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Undoing the Market: Corporate Sponsorship and Activist Protests at Tate Galleries

Marta Herrero

This article focuses on activist group Liberate Tate's online performance-based protests against BP's (Beyond Petroleum) sponsorship of Tate Galleries in London. Their life protests took place at one of London's Tate Galleries, either Tate Britain or Tate Modern (2010-2016), and were recorded, edited and posted online on the group's website. The article conceptualises the protests as interaction rituals (Collins, 2001); collective gatherings characterised by their group assembly, a shared focus of attention including an object/symbol and the creation of barriers to outsiders. If successful, they can lead to the production of group identity, and emotional energy, feelings of confidence, of enthusiasm, that translate into a desire for action, and collective, group symbols (Collins, 2001). The article draws upon and critiques Collins' perspective, arguing for the importance of embodiment and the online environment of protests in understanding their ability to produce emotional energy and collective identity.

Introduction

This paper focuses on activist group Liberate Tate's online or performance-based protests aimed at ending BP's (beyond petroleum) sponsorship of Tate Galleries. During its six-year campaign (2010–2016), the collective carried out a total of nineteen protests at various Tate's venues in London.¹¹ At stake, they argued, was the acceptance of money from BP with a dubious, questionable reputation in its oil extraction practices, in order to fund Tate's artistic activities. Following the announcement, in 2016, of the end of BPs sponsorship of

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¹ The collective targeted Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London which were the recipients of BP's sponsorship. Tate has other branches in Liverpool and St Ives. However, BP's focus is on London's leading arts and cultural organisations, e.g. British Museum, Science Museum, the National Gallery, and Royal Shakespeare Company.

Tate the following year, neither Tate nor BP recognised the years of protests as the reason for this outcome. Tate representatives described the sponsorship as an 'outstanding example of patronage and collaboration', whilst BP blamed an 'extremely challenging environment' as the reason for ending it.² The outcome was publicised in the British media, and Liberate Tate was quick to accept responsibility for the outcome.³ The article conceptualises Liberate protests as successful instances of interaction rituals (Collins, 2001) capable of producing group identity and emotional energy. It argues, however, for the need to expand Collins' perspective by attending to the centrality of embodiment in such rituals/protests seen here as the expression of meanings and emotions through the body.

Interaction rituals are situations, momentary encounters among human bodies charged up with emotions and consciousness (Collins, 2004: 1). If successful they produce emotional energy, a 'social emotion' 'feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action' (Collins, 2001: 39, 42; 2004: xii). Participants in rituals carry with them, at least for a time, this group aroused emotion in their bodies. In this way, rituals operate as emotion transformers; they take some emotions as ingredients which the ritual then turns into collective, group emotions as outcomes. But not all interaction rituals are always successful. There is also the possibility that 'weak' rituals may produce low levels of emotional energy, or fail to produce it at all, and subsequently a lack of group membership (Collins, 2004; Steinhoff, 2008). This article will explore the processes whereby the performance of protests against BP can lead to 'strong' or 'weak' ritual outcomes.

Collins' approach has been taken up in a number of studies in a wide range of topics, from auditing (Pentland, 1993), entrepreneurship (Goss, 2007), mobile technologies (Ling, 2008), harp singing (Heider and Warner, 2010), ethical consumption (Brown, 2011), sports fans (Cottingham, 2012), and restorative justice (Rossner, 2011). Whilst the draw of his approach is the ability to apply this form of analysis to a varied number of settings and situations, some of these are direct applications of his work (Pentland, 1993; Heider and Warner, 2010; Cottingham, 2012). However, others have taken a more critical line and sought to expand Collins' theory, emphasising the need to supplement it with other perspectives (Goss, 2007; Ling, 2008; Brown, 2011; Rossner, 2011). One critical issue to emerge in this literature is to lend further specificity to the interaction process. Goss (2007) expands interaction ritual theory with a model of Schumpeterian opportunities in entrepreneurship. Ling (2008) explains how the mobile phone affects co-present and technologically mediated interaction, and draws upon Goffman's concept of ritual to argue that mobile technology, rather than co-present interaction, facilitates a sense of common identity and unity. Brown (2011) brings together brand theory, its notion of brand community, and Collins' work to demonstrate the

² Tate figures revealed in 2015 showed that over a 17-year period BP paid to Tate £3.8m, *The Guardian*, 11/3/16.

³ *The Guardian*, 11/3/16.

importance of emotional outcomes of ritualistic interactions in motivating consumers to become more socially responsible shoppers. Rossner (2011) supplements an interaction ritual approach with work on micro movements and expressions a person's face reveal about emotion. This scholarship so varied in topic shares an interest in expanding Collins' work by providing models of action and behaviour that are especially suited to the contexts and situations studied. This article contributes to this line research and argues for the need of a more nuanced understanding of performance as a form of ritualistic action that accounts for the role of embodiment in protests.

