Editorial

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Taking Place: some reflections on site, performance and community

Introduction

With increased interest in issues of site and place in performance studies generally it is timely to consider the impact such research is having within the specific fields encompassed by this journal. What position does it occupy within applied performance theory and practice? And what research is taking place within our particular fields that in turn asks questions of site and place? Before we go any further it should be pointed out that we have opted here for the designation 'applied performance' to suggest a possible expansion – beyond simply 'drama' and 'theatre' – in the way applied practices relate to site and place. Thus 'performance' functions as an umbrella term, aligning itself with Stephen Bottoms' inclination to:

> view everything from written plays to group-devised performances to street interventions to installation art as existing on an identifiable continuum of performance practices, and as engaging in different ways with underlying questions of site, text, spectatorship, representation, cultural context, and so on. (2003, p.173)

Where applied 'drama' or 'theatre' are used, or 'drama education', they refer to those specific practices: broadly, the uses of drama/theatre in a range of different community, outreach or educational settings

As for 'site' and 'place', though difficult to apply consistently as discrete terms since they inevitably overlap as spatial designations, we have tried to use the former where specific locations are meant – an artist's chosen site for a piece of performance, for instance. The latter, meanwhile, refers to broader conceptions of location as they relate to identity and difference, and a psychological or physiological response to one's positioning. Ultimately, however, we cannot avoid the conclusion that there are times when a site is also a place, and vice versa.

In this editorial, we introduce some thoughts on approaching the tensions and overlaps of site, place and applied performance. We suggest that both site and place have, in a sense, always been integral to applied practices. However, this association has, perhaps in its refraction through notions of 'community', sometimes suffered from being seen critically to be allied with nostalgic and teleological impulses. Then, referring to developments within the visual arts, we attempt to draw out some of the radical premises at play in this specific field, not least since it was here that site-specific practice first emerged. In particular we are keen to make the connection with recent context-specific work which seems to point to an engagement – reminiscent of the concerns of applied performance – not only with 'certain sites' but also with a mobilisation of activity involving the users of those sites. In the section entitled geopathology, we look more closely at the criticisms that have become attached to 'place' in recent decades and how these criticisms might now be challenged and turned round, with particular reference to the fields encompassed by this journal.

Finally, we offer an overview of the selected contributions to this special issue, whereby attention needs to be drawn to a distinction between the articles with which we begin and the shorter practitioner responses that follow them.

Nostalgia and teleology

Almost by definition applied performance practices take place, in their various forms, in locations not generally designated formally as theatres. Instead they effectively *create* theatres – places of doing as well as showing and looking – *elsewhere*, in 'another kind of space'. Typically such practices seek out particular constituencies – or indeed *produce* them by identifying them as such in the first place – and they *apply* themselves to the contexts or 'homes' in which those constituencies tend to operate. In that very general sense applied performance might be deemed both site-specific and *un*specific. On the one hand it implies some form of engagement with place, with the particular location of certain communities or situations; on the other it can be said to amount to the importing of 'foreign bodies' whose relationship to site is premised on an act of implementation – even invasion – from the outside. Already a potential tension arises then around questions of manner and degree when it comes to the application – or one might say displacement – of performance practices to specific localities: what *kind* of application is involved? To what extent is specificity of context (site or place and its users) the determining factor in the work that is produced, as against the imposition of extraneous influences?[i]

Though taking myriad forms and occurring in many distinct circumstances, within the terms of performance generally, applied practices have often been viewed – and, sometimes dismissed – as teleological: as 'educational' or 'political' forms imbued first and foremost with a committed desire to bring about certain forms of socio-cultural change or to effect empowerment or conscientisation at some level. Hence, the objectives of such work are seen to be intimately bound up with bringing about resolution, improvement or some form of productive *outcome* in the real world (as opposed simply to provoking a response whatever it may happen to be). Effectively, whether through intervention or integration, the work aspires to a kind of creative democracy in action, which may well have, as its project, the establishment or cementing of a given collective identity or community-belonging. It is here that the charge of an implicit paradigm of *nostalgia* has been brought: the practices concerned are supposedly intent primarily on establishing the sense of an integrated, homogenous identity within a targeted host community, and therefore guilty of imposing a form of misconceived idealism or limitation.

