly looking at ideas of community and cultural difference and those of citizenship and belonging.

Tendo describes a very fragmented childhood in Uganda; early years living in the city with both parents, some years in her father's village, then back to the city with her mother until her mother died. Tendo then stayed a few months in her maternal grandfather's village until she moved to the city with an aunt and uncle before coming to London with them in 1991. I asked her whether in this fractured upbringing she had experienced any sense of community. The following is her response.

N: -and I was just wondering whether you felt at any point you, you were living in, had some sense of community, in-

T: Mhm. Yeah, I did. Erm, so when I was in the village, it IS a village, so you really, belong to the house you're in. So it's not a problem. AND, the people next door, as a child, do you really know how they live? Not really. But now, I'm a grown up, you look back and more or less they lived just like you. And [laugh] more or less sometimes you're better off than they. 'Cause I remember there was a house we used to pass when we went to school, and this house had a, a measles, kind of like um, attack on it. You know how measles is, it catches one, it catches everybody. So this house, it ended up that everybody had measles in that house, I think it had four children and ALL four children got measles and THERE, nobody mentions measles, you NEVER call it measles, and I think they call it 'The Prince', 'The Prince is around', so we used to creep past that house. There was no other way of going to school but walking straight past it and [laugh] we used to creep, thinking that, if you ran faster, if you walk, if you shout, if even you breathe, you too is going to catch you and you will die. And ok, we will go to

school and then you have to do it back home [laugh]. But all on the sides, all you're surrounded by is the banana trees, so where are you going to run, there is no, there was no, that was the only route home so, were they better off than us? Er, no, everybody did the same thing. You went to er, everybody went and grew their own food, you know, er and that was it really. Everybody went, you know, to, to, to do their digging at the same time, and they all came home at the same time. Come eleven o'clock nobody's at home but go there at twelve, EVERYBODY'S at home really, yeah. But then you can't go out because the sun is too hot and the snakes are out and goodness knows [laugh] what is out, so you can't, until four o'clock. And then four o'clock is for fetching water and everybody will be fetching water. Well, if you're, if you were lucky that you had a, a tank and the roof had collected the water and it wasn't a hot season and you hadn't used up all the water, yeah, otherwise everybody was fetching water so, yeah, it felt very much er part of a community really, yeah. You did not, I don't REMEMBER feeling isolated and then, you went to school so, more or less everybody kind of knew everybody. The person you knew, they knew somebody and that way everybody knew everybody.

Lines 297-325

I chose this piece because it challenges my western understanding both of how community and belonging are experienced, and of how they might be expressed. It begs the question how easily belonging can be understood cross culturally, which is one of the aims of my research.

For this long story that Tendo tells brings up a number of different issues about cultural difference and cultural understanding. As I was hearing it for the first time I failed to see the relevance to the question. What had the first lines to do with community? She states that "you belonged to the house you were in. So it wasn't a problem". What wasn't a problem? And, what did measles have to do with my question about community?

As I was transcribing I initially intended to summarise rather than transcribe this story. It took a couple of listenings to the recording to grasp that community is *precisely* what she is talking about. Because she is using her memory of a family suffering from measles to tell me about community. That *everybody* had to pass the measles house because there was only one street in the village. Everyone doing the same informed community and communal life. The climate and the workload; digging the crops, fetching water, avoiding snakes – characterised community. The nature of living, of survival, created their community, there was no individual choice of belonging to the community or not, by default one belonged. In fact, the actuality of everybody going down the one street can also be seen as a metaphor for how their lives were played out as a community.

So I am learning how carefully one must listen and re listen – and possibly re listen. It has highlighted for me again how cultural misunderstandings may arise not purely in subject matter, but in *how* stories are told.

Similarly how might this form of community and belonging be interpreted? In the West the idea of ‘community’ tends to be infused with a warm gentle glow of positiveness. Is that a reality here? Is it a desired community or belonging for Tendo? Does she just accept it, giving meaning to her words at the beginning ‘So it’s not a problem’? At the end of the extract she says, ‘The person you knew, they knew somebody and that way everybody knew everybody’, is it simply factual? Does it suggest positive or negative memories of community for her? As one can see, possibly inconsequential words in fact give rise to a number of questions about meaning.