Research on protests as performances has highlighted the different ways in which they help produce a movement's collective beliefs, and build collective emotion, anger, fear. These are involved in all states of a movement, its creation, continuation and decline (Jasper, 1998; Gravante and Poma, 2016). However, scholars have defined performance in different ways. It can refer to the use of existing artistic forms, e.g. popular songs, visual images, and how they help generate collective identity and emotional energy (Eyerman and Jamison, 1995, 1998; Steinhoff, 2008). Others refer to performance art (musical, theatrical, or craft making) as the locus of a debate-like manifestation of political attitudes (Kaplan, 1992; Goldfarb, 1998; Adams, 2002). The relationship between performance and dramaturgy has also received scholarly attention, helping highlight the role of scripting, role enactment and symbolic expressions in political protests (Ku, 2004; Eyerman, 2009; Dawson, 2012). In this article, we focus on the primacy of embodied action: the expression of meanings and emotions through the body, in political protests. This approach is in line with literature on the importance of embodiment in the performance of gendered identities (Butler, 1993; Grosz, 1994). More specifically, it contributes to research on the centrality of the human body in the articulation of political dissent (Parkins, 2000; Alaimo, 2010). Rozik (1999) calls attention to the distinction between body as performer of protest and body as collective symbol of protest. This distinction raises the question of the possible functions and dominance of the actors' body, either individually or as a collective, during a protest performance and within the context of the overall experience of the onlookers and viewers.

The article is divided into four parts. Firstly, it contextualises Liberate Tate's case study of its protests against BP's sponsorship of Tate. Secondly, it introduces Collin's theory of interaction rituals in order to identify how emotions, in the form of emotional energy, are enacted in such interactions. Following from this the article will demonstrate how Collin's framework can be applied to an analysis of Liberate Tate's performance-based protests, helping highlight how from an interaction ritual perspective, they generate emotional energy, and collective meanings. Thirdly, the article discusses some of the aspects of the protests that Collins' framework does not help take into account, the corporeal and online dimension of the protests. The paper ends with a discussion of the shortcomings and advantages of Collin's interaction rituals approach as well as highlighting potential areas for future research on the

primacy of embodiment in the context of an increasing number of online performances of protest.

1. BP's art sponsorship, Tate Galleries and Liberate Tate

In the UK, corporate sponsorship to the arts was facilitated by the implementation of a favourable public policy supporting business intervention. Offering rewards in the form of tax incentives for businesses, as well as spelling out the benefits that sponsoring businesses would accrue, this supportive environment started to develop in the 1970s, at a time when the main source of arts funding, apart from box office revenue,⁴ was the Arts Council of Great Britain. Corporate sponsorship in the arts and culture sectors has received critical attention from scholars. This literature exposes the unequal extent of business marketing and promotion involved in such partnerships (Shaw, 1993; Wu, 1998, 2003; Rectanus, 2002; Philips and Whannel, 2013; Chong, 2013). Sponsorship is a means for businesses to acquire a good reputation by association in the eyes of the public. Industrial sectors such as tobacco and alcohol have been targeted by both scholars and activists for the publicity that arts sponsorship has brought to what are considered industries that induce harmful consumption practices. Activism against arts sponsorship is based on the same premise; it can be traced back to the 1980s when tobacco companies were criticised for cleaning their reputation, or the company's money which by association was seen as 'dirty'.

In Britain, the critique of arts sponsorship by oil corporations such as BP, Mobil Oil and Shell, has been the subject of protests.⁵ The network coalition Art Not Oil which includes the collectives Liberate Tate, Platform and Reclaim Shakespeare Company amongst others, has been at the core of this critique, and BP continues to be one of its main targets. BP has been sponsoring the arts and culture in the UK for over 35 years. During this time, it has sponsored the National Portrait Gallery, the National Gallery, Royal Opera House, the British Museum, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Tate Galleries, in addition to the London's Cultural Olympiad program of events in 2012, amongst others. And yet, all these organisations have been the subject of environmental protests. The Reclaim Shakespeare Company was set up in 2012 to criticise BP's sponsorship of the World Shakespeare Festival and the Royal Shakespeare Company, whilst Liberate Tate was set up in January 2010 after a workshop at Tate Modern to discuss the most appropriate ways to approach political issues in a publicly funded institution. The workshop ended with an intervention inside Tate Modern: a display of the words Art Not Oil on one of Tate's top windows after the organisers of the workshop, who had been

⁴ This was particularly the case of the performing arts that generate income through ticket sales.

⁵ Mobil Oil's sponsorship of Tate was subject of controversy. In 1984, the company threatened Tate Galleries with court action for their exhibition of New York artist Hans Haacke's work, some of which took a critical view of Mobil Oil's corporate policies.

invited by Tate curators, were asked not to engage in criticism of any of Tate's sponsors (Jordan, 2010).

