How is contemporary English spiritual and religious identity constructed and reconstructed by performance?

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Abstract

The relationship between theatrical performance and religion in Western culture has always been complex and often troubled; and yet at points of encounter each provides fertile ground for exploring questions about how our religious and spiritual identity is constructed through society. This is particularly true of England today. The arrival of the 21st century seems to have heralded a renewed interest in questions surrounding religious practice and spiritual seeking.

When debates about the nature and implications of religious belief are so high on the cultural agenda, performance inevitably becomes a public site of these debates. This is reflected in the academy, and while sociologists of religion have become increasingly aware of the 'performative' aspects of religious practices, contemporary performance practitioners and theorists have become more concerned with questions of religion, spirituality and the sacred. This thesis acknowledges both aspects of this nexus. It contextualises these manifestations in popular culture through recent scholarship from the sociology of religion, and uses frameworks and discourse from performance scholarship to consider the implications of psychophysical practice on performative identity construction. To do this it critiques performance culture's use of religion and spirituality to describe both positive and negative aspects of performance and its genealogies, which at its most extreme, asserts the 'failure' of mainstream religion and moves to assume the mantle of religion itself.

This thesis, through textual and performance analysis, literature reviews, archival research and fieldwork argues that performance optics offer significant mechanisms for examining the efficacy of embodied practices that construct the infinite variety of religious, spiritual and cultural beliefs. It includes a series of case studies which explore how notions of 'Englishness' as civic-identity are interwoven with concepts of religiosity and responsibility. They are informed by my fieldwork as a participant and observer in acts of Christian and Spiritualist worship, in addition to my pilgrimage to Lourdes and Glastonbury with Goddess worshippers and Catholics.

This thesis asks how is contemporary English religious and spiritual identity constructed and reconstructed by performance?

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Much of my fieldwork has been facilitated by my work as a researcher with the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion (Oxford). Our interdisciplinary pilgrimages have taken us to Lourdes, France with pilgrims from the Westminster Catholic Diocese and to the Goddess conference in Glastonbury run by Cathy Jones and the team at the Goddess Temple. In both cases, pilgrims were generous enough to share their spiritual journeys and life experiences with me in various rites, interviews and discussions. To them I am grateful. Moreover, my fellow researchers Miguel Farias, Wiebke Friese and Alana Harris have been both inspiring and grounding. Alana in particular, is a gifted scholar and insightful tactician, who has had the great talent (and good humour) to place things repeatedly in a much-needed perspective, for which I will be forever thankful.

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 There is significant scholarship on the capacity of Western performance practitioners to exploit 'other' cultures in the reappropriation of their spiritual and religious rites and practices exemplified in Edward Said's Orientalism (1979). Much of this discourse finds Peter Brook's production of The Mahabharata (1985) to be the epitome of the paradox of exploitation and exploration. See Willams, David Peter Brook and the Mahabharata: critical perspectives, Binita Mehta (2002) Widows, pariahs, and bayadères: India as

Part One: Context

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is concerned with a rich and diverse field of enquiry bounded by the essentially contested terms of 'performance' and 'religion'.[1] This field defines the area that encloses the object of the thesis' analysis: an examination of how the performances of public acts of worship construct and reconstruct contemporary English spiritual identity and beliefs. In order to establish the research framework for this investigation, the thesis describes, utilises and develops discourses from performance studies that resonate with primary concerns in the sociology of religion around the topics of secularisation and change in religious practice, authenticity and identity. It primarily takes a performance studies approach to do this, and uses its histories, discourses and methodologies, tempered, burnished and sharpened by the work of sociologists of religion to analyse acts of public worship to understand better the performance of contemporary English spiritual identity.

By expanding across disciplines, it harnesses the ways in which social scientists have become, in recent years, increasingly aware of the 'performative' aspects of religious practices and the ways in which contemporary performance practitioners and theorists have mirrored this re-evaluation by becoming more and more concerned with questions of religion and spirituality. These discourses collide and combine in the critique offered in part one of the thesis. They then carry forward to create the methodological framework that, in part two, examines changes in religious and spiritual practice, authenticity and identity. To do this it takes case studies of recent worship practice of groups affiliated to the Church of England, Spiritualist practitioner s (affiliated to both the Christian based Spiritualists' National Union Church and the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain), Catholic pilgrims, and Neo-pagan worship practices in contemporary British society focused via the Goddess Temple in Glastonbury. The data for

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[1] The phrase 'essentially contested' was devised by political theoretician and philosopher W.B. Gallie, who identified that certain concepts are beyond absolute definition because within them there are always competing and plural meanings at work, in whatever way they are used. He argues, "[t]he term 'essentially contested concepts' gives a name to a problematic situation that many people recognize: that in certain kinds of talk there is a variety of meanings employed for key terms in an argument." (Gallie, 1956a: 168) (cf. Madison and Hamera, 2006: xi & Carlson, 2004: 224).

these studies comes from fieldwork I have conducted with these groups. This study, as an *intra*cultural performance ethnography, analyses data gathered from archival research, fieldwork and interviews, in addition to statistical data and reflexive participation in order to show how performance (re)creates religious and spiritual belief.

Research Methodologies

An explanation of the research methods I have adopted appears as contextualising commentary where appropriate. Broadly, my reflexively constructed research position is most closely matched with what might be termed a performance ethnography and exemplified by the work of performance scholars like Phillip Zarrilli. It is sharpened by the work of seventh moment ethnographers like Norman Denzin and sociologists concerned with Insider-Outsider behaviours. All try to explore the culture under investigation on its own terms, rather than from an assumption that for a culture to be examined 'objectively' it must be placed in different ethnic or geographical frames.

My examination of English religious culture is necessarily *intra*cultural: I am examining it from the inside because I am English. However, I am not a long term practising member of those groups I met, studied and worshipped with. I was however at times, intimately involved in the enactments of their rites. Some scholars would advocate a need for estrangement from their object of study in order to provide a level of objectivity, I would argue that this hope is not achievable because all researchers take a complex set of presumptions into a study. It is better they have a reflexive understanding of the limitations of their methods and their conditioning by a hereditary environment, regardless of pre-existing knowledges or relationships.

I recognise that the practices I am examining are particularly sensitive because they are expressions of intimate beliefs. Moreover, because, as researchers, we are none of us innocent; we bring to any question our own ontological and epistemological biases; I have wherever possible critiqued my own assumptions and sought to collect and analyse data with sensitivity to both my own expectations and those of the respondent. My research design and qualitative data

collection has been an iterative process, based in grounded theory[2]. This methodology, like all others, has its own limitations in terms of mitigating researcher bias during the processes of sourcing and analysis. In my experience, its strengths have been in the facilitation of the use of participant terms in later aspects of the research.

There are several terms that are common to performance scholarship and the groups I have researched, for example, rite, ritual, ceremony, (Godly) play, energy, power, trance, possession, channelling and prophecy. However, these terms are not similarly understood; they do not necessarily mean the same thing for me as a researcher, the individual respondents, the disciplines of performance scholarship and the wider organising power structure (like the National Union of Spiritualists or Church of England).

A methodology driven by grounded theory has enabled my better understanding of the different meanings attributed to words by each group, before they are further modified by their descriptive, interpretative and communicative contexts. For example, when beginning my study of current Church of England practice, I first held a focus group with twelve Church of England ordinands where we discussed the relationship of religion and performance in general terms. From these discussions, I was able to better understand their use of key terms. This enabled me to refine the questions I was asking, better interpret the answers I received, and disseminate those findings with greater sensitivity. In research, it is important to understand the baggage we carry and the hobbyhorses we ride.

‘Englishness’

The thesis examines contemporary English religious and spiritual identity. The concept of ‘Englishness’ is a complex one. It is a marker of nationality, ethnic grouping, and cultural perspective. In addition, this notion of Englishness is intimately interwoven with ideas of

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[2] Glaser and Straus coined the term ‘Grounded Theory’ in their 1967 collaboration *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*. It advocates the inductive, creative and systematic (mostly) processing of qualitative data in order to mitigate researcher bias. Although some of their theory is contentious, this method of working is the ‘common’ sense approach adopted by most ethnographers. The methodology continues to be popular with ethnographers and develops via the Grounded Theory Institute in Mill Valley California and *The Grounded Theory Review*.

religious identity, which this thesis explores though an examination of a wide range of English worship. In these explorations, it is difficult to disaggregate the ephemeral notion of Englishness from the wider cultural construction of the United Kingdom. Yet, in understanding how contemporary spiritual identity is constructed there are some useful divisions that can be made. These divisions are not absolute; rather they act as porous membranes that temporarily coalesce behaviours to form an apparent cohesive whole that we can critique before they dissolve and reform into another configuration.

Central to this critique is The Church of England, which operates in concrete terms as a religious organisation, through buildings, parish councils, faith schools and bishops in the House of Lords, as well as a conceptualising framework that describes an encultured religious identity. Thus, for example, to say one's religious affiliation is 'C of E' is useful shorthand when completing a form, even if you haven't sung a hymn since school. This aspect of the Church of England is critical to the notion of Englishness. It is a powerful socio-cultural and political force that shapes several aspects of English identity for those who are neither its members nor regular worshippers.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is in two parts. The first part provides an introduction and establishes the research context for the thesis. The second part consists of a series of case studies along with a conclusion. This structure looks for ways to account for the complex and contradictory relationship between religion and performance, whilst assuming a centrality of religion and spirituality in society and a centrality of performance in acts of worship. It seeks a balance between acknowledging the strong similarities between the performance of theatre and the performance of religion whilst problematising where these correlations collapse in the nuance of difference.

Part one explores the networks of ideas that articulate the relationship between religion, identity and performance that operate differently in popular culture (chapter two) from the

academy (chapter three). In order to account for the topics' range, they take different methodological approaches and objects of analysis, types of evidence and sorts of examples. In combination, they provide information that could be placed, more traditionally, in a separate introduction and literature review. However, the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis means that a canonical approach to describing the relevant literature is inappropriate when clearly setting out the complexity of the field.

To highlight the naturalised assumptions in the ways that religion and spirituality are researched and described it critiques dominant discourses that describe the complex interrelationship between this construct of 'Englishness' and religion, in addition to exploiting these differences through paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic reasoning. It first deals with the question of Christian nominalism; that is to say, that although British culture is dominated by Christian assumptions in terms of language, landscape, calendar and politics, the majority of British people are not practising Christians, even though they might describe themselves as Christian. Then it draws on scholarship from the social scientists in order to set out recent discourses surrounding changes in worship practice, spiritual identity construction and radicalised religious affiliation. It draws on recent examples from the media and popular anthropology, philosophy and science from Jeremy Paxman to Richard Dawkins and from the British National Party to British Airways in order to critique this complexity by examining the paradoxical and often slippery ways 'religion' and 'spirituality' are used to construct and reconstruct notions of identity.

Part two uses the research framework developed in part one to examine three types of current English worship practice: the Church of England, the pilgrimage both Catholic (to Lourdes) and Goddess Worship (to Glastonbury) and Spiritualism through a series of case studies. The Church of England case study begins with an examination of its liturgical texts as scripts written for performance. It focuses on the sect's defining rite, the Eucharist, with a close textual analysis of one version of the Holy Communion script and through a series of interviews that I conducted with ministers who lead these acts of worship. It then analyses this script in

performance. Using three different performances that I participated in, in order to explore how different communities of performers at different sites interpret a single script. Finally, this first case study uses some of my UK fieldwork, from Exeter and Sleaford, in order to examine the improvisations that take place in church buildings when the setting remains the same but the script and the worship leader are removed.

The next case study continues the thesis' journey away from the apparent limitation of script, minister and church as stimulus for worship, to explore how contemporary British spiritual identity is expressed outside of mainstream Christian practice. It travels on pilgrimage with Catholics and Goddess worshippers to consider what happens to practitioners when they move from a familiar building into the utopian landscapes of Lourdes and Glastonbury respectively. Through an examination of their performances, it posits that these religious practitioners are active creators of their own individual spiritualities unique to those settings through the altruistic performance of their 'better-selves'.

The case studies conclude by abstracting further from the notion of a separation between religion and performance to consider the similarities in psychophysical process both a partial-trance psychic medium and an actor use in order to embody an 'other'. It concludes by deconstructing the ways in which religious practices are transferred into theatres by psychic mediums in order to change the beliefs of their audience. It asks what is the relationship between performance and belief. It concludes by positing that, through the process of performing public expressions of faith, both belief and spiritual identity are created.

Therefore, this thesis is not about how religion is a reoccurring theme in the creation of theatre – that is a significantly different debate. Yet, it will at times, reflect on how the spirituality of theatre makers is necessarily a part of their creation process and therefore is implicitly and explicitly present in what the audience sees. It instead sets out to consider what might be revealed about religion if its practices are examined with analytical frameworks more often used to interrogate theatrical performances: it asks, what is revealed about contemporary British spiritual identity if we view its public manifestations 'as if' they were a performance. It

focuses on how public events enable members of permanent and transitory spiritual communities to construct and reconstruct their individual and collective spiritual identities in 'sacred' environments. It considers the mechanics of these events, the identity construction of the performer and the performance's cultural context. In order to do this, it adopts performance studies as its overarching methodological approach, focused by scholarship from the sociology of religion, which will include qualitative, quantitative, and archival research strategies.

Chapter Two: Research Context I - Social Science and Popular Culture

"There are curious things going on out there in the religious fabric of the nation." ³

> *There are always topics on which otherwise scrupulous minds will cave in with scarcely a struggle to the grossest prejudice. For a lot of academic psychologists, it is Jacques Lacan; for Oxbridge philosophers it is Heidegger; for former citizens of the Soviet bloc it is the writings of Marx; for militant rationalists it is religion*
> *(Eagleton 2007: 33)*

> *What would Jesus do? Vote BNP*
> *(Gibson, AlexanderThe British National Party 2009: np)*

> *The Lutheran Minister bedecked in white and gold, described the different elements of the vestments for festivals and holidays that she was wearing. She paused, and then asked for questions. The Ordinand in the front row pointed and said, "That's just theatre!"*
> *(Goldingay 2007a: np)*

Cultural and academic engagement with religion, for all its nuance and sophistication, is at times prejudiced, as Terry Eagleton's description of Richard Dawkins' book *The God Delusion* (2006), above, suggests. Such processes reduce human behaviour, which is the manifestation of a 'spiritual' intent, to binaries in terms of both its practices and practitioners. In such cases, these moments of behaviour become evidence for generalized notions - such as secularisation or religious radicalism, fundamentalism or religious apathy, atheism or evangelism. This reductionist tendency also exists in the relationship of performance scholarship to spiritual

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³ With this phrase "there are curious things going on out there in the religious fabric of the nation" Michael Wakelin in his keynote address to the Council for Christian and Jews, Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land (2009), the former Head of Religious Broadcasting for the BBC encapsulates the bewilderment of many 'establishment' organisations to religious change, its paradoxes and complexities.

matters, and is particularly evident in the ways its disciplines engage with 'mainstream' Western religion in general and Christianity in particular.

This is understandable. The historical precedent of the conflict between the structures of the Church and its censorship of the theatre, in addition to the broader rationalist rejection of religion and its study, has shaped our disciplines' examination of current spiritual practices in a particular way. This means that religion has become, for the most part, a marginalised topic for performance scholars, something studied by biased 'believers'. This is not my position. Although I am not religious by practice, I do recognise that I am Christian by enculturation and do think that it exerts a powerful force in contemporary society. Moreover, by examining the relationship between religion and spirituality and performance scholarship, this thesis explores not only religion and spirituality's naturalised[4] position in society. Conversely, it also considers the ways in which religion (and spirituality), in turn, shape performance scholarship.

Such an investigation is timely: the religious and spiritual landscape is changing. Until recent years, the slow disappearance of religion as a topic for research was accepted, and even welcomed. As Terry Eagleton put it, a sense that there was nothing "there to be understood, or at least anything worth understanding" prevailed (Eagleton 2007: 32). Before the 1990s, religion was broadly ignored by international politics - a fact that continues to be fuel for debate within the discipline of International Relations[5]. This changed considerably in 2001 - a landmark year. Even before the year's 9/11 attack on the twin towers in New York, religion was an increasingly important topic for discussion both nationally and globally. The United Nations (UN) issued a declaration at its Millennium Summit. This declaration,

> [...] highlighted the importance of shared values and principles such as freedom, equality, solidarity and tolerance, as essential to international relations in the twenty first century [because...] people respecting one another in all their diversity of beliefs [...] is vital for the achievement of sustainable peace (United Nations 2005).

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[4] Roland Barthes, through his observations of the relationship between cultural material, in particular photographs, and its use by bourgeois society, described how certain objects and processes could become so commonplace as to gain a 'naturalistic truth' enabling them to be accepted as beyond question: they become naturalised. See Barthes (1957: 129).

[5] For a detailed description of the recent history of this process see Fox and Sandler (2006) and Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003).

The declaration emphasises the need for nations and their citizens to understand the interrelationship between expressions of plural religious faiths and multiple cultural identities in order to ensure global stability in terms of political and economic processes. In the same year, on 29th April, the United Kingdom census included a section on religious identity for the first time (National Statistics Office 2008: np). The data from this census is the cause of ongoing discussions across the academy, and will be a key stimulus for debate in this thesis. These undertakings to increase knowledge by national and international Government are a clear indication that, contrary to perhaps what had been the academic assumption before, religion is no dead letter, but critical to understanding Society's practices and motivations.

This need for an up-to-date understanding has stimulated further discussion through conferences, inter-government negotiations and academic discourse. The UN has also sought to create an ongoing international, interdisciplinary dialogue between diverse groups that attempts to find and implement a mechanism to support "shared values and principles" regardless of "diversity of belief" (United Nations 2005: np). This thesis forms part of that ongoing dialogue, and includes elements that I have shared via papers or articles through conferences, networks and publications. It proposes that the rich complexity of 'performance', as both a research topic and methodology, offers a useful insight into the diversity of evolving religious practices and their interaction in the UK's complex cultural landscapes.

The UN's identification of the importance of religion to successful international relations, particularly in terms of inter-faith tolerance, is a response to changes in global religious practice. There is a perception that within the last generation pre-existing processes of change in religiosity, beliefs and worship patterns have crystallised and accelerated, leading to significant changes in spiritual expression. This contradicts the prevailing wisdom of the academy and international politics that has held sway over the last fifty years. It asserts that religion is still a significant social force. Consequently, the topics of religion and religious practices are returning to the world political agenda. Understanding how they operate socially and culturally is an

increasingly important part of sustaining international relations for governments. Religion, it seems, is back on the research agenda.

However, this is not a simple moment of political (re)discovery. In recent years, with the end of the Cold War, the global political map has changed, whilst the infrastructure of the United Nations has not. The UN are, arguably, simply changing the luggage labels on the baggage they carry with them, bringing forward old assumptions about the shapes of the inter-relationship between key international forces. With the collapse of Soviet Russia, the world can no longer be described in terms of economic oppositions, of communist versus capitalist. It can however be described in terms of religious forces, of Muslim versus Christian, or radical versus atheist. Perhaps then, by increasing their interest in religion, the forces of power are sustaining their own understanding of the status quo by invoking a much older narrative, one implicitly present since the Crusades. This thesis explores a key strand of these crystallised tropes as a means to understand the relationship between religion and society: the paradox of the increase in religious radicalism, demonstrated by 'fundamentalist' action, and the predicted inevitability of secularisation through the decline of religious practice is our point of departure below.

Since the 'performative turn', scholars across the academy have used 'performance' as a means to describe and understand human behaviours. Within the study of religion and spirituality, the languages, grammars and narratives associated with the disciplines of performance scholarship have increasing been used to describe behaviours with a spiritual component, whereas performance scholars have, in general, disregarded religion as a subject of investigation and focused on notions of spirituality. The primary argument of this thesis posits, that in spite of an estrangement from the topic of religion, the disciplines of performance scholarship - theatre, drama and performance studies - are well placed to throw new light on religious and spiritual practice and to increase our understanding of the interrelationship between spiritual practice, identity and culture. These disciplines' plural concerns and eclectic methodologies provide a responsive means to present a necessarily nuanced critique of the complex, contested and shifting relationship of religion and society. Through these diverse

approaches, this thesis sets out to demonstrate how 'performance' provides one means to understand contemporary spirituality. It will analyse public acts of live, embodied worship, created via texts written for performance, along with improvised processes enacted in a plurality of traditional and non-traditional settings that I have participated in or seen. It goes on to show how these worship events, their complex cultural constructions and their realisation through the performative enactment of the subjective spiritual-self, continue to create the conditions where belief can be (re)constructed. Thus, by drawing on the methodologies of performance studies, this thesis considers three things about religious and spiritual performances: the mechanics of the event, the identity construction of the performer and the cultural context for the performance.

However, the broad disengagement of performance scholarship (and its predecessors in English languages and literatures) from religion since World War Two means that although its methodologies and approaches, languages and grammars are apposite for the analysis of current religious and spiritual practice, its recent scholarship on the practice and processes of subjective spiritual identification are not. For this reason, the thesis will also draw on the work of sociologists of religion to bridge these gaps. Although the discipline of the sociology of religion has a limited engagement with the subtleties of practice and embodiment, liveness and performative identity construction, it is richly engaged in complex discourses around the contested nature of societal change in terms of statistical measures of spirituality, individualism, civic identity, community affiliation and the secularisation paradigm. These topics are significant optics through which we might understand the context of the performances and the performances themselves. Therefore, the thesis draws on methods and discourses from both disciplines.

A post-secular, apathetic, secular, fundamentalist society?

Religion in Britain is paradoxical. Two contradictory things appear to be taking place simultaneously: a fall in church attendance and a rise in 'fundamentalism'. The media primarily

exemplify this increase in 'fundamentalism' with coverage of terrorist action attributed to radical Muslim groups like Al Qaeda. Beyond this simplification 'fundamentalism' is a complex Christian model which has been transposed to describe groups across a variety of Abrahamic and Dharmic faith practices in the West[6]. Simultaneous with this apparent rise in radicalism, there is also an increase in television and radio programming on supernatural and transcendent themes[7]. Therefore, based on these trends, it appears that there is a growth in spiritual preoccupations across practising and non-practising communities and faith groups. However, a concomitant closure of church buildings[8] and a recent wave of strident neo-atheism, led by scholars such as Richard Dawkins, contradict this apparent growth, suggesting that there is an increase in secularisation[9]. Thus it seems, paradoxically, interest in spiritual matters is simultaneously rising and falling.

Examining the process of societal change in relationship to religion is not new. Its discussion and description, critique and valorisation has been taking place for over three hundred years. The academic descriptions of this change have come to be dominated by the sociologically focused secularisation paradigm. It is an axiom that argues society will soon become fully secular, and religion - a by-product of superstition - will die out completely. This approach through its application and longevity has become established as both theory and history[10]. In this history, secularisation is broadly described as the product of an accumulation of

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[6] For an illuminating discussion of complex inter-relationship between 'making' and 'faking' the news as part of the way that the media communicate stories, see Schudson, Michael (1989) 'The Sociology of News Production' in *Media, Culture and Society,* Vol 11 pp 263-282.

[7] Mikel Koven's 2007 *'Most Haunted* and the Convergence of Traditional Belief and Popular Television' in *Folklore,* 118: 2, 183-202 takes a narrow focus to examine this phenomenon. He uses the unexpected, and ongoing, success of a cable-channel show – *Most Haunted* – to describe this change. Whereas, Sociologist of Religion Paul Hellas in, *The New Age movement: the celebration of the self and the sacralization of Modernity* Blackwell: London. (pp 15-40) deals with it in broad cultural terms, as a means of understanding the subjective, eclectic approaches adopted in religious identity construction.

[8] Furlong explains, in *The Church of England: the state it's in* (2006) that, along with other faiths, for the Church of England there are "bitter pills to be swallowed" in response to "the all round drop in numbers" (pp 1, 112). One of these 'pills' is the selling off of the Church of England's building portfolio.

[9] This atheist revival has also invited the reconsideration of established discourses. For example controversial work like philosopher Martin Hägglund's *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (2008) which refutes that there was "a religious or ethical 'turn' in Derrida's thinking" (p 5). Or the similarly contested John F. Haught's *God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchen*s. (2009), which was described by one reviewer - Theologian Bradford McCall - as "the same old antireligious sentiments that stem from at least the Enlightenment in new dress with increased vitriol." *The Haytrop Journal* 50:3 pp 541-2. We will come on to consider neo-atheism later in this section.

[10] For perspectives on the secularisation debate see e.g. Wilson (1966), Davie (1994), Berger (1999), Martin (2005), Norris and Inglehart (2004). A good critical overview is provided by Garnett et al. (2007:

social change from the Enlightenment, which gained momentum during the eighteenth century through the rise of Deism in the French Revolution. It then tumbled forward into the rationalism of the nineteenth century to be taken up and reshaped by sociological pioneers in the twentieth century for its rebirth in the twenty-first.

Rationalist philosophers like Immanuel Kant[11] are credited with forming the foundation of the secularisation paradigm. They, with others, both before and since, identified a need for society to break free from "the sacred circle"[12] (a world limited by the constriction of religious dogma) in order to construct a modern society where rational thought, shaped by scientific evidence, replaces religion as the primary means of making meaning. They predicted a society where irrational superstition, and its associated manifestations of religion and spirituality, would become defunct. For the twentieth century academy (although not a wider society), this prediction of full secularisation became an apparent inevitability. Four key thematic proofs provided the evidence that sustained the dominance of the secularisation thesis: statistical data, societal disengagement, religious pluralism and rationalism or desacrillisation.

In recent years however, these proofs have been problematised, consequently challenging some of the previous assertions made about religious practice. The construction of these proofs was dominated by Freud (and magic), Marx (and ideology), Weber (and rationality) and Durkheim (and solidarity), and they were framed in terms of economics, power, and the separation of church and state[13]. Sociological pioneers, like Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson and David Martin[14], subsequently re-evaluated and developed work in the 1960 and 1970s. More recent works, for example, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (Brown 2009 [2001]), *God is Dead: Secularisation in the West* (Bruce 2002) and the emergence of strident neo-atheism epitomised with the work of Richard Dawkins' *God*

1-18) Norris et al. (2004: 3-32).

[11] Kant's now famous essay *Answering the Question: What is the Enlightenment* opens with a succinct response: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity." (1991 [1784]: 52).

[12] For a comprehensive overview of the Enlightenment and 'the sacred circle' see *Gay (1996)*.

[13] For an excellent overview of these key thinkers and their work see Hamilton (1995).

[14] See Berger (1967), Wilson (1966, 1970, 1976 & 1982) and Martin (1978).

Delusion (2006) have confirmed the ongoing power of this broadly sociological model in the embedded narratives of both the academy and wider society.

One of its ongoing concerns has been the impossible task of defining 'religion'. The chronicler of Columbus' voyage, Richard Eden, is credited with first articulating a modern concept of religion in 1553. In an early written demonstration of 'otherisation', he observed that there was no religion amongst the natives of the Canary Islands. (This was not true; it simply took a form that Eden did not recognise.) He was not alone in his cogitation on religion, but one of a number of sixteenth-century scholars who were considering its etymology and plural uses. These debates surrounding religion and its nature were rekindled in earnest during the nineteenth-century amongst anthropologists and sociologists in particular.

In the twenty-first century, sociology groups definitions of religion into three broad approaches: the substantive, the functional and the polytheistic. The substantive – which describe religion as 'a thing' – often cites Edward Tylor's early definition in 1903 (alongside Durkheim's 1915 contribution) as a point of scholastic origin. Edward Burnett Tylor, a key influence on Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough (1906-1915),* described religion as "the belief in Spiritual Beings" (1958 [1871]: 8). This refreshing simplicity is augmented with a further substantive definition by Durkheim where religion is;

> a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them. (1995 [1912]: 47)

The primary purpose of this thesis is an enquiry into this relationship between religious and spiritual practice and their effect on belief. We will not find however, "one single moral community" as Durkheim suggests because society's relationship to religion is individualised and fragmented although still articulated in collective forms.

This definition of Durkheim's, as well as being a point of origin for the substantive approach, is also for many scholars the beginning of a functional approach to the examination of religion. Functional definitions are concerned with religion's social effects, or in essence, what it 'does'. In similar ways to performance studies scholars, functionalists are often accused of either indiscriminate universalism or, conversely, of holding an ethno-centric or some other

bias. More recently, a polytheist discourse has challenged both substantive and functional approaches to defining religion. This discourse argues that no one example of religion will encompass all possible variables of what religion might be, and therefore a taxonomical approach to religion is untenable because life is simply not divisible into distinct classes. However, polytheism has been similarly accused of both universalism and reductionism[15]. This conflict points to the ongoing difficulty of attempting to define such a complex and nebulous socio-cultural process as religion. Despite this contestation, one thing can be guaranteed for trenchant secularists; religion will continue to demise and inevitably be eradicated.

Yet, the narrative of the secularisation axiom is being challenged. The inevitability of a fully secular society is, for many scholars, far from certain because although church 'membership' figures may be falling, the majority of society still identify themselves as having some sort of religious affiliation. However, the key change is that this religiosity is constructed outside religious 'authority' structures – rather individuals are constructing their own religious identities from a variety of sources. This increased trend towards a "privatized religion"[16], alongside the changing ways in which contemporary spiritual practice is constructed and embodied, means that as a subject of research religion no longer fits "standard sociological assumptions" (McGuire 2008: 1). This mismatch between religious practice and dominant academic models has necessitated a "redefining of the research agenda" into both religion and spirituality (Garnett, Grimley et al. 2007: 2). A discourse we will consider below.

This 'redefining' process critiques the secularisation assumption in several ways. Space allows for the consideration of three key tropes: the age of faith, the interpretation of statistics and the rise of pluralisation. The first critique is of a primary assumption made by many secularists, that there once was an age of faith; that is to say, a time when everyone was

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[15] For an interesting introduction to the issues surrounding defining religion from a sociological perspective, see Hamilton (2001: 14-24) and from a philosophical perspective see Idinopulos & Wilson (1998).

[16] The frequency with which religious practice is reduced to undifferentiated acts of 'privatised religion' as shorthand for the dominant form of late twentieth century religious practice is astutely problematised by Professor of the sociology of religion, Grace Davie. She explains that "the most prevalent form of religiosity in Western Europe in the late twentieth century" is not only a private matter, to call it so is misleading "to the extent that it overlooks the origins of our beliefs and the context in which they are held" (See Davie 1994: 75-76). We will return to this interpretative tautology later in this section.

'religious' and church attendance was universal. From this point of origin, they then assert that during the 'modern period', society has been moving exponentially away from this position and that therefore, when this trajectory continues (as it inevitably will) society will become fully secular. However, other scholars, like sociologist Rodney Stark draw on the work of medieval historians to argue that this evidence is flawed because it works via causal reasoning. (Stark and Finke 2000: 67-71) Stark posits that the assertion by secularists that there was once an "Age of Faith" is wrong. He contests that this part of the secularisation paradigm is constructed on a "myth of past piety" and "mere nostalgia" (ibid: 63). For Stark, to suggest a baseline of 'absolute faith' to compare with current practice in order to evidence an exponential rise of a secular society is untenable. He explains:

> Astounding as it may seem, the secularization thesis has been inconsistent with plain facts from the very start. [...] Moreover, although the American case continues to offer a devastating challenge to the secularization doctrine, the secularization thesis fails in Europe too. [...] there has been *no demonstratable long-term decline in European religious participation.* [...] current data do not reveal the arrival of an age of "scientific atheism." (original emphasis) (Stark and Finke 2000: 62)

For Stark, society's changing relationship to religion was already in evidence before the Enlightenment[17]. He explains that concerns about falling church attendance, irreligion and its associated (potential) moral decline, were debated by medieval writers fuelled by themes of witchcraft, heresy and paganism, alongside the ongoing religious disputes that were identified and reconsidered by Enlightenment scholars. This challenge to the "Age of Faith" strand of the secularisation paradigm asserts that spiritual practices are not dying out as secularists would suggest, but rather that our relationship to religion - a complex, imaginative, cultural process - is changing.

Statistics, damn lies, and statistics

The second critique of the secularisation assumption concerns the use of statistical evidence. Across the sociology of religion, this is strongly contested. Whilst there is broad agreement that fewer people attend church - or any other public manifestation of organized

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[17] The Enlightenment too is an unstable term. Stark's chapter does not includes a clear definition of how he is using the term in this particular case, but nor do the scholars he sets out to challenge.

religion - among sociologists, statisticians and religious studies scholars, the interpretation of what this fall might mean or how it is calculated is disputed. Within the Sociology of Religion, church attendance figures are particularly problematic because data collection methods vary and consequently they are both inaccurate and reductive: some measure by affiliation, others by membership and more still by attendance. This argument has crystallized in the ongoing debate between Sociologist, Grace Davie, and demographer, David Voas about the 2001 United Kingdom Census. For the first time, it included a section on religious identity[18], which was placed along with ethnicity. It asked, "What is your country of birth?", "What is your ethnic group?" and "What is your religion?" (Office for National Statistics 2007) .

In the census, eighty-five percent of the population described themselves in religious terms: Christian, Muslim, and Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist, Spiritualist or other[19]. Seventy-two percent identified themselves as 'Christian' and almost fifty percent self-identified as being 'C of E' (National Statistics Office 2007). When compared to the Church of England's own statistical evidence gathered in the same year, this census data becomes more intriguing. The C of E data explains that while only two percent of the population attend a monthly Church of England service, thirty-nine percent of the population attend a Christmas service and a notable eighty-five percent of the population visit a church or place of worship during the course of the year (Church of England 2001). These figures present a considerable distinction between describing oneself as Christian, or C of E, and regularly worshipping with a church community. There is a differentiation between religious identity as a cultural affiliation and religious identity expressed through worship practice.

The Church of England's statistical data is contested. Worship attendance and church membership are measured in two often-contradictory ways; first, on a given day, presiding ministers carry out an annual 'headcount' of those who attend a particular service or second,

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[18] See Davie 2007 pp. 58, 114-16, Voas 2004, 2005, 2006 & 2009.

[19] This particular census return is notable for two reasons. First, it was the first census that carried questions specifically on religion. But second it was the year when a campaign to make "Jedi Knight" the dominant UK religion saw marked success with 390,000 describing themselves as such, and only 329,358 describing themselves as Sikh.

individual churches count those who regularly contribute to church funds. Despite these irregularities, there is still strong evidence for a distinction in the way that the majority of British society include 'Christian' in their encultured identity construction from the minority of 'Christians' who worship regularly as with a church community. Moreover, there is evidence that C of E buildings are significant to the majority of the population outside these times of organised worship who do not identify as C of E or Christian. How then can we use this data to frame the interrogation of contemporary religious identity construction that operates via cultural stimulus rather than religious practice?

For many, identification with Christianity, or any other faith, is not necessarily expressed through acts of public worship. Rather, faith is a conceptual marker of a more complex culturally formed performative identity. The 2001 census supports this position. In addition, the Church of England survey indicates that less than two percent of the population attend worship on a weekly basis. Therefore, the majority of people living in Britain do not carry out 'active' public religious worship, but demonstrate a 'cultural' religious affiliation. This apparent disparity between affiliation and practice, and its relationship to identity is a continuously connective thread that runs throughout the thesis: it has important cultural and political ramifications. We will return to consider these issues below, with the question of the prevalence of Christian nominalism in the construction of 'Englishness'. Before that, I would like first to examine the third critique of the secularisation presumption – the rise of pluralism.

Plural, anonymous and impersonal religion?

The third, and perhaps most complex, criticism of the secularisation paradigm is concerned with the question of religious and cultural pluralism (the ramifications of an increased 'availability' of several faith systems). Trenchant secularists, like Steve Bruce, argue that the power of religion in society is diminished by the increase in choice that pluralism offers. And consequently religion will die out. Bruce explains his position:

> The single 'sacred canopy' [...] is displaced by competing conceptions of the supernatural which have little to do with how we perform our social roles in what is now a largely anonymous and impersonal public domain and more to do with how we live our domestic lives. Religion may retain subjective plausibility, but it does so at the price of its objective taken-for-grantedness. Religion becomes privatized and is pushed to the margins and interstices of social order. (2002: 46)

The central tenet of Bruce's argument grows from the work of functionalist scholars, like Durkheim, who argued religion's purpose in society was to provide a series of shared norms and values. Bruce asserts that with the advent of pluralism such a common set of languages and grammars is no longer possible.

However, other scholars, like sociologists Stark and Bainbridge, argue that religion is not dying out, rather that its expressions and practice – its performance – is changing. In their influential *A Theory of Religion* (1996), they describe their own rational choice theory for religion (which asserts religion compensates for some other unfulfilled desire) which rejects the assumption of society's inevitable secularism. They explain these changes;

> mean the transformation of religion, not its destruction. We do not deny that profound changes confront the traditional religious denominations. [...] But religion is far greater than just the low-tensions denominations. It also includes high-tension sects and cults. When secularization erodes the power of respectable denominations, it leaves the market for general compensators first to the familiar intensity of sects and then to the novel innovation of cults. (Stark and Bainbridge 1996: 279)

Thus, Stark and Bainbridge suggest this shift in religious practice is a transformation through growth, not a disappearance. In terms of cultural change, we might see this as a hegemonic process, one by which the avant garde is both challenging, being transformed by, and in some cases, replacing long established religious practices.

These three challenges to the secularisation presumption (the age of faith, the interpretation of statistics and the rise of pluralisation) offer the opportunity to reconsider all aspects of society's relationship to religion – identity, politics, education, economics – which were shaped by the academy's irreligious presumption. This model of a post-secular society does not reject religion outright, but rather assumes a changing society where religion and spirituality are still an intrinsic part of its construction and mechanisms. (Glynn 1997; Blond 1998) This potential to review the assumptions the academy has about religion (or irreligion)

has been embraced across disciplines. As John Caputo explains in his chapter 'How the Secular World Became Post-Secular':

> All this talk about the impossible [continuation of religion] has only recently become possible again. It has for too long been declared off limits – by "modernity", by the "Enlightenment," the great "masters of suspicion," Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche [...] But contemporary philosophers have grown increasingly weary with the "old" Enlightenment. [...] That has inevitably led to a break within their own ranks on the hot topic of religion, where even otherwise "secular" intellectuals have become suspicious of the Enlightenment suspicion of religion (2001: 37)

That is not to say that this suspicion of the Enlightenment generates an easy reorientation towards religion, or one that is necessarily as prevalent as Caputo suggests. Yet, this process of change - contested across the social sciences, theology, politics and economics - does seem to be challenging the prevalent assumptions of the last two hundred years.

However, on a more cautious note, this change may simply be part of a shift in academic fashion (and funding) as was noted at a Yale University conference entitled *Exploring the Post-Secular*[20]. Its organisers described its intention to explore;

> the extent to which the "return of religion" is a product of an actual upsurge of religiosity around the world as opposed to greater scholarly attention to religion. (Gorski, Torpey et al. 2009)

Caputo suggests that the academy is shifting towards a post-secular outlook, and it might well be driven by an "actual upsurge of religiosity," but this change is not in universal evidence. The 'popular scholarship' book market for example has seen the topic of spirituality return to its best-sellers list. Religion has certainly returned to the agenda, but not only in the form of a rise in religious observance. Atheism too has made a comeback with the bestselling success of works by trenchant neo-atheists like Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006), Richard Dawkins' *God Delusion* (2006) and Christopher Hitchens' *God is Not Great: The Case Against Religion* (2007)[21].

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[20] Yale University in April 2009

[21] Published in the USA as *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.*

Amidst all this discussion, what it does seem reasonable to suggest is that if the dénouement of the modernist period was Nietzsche's declaration that God was dead, then the dénouement of the late-modern period might well be that God is resurrected – if only momentarily in order to be disproved.

Dennett, Dawkins and Definitions of Religion

The academic reconsideration of religion has not meant an absolute rejection of the presumption of a secular society. For some scholars the apparent rise in religious radicalism means that a secular society has become a more pressing need. In 2006, two best-sellers[22] on the subject of religion dominated the transatlantic book market: philosopher Daniel Dennett's *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* and Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, Richard Dawkins' *God Delusion.* Both authors used methods, strategies and narratives they attributed to the natural sciences as a means of quantifying religion, in order to characterise it and then subsequently challenge it as a destructive human construct.