Tendo’s early sense of community began to change as soon as she left the village for the city. When I asked about the sense of community living in the city with her mother she responded,

Was there a sense of community? Now that is interesting, THAT was different because everybody kind of lived in their own space. You did your own thing.

Lines 335-337

And, it has continued to change as her life has changed. Having been back to Uganda in 2009 for the first time since she was 17, she is now clear that the huge extended family that she has there would not give her the sort of community or belonging that she now wants.

They said, ‘Will you ever come back here to live?’. And I said to them, ‘No. Erm, I don’t think so’. [...] I looked at that life and I thought, ‘No’. [...] I said to them, ‘You know what, I have an Evelyn who is from Ghana, and I have a Joy who is from the Caribbean, I have an Asian friend Meena, and I have a white friend, Pat and Linda, and I think I prefer it that way’, really. More or less now for them they can predict what they’re going to talk about. Or how it always will be, and they want to keep it that way. I thought, ‘No’.

Lines 791-812

She is thoughtful and quite clear in her desire to have not only community but also a diversity in her life that would be unavailable to her in Uganda. Her communities and her belonging however are not in the street where she now lives, where apart from one elderly neighbour, I am the only person she knows. Her communities and where she finds her greatest belonging are in her Christian faith and in the special needs group that has supported her with her autistic son, and for whom she also does voluntary work. And it is with friends, who in the

main are from these two communities, with whom she finds her greatest belonging. Tendo sees these friends as her family, as to her, family are the people one feels closest to.

In Tendo's account of her childhood there is a complexity of difference which challenges simplistic notions of tribal and colour belonging. As one can see from her next quote, she repudiated the tribal exclusivity others tried to maintain, limiting who one could talk to.

I remember from when, I remember this from when I came, even in the village actually, I used to be the different one, 'cause I remember one time when my friends said that this person, we shouldn't talk to them because they're from a different tribe. So I said to them, 'No you can't do that. Speak the language we understand. If they want to be a part of us, they are a part of us.

Lines 355-360

In addition to thinking of herself as different for taking such a stand, she also describes how she herself was perceived to be different by others. She speaks of how others would touch her hair because it was an unusual texture; that children from West Uganda assumed from her looks she was from their tribe, then ignored her when she refuted that. And she tells this story about her grandmother:

And I was so different that my grandmother, my poor grandmother from my father's side, went and dug roots, boiled them, gave them to me because I was too pale. Er I wasn't as dark [laugh] as everybody else so she fed me these roots, well the water from the roots, erm so that my hair would change [laugh] and my skin colour would [laugh] change. [...] And I did not change [laugh]. So when I went to the city it was the same thing so I was... different.

Lines 370-380

Yet as we can see from these responses, Tendo is insistent that such categorisations had, and still have, no affect on her belonging. These are purely external observations which have little to do with her and simply do not concern her.

It was a general feeling from people who didn't know me. It even carries on today [laugh].

Line 434

No. It's just an outside appearance and people are judging you by your outside appearance, how you look, how you sound...

Lines 474-475

I just brushed it off because it has not really, it's, it's been ... comments or how people see me, and they're voicing how they're seeing me.

Lines 520-521

And of course, Tendo reiterates a number of times that her belonging comes with the people that she is close to and in her faith, which is internal to her sense of self and therefore more meaningful.

I will now look at some issues around citizenship and belonging. I will briefly outline the background to the following narrative extracts. Tendo and her husband have 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' in Britain which gives them permanent residency, but they have not been granted citizenship. When Tendo wanted to travel to Uganda last spring with the children she applied for passports for them. Her four-year-old daughter Elizabeth was granted a British passport, the four older children were not. They were all born in Britain and have always lived here, in fact never been out of the country, but she has been told that because they were born prior to her being given permanent residency, they are not British citizens. Tendo was assured she would be able to get visas for the children to re-enter Britain once she was in Uganda. However, the British authorities in Uganda turned down the applications and Tendo was forced to leave the children in Uganda for six months while she came back and forth trying to sort the situation out. They all arrived back in London in October 2009.

Knowing of these events I wanted to explore with Tendo how the issue of citizenship had affected her belonging. UK government policy argues that citizenship is a crucial determinant in belonging. This would suggest therefore that to belong, one simply needs to speak English and pass a citizenship test. Tendo speaks English very well, has passed the citizenship test and additionally as she says, was educated partially in Britain. But she was not granted citizenship. So what correlation is there between citizenship and belonging?