In April 2010, BP suffered the largest accidental marine oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry, the explosion of its Deepwater Horizon's oil rig,⁶ only a few months after the formation of Liberate Tate. As we will see in what follows, the symbolism around BP's oil spill permeates the majority of the groups' protests, performing the conflict between the aims of BP as a global oil company and those of environmental supporters of arts organisations as being as diametrically opposed.

2. An interaction ritual approach to Liberate Tate's protests

Collins' (2004) approach to interaction rituals draws upon Ervin Goffman's studies of small gatherings, assemblies, congregations, and audiences and adapts it to Emile Durkheim's analyses of formal rituals, to include everyday small-scale rituals. The essence of his approach is that individuals are attracted towards some type of situation and away from others on the basis of what he refers to as 'emotional energy': a 'distinctively human blend of emotion and cognition' (Collins, 2004: 107). The former includes a range of feelings, from excitement and happiness to a depression and sadness.

Interaction rituals are collective performances, characterised by an element of co-presence which enables individual participants to see the reaction of others also involved in the ritual: '[w]ithout bodily presence, it is hard to convey participation in the group and to confirm one's identity as member of the group' (2004: 11, 54). Co-presence is also an important element in viewers and audiences of interaction rituals. According to Collins, as 'engrossing public events' (e.g. a public election, a sports game), interaction rituals offer the highest payoff when they are consumed collectively so that individuals can talk excitedly with others who are 'also excited by the event' (2004: 56). The opposite also applies: viewer's enthusiasm can easily ebb away if the person they try to convey their enthusiasm to remains passive, or uninvolved.

The production of emotional energy to take place interaction rituals must include the following ingredients:

- (1) Group assembly: the presence of bodies together in the same place, and the inclusion of at least two individuals. Bodily presence is essential because it enables a 'physical attunement' that then leads to 'currents of feeling, a sense of weariness or interest, a palpable change in the atmosphere.' (Collins, 2004: 34)

⁶ BP's business has had its own setbacks. In 1988, BP merged with Amoco. In order to emphasise an environmental stance, in 2001, it changed its name from British Petroleum to Beyond Petroleum, and adopted a new logo, a yellow, green and white 'sunburst' (Doyle, 2011: 201). Such re-branding strategy was to help BP mitigate 'its own contribution as a global oil company to climate change' (ibid). BP also sponsors arts and cultural organisations abroad, e.g. Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Aquarium of the Pacific.

- (2) A shared focus of attention: through the performance of shared actions (chanting, gesturing), or the existence of an object, activity, or symbol which enable participants to become aware of each other's awareness, of a shared sense of a group focus.
- (3) Boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of 'who is taking part and who is excluded.' (Collins, 2004: 48)

Successful interaction rituals are able to generate: group identity, emotional energy in the individual 'feelings of confidence, enthusiasm, and desire for action' (Collins, 2001: 39, 42), and construct a set of symbols to become identifiable by the group. During their participation in the ritual, initial emotions individuals may experience, such as outrage, anger, fear, are amplified and transformed into a form of social emotion, stronger collective feelings, or emotional energy (Collins, 2004). Individuals taking part in successful interaction rituals also accumulate stocks of membership symbols, which throughout the ritual process, become attached with collective meanings (*ibid.*). This process of re-creating or transforming symbols into collective, group symbols is similar to the transformation between individual and social, emotional energy. Symbols held during the ritual are now visual representations of the group. Group symbols are charged with emotional energy. The expectation is that emotionally charged group symbols will be able 'to dominate particular kinds of situations, or to enact membership in particular groups' (Collins, 2004: 116).

Collins' notion of performance and bodily co-presence in rituals is helpful in lending specificity to how action happens in rituals, especially, the action that can lead to outcomes such as emotional energy and collective identity. The performative aspects of rituals are a key characteristic that can make them successful, and thus help individuals generate emotional energy. We know from Collins that performance in rituals takes the form of homogeneous actions performed by the group, such as 'uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object'. These actions make individuals aware of what everyone else is doing, as well as giving them a sense of participation in a common cause, a group activity, rather than an individual action. This group performance enhances group consciousness in individuals (Collins, 2004: 35), and a standard for collective morality, or what is right for the group (Collins, 2001: 39). However, Collins' descriptions of actions as performances, participations, and/or interactions amongst participants, especially by means of other actions, e.g. making gesture or uttering a cry, falls short of explaining whether the human body of the performer enacts any other type of action apart from that of 'carrying out the ritual' or making it happen (Rozik, 1999). In other words, his understanding of action in rituals is based on the premise that the role of performers is to carry out the performance, the ritual. It is fitting to refer next to research on performance and protests which has called attention to the primacy of corporality and presence. A focus on embodiment in the context of protests can lend further specificity to how the body acts, performs, or is performed upon. This is particularly important because 'the choreography of protest' is central to the to the