The books caused a passionate, polarised response. On the one hand, the texts, for those who agreed with Dennett and Dawkins' rejection of religion in favour of scientific rationalism, provided a means to articulate a direct, and public challenge to what was, perhaps, an otherwise unassailable, naturalised power in society: organised religion. Dawkins' current high profile, web-led, *OUT* campaign exemplifies this process. Via his website, he explains to his self-styled "choir" of atheists a particular strategy they should adopt:

> [A] major part of our consciousness-raising effort should be aimed, not at converting the religious but at encouraging the non-religious to admit it – to themselves, to their families, and to the world. This is the purpose of the OUT campaign. (Dawkins 2008a: The Out Campaign)

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[22] Although sales data for Dennett's book is hard to find, more is available from Dawkins himself. In a TV interview on the Canadian equivalent to *Newnight,* the *Studio 4* discussion programme, on April 29th 2008, Dawkins claimed that the book had sold in excess of one and a half million copies. This can be seen, along with most of Dawkin's other TV and radio appearances, on "The Official Richard Dawkins YouTube Channel", see richarddawkinsdotnet: 2007. It is simultaneously celebrated and demonised with endless threads on his website, see Dawkins (2008a).

By using this approach, Dawkins is placing himself within a complex set of cultural references. He describes the resistive act of challenging religion as an apparently benign process of 'consciousness-raising', while simultaneously, and explicitly, allying himself with the campaigning strategy of Gay and Lesbian activist groups like Stonewall, who themselves encourage, or force, 'outing'[23]. Moreover, and paradoxically, he is also drawing on the kind of theistic languages and strategies that the Christian Church itself is using in its own 'consciousness-raising' efforts of recruitment.

The C of E is still actively engaged in this process. But this is not simply an evangelism that seeks to convert the 'unbeliever'; the Church of England is proactively engaged in an attempt to reach the 'de-churched' (the forty per cent of the population who have previously attended, but no longer attend Church of England worship) via their 'Mission-shaped Church' campaign[24]. This campaign is spearheaded by the creation of new Fresh Expressions Churches[25]. We will return to consider this initiative in some detail via an examination of an act of worship (the Eucharist) at a Fresh Expressions church called hOME (original typesetting), in which Early Church narratives and signifiers combine with emerging technologies to define the performances.

This Mission-shaped campaign is a manifestation of *intra*cultural missionary practice and as such, is a useful means of understanding how the Church's position in British society has

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[23] In a later statement, Dawkins has qualified his position. He explains: "[t]he obvious comparison with the gay community is vulnerable to going too far: to 'outing' as a transitive verb whose object might be an unfortunate individual not yet – or not ever – ready to confide in the world. Our OUT campaign will have nothing, repeat nothing to do with outing in that active sense. If a closet atheist wants to come out, that is her decision to make, and nobody else's. What we can do is provide support and encouragement to those who willingly decide to out themselves." (Dawkins 2008b, July 31 2007 posting). It will be interesting to see if this moderate tone is sustained as the campaign continues.

[24] In their report outlining the mission-shaped church campaign, the Church of England drew on Philip Richter and Leslie Francis' analysis of the British population's relationship to the church in their 1998 book *Gone but not Forgotten: church leaving and returning*. Here the 'de-churched', those who have attended church to worship at some point in their life, are deemed to be forty per cent of the population. They are placed into two categories; the "Open de-churched [...] – people who have left the church at some point, but are open to return if suitably contacted and invited [...and the c]losed de-churched – twenty percent of the population have attended church at some point in their life, but were damaged or disillusioned, and have no intention of returning." See The Archbishops' Council 2004: 37.

[25] This is exemplified by the Church of England's new innovation for growth, Fresh Expressions. It is described as "a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church." (See www.freshexpressions.org.uk)

changed in recent years. *Inter*cultural missionaries are still active. However, a recent phenomenon has seen the inversion of the conventional missionary narrative (where a white European goes to Africa to evangelise Africans): in what has become termed 'reverse mission', black African churches are sending their missionaries to the UK to evangelise the Europeans. Globalisation too has its part to play.

Although the 'mission-shaped' campaign characterises the proactive ways that the dominant sect in the UK is evolving, it still seems counter intuitive to imagine a proactive C of E. In popular culture its evangelical potential is limited (recognised with a squeamish response to any one using the 'G' word), and more common is the perception of it as a passive, benign force followed by those who hold their beliefs lightly, or simply use it because it is an easy shorthand when completing a form. We will return to popular culture's descriptions of religion and its role in the construction of 'Englishness' below.

In their current recruitment strategies both Dawkins and the Church of England are attempting to move the position of the 'undecided' - the floating voter if you will - into one of clear affiliation. This is an affiliation that both the *OUT* and Mission-shaped Church campaigns would hope to see demonstrated through acts of public affirmation; wearing t-shirts, attending rallies, and for the church, participating in acts of public worship. These are resistive approaches; both Dawkins and the Church seek to consolidate an individual's predisposition, rather than adopting a transgressive approach that attempts to convert the 'unbeliever' - something that a 'traditional' missionary might have attempted, or something the *OUT* campaign might advocate. In this cajoling approach, Dawkins advocates bumper stickers for cars, letters to newspapers, political lobbying and support groups, who should offer "friendship and solidarity" for those who require the 'courage' to come 'out' as an atheist. (Dawkins 2008b) It is possible that Dawkins is unintentionally allowing the religious residue in the language and grammars of contemporary culture to shape his campaign. I would suggest however, that it is more likely that he is knowingly using the well-established persuasive and group-bonding practices of organised religion to (putting it crudely) 'beat them at their own game'.

At this juncture, I find myself in broad agreement with the intention of Dawkins and Dennett. They argue it is necessary to critique religion's place in, and relationship to, society. They wish to challenge ossified discourses and deconstruct naturalised positions. However, as we will come on to see in the next pages, the assumptive positions adopted, and the methods utilised by these scholars are, at times, crudely dogmatic.

"Dawkins the dogmatist" [26]

For those who responded negatively to Dawkins' and Dennett's' 2006 books, those who saw the authors' approach as one of unsophisticated scientism, (whether they were a 'believer' or not), found generalisations in both scholars' argument. These enabled them to challenge and then dismiss these works by describing them as expressing mere "vulgar caricatures of religious faith" (Eagleton 2007: np). This response was understandable: both books took a strong line. They often engaged with binaries and justified their arguments with extreme, unusual and historic cases. The primary argument of Dennett's thesis suggests that religion holds society in some sort of 'spell': a means of controlling the vulnerable created by a process of history, politics and economics. He exemplifies religion's "bad spells" with, amongst others, Aum Shrinrikyo's release of sarin gas in a Tokyo subway in 1995 (Dennett 2006: 13). His crude reductions continue to include statements like:

> If only we could figure out some way today to break the spell that lures thousands of poor young Muslim boys into, amongst others, fanatical madrassahs. (2006: 13)

The stridency of such assertions is unsubstantiated by evidence. Dennett does not fully explain what such a spell might be. He only identifies that 'spells' come in two parts; "religion itself" and "the taboo" (p. 18). He goes on to explain that:

> Up to now, there has been a largely unexamined mutual agreement that scientists and other researchers will leave religion alone.
>
> (Dennett 2006: 18)

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[26] McGrath and Collicutt McGrath 2007:xi

This statement, that religion has not been rigorously challenged or investigated (until his book) because of a tacit agreement between religion and the research community, is something a cursory investigation into the work of generations of scholars, would roundly disprove.

Dawkins' examples are differently problematic. They are, like Dennett's, reductionist, but interestingly they take a more anti-Christian focus. He opens his chapter on the "child abuse" inherent in religion with an anecdotal story of the abduction and forced baptism of a Jewish child into Christianity in nineteenth century Italy. He explains " [...t]his nineteenth-century human tragedy sheds a pitiless light on present-day religious attitude to children" (Dawkins 2006: 311). For Dawkins then, it seems nineteenth-century Italy has an assumptive equivalency to the West's present day religious relationship to children. This is a naive assertion; one cannot assume equivalence across time and culture. Moreover to evidence religion's endemic "child abuse" he describes the persecution of the Jewish faith by Christianity; that is to say, he is using one religion to undermine another, rather than rejecting religion per se. He continues to assert that,

> [..e]ven without physical abduction, isn't it always a form of child abuse to label children as possessors of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about? Yet the practice persists to this day, almost entirely unquestioned.(Dawkins 2006: 311-315)

This is a problematic argument; it reduces 'belief' to one thing, and does not take into account the complex and fluid cultural constructs that are fundamental to the formation of religious identity.

Before moving on from Dawkins' descriptions of child abuse, I would like to address this idea of "children as possessors of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about." In spite of the clarity of this assertion, it does not seem for Dawkins that all affiliation to dogma is problematic. For example, the five-day summer camp he subsidises sets out to teach children about the 'problems' of religion via the concept of atheism. One might well argue that this is similarly dogmatic and uses one set of beliefs in order to relieve children of another set "of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about" (ibid).

Moreover, in *The God Delusion* Dawkins presents a highly selective discussion of the 'Old Testament' in order to describe his singular position on the mechanics of contemporary

Christianity (Dawkins 2006: 237-250). When he discusses the 'Old Testament', Dawkins is demonstrating a lack of sophistication in his understanding of religion in the academy. Religious scholars now call the text he is critiquing the Hebrew Bible, and not the Old Testament[27]. This is in recognition of its plural sources and the shared significance of this sacred text to several sects and faiths. This change in title accounts for plural names: the Tanakh for the Jewish faith (the Hebrew Bible also includes elements of the Tanakh's Aramaic translation - the Targum), the Peshitta for the Syrian Church (which is also in Aramaic) and the Septuagint for the Eastern Orthodox Church (the ancient Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures). Dawkins chooses to ignore this plurality.

An understanding of sacred texts is no longer secret knowledge held by a priestly few, but well documented in good 'popular' works on the philosophy of religion like Karen Armstrong's *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present* (2004). Moreover, Dawkins' generalist position suggests that the nuance (and generosity) required to acknowledge this commonality of a shared text would be an inconvenience to his thesis, which describes religion as a divisive, not connective force.

This lack of in-depth understanding (or intentionally reductive presentation) is exposed by Alister McGrath and Collicutt McGrath, who, when commenting on Dawkins' description of the "evils" of the Old Testament, note that:

> Twelve of the fourteen references Dawkins cites are taken from the Pentateuch or Torah. The remaining two are from Judges: none are cited from the remaining thirty-six books of the Old Testament. (2007: 75)

Dawkins' reductive use of the term 'Old Testament' demonstrates his Anglican enculturation, his disengagement with recent work by religious scholars, and a lack of reflexivity on his part. Moreover, Terry Eagleton in his critique of *The God Delusion* muses on this selective representation:

> Dawkins sees Christianity in terms of a narrowly legalistic notion of atonement – of a brutally vindictive God sacrificing his own child in recompense for being offended – and describes the belief as vicious and obnoxious. It's a safe bet that the Archbishop of Canterbury couldn't agree more. It was the imperial Roman state, not God, that murdered Jesus. (Eagleton 2007: np)

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[27] Although, worshippers retain their sect's own title.

Dawkins, it seems, sees religion as a homogeneous whole.

Although reductionist in its assertions, the popularity of Dawkins' book is unsurprising. The spirit of Dawkins' position, which argues religion is a means of justifying immoral acts rather than being a source of morality, has been retrospectively vindicated – in part at least. In May 2009, the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in Catholic institutions, in both schools and other residential settings, found physical sexual and emotional abuse coupled with neglect to be "endemic" (2009: 12)[28].

The paradox then remains. Religion is a powerful force in society - one that is sometimes constructive, sometimes destructive. Therefore, for all their "lunging, failing, and mispunching" (Eagleton 2007), both Dennett's and Dawkins' books, and the responses they generated, capture the zeitgeist of Western Societies' complex and often paradoxical relationship with religion. They express, on the one hand, the apparent rise of fundamentalism (demonstrated in both the fervent neo-atheism articulated by Dawkins' followers and the apparent rise in fundamentalist rhetoric and action within religious sects and their political expression). On the other hand, the recipients of their vigorous campaigning (particularly their desire to 'out' the undecided and the apathetic) represent another segment of society's relationship to religion that appears to be equally prevalent, evidenced through a decline in practice. This is a particularly English manifestation that operates through caricatures and reoccurring tropes – a dismissive apathy.

Secularisation and Apathy

This notion of a widespread apathy towards religion is interwoven with ideas of authenticity, suspicion of clerical authority, and the 'performance' of the clergy as worship leaders and individuals. Many popular commentators - in resonance with secularist scholars - describe religion in general and the Church of England in particular, as a spent force, a social

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[28] As the deadline for the thesis' submission in March 2010 grew close a new story was breaking about the Pope's alleged mishandling of complaints about a German priest, Father Peter Hullermann, who was convicted of molesting boys in 1986 when he was Archbishop of Munich in 1980. The Pope's resignation has been called for.

affectation and a convenient shorthand that avoids too much engagement when filling out forms.

Descriptions of apathy take a variety of forms. I want to begin by considering the notion of the ineffective 'Country (or now suburban) Parson' which persists. It is a caricature presented by a variety of writers: our first example comes from the respected Sociologist of Religion, Reader at the University of Bristol, Kieran Flanagan. Flanagan repeats a familiar pastiche of suburban Sunday worship where,

> [b]ehind the scenes, priests will struggle into their chasubles, praying not to sink under the details of the rite, a multitude of altar servers and choristers will don their clean white albs and long surplices, remembering their parts again in worried reflection readying for another performance. (Flanagan 1991:1)

Flanagan's clichéd view of worship is disparaging of both worship and performance. This conflation implies inauthenticity and ineffectuality both by individuals and the oversized group made up of a 'multitude': the liturgy is a suffocating, prescriptive detail. Flanagan's allocation of "parts" demonstrates poor discrimination between, and superficial grasp of, both the distinctions and resemblances between theatrical and clerical performance.

This ineffectual trope resonates with other apathetic caricatures constructed by popular commentators. Dawkins calls on one of these when he cites Giles Fraser's article in *The Guardian*, where Fraser explains that:

> There was a time when the country vicar was a staple of the English dramatis personae. [...A] tea-drinking, gentle eccentric.(Fraser in Dawkins 2006: 41)

However, Dawkins' selective citation fails to note the more complex concerns raised by Fraser later in the article at the decline of the Church as a significant support mechanism in community life. This complexity becomes clear when we read Fraser more fully. Beyond Dawkins' citation, he explains that;

> [m]any people confuse these changes with the declining influence of religion. In fact religion has returned to top of the agenda. Indeed, it was resurgent religion that delivered the coup de grace to the doctrinally inert country vicar. Belief is now back, often red in tooth and claw. In the minds of many, God is about terrorism, hatred and gay-bashing. And the ghost of the country vicar looks on with puzzled anguish. As Yeats put it: "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity." The challenge for today's church is to prove Yeats wrong. Liberals need to rediscover their fight and evangelicals need to learn that there is much in religious belief that is right and proper to fear. (Fraser 2006: np)

Fraser, rather than simply dismissing the clergy via a vulgar caricature, exemplifies the complexity of cultural archetypes central to society's relationship to religion – the liberal 'best' and the 'fundamentalist' worst. Yet, still he resorts to binaries. The nuance of the situation is too complex for soundbites.

For Fraser, all the world's a stage, and performance is drawn on as the malleable metaphor able to describe religion and its artefacts. However, now both clergy and 'fundamentalists' are a "staple of the English dramatis personae." In addition, in a complex cultural mirroring of the Church's anti-theatrical prejudice towards actors, ministers are portrayed as being guilty themselves of performing, of being the 'actors' the Church apparently deplores, by living an inauthentic, and ineffectual, role. This is a point I would challenge. I have worked for the last three years delivering performer-training workshops at the South West Ministerial Training College with students ranging from readers to ordinands, and vicars to arch deacons. Limited space does not allow full exposition of all my findings, but it is worth noting that students repeatedly spoke to me about their primary concerns in relation to their preaching and presiding, which centred on their fear of being perceived as being inauthentic by a congregation. For the students, being 'theatrical' was an ongoing concern. They worried about giving 'hammy' deliveries of sermons, and how their accents and gestures might be perceived.

This generalised fear of being inauthentic because of performance was given a clear expression when I was auditing one of the liturgy training workshops that a colleague was running. Three members of the clergy were leading the session. All were wearing casual clothes: there were no dog collars in evidence. Two of them then left the room to put on the clothes that they would wear for leading acts of worship. The Methodist minister returned

wearing a suit, dog collar and clutching a bible under his arm. A gentle discussion then ensued about the importance of personal grooming and cleaning one's shoes.

Andi, the Lutheran Minister, then returned resplendent in white and gold. She described the different elements of the vestments for festivals and holidays that she was wearing and described the ritual she follows as part of her vesting process. (She identified this as an important part of her pre-performance preparation process). She paused, and asked for questions. The Ordinand in the front row pointed and said, "That's just theatre!" (Goldingay 2007a: np). For some clergy (particularly those from a non-conformist tradition, as this ordinand was) the inauthenticity of theatre remains the antithesis of the authenticity at the heart of worship.

Daniel Dennett in *Breaking Religion's Spell* (2006) inverts Frazer's caricature of the inert parson, (the benign staple of the English dramatis personae) to describe "[e]very minister in every faith" as an actor who uses performance to manipulate, and to spell-bind the unwary congregant:

> Every minister in every faith is like a jazz musician, keeping traditions alive by playing beloved standards the way they are supposed be played, but also incessantly gauging and deciding, slowing the pace or speeding up, deleting or adding another phrase to a prayer, mixing familiarity and novelty in just the right proportions to grab the minds and hearts of the listeners in attendance. The best performances are not just like good music; they are a kind of music. [...] Such performer-composers are not just vocalists; their instrument is the congregation, and they play it with the passionate but knowledgeable artistry of the violinist entrusted with a Stradivarius. In addition to the immediate effects today -- a smile or "Amen!" or "Hallelujah" -- and short-term effects -- returning to church next Sunday, putting another dollar in the collection plate -- there are long-term effects. By choosing which passages of Scripture will be replicated this week, the minister shapes not just the order of worship but the minds of the worshippers. Unless you are a remarkable and rare scholar, you carry around in your personal memory only a fraction of the holy texts of your faith – those that you have heard over and over again since childhood, sometimes intoning them in unison with the congregation, whether or not you have deliberately committed any of them to memory. (2006: 154-55)

For Dennett, performance is the inauthentic vehicle that enables 'Religion' to exploit the innocent. In another context, such virtuosic, improvisational performance skill might be seen as positive, whereas for Dennett it is simply a means for the Church to manipulate the vulnerable by exploiting their memories. By presenting performance, and virtuosic performance techniques

as synonymous with religion, Dennett implies that performance unthinkingly serves religion. This position will be roundly disproved in chapter three as we explore the complexities of religion and spirituality's relationship with performance histories.

Dennett's description, although unsurprising in popular descriptions of the American church (Dennett is American) is unfamiliar in the English cultural tradition because it portrays Ministers as proactive and dangerous: the antithesis of the apathetic tendency. This apathetic trope does not allow for benign and "inert" religious leaders to be the indoctrinators of suicide bombers because they are ineffectual fossils left from a bygone age.

This apathetic narrative is engrained into, and imbibed with, a particularly English description of the nation's approach to religion. This is a position presented by Jeremy Paxman in his "portrait of a people" *The English,* and by Kate Fox, in her anthropological text, *Watching the English.* (Paxman 1998: 95-107; Fox 2004: 353-361) Fox summarises the national relationship with religion as being driven by a culture of restraint, rather than spiritual zeal:

> Our benign indifference remains benign only so long as the religious, of any persuasion, stay in their place and refrain from discomfiting the non-practising, spiritually neutral majority with embarrassing or tedious displays of religious zeal. And any use of 'the G-Word', unless obviously ironic or just a figure of speech (God forbid, God knows, godforsaken, etc.) counts as such an improper display. Earnestness of any kind makes us squirm; religious earnestness makes us deeply suspicious and decidedly twitchy. (Fox 2004: 357)

Scholars, like Fox, by offering reductionist, generalised descriptions of religion, such as this, reach a similar conclusion to that of Dawkins or Dennett. They assume that religion can be dismissed. Moreover, there is an underlying assumption that for a scholar to take religion seriously is to either be of dubious character, or worthy of suspicion. This presents a dichotomy around how religion is described, imagined and discussed; a dichotomy of apathy versus fundamentalism. These scholars' positions both devalue and disallow an engagement with the nuanced ways that people articulate and practise their belief and spirituality – religious performativity. Religion is, after all, not a thing that exists as separate from society. It does not stand outside ideology; it is an interwoven strand of it and consequently it needs to be interrogated.

In their descriptions and approach, Dawkins nor Dennett, Fox nor Paxman, deal with quotidian religious expression. Their findings seem to be based not on systematic observation of, or engagement with, recent religious practice (even in anthropologist Fox's case), but on a conflation of overheard conversations (Fox 2004: 354), cultural stereotypes (Paxman 1998: 5-6, 96) and an opinion poll (Fox 2004: 355). Enculturation and identity construction is a complex process that requires a careful approach that engages with, and begins to analyse, its inherent paradoxes. Religious and spiritual practices, although sharing strong family resemblances, cannot be categorised according to a single universal feature in Darwinian terms as Dawkins suggests (Dawkins 2006: 166). This is because they are often articulated through performances that are singular, interpretative cultural events, which are, by their very nature, unique and ephemeral. They are processes of live embodiment, experienced collectively by an invested audience of individuals and therefore they do not lie quiet in taxonomical drawers. Society's worship is not tidy.

Christian Nominalism

> *"I am not an active Christian, more a cultural one, like most people in this country."(Fenton 2006: np)*

This generalised apathy assumes a uniformity of practice. It assumes Christian nominalism in England; that is to say, everyone is Christian. This is correct: the majority are. This is a fact borne out by the seventy-two percent of the population who described themselves as such in the 2001 census. However, associated with this nominalism is a further issue: an assumption that everyone who is Christian is protestant and white and that "We are all the same." This both causes, and is caused by, a number of societal conditions: historical residues, economic priorities, societal institutions and political processes reinforce this Christian nominalism and consequently "very few individuals escape the influence of common religion altogether" (Davie 1994: 76).

However, to be Christian is not homogeneous. As part of a destabilised, post-secular society, this ideological construct is in a state of flux: what is it to be white or not, Christian or

not, practising or not, English by identification or simply by residence are enormously complex, and changing. This is an issue Professor of the Sociology of Religion, Grace Davie, describes in her seminal work *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging (*1994). She explains;

> Christian nominalism remains a more prevalent phenomenon than secularism. [T]he fact that belief in this country derives primarily from a Christian and largely Protestant culture [...should not] be taken for granted. Christian assumptions and Christian vocabulary remain important even if the content has altered quite significantly. (ibid)

This nominalism exists not only in a shared cultural imagination; it also exists in legislation and government.

In a challenging article, Professor of Law, Peter Edge (with Peter Cumper), describes the special legal dispensation enjoyed by the Church of England. He notes "[..f]rom a perspective of equal treatment between different religions by a neutral state there is the protection of Anglican doctrines alone by the criminal law" (Cumper and Edge 2008: 622). In an increasingly pluralist society, where religious identity is cultural rather than practised, and fewer people have an active role in the interrogation of the Church, this C of E assumption is problematic. Moreover, as we will come on to see when we consider the political campaigning of the British National Party, this cultural persistence of Christian nominalism in a shifting religious landscape means that religion is a malleable, not dogmatic, construct for the majority; one that is developed through the cultural imagination, rather than through acts of worship.

Christian nominalism is still a dominant force in Britain. Whether we practise or not, whether we believe or not, it pervades many aspects of our contemporary lives: it is expressed in our language, our calendar, how our children our educated, even the very fabric of our geographical landscape. Religion is a powerful force at work in society, but its mechanisms and articulations are ephemeral and transitory. Religion is naturalised into our quotidian experience and we often cease to notice its influence because it is transmitted through established cultural mechanisms. This is also prevalent in our political life where, for all the rhetorical division of church and state, national identity and national religion are presented as being synonymous in

the media and popular culture. How then is this tautology between 'civic' religion and individual religion experienced?

An interesting example of the process at the centre of this cultural conflation of religion and identity began in *The Telegraph* newspaper on the 24th November 2006, when it ran a story about how Nadia Eweida was sent home by her employers British Airways for refusing to remove her crucifix necklace that contravened their rules on uniforms. This catalysed several calls to boycott British Airways. One such protest took the form of a website, which encouraged people to destroy their frequent flyer cards. The site's designer Marcus Stafford stated:

> This case was the last straw for me. I had just got so fed up with attacks on Englishness and Christianity that I decided to take action. […] I am not an active Christian, more a cultural one, like most people in this country, but I just thought, no more. (Stafford in Fenton 2006: np)

This is a complex but illuminating statement. Stafford indicates that his identity, in part at least, is bound up in his performance of his everyday life that includes an interconnected "Englishness" and "Christianity." And, that in some way, this incident attacked his sense of self.

If we return to the notion of Christian nominalism, then there is logic to his position: to be English is to be Christian. But, what does this mean? Stafford explains that, for him, to be Christian is not a matter of practice, but rather a matter of culture. He states, "I am not an active Christian, more a cultural one, like most people in this country" (ibid). This is an important distinction: this statement conflates "Englishness and Christianity," and claims to represent "most people in this country." It also divides active practice from cultural affiliation. This is not an anomaly reserved for Stafford; it is borne out in the statistical discrepancy between the two percent of the population who practise as Christians, as opposed to the seventy-two percent who do not practise as part of a cohesive congregation, but still term themselves Christian. In this case to be a 'Cultural Christian' is not an expression of benign inertia, rather a position of aggressive defence.

Stories like that of Nadia Eweida have fuelled the calls for the creation of terms such as 'Christianophobia', defined by one pressure group as "a negative and categorical bias against Christians" (Europe for Christ! 2009: np). This is an interesting continuation of what has been described as a "kind of white defensiveness and siege mentality" in the 1970s and 1980s. (Bradley 2007: 177) This term, Christianophobia, has been given equal stature by the UN Human Rights Commission as anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism and Islamaphobia (The United Nations 2009: np). Therefore, rather than liberally dismissing these responses to changes in cultural expression of religious identification as merely right wing paranoia expressed by a minority, they need to be addressed more rigorously because a "white defensive siege mentality" is a prevalent perception.

The task of understanding how contemporary English spiritual identity is constructed is made more difficult because religion is enculturated; that is to say, it has an all-pervasive, naturalised position in our culture. It is perhaps for this reason that, thus far, the charting and explanation for this religious change appears to be inadequate. (Ammerman 2007: 223-31; Garnett, Grimley et al. 2007: 14) To develop this idea of the role of 'cultural' Christian as a force in right wing politics, I will now turn to a further example of this apparently 'benign' British religion and spirituality and the inseparability of Christianity from the 'English' brand. The ultra right-wing British National Party (BNP) used Christ's name and image in its 2009 poster campaign for the European election: an example of which is shown below. In an attempt to place itself in the role of victim, and to win votes for the European Parliament, it uses a bible quotation (John 15. 20): "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" followed by the words "What would Jesus do? Vote BNP" (The British National Party 2009).
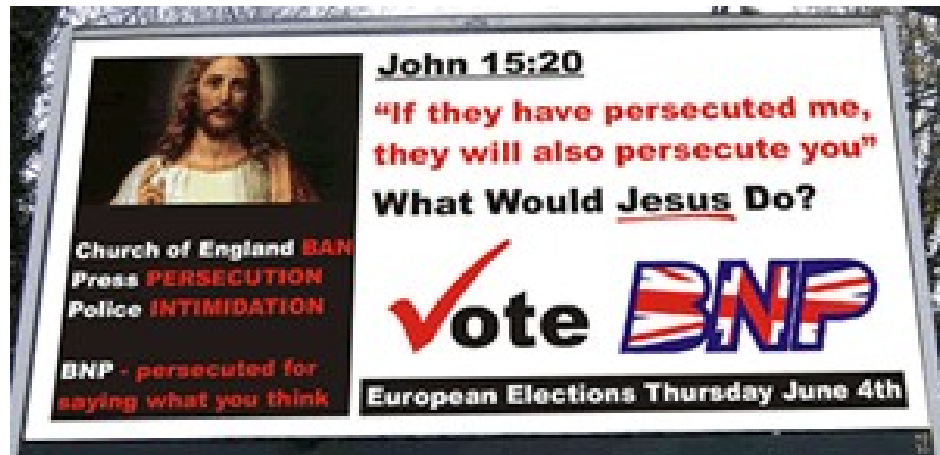
The poster also chooses a telling image of Christ. Not the powerful Middle Eastern freedom fighter overthrowing the stranglehold of the Roman establishment, rather it presents an image of the Victorianised, Caucasian blonde image of 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild' above the words:

Church of England BAN: Press PERSECUTION: Police INTIMIDATION: BNP – persecuted for saying what you think (The British National Party 2009).

The "Church of England BAN" refers to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's response to this campaign. They issued a rare, unanimous and unequivocal rejection of this statement, advising people to exercise "great vigilance" around political parties who would foster "fear and division within communities, especially between people of different faiths or racial backgrounds" (Williams and Sentamu 2009). Moreover, this is not a new battle; in 2004 John Sentamu memorably described voting for the BNP as "spitting in the face of God" (Sparrow 2004). In this case, it would be naive to suggest that the Church and State, religion and identity are anything less than symbiotic in an ideological process.

However, from a civic perspective, this appears to be an unusual case. Traditionally, the rhetoric of both Church and State adhere to clear divisions of responsibility; the Church does

not advise the nation on how to vote, and the Government does not advise the nation on how to pray. However, in their everyday expression, these divisions are porous; twenty-six 'Lords Spiritual' (bishops of the Church of England) sit in the House of Lords alongside the 'Lords Temporal'. Nor should it be forgotten that, although in theory it is the cathedral's college who elect these bishops, the Prime Minister chooses from a list presented by the Crown Nominations Commission, which the Sovereign then instructs the college to elect[29]. Moreover, our former Prime Minister, Blair, was explicitly Christian, as is our current one, Brown. One assumes they deem their religious affiliation to be a positive political statement – perhaps an indication that Christian nominalism does still hold sway. Moreover, around one in four state primary schools and one in twenty state secondary schools are faith schools[30]. It seems therefore that neither church nor state can claim autonomy; the State (and Sovereign) directly appoint religious leaders – who then sit in the House of Lords. We might continue the 'benign' religion tropes and conclude that "the Church of England's relationship with the state may be more significant in theory than in practice" (Cumper and Edge 2008: 623). However, as being a 'believer' becomes more a question of cultural identity, created via an imaginative process, rather than the result of commonly lived practice, it is an increasingly provocative term. One that is more malleable than it has been in the past, and even more available to give an unjustified validity to a militant position.

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[29] For a fascinating insight into the complexities of the House of Lords as a legislative body in relationship to the Church see Cumper and Edge (2008). They explain "Even though the Lords Spiritual can be distinguished from most other peers, being primarily expected to contribute to debates on moral and ethical issues, they still retain the right to vote on legislative proposals within the House of Lords. In view of this and the fact only Anglican Bishops currently sit as Lords Spiritual (although the leaders of some other faith groups can be awarded life peerages), the appointment of ex officio spiritual representatives for Parliament's second chamber has long been a matter of great controversy. [...] The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of London, Durham and Winchester have a right to a seat in the House of Lords, while the remaining Lords Spiritual are the twenty-one other diocesan bishops in terms of their seniority in terms of appointment, with the exception of the Bishop of Sodor and man, who is not permitted to sit in the House of Lords" (p. 620).

[30] The Government website, *Teachernet,* explains that "There are just over 20,000 maintained schools in England of which almost 7,000 are faith schools (source Edubase 2010). Around 68 per cent of maintained faith schools are Church of England schools and 30 per cent are Catholic. All but 58 of the maintained faith schools are associated with the major Christian denominations. [...]Of the 203 open academies open, 53 have a faith designation" (www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/faithschools).

In this context, the BNP's leap across the Church and State divide with their electioneering appears less transgressive and more a matter of simply following the line of a long ploughed furrow. In response to the Archbishops' statement, the BNP's leader Nick Griffin said:

> The British National Party is the only political party which genuinely supports Britain's Christian heritage. It is the only party which will defend our ancient faith and nation from the threat of Islamification. (The British National Party 2009)

Again, notions of 'authenticity' are important, as we see in the BNP's identification of its support as "genuine." Yet, this notion is flawed.

The BNP's identification of Christianity as part of Britain's 'heritage' is correct – to a point. One might reasonably argue that "our ancient faith," which Griffin identifies, would be pagan and pre-date Christianity by several thousand years. Moreover, Islam has been practised by individuals in the UK since before the arrival of thousands of Indian scholars and workers with the East Indian Company in the seventeenth century, who formed the first Muslim communities. Moreover, Islam has been a nationally licensed religion since the passing of the 1812 Trinitarian Act. Christianity is one of several 'ancient faiths'.

For some in our wider society, the BNP's version of Christianity is appealing in its simplicity and certainty. The established Church is destabilised; its certainties modified by attempting to 'keep-up-with-the-times'. The C of E is caught, managing the divergent tensions between sustaining its traditions and historic buildings (most often for those who practise vicariously - rather than through acts of worship) whilst moving forward for a faithful (who are in the minority of the population) who see change as the best means of survival. The BNP in order to consolidate its identity as a staunch defender of British Christianity, are able to look back into a mythologised, nostalgic past.

A good example of this is the BNP's creation of the Christian Council of Britain (CCoB) led by Reverend Robert West, a clergyman with an independent church. The CCoB, in particularly florid language, explains its aims are;

> to promote understanding of Christian values in Great Britain and to develop efforts for the benefit of Christians throughout the country. [...] The Christian faith is inextricably entwined with the very fabric of Britain, guiding our history, shaping the settlement patterns of our people, bequeathing a rich architectural heritage and profoundly influencing our very laws. Beyond all those very visible and tangible aspects, the faith itself has helped define who we, the people of Britain are. For nearly two thousand years, the faith has moulded our national psyche and spirit, defining our values toward life itself; our families, neighbours, animals, the natural environment and the wider society. (Christian Council of Britain 2009)

The naturalisation of Christianity, in its presumptive nominalism, is taken to extremes. The BNP, via the CCoB, is tapping into the sort of language and narratives that describe the interweaving of the Church and national identity that are parodied by Paxman and Fox. They are doing this not for humour, but with deadly political intent. This rhetoric is supported by the intrinsically flawed BNP version of history "British Pride", an online database that further interweaves what it describes as "former triumphs" of white British achievement with religious identity (British Pride 2009).

The division between culture and practice is one recognised and exploited by a CCoB statement on its homepage:

> Although the majority of English, Irish, Scots and Welsh no longer still attend church or recite prayers daily, the family of nations of these islands are still Christian nations. (Christian Council of Britain 2009)

It is not surprising that the BNP should make such a simplistic assertion that, to be Christian is to be white or that Christianity is the defining spiritual practice in Britain. It fulfils several dominant assumptions. It is however incorrect.

The fastest growing sectors of the Church in Britain are black churches and Catholic Churches swollen by Polish workers[31]. Moreover, much of the power of the Anglican Communion resides in the African church as seen at the last Lambeth conference in 2009. African churches are sending missionaries themselves into the UK as a reverse mission. Neither

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[31] The numbers of Catholics attending weekly Mass is allegedly growing to match the number of attendants at Church of England acts of worship. It is believed to be increasing because of the number of Polish immigrants entering the UK (Gledhill 2007). These figures, although reported in the press, have yet to be substantiated and in the light of the number of Polish nationals returning to Poland as a result of the economic downturn, will probably change.

Christianity nor religion are white only identity defining practices, and for many this is frightening.

Yet, this Christian nominalism resonates with much of both the positive and negative rhetoric that describes England and its spirituality - in particular the dichotomy of the practising versus the cultural Christian, as exemplified earlier by the author of the anti-British Airways website. The way Christianity is being selectively branded, because it now exists as a predominantly cultural concept, rather than a lifetime of embodied practice, transmitted through generations of families, means that the long cherished Protestant tradition of individuals reaching understanding of religious dogma through close textual analysis and dialogue with others, who are members of all faiths, is being lost. Sadly, the BNP won two seats in the June 2008 European election, and it is difficult to quantify if this poster campaign contributed to this outcome. It does however point to the fact that in Britain, religion is not simply a benign force, it is marked by radical practice that, if framed in religious terms, might be deemed, by some, to be 'fundamentalist'.

Fundamentalism

The global inter-faith fundamentalism debate is complex. In terms of popular scholarship, Karen Armstrong in *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (2004) introduces the nuances of the West's relationship to what is termed radicalised religion. The academy also offers an accessible summary of the complex and varied causes of this religious radicalisation. Jonathan Githens-Mazer, for example, interviewed North Africans currently living in Europe to understand better what triggers politically inspired violence within some Islamic cultures. His nuanced interpretation of this data challenged the binary assertions about radicalism and fundamentalism, presented in a more generalised discourse. Githens-Mazer identified that there are different causes of radicalisation instigated by a variety of perceived injustices, which vary from inter-generational memories of atrocities linked to colonial occupation to local personal experiences (Githens-Mazer 2008: np). Politically

triggered violence from Islamic communities is often termed fundamentalist. It is however, Christian in its origins.

The word fundamentalism emerged in 1922 at the start of what has come to be known as the *Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy* that was sparked by 'Liberal Protestant' Harry Emerson Fosdick's sermon *Shall the Fundamentalists Win?* (1922: np). In this early iteration, familiar even now, the self-identification term was used by evangelical Protestants who, following a long tradition of Protestant 'protest'[32], sought to distance themselves from their counterparts on the grounds of differences in doctrinal interpretation of science, evolution, inter-faith tolerance and conversion.

Fosdick, as a liberal, was part of a counter-group who were attempting to find a way of reconciling science and religion in order to slow the growth in fundamentalist churches. In his sermon, he described, "the fundamentalist controversy [...] threatens to divide the American churches as though they were not sufficiently split and riven" (ibid). He continues:

> Already all of us must have heard about the people who call themselves the Fundamentalists. [...] Here in the Christian Church today there are these two groups, and the questions which the Fundamentalists have raised is this – Shall one of them drive the other out? [...]Well, they are not going to do it; certainly not in this vicinity. I do not even know in this congregation whether anybody has been tempted to be a Fundamentalist. Never in this church have I caught one accent of intolerance. God keep us always so and ever increasing areas of the Christian fellowship; intellectually hospitable, open-minded, liberty-loving, fair, tolerant, not with the tolerance of indifference, as though we did not care about the faith, but because always our major emphasis is upon the weightier matters of the law. (ibid).

Fosdick's sermon, and the circumstances of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, seems resolutely persistent almost one hundred years later.

The term's early expansion was slow: it does not appear to have developed in order to describe non-Christian, or non-religious, practices until the 1950s (Oxford English Dictionary 1989: np). Yet, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there has been an acceleration and crystallisation of the use of the term fundamentalist to characterise religious and non-religious groups. The word is used as sound bite, predominantly by news and media

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[32] For an exposition of the terminology associated with Protestantism and Anglicanism see the glossary.

reporting primarily to pejoratively describe Islamic groups: it is a catchall that includes conservative, orthodox, and militant practices. The Associated Press Stylebook advises that 'fundamentalist' should only be applied to groups that refer to themselves as such (Christian, Jacobson et al. 2009), whereas the Guardian Style Guide, under its entry for Islam explains, "Islamist is an advocate or supporter of Islamic fundamentalism; the likes of Osama bin Laden and his followers should be described as Islamist terrorists" (Marsh 2007:152). Thus, the term now goes beyond monotheistic boundaries to include Buddhist, Hindu and even Confucian sects (Armstrong 2004: ix). Moreover, it is also used for non-religious groups, for example feminist or environmental groups (Bennett, Grossberg et al. 2005: 135-7).

This wholesale transference of the term from its early Protestant concerns to become a malleable term for the practice of all 'other' and 'otherised' religious and non-religious groups is problematic: each fundamentalist view is unique and contains its own particular foci and dynamics. However, the term as a generality does usefully indicate a particular force at work in society. This is expressed through a public response to a challenge to the performer's sense of a divine Absolute performed as a transgressive action. We will return to this notion by considering 'the performance of terrorism' below, when we examine theatre scholars' responses to the 9/11 attacks in New York.