T: So you're a citizen and I'm a resident. Do you pay different council tax to me [laugh]? So what does it mean? I, I, I don't know. It means something to somebody, but to my everyday life? . It doesn't mean anything really, so.

N: It doesn't mean anything to your everyday life but it meant a HUGE deal to . your life when you went to Uganda this year. Not for YOU personally, I mean not for y, not in terms of yourself but in terms of your children.

T: I [sigh] is it for me or is it for the person dealing with the papers. First, er, I really don't understand it 'cause I don't see what the difference is between a resident and a citizen.

N: But maybe it's just a piece of paper?

T: I, I, I haven't got around to that and I don't know what it is that I want to say because, I the resident was the same resident that applied for Elizabeth's errr

passport, she got it, no problem. So I was credible then. When it came to the others, [*her other children*] when you cross over to the immigration side, then I'm not credible, they treat me with suspicion [laugh]. Same human being! So, er what does it mean? Oh gosh, it means I'm the same person with the different statuses [laugh]. Erm, so me as an individual, I can't understand it. For me it is like, out there. It's outside of myself, even though it was happening to me. But my everyday life, how do I live my everyday life? Oh! HOW do I live my everyday life? So my everyday life I live it as a British Resident, erm, a person who lives in England, really, more than anything else.

Lines 994-1014

N: Do you know formally what residency allows you to do? It allows you to live here,-

T: Yeah.

N: -but it doesn't give you British Citizenship?

T: No. Yet that bit I [sigh].

N: So do you know what the British Citizenship would give you?

T: I've never explored it, really.

N: So it's never occurred to you to want to get British Citizenship-

T: Oh, I, I, erm I did, I did try and it did not work. So that's, for me as a human being, I'm thinking, what's the difference really.

N: Why didn't it work, do you know?

T: Why did it not work? I've got no idea. I went and did the, er why did it not work, it's some law out there that I haven't read and somebody knows about it [laugh] more than me! Er I went and did the tt tt tt, Life in the UK course, but I was educated in England [laugh] oh gosh, and I went and I did erm Life in the UK, er test, and I passed. Then I went er on to fill in the naturalisation form and I did not get it. But I remember a friend of mine said, she, it, it, it, wa, once you get erm, what is it, your, you know, the 'no time limit to leave', what do they call it, there is a word they call it, 'indefinite leave to remain'. When you get your 'indefinite leave to remain' you HAVE to wait a year before you get the naturalisation. She did not wait a year, she applied straight away and she was granted the British Citizenship. .. So,

N: But you waited?

T: We waited after a year.

N: And then you didn't get it?

T: And we did not get it.

N: And you don't know why that is?

T: I don't know why that is and I haven't [laugh], because it doesn't affect my everyday life, I haven't gone and done it, well until now, when I went to get the children's passports and it, it, it, it did, I did not get the passports, so, yeah.

N: So the children erm are Ugandan citizens?

T: The passports I got now are Ugandan.

Lines 1029-1058

In this extract Tendo begins by questioning what difference there is between her status as resident and mine as citizen– we pay the same council tax – what makes us different? That difference in status is meaningless to Tendo because, as she so clearly says, it has no relevance in her everyday life. She dismisses it as a bureaucratic anomaly. And it is interesting to note that despite my suggesting that the passport debacle was a tumultuous upheaval in her life, Tendo appears to show more bewilderment than anything else.

She suggests she doesn't know what she can say to me about her resident status because she was one and the same resident who she feels was credible enough for her youngest child to be given a British passport, yet not credible regarding the others who were turned down. As she verbally mulls over this contradiction she clearly shows that she felt undermined as a PERSON. What more can she offer to be a credible citizen? She seems to struggle with the knowledge that all this was happening to her. She is uncomprehending as to why she was refused citizenship and what more she can do to be British. After all, she has the language, has passed the test, has lived in Britain more than half her life, pays her taxes and she follows the rules imposed by the immigration services. What can she do, to belong more?

Again I suggest that this bewilderment and incomprehension can be explained by her understanding of the whole issue being external to herself. It is, she says, important to other people, not to her, and she does not connect the issues with her everyday life, the meaning of her life as a human being, and the belonging that that brings. A theme, as we have seen, that she repeatedly comes back to.