moral and emotional elements of social movements' mobilisations (Eyerman, 2009: 207). Almaid (2010) addresses performances made through the body, that is, where the body is both performer, carrying out a performance, and as performance, that which is performed, displayed, and becomes a collective symbol of group identity. In naked protests, the human body is performed, staged. Almaid (2010: 16) refers to as 'ethical performances of vulnerability' as bodies are displayed naked on the floor making up letters that spell out words such as 'peace' and 'no war' and 'no gm'. The activity of performing via the body, means that the body is not only the performer but it becomes that which is performed, an integral tool to the creation of meaning and emotion in the protest. This understanding of the role of human bodies in the performance of protests shifts the emphasis away from Collin's bodily co-presence in interaction rituals, and towards an understanding of ritualistic action as embodied.

3. Liberate Tate's online protests

This section analyses Liberate Tate's online protests. In order to contextualize the online environment where the protests are located, it is relevant to provide some details of Liberate Tate's website.⁷ Apart from the navigation menu, the main page of Liberate Tate's website shows is taken up by the header slider showing a total of eleven images of selected protests. The first is an image of Art Not Oil's protest which was carried out at Tate during a workshop out of which Liberate Tate emerged. The words 'Art Not Oil' were painted on paper and glued to a window. This type of presentation, where the images are automatically displayed for viewing, one after another, denotes a sense of movement, and of moving forward in the group's campaign against BP with the various protests. The photographs' prominent context on the website's main page emphasises the importance given to the visual elements of the performances, highlighting their use of symbols and imagery. On the same page, a navigation menu bar directs visitors first, from left to right, to Liberate Tate's Performances. These are followed by Talks and Events, News, Liberate Tate, Press, Contact Us, and Donate. Below each of these selections are a list of further links. The position allocated to Performances in the selection menu is testament to the importance the collective gives to their protests, and the key role they are given on the website: to provide a collective identity to the group as well as a sense of purpose.⁸

The importance given to protests can also be found in other elements of the collective's website. The link to Talks and Events shows an option for Disobedience as Performance which shows a still from the *Human Cost* (2011) protest, displaying the body of the activist crawled on the floor and covered on a black oil-like substance. This image was also part of the set of images

⁷ <http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/>

⁸ The links provide access to individual protests, a total of 19 (even though the list provided of all the performances given on a separate page only refers to the first 13 carried out by the collective).

included on the on the main page of the website. The section also highlights the emphasis the collective places on their protests, providing four short films of lectures delivered on this very topic.⁹ The News section includes announcements of Liberate Tate's collaborations in protests with activists Guerrilla Girls and Reclaim Shakespeare Company. It also refers to Liberate Tate's collaboration in the global campaign Fossil Funds Free commitment,¹⁰ including 400 artists, performers and cultural organisations worldwide. Overall, Liberate Tate's website emphasises the importance of their performances to the collective's identity; they are the main actions that bring the group's participants together. The website prioritises the protests in a number of ways: through their visual representations, by calling attention to the delivery of lectures on performance, thus suggesting the importance Liberate Tate gives to their protests. They are not only a means of performing opposition, but they also offer an educational engagement on the role of protests and performance in society. Making explicit the links of Liberate Tate with other activists also engaged in performing oppositional protests, both within the UK and abroad, is another way of legitimating the group's aims, aligning them with those of others involved in similar types of protests. In what follows, this section proceeds to analyse the presentation and content of some of the collective's protests on its website. I argue that they articulate three different types of embodiment: the body as performer; the body as collective symbol; and bodies in procession. The discussion section to follow will ask to what extent embodiment, in addition to other interaction rituals ingredients, may contribute to the production of emotional energy, collective identity and group symbols for Liberate Tate.

Selection criteria: Liberate Tate's website includes a link to individual pages where to find online reproductions of all Liberate Tate's protests, a total of nineteen. Our analysis will focus on three of such protests and which display the highest number of viewings. To carry out this selection process, we used the search engine Google Trends, and accessed the Vimeo website where the protests are posted for viewing.¹¹ Our Google Trends search on the term 'Liberate Tate' showed the specific time periods when Liberate Tate had

⁹ The caption for the lecture reads: A conversation about how artists and cultural institutions engage in issues related to oil, is presented in collaboration with the Politicised Practice Research Group and Anarchist Research Group, Loughborough University. This conversation, with invited guests Liberate Tate, forms part of Critical Citizenship, Activism and Art, a series of seminars and events to showcase and critically discuss art activists' efforts to give a voice to the excluded, promote inclusive alternatives, and enrich global culture and citizenship.

¹⁰ The Fossil Funds Free commitment is coordinated by Platform ([@PlatformLondon](http://www.platformlondon.org)) with support from Liberate Tate as well as the Art Not Oil Coalition (UK), Not An Alternative (US), The Natural History Museum (US), BP Or Not BP? (UK), and Stopp oljesponsing av norsk kulturliv (Norway), <http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/liberate-tate-news/> (accessed 19/6/17).