The revival of religion, articulated through what is seen to be fundamentalist practice, has as we have seen with the work of the UN, received increasing government attention in recent years. Yet, the aspiration of finding "shared values and principles", as set out in the UN Millennium declaration (United Nations 2005), seems someway off, perhaps because as Karen Armstrong, explains; "[d]uring a war it is very difficult for combatants to appreciate one another's position" (Armstrong 2004: xvi). However, this is not only true of religious practitioners: in the writing of neo-atheist scholars, like Dawkins, there is little evidence of the UN's hoped for moderation. Therefore, it is hardly surprising, and rather ironic, that a term used pejoratively by neo-atheists – fundamentalist – is now also used to describe their own approach.

Atheist fundamentalism and the denial of the divine

As a scholar of 'popular neo-Atheism', Dawkins, more than Dennett, has been strongly criticised. As we have seen Literary scholar and cultural critic, Terry Eagleton, and Professor of Historical Theology, Alister McGrath (with Joanne Collicutt McGrath), provide two notable responses. Eagleton opens his article with great gusto:

> Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the Book of British Birds, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology. Card-carrying rationalists like Dawkins, who is the nearest thing to a professional atheist we have had since Bertrand Russell, are in one sense the least well-equipped to understand what they castigate, since they don't believe there is anything there to be understood, or at least anything worth understanding. This is why they invariably come up with vulgar caricatures of religious faith that would make a first-year theology student wince. The more they detest religion, the more ill-informed their criticisms of it tend to be. If they were asked to pass judgment on phenomenology or the geopolitics of South Asia, they would no doubt bone up on the question as assiduously as they could. When it comes to theology, however, any shoddy old travesty will pass muster. These days, theology is the queen of the sciences in a rather less august sense of the word than in its medieval heyday. (Eagleton 2007: np)

This expressive language is not taken up by McGrath and Collicutt McGrath who too saw Dawkins' work as a "shoddy old travesty." They also staked their claim on a similar patch of moral high ground with some well-judged rhetoric and criticism and in so doing also damned *The God Delusion* in *The Dawkins Delusion: Atheist fundamentalism and the denial of the divine* (2007). They describe their difficulty in finding an appropriate tone for their response to Dawkins:

> It is clear that a response is needed [...] if only because the absence of one might persuade some that no answer could be given. So, how to reply? One obvious response would be to write any equally aggressive, inaccurate book, ridiculing atheism by misrepresenting its idea and presenting its charlatans as if they were its saints. But that would be pointless and counterproductive, not to mention intellectually dishonest. (McGrath and Collicutt McGrath 2007: xi)

By inference, rather than by direct challenge, McGrath and Collicutt McGrath present Dawkins as 'pointless' and 'intellectually dishonest'. It seems now that the 'war' of fundamentalism is omnidirectional.

McGrath and Collicutt McGrath's response exemplifies this terminology transference, and demonstrates how malleable the term fundamentalism has become; showing how its pejorative meaning has shifted in order to include any philosophical position that claims to be the primary source of 'truth' that is in conflict with the speaker. They have grounds for their critique: Dawkins is often shockingly naive in his description of religious teachers as creators of violence because of their passive ineptitude and the stupidity of their pupils who interpret this teaching as a call to martyrdom. For example, he states:

> Suicide bombers do what they do because they really believe what they were taught in their religious schools: that duty to God exceeds all other priorities, and that martyrdom in his service will be rewarded in the gardens of Paradise. And they were taught *that* lesson not necessarily by extremist fanatics but by decent, gentle, mainstream religious instructors, who lined them up [...] while they learned every word of the holy book like demented parrots. (Dawkins 2006: 308, original emphasis)

In an astute and nuanced response, Terry Eagleton explains:

> Dawkins tends to see religion and fundamentalist religion as one and the same. This is not only grotesquely false; it is also a device to outflank any more reflective faith by implying that it belongs to the coterie and not to the mass. The huge numbers of believers who hold something like the theology I outlined above [reflexive and therefore moderate] can thus be conveniently lumped with rednecks who murder abortionists and malign homosexuals. As far as such outrages go, however, *The God Delusion* does a very fine job indeed. (Eagleton 2007)

Eagleton is making an important distinction here between religion and fundamentalist religion: these operate in contrast with one another, *via negativa*. Generally, in its 'English' guise religion is a passive, benign cultural force, whereas fundamentalist religion is followed by 'others' and aggressive, proactive and destructive. It seems then that fundamentalist is a term of 'otherisation', a means of securing one's position in opposition to an 'other'. This oppositional process is understandable because British nationals it seems have "a pervading sense of instability about who we are" (Clarke, Garner et al. 2008: 50). Therefore, there is great appeal in using religion to say, show, or perform who 'we' are not.

Believing without belonging

In order to close this orientation in the contemporary culture of secularisation and religion, and to move on to use performance as a means to unpick some of these complex cultural forces

and their effect on performative identity construction, I want to introduce two key concepts developed by post-secular Sociologist of Religion, Grace Davie. These models were created in response to the 'failure' of traditional secularisation tropes set out in the academy to describe current religious and spiritual practice. Nevertheless, beyond this original intention, I would like to suggest that these two approaches, "Believing without Belonging" and "Vicarious Religion" are useful conceptual frames for performance scholars: they are optics with which we will understand how cultural forces are embodied and conceptualised by performers in acts of worship.

Although the West is becoming generally secular and practice-less, there is still a spiritual dimension to the lives of the majority. However, this spirituality is expressed individually rather than corporately; that is to say religion is private not public and therefore, there is "believing without belonging" (Davie 1994). This much cited, shorthand phrase, articulates the imbalance of the nation's "relatively high levels of [religious] belief and low levels of practice" (Davie 1994: 5). As we have seen, according to the last census, most British people claim a belief in a God but do not feel the need to practise that belief publicly; they do not feel the need to belong to a church.

However, this idea of 'belonging' to an organisation is not so clear-cut. A decline in membership in general is apparent across British society, not just in religious membership. As a society, we are reluctant to join any sort of social group. Politically, "there is strong evidence of a trend decline in individual membership of the three largest parties since the 1960s" (Marshall 2009: 1) and "dramatic [trades] union decline across all types of workplace" (Blanchflower and Bryson 2008: 3). Moreover, Davie suggests that this is, particularly for the urban work classes, because of a "mistrust of institutional life of whatever kind" (Davie 1994: 5)[33]. This decline in religious membership is perhaps therefore, part of a wider, more complex societal rejection of all institutions, not simply evidence of secularisation per se.

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[33] For a wider European context see also Ahern and Davie (1987) and Davie (2007).

Davie's work offers a useful means to reorientate the scholar to the way that society's expression of its spiritualities has changed. In current society, expression of spirituality for the majority exists outside the confines of organized religion. This increase in the individualisation of practice was described as the 'subjective turn' by sociologist Charles Taylor. *In The Source of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (1989) he noted that in order for an individual to make sense of their concept of spiritual 'identity' they define who they are first, and then they construct it in relationship to their wider affiliation:

> The full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community [...] (And these descriptions might not exhaust the identity of either). (Taylor 1989: 36)

Although his original description has been endlessly reused, broadly, he identified how since 1945 members of society operate more as individuals and less as a collective. This turn away from external authority and prescribed social roles, towards a belief in individualised freedoms and the unique self might well be seen as an element of the 'performative' turn. Yet, paradoxically, community affiliation and affirmation, of sorts, remains important within this turn towards 'the self'.

Notions of 'authenticity' are paramount in both individual identity construction and the ways in which existing religious groups sustain their status (Lynch 1989: 174-190; Garnett, Grimley et al. 2007: 12, 21-30). Individuals affirm their hybrid-identity via group affiliation and affirmation. In the expression of religious and spiritual identity the concept of 'community' although transient and complex remains significant to people's sense of wellbeing: the Church and its buildings remain a key manifestation of stability (Clarke, Garner et al. 2007: np). Despite this ongoing common desire to be accepted as authentic, and our need to feel part of a community, as a Society we do have more religious choice, and consequently we do create our own spiritual identity on a scale not seen before. These 'DIY' and 'pick-and-mix' [34] approaches to religion are the products of 'seeking behaviour', where rather than a relying on established

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[34] For intelligent and interesting enquiries into new religious practices, movements, 'seeking behaviour' and authenticity see Gordon Lynch (2007) *The New Spirituality: An Introduction to Progressive Belief in the Twenty-first Century* London: I.B.Tauris, Grace Davie, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (eds) (2003) *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternative Futures* Farnham: Aldershot.

religious organisations, people create their own method of religious expression from a variety of sources made available by pluralism. They lead to what has been termed 'fuzzy fidelity', where affiliation to organisations is generalised rather than specific (Pigott 2008: 43). However, this liberal pluralism and subjective approach does not deny belief or a sense of belonging, or, as we have already seen, a strong affiliation to British Christian culture by many who do not practise with the Church of England but still term themselves as such.

Vicarious religion

Those who do not practise their spirituality publicly, via regular attendance at acts of worship, are still deeply concerned by the process of religious change and its potential to create and indicate social instability. For many, evidence of the continuity of religious practice is an important sign of the world continuing as it should. This imaginative relationship with religion as an external stabilising force is termed by Davie "vicarious religion," a development of her exploration of the relationship between practice and affiliation. She explains that it is a:

> notion of religion [which is] performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing. (Davie 2007: 23)

Therefore, for those who do not practise for themselves, others (practising believers) perform rituals, believe, and embody moral codes for them, whilst also "offer[ing] space for the vicarious debate of unresolved issues in modern society" (Davie 2007: 24). This vicarious model, perhaps, enables a wider society to place its desires within an imagined past and imagined moral 'other', thus leaving it free to experience the privatised, unorthodox manifestations of individual religious expression that individuals performatively construct.

As a society, we like to know that church buildings are being used every Sunday to conduct church services. We like to hear the bells on Sunday morning. We want vicars to be available to conduct rites of passage, in particular funerals, because in some way, if we can operate vicariously through the repeated practice of others, the world is reassuringly stable. Professor at the Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research in Manchester, David Voas, explains

a trait that the relationship of English people to religion is a desire to see it continue in order "to make children well-behaved, strangers helpful and shopkeepers honest" (Voas in Pigott 2008). However, this is not the whole story. This reassurance provided through vicarious continuity is the antithesis of the Islamaphobic fear that is also part of our society.

Before we leave Davie's model of vicarious religion to conclude this section, let us return to consider the BNP's advertising campaign for the European elections through a vicarious optic. In this light, the BNP seem to have harnessed a vicarious potential in how English society practises its spirituality. By having someone else 'do religion' on your behalf, your understanding of it and relationship to it is shaped not by experience but by hearsay and imagination. The BNP's strategy, which conflates religion and identity, exploits this particular process. Its own half-truths feed the desire we have as a society to sustain the orthodox dimensions of our imagined religious practice that sustains our perception of culture and history. In this way, the process of vicarious religion has the potential to support the unsupportable, because it operates from assumption and hearsay rather than knowledge and practice.

This is a key point on which I take issue with Dennett and Dawkins, and Paxman and Fox's overly simplistic description of religious practice. They do not engage with the nuance of what is taking place and, although I would not describe myself as religious, my field-research (facilitated by the generosity of many people and organisations) has enabled me to attend a wide variety of religious worship within a number of Christian and non-Christian groups. At times, I have been deeply moved by these experiences. Unlike the evidence presented by these scholars, I shall be drawing on primary evidence from recent public performances of religious and spiritual belief that I have observed and participated in. The naturalisation, enculturation and subversion of religion in society mean that it cannot be simply reduced to binaries, where religion is bad, and secularisation is good. On scrutiny, such apparent binaries collapse. Christianity still has a great deal of social (and political) influence. While I'm not suggesting that Christianity in public life is a bad thing, I am suggesting is that it is too readily overlooked.

It is still an active force in our ideological construction and still effects implicitly and explicitly the way our society views and constructs itself, and therefore the way our society works.

Religion and Society

> *Do you believe in a God who can change the course of events on earth? [...]*
> *No, just the ordinary one.*
> *(Davie 1994: 79)*

Religious practice in the UK, and globally, has radically changed in the last century: fewer of us practise our faith in public acts of worship, and yet the Enlightenment prediction of a full secular society has not come to fruition: spirituality persists. Therefore, it seems that religion and spirituality still exert a powerful force on this 'secular' society. As philosopher Charles Taylor suggests in *A Secular Age* (2007)[35]

> today's secular world is characterized not by the absence of religion – although in some religious societies belief and practice have markedly declined – but rather by the continuous multiplication of new options, religious, spiritual, and anti-religious, which individuals and groups seize on to make sense of their lives and give shape to their spiritual aspirations (Taylor 2007).

The analysis of acts of worship as performances is problematic: they are not a clear indication of individual belief or an expression of group affiliation, yet they do offer insights into the socio-cultural processes at the heart of performative identity construction.

In conclusion to this chapter, before we move on to consider a detailed reading of the histories and potentials of the relationship between religion and performance in the academy, I would like to crystallise the three dominant paradoxes at work in the relationship between religion and society we have explored thus far. The first of these is liberal pluralism versus conservative fundamentalism. Liberal pluralism accounts for 'DIY', 'subjective', and 'pick and mix' approaches to religious identity construction whereas conservative fundamentalism (religious or atheist) is concerned with an absolutist relationship to the Divine. This paradox is based in a tension between freedom and limitations – the liberal pluralist has freedom within

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[35] This book is the follow up to his celebrated philosophy of religion *Sources of the Self* (1989) where Taylor, winner of 2007 Templeton prize, established the key definition of the 'subjective turn' scholars of religion.

cultural limitations and the conservative fundamentalist has freedom within dogmatic limitations.

The second paradox is concerned with the individual and the collective. The liberal, pluralist individual constructs their own religious identity, but this is whilst still taking part in (real and imagined) collective practices in collective spaces. There are two benefits to this process: first to gain affirmation from a community that your identity resonates with and second to gain the social wellbeing that is still associated with community affiliation. This interplay persists in both traditional and emerging spiritualities.

The third paradox at work is the tautology between homogeneity and the embodiment of hybrid-identity – or what we might term performativity. Homogeneity is made manifest with the conflation of Englishness and Christianity – what we have termed Christian nominalism – the assumption that we are all the same. The liberal pluralist position enables several aspects of religious and spiritual practices also to construct a 'fuzzy fidelity', where one person may practise t'ai chi, read their horoscope, go to church at Christmas and believe that mediums can speak to the Realm of Spirit. Simultaneously these paradoxes are conceptualised, practised and embodied in multiple ways to create an individual's performative spiritual identity. The interplay of religion and society, culture and spirituality is a complex performance. Performance scholarship offers a range of methodologies, optics and approaches with which to explore public acts of worship in order to understand better how contemporary English spiritual identity works.

However, the disciplines of theatre, drama and performance studies have a long and tense relationship with religion and spirituality: a relationship that often reduces religion and spirituality to a topic without intellectual merit. This reductionist tendency is particularly evident in the ways its disciplines engage with 'mainstream' Western religion in general and Christianity in particular. The history of conflict between the Church's censorship of the theatre and its castigation of actors, in combination with the rationalist rejection of religion and its study, has shaped our disciplines' examination of current spiritual practices in a particular way.

This means that religion has become, for the most part, a marginalised topic for performance scholars, something studied by biased 'believers'.

This is the next issue we will negotiate via a critique of performance scholarship's approach to religion as a separate research topic, as well as religion's influence on the disciplines' own autobiographical constructions. It asks, if traditional performance histories have been rejected, and theatre is no longer born from religious worship or ritual acts, then is it reasonable to invert this historical model and suggest that, because performance is the new dominant paradigm, religion is born in performance?

Chapter Three: Research Context II - Performance Scholarship

Performance histories, methodologies and the antitheatrical assumption[36]

> There are some notions which are difficult to grasp clearly not because we are not sure what is covered by them, but because we cannot say with certainty what they do not cover. 'Theatre' and the terms associated with it form one such notion. Use it widely enough – and many of us do – and it seems to take in most aspects of life, public and private.
>
> (Thomson and Salgādo 1985: 22)

> Clarity of thought – covering among other things a careful and consistent use of terms – is essential in this potential contentious area, for discussions about church and state are likely to become confused if the terminology is inappropriately used.
>
> (Davie 1994: 139)

Historically, the relationship between theatrical performance and religion in Western culture has been a complex and often troubled one. Yet, while all the arts have traditionally claimed a spiritual dimension of one kind or another, in addition, theatre has demonstrated the unique ability to engage us as social beings, and to focus our attention upon civic and religious identities. It is for this reason that the interaction between religion and theatre offers such a rich milieu for exploring questions about the performance and performativity of spiritual identity in contemporary England, which is what this chapter sets out to explore.

Despite shifts in practice, religion and spirituality continue to have a strong effect on contemporary English society and their encultured positions means that their process and effects in social operation are, for the most part, naturalised. As we have seen, these social processes are poorly interrogated, often reduced, by both popular writers and academic scholars, to

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[36] Elements of this section were published as 'Plagiarising theory: performance and religion?' in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 29:1 pp. 5-14.

generalisations where they become either a benign set of cultural conditions, or a fundamentalist vehicle that enables the 'other' to challenge the status quo. The study of religion encompasses work by secular scholars and those who belong to belief communities. Religion is a complex topic in a diverse academy.

In recent years, religion has returned to the research agenda, but previous frameworks for its study are being necessarily revaluated. As part of this broader re-evaluation process, I argue that the methodologies and approaches of performance scholars, because of their capacity to engage with the embodied, spatio- temporal and performative aspects of religious and spiritual practices, are able to reconsider these dominant assumptions in meaningful ways. Thus, by continuing the Arts' long history of critiquing societal forces, the disciplines of performance scholarship are able to offer different insights into the ways in which religious and spiritual identity is performatively constructed, tested and modified.

The engagement with the embodied nature of religion and spiritual practice has become increasingly significant across the academy. Social scientists are concerned with the religious body in two, perhaps paradoxical, ways. First, the body has become an experiential site, making it utterly significant in descriptions of spiritual practice, as the Presidential Address to the 1989 meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion explained:

> The social sciences of religion could be transformed by taking seriously the fact that humans are embodied. A new conceptualization of a mindful body has the potential to lead to profound shifts in how we view our subjects and their worlds. Our research strategies need to take into account that believers (and nonbelievers) are not merely disembodied spirits, but that they experience a material world in and through their bodies. (McGuire 1989: 284)

I would argue that this reorientation towards 'the body' advocated in 1989 has already begun, but it is limited in its scope and impact: the concepts of ephemerality and change – what performance scholars might see as the intrinsic qualities of liveness at the centre of an embodied act – are seldom included in sociological or scientific remit.[37]

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[37] See also McGuire in Ammerman (2009: 187-199). Moreover, this notion of embodied 'subjects' in a material world has been embraced by the development of the discourse of 'Material Religion', see *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* (Berg 2006) for this ongoing discourse.

My construction of an interdisciplinary research framework has led me to understand the generic differences in the research approaches of both Performance Scholars and Sociologists of Religion. For both, a contextualised, reflexive researcher interrogates data 'properly'. However, the disciplines differ on their attitude towards the nature of 'data' – a term used rarely in performance scholarship. For sociologists, perhaps because of the dominance of quantitative collection methods, data is perceived as being fixed, historicised and unchanging. Whereas for performance scholars, because of the ongoing significance of the liveness debate[38], data is not singular and a-historicised, rather it is seen as being ephemeral, unstable and changing. The ability to engage with this 'liveness' is a key strength of performance scholarship, one that I will be employing in my examination of acts of worship.

The second way in which the social sciences have reorientated their analysis towards the body, in their examination of religion, centres on questions of what happens to the body with the rise of new technologies. Paradoxically, this means that the body declines in significance as it merges more fully with technological advances. Cyberspace is seen to undermine the traditional means by which religious practice is transferred across generations and consequently, this presents a challenge to the ability of the academy to predict how the religious landscape might change.[39] Previously, the body has been deemed to be central to the transference of religiosity across generations (predominantly via grandmothers and collective acts of worship), which are seen to be critical to the continuation of religious practice. For trenchant secularist Steve Bruce this inter-generational transference has all but stopped. He explains in *God is Dead: secularization in the West* (1995) that;

> individual beliefs which are not regularly articulated and affirmed in the group, which are not refined and burnished by shared ceremonies, which are not the object of regular and systematic elaboration, and which are not taught to the next generation or two outsiders are

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[38] This is exemplified by the exchange between Phillip Auslander (2008b, 43-47; 2003), and Peggy Phelan (1998) on the causal creation of 'liveness' in order to make mediatised performances distinct from others.

[39] See Lövheim in Ammerman (2009: 83-137) for an interesting exploration of how different generations negotiate spirituality and technology. For a nuanced reading of how this operates in relationship to religion and the encultured body see Shilling and Mellor (2007: 531-49).

unlikely to exert much influence on the actions of those who hold them and are even less likely to have significant social consequences. (:58)

For Bruce the body is central to the continuation of belief, but more than that, he asserts that group performances are at the heart of the creation and sustaining of religious belief. In part two of the thesis we will reconsider this assumption as we look at individual's construction of new religious rites that take place in Church buildings, that are improvised and are therefore not necessarily repeatable or reproducible.

The body is significant to these performative processes in another way; as a political signifier, in addition to the embodied performances of community-driven, emotional, psychophysical practices suggested by Bruce as being central to religious belief transfer. And, for religious scholars it has become significant both in terms of sex and gender - notably in the work of practical and feminist theologians defending their right to be ordained as ministers, as well as scholars and campaigners forwarding the homosexual equality agenda around both the creation of gay clergy and same sex marriage[40]. Thus, across the academic study of religion the;

> *body* has become a critical term […] whereas *mysticism,* for instance has largely dropped out. […] Twenty or thirty years agoin the situation would have been reversed. […O]ne reason for this change has been the degree to which ethnographic materials – and the ethnographer's capacity to show that bodies speak loudly about mentalities (LaFleur 1998: 36).

LaFleur confirms a shift in research methods towards an ethnographic approach which has increased the validity of embodied knowledges and the significance of the mind-body connection. We have seen this shift in performance scholarship.

In recent years the body, and notions of embodiment, and their relationship to cognition and belief have increasingly become a site for both contestation and empowerment across the academy. This change, might be seen as part of the rejection of Cartesian dualism that reduced the material body to 'a mere mechanical contrivance', distinct from the non-material

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[40] For a comprehensive overview of recent and classic scholarship on the subject see Roger (2002), and for an exploration of more recent discourse see the Journal of Feminist Studies of Religion .(1985-) (Harvard: Cambridge, MA)

mind[41].Although this recent shift in focus suggests that dualism has notionally been rejected, the question of how a non-material mind influences a material body persists, and therefore this rejection is neither universal nor seamless. At times, in an active inversion of what has gone before, the embodied tends to be valued above the cognitive, rather than the mind and body being considered as part of a single inter-related unit. In this case, religion and spirituality are 'lived' through the body before it is 'experienced' through the body mind. I am not suggesting that performance scholarship has resolved these distinctions, in any way, but since the late 1960s, with the evolution of the performative turn, *performance* has been increasingly adopted as a means of unifying this Cartesian bifurcation.[42] In addition, it has even been suggested that it might also bridge the gap between the humanities and the social sciences (Hymes 1975).

Performance scholarship has a rich history of critiquing different knowledge discourse: challenging the marginalisation of the body, its bifurcation from the mind, and the effects of emotion on the psychophysical quotidian actor. Broadly, the rest of the academy has been wary of engaging with the ephemeral indications of the spirit – emotions. However, in recent years, in the social sciences there has been a desire to engage with the emotional components in religious experience. This is exemplified by a forthcoming book, *A Sociology of Religious Emotion* (2010) that seeks;

> to change the way we think about religion by putting emotion back onto the agenda. It challenges a tendency to over-emphasise rational aspects of religion, and rehabilitates its embodied, visceral and affective dimensions. Against the view that religious emotion is a purely private matter, it offers a new framework which shows how religious emotions arise in the varied interactions between human agents and religious communities, human agents and objects of devotion, and communities and sacred symbols. It presents parallels and contrasts between religious emotions in European and American history, in other cultures, and in contemporary western societies. By taking emotions seriously, A Sociology of Religious Emotion sheds new light on the power of religion to shape fundamental human orientations and motivations: hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, loves and hatreds. (Woodhead and Riis 2010)

However, despite this sociological interest, I would argue that this promotional paragraph suggests that this book is still an example of a divisive approach; still the cognitive, the embodied and the emotional are distinct processes; they are considered as separate rather than

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[41] See Descartes, *Passions of the Soul* (1989 [1650]).
[42] Influential texts include Yuasa, Yasuo (1987 and 1993) and Zarilli (2008 and 2002 [1995])

interactive practices. Performance studies' discourses, surrounding the experiences of the emotional psychophysical practitioner, provide a rich precedent to draw upon in the investigation of actions that are religiously motivated. These are practices constituted of ephemeral moments that sustain and create religious belief.

Performativity is a key concept in grasping the significance of the body in the creation of the cognitive sense of spiritual identity. The performative optic enables the scholar to engage with the complex ways in which identity is constructed within a given culture. This is particularly significant in the case of this research because, as Judith Butler suggests, identity, and particularly gender identity, is

> a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief. (Butler 1990: 270)

This is not to assert that religious or spiritual belief is in any way universal. Belief is not a singular state (and the belief that Butler is speaking of here is broader than just religious belief). Nevertheless, this statement still gets to the heart of the potential of performance as an analytical tool to describe the psychophysical emotional processes at work in the construction of religious identity.

In the case studies that follow in part two, by assuming that performance is critical to subjective identity construction, and by conducting an assumptive analysis of an act of worship *as if*[43] it is a performance, then we are able to use these live events to better understand how performance constructs and reconstructs contemporary English spiritual identity and beliefs in a post-secular society, through an examination of the mechanics of the event, the identity construction of the performer and the cultural context for the performance. However, before this

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[43] Schechner, in *Performance Studies: an introduction* (2002) offers a useful dyad in which to frame different kinds of human behaviour: *is* performance and *as* performance. By using these categories the researcher can make a taxonomical distinction between those events that explicitly state, this is a performance, for example a theatre event or a Punch and Judy show, and those which a performance studies scholar might wish to interrogate as a performance, for example court room proceedings or a surgical operation.

can happen, we need to consider the complex history of theatre and religion, performance and spirituality.

"Holiness and Theatricality behave as if their love has never been consummated"[44]

Although performance as an optic allows for a reconsideration of ossified discourses and naturalised assumptions, as a discipline performance studies is itself an ideological construct: one that has been broadly disengaged from the study of religion, in particular Christian practice, since World War Two. This means that although its methodologies and approaches, languages and grammars are apposite for the analysis of current religious and spiritual practice, its recent scholarship on the practice and processes of subjective spiritual identification are not. Therefore, before using it to study these acts of worship, it is important to analyse its own relationship with religion and spirituality, and to critique its intrinsic assumptions and limitations so that my research can be appropriately conducted and my findings reflexively located. This process is twofold, and involves a critique of both my research methodology and the discipline I am affiliated to. As an individual researcher, in an expansive discipline, it is important for me to understand the baggage I carry and the hobbyhorses I ride, so that I can proceed with sensitivity.

Both theatre and its associated terms, and spirituality and its associated terms, are sites of contestation. These are malleable words that are often used without bounds or a careful framing. This is a relationship Simon Levy in *Theatre and Holy Script* (1999) playfully describes in terms of an estranged marriage:

> The odd couple Holiness and Theatricality have long been strange stage fellows, who have suffered and enjoyed ups and downs in their complicated relationship. Truly in symbiotic love with each other on the early days of their honeymoon [...] they soon split on separate quests of mutual adultery. Although they have many playful children, Holiness and Theatricality behave as if their love has never been consummated. (p. 1)

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[44] Levy (1999: 1).

This section looks at both the past "ups and downs" of their complicated relationship, as well as their "unconsummated" present in order to understand the potentials and limitations of using existing scholarship to investigate the case studies of part two.

For all this apparent distance and contestation there is a profusion of journals that publish on this ongoing exchange. These journals tend to segregate 'established' religions, from articles that cover the '(re)discovery' of esoteric practice. The 'religion' titles include, *Literature and Theology* which considers dramatic texts, *Culture and Religion*, *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, *The Journal of Religion and Film*, *Ecumenica: Journal of Theatre and Performance*, and *Theatre and Religion* whose first article we will return to later in this section. Although fewer in number, specialist 'spiritual' publications are beginning to emerge with texts like *Coreopsis: A Journal of Myth and Theatre*. Moreover, special editions of journals have also been given over to the topic; for example, the 2008 publication 'Drama and Religion' from the *Themes in Drama* series. In addition, spiritual and religious practices (most often non-Western) are a reoccurring theme for the *Asia Theatre Journal* and *TDR: The Drama Review*.

There is also a rich seam of scholarship that is focused on the relationship of performance and consciousness, and although not explicitly concerned with aspects of religiosity, it does necessarily draw on philosophies and practices developed as part of non-Western spiritual and religious systems. Daniel Meyer Dinkgräfe is both a prolific writer and editor on the topic: significant texts include *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* (an online journal supported by an annual conference and associated publications) and the Intellect series on 'Theatre and Consciousness'. Each of the three books in the series has been differently significant to the contextualisation and presentation of the material included in the thesis: They are *Theatre and Consciousness: Explanatory Scope and Future Potential* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe 1995), *Performing Dark Arts: a cultural history of conjuring* (Mangan 2007), and *Sacred Theatre* (Yarrow, Franc Chamberlain et al. 2007).

Yet, despite the richness and variety of this exchange, which is often constructed on points of similarity, there is a similar number of points on which the two disciplines do not agree.

Moreover, within those points of disagreement there continue to be significant areas of animosity. Narratives and tropes from within the performance disciplines often describe themselves in opposition to religion. The 'sacred' church is set against the 'secular' theatre, while 'free' performance exists in opposition to 'limiting' religion. This rejection of religion is two-fold. It reflects both the wider academy's assumptive adoption of the inevitability of full secularisation in addition to performance scholars' narrative histories that describe the birth of English languages, literatures, and performance disciplines as emerging out of the death of religion. However, this clear rejection does not exist in the inter-relationship between performance and spirituality. Unlike religion, 'spirituality' is deemed a necessary, significant and positive part of the creative process. Performance scholars, for the most part, reject religion but embrace spirituality. It does not seem, therefore, that our disciplines see a world that is about to become fully secular.

Thus, performance scholarship's relationship to religion and spirituality is complex. It is not simply rational and oppositional. It is both positive and negative. This paradox is further complicated by the slippery ways in which terms are used. In order to steady this taxonomical sway, this chapter now constructs a framework, based on Raymond Williams' model of residual, dominant and emergent aspects of a culture, to examine how performance scholars place religion and spirituality in their histories, and how this genealogical practice has shaped our present. It then develops this position using a single case study: a close textual analysis which considers the ways in which Timothy Beal and William Deal's (2004) book, *Religious Studies: an introduction* was plagiarized by Phillip Auslander to create *Performance Studies: an introduction* (2008), and how the small changes made by Auslander are both symptomatic and illustrative of Performance Studies' relationship with religion in general and Christianity in particular. From this broadly negative articulation of the relationship, the chapter concludes by exploring recent synergistic projects that provide good examples of the religion/performance exchange on which I will draw in the second half of the thesis when analysing acts of worship to ensure my findings are nuanced and suitably located within a sensitised discourse.

Performance Culture: residual, dominant and emergent narratives.

The ways that performance scholarship describes its histories is important to the discipline's autobiographical construction. This description includes plural aspects: the imaginative reconstruction and performance of contextualised texts and improvisations, the genealogical layering of critical scholars, practitioner approaches and methodologies, and speculation on the nature of performance as a cultural device within society. In order to frame my analysis of these complex multiple histories, I am drawing on the work of Raymond Williams to group these changes into three narratives.

Williams offers a flexible way to consider culture, not as a homogeneous expression of a single epoch, but rather a coalescence (and sometimes a conflict) of *residual*, *dominant* and *emerging* processes and practices.[45] Such an approach allows for plural opposing narratives to ebb and flow simultaneously. Williams developed this model initially to describe the processes at work in a hegemonic society, whereas I am using it to describe an academic discipline's evolving relationship to its topic of analysis: that is to say, performance scholarship and religion.

As a culture evolves over time it changes, but not completely. The *residual* elements of a culture, those that cannot be "verified" or "expressed" in terms of the dominant culture, are retained in a modified form to serve the dominant. Williams explains that they are;

> effectively formed in the past, [...and are] still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. (1977:121)

He notes that, as part of a hegemonic process, the *residual* operates in the present as a manifestation of a "selective tradition" which is nominated by the dominant culture. Consequently, it is then verified by the dominant in order to become "the tradition, the

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[45] See particularly, *Marxism and Literature*; (1977) *Problems in Materialism and Culture*; (1980) 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory' in *Culture and Materialism: selected essays* (2005).

significant past" (2005: 39). This newly-shaped residue can then be incorporated into, and used by the dominant. Williams exemplified this by describing society's construction of an idealised rural past, where the reconstructed rural ideal is deemed positive by the dominant.

In terms of performance studies' approaches to theatre and religion, then: there is a residual narrative (dating back to nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholarships) which locates the origins of all theatre in religion; this has been largely superseded by a currently dominant narrative which suggests the origins of theatre are rooted, not so much in religion, as in ritual (a complex term in itself). The third, emergent, narrative is harder to characterise, but broadly it tends to reject the very search for "origins" in favour of a model which sees ritual and theatre as being co-existent .

Having drawn the broad outlines of these various arguments, I now want to look in some detail at their implications.

Williams and the relationship between the residual, the dominant and the emergent

In his critique of the classic Marxist model (that the base determines the superstructure), Williams proposed an evolving dominant system of meanings that are adopted centrally and operate effectively: the dominant is always fluid, moving in relationship to the emergent and the residual. (Williams 1977) As part of this process, the *residual* is modified to serve the dominant and consequently some histories and traditions are forgotten or sidelined. In terms of performance scholarship, and its histories, the *residual* element of performance histories' narratives places the 'origins' of theatre in religious ceremonies, both Christian and Pagan, whilst the dominant places its 'roots' in ritual.

The final element of Williams' tripartite approach is the emergent – that part of culture that is concerned with the continual creation of new "meanings and values […] practices […] significances […] and experiences" (Williams 2005). The *emergent*, like the residual also operates in relationship to the dominant, but its challenge to the status quo is driven by novelty

rather than by nostalgia. The emergent is, by its very nature, difficult to pin down: it is difficult to define. The emergent narrative deployed in the autobiographic descriptions of performance culture, and its interwoven methodologies, is similarly ephemeral. I do want to identify however two emerging (apparently oppositional) trends in recent emergent performance scholarship, which I will term the 'forensic' and the 'compositional'.

The 'forensic' takes into careful account the location of the researcher, their academic affiliation and cultural background; in this way it "is analogous to pleadings in court" (Oxford English Dictionary 1989: np). As part of the *emergent* performance culture, this forensic approach makes no claims for theatre's origins – in fact it rejects that possibility. It is orientated towards locating the researcher in relationship to particular events, contexts and methodologies. In so doing, it demonstrates its detailed understanding of both reflexivity and the object of study via sharp taxonomical divides. This trend grows predominantly from the ethnographic tradition developed by the Schechnerian 'brand' of performance studies and is perhaps best exemplified by *Theatre Histories: an introduction* (Zarrilli, McConachie et al. 2006). These forensic theatre historians are circumspect, articulating with great sensitivity the limitations of their claims: the event, time frame and culture under analysis, in addition to their own reflexive position and methodological approach are all articulated with care. In apparent opposition to the forensic, the 'compositional' aspect of *emergent* performance culture introduces 'performance' as the new paradigm; one that encompasses every moment of human behaviour.

In order to contextualise these emergent approaches it is helpful to begin with a consideration of shifts in prevalent research practices and outlooks which have driven these two potentials. Simultaneous, and symbiotic, with performance culture's shift in its autobiographical description of its origins, have been a series of changes in academic research methodologies. The residual trope (theatre is born of religion) is formed by and articulated through a syntagmatic model. This approach assumes a linear evolution and consequently often adopts a causal logic. In the case of performance culture, the syntagmatic assumed a 'Darwinian evolution' of humankind's development from 'the primitive' to 'the modern'. This syntagmatic

assumption was demoted from being the *dominant* methodological discourse to being the residual methodological discourse when the academy adopted a paradigmatic approach - where ideas are not described as linear but rather as relative and interwoven, and chronologies and hierarchies are dislocated. Thus, practices and process that braid ideas and take a comparative approach to discourse have become dominant. This shift is critical because it drove the necessary re-evaluation of the role of the researcher in relationship to their subject. Consequently, for the dominant performance culture, the researcher is paradigmatic and reflexive. It is difficult to suggest a defining emergent research practice; on the one hand, the 'forensic' scholar is becoming increasingly reflexive and circumspect about their place in the world, whereas the 'compositional' scholar seems to be making ever greater claims for the paradigm of performance which can speak to universals in human behaviour.

In the dominant academy the paradigmatic prevails, but postmodern notions of porous boundaries, post secularity, post disciplinary and post human possibilities temper it. This tendency is often framed in terms of post-structuralist Western thinkers from the Frankfurt School, (as we will come on to see in the section below on Auslander's creation of a 'canon'). Sue Golding offers a good example of this process. In *The Eight Technologies of Otherness* (1997), she attempts to find a freedom "beyond the postmodern," and as a solution offers the notion of the "radical composition" (p. 20). In typically postmodern/post-structuralist language, she describes the difficulty of dealing with the paradox of indeterminacy in the human condition, which operates as both a problem and a necessity. She describes indeterminacy as;

> a radical composition, a radical multiplicity in all its negative dimensionalities; and it is precisely un-thinkable, inasmuch as it is neither paradigmatic nor syntagmatic; neither metaphorical nor metonymic; neither time nor space; neither true nor false. (1997: 21)

Here, Golding gives us an interesting distillation of the *emergent* compositional approach. One that is, as Raymond Williams would recognise, by its very nature radical, un-thinkable and indeterminate.

With these three narratives established, we will now use them to frame significant moments in performance scholarship from the last one hundred years that describes theatre's

relationship to religion. It is worth noting that in order to examine each of these performance culture narratives I choose examples of scholarship that are general in both their range of topics and their intended audience, rather than texts with a narrow focus, because these offer the best distillation, a snapshot if you will, of the residual, dominant and emergent narratives with which to illustrate this process. We begin with the residual narrative and the work of Phyllis Hartnoll.

The Residual Narrative: theatre's origins are in religious ceremony.

The *residual* narrative states that theatre's origins are in European acts of worship that respond to, or create, performance texts. These acts are conceived of syntagmatically in terms of Western traditions, both Christian and Pagan.

Phyllis Hartnoll's richly illustrated text, *A Concise History of the Theatre* (1968), offers a useful distillation of performance culture's residual narrative about its histories. It places the beginnings of theatre in two European religious ceremonies focused around acts of worship: first, the 5th century BCE pagan rites of the Greek Dionysian cult and second, the liturgical dramas of the Christian medieval Church of Western Europe. The following extensive citations from Hartnoll articulate the main tropes that constitute this construction, and provide evidence of the syntagmatic approach central to its formation.

In describing the first source of theatre, she states:

> The origins of the theatre go back far into the past, to the religious rites of the earliest communities. Throughout the history of mankind there can be found traces of songs and dances in honour of a god, performed by priests and worshippers dressed in animal skins, and of a portrayal of birth, death and resurrection. Even now similar ceremonies can be discovered among primitive peoples. But for the theatre as we understand it today three things are necessary: actors speaking or singing independently of the original unison chorus; an element of conflict conveyed in dialogue; and an audience emotionally involved in the action but not taking part in it. Without these essential elements there may be religious or social ceremonies, but not theatre. [...]The event is firmly rooted in reality; according to Aristotle a play is 'an imitation of an action, and not the action itself'. [...] the first great theatrical age in the history of Western civilization is that of Greece in the fifth century B.C. [...] The origin of the modern theatre can be found in the dithyramb [...] sung round the altar of Dionysus. (1968: 6-7)

Hartnoll is unequivocal. For her, the origins of theatre lie in religious rites, in particular in public acts of worship.