She laughs and sighs throughout this dialogue but her laughter is more in incredulity and frustration than in humour.

I'd like to look in particular at the last two lines of the extract. I find them revealing in Tendo's refusal to acknowledge her children as Ugandan citizens. She cannot imagine how they *cannot* be British having been born and always lived here. How can they be Ugandan citizens, what belonging do they have in Uganda? And she only concedes that they have Ugandan passports – a qualitative difference.

This whole extract powerfully reflects the complete mismatch between Tendo's feelings of her

own and her children's belonging in Britain and the political reality which defines them as belonging to Uganda.

When pushed by me to tell me her feelings about what had happened, Tendo says she feels angry and discriminated against by, "a system that is not working very well". However, she also stresses that it has not affected her sense of belonging.

N: Has it affected how you, your sense of belonging, in any way?

T: No. .. It doesn't. It doesn't affect the sense of belonging er it's the same people I was with before and it's the same people I am with now, really.

N: Does it affect your sense of belonging to Britain?

T: No. It doesn't. It matters er to somebody somewhere, it doesn't matter to me. So I'm here and while I'm here, whatever the British do, I'll do.

Lines 1361-1366

Thus she repeats what she has explained a number of times before, that it is her relationships with people that give her a sense of belonging, and issues that she perceives as external to her sense of self, cannot affect that belonging. Tendo simply doesn't see how her belonging has anything to do with her political status. However it is difficult to imagine that Tendo's sense of belonging is not at least jolted by the insensitivity of government policy and practice which raises the question whether she may be denying her subjective feeling in an effort to maintain her sense of inherent belonging to Britain. This will be a subject I will pursue in a follow-up interview.

Applying Yuval-Davis' (2006) categories of belonging to Tendo's interview, it is clear that my primary interest is in her category of subjective identifications. That is, how Tendo defines belonging from her own experience and emotional attachments. Throughout her interview, and specifically in the examples I have used above, Tendo clearly portrays her friendships, her Christian faith, and 'living in Britain as the British do', as central to her belonging. However, this perspective of hers, and particularly how she so strongly feels she is a part of Britain, is hard to reconcile with her social locations as a black woman and mother from Uganda with 'indefinite leave to remain' in Britain. The ideological or political values behind British naturalisation law that render Tendo a non-citizen therefore sit in stark contrast with Tendo's sense of herself in Britain. Similarly in her Ugandan youth, her rejection of tribal categorisations and exclusivity that others were attempting to maintain, signified how her identifications and belonging did not match comfortably with people around her and her given social locations. Tendo cannot deny or refuse her social locations, she is defined by them, yet they reveal little about her lived life. Hence Tendo's interview raises clear questions about the relationship between social locations and belonging. Hegemonic societal thinking imposes

social locations but, if they inform identity, how does that identity relate to belonging? Does not *who* we are, define *how* we belong? In Tendo's case it would seem not.

In terms of social location there are undeniable contrasts between Tendo and me. She is a black African in her mid-thirties who spent half her life moving between Ugandan village and city life, and the other half in East London. I am a white British woman in my late fifties born and brought up in London who has lived the last 33 years in East London. Given the most obvious differences, what is it that allows or enables me to analyse, interpret and make sense of Tendo's stories? There are a combination of reasons but first and crucial is the collaboration that is the very stuff of narrative inquiry, the co-construction of narrative and meaning in a process involving two active participants (Riessman 2008). As such narratives are not simply stories told by one to another, but are stories and meaning created by the interaction of questions and responses of the two protagonists, interviewer and interviewee. The hermeneutic, interpretive analysis also allows a dialogic interaction between the spoken words and meanings of the interviewer and the reflexive understanding of the interviewer/analyst. Naturally that does not mean that I will simply be able to relate to everything Tendo says, but, I also believe the invisible axis of my social location as a second generation Jewish refugee has given me an experience of otherness, difference and not belongingness which plausibly enables me to empathise with the not-belongings and belongings of others.*

For example, while my own childhood was obviously very different to Tendo's, I can relate to her stories of tribal exclusion and belonging (though our responses were very different). For me, 'being' Jewish, without having a vestige of Jewish living, rendered me 'other' with both non Jews and Jews and I felt I belonged with neither. While Tendo regards her experiences as external and not relevant to her subjective belonging, for me they were affective and formative. And, given my own response, I find myself surprised that she felt so unaffected by her experiences. This sense of connection to the issue but experiencing a very different affective response resonates with other aspects of Tendo's stories. As a mother I relate to Tendo's story of her children being denied readmission to Britain from Uganda, but find it remarkable that her sense of belonging in Britain could be so unshaken by that exclusion. However, as a woman who has always held British citizenship, it is difficult for me to imagine what it must feel like to be deemed a non-citizen in the country you consider home.