¹¹ Apart from being posted on Liberate Tate's website, their protests can be found at <https://vimeo.com/channels/360124> (accessed 1/8/17). In order to find out the views that each protest has had we have relied on the Vimeo website, as Liberate Tate's website does not provide such information.

attracted most online interest, providing us with a graph visualizing such interest in percentages. There were four time periods identified as the highest on Internet traffic during Liberate Tate's six-year campaign. Our second search of the Vimeo website identified three protests which had the highest number of viewings on that particular site: *The Gift* (10,400 plays), *Human Cost* (7,753 plays), and *Licence to Spill* (1,863 plays).¹² Our initial search on Google Trends supported this result: the months when these three protests were carried out were actually the times demonstrating the highest interest in internet browsing of the term 'Liberate Tate'. The need to correlate information from Vimeo with a search on Google Trends was due to the fact that the video uploads on Vimeo do not necessarily take place at the same time, or near time when the protests occur. Thus, there was a potential gap between the time each of the protest was performed, and the dates when these were uploaded on Vimeo. Data obtained from Vimeo and Google Trends was cross-referenced, resulting in three performances that had generated most attention. From these it was possible to identify the protests that had had the highest number of views, and near the time these took place Liberate Tate had received the highest ratings on Google Trends. We worked on the assumption of a link between the interest in Liberate Tate and the numbers of users watching the protests.¹³

The following analysis of the three selected protests – *Licence to Spill*, *Human Cost*, and *The Gift* – focuses on the importance of embodiment, understanding their ability to produce emotional energy and collective identity. In order to do so, in what follows we focus on each of the three protests individually to identify the presence of interaction ritual ingredients, how the protest was carried out and developed, and the set of outcomes emerging from the ritual. Throughout the analysis, we will emphasise the role played by embodiment as an added ingredient in the production of emotional energy and collective identity.

Licence to Spill, (2010) 09'39" Venue: Tate Britain

Online context: The webpage where the protest is uploaded shows four additional still images of the protest, and one further image of a newspaper article in *The Guardian* about the protest. The video lasts 9:39'. The performance of the protest starts with textual information, added during the editing process of the life-performance, '20 years of sponsorship', and it displays the time it was filmed, '19:00'. This additional material provides a context that justifies

¹² Even though the protests are uploaded on Liberate Tate's website, we were unavailable to find any information on the number of views for each performance there. However, the site Vimeo.com, which we follow here, and where Liberate Tate's performances are also posted shows the number of viewings.

¹³ Some of the Vimeo videos of the protests were posted a while after the protests had taken place, this is why it is important to correlate the number of views with interest on Liberate Tate. Our argument is that this interest is linked to watching the protests on the Liberate Tate's website.

the protest: it took place at the same time as Tate Britain's summer party in celebration of 20 years of BP sponsorship of Tate.

Ingredients: The online video starts by showing the context of the event, guests arriving dressed up for the occasion, protesters with placards demonstrating outside Tate and asking for the end of BP's sponsorship of Tate. Some of the guests are asked for their views on BP; some comment, others do not. The representation of initial moods by the juxtaposition of different scenarios, which reflect both celebration and opposition creates an expectation for what is to come next. Some guests are angry at the set up they experience at their arrival at the party, others show perplexity at the subject of the protest, and a certain disingenuousness. A group of protesters can be seen displaying placards and when interviewed, they explain, and visibly show their anger at BP's sponsorship of Tate. The outside protest takes place at Tate's main entrance. Seeing the participants preparing for their protests creates a sense of expectation about what is to come next. Inside a taxi, we see three people dressed in black, their faces covered by a black veil. One of them says that they are ready for the performance. A performance they have worked on for quite a few weeks, and, he adds:

... it's going to be beautiful'. We are talking about a culture of life, not a culture of death' we are talking about art, that it is about creativity and not destruction, and we are talking about the future, not fossil fuels, not the past.¹⁴

What looks like the preparation of the performance, the arrival of participants by taxi at Tate, exemplifies the beginning of the interaction ritual itself: human bodies coming together to the same place, with pre-existing shared beliefs, their opposition to BP, which we learn about from their own words, rationalizing and explaining the purpose of the protest, and dressed in similar black outfits, with black veils covering their face.

Process: The very core of the protest, the performance of opposition itself, takes place when the protesters arrive at Tate and start walking in line, holding a black barrel with the BP logo on it. It is at this point, in orchestrated strides towards the BP entrance, where the final act of the protest is carried out and we are offered a gradual buildup of the intensification of shared experience at work. The barrels are the objects the protesters bring with them which are not only transformed in the process of the protest, from a barrel into a substance, into a spill, but they are also important for what they demonstrate about the process of collective, symbol making. The protesters spill the contents of their barrels, some contain an oil like substance, and others white feathers, at Tate's entrance. The protest ends with a view of the 'spill'. Tate's entrance is covered in a black oil-like substance, which is in turn covered in white feathers.