Whether or not this may be the case, nostalgia is an interesting term to consider with regard to place. It literally splits – as Milan Kundera's narrator explains in the opening pages of the novel *Ignorance* (2002, p.5) – into the pain suffered (*algos*) as a consequence of being unable to fulfil the dream of return (*nostos*) to a location perceived to be 'home'. The narrator goes on to invoke *The Odyssey*, that 'founding epic of nostalgia', describing the intricacy of its protagonist's eventual decision, after twenty years of travel and displacement, to return to Ithaca. That is, in effect, to privilege 'the apotheosis of the known (return)' over 'the ardent exploration of the unknown (adventure)'. Thus, in coming to rest on his laurels, Odysseus 'chose the finite (for the return is a reconciliation with the finitude of life)' rather than 'the infinite (for adventure never intends to finish)' (pp.7-8).

Kundera's invocation of the Odysseus parable permits us to see that the concept of nostalgia itself is dependent on place identity, but not necessarily the other way around. That is, differing identifications with place can arise than those seeking 'inalienable belonging' or 'a coming home to common knowledge', a state Kundera in fact equates etymologically with ignorance (p.6). In Eugène van Erven's discussion in this issue around the question of 'authentic locals vis-à-vis immigrants' in the work of two Dutch theatre companies, for example, he draws attention to the important critical notion, derived from Stuart Hall, that place identity 'is always evolving and at best only temporarily fixed for strategic reasons, to enable an individual – whether locally born or migrant – to act' (p.). As he goes on to suggest, for applied practices concerned with community-belonging it is vital to attend assiduously to the way such places are *imagined* and *contested*.

The situation of art

If, in its performance practices, it *may* be possible sometimes to ally the term 'applied' with sentiments of 'lost places' and 'ultimate ends', it is also worth entertaining a further possibility of definition – one commensurate in spirit with the 'adventure' and 'exploration of the unknown' spurned by Odysseus – that of *bringing into play*. It is this notion which steers the discussion towards a consideration of the way site and its specificities have evolved – and continue to do – within the realm of visual and live art practices where they are principally associated with radical tendencies seeking, amongst other things, to redefine *what* art is by questioning *where* it occurs. As we discuss later, such *bringing into play* can also be usefully transferred to matters of place and applied performance practices.

Stuart Hall has encapsulated illuminatingly the broad 'cultural turn' towards postmodernism as 'modernism in the streets'. In other words, 'it is the end of modernism *in the museum* and the penetration of the modernist ruptures into everyday life'. This requires us to 'consider the proliferation of sites and places in which the modern artistic impulse is taking place, in which it is encountered and seen' (Hall, 2004, pp.288-289). As is well documented, the move towards site-specific art stemmed not only from the desire to escape the clutches of a cloying institutionalism, the 'original' or 'fixed' location of a canonical museological culture, but also from a recognition of the viewer's position of contemplation of the artwork as both active and contingent. Hence, according to Nick Kaye, a 'transitive definition of site' emerges, involving a 'displacement of the viewer's attention toward the room which both she and the object occupy'. This forces a 'self-conscious perception in which the viewer confronts her own effort "to locate, to place" the work and so her own acting out of the gallery's function as the place for viewing' (2000, p.2). Both aspects of the shift towards site-specificity are, thus, propelled by anti-elitist, democratising impulses. The emphasis on a generative, participatory spectator, moreover, is also a clear gesture in the direction of 'theatricality', as Kaye proceeds to show (p.3). The site of the gallery becomes a place for the enactment of showing and looking. So, a relationship involving site, stimulus and spectator – in which nothing is certain from the start (or even by the finish) – is brought into play. And it is precisely this triad, in all its ludic permutations, that might be said to constitute the artwork.