I do not want to attempt to draw any formal conclusions from this limited look at one interview. However, the interview clearly raises a number of significant issues about cross cultural belonging and cross cultural understanding, as well as the difficulties in reconciling citizenship and belonging. These are issues I will explore in greater depth through additional interviews. Correspondingly, I will also further consider the nature of the relationship between

* The issue of minority axes is clearly central to discussing social location, identity and belonging but not one that I will discuss in this paper.

Yuval-Davis' proposed analytic categories of belonging through other women's lives. I hope this paper gives a flavour of the complexity of belonging as well as the richness of narrative inquiry and reflexive analysis. As stated earlier, I am interviewing about 15 women and expect that such exploration will reveal a broader picture of how belonging is configured for women across ethnicity, generation and class.

I conclude with the words Tendo said in thanking me for interviewing her. She told me I was brave to interview her, and I believe her words sum up a fundamental value that narrative interviewing can offer in understanding the complexities of people's lives.

T: Yeah. That is brave. It's not easy to listen to other people's stories, I don't think so. Erm, I feel we want to fix people. Rather than erm, listening, yeah. We want to offer solutions, I think, yeah, so that's why I say it's brave what you're doing. Yeah [laugh].

Lines 1392-1394

References

- Andrews, M. (1991) *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, politics, psychology*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Andrews, M. (2007) *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bell, V. (1999) 'Performativity and Belonging: An Introduction'. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 16 (2), pp.1-10.
- Castles, S. & Davidson A. (2000) *Citizenship and migration: globalization and the politics of belonging*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Fortier, A-M. (1999) 'Re-Membering Places and the Performance of Belonging(s)'. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 16 (2), pp.41-64.
- Frisch, M. (1990) *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Geddes, A. & Flavell, A. (eds.) (1999) *The Politics of Belonging: Migrants and Minorities in Contemporary Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

- Hall, S. & du Gay, P. (eds.) (1996) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- Jones, T. (2009) *Into the Woods*. The Guardian, 17 November, pp. 6-9.
- Lieblich, A. (1996) 'Some Unforeseen Outcomes of Conducting Narrative Research with People of One's Own Culture', in: Josselson, R. (ed.) *Ethics and Process in the Narrative Study of Lives*. London: Sage.
- Miller, D. (2008) *The Comfort of Things*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Miller, D. (2009) Personal conversation with Daniel Miller, Keynote speaker at FiLo (The Fieldwork in London Network) Day Workshop held at the Institute of Contemporary European Studies, Regents College London, 18 September 2009.
- Nava, M. (2007) *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference*. Oxford: Berg.
- Plummer, K. (2001) *Documents of Life 2*. London: Sage.
- Reay, D. (1998) *Class Work: Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling*. London: University College London Press.
- Riessman, C. (2005) 'Exporting ethics: A narrative about narrative research in South India'. *Health*. 9 (4), pp.473-490.
- Riessman, K.C. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. London: Sage.
- Samson, N. (2007) *Speaking of Home: Bangladeshi women in London's East End reflect on belonging*. BA Dissertation University of East London.
<http://www.uel.ac.uk/risingeast/archive07/academic/samson.htm>
- Samson, N. (2008) *'If it hadn't been for Hitler I wouldn't have been born': Second Generation Jewish refugee women in East London reflect on their belonging*. Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Sussex.
- Savage, M. Bagnall, G. & Longhurst, B. (2005) *Globalization and belonging*. London: Sage.
- Tamboukou, M. & Ball, S. J. (eds.) (2003) *Dangerous Encounters: Genealogy and Ethnography*. New York: Peter Lang.

Urry, J. (2000) *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the twenty-first century*. London: Routledge .

Westwood, S. and Phizacklea, A. (2000) *Trans-Nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Routledge.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) 'Belonging and the politics of belonging'. *Patterns of Prejudice*. 40 (3), pp.197-214.