¹⁴ <http://www.liberatetate.org.uk/performances/licence-to-spill-june-2010/>

Outcomes and embodiment: The oil-like substance and feathers are already suggestive of BP's oil extraction practices, and their consequences for the animal environment. The body of the animal is no longer present, only traces of it. Feathers that are no longer covering an animal's body, but rather, a man-made spill. In particular, it is the spilling of both substances, feathers and 'oil' that helps visualize the very performance of opposition: the ritual itself provides participants with a process of transformation where individual symbolic objects become emblems, markers of group identity. They are not merely signifiers of specific substances or animal bodies, they are instrumental parts that help generate a collective oppositional instance: oil extraction should not interfere with the natural environment, it can result in disaster. The last outcome present here is that of emotional identity. The protest sets the tone for the other protests to follow: the inclusion of an oil spill, and its consequences on the natural environment. Finally, this protest exemplifies the role of bodies as performers, that is, as carrying out the interaction ritual. In this role, the performers' body, its corporeality is made manifest in a number of ways. It enables protesters to take up a group identity, their bodies are dressed in black, in similarly looking outfits.

Human Cost, (April 2011) 05'57" Venue: Tate Britain

Online context: This live protest lasted a total of 87 minutes, whilst its presentation online is only 05'57" long. The webpage where the video is posted contains an image of an individual naked, crawled on the floor of Tate Britain's, and covered on an oil like substance. Underneath, a caption explains that the 87 minutes of the performance symbolise the 87 days that had passed between the performance event and the oil spill. The page includes one further image of the performance, one short piece of news on the protest televised by Chanel 4 news, and a copy of a newspaper article showing an image of the performance on its first page, with a title reading, 'Protesters pour oil on BP's troubles'. Central to this protest is the human body: it is an ingredient in the protest, it is part of the ritual process, as well as its outcome.

Ingredients: The video shows protesters clearing out the gallery so that the performance can take place. Whilst somber music plays in the background, we can see a naked body crawled on the gallery's floor, his hands covering his face. The next image shows two people arriving into the gallery and standing on each side of the body, they are dressed in black, their faces are covered in a black veil, and they are holding what looks like a watering green can displaying the BP logo.

Process: The interaction ritual starts when the two protesters pour the contents of the can, an oil-like black substance, onto the naked body, which is seen as gradually being covered in black oil. The performance ends when the protesters finish pouring the contents, they proceed to facing each other - the naked body laying still on the gallery floor, motionless - and walk out of the venue together in synchronised steps. Close ups of the body, people taking pictures, visitors surround the body and read a note left next to it by the protesters. The tainted body becomes another work of art to be contemplated

inside Tate Britain, only this time this is an unofficial and transgressive artwork that entered Tate unofficially. We are further shown how the site of the performance is closed up to the public by Tate's staff. The protester gets dressed and leaves, and Tate's staff proceed to clean the gallery's floor. This is followed by a text which is added to the video, and can also be read in a capture underneath. This explains that on the same day the performance took place 166 people working in the arts published a letter in the Guardian calling on Tate to end its sponsorship relation with BP. The letter refers to BP's recent investments in tar sands extraction in Canada and has attempted to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean. These actions damage Tate's reputation via its association with BP.

Outcomes and embodiment: This protest, of the three analysed here, is where the importance of embodiment in interaction rituals comes to the fore most prominently. It can be argued that this protest is all about the human body. It is the centre of attention of the protesters. Even though this is a group assembly of three, the body takes the centre place. This centrality is given in a number of ways: the body is still, it lays on the floor naked, eyes closed. The naked, tainted body stands for vulnerability (Alaimo, 2010). It is a metaphor for the pollution of all humanity, and the impossibility of reacting to the process. During the protest the body emerges as the collective symbol in this interaction ritual. In this example, the process of becoming a symbol is clear: the naked body is progressively deformed, transformed into a body covered in a black substance. This is both the symbolic outcome of the ritual and the collective identity of the group, what the collective is against: the damaging effects of oil extraction on the human environment.