The conceptual properties particular to site-specificity as a form appear now to have spread their influence so as to produce new areas of practice within visual art. In what seems to be an all-out embracing of the cultural paradigm shift implied by Hall's 'modernism in the streets', relational

aesthetics, as theorised by Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), or its bed-fellow, the new situationism described by Claire Doherty (2004), point to practices in which transitivity, the prompting of inter-human relations within given social contexts, is central or, indeed, *is* the artwork. As Bourriaud declares: 'Art is the place that produces a specific sociability' (2002, p.16). Crucially, though, the transitivity that is sought introduces 'that formal disorder which is inherent to dialogue'. As such, it 'denies the existence of any specific "place of art", in favour of a forever unfinished discursiveness' (p.26). An example which encompasses such open-ended interaction, and at the same time quite literally enacts Hall's image, is given by the work of the Colombian Colectivo Cambalache, who run a 'street museum' as a barter and informal redistribution initiative:

> Originally founded in an area of downtown Bogotá known as El Cartucho, the museum provides a process of encounter and disencounter through trade and the circulation of secondhand merchandise. The museum consists of a wooden porter's cart (the Swift) which contains a stock of artefacts and objects that have been obtained on the streets through chance, through scavenging refuse dumps and through bartering with passers-by. […] Drifting through urban spaces the street museum parks up to display and trade its contents. Visitors are invited to take something that they desire in exchange for something that they themselves no longer have a use for. Showing the museum in the street is in acknowledgement of a public that is often overlooked by city authorities and museums alike: illiterates, the homeless, junkies, the unemployed, beggars. […] The museum is without walls, without a collection policy and without a fixed location. The paradoxical collection that it 'contains' can therefore be read as a testimony to the streets, to the people and to the kind of social relations that are in operation within material culture – not as a static representation but as a wealth that is constantly being redistributed and redefined. The project celebrates exchange and the street as a space for the circulation of knowledge. (Blamey, 2002, p.261)

Whether or not he would concur with the application of Bourriaud's specific label of relational art/aesthetics, the Portuguese performance examples Malcolm Miles draws on in this issue also would appear to embrace many of its properties. Involving voluntary collaborators, the project – part of a cultural programme – was premised on a 'refusal of the dominant mode of cultural production…in which the boundary between art and social process is a site of creative tension, not a dividing line' (p.). Thus, it inverted the notion of the artist as provider of culture, working via existing social networks to initiate a series of everyday life creative interventions in a multi-ethnic social housing district of Lisbon. Crucially, for Miles, the project operated from a non-teleological position in which 'the means are what is left when the end is discounted…values are enacted rather than represented' (p.).

Relational or situational art as touched on above might be said, then, to be premised on a form of ongoing negotiation or indeed *troubling* of its chosen sites: on a recognition of identity informed by site being not only subject to multiple possibilities and complexities of construction but also in permanent transition. Thus, as Miwon Kwon broadly argues in *One Place After Another* (2002) – which represents one of the key contributions to the debate on identity, site and place in art – amongst artists and cultural theorists the understanding of site has been diverted from a fixed, physical location to somewhere/something constituted through social, economic, cultural and political processes. Paradoxically, therefore, to be situated might mean to be *dis*placed in fact (or

between physical sites), the new condition of being recognising itself as a form of 'belonging-in-transience'. In his response piece in this issue Acty Tang seems to evoke just such a notion. Growing up in Hong Kong but living and working now in a South Africa fraught with the legacy of recent apartheid struggle, his perception of himself in relation to his performance work is of a dislocated body in search of an ethics of practice: 'I have no claim on this land, and therefore no claim on how right or wrong the rules are. I only hope that my floating in space can alert audiences of another foreign reality, beyond what they recognise' (p.).

Geopathology

The paradox of belonging takes us to the heart of 'geopathology'. According to Helen Nicholson, applied performance practices are closely connected to the 'politics of context, place and space … bring[ing] into focus questions of allegiance, identity and belonging' (2005, p. 13). Yet 'place' is a deeply complex and contested concept and to privilege place as an increasingly important concern in applied performance practices, as we are suggesting in this issue, warrants an engagement with that complexity. Una Chaudhuri has coined the term geopathology to describe the 'century-long struggle with the problem of place … the painful politics of place' (1997, p. 15). Adopting geopathology as the title of this section therefore, offers a further context for the articles in this issue and three areas within the debates surrounding place seem particularly relevant to applied performance practices: global/local binaries, distinctions between place/non-place and nomadism. This journey reflecting on discourses of place takes us to a strikingly similar position as the previous discussion on developments in site-specificity and visual art, involving questions of the non-teleological, transitivity, belonging-in-transience and a *bringing into play* philosophy.