Review

Review of 'Boehmer, E and Morton, S (2010) *Terror and The Postcolonial* Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford'

Madeline Clements

For those of us currently engaged in research in the humanities, social sciences and cultural studies in particular, it seems that every other conference, call for papers or special journal issue provides another attempt to revise understandings of contemporary global multiculturalism and in the wake of 9/11 and the ensuing 'War on Terror', the political, social and cultural discourses that surround it. Robert Duggan (2010) recently observed when convening a *Forum on Literature, Terrorism & 9/11* held at the University of Chichester that 'postcolonial studies ... with its established interests in cross-cultural communication and international encounters' seems especially well placed to respond to the 'challenge posed by the growth of international terrorism and the apparent intensification of conflict and suspicion'. This is a challenge which postcolonial literary theorists Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton's edited volume, *Terror and the Postcolonial*, attempt to meet by critically examining and exposing how 'terror' has been and continues to be constructed by colonial and neo-imperial forces in discourses both contemporary and historic.

This comparative study brings together essays drawn from a range of disciplines, including literature, theatre and film studies, geography, history and sociology, which relate to theories, histories, and genres of post/colonial terror. It features articles by well-known scholars such as the Achille Mbembe, author of the provocative 'On the Postcolony' (2001), and the political and cultural geographer Derek Gregory. It also provides an important opportunity to explore the ideas by younger theorists whose voices are less familiar, such as Stuart Price and Alex Tickell, who specialise in media and in English studies. Some of the essays have appeared in earlier publications, dating back to 2007. All provide insights which are highly topical – whether analysing the ways in which the British Press 'mediated' controversial contemporary events such as the shooting in Stockwell of Jean Charles de Menezes by Metropolitan police officers, a civilian casualty of anti-terror, or uncovering attempts to police the predominantly fictive figure of the Indian *thuggee* and the way in which this informs our understanding of counter-terroristic practices and the practices of neo-colonial power in the present day.

Given the specificity of the individual essays contained in this volume (some of which prove more accessible to the lay-person than others), and the breadth of theoretical, historical and cultural material with which they engage, one would be inclined to assume that most readers of *Terror and the Postcolonial* would select just one or two chapters to consider, depending on their research interests. However because of their density and scope, the contents of this

comparative study (themselves the outcome of papers given in workshop discussions), will if comprehensively read, provide a powerful sense of the rich and rapidly augmenting body of texts with which scholars from across different disciplines engage with when considering colonialist and neo-imperialist aspects of present-day 'terror'.

For example, in 'Terror Effects' (2010, pp.307-328), the essay with which the volume's concluding chapter on the 'Genres of Terror', Robert J. C. Young looks back to Edmund Burke's initial theories of the sublime and the beautiful in an attempt to understand how colonial power operates through the (ab)use of the painful pleasure of living in terror, 'depoliticizing politics by turning it into the form of the aesthetic' (2010, p. 314). Young's brief discussions of this 'affect', in particular its dangers, resonate with comments by Tickell in his excellent essay 'Excavating Histories of Terror: Thugs, Sovereignty and the Colonial Sublime' (2010, pp. 177-225), contextualised by Boehmer and Morton in the preceding section of the book under the heading of 'Histories of Post/Colonial Terror'.

Tickell draws a distinction between Burke's anxieties concerning the unfathomable sublime which, in the context of British India 'threaten[s] to dissolve the certainties of the colonial subject', and Immanuel Kant's notion in which the empowered (Western, male, sovereign) 'perceiving subject' is renewed and redeemed by a sense of transcendent reason after experiencing an 'imaginative breakdown in the face of fearful nature' (2010, p.194). Tickell is at pains to point out the Kantian model of the sublime, as being similar to today's discourses of anti-terror that places the (terrorist) Other 'beyond the category of the human ... rob[bing] us of [our sense of] empathy' (2010, p.195). The ability to empathise – as the different essays repeatedly remind the reader – is something that remains vital if we are find ways of thinking through and beyond contemporary states of fear and terror.