Her methodological position, driven by an underlying assumption of social Darwinism, is syntagmatic in three ways. First, she assumes that religious rites are universal, taking place "throughout history". In so doing, she sustains both the Aristotelian dictum that tragedy began in the dithyramb, and the work of "the Cambridge Anthropologists" [46], in particular that of Gilbert Murray who placed the origins of theatre in Greek tragedy. And who, in an attempt to apply scientific methods to the analysis of theatre, asserted that a *Sacer Ludus* (sacred game) was central to Dionysian ceremony (1912: 341). Second, Hartnoll by stating "[..e]ven now similar ceremonies can be discovered among primitive peoples" sustains the hierarchical assumption that culture moved from the 'primitive' to the 'modern'. This linear model assumes a developed Western superiority to the 'primitive', usually non-Western, world: in this approach the 'primitive' is a value laden term, constituted via an 'otherising' worldview, reconstructed by later post-colonial scholarship.

Third, for Hartnoll theatre is singular: something that is definable. In supporting the Aristotelian binary of the real versus the unreal - where civic or religious ceremonies are distinguished from performance by their "reality" - theatre is a conflict conveyed by the performing individual in such a way as to engage the emotions of a non-participatory audience. Hartnoll's work is, in many ways, the conclusion of the project begun in 1839 by the Greek Archaeological Society's excavations at the Dionysus Theatre in Athens that, in part, sought to construct a singular chronology for theatre. Although methodological approaches have changed, this drive to establish a genealogy for both theatre, or more often performance, and its associated academic disciplines continues, as we will see below.

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[46] These were the Oxbridge University classicists Gilbert Murray (1866-1957), Francis Cornford (1874-1943) and Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928) who "attempted to lend scientific foundations to earlier institutions by applying a combination of historical and anthropological methodology. Although already discredited [...their influence] remains clearly discernible in subsequent theories." (Rozik 2002: ix).

The Dominant Narrative: 'roots' and 'ritual'.

In Raymond Williams' tripartite model, the residual and emergent operate in relationship to the controlling dominant. The dominant narrative places theatre and drama's roots (rather than origins) in ritual (rather than religion), and these acts are conceived of paradigmatically (rather than syntagmatically) in terms of non-Western and non-Christian traditions.

The year after Darwin's *Origins of Species* was published in 1859, which we might describe as the product of a syntagmatic academy obsessed with form and taxonomy, Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (1860) in which he asserted, following Aristotle, that Greek tragic theatre grew not out of religious worship, but out of a collective, 'primitive' sacrificial ritual. This position not only negated the primacy of the text, it also challenged the purity of the classical world, as well as the individualism of the Christian cult. In so doing he "aroused an upsurge of indignation and open hostility" (Fischer-Lichte 2005: 19) [47]. In 1890, James Frazer's *Golden Bough* offered a similarly fierce rejection of the dominant assertions of Christian orthodoxy by exchanging the assumption of meta-narratives for multiple narratives. With scholars like Nietzsche, the syntagmatic became the paradigmatic and the freedom of myth driven ritual, rather than the restriction of religious worship, became possible. Thus, our dominant narrative, that places the roots of theatre in ritual, is long established in the scholarship of religion and spirituality.

As I did with the Hartnoll extract for the residual narrative, I want here to critique one text as an example of the dominant narrative. In this case, I take a textbook as the distillation of the dominant; it is an extract from the expanded 2000 edition of *Drama and theatre studies: for use with all drama and theatre studies A and AS levels*. This is a successful textbook, in its sixth reprint since its 1995 debut. Again, I quote at length.

In its general introduction, it states:

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[47] A position that Fischer-Lischte discusses at length in *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: exploring forms of political theatre*.

The earliest forms of drama arose from a ritual base where very few of the performers could read or write; written text was not necessary since components were handed down through an oral tradition. Drama would have been a shared experience where performer and audience would be barely distinguishable. The remnants of such drama can still be seen in Britain, albeit in a commercial setting where there will be a force of spectators. The Padstow Hobby Horse can still be seen dancing the streets of Padstow, Cornwall, on Mayday, intent on providing a spectacle. Although it has lost its original purposes as a symbol of forthcoming fertility, an echo of such a rite can be sensed. Some rituals are of more recent origin. The rolling tar barrels of Ottery St Mary in Devon (or Lewes in East Sussex) on 5 November provide spectators with a sense of communal ritual. These rituals are a form of 'performance art' where the 'text' is often wordless and the audience participation is part of the whole ritual. This is in contrast to earlier *plays* which had a story, spoken text and a clear definition between performers and audience.

Drama as performance art without a script is not confined to traditional rituals. Whilst we have scripted records of early mystery and morality plays, no such forms were used with the mediaeval jongleurs and only scenarios were used in the great Commedia dell'Arte performances of the Italian middle ages. We tend to allocate too much importance to the written text, even for the plays of Shakespeare's time. (MacKey and Cooper 2000: xi)

Here the dominant narrative differs from the residual narrative in four main ways. First, the theatre's 'origins in religious worship' shift to become its 'roots in ritual'. Second, the location of the investigation into theatre's genealogy shifts from the West to non-Western traditions. Third, it collation of data shifts from a syntagmatic to a paradigmatic approach, where chronology is less important, and notions of 'value' or 'hierarchy' are dislocated. Fourth, it moves from giving primacy to the text, to rejecting it.

The shift to 'roots in ritual' is both explicitly and implicitly articulated. MacKey and Cooper first explain:

 The earliest forms of drama arose from a ritual base where very few of the performers could read or write; written text was not necessary since components were handed down through an oral tradition (ibid).

For them, straightforwardly, drama is born of ritual – religion is not even mentioned. But the shift between 'origins' and 'roots' is more complex: the move from formalised religious worship to an implicitly organic series of influences and sources is not so clear-cut, but is interwoven with the valorisation of non-Western (or perhaps non-modern) traditions. Drama is sustained through an oral tradition, which is (at least implicitly) given the context, a positive statement.

This is however, a complex (and in many ways two-faced) compliment. I am reminded of Holledge and Tompkin's criticism of a type of academic discourse on ritual practice that permits the a-historicisation and primitivisation of 'other' cultures (2000: 57). In such a discourse oral transmission is celebrated. But these traditions are firmly placed in the authorised past where they are communicated by illiterate individuals. And therefore, in an academic textbook literacy (one might imagine) must be valued above all things, the literate West is implicitly superior to, through its approval of, 'other' oral traditions. In many ways, emergent residue prevails as Darwinian evolutionary assumptions quietly continue.

Second, this valorisation of the traditional is also interwoven with the devaluing of Western practices. The relationship to this drama is nostalgia because it is lost in Britain where only "remnants remain". Moreover, these "remnants" exist only in a commercial setting, but despite their 'selling out to capitalism' (a further echo of their political position) they are still able to provide "a sense of communal ritual". With the sound of Brook's bemoaning of the loss of the spiritual ringing in my ears, I move on to the third shift.

Third, for MacKey and Cooper drama, performance, and performance art, rather than theatre are significant to this dominant trope. Moreover, drama and performance are broadly interchangeable, and 'performance art' is used in its widest sense. This flexible approach persists until it becomes necessary to distinguish "audience participation" from "plays". The word is italicised by the author to mark it out as an unusual concept, one that has "a story" and "a spoken text". Moreover, these plays were not performances of communal experience, ones that facilitated the implicitly desirable "audience participation", but rather they sustained a "clear distinction" between actor and audience. This distinction between actor and audience was something that Hartnoll in the residue saw as necessary (1968: 6). One can only assume that theatrical devices used in plays to break this "clear distinction" like direct address, asides or the call and response of pantomime (which too is scripted) slipped MacKey and Cooper's mind in

their exposition of the dominant narrative's assertion of the decline of theatre. The death of the text is confirmed with the statement;

> We tend to allocate too much importance to the written text, even for the plays of Shakespeare's time. (ibid)

With this mention of Shakespeare, and the suggestion of resistance towards bardolatory, we are reminded that performance culture does not reside outside a wider ideology; rather that it too is interwoven with notions of Englishness and spirituality. In this dominant narrative the vibrant, original, national culture – the very roots of who we are, and the rituals that mark the turning of the year - have declined (or perhaps have been eroded by commercial forces) until only shells of 'authentic practice' remain, and audiences are kept apart from communal experiences by plays. The spiritual authentic exists in rituals from specific geographical locations, in the present-embodied or the past-remembered, transmitted through an oral culture. Religion it seems has disappeared to be replaced with a longing for the 'Holy' described by Brook.

The Emergent Narrative: perform or else?

The emergent narrative argues for a performance paradigm from which both religion and ritual emerge. I want to begin with an unlikely emergent scholar: Richard Schechner. In *Performance Studies: an introduction,* in a section entitled 'Origins of performance: If not ritual, then what?' he writes:

> Performance doesn't originate in ritual any more than it originates in one of the aesthetic genres. Performance originates in the creative tensions of the binary efficacy-entertainment. Think of this figure not as a flat binary, but as a braid or helix, tightening and loosening over time and in specific contexts. [...] That has not stopped Western scholars since the end of the 19th century trying to prove that the performing arts originated in ritual. [...] Each of these arguments is spurious. There is no such thing as "primitive" peoples. [...] The "primal ritual" of the Cambridge Anthropologists [...] is provable only by circular reasoning [...] The mediaeval epoch was full of performing arts both within, nearby, and separate from the Church. (2006: 80-1)

I begin here not because Schechner is 'typical' of *emergent* scholarship, but to point out that the divisions between the *emergent* and the *dominant* are neither sharply defined nor fixed (scholars can change their mind over time): these narratives are necessarily porous. In apparent cultural development, we cannot stand outside our ideology. To take this as an example of the

emergent is a simplification, although of course Schechner is critical of how the *dominant* narratives are imagined and employed. This quotation does remind us however, that all three narratives rely on one another to be sustained, and therefore the *emergent* has much in common with both the *dominant* and even the persistent *residual.*

The emergent narrative has two key strands, which I will be terming the forensic and the compositional. They agree on important points: the primacy of performance over drama and theatre, the rejection of the *dominant* 'ritual roots' narrative, and continued rejection of the *residual* Darwinian evolutionary assumption. To illustrate this, rather than taking a single text, I am placing an example of the forensic and the compositional in a dialectic in order to examine points of similarity and difference. I begin with the forensic and to exemplify this I am using Phillip Zarrilli et al (2006) *Theatre Histories: an introduction.*

The forensic first rejects the ritual, high-art binary and the 'roots' in ritual narrative (pp 71-72). It instead looks to functionality. This shift is described as taking place "fairly recently" (ibid: 34). Zarrilli explains:

> Although the belief is widespread that the performing arts originated in or as rituals, there is not historical or archaeological evidence to prove this assertion. More probably from the very earliest times the entertainment qualities of performance were as present as the ritual elements. Instead of thinking of the oppositional binary of "ritual or art," one should think of a spectrum or dynamic braid. Every performance both entertains and ritualizes. (2006 – 2nd ed : 87)

Although thus far I have argued for a forensic *emergent* scholar who is increasingly narrow in their categorisation of individual performances, here Zarrilli places a caveat on that position, one that widens the efficacious nature of performance so that its participants are both entertained and ritualised.

Second, this is a book of rehabilitations. Although the possibility of a "general history of theatre" is rejected (p53), 'theatre' itself as a performance form is re-evaluated and rehabilitated, and is found to be significant in a performance shaped landscape. The book is, after all, entitled

theatre histories rather than performance histories. Moreover, a performed ancient English landscape is also reintegrated into the portfolio of case studies through an examination of the religious practices at Stonehenge. Thus, the forensic scholar, like the compositional we are about to consider, is international, one might even say global, in their outlook. As such, it engages with;

> a variety of different types of early drama and theatre […that] emerged in the context of religious festivals in large-scale literate societies – in Egypt, Greece, Mesoamerica, Persia (Iran), and medieval Europe. (p. 4)

Critically however, it seeks specificity, and rejects a *dominant* performance culture's desire for a unified theory.

Key to understanding the forensic manifestation of the *emergent* theatre history (and genealogy) is its methodological approach. It is nuanced and detailed. Ritual is rejected as is any general history of theatre, but it is international in its aspirations and examines a wide chronology from the Neolithic to the modern that necessarily reengages with Western practices and the theatre.

The compositional narrative adopts a different approach: claiming large territories by describing everything as performance. This suggests that rather than theatre arising from either religion or ritual, performance is in fact the source of theatre.

Jon McKenzie in his book, *Perform or Else: from discipline to performance* (2001) explicitly presents performance as *the* subject and *the* means of analysis, with the text as a rehearsal for an as of yet undefined performance. He explains that his theories, examining the "historical sediments" of performances are "framed as a rehearsal, for the performance [the book] addresses is not yet in full production" (McKenzie 2001: ix). For him, performance has become "a key term for the new century" (back cover) one that can describe both experimental art, productivity in the workplace and the functionality of technological systems, and the relationships between cultural, organisational and technological systems. Performance then it seems can examine all life. Thus, performance is the new paradigm.

McKenzie's work is the sophisticated culmination of a series of responses to the performative turn and its ongoing potential to understand human behaviour. Key monographs since the 1990s, predominantly by male American performance studies scholars, have set out to answer the question, "What is performance?" (Phelan and Lane 1998; McKenzie 2001; Schechner 2002; Auslander 2003; Schechner 2003; Carlson 2004). In their investigations, they have expanded the range of territories in which performance might be seen to exist. This expansion of the use of the term 'performance' by the compositional *emergent* scholar, in opposition to the specificity of the forensic scholar, is confirmed by Bonnie Marranca in *Performance Histories* (2008) when she explains:

> After a century of hybridization in the arts, the concept of "performance" has come to the forefront of contemporary thought on art and culture. The word "performance", whether it describes a live event or personal acting-out; the features of a car, a perfume, a sound system; and whether it refers to history or therapy or the act of mourning, now shapes contemporary thinking about people and things. [...] Offering a vocabulary of human action that can be used to shape a view of the world and its events, performance is the condition to which American culture increasingly aspires. (pp 3-4)

For Marranca, performance as *the* paradigm becomes a concept that is wide enough to describe a nation. A claim she expands upon to assert that;

> [t]he performance culture that is American transforms everything into some form of actor-spectacle equation. (p.12)

Therefore, whereas the forensic is concerned with the provisional potential of performance as an optic focused through a researcher, the compositional is certain of the importance of performance as *the* paradigm. Performance scholars, like myself, are certain of its potential to help understand the human condition – and to a greater or lesser extent – "save our souls and heal the State". But, in our certainty we would do well to remember that many scholars outside the performance disciplines are less certain about this new paradigm. Ritual Studies scholar, Catherine Bell, offers some thoroughly researched insights into recent performance discourse. And she describes it as;

> sobering [...] to consider the evidence that scholarly promotion of the concept of ritual, which some would replace with the term "performance," has significantly affected how many people today think about and engage in their own religious activities. (Bell 1998: 220)

She continues, with an insightful description of the ways in which some *emergent* scholars'

assumptive approach to the potentials of performance may need to be reconsidered

> the greatest challenge to current performance theory lies in its tendency to flirt with universalism, that is, to substitute performance for older notions of ritual in order to create a new general mode of action. This […] spawns many of the smaller problems afflicting performance analyses, such as the tendency to assume that performance is a single, coherent thing, sufficiently the same everywhere. (Bell 1998: 218)

Despite the rhetoric of its provisionality and inclusiveness, if performance culture really does

accept that performance is *the* new paradigm then we are countermanding our ability to engage

with those events with sensitivity and any sense of nuance.

To consolidate these *emergent* scholarships in light of religion and spirituality, I would like

to return to the Holy Actor and the essay by David George in *Performance Research: On Ritual*

that we first encountered in the section where both religion and theatre claimed to be able to

'save' one another. In this *emergent* essay the notion of the holy Actor reaches its zenith, when

we move from theatre into performance. George states:

> Disguised as theatre, performance has had to wait for a long time for its contemporary emancipation, but one can conjecture that theatre-people must have already found their marginalization puzzling. People kept accusing them of practicing deception, not understanding how one can live with the creation of artefacts that have no continuous material base. Theatre-people shrug: we live in a world of elusive temporality; isn't that what the real world is like? They always knew that their worlds were 'unreal', the product of their wills, consciousness, perceptions, desires, that they had no substance, existed only in time. Paradoxically, it was theatre-people who never made the cognitive and emotional mistakes which Buddhists spend their lives refuting. No one needed to tell them about impermanence, temporality, insubstantiality, dependant arising. But then Buddhism has never had problems with other realities, posting a virtually infinite number of parallel universes – necessary if every possible expression and manifestation of the basic forces in the universe is to be realized. None of these universes has any priority over the others: all of them are fictions, Maya-like, a creation, a construct of the mind: they are all 'theatres'. Originally... (George 1998: 13, original punctuation)

George gives a new origin to theatre, he asserts that theatre grew from performance, and posits

that this process was stunted by the antitheatricality of 'people' who could not understand the

significance of the invisible-made-visible and saw it simply as "deception" and "inauthenticity".

Yet, in this *emergent* scholar, I am reminded of Hartnoll's antitheatrical/anticlerical tendencies,

as George asserts that "theatre-people" had a better grasp on spirituality than "Buddhists". To

conclude, he feels able to reject any value system, one assumes, because the paradigm of

performance is sufficiently capacious to contain all their indeterminacies and reduce everything to " 'theatre'. Originally."

Complications: Problems with the linear narrative

It is, I believe, useful to see performance studies' approach to the question of religion in terms of this pattern of residual, dominant and emergent tendencies. Yet the history of a discipline, like cultural history, is rarely entirely clear-cut, and in this section I will look in more detail at some of the issues involved in attempting to draw such a diagram.

While Hartnoll exemplifies the syntagmatic linear narrative which suggests a continuous cultural evolution from religion into theatre, she also raises a series of questions about the nature of that evolution. As her story rolls forward from the Greek to mediaeval liturgical drama, she problematises what are, for her, some long-standing assumptions. It is important to note that when Hartnoll was writing she was occupying her own dominant narrative, whereas now, for us looking back, she occupies our *residual* narrative. In a further temporal shift, in the quotation that follows, she is challenging her own *residual* performance culture. She explains:

> Throughout the history of the theatre there is nowhere to be found a complete break in continuity of development [...] there must always have been some current flowing [...] to convey the fundamentals of the art from one era to another. After the disappearance of classical drama came the age of the liturgical or church drama of Western Europe. It was for a long time thought that there was no connection between the two; that one died with the invasion of the barbarians and that after a gap of several centuries the other was born. This is to underestimate both the force of the mimetic instinct in man and the stubbornness of inherited traditions. [...] It is sufficiently ironic that the drama, so strictly forbidden to Christians [...] should renew itself in the very heart of their cult. Just as Greek drama developed from the worship of Dionysus, so medieval liturgical drama developed from the Christian liturgy. [...A] clear pattern emerges, showing a definite progress from a simple act of faith in a ritual setting to a full-scale pageant on the life of Christ, acted in Latin and utilizing the whole of the church buildings. (Hartnoll 1968 : 32-35)

On one level, Hartnoll is clear: theatre began in religious worship; "[..j]ust as Greek drama developed from the worship of Dionysus, so medieval liturgical drama developed from the Christian liturgy." However, she also states that "for a long time it was thought there was no connection between the two." This is a point I will contest, but to do so I have to assume that

Hartnoll is drawing on the work of earlier scholars: she refers to earlier 'thinkers,' but does not cite her sources. In order to contest her position, I turn now (assumptively) to foundational works on the histories of theatre in the Western tradition. These key texts do not universally assert that there was "no connection" between Greek and liturgical drama as Hartnoll suggests.

The texts are incremental and build on one another to form a crisp chronology: E. K. Chambers' 1903 *The Mediaeval Stage,* inspired Karl Young's 1933 *The Drama of the Medieval Church,* both of which were then critiqued in O.B. Hardison's classic 1965 text, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama,* in which Hardison explains that in order to produce his book "the works of Chamber and Young must be appraised" (p. 5). This tripartite of scholarship has been endlessly and extensively discussed, which often turns around the criticism of Chambers' text as "a monument to incorrect thinking" (Parker 2010: 7), particularly in terms of his understanding of 'drama' and the Darwinian, cultural evolutionist model adopted differently by both Chambers and Young[48].

Chambers' and Young's work is problematic, precisely because it is part of the *residual* culture that later scholars like Hardison, as part of our *dominant* culture, critique. Their works however are significant in the history of Western performance culture, and I am assuming that these are part of the canon Hartnoll is drawing upon to make her assertions about the origins of theatre. However, they do not support her position. The first discrepancy centres on Hartnoll's assertion that it was "thought that there was no connection between" the death of theatre at the fall of the Roman Empire and its rebirth in the crucible of the mediaeval church. To address this I want to begin in the middle of the three texts, in 1933, with Young who appears at first reading to agree with Hartnoll.

In *The Drama of the Medieval Church,* Young assembles a comprehensive collection of whole and fragmentary mediaeval play texts and contextualises them by using liturgical sources.

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[48] For an insightful overview see Shepherd and Womack (1996: 48-52). John Parker offers an interesting critique of Hardison's reading of Chambers and Young, and its related scholarship (2010: 7-37).

He places their development between the tenth and thirteenth century, and makes his position clear that they should;

> be regarded not as a continuation of an ancient tradition, and not as a worldly importation from outside, but as a spontaneous new birth and growth within the confines of Christian worship. (1933: 1)

Taken in isolation, Young's position seems to confirm Hartnoll's assertion that, in this earlier scholarship, the performance history narrative places the birth of drama in the crucible of the Church. This is underlined by Young's statement that these liturgical performances, which are to become the basis of a future theatre, are constructed "free from the contamination of alien forms" (1933: 2).

However, Young's position is more nuanced than this extract suggests. Although he does describe these texts as being a product solely of Christian worship, distinct from a wider cultural landscape, he does later concede that;

> the vernacular drama which emerged from the Church during the later Middle Ages […] was freely modified under secular influences. (p. 5)

He is not suggesting that these texts were created by the vernacular, rather that soon after their creation they were changed by interacting with it. This means that "vernacular drama" either emerged spontaneously (simultaneous with or as a consequence of these texts), or was a continuation of a pre-existing form. Young goes on to identify it as being the latter:

> Our view of the productions of Church playwrights will be more enlightened […] if we approach them through a brief survey of three other dramatic traditions which maintained themselves […] throughout the medieval period. (p. 1)

Thus, he acknowledges that, in some way, these liturgical performances are part of a wider continuous performance landscape. Therefore, rather than the desert between the fall of Rome and the emergence of Liturgical drama as suggested by Hartnoll, Young identifies a continuity of three surviving traditions; the classical Greco-Roman theatre (as texts), popular entertainment, and folk ritual.

The latter two forms of popular practice are, for him,

less elevated in their appeal and less tangible in their evidences: that from the popular entertainers of antiquity, and from the ritualistic observances of the folk. (p.8)

Thus, Young is not so much suggesting that there was an absence of theatre between the Roman and the Liturgical theatre, but rather that there was a dearth of 'high' art forms (the classical and the scripted) in the period. Here, secular performance is acknowledged by Young, but marginalised as being 'low' art. Almost one hundred years on Young's position perhaps appears crude; however, divisions between the critique of 'good' and 'bad' performance continue, as do the echoes of Matthew Arnold's hopes for the civilizing effect of art in the continuing 'aspirations' of funders and patrons.

Young's text was based on the three-volume 1903 classic by E K Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage.* Chambers also takes a sophisticated position in relationship to performance history, and although his work pre-dates Young, it is perhaps closer to our own *dominant* narrative's description of theatre's origins. Chambers noted not only the continuity, but also the significance of folk performance between the two text-based epochs. Chambers, a member of the so-called Pagan school[49], explains that when looking for a book to contextualise his work on Shakespeare he was unable to find a "short account of the origins of play-acting in the Middle Ages" (p. v), and that this book was his response.

Chambers' historical narrative follows a familiar plot, from the "Fall of the Theatre", as part of the fall of Rome, and the rise of Christianity with its rejection of mimetic "disguisings" and the "spectacular" as set out by Tertullian. Unlike Hartnoll's suggestion, Chambers notes that, although playwriting may have declined between classical theatre and the mediaeval period, folk traditions continued. When writing about liturgical drama he states:

> It is possible, as is here suggested, that this renascence was but the coming to light again of an earth-bourne dramatic tradition that had worked its way beneath the ground ever since the theatres of the Empire fell. (pp 85-86)

Therefore, even in 1903 the performance landscape between the Greco-Roman and mediaeval theatres was not seen to be barren. For Young there was a continuation of a rich folk tradition,

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[49] See Shepherd and Womack (1996: 50).

formed of what he describes as a "minstrelsy" that was "home-grown and racy of the soil"; that is to say, a vernacular folk practice (ibid). This is not 'high art', but a folk practice that was, for Young, intimately interwoven with reappropriated pre-Christian and Christian religious practice, seen most often as part of feast days and holiday festivities (p.87). Therefore, on closer inspection Young also disproves Hartnoll's assertion that her predecessors believed that there was a death of theatre between Dionysian and medieval Liturgical events. So why was Hartnoll so clear about earlier scholars' denial of folk practice and her rejection of them? And how does that residue impact on performance culture's *dominant* narrative?

One might speculate that Hartnoll rejected the authority of the text as artefact, and consequently, also rejected the work of earlier scholars who gave the text primacy in their research. However, I would like to explore another possibility: the academy's shifting relationship with Christianity in general, and Christian nominalism in particular. Whilst she is dismissing, what is for her, a *residual* element that suggested an absence of theatre between the fall of Rome and the emergence of liturgical drama (exemplified here by the work of Chambers and Young), Hartnoll takes an opportunity to clarify her anti-Christian position.

She first celebrates the endurance of the "mimetic instinct" in humanity by presenting it as universal, innate, inherited and traditional, stating that to assume a death of theatre is "to underestimate both the force of the mimetic instinct in man and the stubbornness of inherited traditions" (1968: 33). This statement alone does not evidence Hartnoll's anti-Christian position. However, she then moves on to note, and it is this statement that is particularly revealing about her relationship to Christianity, that it " is sufficiently ironic that the drama, so strictly forbidden to Christians [...] should renew itself in the very heart of their cult" (ibid). This is a paradoxical statement. The liturgical drama was clearly a strong point of renewal for theatre in Hartnoll's history, and yet for her this source of renewal is also prohibitive, and –to use a word which is very important in the discipline's account of the relation between religion and performance – 'antitheatrical'.

The antitheatrical prejudice?

If we return to Young and Chambers we see that Hartnoll's position is not new (although she claims it is in opposition to earlier scholars): Chambers describes a polemic between Christianity and the State that has been in evidence from the beginnings of the early Christian Church which he describes as, "emerging from Syria with a prejudice against disguising" (1903: 26). This is an assertion I would contest, given that the power was held by the Roman Empire at the surfacing of the early church. I would argue that this statement is more of an indication of Chambers' anticlerical prejudice than of the position of the early church fathers, who were not universally antitheatrical. Yes, they did castigate the Roman plays and players, yet they still recognised theatre's merits - they later employed its images and techniques, eventually using them as elements in the text and performance of the liturgy. The relationship between theatre and religion was not, nor is now, simply antitheatrical.

Few scholars have investigated this aspect of early Christian development. Christine Schnusenberg presents some of the most sustained research. She considers performance and worship traditions from various cultures (that might be broadly termed middle-Eastern) and their interrelationship with later Byzantine "counter-theatre" liturgical drama, including the scholarship of Carolingian liturgist Amalarius of Metz (d. c. 850 CE) who sought to create a system with which to analyse the enactment of liturgy that he called *ratios*[50]. Performance scholars, drawing on the work of Hardison in *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama*[51], often use Metz to legitimise their comparison of the Mass to the theatre. However, beyond the discipline, they are criticised for their expansive claims relating to Metz and the assertion that the adoption of his practices was "wildly popular" (Coldewey 2004: 31), which were to his contemporaries (and still are) for many other scholars, "controversial and marginal" (Hen 1995: 77). Schnusenberg's work explores the cultural complexities intrinsic to the formation of an enactable Eucharist, and

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[50] See Schnusenberg (1988 and 2009). For an insightful review of her 1988 book see Alberi (1990).

[51] As Schechner does in *Performance Studies: an introduction* (2002:26)

unpicks the arguments posed by the early church, which discussed both the virtues and validity of the Roman Theatre. In so doing she challenges performance culture's generalised antitheatrical assumptions.

Antitheatricality, as understood by some performance scholars, is at times crudely dogmatic. Used generally it becomes a stick to beat theatre's detractors with, or displace responsibility for theatre's ill to. However, by adopting such a position, the nuance of specific cultural context is often lost - as Davis and Postlewait usefully note, during their examination of the selective use of documentation in evidence of the discriminatory practices controlling cross-dressing in Renaissance London's theatres. They explain that:

> The idea of a London society under the sway of antitheatrical prejudice seems at odds with the fact that ten to twenty thousand people (in a city of two hundred thousand) went to the theatre each week the theatres were open. (2003: 103)

Moreover, they show that this use of antitheatrical as a taxonomical device has developed beyond its original 'accuser', the church, to include any number of other limiting societal forces that are critics of 'theatricality'[52].

Antitheatricality found its clearest articulation in Jonas Barish's *The Antitheatrical Prejudice (1981)*. But, Barish is often misrepresented, and the subtlety of his understanding of what this antitheatricality might be is lost. Barish is clear, his work is not a complete history of the relationship between organised religion and theatre (p. 3) nor does it set out to be polemical, rather it hopes to "explore the territory within which [antitheatrical prejudice] operates" (ibid). Barish then, has a strong affinity with the work of Schnusenberg. Both scholars recognise the potential for exploration of the territories of antitheatricality, censorship and power. These are optics that have been usefully adopted by other scholars, for example William Bouwsma in his biography of John Calvin notes that Calvin saw 'antitheatricality' as a political card to be played, and would have been perfectly capable of distinguishing the subtle differences between acting as 'deceit' and acting as 'going about one's business,' and even the potential of acting to enable a politician to positively 'play one's part' (1988: 280). We should not therefore assume

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[52] See Auslander (1997: 51) 'Presence and Theatricality' in from *acting to performance*, and Reciniello in Wilson for an exploration of how dancers as well as actors are treated unfairly (1991: 97-102).

that our predecessors were absolutist in their thinking: nuance and flexibility has always also been a part of the complex antitheatrical nexus. As Barish himself puts it:

> The battle of the theatre, in its more superficial sense, has been won long ago. Actors now win knighthoods, inhabit the seats of government in America, and are revered as sages in France. But the antitheatrical prejudice, tenacious, elusive and protean in its own right, and springing, as it seems, from the deepest core of our being, seems to have taken refuge in the theatre itself. (1981: 475)

Thus, there is a long history of Christianity being, 'antitheatrical'. But in our tenacious reduction towards notions of the antitheatrical we often ignore another important prejudice between theatre and religion that also operates in performance culture – the anticlerical disposition of many performance scholars.

To investigate the anticlerical, we return here to our early writers. Young, like Chambers, was studying theatre in an age that was nominally Christian. However, it was also deeply anticlerical: in an academy shaped by the work of Matthew Arnold (1812-1888), Christianity was suspect. O.B. Hardison explains that for his two predecessors,

> [t]he Clergy is consistently cast in the role of the villain who opposed the "mimetic instinct", which is associated with such terms as "healthy", "human" and "pagan." Classic drama was, by definition, "pagan". Christians, allied with "barbarian invaders," attacked the theatre." (Hardison 1965: 15)

I would argue that it is a residue of this anticlerical sentiment, rather than a simply anti-religious one, which persists in the work of performance culture and popular commentators like Fox and Paxman, to sustain an anticlerical assumption even now – whose lead player, the inept and inert country parson, can still be seen as one of the English *dramatis personae.*

This polemical position runs deep, and is in evidence even before Young and Chambers. In 1893 Katherine Lee Bates in *The English Religious Drama* - through romantic, nationalic language - affirms that the Church was a "resentful" parent, hostile towards its "mischievous" child Theatre's new found independence;

the European theatre, not only west of the Channel, but upon the Continent as well, bears resemblance to the history of the little English robin, who, as his strength waxes and his breast brightens and his song grows tuneful, turns his ungrateful bill against the parents who have reared him, so that the misty autumn mornings ring with melodious defiances and cries of combat between the young birds and the old. In like manner the romantic drama, born of the Church and nourished by the Church, came in time, as it acquired an independent life and gradually passed from sacred to secular uses, to incur the resentful hostility of the parent bird, whose plumage its mischievous young activity loved to ruffle. (1893: 1)

Therefore, the interrelationships between the academy, and religion, and the theatre have always been complex. This is also true for performance scholarship's antecedents, English languages and literatures.

"the failure of religion"

Terry Eagleton reminds us In *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983), our current definitions of literature began as an eighteenth century concept when 'literature' was not a subjective, emotional experience, as it is primarily today, but a manifestation of

> ideological institutions: periodicals, coffee houses, social and aesthetic treatises, sermons, classical translations, guidebooks to manners and morals. [8296](p.18)

In the academy, the ideological power of literature was harnessed by English studies in the late nineteenth century. For Eagleton its particular success was due to religion. He argues;

> [...i]f one were asked to provide a single explanation for the growth of English studies [...] one could do worse than reply: 'the failure of religion". (p. 20)

In order to justify this position he tells the story of Oxford Professor, George Gordon, who in 1922, stated that because the Church had failed (i.e. secularisation was evident and inevitable) and social interventions were slow in application:

> English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State. (ibid)

Gordon's claims for English literature after the Great War, that it would "save our souls and heal the state" resonates powerfully with the way that performance scholars see the role of performance today - as an ideological force for the good. In the face of a perceived failure of

religious institutions, is performance culture then trying to assume the mantle of religion itself? This is a question we will return to in the exploration of the *emergent* narrative below.

More, than one hundred years after Bates, with the re-evaluation of histories and cultural identities in light of post colonial and intercultural theories, and the consequent rejection of evolutionary anthropology, the assertion that the theatre grew solely from acts of religious worship has been disproven. However, this assumption has not been lost completely. These elements are still effective in the present, some fifty years after Hartnoll's publication in 1968. Hartnoll's book is still described as "an excellent general introduction to theatre history", (Hawkins-Dady 1996: 195), a tool that "a librarian can use [...] to easily obtain an education in almost 2,000 years of theatre history" (Sheehy 1994: 196), and "appropriate to the newcomer to theatre history" (Archer, Fendich et al. 2003: 63). Therefore, although Hartnoll's theatre history may be a distillation of the *residual* narrative, it is still alive in the *dominant* narrative's dissemination of theatre history. It still affects the discipline's relationship to the study of religion.

Although Hartnoll's narrative on the origins of theatre in religious worship has been rejected, it is still *residual* in our performance culture. It is still remarkably popular: Hartnoll's text is on Amazon's best sellers list. Thus, the 'origins in religion' narrative although *residual* and formed in the past is "still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (Williams 1977:121).

Performance scholars may have neglected religion as both a topic of study and rejected it as the primary origin of theatre, yet their narratives have not become secular: one might suggest the opposite has happened. Religion has become the authorised past, used as a negative to operate against, whereas 'spirituality' and 'ritual' practice are now critical to how it describes its present and histories. Both religion and spirituality are differently significant to the dominant culture.

Problems of definition (1): "religion"

The *dominant* narrative places theatre and drama's 'roots' (rather than origins) in ritual (rather than religion). These acts are conceived of paradigmatically (rather than syntagmatically) in terms of non-Western and non-Christian traditions. Until this point, I have been using 'religion' and 'spirituality' as broadly interchangeable terms, but in the shift between the residual and the dominant narratives the use, meaning and significance of the terminology changes. By distinguishing here I intend to offer a useful means to understand the dynamics at play in the autobiographical construction of performance culture's genealogies.

We have seen that across the academy defining 'religion' is an enduring and complex issue. Although few performance scholars set out to define the term, it does have a range of uses. Scholars in the *dominant* narrative describe religion in three key ways: first, as a general descriptor for an organisational device, second as a self-sustaining (and damaging) social control and third, and less often, as a facilitator of creative expression. I am not advocating any of these as ideal, rather I am exploring their potential as different optics which offer ways of grasping the contested nature of the discourse.

The first use takes 'religion' to be a general term that is both a cultural device and a reoccurring theme for performance creators. For example in their introduction to a book that collected together a selection of colloquium papers on Beckett and Religion (2000), Bryden and Butler explain that they "intended to render 'religion' as capacious a term as possible for the purposes of the debate" (p.13). Religion here is neither specific nor distinguished. In their creation of capaciousness Bryden and Butler offer no value judgement or definition of religion, unlike our next example.

The second description of religion comes from Ralph Yarrow's "hetroglossic collaboration" *Sacred Theatre (2007),* which sets itself in opposition to

> common [...] theological or religious notions of the sacred which [...] generally try to positivise the sacred by making it knowable; that is to say reducible to a set of preconceptions or commandments. (p. 9)

For Peter Malekin, writing in the co-authored chapter that sets out "terminologies and categorisations of the Sacred", the distinction between religion and spirituality is clear. Religion is, for him, the limiting antithesis of spiritual freedom. He explains,

> [m]ost religion seeks to maintain itself by asserting dogma, employing social and psychological persuasion or intimidation, invoking directness of cultural and group identity, and, at the all too common worse, instigating or practising persecution, torture, war and murder. Drama on the other hand also has a tendency to undercut falseness in convention, religious or political. There is, thus, a fraught tension between drama and religion, drama often undermining political religious establishments, religion tempted to censor and control drama on dogmatic grounds, the more puritanical forms of religion trying to suppress it utterly. (Malekin 2007: 47)

Thus for Malekin, religion is also a social force - but it has hard edges. It limits social freedoms and imposes dogmatic structures. Following a form familiar in Marxist readings of religion, he describes religion as intrinsically destructive because it operates by manipulating the masses through "all too common [...] torture, war and murder" (p. 9) and appears to be asserting that religion is 'knowable' and exists in opposition to 'the sacred' which is unknowable.

This is a similar approach to 'religion' to the one taken by Richard Dawkins, exemplified by his explanation of the actions of suicide bombers introduced in section one:

> Suicide bombers do what they do because they really believe what they were taught in their religious schools: that duty to God exceeds all other priorities, and that martyrdom in his service will be rewarded in the gardens of Paradise. And they were taught *that* lesson not necessarily by extremist fanatics but by decent, gentle, mainstream religious instructors, who lined them up [...] while they learned every word of the holy book like demented parrots. (Dawkins 2006: 308)

For both Malekin and Dawkins, religion is fanatical and destructive, enacted by unthinking practitioners. Moreover, it is in definite opposition to the sacred or spiritual, to which Malekin unlike Dawkins, assigns a positive value.

Our third, and final, definition of religion comes from the online journal *Theatre and Religion*. It takes religion to be a positive force in society, and as such, although located in the *dominant* performance histories narrative, is in the minority in its perception of religion. In his essay *Theatre is Religion* (2002), the journal's editor Norman A. Bert attempts to set out the scale and scope of the publication's enterprise . He explains that religion is far from being the

antithesis of the creative act of theatre. Instead he argues that religion is both celebratory and an important contribution to human life. He begins with a swift historical analysis of different understandings of theatre, as poetry, rhetoric, entertainment, education, scientific investigation or industry. As part of this process, and in order to justify his assertion, he first rejects the binary of the entertainment/efficacy dyad presented by Schechner because it is, for him, an oversimplification of a division between art and entertainment (we will return to consider these porous boundaries in the concluding chapter) and goes on to explain that,

> [...s]imply defined, religion is the creation and reenactment of myth for the purpose of realizing—in both senses of that word as "perceiving" and "making actual"—and celebrating the relationship of human beings with supra-human, spiritual forces. In this sense, the human endeavor we call "religion" parallels two other major human endeavors—work and philosophy. Each of these three endeavors, philosophy, work, and religion, contribute importantly to human life. Philosophy (in both its pure form and its younger incarnation as science) understands and explains nature and human experience; work manipulates nature and creates and distributes goods; and religion relates human beings to spiritual forces beyond their control.
>
> A word about those super-human, spiritual forces: They certainly include the deity or deities, those spiritual personages or forces that transcend time and space. But they should also be understood as including more temporal and immanent entities such as the Zeitgeist, the organizational power we call natural law, the world-wide network of consciousness that Teilard de Chardin called the nousphere, and perhaps even national and ethnic "spirits" such as "el Raza." These forces form the context for our lives, and from the beginning of human consciousness we have used religion to relate to them. For some two thousand years, we've used theatre as a tool in this religious endeavor. (Bert 2002: 2-3)

Bert does not mention the organisational manifestations of religion: churches, synagogues, mosques, clergy, rabbi or imams. Instead, his position focuses on religion in terms of human endeavour, which for him is realised in terms of work as well as philosophy.