The global/local

Fundamental to contemporary discussions about place is the recognition of its recent 'poor relation' status, in comparison to space in particular. As part of this relegation, place has become increasingly associated with 'the local', whilst space (and, to an extent, time) has been positioned with 'the global'. There is a theoretical and political hierarchy implicit here: '[T]he global is often equated with space, capital, history and agency, and the local with place, labor, and tradition. Place has dropped out of sight in the "globalization craze" of recent years' (Escobar, 2001, p.141). Some theorists have opposed the lack of attention awarded place during the preoccupation with matters of space and time in the last half century (see, for example, Casey, 1993), yet space seems to have maintained the material and theoretical high ground. Space, and movement through space, are still the dominant tropes when it comes to reflecting the vicissitudes of contemporary life on a global scale.

Place has struggled to position itself, then, during this preoccupation with the spatial. However, as van Erven touches on in his article in this issue, to favour space and ignore place as a conceit worthy of complex and rigorous interrogation is to ignore a seemingly persistent desire for the conversion of space into place through human practices. The importance of the performance of place through practices has been thoroughly argued (e.g. de Certeau (1984); Lefebvre (1991)), and Tuan sums up the key tenor of these debates thus: 'When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place. … [P]eople undertake to change amorphous space into articulated geography'

(1977, pp. 73, 83). Arguably, then, there is still a desire for located belonging, a need for place habituated through performative behaviours that stands in contrast to the claims for multiple and transient 'spatial' living. (See Escobar, *op cit*, and Massey, 1997, 2005.) Several of the pieces in this issue touch on this and burrow more deeply into how we perform familiar places (see, for example, Bradby and Lavery, and Whalley and Miller).

The global/local issue is not resolved by simply accepting and revalidating the desire for locality, however, as Tuan and others have done. Belonging to a geographical place may *not* offer an ideal antidote to 'amorphous space', after all. Territorialisation, introversion, defensiveness and boundary-making that excludes difference can be all too familiarly depressing signs of more negative practices associated with located or local place. Sometimes exacerbating this are traditional and uncritiqued assumptions of 'community'; community and place are intricately sewn together and, in certain manifestations – invoking the retrospective idealism of nostalgia discussed above – can lead to the establishment of areas that are oppressive, ghetto-ised and hostile to outsiders (Baumann, 2001). This is one interpretation of place that has been hoisted in opposition to fluid, global and – by intimation – liberating 'space'; it is just one potential 'problem of place'.

Such geopathological issues are rife within the context of applied performance practices. Drama teachers have had to become adept at challenging prejudices arising from overtly place-based tensions. Inventive role-play allegories or dramas situated in times of historical confrontation are devised in an attempt to shift jaundiced views and present multiple perspectives where territorial ownership of located place is intended to be challenged. For applied theatre/drama practitioners, often working beyond the statutory institution of schools, there can be similar manifestations of cultural restriction associated with particular local places and community customs. In this issue, for example, Jerri Daboo's encounter with the practices of self-harm as a contemporary echo of *sati* provides a thought-provoking reading of the traditions of one emplaced community transferred to another environment. Here the global/local binary is thrown into confusion as new lives are impacted by the shadows of specific cultural practices of a still-present, yet distant place and community.

Non-place

So, to consider the impact of place in our applied practices is to immediately engage with the positioning of place as 'local' with all its complex positive and negative associations. When place is not being criticised for its parochialism, as suggested above, it has been accused of other faults: of blandness and homogeneity, for example. Lesley Hill describes visiting the Forbidden City in China, inspired by the 'double-strength symbolism of Chinese communism and Imperialism entwined at this site' – until she saw the Starbucks (Hill and Paris, 2006, p. 4). The increasing presence of such chains across the world is indicative of global homogeneity; a fading of local 'authenticity' is deemed one of the failings attached to such western capitalist expansion. Local meanings and the individuality attached to local places are thought to be dissipating as a result of such global take-overs. The outcry against the increasing blandness of places and their lack of distinctive character reaches its peak in the debates about non-place. From the global/local, the struggle moves, then, to issues of non-place in geopathological debates and the relevance for applied performance practices.