The Gift (July 2012) 03'03" Venue: Tate Modern

Online context: The online page where the video is posted shows one picture of the protest, with a caption detailing how the work of art was made during that performance: an installation of turbine blade measuring a 16.5 metre, and with a weight of one and a half tone transported by over 100 members of Liberate Tate. The text explains that the installation was later donated as a gift to become part of Tate's permanent collection: 'for the benefit of the public' under the 'provisions of the Museums and Galleries Act 1992'. It elaborates on how, in the week after the donation was made, over 1,000 Tate members signed a petition to bring the turbine blade back into the Tate's Turbine Hall and to accept it as part of its permanent collection. A letter addressed to Nicolas Serota and Tate's trustees explained that the turbine blade had been created using an icon of renewable energy with an express wish for Tate to stop its relationship with BP. The petition was subsequently rejected by Tate. The online page facilitates the inclusion of elements that enable viewers to interpret the meaning of the protest performed. Furthermore, the provision of evidence in the form of a petition letter presented by Liberate Tate to Tate, as well as the outcome to their petition, provide a readily-made interpretation of the meaning and intention of the protest. However, apart from this interpretation of the protest from the point of view of their participants it is also

possible to ask whether the performance is an interaction ritual (Collins, 2001, 2004), and if so, the specific role of embodied action in delivering the outcomes of such ritual. We start next by outlining the protests' ingredients.

Ingredients: The Gift includes all the ingredients that qualify it as an interaction ritual. Group assembly: a group of protesters dressed in black and carrying the turbine blade enter Tate's Turbine Hall; a shared focus of attention: the group performs shared action, all its participants are dressed in black outfits, and proceed to walk in procession surrounded by a group of other people who observe them, and that will take part in the protest; boundaries to outsiders: the protest is the concern of those in charge carrying out the turbine blade and those supporting its installation inside Tate. The performance of these actions helps distinguish those involved in the protest, and those watching it from the outside.

Process: From the start the actions of the protest are accompanied by the playing of upbeat music. During the protest all the different parts of the blade are assembled until it becomes an artwork, a gift to be donated to Tate standing inside its Turbine Hall. The protesters hold hands, standing in a circle around the newly made blade. We also have a glimpse of how the performance is being watched by an audience of onlookers, as well as becoming aware of the presence of police during the event. Throughout the performance of the protest we can hear a male voice explaining and interpreting its development for its audiences. It starts by saying how unbelievable it is that just a few people can make such a beautiful work of art, in comparison to how much money is usually spent when putting together a show at the Tate. He discusses exhibition by of an aeroplane and how it made the headlines because it had costed 100,000 to bring it into the venue, and how it shows the priorities of Tate and how they misunderstand what is happening in the world at the moment. That they need to rethink what they are doing, if they want to pretend that they have a critical or radical sense that art can play a part in society in that way. To end, the narrating voice stops, and we can see all the participants leaving the Turbine Hall. Soon after, we can also see a team of Tate's staff dismantling the turbine, taking it apart, and outside the Turbine Hall. An update section explaining how the donation of the artwork had been rejected by Tate in September 2012. The text explains that the rejection is against Tate's policy of working with artists that engage with environmental issues in their work and want to maximise the public's engagement in the debate through the medium of art.

Outcomes and embodiment: Even though the protest includes all the elements of interaction rituals, in comparison with the other two protests analysed above, the online performance of *The Gift* provides a strong interpretative element, both through the addition of audio and textual elements. This helps describe the purpose of the protest, its meaning, and what type of opposition it performs against Tate's policies, especially its collection and sponsorship policies. Clearly, the ingredients highlighted above do suggest that the protest is, in fact, an interaction ritual. However, we argue that this is an example of 'weak' interaction ritual, rather than a 'strong' ritual. Its 'weakness'

is due to the fact that whilst, as viewers, we are offered a very clear explanation of what the protest is about, and thus have a cognitive understanding of its purpose, of the fact that the turbine blade is a symbol of the group and its pro-environmentalist campaign which targets BP's role in the oil industry. Despite this understanding, and the ability of the actions in the protest to formulate such meaning (with the help of add-ons), it is also possible to argue that the emphasis on the rationality and justification of the protest provided by its online version, is also detracting from an engagement with the emotional energy that, arguably, could result from the protest. Whilst the two protests analysed above are emotive performances, based on displaying feelings of rage, anger and vulnerability, the creation of a collective emotional energy is less apparent in this instance. Rather, the protest moves away from the examples of emotional performances, and towards the presentation of facts, figures, and rationalizing the meaning of the protest.

An alternative analysis of the protest, to that suggested by the collective, is one where the human body plays a key role in performing oppositional protest. *The Gift* exemplifies the workings of a body collective, of the organisation of bodies in procession, working together to achieve a common aim: the transport, and subsequent assembly of a turbine blade. This turbine blade, in turn, once inside Tate and all assembled, is surrounded by a circle of bodies. A circle that denotes inclusion, acceptance, support of the type of work represented by the turbine blade, once inside Tate. The corporeal 'embrace' of the turbine blade, is suggestive of the collective embrace of Liberate Tate towards its cause. Whilst the emphasis of Liberate Tate has been placed on interpreting the protest itself, it is clear that the 'body protester', the 'body in procession', is as crucial to the performance of the protest as its cognitive mechanisms endeavoring to explain to the public what the protest is about, and what it is for.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This article has offered an analysis of a selection of Liberate Tate's protests with the purpose of exploring their ability to deliver interaction ritualistic outcomes: emotional energy and collective identity. In the process, the addition of embodiment, as a concept prominent in the literature on protests and performance, has been added as a further way of illustrating and lending specificity to the type of action taking place in protests. The empirical material consisting in a selection of Liberate Tate's online protests was analysed following Collins' interaction ritual approach with an added focus on the role of embodiment. Our question was to integrate both perspectives and explore the extent to which these ingredients were able to deliver the outcomes proposed by Collins': emotional energy and group identity. Even though these aspects have been touched upon on the above individual analysis of the protests, it is fitting here to offer some conclusions on the three protests, their online environment, and how this intervenes in the type of online protests offered for public consumption.