In the second half of the article, Bert then subverts traditional tropes when he describes theatre as religion. He explains:

> Religion relates us to the supra-human forces that surround us by creating and reenacting myths. Theatre, no matter how "secular" its content, is in this sense of the word, religion. The many parallels that exist between theatre and formally practiced religion justify considering theatre as religion. To begin with, theatre has all the parts of religion. At the core of formal religions lies the cultus, the system of religious performance. The cultus re-enacts the myth through words or liturgy and actions or ritual. The personnel who execute the cultus, the clergy or priests, frequently wear specific clothing to emphasize their function (vestments), and use various objects to perform the rituals—vessels, symbolic weapons, wands, censers, candles, and the like. The priests execute the cultus on behalf of, and frequently in the presence of members of the community, the worshippers. And the cultus typically takes place in a sacred space constructed or at least enhanced for the purpose, the temple. It takes no mental leap to find each of these elements present also in theatre. (Bert 2002)

Thus, for Bert, theatre is religion because it connects the human and the supra-human through myths that are enacted through cultus and its liturgy, vestments, and objects, in a space set apart on behalf of others. If we think specifically about the decline of audiences accompanied by a nostalgic desire to sustain beautiful buildings and 'high' art, then the vicarious operation of religion might well be seen as a good model for describing changes in theatre audiences. For Bert, 'religion' is closer to what, for many other scholars, is best expressed in the freedom of 'spirituality' rather than the social cement, or social restrictions of religious institutions and cultural frameworks. For most performance scholars, spirituality has a very different, one might say oppositional, discourse from religion.

Problems of definition (2): "spirituality"

If religion is difficult to define, then spirituality is much more so. In performance culture, it is used in individualised ways, in line with Taylor's identification of the 'subjective turn' and its associated rejection of external authority and prescribed social roles, towards individualised freedoms and the unique self. For performance scholars, spirituality is often articulated in opposition to religion's dogmatic constraints and is framed *via negativa* to it in those terms. Spirituality, as concept and practice is perceived as having two benefits: it is both an inspiration for the creation of performance, and an efficacious outcome of a 'good' performance. In this configuration, spirituality tips towards the mystical unseen and the representation of the

intangible via the present, visceral body. It does not reside in the concrete, easily identifiable constructions of religion; rather it slips in the spaces between practice and experience.

In the twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, various theatre practitioners and theorists have drawn on spirituality to revitalise theatre and performance. Spirituality as a key component in performance began to be reinvented in the 1960s when performance practitioners found a synergy with the work of other thinkers and artists who were already looking to non-Western traditions for inspiration. During this process they frequently invoked spirituality's ritualistic base, and looked to apparently extinct rituals, what might in another setting be termed folk practices, in predominantly Indian and Asian religious and cultural practices for material and inspiration. However, in light of post colonial and intercultural reframing hierarchies of knowledge and power exchange (Conquergood 1995; 2002; 2003), this process is contested, deemed exploitative and unreconstructed, because it is at times based on nostalgic or romanticised ideals[53].

And yet, this contested search persists. The "failure of religion", and the loss of performance culture's former Christian frames, means that, broadly, performance is engaged in some of the key spiritual behaviours posited by post-secularists: many of us operate as liberal pluralists, seeking our spiritual selves through a subjective, individualised approach in order to create a more authentic hybrid performative identity.

The spiritual component of performance remains significant, and notions of the sacred in theatre have been re-emphasised recently in the work of Ralph Yarrow et al., as we have seen with *Sacred Theatre* (2007) and Christopher Innes with *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant*

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[53] *There is significant scholarship on the capacity of Western performance practitioners to exploit 'other' cultures in the reappropriation of their spiritual and religious rites and practices exemplified in Edward Said's Orientalism (1979). Much of this discourse finds Peter Brook's production of The Mahabharata (1985) to be the epitome of the paradox of exploitation and exploration. See Willams, David Peter Brook and the Mahabharata: critical perspectives, Binita Mehta (2002) Widows, pariahs, and bayadères: India as spectacle (pp 163-203), and Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2001) Approaches to acting: past and present (pp 147-158).*

Garde (1984) and its second edition which had some considerable amendments *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892-1992* (1993). Moreover, Bates (1986) has claimed 'the way of the actor' as a path toward enlightenment, and yoga, vedic breath techniques, shamanic journeying and martial arts have been appropriated into pre-performance training techniques, by practitioners like Phillip Zarrilli (1984; 1995; 1998; 2009) and Rachel Karafistan (2003). They deliver their work in both academic settings and workshops, like those run by Zarrilli in his own Kalari that includes a puttara and Karafistan under the COSmino banner (sic) (http://www.cosmino.org/en/strony/shaman.htm), while, John Osbourne Hughes, "professional actor and international DJ turned practical philosopher" has developed a training programme centred on the spiritual psychology of acting. (http://spiritualpsychologyofacting.com).

Problems of definition (3): " Holy" – as in " Theatre"

The complexity, and widespread usage, of varying notions of "spirituality" means that singular definitions are particularly difficult to find. However, there are two reoccurring points that anchor conceptualisations of spirituality in performance culture: the 'Holy Theatre' and the 'Holy Actor' (as articulated through the work of Artaud, Grotowski and Brook) and the 'Ritual Performer' (made popular through the work of Turner and Schechner)[54]. This next section begins with a brief overview of the notion of 'Holy Theatre' and 'Ritual' in order to establish the ways in which these terms braid notions of spirituality through a residue of religiosity, to then relocate these discourses into the dominant narrative.

Plural possibilities of performance, as an expression of and vehicle for, spirituality are suggested in *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (2001 [1997]): an edited anthology that includes essays on, and by, important theorists and practitioners who have worked with Grotowski. In a key essay, theatre Director, Peter Brook (b. 1925) , sets out his understanding of the complex interrelationship of theatre and spirituality:

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[54] And although, ritual is a slippery term in performance, this is not so in Christian Liturgy as we will come on to see in part two.

> Right from the first moment when one begins to explore the possibilities of the human being, one must face up squarely to the fact that this investigation is a spiritual search. I use an explosive word, which is very simple, but creates many misunderstandings. I mean "spiritual" in the sense that, as one goes toward the interiority of man, one passes from the known to the unknown. (2001 [1997]: 383)

Brook states, unequivocally, that an investigation of performance is in fact "a spiritual search." For him, the two are necessarily interwoven. And, in Brook's description this is a solo search, characterised by individualisation and seeker behaviour, which mirrors aspects of Taylor's 'subjective turn'. Moreover, for Brook spirituality is an essentially contested term: a word that is 'simple', 'explosive' and 'misunderstood'. Yet, despite this confusion, he is able to distil spirituality down to an essential investigation into the interiority of a performer[55] and this understanding of spirituality is a key driver for many performer training approaches. (Kershaw 1999: 173 cf. Zarrilli, Stanislavski, Brecht)[56].

Beyond this emphasis on the performer and their process, Brook sets out a tautology in his 1968 book *The Empty Space* through which he tries to establish a 'Total Theatre' in opposition to the prevalence of 'Deadly Theatre' which he described in an interview; "in very precise terms" as a "non-event. [..S]omething which resembles life without it being alive [where] nothing happens, nothing is conveyed" (Brook and Kalman 1992). Brook offers a stepping stone towards 'Total Theatre' as the antithesis of the 'Deadly Theatre'; the 'Holy Theatre'. In addition to changing the actor, Holy Theatre has the capacity to change the audience, one that allows them to experience both the quotidian and the transcendent – what Brook terms the "theatre of the invisible-made-visible."

Brook explains that uniquely, 'Holy Theatre' exploits theatre's potential as;

> the last forum where idealism is still an open question: many audiences all over the world will answer positively from their own experience that they have seen the face of the invisible through an experience on the stage that transcended their experience in life. (1990: 42)

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[55] This notion of the interior spirituality of the performer is something we will return to in part two of the thesis when we consider the extra-ordinary experiences of an actor and partial-trance medium.

[56] This was certainly my experience of a year's intensive actor training with Phillip Zarrilli.

Holy Theatre then is uniquely transformational because it facilitates a transcendent experience for the audience and actor. This notion of efficacy and transformation for both actor and audience through spiritual performance is increasingly important as we go forward in the thesis: it becomes the primary means through which we will explore how performance (re)creates religious and spiritual identity through its affect on individual belief.

Brook's spiritual ideal of Holy Theatre is a conflation of the work of several thinkers who were working on the idea in the late 1960s (he notes the work of Cunningham, Meyerhold, Beckett and Living Theatre), but the work of Jerzy Grotowski and Antonin Artaud sets the clearest precedent. However, their perspectives on what Holy Theatre is are very different. For Artaud it is akin to a plague, whereas for Grotowski it is a therapeutic device delivered via the 'holy actor' who is able to reveal some mystical insight via their 'secular' self-sacrifice. This sacrifice enables the eradication of the "mask" that the actor wears in daily life, and through this transformation the actor becomes "holy". Grotowski explains (noting Christian theology) that:

> Just as only a great sinner can become a saint according to the theologians […], in the same way the actor's wretchedness can be transformed into a kind of holiness. The history of the theatre has numerous examples of this.
>
> Don't get me wrong. I speak about "holiness" as an unbeliever. I mean a "secular holiness". If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it. He repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness. If such acting is not to be something transient and fortuitous, a phenomenon which cannot be foreseen in time or space: if we want a theatre group whose daily bread is this kind of work - then we must follow a special method of research and training. (Grotowski, 1968:35)

In this description, the actor vibrates with a shamanic quality as they undergo a psychophysical fracture; a transformation on the behalf of the audience through which they might too be transformed, like the actor, via their perception of the spiritual unseen. This echoes the vicarious religious process set out by Grace Davie; this performance therapeutically transforms, and presents an otherwise unseen world that quantifies and stabilises quotidian experience.

But this theatrical vicarious practice is witnessed by a present, rather than absent, audience unlike church services that usually take place behind closed doors. This is an important distinction between these sacred and secular performance. The knowledge that theatre continues sustains few in their everyday contentment, whereas a direct experience of it (even if it is not Holy) has the potential to transform audiences, however fleeting that transformation might be. Paradoxically, the sacred performances of a national religion sustain a vicarious society precisely because they do not have to be present as part of the witnessing congregation. One might even suggest that should the vicarious congregation attend a Sunday service at their imagined Church, their imagined understanding of what takes place might be disrupted to the point of disrepair. The antithesis of its desire to facilitate a spiritual transformation: a point sustained by journalist and broadcast Joan Bakewell who describes herself as a non-believing member of the Church of England.

Before moving on from the previous quotation from Grotowski, I want to return to his concluding statement about the 'Holy Actor':

> If such acting is not to be something transient and fortuitous, a phenomenon which cannot be foreseen in time or space: if we want a theatre group whose daily bread is this kind of work - then we must follow a special method of research and training. (Grotowski, 1968:35)

He seems here to be responding to a perceived slight, perhaps an antitheatrical prejudice, noting that in order to be deemed authentic the work requires a formal training and research component to grant the project credence and move it from dismissible metaphysics. This moves his work, and perhaps most of holy theatre (Artaud is a key practitioner on most 'A' level theatre syllabi) in aspiration at least, and certainly in its wide acceptance, to be part of the *dominant* narrative.

Artaud's theatre was not vicarious – it required a psychophysically present and active audience. In his search to create a change in theatre from a text-centric 'entertainment' to a forum of transformation the Holy Theatre was not a therapeutic exchange, but rather a theatre of cruelty that erupted like a plague, one that purged, a crisis that transformed by death or cure. He explained in this way theatre was no longer;

> a game and an entertaining way of passing an evening and [instead a crisis that was] a kind of useful act, restored to the status of therapy, to which the mob in ancient times used to flock to regain a taste for life and the strength to resist the blows of fate" (Artaud 1999: 151)

Artaud uses the term 'therapy' to describe his theatre of cruelty, but this was not the benign therapeutic model presented by Grotowski, rather it was a purification process more akin to the force of the Hindu goddess Kali. Thus, this theatre of cruelty, required the surrender of its audience in order that they might take responsibility for themselves in order to be socially transformed by the events they witnessed: a process we might see, through Turner's optic, as a social drama.

To conclude this summary, and provide a wider context for this holy theatre that searches the interiority of the performer in order to create a therapeutic transformation in the audience, I want to return to Peter Brook and *The Empty Space* to consider it through the post-secular optic. Brook bemoans the actor who;

> searches vainly for the sound of a vanished tradition, and critic and audience follow suit. We have lost all sense of ritual and ceremony – whether it be connected with Christmas, birthdays or funerals – but the words remain with us and old impulses stir in the marrow. We feel we should have rituals, we should do 'something' about getting them and we blame the artists for not 'finding' them for us. So the artist sometimes attempts to find new rituals with only his imagination as his source: he imitates the outer form of ceremonies, pagan or baroque, unfortunately adding his own trappings – the result is rarely convincing. And after the years and years of weaker and waterier imitations we now find ourselves rejecting the very notion of a holy stage. It is not the fault of the holy that it has become a middle-class weapon to keep children good. (1990: 141)

Here, in his own 'subjective turn' Brook grieves the loss of an external 'sacred'. No wonder then that he advocates practitioners look to the interiority of the self for 'authenticity' in the act of collating plural sources. This process fits well with wider societal changes in religiosity and spiritual identity construction. In this model, 'artists' – rather than clergy – become the vicarious practitioners that audiences look to for stability and assurance. In so doing, he concludes that authenticity is paramount, but that in society all authenticity is lost.

Brook's Holy Theatre, with its search for the interior authentic and the transformed audience (the realm of the ineffectual middle-class), affirms the role of the arts to save-our-souls

and heal the state. In so doing, he almost repeats the assertion of David Voas, who in response to the 2001 census, argued that for the majority, religion exists to "keep children well-behaved and shop keepers honest" (Pigott 2008). Despite the disappearance of religion there is still a desire for some external force to set out inspirational moral codes, and for one strand of performance culture, Holy Theatre might just be that arbiter.

Problems of definition (4): When Richard met Victor: the development of Ritual.

Ritual, like religion, is similarly difficult to define: Richard Schechner describes such an undertaking as "asking for trouble" (1993: 228). In its development, Performance Studies has drawn on numerous theories from a variety of other disciplines, and whilst speech act theory and gender studies continue to be important to the discourses surrounding performativity, anthropology and ethnography are central to its academic development. In this particular aspect of performance scholarship, 'ritual' is used in its widest sense as, "concept, praxis, process, ideology, yearning, function" and as a manifestation of the "slippery" sacred (ibid). The definitions and use of the term 'ritual', by these research optics, are often described in terms of and in relationship to the moment when Victor Turner and Richard Schechner began their collaboration.

In order to understand and problematise recent usage of the term 'ritual' Holledge and Tomkins collate its attempted definition into three "major strands" First, they argue that ritual is a-historicised in time and place, firmly located in non-Western cultures, which are "frequently described by (problematic) words such as 'primitive'" – a Darwinian evolutionary residue familiar from Hartnoll. Second, they note that it is typically placed as the "ancient ancestor of contemporary theatre", which also sustains the 'primitive' inferences and therefore, gives implicit permission for the consumption of ritual as theatre – we might also here remember Williams' definition of the *residual* culture as the authorised past that serves the *dominant*. Third, they note its tendency to be universalised, and the term ritual's ability to encompass every human action (Holledge and Tompkins 2000: 57). They then reject these three collations,

and create a fourth that sees 'ritual' as being specially prepared events set apart in space and time that are not fixed in time either during their enactment or in their repetition, but allow for change in the practitioner and their community.

Since Richard met Victor much has changed, ensuing scholarship about ritual has been described as both a valuable means to "shake theatre out of the slumber of aestheticism" (Grimes 1982: 54), and a source of "a conceptual confusion" (Bouissace 1990: 194). Yet there is much to value in ritual's potential as a utopian portal into the exploration of human behaviour. In *By means of performance: intercultural studies of theatre and ritual* Richard Schechner in the book's introduction revisits a paper given by Victor Turner three years before his death in 1983:

> Cultures are most fully expressed in and made conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances. [...] A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering in another's performances and learning their grammars and vocabularies. (Schechner and Appel 1990: 1)

In this statement I see the hope of the United Nation's statement on Millennium Summit that;

> [...] highlighted the importance of shared values and principles such as freedom, equality, solidarity and tolerance, as essential to international relations in the twenty first century [because...] people respecting one another in all their diversity of beliefs [...] is vital for the achievement of sustainable peace (United Nations 2005).

However, I also note the potential of this universalist assumption to estrange scholars from those they work with. This aspect of the *dominant* narrative equates with ritual with a religious or spiritual intent.

For many scholars writing on religion, 'performance' is a generalised notion and is simultaneously (and often unwittingly) a generalised term for both quotidian and more formal performances, a heuristic assumption and even a metaphor for describing God's intervention on earth as Von Balthasar's *Theodrama*. This is problematic. In the case of Western religion, there is a long and complex history of the theatre being seen as a site of inauthentic practice and immoral behaviour. Therefore, for some members of religious communities performance is the antithesis of sacred enactments because at its centre is pretence. For them, to make the

comparison of acts of worship with performance is morally untenable. This view of performance in general, and theatre in particular, is not universally held either across faith groups or unproblematised by individuals.

With this acknowledged however, the Turner-Schechner nexus leaves some important concepts and tools in the performance scholar's tool kit. Beyond the assumption that all behaviour can be examined *as if* it is performance, notions such as *communitas, social drama* and *transformation* remain significant. For some, religion is simply a formalised endorphin-based group bonding experience (Dunbar 2006: np), and this may well be true – in part. But it is a limited assertion, and Turner with his description of *communitas,* gave a socio-cultural location for these collective transformational experiences. This concept offers a means to understand why group practice continues to be significant for religious and spiritual affirmation even after the subjective turn towards individualisation. We will return to the notion of *social drama*, *communitas* and its capacity to transform people through a structured experience in part two of the thesis when we come on to explore in the case studies how belief is (re)constructed by performance.

With this outline of the holy and ritual completed, we return to our exploration of the *dominant* narrative of the histories of performance culture.

Liturgy and Drama?

I would like to conclude here by coming full circle and considering a challenge to the *residual* core of these performance narratives. Recent scholarship – outside the discipline of performance – has raised this critique, which question whether Young (or by association Chambers or Hardison) had any basis to read early liturgical texts as 'drama'.

Nils Holger Peterson et al in *Signs of change: transformations of Christian traditions and their representation in the Arts, 1000-2000* explain:

> Nothing in the earliest [*visitatio sepulchri*] manuscripts (generally, liturgical books) containing these short representations of the women coming to the grave of Christ [...] to find it empty [...] points to a reading of these texts as drama. What motivated scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to investigate such "staged" representations of the medieval church was apparently an intention to construct a convincing narrative of the beginnings of the history of European drama. (2004: 7)

This suggests that the *residual*, which now shapes the *dominant* and *emergent* is causal – a reverse engineering of history. This is not surprising. Young's understanding of 'drama' has been repeatedly critiqued within the performance disciplines, but the assumption that these 'artefacts' represent performances prevails in performance scholarship, and it does challenge the assertion that 'everything' can be seen as performance.

The next section critiques in detail a recent example of work that is located in this complex interrelationship between the plural narratives that describe performance and its histories. It is a problematic case of plagiarism that impinged upon a central aspect of my research.

Theory for Performance/Religious Studies[57]

In August of 2008 an article began circulating entitled "Plagiarism, Greed and the Dumbing Down of Performance Studies" (Schechner 2009 [2008]). Its content was shocking, because in it Richard Schechner apparently accused Philip Auslander, in his book *Theory for Performance Studies: A Student's Guide* (Auslander 2008), of plagiarising ninety percent of another book, William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal's *Theory for Religious Studies* (Deal and Beal 2004). The article stated:

> The theorists discussed in the two books are identical; the order in which they are presented is identical; the wording in the two books is almost entirely identical; the overall length of the two books is identical (168 pages). There is one significant difference: the Deal and Beal book is 'copyright 2004 by Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.' (Routledge's parent company) while Auslander's book is 'copyright 2008 Philip Auslander'. (Schechner 2009 [2008]: np)

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[57] A version of this section first appeared as 'Plagiarising theory: performance and religion?' in *Studies in Theatre and Performance* (2008) 29: 1, 5-14 before the March 2009 edition of *TDR: The Drama Review* where the case was discussed at length.

The article's format – simply a PDF file embedded in a website entitled *interregnum.dk* – did little to verify its authenticity and move its status, in my mind, beyond the category of unlikely hoax. However, on further investigation - by examining the texts side by side and then speaking to a colleague, who had spoken to Talia Rodgers, the book's editor at Routledge, as well as Richard Schechner himself - the article proved to be authentic.

The book produced by Auslander is, for the most part, an exact reproduction of the Deal and Beal original. Routledge have, in a variety of statements, made it clear that this book, as one of a series based on the Deal and Beal text, should have credited them as authors and did not because of human error. They have apologised in full, crediting Deal and Beal retrospectively and pulped their remaining copies. The consequences and ramifications of this case have been discussed in print in a speedily collated edition of *TDR* [58], following a public discussion at the 14th Psi conference in Copenhagen on 22 August 2008. *TDR* 53:1 includes a version of Schechner's original essay.

Philip Auslander responded in the subsequent issue of *TDR*. He, like Schechner, was concerned with the ramifications of plagiarism. He expressed;

> remorse to the scholarly community—my colleagues, students, and mentors—for my part in the debacle this project sadly became. [...] I was intrigued by this project. I thought the resulting text would be useful. I liked the idea of a series of books that would look at the same body of theory from different disciplinary perspectives. And I found it interesting that the series was conceived around the idea of redacting an existing text. [...] In late July of 2008, a reporter from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* contacted me. It was only then that I learned that *Theory for Performance Studies* had become an object of controversy and that I was being accused of plagiarism. Routledge failed to credit Professors Deal and Beal on the copyright page as agreed, with the result that there was no indication that the book was not of my sole authorship. In an attempt to acknowledge and rectify this error, Routledge began shipping the book with an addendum slip correcting and taking full responsibility for the misattribution. I never intended for Professors Deal and Beal to be deprived of the acknowledgment and credit they clearly should have received. But I made a serious mistake, which I deeply regret. I believed that the contractual arrangements surrounding this experiment in publishing would result in sufficient acknowledgment of their work. [...] Routledge was able to grant me the legal right to use Professors Deal and Beal's

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[58] In '*TDR*: Comment Concerning Theory for Performance Studies' Richard Schechner, Timothy K. Beal and William E. Deal, Judith Butler, Marvin Carlson, Tracy C. Davis, David Savran, Shannon Jackson, Branislav Jakovljevic, Jill Dolan, Phillip Zarrilli, W.B. Worthen, Joseph Roach & Peggy Phelan use the responses of Routledge's Talia Rodgers and Claire L'Enfant to discuss the complexities of conveying knowledge to large numbers of undergraduates and speculates on it as one of the drives towards plagiarism for established scholars *TDR* 53:1, 7-49.

original text, though the publisher failed to meet its contractual obligations by not crediting Professors Deal and Beal in the agreed-upon manner. [...] The publisher was not the only party obliged to provide acknowledgment and credit to Professors Deal and Beal, however. I, too, was obliged to do so. My obligation was ethical [...] With a heavy heart, I acknowledge that I failed to meet this ethical obligation. [...] Routledge is no longer offering the book for sale and all unshipped copies have been destroyed. [...] This has been a painful and humbling experience. I hope that others will learn from my mistake, as I have, so that something positive results from it. But I also hope the matter can now be laid to rest. (Auslander 2009: 7-9)

Schechner's on-line article, which first brought this matter to my attention, (and many of the subsequent comments in *TDR* 53:1) focuses almost entirely on a discussion of plagiarism and the roles and responsibilities of publishers, authors and academic disciplines in such a case. It highlights issues that are more complex than the simple fact that Deal and Beal were not credited. It, quite rightly, raises questions about intellectual property and copyright[59]. However, plagiarism is not the focus of this section of the thesis. Here I will focus, not on what Auslander keeps of the Deal and Beal text, but on the changes that he makes to it.

These changes are apparently insignificant but, in a text where so little is amended, any changes that are made carry an important indication of the author's intention and are worthy of detailed consideration because they highlight and problematises the interplay of critical narratives from both Religious Studies and Performance Studies. An analysis of them forms the basis of a critique of how some of Auslander's editorial decisions are, both, symptomatic and illustrative of Performance Studies' problematic relationship with religion in general and Christianity in particular.

By transferring a significant amount of a book written for Religious Studies into a book for Performance Studies, Auslander challenges my own research position in two ways. Firstly, through this process, he implicitly suggests that a single theoretical lens, constructed of a "list of twenty-nine canonical modern and postmodern thinkers" (2008: 1), can be transferred wholesale across disciplines – that one analytical frame fits all. My research position, however, is different. It argues that by using a unique framework, which is primarily grounded in

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[59] A discussion that continues with an interesting response from Franc Chamberlain to Schechner's generalised assertions about the relationship between introductory texts and 'quality' of scholarship. See Chamberlain (2009: 12-14).

Performance Studies scholarship, and is sensitive to its historic president in addition to the work of other disciplines, something new about contemporary spirituality can be revealed.

Auslander's second challenge to my position lies in his implication that Christianity is not a worthwhile topic of discussion for Performance Studies. Such reticence is not uncommon in a post-enlightenment academy, as we have seen, but Auslander's text exemplifies Performance Studies' rejection of Christianity and celebration of non-Western spiritual practices. To explore this, I will focus on his decision to carry forward Deal and Beal's entry for Slavoj Žižek where Auslander removes all reference to Christianity in his chapter by making small editorial interventions: in so doing, he denies Žižek this recurring, and critical, aspect of his scholarship. (I will address the detail of this in the *Cutting out Christianity* section below.)

Through this editorial process, he also suggests that Performance Studies has no theoretical interest in Christianity. As we have seen, Christianity remains a potent ideological force which is significant to the way post-secular Westerners construct and perform their spiritual identities - albeit a force that is naturalised, to the extent that it appears to be benign, and unworthy of discussion for many scholars. This phase of the argument will conclude with a final section in which I consider what the removal of Christianity from Auslander's book has to say about Performance Studies' relationship with organised religion.

The Theory 4 Series:

Published in 2004, Deal and Beal's book for Religious Studies became the first of a Routledge series called *Theory 4*. It was followed by books on theory for art history (Emerling 2005), education (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 2006), classics (Hitchcock 2008) and finally, by Auslander's *Theory for Performance Studies: A Student's Guide* in 2008. The books' shared format, established by the publisher, based on the first book, includes a short general introduction, then a series of entries on critical twentieth-century thinkers who are categorised into two parts. Part one is entitled *Predecessors*, and deals with thinkers who, broadly speaking, were working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, part two entitled

Theorists, which deals with thinkers from the mid-twentieth century. The entry for each individual thinker opens with a list of their key concepts, followed by a brief biography, an exposition of their important ideas, and an explanation of how these ideas are pertinent to the discipline the book is aimed at. Each chapter then concludes with a bibliography and some suggested further reading (and here, at least, Auslander provides some discipline-specific references).

This structure forms the core for each book in the series: all the authors follow it. However, only Auslander chooses to follow the list of thinkers first suggested by Deal and Beal in its entirety, whereas the other writers in the series make amendments to it. Is so doing, Auslander is implying that a theoretical framework of key thinkers constructed for Religious Studies can successfully, and unproblematically, be transferred in order to become a critical theory framework for Performance Studies. In fact, such a direct transfer is problematic. Of course there is interdisciplinary overlap of important scholars, but Auslander's direct appropriation goes further than that. His wholesale transfer onto Performance Studies of an analytical framework which was constructed for Religious Studies obliterates any sense of disciplinary difference. His book does little more than change the cover of Deal and Beal's original.

The Canon

In their introduction Deal and Beal acknowledge that "[t]he academic study of religion has no GUT, that is, no Grand Unifying Theory that brings into sharp focus all things religious". Moreover, they assert that "[e]very theory frames and focuses our attention on some things whilst leaving other things outside the frame or out of focus" (Deal and Beal 2004:1). However, Auslander disregards the modest position adopted by his colleagues, and into his "handbook to *the* key connections between Performance Studies and critical theories" (Back cover; my emphasis), he introduces his own GUT.

In the first two pages of his introduction he describes the list of theorists in his handbook - which is identical to that of Deal and Beal - as a canon: "a list of twenty-nine canonical modern

and postmodern thinkers". But this is a "canon" that "does not survey exclusively those theorists assumed to be central to Performance Studies (many are absent, in fact)". It is constructed of figures whose importance "is generally accepted in academic circles and [whose] influence is not confined to Performance Studies or any other single discipline". Oddly, Auslander further explains that "it is not a guide to key concepts of the field", and yet, the book claims, implicitly through its title, and explicitly through its own marketing description on the back cover, to be authoritative (Auslander 2008: 1-2). Thus, within one paragraph of his brief *Introduction*, Auslander justifies how he can reduce a rich and complex, inclusive and challenging theoretical network into a canon that is transferable across disciplines, because, with all its absences it can now be "generally accepted in academic circles". Performance Studies is a discipline that, at its very heart, contains a process of reflexivity; it questions and challenges ideological structures, particularly within the academy: it is not about finding a way of being "generally accepted" (Auslander 2008: 1-2).

The problems of this 'generalised' position are compounded when we consider the book's intended audience. It describes itself as "an essential first volume" and as an introductory text that is primarily aimed at undergraduates (Auslander 2008:2). However, this "introductory text" assumes a significant existent knowledge in its reader; it expects them to be able to fill in the absent theories and theorists in a meaningful way. This requires a nuanced understanding of the interrelationship of Auslander's canon to the Performance Studies scholars and practitioners whom he has not included: those, to be specific, whose work is grounded in anthropology, intercultural theory and linguistics, and who are critical to an understanding of the complexity of a discipline that is plural and inclusive in its interdisciplinary approach[60]. He assumes that there is a sufficient depth of knowledge in the reader to engage with that which is both present and absent. It is an unreasonable assumption.

These absences are most significant in light of the text's claims to authority. For example, there are no anthropologists included in Auslander's canon, which seems particularly strange

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[60] See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's classic essay 'Performance Studies' in *Performance Studies a Reader* Bial, H (ed) (2004) pp 43-56.

when we consider how traditionally important both anthropology and ethnography are for Performance Studies in terms of its research methodologies and approaches, and its philosophical positions which, in a postcolonial context, help scholars to look beyond themselves in order to better understand the continuing power and influence of a wider Western culture at the digital turn of an intercultural world. So, what was Auslander thinking? His response to Schechner's article in *TDR* is not illuminating and obviously I cannot claim to know the author's mind, but I do have some possible interpretations of Auslander's 'canonical' decisions.

Deal and Beal, in their introduction, justify their omissions of the anthropologists Geertz and Turner by stating;

> [a]lthough there are excellent introductions to traditional theories of religion (covering, among others, [...] Eliade, Turner and Geertz), there has not been a corresponding introduction to the newer theoretical perspectives treated here. (Deal and Beal 2004: 1)

But what of Auslander? What does he do to justify his omissions, not only of Geertz and Turner, but also of other key scholars who have established the discipline's theoretical core? In the opening to his book, he mentions that other introductions to performance and Performance Studies are available; however, unlike Deal and Beal, he does not acknowledge the limitations of a canon, that is, broadly speaking male, made up of the Frankfurt School, Western, and post-structuralist. Perhaps, then, Auslander is silently choosing, in his appropriation of Deal and Beal's list of scholars and his omission of anthropology, not to focus so strongly on the Schechnerian, New York University 'brand' of Performance Studies whose genealogy lies, amongst others, in Western and Indian philosophy, anthropology, and feminism (See Schechner 2002: 7). Instead, perhaps, he is choosing to focus on another driving force in Performance Studies, the Northwestern focus on speech, communication, and rhetoric in his interpretation of its theoretical genealogy (See Schechner 2002: 17). However, even the philosopher of linguistics J. L. Austin, who wrote the classic text that is critical in the development of an understanding of performativity, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962)*,* fails to make an appearance on the list. There must be another intention at work.

Performance Studies is a unique discipline in many ways; its practice-based, ethically-aware methodological approach, grounded in anthropological foundations, is one of its strengths. And therefore, there can be no definitive list of thinkers for the theory of Performance Studies, but a text that claims this level of authority should acknowledge the significance of anthropology in its theoretical make-up. Moreover, this 'canon' sustains a hierarchy of knowledges that Performance Studies, led by Dwight Conquergood, has fought to change which values the cognitive above the embodied and the emotional (see 1991; 2002). Interestingly, other authors in the series do include anthropologists. For example, Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, in *Theory for Education* (2006)*,* include Clifford Geertz. They state that his landmark thinking on culture and fieldwork "was critical to much of the interpretive work that would take hold in education in the 1980s" (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 2006: 128). One might reasonably argue that Geertz is a critical influence on Performance Studies, too. Dimitriadis and Kamberelis also include Stuart Hall, whose early work with Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (1964), explores the complexity and plural manifestations of popular culture, and continues to be significant not only for education but also for Performance Studies. Auslander excludes Geertz and Hall but includes Žižek who, he notes, "[a]side from a few pages on Bertolt Brecht [...] has written very little on theatre or performance" (2008: 167).

For the other authors in this series this primary list is not a canon, and it is not directly transferable from Religious Studies to education or classics or art history: it is Deal and Beal's original format, adopted by the series editor, which serves their audience, not the absolute of the content devised by Deal and Beal. Auslander, by choosing not to carry forward changes made by other authors in the series, underlines his position, that for him, this canon is truly interdisciplinary and authoritative – that one analytical frame fits all. In so doing he reduces Performance Studies to a generalisation; it becomes one of those humanities which occasionally dabbles in the social sciences.

Cutting out Christianity

Having looked at the wider implications of the book's structure, I am now going to consider the details of Auslander's small interventions into Deal and Beal's entry for Slavoj Žižek. Žižek's engagement with theatre and performance is scant, therefore it is unlikely, that in a general sweep of Performance Studies theory, a student will come across a more in-depth study of his work. This means that this entry, in an "essential first text", should be, in its broad introductory scope, an accurate reflection of the theorist's work. Auslander, however, makes the editorial choice of cutting out the primary theme of Christianity from Žižek's entry; a critical and recurring topic in his work for more than a decade. He does this via a series of relatively small interventions, where words, rather than sentences, are changed. These changes are apparently insignificant, but in a text where so little is amended any changes that are made carry an important indication of the author's intention and are worthy of detailed consideration. I am going to focus on two interventions that, in combination, enable Auslander to remove Christianity from Žižek's entry. Then, I will consider how Auslander's action perhaps is symptomatic, and illustrative of, Performance Studies' relationship to Christianity in particular and religion at large.

Each entry, for each thinker on the list, begins with key words that describe the thinker's big ideas. The key words that Deal and Beal use to describe Slavoj Žižek are; "authentic act, Buddhism, and *agapé* and Pauline Christianity" (Deal and Beal: 165). For Auslander these key words become "authentic act, Buddhism and over-identification" (Auslander: 165). He simply removes all trace of Christianity. In order to understand what this removal of Christianity means to a description of Žižek's works, it is helpful first to explore what he means by the first idea on the list, authentic act. Authentic act is a key tenet for Žižek. For him, it is a process that enables members of society to expose the mechanisms that facilitate the workings of late capitalism, what he terms its symbolic order. He explains that, rather than attempting to achieve the impossible and stand outside the totality of this symbolic order, it is instead better to engage in an authentic act. And that through the performance of an authentic act, the symbolic order's

process can be exposed and as a consequence its power undermined: Žižek establishes this through Christian theology.

Žižek suggests that at its heart Christianity has, in one of its theological discourses, such an authentic act; *agapé*. For him, Saint Paul, in his construction of the Christian messianic narrative, creates at its centre this authentic act of *agapé*, the act of unconditional love. Žižek argues that the ideal of *agapé* can, by ignoring and circumventing the actions of capitalist exchange – by giving but expecting nothing in return – undermine the primary forces of financial exchange at work in late capitalism. For Žižek Christianity has transgressive potential, but not, it seems, for Auslander.

Auslander's changes to the key concepts that introduced his entry for Žižek, meant that he therefore had to make further editorial interventions to the chapter's main body to ensure that Christianity did not appear in the main text. These are perhaps the most telling of Auslander's intention. For example, whereas Deal and Beal explain that,

> Žižek finds this radical potential – this opening toward the authentic act that can break the hypnotic force of the symbolic – not only in Pauline Christianity but also in early Buddhism. (2004: 167)

in Auslander's rewrite this becomes

> Žižek finds one example of this radical potential - this opening toward the authentic act that can break the hypnotic force of the symbolic – in early Buddhism. (2008: 166)

And thus, with the removal of "not only in Pauline Christianity but also", and the addition of two words, "*one* example" (my emphasis), Christianity, and Žižek's use of it as a radical, subversive force is removed. Where then, does this eradication leave the reader?

Žižek's basic position is Marxist. He himself is not Christian, but he argues for the importance of the Christian tradition, and that Marxism and Christianity are inextricably linked. In his key works, *The Ticklish Subject* (1999), *The Fragile Absolute or Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (2000), *On Belief* (2001), and *The Puppet and the Dwarf: the Perverse Core of Christianity* (2003), he explicitly interrogates the ideological function of

religion, and in particular the naturalised position held by Christianity. This is expressed clearly in the opening of *The Fragile Absolute* where Žižek explains,

> there *is* a direct lineage from Christianity to Marxism; yes, Christianity and Marxism *should* fight on the same side of the barricade against the onslaught of new spiritualisms (original emphasis: 2).

It is interesting that I find myself championing Žižek at this point, because in many ways I would argue that his partnering of the metanarratives of Christianity and Marxism in a binary opposition to "the onslaught of new spiritualisms" is a limited position. Žižek, quite rightly, highlights the observable fact, as outlined earlier, that the way religion is enacted in society is changing. Žižek, in an assertion of Christian nominalism by placing Christianity - the old, the established and the authentic - in opposition to the "new spiritualisms" is able to claim a strong connection to the rationalist past. Thus, Žižek presents Christianity as the primary religious *residual* in contemporary society, which operates not through naturalised normalism but rather via an active cultural understanding, suggesting therefore, that, rather than it being removed from the discussion, as Auslander does, Christianity should be actively interrogated. By choosing to remove it from his representation of Žižek's work Auslander is castrating him as a thinker.

As I move on now to consider the implications of Auslander's editorial choices, much of my response will be speculative and given by a white, British woman who is Christian by enculturation rather than practice. I am interested in why Auslander chooses to retain Buddhism but remove Christianity. Without claiming to know the author's mind, or simply dismissing this process as the by-product of an act of plagiarism, I suggest that Auslander's editorial decisions are both symptomatic, and illustrative of, the way that Performance Studies conceives of and describes itself. And, as such, that they are useful catalysts to stimulate a discussion that explores why Buddhism was retained whilst Christianity was cut.

Performance Studies, as a discipline that is focused on intercultural practices, has been fascinated by the rich interrelationship of the sacred, the religious and performance in other cultures. In its construction of autobiographical identities, histories and genealogies, as we have

seen, it continues to include them at the heart of its narrative core. Yet it is, for the most part, disengaged with current acts of religious worship and practice. The disciplines' foundations in Artaud and Grotowski, Turner and Schechner, means that to discuss a performer's spiritual practice, or how a process originally developed as an act of Hindu worship might be reapplied as a Western performer-training method, or how Buddhist meditative practice might be a useful metaphor to describe an actor's process, has become commonplace. However, Western traditions, particularly Christianity, are largely ignored. And so, in his editing of the Deal and Beal entry for Žižek, it is understandable that Auslander should remove Christianity but retain Buddhism. This is after all a book for the theory of Performance Studies.