Since Marc Augé popularised the concept of non-place, it has stood as a mainly negative, reductive alternative to place: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place' (Augé, 1995, pp. 77-78). He equates non-place with such 'places' as hotel chains, shopping malls, aircraft and leisure parks, and suggests that 'place invested with meaning is in conflict with a new form of space emerging in supermodernity' (Augé, 2005, p. 4). These new forms of space, non-places, are barely tenanted, homogenous areas of transit. Despite critiques of Augé for his simplification of such spaces,[ii] 'non-place' has somehow come to represent all that might be unhealthy about a global, transient lifestyle. Such spaces symbolise the 'abstractly familiar' consumerist world of supermodernity in which 'people are always, and never, at home' (Augé, 1995, p. 109).

Challenging and deconstructing 'non-place' has relevance to applied performance practices. First, it could be argued that non-places are primarily places of privilege; access to such places-of-transit is intended for the affluent. As Terry Eagleton styles it: '[T]he rich have mobility while the poor have locality' (2003, p. 22). By default, there is an implicit politicisation of 'place', therefore: if 'non-place' is not known, 'place' cannot be relativised. Without access to or experience of non-places, place becomes an accepted, uncontested way of being; there is no 'othering' of place through alternatives. For Eagleton's poor, place simply is; there is no psychological or material option. Second, as Lee Miller and Joanne Whalley suggest in their response in this issue, are there times when being 'generic' in 'non-places' is, in fact, desirable? Is there sometimes a *desire* for generic effacement: do we *seek* not to be noticed? In other words, the anonymity offered by being in 'no definable place' might be deemed positive. Third, as Carl Lavery proposes in this issue, we might *not* feel 'alienated by [a] sense of spatial defamiliarisation'; instead, for him, 'separation *from* place produces my attachment *to* place' (p. ---). Being out of place or in a non-place can offer a particular lens *on* place, perhaps. Fourth, non-place may be temporally prescribed with a short time-limit for some. Georges Perec, for instance, talks of the 'minor problems' of adapting to 'living' in an airport, of how an airport could provide all the services required and that adapting 'habits and rhythms' would be a displacement 'more apparent than real' (1997, p. 27). An airport may quickly become practised place, he seems to suggest. (Indeed, there is the celebrated case of Merhan Karimi Nasseri who has lived in a corner of Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris since 1988.) How quickly do some territorialise and make the strange reassuringly familiar? Lucy Richardson's account of LIFT's Phakhama project offers some insight into the *way* applied theatre might engage with this transformation. Here is an ironic re-reading of one of our opening points, where the participants' relationship to site is challenged as they struggle to emplace their 'extraneous' selves through an imbrication of past and present.

Nomadism

Engaging with geopathology and struggling with contemporary issues of place provides an introduction and context for the reframing and rethinking of applied performance practices through matters of place (and site), and is exemplified in the following articles. There is a further issue worth touching upon here, however, that might add to such thinking: nomadism. Deterritorialisation and nomadism are perceived to epitomise global movements from the mid-twentieth century to the present day. Certainly, the work of drama teachers and applied theatre

practitioners frequently engages with displacement and adaptation to changed locations and, as Jane Rendell points out, languages of critical and artistic discourse – often concerned with questions of identity, difference and subjectivity – are frequently spatial (e.g. mapping, locating, situating, positioning, crossing boundaries, transgressing). As Rendell goes on to explain:

> For those concerned with issues of identity – race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity – spatial metaphors constitute powerful political devices which can be employed as critical tools for examining the relationship between the construction of identities and the politics of location. In such ongoing theoretical disputes as the essentialism/constructionism debate, positionality provides a way of understanding knowledge and essence as contingent and strategic – where I am makes a difference to what I know and who I can be (But I am not going to be [t]here forever). (2002, p.46)

Hence, moving *between* two or more places is a paradigm for how we engage in constantly evolving processes of identification. At the same time, it encapsulates the manner in which we may come to know and be transformed by a variety of 'unknown things'. Nomadism, then, is not simply a physical reality but also reflects interdisciplinary knowing, involving a similar 'movement of discourse', reminiscent, as Greg Ulmer suggests, of 'the ancient topos of rhetorical invention – the walk through places' (1989, p.167).