One of the key issues is the importance of the online environment in enhancing the ability of the protests in delivering their ritualistic outcomes. There are several issues here. The website where the protests are posted can be seen as an interpretative environment where the aim of the protest is somehow explained and resolved for potential viewers. The addition of textual information and still images that surrounding the posting of each protest are explanatory: they indicate the part of the protest the collective values most, and they also exemplify whether the protest has received any media attention. The addition of these types of material continues through the edited versions of the online protests offered for consumption. All the protests invariably include textual information explaining the reason for the proposal, why it was performed at a specific venue, e.g. *Licence to Spill*, and the length of time it lasted, *Human Cost* real-life protest lasted 87 minutes, one for each day of the Deepwater Horizon spill. The inclusion of these strong interpretative elements, whilst useful explanatory frameworks, are also a means of detracting attention from the protests themselves. Viewers can shift between reading the texts/looking at the images in order to interpret the meaning of the protests, but in so doing, the protest itself, the performance moves on the background. As another alternative way of understanding the collective's aims. Moreover, this interpretation can pre-dispose a viewer towards assigning the protest with a specific meaning, arguably, that proposed by Liberate Tate's framing devices. This is not to argue for or against the benefits of including interpretative elements to online protests, simply to suggest that it can predispose a particular perception of the ritual. This rationalisation of the protests leads to an issue raised by Collins' on the consumption of interaction rituals. He argues that strong rituals are those that are consumed collectively so that individuals can talk excitedly with others 'who are also excited by the event' (2004: 56). On the other hand, it is possible to argue that the addition of music, for example, is a very useful way of channeling a specific mood in those viewing the protest. This comes to the fore if we compare the type of music added online to *Human Cost* and to *The Gift*. In the former, music is an accompaniment to the meaning being produced by the performance of actions: the music is somber as is the message being communicated in the act of protesting. Oil extraction is damaging to humanity, and there is nothing humanity is doing to stop it. However, in *The Gift* the music added is upbeat, suggestive of the collective action, and effort, taking place as the various parts of a turbine blade are transported and then put together inside Tate's Turbine Hall. The message here is one of creation, not destruction, as in the two other protests examined. Here we can see how the online environment can work towards delivering some of the outcomes of interaction rituals, namely a shared mood, shared in this case by audiences and protesters alike, where the former identifies with the latter, with their actions, and the specific meaning they attached to them.

The importance of mediated interaction has been, and still is, a bone of contention in Collins' approach, and it is relevant to address some of the findings in this analysis to further some of his arguments. On the one hand, Collins argues that online communications fail to provide the 'full sense of emotional

participation' that face-to-face rituals offer; they lack 'the flow of interaction in real time' (Collins, 2004: 63), which, in turn, leads to a lowering of group focus. On the other hand, Collins provides the example of viewing long-distance rituals with the use of mediated technology, such as television, and how audiences respond to them. Television, he notes, enables audiences to experience rituals through both image and sound, and in so doing, as in the case of televised memorials for 9/11 victims, they can create a sense of 'shared emotion, solidarity, and respect for symbolism' (2004: 55). In a similar manner, the findings in this article suggest a scenario where interaction rituals, their ability to represent a shared mood, for example, can be enhanced by the addition of music to a given protest, e.g. *Human Cost*. However, it is also the case that the addition of elements such as interpretative texts can have a counter effect. The amount of explanation and interpretation offered to potential viewers can detract attention from the very ritualistic action taking place in protests. Whether this happens because it creates pre-conceived meanings for viewers and thus watching the protest becomes less relevant; or rather, because this type of interpretation prioritises a cognitive understanding of the protests, based on what the collective wants them to signify, is open to question. In the analysis provided here we can see how the provision of over interpretation could easily take away from the ability of protests to generate emotional energy in those who view them. As this article has emphasised throughout performance and embodiment are key aspects of protests, and these are to be experienced as they are enacted within the protest. In an age of online protests, the feelings and desires for action that the performance of protests are designed to spur can easily be superseded by an overload of information, aural, visual and/or textual, explaining the relevance and legitimacy of the protest. And this can well be a leading factor that will draw distinctions between future interaction rituals offering a strong or a weak pay off for both participants and viewers.

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