But why is Christianity largely ignored in Performance Studies? Here I would like to recap the scope of three simultaneous and inter-related threads. The first thread identifies the historical relationship of English Studies (which as we have seen is a key antecedent of Performance Studies) with Christianity. English Studies grew, in part out of a sense of failure of religion, and English literature became the means to "save our souls and heal the state". The second recognises that Performance Studies emerged as both a development from, and a critique of, text-based studies, and continued the process of estrangement from *logos*-based Christianity which was begun by English Studies. The third and final position notes that key practitioners in the development of Performance Studies looked to the 'East' for their inspiration, and therefore increased the marginalisation of Christianity, supported by an anti-clerical academy.

With the focus of these suggestions, and seen through the lens of Performance Studies, it seems then as if Christianity itself has become a *residual* culture and yet, importantly Britain is – as we have seen – Christian by enculturation rather than by practice. Therefore, to dismiss its ongoing potency in contemporary society is a mistake.

Christianity still has a great deal of social (and political) influence, as we have seen with the seventy-seven percent of the populace who describe themselves as Christian. But this influence is exerted in the majority of cases via a cultural imagination, rather than through embodied practice. Consequently, Christianity has become naturalised in Performance Studies and a wider

society. It has been put beyond discussion, or worse, a topic that is examined by practising, and therefore subjective, zealots who are unable to disentangle their misplaced belief from their research: thus, a discipline that is able to interrogate a culture created through embodiment and imagination, has placed it beyond question.

This perception has had specific effects on me as a researcher. As a non-Christian, the question I am asked most often by colleagues in the discipline is "Do you go to Church then?" I would suggest that scholars of queer theory would not be so frequently asked about their sexuality, and that if they were gay – unlike the 'Christian' scholar of religion – this would be seen as a likely benefit to their understanding their area of research.

Here then I want to reconsider Auslander's choices not as ones of idle plagiarism, but as symptoms of performance scholar's relationship with formalised Western religion and East based spiritual forms. What Auslander does by removing Christianity from the debate is to align himself with the tendency to dismiss it, to naturalise it, to place it beyond question, and to exclude it from discussion. This is the antithesis of what the project of Performance Studies is about. Performance Studies sets out to look at something in a new way, to reveal and challenge previously unquestioned assumptions.

This case demonstrates that the *emergent* framework, in which I would place Auslander along with myself, has all sorts of problems - the forensic approach, through its confessional style, might appear to absolve the researcher, leaving them 'innocent' reporters of information, while the compositional approach perhaps makes exaggerated claims for the universality of the performance paradigm that denies the nuance at work in live enactment in a unique community. Moreover, the interplay between theatre and religion continues to be particularly charged. Some scholars, as we will see below, advocate and claim that one can 'save' the other from its inevitable demise: religion claims to be able to 'save' performance and performance claims to be able to 'save' religion.

All is not lost: there is evidence of important work taking place that carefully negotiates the divide between the apparent universals of 'performance' and 'religion', where some scholars have successfully exploited the potential of applying one frame to illuminate another. I recognise that there are great strengths to using this interdisciplinary research approach I am choosing to work within because it offers rich potentials. We will return to these potentials shortly, but first I would like to examine the phenomena of disciplines claiming to be able to 'save' each other.

Saving Each Other

Here, I would like to return to the work of *emergent* scholar, David George. In his essay on ritual he states:

> performances heal – temporarily – the split universes of religions: every religion requires regular acts of re-evaluation to re-establish the connects between transcendent and immanent strata of time, space and consciousness. (George 1998: 12)

Thus, he goes beyond the suggestion that religion is a product of performance, to state that performance heals religion. This operates on two assumptions. First, that religion is 'broken' in some way – in need of healing - and second, it presumes that religion needs performance in order to function. In this second presumption, George finds support from trenchant secularist Steve Bruce who, as we have seen, argues that performance is a necessary element in the continuation of religion (1995:58). For these scholars, performance heals and sustains religion, thus 'saving' it from an inevitable decline.

This ability of performance to provide salvation for religion is more explicitly articulated by Malekin's definition of religion and how he uses it to argue the positive social effects of the arts. As we have already seen, in *Sacred Theatre* he describes religion as;

> maintain[ing] itself by asserting dogma, employing social and psychological persuasion or intimidation, invoking directness of cultural and group identity, and, at the all too common worse, instigating or practising persecution, torture, war (2007: 47).

This definition then becomes an important rhetorical device. As the paragraph continues he places drama in opposition to it. He explains:

Drama on the other hand also has a tendency to undercut falseness in convention, religious or political (2007: 47)

Thus, for Malekin, drama is a societal saviour that undercuts falseness. One might even argue that for him, drama too can 'save' religion, a similar claim made for English literature by Gordon in 1922, that it can "save our souls and heal the state" (Eagleton 1983: 20)

This idea, of drama as authentic and religion as inauthentic, presents an interesting inverse to the way that theatre is often described by theological scholars. They, like Malekin and George, take what might be seen as a messianic line. But whereas they claim that drama can save religion, these scholars argue that religion can save 'the arts'.

Theologians – saviour of the arts

Jeremy Begbie, former honorary professor of Theology at the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts at St Andrews University is one of many, broadly British, theologians who claim to be advocates for the arts. Begbie explains that "the arts constitute a vitally important field for theologians to be exploring today." (Begbie 1991:back cover) However, there is a common concern among these Christian theologians. They see the arts as being in a "state of crisis" (Monti 2003: 1), in a "moral predicament" (Gunton 1993: 6), and as something to be "restored" (Pattison 1998). Thus, for them, the arts need to be saved. And, religion can save them.

Antony Monti's *A Natural Theology of the Arts: Imprint of the Spirit* (2003) states;

> the meaning of art can only be recovered and understood more fully by viewing art as a natural theology that finds its fulfilment in, rather than substitutes itself for, the revelation of the Triune God. (p.9)[175142]

This statement is a good example of how most contemporary theologians treat the arts. They understand them cognitively, best qualified in terms of a philosophy of the arts and that, paradoxically, they also suggest that through this 'saving' the arts can be removed from 'the body' to return to a spiritual purity – a 'natural state' – in praise of their version of God.

For these scholars the notion of 'art' is not problematised. It is used capriciously to include embodied forms of live performance, like theatre, alongside visual and digital arts and to some extent film. But the theological critique uses scholarship from fine art analysis, which is problematic because, as a discourse, it is concerned with the observation of an artefact separate from its creator, rather than a more sensitive engagement with the complexities of the responding psychophysical body.

For these theologians, 'art' is the saviour of modernity, but a saviour that can only arrive through religious engagement. For example, philosopher Philip Sherrard posits,

> the artist must be sure: that only when his art possesses a sacred quality will it present a positive change to our technological world and to the degradation of human life which is endemic to it; and that he will be powerless to manifest such quality in his art unless he has first made it effective in both his own mind and heart. The primary battle is not cultural but spiritual. (1990: 41)

Perhaps here, in Sherrard's closing phrase, we find the clearest articulation of how theologians see theatre; as a 'traditional' cultural form that is an artefact of a spiritual battle that has not yet been won.

Some theologians do have a more nuanced understanding of differences in artistic expression. George Pattison, for example, presents a careful reading of the history of modern art in a spiritual context. However, his writing is still based in theory and history, rather than in practice or experience. Jeremy Begbie, states that "the urge to make and enjoy art seems to be universal" (2000: xi). However, this universal 'urge' moves beyond descriptions, to his assumptions about 'art'. Begbie, like Monti, uses fine art theory as a means to critique a generalised art that includes embodied live performance. Moreover, his relationship with the arts is not a psychophysiological one. He explains that he is;

> seeking to propose a cognitive understanding of art – that is , one which sees art as capable of affirming genuine knowledge of reality beyond the confines of human self-consciousness, and therefore is in principle open to clarification, elucidation and assessment. (Begbie 1991: 247)

For Begbie it seems that art is a source of 'genuine knowledge' of a transcendent 'reality' that can be clarified, evaluated and assessed. One can only assume that this reduction to a series of

measurements is not designed to increase an understanding of practice, but to increase evangelical success.

Begbie does move on from Monti's position however by engaging with scholarship on Church music. He draws heavily on the work of German existentialist Protestant Theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) in order to argue that, rather than the church being fully divided from the arts it has, on earlier occasions, attempted to create a theological assessment of the arts but that in general the arts continue to be "marginalised". This position is expanded with his claim that

> it would be hard to deny that among more common features of Western European culture [...] is a cast of mind which tends to alienate and isolate the arts from other sphere of human activities. The notion of the artist as an essentially solitary figure with little responsibility to his community. (p.186)

Begbie's position is incorrect and universalist. To describe the arts, via an unreconstructed description of the solo practice of the fine art painter, detached from their community, is untenable, and denies the political motivations of much of performance culture's work in applied settings. Yet, Begbie is not alone in his position.

In 2004, an Issue Group on the Arts, part of the influential Lausanne movement for World Evangelisation, were focused on means of "Redeeming the Arts." Colin Harbinson, the group's Senior Associate, gave an interesting overview of their findings:

> The neglect of the imagination in life and faith has impoverished the Body of Christ and hindered its missional endeavors. However, during the past few decades there has been a global renewal of interest in the arts and the imagination amongst believers. This is no accident. We are living, culturally speaking, in the age of the artist—with its image oriented and visually driven communication forms. The language of the arts and the imagination is increasingly the global default language of our world.

He continued;

> This understanding is not lost on a global arts and entertainment industry that is literally discipling nations by shaping cultures through music, film and television in particular. This is the increasingly urgent moment in which the church needs to recover the understanding that word and image must be reintegrated in the context of global mission. Our example is Christ who was the Word of the God and the Image of the invisible God. (Harbinson, Franklin et al. 2005: np)

With antitheatrical echoes, the old fears of the arts being more evangelically effective than the church continue, but interestingly the primacy of the 'word'(or the idea of *logos*) that dominates the protestant tradition is partnered with Christ as the visual embodiment of the invisible God, which returns us to Bert's definition of theatre as religion. Thus there is a tautology in the ways that each group uses the grammars, languages and metaphors of the other – there is delight in the creative potential of the other, but also a fear of its ability to undermine and damage 'the good'.

Belief as Cultural Performance

Yet, for all this antitheatrical and anticlerical posturing, and the difficulties within the discipline of performance studies, as exemplified by the Auslander case, this methodological approach is still valid and useful. Moreover, not all is lost. There is significant scholarship currently taking place that responds to the multiple potentials of the interrelationship between performance and religion. And it is these projects which I now draw upon in order to continue with sensitivity onto the second part of the thesis, the analysis of the case studies.

The AHRC network Belief as Cultural Performance was established at Birkbeck College in May 2009. It draws together;

> an international group of researchers interested in studying religion and youth in a wide range of national, social and religious contexts. The central aim of the network is to develop a more critical understanding of the concept of 'belief' in relation to the study of contemporary religion and young people. Anthropologists and historians have developed a well-established critique of the concept of internalised, propositional belief as a universal element of religion. But sociological studies of religion continue to assume that religion can be understood through identifying individual's beliefs. [...] It will also examine whether there are alternative ways of conceiving of belief, beyond individualized assent to religious doctrines, in terms of different forms of cultural performance. (Lynch 2010)

I am the only performance specialist in this interdisciplinary network which means that there are particular challenges in re-orientating my understanding of performance culture in light of the sociological assumptions that dominate the network. (Simultaneously, all the network members are working hard to construct shared grammars and languages to understand how belief – in its widest sense – is constructed through public performances of religious intent.) Our key areas of

contestation are the questions of liveness, ephemerality, data collection methods and the fixity of that data once it has been gathered.

The 2010 Sociology of Religion annual conference, a bastion of secularisation and empiricist residues, is entitled *The Changing Face of Christianity in the 21st Century,* it is concerned with the;

> steep decline in [Christian] membership in some areas, but resurgence in other contexts. At the same time, contemporary Christianity incorporates (sometimes uncomfortably) new forms and hybridisations. The lived experience and performance of Christianity in the West appears to be shifting according to influences from late-modern consumer and media cultures. World Christianities are increasingly influential and migration and diaspora Christianities are (re) shaping Christianity in the West. Meanwhile, far from disappearing from the agendas and language of the public arena, Christianity continues to excite debates around the place and importance of religion in the public arena, as well as discourses of citizenship, equality and well-being. (Vincentt, Adogame et al. 2010)

It sets out clearly that the notion of performance is being embraced within the social sciences as a means to better understand affiliation, hybridity, diaspora and cultural contestation. Moreover, in their recent book, *Redefining Christian Britain: post 1945-perspectives* (2007), interdisciplinary scholars Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley et al, give over a sixth of the book to the examination of performance. They explain that performance is key to their examination of the theme of authenticity because

> [...p]olarised debates have developed over the second half of the twentieth century about the relationship between Christian moral teachings and 'authentic' sexual identity, the role of the clergy in performing the liturgy and communicating a 'relevant' Christian message, and tensions between notions of authenticity and performances of public and private rituals. (Garnett, Grimley et al. 2007: 13)

Thus, as in performance scholarship, performance as a method of analysing behaviour in the wider academy has gone beyond a temporally distinct set of actions set apart in space and time, to include a consideration of the construction of the 'authentic' self and performativity. This (re)appropriation of performance scholarship frameworks and terminology, by sociologists, liturgists and social historians, has expanded the range of methodological possibilities. Going forward I will draw richly on this work.

Moreover, in the discipline of performance studies there are exceptional examples of engagement with religion as a cultural force. The primary journal for this interface is the online *Journal of Religion and Theatre*. As we have seen, the journal began in 2002 with a provocative essay by Norman Bert, which argued *Theatre is Religion*. The twice-annual journal began richly, with a wide exploration of what theatre and religion might be. It moved from character in Jewish dramatic texts, to a consideration of nineteenth century speaking in tongues as performance, to Seneca's inclusion of prophecy in *Oedipus* by reading the entrails of a bull. It has also considered the assumptions of the ritual origins of theatre and preaching as performance. However, by the single editions of 2008 and 2009, the journal's focus had narrowed, and although topics remained diverse, the transgressive challenge had gone. One hopes that through its affiliation to the American academy's Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Religion and Theatre focus group, which is dynamic and growing, the richness and diversity of the scholarship will be revitalised and sustained.

An important example of the potential of performance scholarship to comment upon religion as a cultural force is a special edition of *Theatre Journal* (2002) *,* which was published soon after the 9/11 Al Qaeda attacks on the twin towers in New York. It consists of a rich and moving series of writings where scholars used performance in order to describe their world after a cataclysmic change. Twenty-eight leading performance scholars responded via a forum. Some essays were written in direct response to the attacks, while others commented on terrorism and the social constructions of religion in general. These essays see acts of terror as performances, and as such offer a unique position from which to attempt to understand the events that took place[61].

I would like to conclude with a typically nuanced response from W. B. Worthen who explained:

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[61] Terrorism as performance is an already established concept for the discipline. Atheist, Mark Juergensmeyer describes, in a chapter entitled *Theatre of Terror,* the Branch Davidian attack on the ATF regional offices in Oklahoma that killed 168 people on April 19 1995. "In this scenario of terrorism, the lives of the workers were, like the building, a part of the scenery: they and the edifice constituted the stage on which the dramatic act was to be performed." (2001: 128)

(Like everyone else, I keep using the phrase *the events*—the only other word that seems to work is *tragedy*.) By the time this essay is published, many of these concerns will no doubt look quite different; today those events still seem terrific and terrifying in their opaque, unrelenting purpose. The events of September 11 were probably not much like Aristotelian tragedy, but thinking about them as tragedy forces us to ask what our role in this spectacle and its resolution might be, how we may be transformed by the action, and what that acknowledgment might cost us, as individuals and as a nation, even as citizens of a postmodern, globalized, *polis*. No consolation, just catharsis—the recognitions of tragedy will take some time. (Worthen 2002: 100)

Worthen personalises these international concerns and identifies that, beyond the international scale of the events, their impact was on the individual. He asks questions about "our role in this spectacle and its resolution [...] as individuals and as a nation, even as citizens of a postmodern, globalized, *polis*." Here Worthen expresses, through his own response to the 9/11 attacks, how the global state of spirituality is important to how individuals perceive their religious identity.

And in this telling we see very clearly the three paradoxes set out at the end of the previous chapter. They appear now in these extreme events more as taxonomical divisions with porous boundaries. We see the liberal pluralism of American culture versus the conservative fundamentalism of the Al Qaida pilots and their absolutist relationship to the Divine. The distinction between the individual and the collective is expressed complexly. It is not simply a matter of Worthen looking to his nation or culture to affirm his authentic position in a collective group in order to reconsider his own identity construction, he also questions how these performances challenge the role of the postmodern citizen and wonders about society's responsibilities in a globalised *polis*. Finally, for Worthen, this performance is predominantly an expression of religiously focused fundamentalist belief. But as we have seen, much fundamentalist action is constructed in response to liberal expressions of plurality and hybrid-identity. This is a performance that demands the liberal pluralist to recognise the homogeneity of a singular practice constructed in relationship to a divine Absolute.

With this framework now complete I want to use it in order to analyse a series of performances. This series moves through a range of acts of worship that are grouped into two extended essays with a connecting segue. The first essay is concerned with the ways that Church of England buildings are used by both the two percent of the population who describe

themselves as regular worshippers and the other eighty-three percent who use these buildings for some other purpose. It begins by considering the stimulus for the most common communal act of worship – the script for Holy Communion. After conducting a close textual analysis of the liturgical text as a script it moves to consider the script's enactment by analysing three performances of it on the same day. It then abstracts to consider what takes place in church buildings, when there is neither script nor worship leader, in its consideration of improvised performances in church buildings.

A short description of two pilgrimages that I undertook in the summer of 2008 provide the segue between this case study and the next. The first was a catholic pilgrimage to Lourdes and the second to Glastonbury with worshippers of the Goddess.

The final essay moves to the performer's relationship to text and space, to consciousness and efficacy. It begins by exploring the connection between an actor's and a partial trance medium's experience of possession and optimum performance. It then moves on to consider what happens when the edges between the sacred and the theatrical, efficacy and entertainment, and authenticity and fraudulence are blurred when it considers the work of stage medium Shaun Dennis. It finally returns to my experience of sitting as a member of a séance circle when the roles of participant and observer, and insider and outsider were fully blurred.

Performances are political, emotional, ephemeral and embodied events that are not fixed in time but are relived in memories and reborn in retelling, constructed in a slippery, researcher interpreted context.

Part Two: Case Studies

Chapter 4: 'Mainstream' C of E practice

> [L]ess frequently recognised in [...] twenty-first century Britain is the popularity of cathedrals and city centre churches. These are places which offer a distinctive but rather different product, which characteristically includes traditional liturgy, first-rate music and excellence in preaching, all of which take place in an historic and often very beautiful building. A visit to a cathedral is an aesthetic experience – sought after by a wide variety of people, including those for whom membership or commitment present difficulties. "I go to a cathedral confident that I will not be obliged to share the Peace or stay for coffee" is a common sentiment.
> (Davie 1994:146)

> In England [...] religion under the aegis of the established church has become little more than a pleasant social pastime, scarcely recognizable as religious at all. (Dawkins 2006:41)

This three part, extended essay, takes the theoretical framework constructed in part one of the thesis and uses it to examine current Church of England scripted and improvised practice. This examination draws upon my experience of various performances of Church of England worship in a number of C of E and non- C of E buildings. I consider these events in three ways. First, I carry out a close textual analysis of a liturgical text – The Eucharist – treating it as an artefact with a manifest function; that is to say, one that seeks to change (or sustain) the beliefs of the congregation who participate in it. Second, I then consider this liturgical text, the script, in three performances in three different worship communities on the same day and third, I then abstract away from the script in order to consider what takes place in C of E buildings during performances that are improvised and have neither worship leader nor script.

In this exploration, we have already seen that the way in which contemporary English spiritual and religious identity is constructed and reconstructed by performance is a complex socio-cultural process. The majority of English society recognises a spiritual component in their lives which is broadly Christian, and frequently aligned to the Church of England. This identity for the majority is constructed through an imagined encultured process, rather than one wrought through acts of worship. This practice based knowledge resides with the one to two percent of the population who regularly worship in C of E buildings. However, this is not the whole story

of the minority worshipping and the majority imagining. The Church has also identified that somewhere in the region of eighty-five percent of the population use their buildings for some other purpose during the course of the year, and it is reasonable to assume that some of these users will also have been worshippers in the past who no longer regularly practise. This extended essay sets out to examine this range of practices.

Church buildings are the complex sites of two key ritual genres. First, they provide the location for scripted, minister-led liturgical worship and second, they act as both the stimulus for, and receptacles of, performances that are neither liturgical, nor supervised by an appointed Church representative. These improvised performances run a gamut between performances of remembrance - expressed in the reverence of silent prayer, and performances of consumption, as exemplified in a tourist's gaze. In this chapter, I am interested in considering both aspects of this scripted/improvised dynamic.

The chapter begins with an examination of the Church of England's defining rite, the Eucharist, by considering this liturgical text as a script intended for performance. There are four options currently available for the rite, and we focus on *Common Worship - order two: Contemporary language version*. While recognising that the conflation of religion and theatre is problematic, conducting a dramaturgical analysis offers an opportunity to consider the plural performers and audiences (visible and invisible) that the text addresses, and the complex ways in which it invites interpretation. In order to enrich our understanding of processes of embodiment, transformation and belief associated with the task of fitting this text to the life of a worship community, this section also uses extracts from interviews I conducted with ministers from Exeter diocese about their experience of leading worship.

The chapter then moves on to consider this liturgical text in performance. I participated in three enactments of this same script, which were performed by three different C of E communities, in the same city (Oxford), on the same day. I use these experiences to explore the different ways in which these scripts are interpreted, particularly in relationship to the importance of collective identity in the creation of worship practice. There is a tension between

the text and its enactment, because although the liturgy maybe 'imposed' from above by the Liturgical Commission, the way this is interpreted from below, in accordance with 'local tradition', is a similarly powerful force. This tautology ensures a varied and dynamic interpretation of these scripts both within, and between, congregations.

Finally, the chapter then moves away from the singular script and its enactment by the 'minority' of society, towards the 'majority' of those who engage in a plurality of individualised, improvised performances in C of E buildings. These are similarly varied and dynamic, but rather than being a response to a text intended for a collective performance, these are primarily individual expressions of 'DIY' spirituality. To explore and exemplify these, I will be focusing on improvisations that are stimulated and facilitated by the material culture presented by the church building. These are familiar opportunities: lighting a candle, completing a prayer card, or performing - as a tourist - and following a written guide to the history of the building. It draws on my fieldwork at St Denys' parish church in Sleaford Lincolnshire and in Exeter Cathedral during the Autumn of 2008.

My discussion will include reflections, memories and field notes, and will return to the work of Grace Davie and her concepts of 'Believing without Belonging' and 'Vicarious Religion' in order to contextualise these performances. Within this framework of behavioural expectations and potential signifiers, punctuated by points of interaction, overlap and collision, it will offer an alternative reading of her findings using performance studies as the illuminator, and attempt to use performance as a means of understanding some aspects of contemporary British society's complex, and often paradoxical, relationship with religion. I want to begin by locating myself as a researcher. In many ways my experiences are similar to the majority of English society, who are Christian by enculturation rather than by practice. This chapter looks at how performance creates belief.

The performance of the liturgy: scripting worship

In its broadest sense, the word 'liturgy' means worship. It also describes the collection of performance scripts that provide both structure and reproducibility to the enactment of formal rites of worship. As we have seen, in theatrical scholarship there is a tradition of comparing the enactment of the Eucharist (or Mass) to theatrical performance - where correlations are drawn between a performance script and a liturgical text, a congregation and an audience, an actor and a minister, costume and vestments, and props and church ornaments. Despite the history of an anti-theatrical prejudice in the Church, there has also been an acknowledgement by bodies within it, such as the Liturgical Commission (that advises the Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, on the creation, delivery and amendment of texts for the performance of worship rites) of the importance of performance. The synod also oversees the Church of England's highly developed body of regulations that represents ecclesiastical law. Canon Law provides guidance on all aspects of the Church of England, from bell ringing to building conservation, worship practice and church closure.

It is nothing new to suggest that the minister is a performer who tries to ensure the best communication of liturgical texts in the celebration of services in order to maximise their evangelical potential. For the majority of both performance scholars and liturgists these correlations remain generalised, and often affirm previous reductionist assumptions. In order to move beyond this polemic, I want to return to the theatre studies tool kit and examine how these texts work dramaturgically.

Anything but 'Common' worship

In this case I am going to consider the Holy Communion rite, also known as the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. It is, in its intent, a re-enactment of a biblical event; that is to say, the final meal that Christ took with his disciples where they shared bread and wine. In its performance, the minister - who is representing Christ - leads the rite and invites the congregants to take and eat the consecrated bread and wine in an act of remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. This worship

event - the defining rite for all Christians[62] - is an enactment of a text written for performance: it is the performance of a script.

However, to call this text a script is problematic in two ways. First, to describe a liturgical text as a script conflates religion with performance, and directly compares the sacred and the secular. This comparison is far from neutral. There are long, complex and ongoing discourses centred on this issue. Yet, simultaneously, there is an already established positive exchange between theatre and religion where some theologians or liturgists use performance-based terminology and metaphors to describe both theological narratives and liturgical practice. [63] Religious scholars are already describing liturgy as performance and, with sensitivity, I set out to do the same.

This equivalency is also problematic for performance studies scholars. As a discipline, performance studies (as part of the re-evaluation of the text undertaken in the post-dramatic developments of the discipline) tends to avoid the term script - preferring instead score, text or even 'blueprint for performance'[64] (Aston and Savona 1991: 2). 'Script', it seems, is an unfashionable term. Yet, it does have benefits; in this case, it means I can be specific about the optic of analysis that I am using. Over time English and Theatre Studies scholars have developed close textual analysis techniques that provide the means to posit a hypothesis of how

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[62] The act of communion continues to be a fundamental point of division between the Anglican and Catholic church, because they disagree about the nature of the transformation of the bread and wine. For Roman Catholics this rite – their Mass – transubstantiates the bread and wine; that is to say, changes its material nature to become the body and blood of Christ. Whereas for the Anglicans it consubstantiates; that is to say, the bread and wine exists along with the body and blood of Christ. Moreover, within the Anglican communion the rite has varying significance, whereas it might be a weekly rite for a 'high' church it may only be monthly for a church allied to a non-conformist tradition.

[63] This tends to take two forms. First, it acknowledges the liturgy is written for performance: see McCall (2007) and Grainger (2009). Second, it uses theatre and performance as a metaphor to describe God's relationship with humanity. Much of this centres on the surge in the popularity of theologian Urs von Balthasar's three volume classic text, *TheoDrama* (1989), also see Nichols (2001), Oakes (2004) and Quash (2004; 2005).

[64] I have found few entries for it in specialist performance reference books. Even Patrice Pavis' comprehensive *Dictionary of the Theatre* which defines the terms 'dramatic texts' and 'score', does not define 'script', although the term is used intermittently in other points of reference. See also Perham's reference to 'detailed instructions' (1978: 35).

a script will 'work' in performance, I will be using these methods in order to analyse this liturgical text.

First, choose your script

The script we are about to analyse, *Common Worship - order two: Contemporary language*, is one of the four current versions of the Church of England's text for the Eucharist. Of the four versions of the rite from which ministers can choose, two come from the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* and two from *Common Worship.* Confusingly, these two *Common Worship* scripts share a name with the *Common Worship* canon of which they form a part. Those who lead worship select from these forms of service that have been authorised by the Liturgical Commission and are allowed by the Church of England's canon law. The two pairs of services, *BCP* and *Common Worship,* are described as "different but complementary" and provide a;

> common framework and structure for services in the Church of England [...which provides a variety of] resources to use [...] This allows individual churches to tailor their services to their own setting and culture and the needs of their particular congregations (The Church of England 2000: np).

This statement identifies two significant points. First, that ministers are not fully constrained by the liturgical canon, but have four texts to choose from, which then structure their congregation's worship practice. And second, that choosing the best text is a complex process, driven by the minister's understanding of their church community: the worshippers, buildings, and socio-economic sub cultures that constitute a given congregation. Thus ministers, and their congregations, through this process are selecting the version of the rite that best fits their 'local tradition'.

'Local tradition' is a term adopted by the Church to both account for and provide a vehicle through which to communicate their understanding (to the clergy) of the nuanced concomitant performance vagaries of different communities. Its prolific use demonstrates, perhaps counter-intuitively, that the Church creates its worship texts as items for interpretation via live, embodied practices. The importance given to local tradition, by the larger organisation of the Church of England, is notable because it challenges the prevalent performance scholar's view

that organised religion is fixed, concrete and limited. The C of E is, in fact, interpretative in its performance of worship. This offers an interesting paradox. In an echo of Lynch's assertion that group acceptance and 'authenticity' are important for spiritual and religious identity it seems that although this may be true within a given congregation, it does not necessarily universally apply across different church communities. This is because although a common sentiment among congregations prevails, "that everyone does it like us" this simply is not true. The minister's selection of which version of the Eucharist liturgy to use is the first layer of performance interpretation that takes place within the apparent fixity of the Church's liturgical canon. The *Common Worship* collection of services, available in printed and downloadable form (to facilitate the construction of rites tailored to individual congregations) is described as being;

> in a modern idiom, with vibrant images that seek to connect the Biblical tradition with people's own experiences. A key concept is that of the Christian life as a journey - one in which those as yet uncommitted to the faith are also invited to join. (Archbishops' Council 2000-2006a: 157)

This emphasis on modernity is slightly misleading. Common Worship is a revised collection of worship texts, which replaced the existing liturgy (*The Alternative Service Book* 1980) in 2000; it also retained and revived the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. Thus, in its reconstruction of the liturgical canon, it has chosen to sustain tradition, alongside the desire for modernity.

This was the latest iteration of the controversial process of liturgical revision by the Liturgical Council[65] that began in the 1920s. Such revision is treated with a gentle cynicism by many in the Church, who appreciate that regardless of the top-down change sought by the Liturgical Commission, local tradition will mean that change will take a long time coming (if at all), and that local interpretation will be a constant in how the liturgy is performed even if the script changes. A charming example of this understanding comes from the influential Church Society:

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[65] The Liturgical Commission, established in 1954 defines itself as a body of liturgists, answerable to the General Synod, whose functions are; "to prepare forms of service at the request of the House of Bishops; to advise on the experimental use of forms of service and the development of liturgy; to exchange information and advice on liturgical matters with other provinces of the Anglican Communion and other Christian Churches both in the British Isles and abroad; to promote the development and understanding of liturgy and of its use in the Church" (The Liturgical Commission 2008)

It is perfectly permissible in the new services to substitute a traditional language text, the creed for example. Mixing old and new is very 'post-modern' and congregations may prefer to do it for their own reasons. (Church Society 2003: np)

Again, choice is affirmed for individual congregations. This description of 'mixing' and 'retaining' resonates with post-secular notions of hybrid identity construction; however, this suggests that in opposition to present sociological assumptions this exists not only for those who do not practice, but also for regular worship communities.

Common Worship's new focus on, and celebration of, the 1662 version of the *BCP*, which emerged from the Protestant Revolution, appears to be a nostalgic return to the origins of the Church of England, and as such, it uses 'traditional language'[66]. This is in apparent opposition to the newly devised 'contemporary language' version on which we are concentrating. This is a script that is, for its authors, a "vibrant", "post-modern" text. Such a statement contradicts the way that religion and the C of E are generally perceived in a wider society, as dependable and stable on the one hand, and benign on the other.

These choices enable churches to cater for individual segments within their own worship community; for example, many churchs provide an early morning Sunday communion service that utilises the traditional language of the *Book of Common Prayer,* and a mid morning service using *Common Worship (contemporary language)* in order to make worship more accessible for an audience dominated by families. Thus far it seems that the liturgy, with its range of scripts, does include considerable levels of choice.

Next, choose the content

Once selected, the script is only partially prescriptive. In all cases, the rite's structure is divided into four processual segments; the gathering, listening, and responding to the word of

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[66] In many ways, this current desire by the Liturgical Council to construct a 'common' element to *Common Worship* is reminiscent of development of the 1645 *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*. (sic) This Parliament-overseen movement, against the 1640 *Book of Common Prayer* ,sought to oust the last of the oppression of "Romanish Breviary, Rituals and Mass Book" leaving congregants with clear instruction on how the Church of England liturgy should be enacted, thereby empowering them to understand their own worship actions. It extolled ministers to provide "pithy narration [...] that all may better understand". (Gibson 1645: np).

God, and the Holy Communion or meal (the re-enactment of the Last Supper). These segments however, need to be interpreted. And this interpretation is even more of an expression of how an individual worship community perceives itself. For example they, led by the vicar, select the hymns that are used and where they appear and, perhaps, the form the homily takes (although it is worth noting that church wardens wield considerable power in a circuit of churches with not one, but a panel of, worship leaders). The homily might be a traditional sermon, a 'drama'[67], an act of 'Godly play'[68], a more explicitly political statement (where the sermon is given over to a political/charitable organisation like Oxfam), or a sermon might even be a vehicle for the church's own internal public relations with a 'corporate-style' film.

This interpretation, expressed through local tradition, appears to be counter intuitive because the script for the performance of Holy Communion has a manifest function. It sets out to ensure the communication, dissemination and repeatability of Christian public worship. The text is intentionally political and seeks to be efficacious in two ways. First, it seeks to evangelically recruit new members to the Church, and second it seeks to sustain its existent believers. A point confirmed when we return here to the Archbishop of Canterbury's description of *Common Worship,* as seeking;

> to connect the Biblical tradition with people's own experiences. A key concept is that of the Christian life as a journey - one in which those as yet uncommitted to the faith are also invited to join. (The Church of England 2000)

Beyond this manifest function (its explicit purpose in relationship to the institutions it serves; to sustain believers on their journey and welcome the newcomer) it also has a latent function. This latent function is driven not only by the 'top-down' forces of the Liturgical Commission, but also by the 'bottom-up' forces of local tradition and practice.

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[67] There is a rich source of playtexts available that have been written for this particular set of performance conditions. They often take the form of a dramatised bible passage; see Penfield (1977); Perry (1989) They may also take an allegorical metaphorical form – in the tradition of the parables.

[68] The notion of 'Godly play', a means of making theology and doctrine entertainingly engaging and accessible to young people, and audiences with a limited existent knowledge is grounded in the world of theologians like David L. Miller (See Miller 1970).

This latent function is problematic for a political performance that seeks to sustain or generate belief in a predictable way, because performers and audiences create their own interpretations; its writers cannot predict the outcomes, nor can the worship leaders. As the former Archbishop of Canterbury notes, the liturgy is;

> far from being some kind of impersonal formality for the life of the Christian community [it] belongs in fact to the most genuinely personal dimension of Christian life. (Rowan Williams in Grainger pg viii)

So how does the impersonal formality of the text become genuinely personal in performance? The script can give us an insight.

Who is performing what?

The script for *Common Worship - order two: Contemporary language* contains within it several dramaturgical styles. By considering four elements of the script; the Prayer of Consecration, the Giving of Communion, the bible reading and the sermon, I shall examine how these operate in relationship to fixity and interpretation, and latent and manifest functions. I focus on who is speaking, who is listening, who is authorised to do so and who is present.

The first extract from the script under consideration is the Prayer of Consecration. This is, perhaps, the most significant action in the script. It is the moment where the vicar, or as they are referred to in the text, the president[69], bless the bread and wine, transforming them for consumption. Those who have undergone the rite of passage of 'confirmation' within the congregation are permitted to consume this transformed bread and wine. Other members of the congregation who are not confirmed can, at the point of distribution, go forward to be blessed. The Prayer of Consecration is quoted in full below.

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[69] President is the overarching term for the individual who is presiding over the rite. In most cases this will be the vicar but can also include other members of the clergy.

The Prayer of Consecration

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
who, in your tender mercy,
gave your only Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption;
who made there by his one oblation of himself once offered
a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction
    for the sins of the whole world;
he instituted, and in his holy gospel commanded us to continue,
a perpetual memory of his precious death until he comes again.

Hear us, merciful Father, we humbly pray,
and grant that we receiving these gifts of your creation,
    this bread and this wine,
according to your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution,
in remembrance of his death and passion,
may be partakers of his most blessed body and blood;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
      Here the president takes the paten.
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
      Here the president breaks the bread.
Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you;
      Here the president lays a hand on all the bread.
do this in remembrance of me.
In the same way, after supper, he took the cup;
      Here the president takes the cup.
and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
      Here the president is to lay a hand on every vessel
      in which there is wine to be consecrated.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.

All   **Amen.**

(Archbishops' Council 2000-2006a: 261)

This extract intentionally retains its original typesetting. This is significant in our understanding how it is communicated to both types of performer – the president and the congregation. The standard typeface indicates the president's words. This is emboldened to distinguish when the congregation are to join in, and speak collectively with the president, as they do at the end of the extract with the word, "Amen".

This particular section of the script includes two sets of performers, the singular president, and the collective congregation. In other versions of the script, although the words stay the same, the amount of words given to the president to speak alone is reduced, and the entire congregation speaks collectively more often. A larger, emboldened typeface indicates the title of the section, which also articulates its purpose, in this case, the Prayer of Consecration. Of these plural formatting styles, the typeface that is of most interest from a performance point of view appears as red italics. These are the rubrics.

Crudely put, we might describe rubrics as stage directions: the indication of the performer's physical action. The word's etymology reflects its *ruber* (red) origins, where it appeared as the initial red-letter in a book or manuscript. The term rubric has now predominantly come to mean the mechanism within a liturgical text that instructs the physical action of the president or congregants. Although it demands an action, it does not give instructions about the expressive or emotional quality that the performer should show during the action, or their related delivery of a spoken text, as a stage direction might.

In the Prayer of Consecration, a rubric appears before any words are spoken. It is a relatively straightforward indication of performance action: "The priest, standing at the table, says the Prayer of Consecration". The table (or altar) carries the sacraments and is the most sacred location in the Church. It is the focus of the performance, and by standing here, the minister is semiotically powerful. The prayer text that then follows this rubric operates on several dramaturgical levels. On first reading, it appears to be a monologue: the performer is alone, making an internal dialogue audible for the audience, although she is not speaking directly to them. However, this section of the script is spoken, not only to be audible for the congregation; it is also a speech of direct address. That addressee, as one might expect with a prayer, is God. However, although God is the primary addressee - that is to say, the prayer beings with "Almighty God", it also has a secondary group of addressees, the congregation - those who are physically present[70].

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[70] The Church of England passed a vote to ordain women in 1992 who were first ordained in 1994 (it also passed an act of Synod in 1993 that enabled parishes to refuse women's ministry). In an attempt to

In an additional layer of complexity, this congregation fall into two groups; those who are being evangelically encouraged to join the sect (the un-churched or de-churched)[71], and those who come to affirm their existing belief through practice. Therefore, the prayer's purpose is not only to communicate with God, it is also to impart information to the uninitiated for the first time, as well as sustaining the belief in its existing practitioners. This prayer structure is an act of political performance with manifest function.

For the existing congregation, the purpose of the prayer is, to sustain their belief. As the first lines exemplify, the prayer seeks to confirm relationship of the communicants to God, to remind them of why this relationship is significant, what they already know, and why they believe it. It invokes, and reminds, by stating; "[...] our heavenly Father, who, in your tender mercy, gave your only Son our Saviour Jesus Christ" (ibid). Thus, it both calls on God, and reminds the congregants of God's mercy and Christ's sacrifice. Here, at the mention of "our Saviour", the president bridges a potential divide between watchers and watched as she reaffirms her shared status with the rest of the congregation. She is emphasising that although she may hold the special honour of conducting the rite, she is in fact enacting it for, and with, those present. This process of religious re-affirmation is significant. Its purpose is to sustain belief and collective identity – not only within the congregation but in the wider Anglican and Christian communions. Performance scholars often envisage 'sacred' or 'holy' theatre as only transformational – but here we see that a significant function in these kinds of 'holy' performance is to sustain, rather than create, a sense of the sacred in human experience.

Logos: text and embodiment / absence and presence.

The primary addressee of this prayer cannot be perceived directly by the congregants through their senses. God is not visible or audible, but perceived as an absence. During the

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strengthen the relatively new status of female C of E clergy I am referring to the ministers in this textual analysis as she rather than he.