It is this *potential* for the nomadic evolving in current discourses on place that is exciting for applied performance practices and maps onto recent developments in site-specificity (and the visual arts). Doreen Massey's work in geography is particularly worth noting here. Initially she promoted a 'global sense of place', a progressive 'meeting place', where boundaries are unnecessary because place is constantly shifting through the heterogenous interactions that constitute it (Massey, 1997). More recently, Massey has been at the forefront of rejecting the binary of space and place (global/local) in her suggestion to think of the world as 'coeval' (all places are of equal duration or age). She suggests that we inhabit a world with a 'plurality of trajectories' (2005, p. 76); one world must not be thought of as 'behind' another on a global timeline of development, waiting to be 'dragooned into line' (*ibid.* p.82) but all worlds exist spatially in parallel. Space is merged with place – place can be as abstract as space and space as local as place – and, she suggests, is open yet specific. Places are a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (*ibid.* p.9). Massey makes great play of the mountains in the Lake District, UK, as an example of fluid place, pointing out that even these mountains are visitors to that place, interpolators millions of years ago. Each place is specific and identifiable and has characteristics redolent of that location. Yet places, spatially equal across the world, are crucibles for a range of people and their narratives *to date*. They will change.

Considering place as intersticial and fluid, as Massey suggests, sits well for applied performance practices. Place loses its bounded locality and becomes something distinct, resonant, deeply known, specific and reassuring – yet continuously moving and evolving. Such a perception of place might be said to encourage Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 'nomadic thought'. As the translator of their *A Thousand Plateaus* explains:

> "Nomad thought" does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exterioriority. It does not suppose an identity: it notes difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. … Nomad thought replaces the closed equation of representation. (Massumi, 1988, p.xii/xiii)

If each coeval place is read as 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far', 'nomadic minds' become the foundation for these simultaneous stories to date; nomadism is implicit in the notion of a meeting place with a range of different narratives. Connections are made here on the basis of presupposing mutual transformation. Returning to points made earlier in this piece, then, a non-teleological, *bringing into play* philosophy emerges that offers much for applied performance practices. The encounter with place does not imply striving for a resolution or an ending but suggests instead a 'permanent temporariness' – no less familiar or comfortable for being open ended.

Performing site/thinking place

The call for papers for this special issue on site and place posed questions along the following lines:

- What can or should 'applied' mean in the context of place/site?
- Where is the place or constituency for which or with whom the applied performance practitioner makes work?
- What are the new dimensions, excursions, transformations, transgressions of site and place? How and where are they taking place? And how are applied practices engaging with them?

As these questions imply, we sought to establish both what kinds of site were *currently* being identified within applied performance practices – and how notions of place impinged on them – and where the *future* dimensions of site might be located. The response this generated in terms of proposals was considerable – in itself indicative of the degree of current interest in this area of practice and theory – and we have only been able to develop, and eventually include here, less than a quarter of the original material received.

As a specialist within the field of visual art, Malcolm Miles provides an important link with a discipline whose pertinence to applied performance we have tried to demonstrate. Casting doubt over the possibility of a concept such as a place-based community identity, Miles is nevertheless concerned to argue for the potential of 'cultural work' to insinuate itself into everyday social life in such a way that it 'achieves form', as he puts it. Thus, in an echo of Lefebvrian urban theory, within the context of a multi-ethnic, social housing district of Lisbon, art might be said to be performing '*praxis* and *poiesis* on a social scale: the art of living in the city as a work of art' (Lefebvre, 1996, p.173).

Eugène van Erven, one of the world's leading authorities on community theatre, considers the evolving practices of two well-established companies in Holland: Stut Theatre from Utrecht and Wijktheater of Rotterdam (RWT). Both are accustomed to producing theatre for working-class communities but have recently found themselves effectively *forced* to engage with such constituencies under site-specific circumstances. Battling against entrenched views of such work

as particular to the privileged domain of 'avant-garde experimentation', the companies have in fact found their respective practices to have been exposed to exciting new possibilities of artistic expression as a result.

La

wrence Bradby and Carl Lavery bring to the issue an example of performative walking in site and place, a phenomenon that has increasingly gained momentum and interest.[iii] In a 'planned drift' around 'quotidian Norwich', the authors naturally fall into conversation with one another as well as with members of the community they happen upon. Using an epistolary form, which replicates the space of encounter opened up by the act of walking, Bradby and Lavery reflect subsequently on questions relating to performer and audience, place and non-place, the discrete rhythms of particular places and the potential for building community through sharing an impromptu moment of 'reverie'.