I have mentioned the cross-disciplinary reach of *Terror and the Postcolonial*. The book contains several papers which are pertinent to my own doctoral thesis, which looks at the fictions produced after 9/11 by four South Asian Muslim writers, many of which deal with the representation of terror – and the Muslims framed in such acts. The essay by Robert Eaglestone on 'Contemporary Fiction and Terror' (2010, pp. 361-379) for example is one I have referred to when outlining the contexts of my research, conducted at a time when a slew of fictional narratives have attempted to grapple with what Eaglestone describes as 'the melange of anxiety and anger that make up the West's fuzzy understanding of the current crisis' (2010, p.361). Eaglestone's paper both provides tools for discussing the role and responsibilities of today's postcolonial writer in interrogating terror, and touches on how terror's effects are measured and mediated through individual literary texts, such as Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*, a novel, which I will be examining for my thesis. It is one of a number of essays to which I will return as I continue to explore contemporary fiction's capacity to provide what Emma Brodzinski (2010) terms 'an aestheticized space for reflection which recognises how

mediatised responses are constructed yet resists ... principles of fear and anxiety and allows for a more critical dialogue with the experience of terror' (2010, p. 379).

A number of research students in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences are engaged in PhD projects which explore aspects of twenty-first century terror – whether Europe's 'war on terror', visual representations of terror, or constructed understandings of 'jihad' – from the perspectives of refugee studies, journalism, and film studies, to name a few research fields. I suggest that an exploration of the publication *Terror and the Postcolonial*, would greatly enhance any such student's understanding of the range of scholarship now available in this growing area of research, and could provide the specialist with new ways of looking at the material that forms the focus of their research, as it has already begun to do with mine.

References

Duggan, R. (2010) 'CFP Forum on Literature, Terrorism and 9/11 – University of Chichester, UK – 29 May 2010', *Postcolonial Studies Association e-mail list*, 26 March.

Mbembe, A. (2001) *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Notes on contributors

Marie Godin holds a Masters in Social Science from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and a Masters of Science in Forced Migration from the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University. Her expertise lies in the field of gender and migration, migration and development and undocumented migrants.

Timothy Jenkins is Assistant Director of Research, University of Cambridge, and Dean & Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. For his most recent book – ‘The Life of Property’ (2010) – see <http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?rowtag=JenkinsLife>

Tahir Zaman is a second year doctoral candidate at the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging at the University of East London. He successfully completed a Masters in Refugee Studies at UEL in 2007 where his dissertation ‘Keeping the Faith: Islamic Perspectives on Forced Migration’ explored the role of Islam and the mosque in the lives of the Somali diaspora in London. He is currently conducting fieldwork in Damascus, Syria on how Iraqi forced migrants in Damascus mobilise religious traditions in exile.

Anthea Williams studied Theology at Durham University, followed by pastoral training at Lincoln Theological College and membership of the Lady Margaret Hall Settlement in Kennington, South London. She then spent almost thirty years in full-time professional Church of England ministry, combining this latterly with academic studies in Applied Theology and Social Science Research Methodology. She left parish ministry in 2004, to give more time to her voluntary work as a Chaplain to Police, and is now a part-time Public Enquiry Officer at a police station to help her identify with her 'flock'. Anthea has studied for the last six years at the Centre for Narrative Research, supervised by Maria Tamboukou and Molly Andrews, and hopes to be awarded her Ph.D by the end of 2010.

Mary Fogarty is a PhD candidate in Music at the University of Edinburgh supervised by Prof. Simon Frith and Dr. Nick Prior. The dissertation is a three-year study of global b-boy/b-girl culture investigating the relationship between musical tastes and dance practices. Currently a Lecturer in Dance: Urban Practice at the University of East London, Fogarty is a practicing b-girl who has performed at Breakin' Convention (Edinburgh Festival Theatre), We B-girlz (Berlin), and Style in Progress (Toronto), amongst other events.

Charlie de Ledesma is a member of the editorial board.

Nicola Samson As the daughter of Jewish refugees Nicola is first generation British born and spent her childhood in central and north London. For the last 33 years she has lived, worked and brought her children up in East London. Having trained as a journalist, much of her working life has actually been spent in a variety of education projects. She began studying at the age of 50 and it continues to challenge her sense of who she is.

Madeline Clements is a member of the editorial board.

Editorial board

Madeline Clements has a BA in English from Oxford and an MA in National and International Literature in English from London University. She joined UEL in September 2009 to study for her PhD, 'Orienting Muslims: Mapping Global Spheres of Affiliation and Affinity in Contemporary South Asian Fiction', supervised by Dr. Peter Morey. She has participated in his 'Framing Muslims' research network, has a review forthcoming in the 'Journal of Postcolonial Writing' (August edition), and is currently preparing a paper entitled 'Bombs and Mullahs: Negotiating Landmines in the fictions of Hamid and Hanif' for Newcastle University's conference on 'The Depoliticisation of 9/11'. She also regularly reviews new fiction for the 'Times Literary Supplement'.