[71] The Church of England's collective nouns for those who have never attended church, or who have in the past but do not any longer, respectively.

performance this absence is compensated for through a plurality of theological, liturgical and material discourses and presences: textually, visually and performatively. At this point it is worth noting that God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, although each having different qualities for Trinitarian Christians, are all equal manifestations of the divine. In theological terms, God is metaphysically omnipresent – everywhere and nowhere – and therefore regardless of how the prayer is performed it will be heard. However, although the way it is performed may make no difference to God, it does, in most cases, make a difference to the congregation, because, as we have seen, collective actions are an important affirmation of subjective spiritual identity construction. They are the means by which these performers realise the invisible-made-visible in a live, collective, psychophysical emotional experience.

The presence/absence tautology is an issue that theologians have been interested in for generations. For Protestants the ultimate authority lies in the Word: written, spoken, embodied and invisible. God *is* and *is in* the words that are spoken. Therefore, to utter the Word(s) is to invoke God's presence. This is expressed through a key theological tenet, *logos,* which is driven by a biblical text:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1: 1-14)

'Word' at this point is used in its widest possible sense: uttered, thought, lived and printed. *Logos* asserts that Christ is the embodiment of the Word of God and the Word of God is also the bible, (in addition to primary performance texts of prayers, liturgy and rubrics). In this way, the liturgy is certainly no dead letter.

For Protestants, the Word is the embodiment of ultimate truth, hence the problem of comparing the 'truth' of the liturgical Word with the 'falsity' of a script. My earlier discussion about Philip Auslander's choice to remove Christianity from Deal and Beal's original text, but retain Buddhism, perhaps finds it strongest connection here. *Logos* enables the Word to be both artefact and embodiment, and the academy in choosing to reject 'the text' in general, in terms of

Christianity, also rejected *logos* in all its facets, which meant losing both the written text and its performative embodiment. Thus, *logos* tended to be separated as artefact and performance.

Liturgist Irénée Dalmais explains (in a book aimed at religious scholars and practitioners) as an expression of the Word, the;

> liturgy belongs in the order of 'doing' (ergon), not of 'knowing' (logos). Logical thought cannot get very far with it; physical actions yield their intelligibility in their performance, and this performance takes place entirely at the level of sensible realities, not as exclusively material [...] that is the cause of overtones capable of awakening the mind and heart to the acceptance of reality that is belonging to a different order. (Dalmais, Martimort et al. 1986: 259)

Although Dalmais does not explicitly acknowledge the psychophysical nature of embodied performance, I suggest that in her reaction to a *logos*-driven faith, she does recognise the nuanced connection between mind, body, emotion and efficacy; that is to say, the ability of performance to change how people feel and what they believe. Yet, this position is paradoxical. Performance is efficacious, but its latent function makes it unpredictable and for this reason, potentially subversive.

Being-becoming Christ

Yea, me and my brother used to play at being priests in the back yard. And, well, this is a bit gross really; you know those ready-made vol-au-vent cases you can buy? Well, me and my brother would bite off the sides and the middle and be left with the base – a circle about the same size as a wafer and we'd say to each other "The body of Christ" as we put it in the other's mouth:
Australian, catholic woman in her 30s.(Goldingay 2008a)

I used to play with two brothers at being priest, in the shed. One of them Donald, yea Donald his name was. He set up an altar whilst the rest of us were playing cowboys and Indians -- Donald and Michael -- It was kind of weird.
And did they feed you the wafer?
Yea I think so.:
British, encultured protestant male in his 50s.(Goldingay 2008d)

It has already been noted that for the late twentieth and twenty-first century theologians the body is a contested site. This complexity is epitomised in the liturgy where God is also represented not only by the written and spoken Word, but also visually in the body and voice of a worship leader: the president who is both presenting and representing Christ on earth. This is a long established aspiration for the Christian devotee. The classic monastic work, attributed to Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380-1471), *The Imitation of Christ* - upholds Christ as the ultimate moral guide. In this case, there is no suggestion that to imitate Christ is in anyway an inauthentic attempt at impersonation, this is rather a role to aspire to, one that it is beneficial to play.

This is a complex performative process, particularly during acts of worship, which the next six rubrics of the Prayer of Consecration give significant insight into. In this performance, the president simultaneously takes on four roles: she carries out an action in the present moment, whilst presenting (in the re-enactment of the Last Supper), and representing Christ (as a minister of the church), whilst simultaneously narrating a story.

In the first of these rubrics she is instructed to carry out two simple actions; "take the paten" and then "break the bread". While carrying out these actions she is, simultaneously, narrating the events of the Last Supper by saying;

who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
Here the president takes the paten.
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Here the president breaks the bread.

By breaking the bread whilst speaking Christ's words, the president is not only representing

Christ on earth as a minister, but also becoming Christ on earth as a re-enactor. This narration

and re-enactment continues, at the next line and rubric, but here, an additional layer of

performative complexity is introduced.

Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you;
Here the president lays a hand on all the bread.
do this in remembrance of me.
In the same way, after supper, he took the cup;
Here the president takes the cup.
and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
*Here the president is to lay a hand on every vessel
in which there is wine to be consecrated.*
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.
All **Amen.**

This combines words and actions, as before, but now they frame a moment of transformation.

As the Last Supper is fully re-enacted, the president's touch transforms a secular substance

(bread and wine) into a sacred substance (the body and blood of Christ) and as a consequence

this action enables the congregation to themselves be transformed as they consume these

sacraments.

In this narration, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you" is a speech act; a

transformative instruction that takes the congregation back in time to the Last Supper, one that

affect their belief and to mitigate for the absence of God. This is complimented by an addition

of one further doctrinal layer of presence. The bread itself is not seen to become the body of

Christ, as in the Catholic transubstantiation, when it changes its material nature to become the

body and blood of Christ, for the Anglicans it consubstantiates; that is to say, the bread and

wine exists along with the body and blood of Christ. This moment of transformation is enacted

as the president lays a hand on all the bread. It is cemented by the line of text that follows

(which is the fundamental purpose of this Prayer of Consecration); "Do this in remembrance of me."

In this speech act, the words are as important as the actions. Through the gesture of laying on of hands the president is transforming the bread, which will on its consumption, transform the communicants. But the words; "do this in remembrance of me" also fulfil the script's manifest function – to sustain individual believers in a wider community. This speech act has a primary theological function which deals with the notion of presence in a very elegant way. Here though, remembrance is not only a cognitive action. It is also embodied and imaginative. The significance of this line is confirmed when it is repeated at the end of the prayer and cemented, at the only point of collective speaking in the prayer, at the "Amen" which immediately follows.

The Distribution of the Sacraments

After the Prayer of Consecration the newly transformed sacraments are distributed amongst the congregation in the 'giving of the communion'. The script gives clear instruction in both the words and actions of this performance element.

Giving of Communion

The president and people receive communion.

To each is said

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which was given for you,
preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.
Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you,
and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ,
which was shed for you,
preserve your body and soul to everlasting life.
Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you,
  and be thankful.

*Or, when occasion requires, these words may be said once to each row
of communicants, or to a convenient number within each row.*

*If either or both of the consecrated elements are likely to prove
insufficient, the president returns to the holy table and adds more,
saying the words on page 296.*

*What remains of the consecrated bread and wine which is not required
for purposes of communion is consumed now or at the end of the service.*

The first rubric explains very simply; "the president and people receive communion." This simple statement belies the complexity of moving large groups of people from their seats to the minister, or the distributors, so that one at a time they can receive the sacraments. Moreover, although according to the script it appears that ten lines of text are spoken by the president to each recipient in turn, the practicalities of distributing the sacraments to tens or hundreds of people precipitates a different 'local tradition' which involves fewer words and therefore takes much less time. This is a key moment of interpretation, one where the president can express their understanding of what this particular worship community needs; it is an important opportunity to affirm its collective identity.

These choices however, are not universally popular within and between the congregations. One of the ministers I interviewed described to me two polar approaches that her colleagues used in their sharing of the sacraments. In the moments of the interview that preceded this extract, we had been discussing the complex nature of coping with local tradition if you work on a circuit of five churches, or as she does, work as a 'locum' across the diocese filling in for

colleagues. The discussion then took a fascinating turn as we began talking about the distribution of the sacraments;

> Another interesting thing that just came up recently, a Methodist colleague told me that whenever he is distributing the host, he just concentrates on the host. Not the people he is giving it to and that, in his opinion, the distributor shouldn't make eye contact, because if that person was to make eye contact then, they are erm, they are detracting from the sacrament, from the body of Christ. And that's a really important thing. I'd never thought about it like that because I'm the sort of person who does make eye contact. I supposed I'd be worried that your meaning might not be understood, that someone would think you're not just being unfriendly, not that you're concentrating on this holy, holy thing in your hand. [...] It's certainly an interesting performance question [...]But, I'm not sure if it's not just something he's constructed to compensate for his shyness – it would be really sad if someone was to construe him as simply being unfriendly because of it, in which case, well, all is lost in translation isn't it.

I then asked about her experience of giving the sacrament to members of her family and if she felt that her performance role changed. She replied;

> Yes of course it's got to be different hasn't it? But I don't make any distinction. Although, I do remember that we had an incumbent once who liked to use people's names. But it's something that I would only do if I was really certain about everyone at the altar rail. It would be awful to forget or get it wrong. So I will never say, "Maureen, the body of Christ", "Christopher, body of Christ" even though I know that's a lovely thing to do.
>
> But, there was a problem that I did have with this other incumbent who would use everyone's name -- you see when he got to his wife he'd say "Darling, the body of Christ". And I didn't like it! I didn't like that at all because it singled her out as being a bit more special than everyone else. And to me, at this holy point, it was quite wrong. (Goldingay 2008e)

Here the script, articulated via the embodiment of local tradition, has a variety of interpretations. However, these are not universally popular. This interview gives a very human insight into the careful thought that goes into the weekly delivery of this script, and the concerns and issues that are raised when the quotidian world of the minister bleeds into the transcendent world of the rite. These different interpretations exist on the cusp between the script's manifest and latent functions. But this transition is not smooth. Even if the minister believes they are enacting the script's manifest function in line with the limits of local tradition and canon law, they cannot be certain that their intention will be fully understood. The script does not account for the complexity of different ways this distribution is collectively achieved and the kinds of co-operative practice that operate within a local tradition. The realisation of this element of the rite is particularly interpretative, ephemeral, embodied and therefore, performed.

The Reading

In this textual analysis, I have been flexible with this script's order of performance. In the Eucharist, the Prayer of Consecration and distribution come after the reading and the sermon. However, to serve the structure of the argument of the chapter, I am considering the reading and sermon second, after the consecration and distribution, because they offer increasingly complex interpretative possibilities of the script. We continue with a consideration of the reading of extracts from the bible. And, as we have already seen because of *logos* these are not simply words, but a direct manifestation of God.

Readings

Either one or two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading.

At the end of each the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

The psalm or canticle follows the first reading, and other hymns and songs may be used between the readings.

Gospel Reading

An acclamation may herald the Gospel reading.

When the Gospel is announced the reader says

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to N.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

At the end the reader may say

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

In the script, the typesetting follows the same format as the Prayer of Consecration and the Giving of Communion: the instructions of the rubrics appear in red, titles in large, bold type, congregational statements are in bold and the reader's words appear in the standard typeface. However, two new elements are introduced in this element of the service; another type of performer - the Reader, and a further interpretative process, where variable texts are selected from another authorised source, the lectionary.

As their title suggests, Readers are trained members of the laity who read the weekly bible extracts. There are, usually, two bible readings followed by a further one taken specifically from the gospels. (The subsequent sermon is most often an exposition of this.) The reading is not defined by the script itself, but by a further text, the lectionary. This is a supporting text that over a three-year cycle sets out to ensure that both the old and new testaments are heard in their entirety. As the canon law explains;

> The readings at Holy Communion are governed by authorised lectionary provision and are not a matter for local decision except where that provision permits.
>
> Whenever possible, all three readings are used at Holy Communion on Sundays. When only two are read, the minister should ensure that, in any year, a balance is maintained between readings from the Old and New Testaments in the choice of the first reading. The psalm provided relates to the first reading in the lectionary. Where possible it should be used after that reading.
>
> When announcing the Gospel, if it is desired to give book, chapter and verse or page number, the reader may do this informally before saying 'Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N*.' (Archbishops' Council 2000-2006b)

And here, after the announcement, at the point of performance, the authority of the script diminishes; the reader interprets the text for themselves and attempts to communicate that with clarity to the congregants. Over the last three years I have been working with readers in the Exeter diocese as a teacher. In these performer training workshops, I have transferred the same techniques that I use to teach about approaches to acting Shakespeare, in particular an emphasis on the primacy of the text with an emphasis on metre, repetition, antithesis etc. In canon law and liturgy there is little to describe the performance of the readings and yet all the readers undergo a rigorous training course to do so. (In the case of the SWMTC, their reader's development course is three years.) This lack of acknowledgement of the performative reader in canon law is perhaps because the reading is deemed to be a low level interpretative process and the Word will speak for itself – whereas the sermon, the exposition of the reading, is a reflection of the quotidian life of the minister, who at this point is certainly a representative of the Church.

The Sermon

The sermon provides the zenith of the interpretative process. And, although in terms of time, it is one of the longest elements within the rite, its entry within the script simply states:

Sermon

This simple entry "sermon" gives the most space in the rite for performative interpretation and variation. This is acknowledged within the canon law, which explains:

> The sermon is an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word. A sermon should normally be preached at all celebrations on Sundays and Principal Holy Days.
>
> The sermon may on occasion include less formal exposition of Scripture, the use of drama, interviews, discussion and audio-visual aids. (Liturgical Commission 2008)

The opening statement of the law, which emphasises the integral nature of the sermon into the rite, highlights a significant distinction between different styles of performance delivery embedded within the rite. When the Minister is enacting the majority of the rite they are deemed to be presiding over it. However, when they are performing the sermon they are deemed to be preaching.

This is an interesting distinction, and acknowledgement of the different performance genres operating within this rite. We have already seen that when presiding, the Minister performs a direct address to God that includes themselves as part of the congregation, who are referred to in the third person. This might usefully be described as a non-naturalistic performance, which contains within it a Brechtian self awareness of the rite being invoked. With the sermon however, if we assume that the sermon follows a 'traditional' pattern where the Minister climbs into the pulpit and gives a "formal exposition of the scripture", this is a direct-address to the congregation that is often developed through first person anecdotes and 'real-life' comparisons.

Of the rites I attended, the sermon was the most revealing indicator of the performative identity that the communities wished to embody and present to the outside world as we will come on to see in the next chapter. Dramaturgically the script suggests that the most complex

element of the performance is the Prayer of Consecration, and certainly that sees many simultaneous liminal worlds being presented and represented through performance. However, the sermon is the moment when the minister is most 'themselves' and needs to be perceived as most 'authentic'. This is when they are no longer being Christ but rather being seen to become Christ through their everyday life. Therefore, whilst the sermon creates the widest variety of interpretation delivered in the most personal format, this is also when the minister is most exposed to the accusation of 'theatricality'.

As church attendance falls, fewer people undergo this weekly experience of the same script. As noted in an earlier citation, secularist Steve Bruce identifies this as a point of potential efficacy. He argues that without regular attendance at such rites, a fully secularised society is inevitable, without them belief is not sustained through a systematic process, burnished, or passed on through subsequent generations. (Bruce 1995:58) However, Bruce is suggesting a uniformity of practice that I do not recognise. Performances are, by their very nature, unique. Yet, he does point to the importance of repetition, which a script facilitates. And I would argue that it is the active interpretation of a continuing form, rather than the delivery by rote, that keeps the liturgy alive and fulfils its manifest functions to sustain and create belief.

Before going on to examine this script's interpretation in three different performances by C of E communities, I want to take a short excursus to examine how liturgists themselves see the performance of these texts.

Liturgical Performance

Beyond the antitheatrical and anticlerical polemics, there are subtle differences at work in the way that performance is understood by liturgists in comparison to the theatrical performance specialist. And these differences open up significant opportunities for engaging with the rich sophistication that the Church has for dealing with the enactment of the liturgy, rather than simply assuming that a past antitheatricality means the construction and enactment of the liturgy is an arid, text-centric process. In the past the liturgy has been supported by secondary texts that

specifically advise on both performance techniques and the material culture associated with those performances: the vestments, ornaments and architecture. Until the 1970s, the liturgical text had an additional guide to explain how these scripts should be enacted, *Ritual Notes: 'A Comprehensive Guide to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Book of Common Prayer of the English Church*. It was first published in 1894, and acted as the support to the words that were to be spoken to ensure that;

> The Church's Liturgy remains constantly the same, and yet varied: the same in essence, for she must always 'do things in remembrance of' her Lord, and not for something of her own devising; and varied, because within the framework of this abiding principle, she has felt herself free to adapt her forms of service. (1956: vii)

Thus, *Ritual Notes* attempted to provide regulatory control of the plurality of possible performance interpretations generated through the same script being delivered by multiple ministers, conducting multiple services several times a year for multiple audiences. In order to ensure worship did not become 'something of [the Church's] own devising', in conjunction with canon law, it gave clear performance instructions.

These instructions included indications as to physical and vocal actions of the performance of the text; for example the three ceremonial bows: profound, moderate and simple and the correct incensations of objects or people. However, note 185 does point out that "How to handle a censer neatly and correctly is exceedingly difficult to describe in words: indeed, it can hardly be learned except by demonstration from a competent thurifier" (1956: 47)). In addition it described the different 'voices' that a minister should use;

> the loud voice [...], which should be distinct and audible without any approach to shouting, [...] the audible voice, i.e. audible to those nearby [...and] the mystic voice, i.e. whisper heard only by the celebrant himself. (1956: 112)

This is a level of performance practice sophistication that is assumed, by a wider performance culture, to be absent in how the C of E articulates its worship.

This instructive text added a layer of interpretation onto the liturgy; how it should be spoken, who should speak, the gestures that should be made, what the interaction with other

clergy should be, and the choreography they should be following when moving through the rite. The book's guidance was dropped, and it ceased to be published in 1964, at a time when there was recognition, within the Church, that liturgical services needed to be more accessible for congregants.

For theatre and performance studies, the terms 'rite' and 'ritual' are broadly interchangeable. In the Church, these terms are used with more precision, in order to articulate the distinction between actions and words. In his *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, John Davies notes that a rite, as we might expect, is "a formal act constituting a religious observance" (1986: 468). But, as an overarching term it also includes a necessary element of efficacy. It is a religious observance that is done "properly," enacted in accordance with a pre-agreed format in order to elicit a pre-agreed outcome. (Bradshaw 2002: 407-409)

In order that this rite might be done 'properly' it is constituted by two elements: its 'ritual' and its 'ceremony'. Ritual in this sense has a precise meaning (unlike in its general usage in performance scholarship), it refers to "the prescribed form of words which constitute an act of worship". (Davies 1986: 469) This notion of words being the ritual is almost the antithesis of the way that ritual has come to be used in the *dominant* performance culture as a means to enable Western scholars to break free of a text-centric academy and embrace other cultures and experiential knowledges.

In this way, the ritual aspect of the liturgical text is like a play text, but one without stage directions. These directions for gesture, movement, tone of voice and interactions are given by the 'ceremony', which, in strict ecclesiastical usage, "refers to the prescribed and formal actions that constitute worship." (ibid: 155) The liturgical text, with its inclusion of both ritual and ceremony, is a blueprint for production (Aston and Savona 1991: 2) that is more than just a text; it has guidelines that ensure efficacy. However, in the text under consideration here, The Holy Communion, the rubrics give little indication of the embodied aspects of the rubrics. That information comes from elsewhere.

In recent years, particularly with the shift to churches that operate in non-church buildings (that are encouraged to develop their own worship patterns and styles), ministerial training colleges are finding it difficult to give their incumbents the necessary communication and performance skills with which to interpret a liturgical text whilst still sustaining worship efficacy and integrity. There are no new publications of *Ritual Notes* to guide this process. It is worth noting that the liturgy is not learnt by heart – it is read from the text. As a performer I found this an interesting point. I know that I have the strongest connection to a performance once I have learnt a script and find the physical text a barrier in communicating to an audience. Before we move on to consider the text in performance it is worth noting that as an actor my full engagement with the text can only occur after I have learnt the lines – when I feel that the words are mine. This is not expected and ritual notes even states in note 409 that

> No priest should attempt to say Mass without a book of the rite, for memory is treacherous; and this book should contain the whole of the service. It is desirable, on the grounds of appearance and dignity, to avoid using several small books at the altar. (1956: 109).

These are performances where a demonstration of what is personally authentic is valued more highly than the virtuosic – although both are still important. Moreover, the local is given priority over the global and although congregations acknowledge that there are distinctions between their performances of the same script, in essence the feeling that we are 'all the same' is commonly held. My exposition of the three performances of the same Holy Communion script that I experienced in Oxford on the same day confirms that this could not be much further from the truth.

The performance of the liturgy: enacting the script

This extract offers a segue between our examination of a script, and the minister's understanding of that script, and my experience of the script's enactment as an audience member/participant. The extract below comes from an interview I conducted with a C of E minister and member of the Southwest Ministerial Training College teaching team. It is the

response to my opening question: What do you think about the relationship between worship and performance?

> Well, when I was confirmed, this was as an adult, so really that was the first service I had a 'role' in. (Rather than being a passive singer of hymns or receiver of the sermon). I was really disappointed to find it was all rehearsed – you know [...] We people who were playing a part had to go early and be told "You stand up at this point, and then you turn round, and then he's going to come in. Should he come in from this side? No, it will look better if he comes in from over here." And it was all choreographed, obviously, so it would look good. And up to that point I'd not thought it was done quite so coldly and calculatingly. And I can remember being disappointed that these things didn't simply flow – God-led - you know. [Laughter].
>
> That was my first realisation that a lot of it is performance. Well of course now, I'm fully on board with that and understand how important it is how things look, and flow, and that there shouldn't be a long gap. So you work out who's going to move from their seat to where during the hymn, or whatever, so that there's not a long gap or anything...and that's all rather important actually. So I'm now fully on board with that. (Goldingay 2008e)

This was the frank beginning of what proved to be a fascinating interview with an experienced member of the clergy, who is also responsible for clergy training. It expressed both the complexity that is at the heart of delivering liturgical text via performance and the way it is understood by a practising minister. It was through descriptions of the real-life practice of ministers, articulated by these interviews, that I came to understand that to lead an act of worship does not necessarily leave capacity for you yourself to worship (Goldingay 2008e) and that it is more about "holding a space for others" (Goldingay 2008c). However, many do still feel themselves to be called, to be marked out as "special people" (Goldingay 2008c) and in their enactment of rites, ministers can experience a variety of anomalous experiences, for example "seeing" golden light weaving above the heads of their congregants in a "tapestry of God's love" (Goldingay 2008b).

Thus far, we have examined the script's potential to be interpreted in performance. This section of the chapter now moves on to see what happens to these suppositions as they move from words on the page to words in the mouth and impulses in the body. It takes the four elements considered in the textual analysis, the sermon, the reading, the prayer of consecration and the distribution of the sacraments, and explores how they were performed. It uses these findings to suggest that the processes at work are not merely a passive 'top-down' expression of

the Liturgical Commission and the Church's organising power, but that they are also an articulation of 'bottom up' management powered by local tradition and participant engagement.

To explore the variety in the way that different worship communities express their collective identity we take a twelve hour journey across Oxford on 11 April 2007, in order to participate in three enactments of the same script for the rite of the Eucharist, *Common Worship contemporary language*. To consider the first of our Oxford performances, I want to return to the chronological order of events given in this script (rather than the route taken in the preceeding textual analysis). In order to best describe the four separate element of the script we have considered so far, I place them in interconnected pairs because, despite an apparent lack of interconnection on the page, they operate synergistically in performance. First, we will consider the reading and the sermon, before looking at the enactment of the Prayer of Consecration and distribution of the sacraments for each of the three congregations.

The three worship communities

Performance 1: Christchurch

I say to him, "The body of Christ". He looks down at the wafer and then up to look me in the eye. And my pulse is racing, and my knees are literally trembling with this enormous sense of responsibility. I might have just changed this man's belief. This potential to change others seldom crosses my mind when I'm acting.(Goldingay 2007)

The day began at 8:30am with Holy Communion at Christchurch Cathedral which is in the quad of Christchurch College, and is very much part of the University's community. The early mediaeval building was architecturally beautiful and sparsely decorated. I was one of a congregation of twelve, who were for the most part students. The service took place in a side chapel. There was no hymn singing, but our entrance was accompanied by a student playing piano. The *Common Worship* script unfolded without incident, and the readings were unremarkable, given crisply and effectively by students standing behind a portable wooden lectern placed beside the table that would shortly become the altar. The sermon was more unusual. It was given, not by the presiding minister as one might expect, but rather by a representative from the charity Oxfam.

Canon law, and tradition, suggests that the sermon is an exposition on the gospel reading indicated by the lectionary. In this case, whereas the bible reading itself was the parable of Christ calming the storm on Lake Galilee, which was read by one of the College's students, the Public Relations officer for Oxfam instead spoke on the theme of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The metaphorical links were of course there to be exploited by the charity: invoking good works in the congregation through the sermon is nothing new. Here however, this politically efficacious point of the rite was harnessed by the visiting charity, rather than the Church.

This kind of political engagement with an external organisation was not particularly surprising. Churches have long had affiliations to external charitable organisations like Traidcraft and Fairtrade. This moment for me, pointed towards ways in which the congregation, and its individual members, affirms its own identity and values in a wider community. This happens not just through a similar style of worship practice, but through an affiliation to 'authorised brands' that ally themselves with the aspirational lifestyle of the community. What was surprising was what took place at the Prayer of Consecration.

The minister wore a coarsely woven white surplice whilst blessing the stoneware paten and chalice, thus semiotically presenting with signifiers that invoked the Early Church and its 'inherent' purity, simplicity and small group integrity. This 'familial' evocation continued when we were invited to stand and form a circle around the altar. This gave me a great sense of intimacy and a sudden awareness of the entire congregation. This democratic ethos reached its full fruition when, after the prayer of consecration was complete, it became clear that the distribution would not follow the normal pattern. As the distribution of sacraments began, I saw that, rather than it being distributed by the minister, or an appointed server, we congregants would instead distribute it ourselves around the circle we had formed beside the altar.

The minister began by holding the paten in one hand, and giving the wafer with the other to his neighbour as he said "The body of Christ". To my surprise, she then took the paten herself and repeated this element of the rite for her neighbour. She then turned back to drink from the challis with the words "The blood of Christ". The sacraments then made their way around the circle. I was fourth in the circle and as it made its way to me I

was fully focused, not on my own preparation to receive the sacrament as the script's manifest function would suggest, but on learning the performance pattern so that I would not disrupt the rite. Looking back, I have little recollection of being served myself, I do however, have very clear memories of serving the next person in the circle. The enormity of the situation struck me when I turned and made eye-contact for the first time with John, from Newcastle, reading maths. In this moment I shifted from audience, to actor, to witness as I took on, in that ephemeral moment - before the rationalisation and reflection offered by time and distance - the responsibility for the (re)creation of someone else's belief. It was profoundly moving.

Performance 2: St Aldates

> *He simply stood there and sobbed – with an unguarded honesty I'd never seen from a man before, in private or public. On the screen behind his head, the words "Can the parents of child 23 please return to the children's centre" continued to flicker. (Goldingay 2007)*

At 10:00am I took my seat in St Aldates in time for the 10:30am service. I'd been told that after 10:15 it was standing-room only. I was cynical, but the advice was accurate. By the time the service began, the building and its annexes for four children's churches were overflowing.

St Aldates describes itself as:

> A house of prayer for all nations at the heart of Oxford [...]. A vibrant Anglican church in the centre of Oxford. At the heart of the Church are pastorates, which are gatherings of 20 or so people meeting together during the week – in houses across Oxford – for food, worship, Bible study, prayer and fun! We also run Alpha courses for those who are enquiring about or just getting into the Christian faith. In everything we do, we place a high emphasis on making friends, Bible reading, worship and prayer. (St Aldate's Church 2005-)

They are particularly good at affirming their identity and practice through digital means; their web pages not only give information of their aspirations and worship but also carry recordings of previous sermons and footage of special events. Their success with publicity was confirmed

when the church's Alpha course was recently the subject of a Channel 4 television documentary *Revelations: How to Find God* (Ronson 2008: np).

Unlike the service at Christchurch, music was central to the formative experience. The first 20 minutes of the service were led by the church's director of music and five piece house-band in worship that was centred on chorus singing. The church's website is very informative and explains that the community's organisation is split into departments. One of these is worship, which has two subheadings: 'fuel for the fire' and 'resources'. Fuel to the fire is the collective name for the organisation's numerous worship leaders. They characterise themselves as being committed in four areas, "community, character, crawling, and creativity", which they describe as "developing fresh avenues of contemporary worship including music and the arts" (St Aldate's Church 2005: np). Under the 'worship' heading, the church explains that the Sunday gatherings are led by a band that is "loosely set with a worship leader of the musical and relational community and are made up of students and other members of the church body" (ibid).

The sermon at St Aldates, as at Christchurch, did not (as cannon law suggests) provide an exposition of the bible reading. The sermon instead provided a report on an event that had happened the previous day, which was framed by another biblical text from Corinthians. Its delivery was far from the traditional image of the vested minister in the pulpit. In an erudite exploitation of new technologies, the bible reading appeared on the overhead screens which were dotted around the church. These had a variety of uses; not only did they enable the entire congregation to read the text aloud, together, they also carried the words for the hymns and choruses; and indicated when a fractious Sunday school child should be collected by their parents with the words "can the parents of child number N return to the children's centre".

The sermon was given by Gordon Hickson, associate Minister, and men's group leader. After we had collectively read the text from Corinthians, a prayer was then said for God's support in "breaking it down" in order to restore "original design" – I cannot be certain that the intelligent design overtones were not intentional. This was followed by more call and responses,

and we were asked to repeat "people are never my enemy". Later during the sermon we were invited to close our eyes and imagine a scenario of a beached boat. This was certainly an interactive experience.

The presentation then fell to reporting back on the work that had been conducted at the previous day's men's group breakfast, which was about constructing 'the dream team'. The men's group has a motto, *esse quam videre*: to be rather than to appear. Again we are reminded of the significance of authenticity. This was underlined by the theme of the breakfast which was about money, sex and power. It sought to sustain the men in both physical and digital fidelity to their wives (internet pornography was explained to be a significant issue). In its delivery the approach of the sermon was somewhere between impassioned Americanised Pentecostal leader and corporate sales promotion. This asserted the St Aldates brand in its own unique 'local tradition' which was fully affirmed as we reached the end of the sermon when a video was played. This documentary followed the style of a corporate video and in its purpose echoed the prayer of consecration; an advertisement for the other work that the church was undertaking. It did two things. First, it affirmed the collective identity of the believers and justified the investment that individuals make into the coffers of the establishment, and second it encouraged the commitment of the undecided. This video was a convincing product that had exceptional production values and high aesthetic qualities. I felt, however, it was about selling St Aldates first and Chrisitanity second. The Church of England was not mentioned. Perhaps their product isn't sufficiently aligned with the St Aldates brand.

I found all this rather difficult. However, as the service reached its culmination, before the blessing and dismissal, something that wasn't in the script took place. Charlie Cleverly, the church's Rector, asked for anyone who wished to be prayed for, or to bring a concern publicly before God, to come down to the front of the church. To my surprise more than thirty of the congregation stood and began to move forward. Over the microphone Cleverly repeatedly called for members of the laity and various prayer teams to come forward and pray alongside people. Over the next ten minutes, I witnessed (and I use that word with care) a moment of catharsis. A

young man in his early 20s spoke aloud about a series of what he deemed to be sins. Alongside him another man then asked God for forgiveness. The young man was stooped over, his body wracked with weeping. Without his companion I doubt he could have remained standing.

I was relatively unmoved by the rest of the service, I found its local tradition manifested through marketing tactics difficult to find sincere or authentic. But in this moment when this individual felt able to publicly express his deep emotional concerns and find a form of healing, through the setting provided by this act of worship, I was deeply moved. I felt deeply privileged to be there. as I had done when I'd given bread and wine to at Christchurch.

Performance 3: hOME: a fresh expression of church.

In recent years the Church of England, in an effort to reverse the fall in its practising membership, has rebranded itself as a 'Mission Shaped Church'; one that recognises the need for a different 'missionary strategy' in a changing world where;

> [c]ommunities are now multi-layered […] with permeable boundaries, […in] a wide variety of networks, ranging from the relatively local to the global. Increased mobility and electronic communications technology have changed the nature of community. (The Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council Working Group 2004: xi)

One iteration of this process is the Fresh Expressions movement where small 'cells' of congregants move out from the main body of the parish church into non-church buildings within a community that is perceived to be poorly provided for spiritually. These cells then become churches, with vicars and congregants. The communities are the ultimate manifestation of a 'local tradition', but this is one that is displaced from its original church and constructed from the aspirations, imaginings and practices of its members – rather than what is carried forward from the long standing traditions of worship associated with a single building. Thus, at 8pm, I found myself in the Fresh Expressions church called hOME, which is a cell of former St Aldates members.

These fresh expressions of church seek to go out to new communities in order to attempt to serve that the church community's needs. In this particular case, hOME takes place in a community centre on the Cowley Road, and as I walked upstairs to the third floor carrying a cushion, I heard a karate class already underway in the room beneath. The first fifteen minutes of the service were concerned with the practicalities of something which, for another community, might have otherwise taken place at a parish council meeting; storage and the suitability of using this rented room. The performance space was defined by a circle of candles that illuminated a series of reproduction Byzantine icons. We sat on the floor together, the Minister democratically sitting amongst us.

Music played a vital part of the service, but this was pre-recorded and played back by a VJ who also sat within the congregational circle. The sermon here took a recognisably similar form to that at St Aldates, with the bible reading appearing as a projection, but the context was fundamentally different in two ways. First, the technology was all consuming; the heading for each element of the service, for example the "Prayer of Consecration", was projected on to the wall and music was often accompanied by video images that ran in the background whilst the congregation sang choruses. Second, we read in silence and then each member of the group was invited to comment on their understanding of how the gospel was "speaking to their lives". This was a collective process, facilitated by the minister. This created an even stronger sense of community with a powerfully articulated local tradition.

The reading for the first time followed the lectionary; the story of Christ calming the Sea of Galilee. However, in this small circle the close textual analysis of the Gospel led not to the fully open experience suggested by the church's monastic structure and affiliation to the early church. This was because as the discussion evolved it fell to the Pastor to interpret and collate these feelings. In many cases paradoxes and complications were either ignored or set aside. There was no sermon as such, but a short narrative which followed a similar format to the blog that Matt, the Pastor, keeps. Interestingly, the most profound moments within the service came from a

close articulation of the script through the prayer of consecration and distribution of the sacraments.

It would have been very easy for the group to pass the sacraments amongst themselves, instead the Pastor put up a foldout picnic table, which became the altar, and was joined by two servers. In order to separate out the sanctity of the moment from the prosaic act of putting up the table, he turned, made eye contact, smiled and put on the Stole. He then gave the sacraments to the servers who distributed them to the rest of congregation. At the end of the service I spoke to a member about her decision to create her own worship community. She explained that she didn't need a weekly "earthquake" of a service, but wanted a Eucharist that challenged her, and purged her. She said that sometimes she could feel the sacrament "burn".

These performances demonstrate, unsurprisingly, the rich inspiration a script provides for different worship communities. The performances confirm that the Church of England, for those who practise regularly, is not an inert, uniform enactment of 'Englishness'. It is in fact, plural, dynamic and changing. In addition, digital technologies are held in tension with conceptions of the authenticity of the early church in order to construct and disseminate singular community 'brands'. These brands also draw on affiliation to other organisations such as Oxfam and Fairtrade to locate their altruistic outlook in a wider world. However, this desire to change worship practice is at times in opposition to the majority (discussed in chapter two) who wish religious practice to stay the same and provide a sense of stability through a nostalgically conceived authorised past, when children were well behaved and shop keepers honest.

We now move beyond the complexity of the enactment of a script to consider practice that takes place in Church of England buildings but without script or minister: these are improvised performances.

Beyond the liturgy: Improvised Performances

Thus far we have considered performances that are 'authorised' by scripts and ministers. But this is not to say improvisation has no place in the Church of England. We can see it in the

way in which that eighty-five percent of non-congregational visitors use these building outside supervised services for non-liturgical rites: lighting candles, building a cairn, writing prayer cards and taking a guided tour. The 'authorised' liturgical framework dissolves and is replaced by something else, which is provided by the local church community. These performances are not anarchic: they respond to both the more ephemeral and complex framework provided by the material culture of the building and the expectation of the performer. These are contracts, and they are not only located in the moment when the participants meet face to face, but in a whole network of previous experiences and expectations that are encountered and developed both before and after the performance. As we go forward, I will argue that these contracts hold the potential to provide the forum in which belief is constructed.

Although these performances are not directed or led by a minister they are still marbled with the politics of the Church. They are improvisations that respond to its structures of belief, articulated through the building which provides the stimulus, the props and the venue. However, without the script the Church no longer directly controls the words that are spoken or the actions that are performed - nor the choreography, nor the costumes. These performances then, without the arbitration of a minister, for both performer and spectator, take place in a state of partial agreement and potentially transgressive actions. And, if we are to believe the accuracy of the Church of England survey that suggests eighty-five percent of the population use its buildings during the course of a year, then this is spirituality performed by the majority.

To state that eighty-five percent of the population use these buildings then appears counter intuitive. As we have already seen, many popular commentators describe the Church of England as a spent force, characterised by a faithful who practise their religion lightly (Fox 2004: 253). Yet, to dismiss the nation's dominant religion, with its political and financial power, as unobtrusive and irrelevant is to deny its potential. The Church of England explicitly affects politics, education and ethics. Implicitly it exerts a powerful force on the creation of cultural identity. This then presents a paradox. It is widely accepted that Church membership is in decline, along with attendance at clergy-led worship, and yet eighty-five percent of the

population are using these buildings for some other purpose. So what is taking place? What are these other users doing?

We will examine one possibility by considering the performance of rites in these sacred, public spaces. Church buildings are complex sites and they facilitate the enactment of two key ritual genres. As we have seen, they fulfil their intended purpose by providing the location for scripted, minister-led liturgical worship. They are also the stimulus for, and receptacles of, performances that are neither liturgical, nor supervised by an appointed church representative. These then, are improvised performances, occupying a place on a continuum. Below we will consider moments that are performances of remembrance; expressed in the reverence of silent prayer, performances of consumption, as exemplified in a tourist's gaze and performances that connect vicariously to an absent community through cascades of action that precipitate later acts of worship.

My square mile

Narrative I: St Andrews Church, Langley Mill. 1978

The small blond child lets go of the woman's hand and, laughing, clambers onto the granite wall, turning to reach again for her Mother's palm - a safety net for her perilous and exciting journey along the church's boundary. She leaps down, to take a shortcut from one gate to the other, racing with her sister through the graveyard. Unbalanced, turning, sprinting, she has to dodge the older children who are sharing secrets and cigarettes in the porch before school starts. Almost every day of her life, until she turns eleven, she will play in the building's grounds on her way to classes, and yet never go inside.

This investigation, of course, contains an element of autobiography, as my childhood recollection above attests. As an English researcher, working in an intracultural setting, I recognise the importance of attempting to estrange myself from my own mythologised perception of the Church of England. How then did my own relationship with it begin?

Until I was fourteen my only intimate interaction with the Church was via my local parish church. It was, and is, one of a network of physical religious markers that dominate the United Kingdom's geography both in terms of size and profusion. These are more than buildings.

Internally and externally they carry the physical marks of the lives of their congregants, their neighbours, and their visitors. They are complex locations that serve as geographical and temporal landmarks, receptacles for memories of life's milestones, or destinations to be ticked-off on one of the Church Tourism Network's guides. They are sites of performance, littered with visible traces that, in the absence of the mark-maker, stand in for a person carving space and time with their presence. Critically, for the examination of my own preconceptions, they also play a part in the formation of personal narratives. My experience of my parish church was a wholly external one; I did not use its interior, nevertheless its outside was significant. Nor is it formless in my memory now. When I close my eyes I can recall its presence in clear crisp detail - its colour, its shape, and its force.