Jerri Daboo draws on postcolonial feminism as a way of understanding the multiple sites that are inhabited by, in this instance, twelve Asian women who undertake a series of workshops with Daboo in an attempt to relieve some of the daily pressures in their relocated lives in Bristol. The re-siting of these women's existences, their cultural associations and Daboo's own place as a researcher/practitioner are interrogated. This piece explores a range of interpretations of 'site' attached to one applied theatre case study.

Not unlike van Erven, Charles Nwadigwe also introduces instances of drama in search of an appropriate place to perform, though in quite distinct conditions. Drawing on the case of a nomadic population of migrant fishermen in Nigeria, he analyses attempts to utilise theatre techniques to introduce the imperative of adopting safe fishing practices. Resulting in the intriguing circumstance of performances held on river banks witnessing some performers actually rowing boats or swimming on to stage, Nwadigwe considers the effect on the communication of meaning in such an overlapping of real and representational space.

Daniel Watt's article represents perhaps the greatest challenge to those versed primarily in applied drama and theatre practices. Unusually for this journal it presents an instance of performance research within the context of *higher* education, whereby the constituency of 'learning participants' encompasses the members of the research team involved – a site-specific group of practitioners and academics based in Wales – and the delegates of a conference at which the work was presented (identified as witnesses to the process). Crucially it emerges as an example of practice as research, which uses performance as both the object and means of enquiry. Its conclusion is to recognise the witness as a potential site for the generation of performance knowledge. In other words, the notion of site resides within renewed situations of participant encounter with material presented, a process in which it is implied performance has a relation to knowledge that is 'not based on evidence, testimony and truth' but that 'admits loss, forgetfulness and uncertainty' (p.)

Practitioner responses

As a second section, we asked for responses to the following question by those engaged with

relevant practice:

. What do you perceive to be the challenges and/or opportunities for your work when applied to place/site and 'communities'?

As already mentioned earlier in this editorial Acty Tang engages with the problematic of displacement as a Chinese citizen now creating site-specific work in post-apartheid South Africa. Taking the form of loosely-structured vignettes his writing attempts to perform in an intensely personal way the sense of 'wondering about' and 'wandering amongst' various aspects of theory and practice as they relate to the highly conflicted circumstances of his situation. Adam Ledger, meanwhile, also addresses the difficulties attached to negotiating performance languages within an inter-cultural site. Meeting head on questions of 'our place in Europe' and 'Europe as a unified entity', he describes the challenges of communication when a group of practitioners from distinct European nations – unknown to one another and with no single common language available to them – attempt to make a piece of site-specific work in Austria.

Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller's response is rooted in their long-term engagement with Augé's non-place, as suggested above. In addition to reflexively drawing on their past work, and thus asking questions about amorphous places such as motorway service stations, they present a refraction of a moment many will understand: being 'generic' in a shopping centre. Whalley and Miller's lateral engagement with core issues of site and place encourage us to challenge assumptions about place that reverberate across all aspects of our field. Lucy Richardson offers a thought-provoking exploration of a LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre) project that has taken place across several continents, where notions of 'place' are also questioned. Pointing to a fragile multiplicity of place implicit in the 'current present' of a group of young Somalian asylum seekers, she describes how they created individual installations offering them a temporary 'place of refuge'.

Victoria Hunter's dance work has led her to ask questions about the 'triadic' power relationship in the early stages of a site-specific community project. She articulates the tensions between site, community users and artist in the critical embryonic period of creation, suggesting that this phase of site-specific performance warrants closer attention. In another dance-inspired response, Pam Woods attempts to engage with the *experience* of *creating* place through a series of dance improvisations, working with a range of communities responding to different sites. She touches on a particularly numinous wing of this field of study: how do we effectively express the experience of 'a sense of place'?

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[i] For an elaboration of this tension with regard to site-specific performance see Pearson and Shanks (2001), p.23. Interestingly, in drama education specifically, both 'teacher' and 'receiver' could be considered as extraneous to the site.

[ii] See, for example, 'I argue that Augé's ethnology of supermodernity results in a rather partial account of these sites, that he overstates the novelty of contemporary experiences of these spaces, and that he fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks bound up with the production of non-places/places' (Merriman, 2004, p. 145)

[iii] For a further example of such work, see the fascinating work of Wrights and Sites and their mis-guides: www.mis-guide.com.