After completing an MA in Cultural Studies at the University Of East London in 2003, **Jamie Hakim** returned in 2007 to embark on a PhD. Tentatively titled, 'Affect, "The Six Day War" and The Zionist Territorialisation of the British Jewish Community', it uses Deleuze & Guattari's theories of affect to attempt to explain the sudden surge in Zionism after the Arab-Israeli war of that year. He has a review forthcoming in the cultural studies journal 'New Formations' and teaches undergraduates media and cultural studies at UEL. Outside of academia Jamie is a senior contributing editor at gay popular culture magazine 'Attitude'.

Roshini Kempadoo is a London based Photographer, Media Artist, and Reader in Media Practice at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London. Recent exhibitions include: 'Roshini Kempadoo work: 1990 – 2004', (2004) Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery, London and 'Liminal: A question of position' (2009) Rivington Place, London. Recent publications include: 'Amendments: A fictional re-imagining of the Trinidad archive.' (2008) 'Journal of Media Practice', 9:2. 'Back Routes: historical articulation in multimedia production,' in Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien (eds.) 2007 'Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice', Wallflower Press, London. Current research includes 'Domino Effects' (2010) a photographic and video artwork centred on Trinidad; 'Arrival' (2010) an artwork referring to the migratory crossing to Spain from North Africa; and a chapter in Thornham, H. & Weissmann, E. (eds.) forthcoming book 'Renewing Feminism: Stories, Fantasies and Futures' (2012) by IB Tauris.

Charles de Ledesma is a lecturer on the School's Music Culture and Journalism pathways. In music, his lectures cover popular genre history, from blues to electronic dance; and in journalism, his seminars cover print/radio techniques and practice. Charles is putting the finishing touches to his MPhil on popular music, where he is researching contemporary electronic trance music events from global and materialist perspectives. Charles also maintains a foot in journalism's working world in his capacity as Associated Press London bureau radio

producer. This autumn sees the publication of his paper, 'Psychedelic Trance Music Making in the UK: Rhizomatic Craftsmanship and the Global Market Place, in the Graham St John-edited 'The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance' (Routledge).

Peter Morey is Reader in English Literature in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. He is the author of 'Fictions of India: Narrative and Power' (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 'Rohinton Mistry' (Manchester University Press, 2004), and co-author of 'Framing Muslims: Representation from 9/11 to 7/7' (Harvard University Press, forthcoming in 2010). He is also editor of 'Alternative Indias: Writing, Nation and Communalism' (Rodopi, 2006) and is joint editor of a forthcoming volume of the postcolonial journal 'Interventions' (12:2) on 'Muslims in the Frame'. He has published widely on colonial and postcolonial literature and theory, including essays in the Cambridge Companions' to 'E. M. Forster' and 'Salman Rushdie', as well as numerous other articles. At present he is Principal Investigator of the AHRC-funded International Research Network, 'Framing Muslims: Structures of Representation in Culture and Society since 9/11'.

Derek Robbins is Professor of International Social Theory in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of East London. He is the author of 'The Work of Pierre Bourdieu' (1991) and of 'Bourdieu and Culture' (2000); the editor of two 4-volume collections of articles on Bourdieu in the Sage Masters of Contemporary Social Thought series (2000 and 2005) and of a 3-volume collection of articles on Lyotard in the same series (2004). His 'On Bourdieu, Education and Society' was published by Bardwell Press in July, 2006, and he was the editor of the special number of 'Theory, Culture and Society' on Bourdieu (23, 6, November, 2006). He is currently writing 'The Internationalization of French Social Thought, 1950-2000' for publication by Sage.

Maria Tamboukou is Reader in Sociology and Co-director of the Centre for Narrative Research. Her research interests and publications are in feminist theories, foucauldian and deleuzian analytics, and autobiographical narratives.

University of East London
Docklands Campus
University Way
London E16 2RD

www.uel.ac.uk/hss

University of East London
Stratford Campus
Water Lane
Stratford E15 4LZ