The English language, unlike Welsh, has no specific terms for the formative interplay between person, landscape, community and identity. In particular, it lacks the terminology for the description of the critical influence of the place where we grow up. Mike Pearson explains that these complex inter-relationships operate as 'a series of cognitive maps', where in Welsh, *y filltir sqwar* (the square mile) is "the intimate landscape of one's childhood, that […] we know in a detail that we will never know anywhere again" and c*ynefin* (habitat) is "that area where we feel we belong, the immediate environment, the surroundings which impress themselves upon us in the formative years between 5 and 15" (2001: 138-9). In our early years, the landscape we grow up in forms us. And, through the action of living in it, we simultaneously form it. We take this place of formation as a palimpsest, and then overwrite it with a collection of memories of people and events. For me the village, although radically changed, is marked by a language of my younger self – 'the big hill to Jackie Gregg's house', or 'the gate we're not to swing on because the farmer comes out and shouts', or 'the big building opposite the off licence', St Andrews in Langley Mill, an unremarkable cruciform church in an unremarkable East Midlands mining village.

My working class family did not belong to the church's congregation. This did not mean we were atheists; I don't remember that option being available. Like many others in the area our

household had a strong emphasis on 'religion'; as children we were told to say our prayers every night. We had copies of the bible on the bookshelf, and were socially managed by a perception of Christian morality. We were not baptized; marriages often, by necessity, took place in a registry office, and I was not allowed to attend funerals. In my childhood, I had no direct relationship with the church congregation or its vicar. I did see him, though. He would appear, annually I think, perhaps to lead a school assembly around Easter time, the hem of his cassock gathering the dust from the corners of the stage in the school hall. My family simultaneously found him a figure worthy of benign amusement and generous respect, another paradox. 'He's a good man - gave your Aunty a lovely send off', but it always raised a smile as he wrestled in public with some practical domestic task – how you wielded your lawnmower was an important indication of your masculinity in a mining community. He was certainly a vicarious figure: respected and simultaneously dismissed for his learning and compassion.

Despite my ignorance of the church's internal practices, the building itself was an important geographical and temporal landmark in my childhood, so my relationship with it was contradictory. On the one hand it was part of my formative landscape. But on the other, I never went inside, nor did I have any connection to the church's membership. I was not a member of its congregation, and therefore I never 'belonged' to that church. And yet, paradoxically, the building was part of my *cynefin:* it belonged to me, and consequently I belonged to it.

As an adult I see that, for many, their relationship with these significant buildings is not one of either an exterior or an interior belonging, but it is formed of partial contracts and apparently transgressive usage. I suggest that permission to use these buildings, for the enactment of personal spirituality expressed through non-liturgical rites, is not given by being part of the membership of that church's congregation of regular worshippers, or of the wider Anglican Communion. Rather it is facilitated by some sense of 'belonging' to that place, that building, or landscape, or past, or even simply some relationship with what it stands for.

Believing without Belonging: a lived cynefin

My family's lack of identification with the organised church, whilst still retaining patterns of belief, is not uncommon, as we have seen with the work of Grace Davie; we believed, but we did not belong. Our religious identity was formed though enculturation, in hope and fear of the Christian ideal. As we have seen, the decline in worship does not mean disenfranchisement from the church: questions of 'belonging' go far beyond buildings and congregations of Sunday morning worshippers. I think here it is worth reiterating Davie's assertion that as a late modern society, we are reluctant to join anything. This is particularly true from the social typology my family might have been placed in, the urban working classes, where:

> [B]elief persists (albeit in a depressed form), but the expected reluctance to practise religion is compounded by a further factor, a mistrust of institutional life of whatever kind […]: this situation of alienation from institutional Christianity is nothing new. (Davie 1994:5)

I recognise this mistrust of institutional life. My family, like most contemporary Europeans, were reluctant to join anything; societies, clubs, and political parties – although these remain key conceptual references for identity construction. So, for example, we were 'Labour' because we were miners and bought the *Daily Mirror*, not because we knew who our local MP was.

As we have seen, in critiques of the secularisation axiom, causal conclusions derived from statistics are problematic. Numbers cannot be absolute, the collection and reading of statistical data is affected by the expectations and interpretation of both researcher and respondent - what it means to be a Christian for one person is not the same as for another. This issue becomes more complex around questions of church membership, because membership and attendance are not synonymous, and neither tithe payment nor head counting are universally reliable methods for assessing numbers. Furthermore, none of these approaches can quantify the set of interrelationships that define a congregation, its wider community, or the individual purpose and experience of each member. Religion, performance and congregation are all slippery terms that present multiple layers of interwoven paradoxes.

Vicarious Religion and Performance Contracts

Church of England acts of worship do not operate in isolation. They are public events conducted by the minority that operate vicariously for the majority, who see them as "mak[ing] children well-behaved, strangers helpful and shop keepers honest" (Voas in Pigott 2008, 43). However, we have also seen that this idealised view (both positive and negative) of English Christianity as an institution and cultural construct is a malleable concept – vulnerable to exploitation as we have seen in the case of the BNP. The idea of vicarious enactment echoes themes in current debates within performance studies around questions of presence and absence. But in the vicarious performance of religion it is the audience, those people for whom the performance is intended, who are absent. It is they who benefit *in absentia* from these vicarious rites. It is a different sort of absent audience that I now want to turn to in performances of remembrance.

Performances of Remembrance – candles, cairns and paper prayers

The Narrative: Part I Exeter Cathedral, Devon. 2008

The man deposits his twenty-pence piece in the slot, takes the candle from the box, lights it from another that is already burning and places it in the rack. He steps back and kneels before the icon of the Virgin Mary, fingers intertwined, head bowed - his physical shape framed by the soaring voices of the choristers in rehearsal for evensong.

The performance of remembrance is integral to Christianity. The faith's defining sacrament, the Eucharist, is, through the performance of a liturgical rite, a re-enactment of the Last Supper. As we have seen, Christ's words: 'Do this in remembrance of me' are taken as a critical instruction – a performative utterance. In liturgical terms, this action of remembrance is exemplified in one section of this script that we have not considered, the Eucharistic prayer.

However, the idea of remembering has a wider resonance. A key term in this context is *anámnesis*. In his *Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, John Davies explains that;

> anámnesis is all but untranslatable into English. Memorial, commemoration, remembrance – all these suggest that the person or deed commemorated is past and absent, whereas anámnesis signifies exactly the opposite: it is an objective act, in and by which the person or event commemorated is actually made present, is brought into the realm of the here and now. (1986: 18)

In the process of anámnesis the act of remembering becomes the act of recreating; that which is absent becomes present – a performance indeed.

The liminality of performance allows for something to happen to the ludic-self, for space and time to be shifted, for that which is missing to be 'brought into the realm of the here and now' (ibid). And, without the framework of liturgy, those carrying out these performances are empowered in an echo of their Protestant past; they can, through their own interpretive actions, shift space and time. These are also the performances of vicarious religion. Where, through the anámnesis of others, performers can, in addition to shifting their relationship to a situation, bring that person before God in order to act on their behalf. Churches, in the absence of a vicar, present performers with frameworks of potential acts of anámnesis. One of the most common examples is the action of lighting a candle. Most, although not all, parish churches provide a rack of candles, tapers or tea lights. This is often in the Lady Chapel, which is usually reserved for private prayer, where respondents are invited in exchange for a donation, to light a candle and say a prayer in remembrance of someone living or dead, or a situation that they would like to bring to mind.

This is an image of the rack of candles provided in the Lady Chapel of Exeter cathedral. The lighting of a candle in such a setting is a rich and complex exchange. For the most part these are solo performances, but they are often observed by other members of the supplicant's group who watch as the solo performer leaves them and walks forward. Some enter the rite with confidence, their money already in their hand, their first action to drop it in the box. For others the economic aspect of the transaction comes much later, if at all.

Once their immediate surroundings have been taken in, most simply stand, and perhaps bow their head, but others kneel. Those who are standing are observed more closely, more directly; somehow their posture invites the spectator's gaze. Those kneeling however, are watched surreptitiously in fleeting glances, or beneath half lowered eyelids. This interaction of observation also transfers into proxemics. It appears that strangers to the supplicant who is

standing still feel able to enter the intimate location of the chapel. However, if the subject is kneeling they hold back, waiting for permission given by the supplicant rising to their feet.

The length of time spent and the actions completed whilst at the rack vary – most performers remain very still, but others pick up the instruction card; turning it through their fingers or gently shifting their body weight. Almost all performers maintain a very small radius of visual interaction; they look at their feet, the altar or icon, and the candles. Moreover, they have very little response to others within their peripheral vision. Their recognition of sound is shown as it shudders through their bodies, fracturing their concentration – but I have yet to see someone turn and look at the source of the sound, thus either welcoming or challenging the interloper.

The exit is complex and varied. Sometimes performances are brought to an end when one of the supplicant's party, who has been observing from some way off, approaches them with care and moves away from the icon with them. The duet is remade most often through a gentle touch on the shoulder, followed by eye contact – words are infrequently used. Others move away from the rack and sit in pews for a moment in another phase of silent stillness, whilst more still simply turn on their heel and walk away – the mark of the transition from one world to the next articulated by turning their back on one world to face another.

This setting provides a loosely woven framework of semiotic threads to confine it. There are no absolute instructions on how the performer should behave, their tone of voice, gestures or movements. Given that it is not explicit from the church's exterior that such a practice is even available, then there are two sources of behavioural guidelines. Firstly, that the performer expects this opportunity to be available in this building, and is entering with this express purpose; most likely they have done it before. They arrive with an expectation that this rite and therefore its anticipated outcome will be available to them. Or secondly, they enter the building and there are sufficient signifiers in its interior to instruct them on how to complete it, or to persuade them to carry it out. Instructions are always few, perhaps taking the form of a laminated card placed on a nearby pew, or the actions of someone else carrying out the ritual

before you, or remembering previous visits or similar processes shown on television or film. But these instructions are in both cases mostly concerned with the action, rather than its purpose. The purpose it seems comes from the internal discourse of the performer themselves.

A relatively new development of this action of anámnesis is 'The Cairn of Hope'. Where, when entering another side chapel or different section of the building, the performer or performers are invited, again through a laminated card, to take a stone from a pile in the centre of the floor and whilst thinking of a burden, either physical or psychological, that they or someone else is carrying, to place the stone on the altar before God.

When watching the enactment of this process – perhaps because it is new and unfamiliar – I saw it treated with more caution, and more discussion than lighting a candle. In addition to being a solo performance it is often a silent duet that begins with verbal agreement. After the card is read and discussed, eye contact is broken, silence formed as each performer collects a stone, and in movements that could have been choreographed by Bausch, they walk forward carrying their burdens – their feet ringing on the flag floor. The stones are carefully placed on the altar in the quiet of the space and that moment is held, sustained in an amicable tension between the pair. Sometimes they turn in unison and eye contact is powerfully reconnected, often accompanied with a soft smile of acknowledgement. But at other times the unison dissolves as one turns and waits to be noticed, or simply exits to leave their partner alone. I rarely saw people cry when lighting a candle; but something about this performance, the physicalisation of the act of laying down their burden appears to enable the performer to strengthen a psychophysical connection perhaps, allowing their body to respond with a catharsis of tears.

In an additional action, those placing stones are invited to place a handwritten prayer-card beneath their stone, where they state in their own hand what they would like to bring before God. This is nothing new. Many churches have pre-printed blank prayer-cards which they invite respondents to complete. They are presented and shared in various ways; most often the cards are put on a board for display, the implicit agreement being that this burden should be shared

publicly amongst those present in the building, the congregation. I never saw any one write a card to place beneath a stone, perhaps they sought the anonymity of the wide pews to carry this out rather than the exposed corner of the transept, or the altar under the Cairns, but for me as an observer, reading the cards that were left behind provided some of the most challenging moments. This was when I felt most like a voyeur; suddenly these burdens were no longer stones but living, breathing people with names who were brought powerfully to life through the performance of anámnesis. I was, in the action of continuing the performance of the cairn, also bringing these people to mind – giving them each their own complex narrative – they were, for me, no longer absent – but prayers for Jac and Nic, a request for healing and a memento mori that begins "for the love of my life".

In these simple performances I saw people exercising their own belief in a place that they did not perhaps 'belong' to, in the conventional sense. They were still operating in a public space shared with other people, and as such, became part of a different sort of temporary, fragmentary congregation formed of individuals, of strangers. But they were, in creating their own contracts of performance, enacting the kind of ownership that comes from a relationship of belonging in, with and to a place, a place of safety - a further paradox then, the safety of anonymity amongst the risk of strangers.

In their facilitation of spiritual experience, the buildings and the contracts formed with them, like theatres, are mediators – points of transition and disembarkation from one reality to another. They are by their very nature liminal locations that are conducive for performance of transformation and absence. They transcend the distance between the mortal and the holy, allowing for a form of belief that arises *through* performance.

The Rules: horizons of expectations and rhetorical contracts

In all these instances of ritual enactment – be they liturgical performances or vicarious enactments – there is an implied contract between performer and audience. A script is more than the words on the page that guide the process; it also contains implicit pre-existing knowledges that dictate the contractual terms of interaction between performers and audience members. These knowledges are critical in ensuring the efficacy of the performance of an action as Schechner suggests (1988: 70). The implicit contractual frameworks that operate between the minister and congregation are, like other performance contracts, formed by the subtle interrelationships between words, signs, bodies, expectations and interpretations.

The confirmation or challenge of these knowledges and expectations dictates what participants experience before, during and after a performance. Baz Kershaw argues that this process of confirmation or challenge is, at times, carried out intentionally on the part of the performers. And, that it is the intentional manipulation of these contractual agreements that provide the source of an event's potential efficacy: that it is the intentional manipulation of these contracts that makes theatre political (Kershaw 1992: 21-29). With its express intention to either sustain the belief of its faithful, or through evangelical means, to bring new members to the Church, liturgical rites are indeed political performances.

Drawing on the work of Victor Turner, Kershaw describes this process of manipulation as 'rule breaking within rule keeping'. He identifies social gathering before the event as a point of consolidation for a pre-existing 'horizon of expectation', and suggests that this time enables the

participants to enter a ludic state, a state of potential change (ibid). Whilst in this state participants can embody the paradoxical duality of performance – accepting that it is simultaneously both real and not real. At this point, it is worth acknowledging that, when describing this process in a religious setting, 'reality' and 'unreality' are hardly adequate terms. The theatre perhaps creates unreal words; a theologian might argue that the Church reveals unseen, supernatural worlds that, for the believer, are very real indeed.

In these liminal spaces of church and theatre, participants – audiences/congregations and actors/ministers – can sustain two selves. First, their sense of self they arrived with, the one that continues to exist in the real world outside the world created by the performance. This is a safe-self, a self that does not necessarily have to change. Secondly, and simultaneously, there is their newly-formed ludic-self which can then interact with this world that is beyond reality. Both selves are able to engage in relative safety, because although this not-real world is different, and in many ways beyond the control of the participant, it exists within a pre-agreed contract of expectations. Participants are still able to make the choices whilst they are inside it.

The point of change – of efficacy – takes place in the manipulation of the space created between these worlds and the different aspects of the same self that occupy them. By challenging existing preconceptions presented at the 'horizon of expectation' and offering an alternative way of being, the ludic-self can try out, and play with, different behaviours before the safe-self needs to decide whether to take these ideas back out into the real world. These processes are, then, performative.

Cascades of Performance

These performances do not operate in isolation. These buildings are containers of, and for, continuous cascades of plural performances that might span minutes or centuries. Moreover these cascades of performance are not linear, one following after another, but they form overlapping frames of performance and observation that intermingle as their porous edges blur. The buildings themselves establish contracts with people, as landmarks in a person's *cynefin*, a

receptacle for earlier memories, or as the generalised indicator of a place of well-being. Often these are not created by a direct knowledge of, or interface with, a particular church, but by an expectation, based on other encounters with similar Christian and non-Christian sites.

These buildings become the receptacles for cascades of performance generated over time. Current performances were brought into being in response to previous performances, and then these new actions become catalysts for future performances. Thus, prayer cards are left behind on a board, or under a stone, in conclusion of a performance of anámnesis, are collected and then read aloud to the congregation present at the next daily service. They become the subject of prayers of intercession. 'We pray for Jonathan' is spoken, and the words on the page become words in the air, a performance where the card is moved from the board, to the lectern, to the fingertip, to the mouth, to the ear, to the mind of the participants – and for some, onto God. In this way, even those who do not belong directly to the church congregation do belong to the building. In leaving behind a marker of their performance of remembrance and by passing it on via a cascade of further performances they move from the enactor of anámnesis, to the subject of anámnesis. They, along with the burden they brought forward, are now the absent that is being remembered in this new performance.

Not all these cascades are short in number, nor do they occur over spans of hours, minutes or days. Some repeat over generations. These buildings, and their relationships to people, then, are not a-historical. Their very fabric carries marks of long past performances. *Ritual Notes*, in some detail, explains the rite that is performed at the consecration of a church which leaves behind some of these marks. This rite, which is conducted by a bishop and attended by the clergy and congregation, is preceded by a further performance, one of mark-making:

> Twelve crosses should be marked or inset at equal distances, 71/2 feet from the ground, on the interior walls of the church with a lighted candle before each. (1956: 374)

These tokens mark the place where human flesh and holy oil touch the wall and trace the sign of the cross during an interior circuit of the building, anointed whilst Psalm 147 is sung. This is a small part of a complex and mystical rite that includes the bishop and congregation circling the

building inside and out three times using a sprinkler made of hyssop to cast holy water, and inscribing, with a staff, the church's floor with the Greek and Latin alphabets. The altars are consecrated by the bishop dipping his thumb in holy water and tracing five crosses on its top in a specific pattern. They then receive a further consecration where;

> [The Bishop] first sprinkles it with holy water and then, with his own hand, forms five crosses made of incense-grains on the places where he traced the holy sign on the altar-top, and over each he places a cross of the same size made from a wax-taper. He lights the top of each of these crosses, and the incense is burned and consumed with the wax. (1956: 377)

Several hundred years later there is no direct record of this ritual, but the carved or painted signs of the cross, that marked the point of anointing, are still visible, signifying that now-absent performance of consecration. These then become a catalyst for another kind of performance, a performance of consumption.

Performances of Consumption

The Narrative: Part II Exeter Cathedral, Devon. 2008

I continue to watch the man kneeling before the icon of the Virgin Mary. But now the quiet background of footfall and hushed voices is broken as one the cathedral's volunteer guides – bedecked in his indicative red sash – ignores the sign explaining that, 'the Lady Chapel is a place for quiet prayer – silence please', and rests his left elbow on the chapel's gate, shifting his pelvis and allowing his body to settle and relax. Using the walking stick in his free hand as a pointer, he begins, at high volume, to explain to the attached Dutch tourists the finer points of medieval architecture. Neither supplicant nor guide acknowledges each other. Just occasionally, tour party members look across at the prone form with what I interpret to be glances of apology. The party completes this section of their tour and moves on. He and I are again alone.

Visiting churches as an act of pilgrimage is reborn in the performance of the tourist. Organisations like the Church Tourism Network are attempting to "integrate Lincoln Cathedral and all the churches in the area of the diocese [...] into one church tourism process." (The Churches of Lincolnshire short breaks 2008: NP)

Thus, churches are no longer only sites of spiritual pilgrimage but one place in a collection that can be ticked off in a guide that also has recommendations on places to stay, locally produced food and other sites of interest. Pilgrimages, of course, still take place across different denominations and faiths. And, like now, they have never stood outside the economic and social ideology of the day. They operate along a continuum characterised at one end by the performance of a long and arduous journey that ensures one's success in the afterlife or relieves current mortal difficulty, and at the other, with what Richard Dawkins has described as 'little more than a pleasant social pastime' (Dawkins 2006: 41).

St Denys Parish Church in Sleaford, Lincolnshire is a member church of the Church Tourism Network. Here the crosses that marked the anointing now initiate the performance of tourists who move through this tightly branded space in a flurry of reverence, encouraged by their tri-fold, glossy leaflet, to track down each of the signs that were painted on the wall some four hundred and fifty years ago.

St Denys is relatively unusual because it gives very specific behavioural guidelines in the shape of a numerical guide, on a map of the building, which suggests the most logical way to complete its consumption. At each of these numerical points on the walls of the church, an information point gives social, historical and, interestingly, at times, spiritual points of reference that might increase the visitor's understanding of both the building and its congregation. Not all places operate in this way, and consequently tourists adopt different behavioural strategies in different spaces. Sometimes they are outsiders who are given little instruction as to how to behave or where to direct their attention in order to see the most important phase of architecture or point of interest. Here contracts of performance are not well established. Visitors behave cautiously – unsure of protocol, or their place along the participant-observer continuum. They move slowly and quietly, more aware of fitting in with their fellow users.

Churches themselves are both part of and responding to, a consumer, consumption, and choice-driven economy. They, in an attempt to fulfil their pastoral obligations and make their churches more 'friendly', are constructing card and gift shops in the corner of traditional

cruciform parish churches, reflecting their political position by carrying Fairtrade products alongside bibles and Christian ephemera. These brightly lit spaces often play recorded music, in an attempt to make the building more inviting. However, bright lights, Dvořák, constant supervision, and offers of assistance, are not conducive to quiet acts of anámnesis. As the Church attempts to attract one kind of user, it risks alienating another: the contract it offers to the reflective visitor conflicts with the conditions of performance which are directed towards the consumer. And this is what is so interesting from a performance studies point of view. New rules are emerging. It is no longer clear what a church building is for, nor what kinds of performances are appropriate to it. At the porous edges, where these performances of remembrance and consumption meet, new performances, held in dramatic tension, are taking place.

Performance Creates Belief

As an institution, the Church of England is in a difficult position. It is an evangelical organisation that aims to provide pastoral outreach to its communities as well as sustaining congregations amongst its members. But it also needs to maintain architecturally complex and historically important buildings. This inter-relationship between the spiritual and the economic is perhaps best expressed in the buildings themselves. There are protests if a cathedral charges for entrance or if a church building is closed for lack of funds, but, there is also a reticence to give donations (even if separate boxes that accrue monies for the fabric of the building are available). This is a further indication of society's uneasy, vicarious relationship with religion.

Exeter Cathedral is about to start charging for entrance to the building, with a caveat, somewhere in the small print, that there will be no fee if you are going in to pray. Already, a distinction has been made between consumption and anámnesis. But is it right to assume that these performances take place singularly, that performers only enact one or the other? I'd like to conclude this article with some further field notes that finish the earlier narrative strands I've included. I made them in the Cathedral's Lady Chapel in March of 2008. I think they go some way to express the complexity of the processes that are simultaneously taking place.

'It needs more attack.' The choristers come to a shuddering halt mid-phrase in Purcell's Remember not, Lord.

I inhale deeply. He marks himself with the sign of the cross, stands, and walks back to a pew where he sits in contemplation. Or what I think is contemplation, but when, resisting Heidenburg, I look across he is winding his watch and comparing it to the time on his mobile telephone.

A party of three camera-bedecked tourists arrives with a reverential lightness of silence. The first of the party steps forward, reads the instructions on the card and lights a candle but then, she just looks around and turns away – apparently unsure as to what to do now she's paid her coin. The second in the new party kneels – in what I initially take to be a signifier of reverence – but as I watch his performance unfold, I realise that his head is bowed not in silent prayer but to aid the removal of the lens cap from his camera, and that this kneeling position gives him the best angle for a photograph of the icon of the Virgin.

The supplicant stands - in order to challenge this behaviour? To state that, in his contract of expectations with this building photographs are not permitted - in particular photographs of a sacred object. But no, he passes his mobile phone to the second member of the new party, and proceeds to climb over the kneeler, and the candle rack, up onto the step at the bottom of the alcove where the icon is placed. He stands beside the Virgin Mary facing out, smiling, his gaze parallel to hers, their heads almost touching. He nods, and the second of the new party raises the supplicant's mobile 'phone in order to take a picture – its digitally recreated sound of a motorised shutter reverberating in the hushed space. I wait with baited breath to see if he will put his arm around her shoulder for the next shot, like mates after a football match. To my surprise, he didn't.

We now move further again from the apparent predictability of a minster-led liturgical performance in a Church of England building, to consider what happens when practitioners affiliated with other faith groups, in this case Catholics and Goddess worshippers, leave behind their familiar *cynefin,* to go on pilgrimage.

Chapter 5: Segue on Catholic and Goddess pilgrimage

> *Pilgrimage is above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for both the official co-optation and non-official recovery of religious meanings for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups, for drives towards consensus and communitas, and for counter-movements toward separateness and divisions. (Eade and Sallnow 1991: 2-3)*

Eade and Sallnow explain that pilgrimage is "above all" a place where the sacred and secular test out their conflicting discourses. As a segue between the two extended essays that form this second part of the thesis I will be using my experience of two different pilgrimages, which I participated in during a three week period in July and August of 2008, in order to explore this arena of competition. The first of these pilgrimages took me to Lourdes, France, with fifteen hundred Catholic pilgrims from the diocese of Westminster; the second to Glastonbury, England, with four hundred worshippers of the Goddess. By placing these two pilgrimages, Christian and 'New Age', into a dialectic[72], I seek to consolidate and develop the idea of an improvised performance (as described in the previous essay), and to consider dislocated cultural performances that happen away from a familiar *cynefin* of building, landscape and community. Moreover, in order to re-evaluate the notion of performance as morally efficacious, I consider the performance of supererogative acts that see the actor carry out 'good works', altruistic actions, which are beyond quotidian calls of duty or expected codes of behaviour. I will argue that in these "arenas" what is sacred or secular is unclear, rather than the binary offered by Eade and Sallnow, and that the quotidian performance of the role of pilgrim is necessarily an expression of the totality of what (re)constructs complex interwoven beliefs.

Space does not allow for a full exploration of the dynamic range of cultural and performative forces I saw and experienced on these pilgrimages: this essay instead focuses on

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[72] What constitutes a 'New Age' religion or is even a suitable definition of the term is as contested as words like religion. For an interesting overview of the possibilities see the prolific work by sociologist Paul Heelas (1996), and Heelas with Linda Woodhead (2000; 2003; 2005).

constructing a dynamic study based on the correlation and distinctions, resemblances and differences between 'performing a pilgrim' on both a Christian and 'New Age' pilgrimage. To do this I draw on photographs I took in the field, which richly illustrate a comparison of geographical and mytho-geographical place, role playing and of tribal affiliation expressed through costume. It reflects on the pilgrim's ability to play the role of the 'better-self' in a sacred, utopian landscape.

This is an image of Starchild processing with the other Goddess pilgrims along Glastonbury High Street.

Performing in "a place apart"

Pilgrimage happens away from home. It involves travelling to another place, which were for Chaucer "sundry lands". On pilgrimage, religious practice is removed from a 'home' building to take place in sacred landscapes, set apart in space and time where familiar *cynefin* is dislocated, where normal rules of identity and spiritual identity do not apply. These locations provide a utopian frame and wider affirmative community that allows pilgrims to reinvent themselves; to performatively construct a better version of their quotidian-self: a publicly wrought manifestation of their subjectively formed spiritual ideals through acts of supererogation.

Supererogation is a long established tradition where a supplicant takes actions that are beyond the call of duty, or expected codes of behaviour. In the context of pilgrimage, these acts

are often for the benefit of those who are deemed to be less able than the supplicant in some way, as in the Malard at Lourdes, which involves many volunteers (such as myself); or in the case of Glastonbury, (where a more animistic tradition is drawn upon); the supererogative pilgrim performs rites that heal the earth. Thus, the pilgrim has the capacity to heal themselves and another.

I attended the pilgrimages to Lourdes and Glastonbury as part of an interdisciplinary team from the Ian Ramsey Centre for the study of science and religion, founded in 1985 as part of the theology faculty at the University of Oxford. The Pilgrimage project sets out to study "motivations and experiences in Sacred Space". And, as an interdisciplinary team, we use a wide range of research methods – both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative aspect of our research focuses on a survey that assesses five things: spiritual growth, relationship to nature and cosmic closeness, sensation seeking, healing and communal desire. The qualitative takes the form of interviews and researcher participation. Our qualitative and quantitative studies encompass the predominantly Catholic pilgrimage sites of Fátima and Lourdes; ecumenical Christian and New Age practices at Glastonbury, alternative spiritual gatherings (particularly neo-pagans and druids) at Stonehenge and the ancient Christian, but now widely accessible pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela.

Our research is stimulated by an increase in wider spiritual preoccupation and spiritual seeking behaviour as evidenced by the post-secular discussion in chapter two, in addition to the unprecedented numbers of pilgrims visiting traditional pilgrimage sites and places of ecumenical meeting such as Walsingham and Taizé, as well as the revitalization of pilgrimage paths traversing Europe from Czestochowa to Santiago de Compostela. We are exploring the complex interplay of the motivation to travel to sacred sites, ranging from the desire for healing and spiritual help through to tourism and the need for community and expressions of altruism.

Performance scholarship's relationship to pilgrimages has been framed predominantly by the work of Catholic convert and anthropologist Victor Turner and his wife Edith. Their work on the topic coalesced in the seminal and contested text, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian*

Culture (1978). Here pilgrimage is categorised as a rite of passage, a liminoid phenomenon, that is framed in terms of the efficacy of communitas. Much recent scholarship has been seen as attempts to escape this "theoretical ghetto" (Coleman and Eade 2004: 3) that is deemed to take a structuralist approach and divide pilgrimage from a wider quotidian experience by deeming it extraordinary (Sallnow: 1981). The Turners' descriptive narratives do perhaps now seem rather romantic. Yet, I would argue that Turner's concept of communitas is still a helpful one when framing collective practice. In this analysis however, I want to adopt a different approach. *Mythogeography* has emerged more recently from performance scholarship and provides the means to consider quotidian performances in relationship to imagined landscapes constructed by a dominant culture. Before we return to consider this in some detail below, I would first like to give an overview of the two pilgrimages.

2008 in Lourdes was a special year. It marked the 150th anniversary of the apparition of the Virgin Mary to St Bernadette, who was known as Bernadette Soubirous before her canonisation. The pilgrimage I attended was an annual one, organised by the Catholic Diocese in Westminster who describe the town as 'a place apart'. This highly evolved programme chartered trains and planes to take 1500 pilgrims (both those who needed care and their voluntary supporters) to Lourdes. I went as a 'red-cap', a group of volunteers who, alongside the 'brancardier' and 'handmaidens' serve the less able pilgrims, the 'Malade'. (As you can gather, the language of Lourdes is unreconstructed.) The remarkable scale of the undertaking is shown in the image below. We red-caps are sitting together, in our indicative tabards that carried the words "Westminster Diocese Pilgrimage Redcap: here to serve", waiting for Mass to start for the 10,000 pilgrims in the town's underground basilica.

The Glastonbury pilgrimage operates differently. It is organised by the town's Goddess Temple and is a pilgrimage not only to the Temple but also to the wider landscape. It calls itself a conference; and operates, in part as such, with papers and plenary sessions. It has however more complex dimensions that involve numerous daily rites that mark the opening and closing of daily session in addition to large scale healing and processional events that involve both the town centre and its surrounding landscape. It is based in the Town Hall; you can see the preparations for the opening rite below.

The mythogeography of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is often understood as the act of journeying, usually on foot. But both the pilgrimages at Lourdes and Glastonbury do not require their pilgrims to walk to the destination as acts of devotion. Instead, the pilgrims perform these acts of devotion on arrival: they are predominately 'moral' (about service) and 'place' (about location) based pilgrimages[73]. In order to understand how this located moral pilgrimage is performed in a given landscape I want to draw on the concept of mythogeography.

Mythogeography is an emerging discourse in performance scholarship; in resonance with folklorists and cultural geographers it seeks to understand how place and politics affects the acts of performance that take place within and in response to a location; urban, suburban or rural. A conference took place in Plymouth, England in October 2008, taking mythogeography as its primary topic. In its call for papers it was defined as;

> The theorisation of an experimental approach to the site of performance as a space of multiple layers. This approach might include numerous influences and strategies, perhaps including the atmospheres and effects of psychogeography, and the deployment (both analogical and direct) of geological, archaeological and historiographical ideas and methods. It is self-reflexive in the sense that it would regard the performer as a similarly multiplicitous site. (Mock 2008)

One articulation of these pilgrimage acts of altruistic service requires that the pilgrims collectively walk (or in the case of Lourdes are pushed in wheel chairs, voitures or on beds), in a choreographed manner within the wider geographical boundaries of the pilgrimage site. This occurs at set times and in relationship to a representation of a female deity in a performance whose rules of engagement are established by an ideologically empowered organisation with a sacred affiliation. In both Lourdes and Glastonbury I was particularly interested in how this mass performance of people was communicated and co-ordinated, because although in both

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[73] Dee Dyas proposes "From the fourth century onwards, there have been [...] three strands of practical interpretation: Moral Pilgrimage: serving God and others in daily obedience.
Place Pilgrimage: including journeying to saints' shrines or other holy places to obtain forgiveness, seek healing and other benefits, to learn, to encounter God and express devotion.
Interior Pilgrimage: focusing on inner spiritual journeying through prayer and meditation, stressing 'stability' and seeking an 'interior Jerusalem' (the presence of God within the soul)" (Dyas 2008: np).

cases this is a repeated performance for the organisers, it is a new experience for many of the participants. I wondered how do people know what to do? How do they reflect the intended public statement of the organising group? What narratives are they presented with? What choreography is put in place? What performance scores are delivered?

Lourdes: Mountains and Town planning

I want to begin by considering the 'natural' landscape and town planning on the choreography of pilgrimage in Lourdes. As you can see in the next image the geology of the landscape hides the town in the curve of the mountains (the reason Lourdes remained a rural backwater until the rapid arrival of the railway after the event of the visions). These contain and focus the liminal, performative world of Lourdes. But it's not just a sacred landscape – it's actually a distillation of all life; the sacred and the secular. However, this intensification is carefully managed and divided, bounded and controlled by a perimeter fence that closes off the sacred world, the world called the Domain.

The domain is planned to facilitate the performance – an enormous amphitheatre. In addition to collective community Mass where groups of pilgrims tend to worship together in smaller groups, the candlelit processions is the key event that gives shape to the day. I experienced this as both an observer and a participant - when I had very different experiences.

I took this image as a member of the audience watching the candlelit procession that was attended by approximately 10,000 people. This is a nightly event. This image was taken at the end of the procession, just before the beginning of the liturgical celebration in front of the Rose basilica. The picture was taken from the top of the basilica inside the domain, close to the grotto. To get a sense of how the city is laid out, one can visualise Lourdes like an archery target with the Grotto (where St Bernadette saw the visions) at the centre and with significant landmarks like the basilica radiating out. The perimeter of the 'target' would be the extent of the domain, separated from the rest of the town by a fence. Inside the domain is in the control of the

brancardier; there are no cigarettes, chewing gum or mobile phones. This is the world of the sacred. Outside the domain the sacred bleeds into neon signs. (To see the procession live on the Lourdes webcam see www.lourdes-france.org.)

As a participant in the procession my experience was very different. We arrived early in the domain because our pilgrimage group were near the front of the procession. We gathered at 4pm for a 9pm service in order to assemble our group within the larger mass of processing pilgrims. We were instructed to wear our indicative red tabards and purchase a candle and paper shield (see the photograph below). We were then arranged in single file, as far as possible. Then we waited. At 8:15pm we began to move, simply following the pilgrim in front of us, wary of the pilgrim behind us whose wheelchair footrests could damage the achilles heel of the unaware. This was something that had been highlighted at the intensive training day that I attended in April 2008.

The performance score was tightly managed and articulated in four key ways; town planning, one man as movement choreographer, a paper candle shield and group mimesis. As we set off from our meeting place, we followed the avenue first away from the square in front of

the Rose Basilica (on the left in the image below) around the horseshoe turn in the avenue to return up towards the Basilica on its parallel side (on the right). The town planning at this point did much of the work of organising the procession.
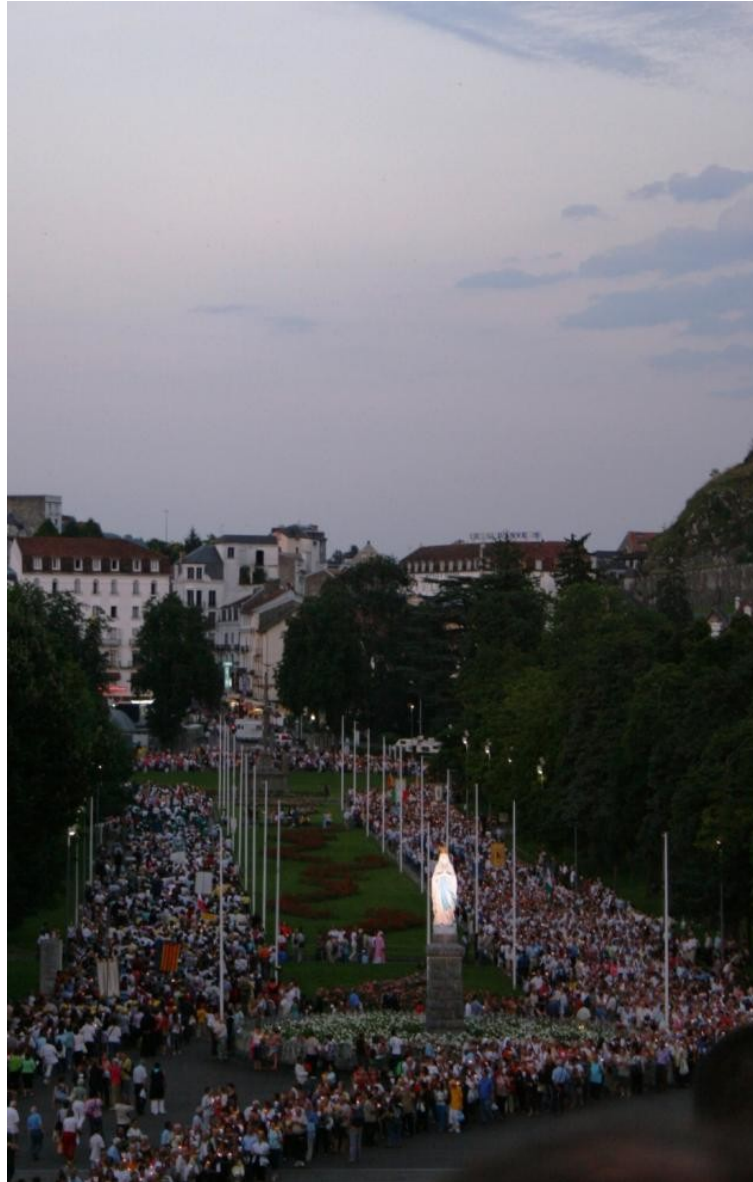
During the journey we sang from the hymns on our candle shield, I don't know who or how this started – we simply began singing collectively and repeatedly *Ave Maria.* Early on in this phase of the performance, the singing began to be accompanied by a shared gesture whose timing respondid to the music. We raised our candles above our heads on the repeated chorus line, "Ave, ave, ave maria". As we reached the end of the horseshoe shaped avenue the procession line was presented with space, the square.

But rather than the procession simply pressing forward to become a crowd, one man controlled the ten thousand. He simply walked backwards in a series of lines that traversed the square (you can see the process taking place here).

Glastonbury: The tor and the High Street

This perception of boundaries as porous and malleable is different from how Lourdes relates to its landscape. Glastonbury, as a town, takes its mythology very seriously – the cynical might suggest this is an economic imperative – but this mythology is located and locked within a series of landscape markers; the tor, the springs and chalice hill, which marked the end of the procession. As a performative place it is relatively unbounded in the wider landscape, and operates through a tolerance of different spiritual expressions. The sacred places are scattered and plural, neither fixed nor exhaustive.

In addition to being public demonstrations of a shared faith, these processions also have another purpose. In the case of Glastonbury, as you can see in the image below, we are walking up the High Street towards the tor performatively embracing our wild maidenhood.

In the joining pack the conference organisers set out both the role and actions of the pilgrim. They explain that our job on this spiritual journey, is to heal the landscape by;

> walking from place to place [to] make small offerings of herbs, flower seeds or grains to scatter in gratitude on the earth, wherever you stop to pray. All offerings should be biodegradable so that they return harmlessly back to Her body. Pour libations of holy water to the Wild Maiden. (Jones 2008: 3)

This advice on offerings suggests that a sacred place can be anywhere that the supplicant feels drawn to and that in order to be efficacious it should be an expression of the supplicant's devising. Thus, the purpose of the organising group is fulfilled both by Deity and nature being healed, and with careful planning of the rite, neither are harmed. But also the pilgrim is able to follow their 'inspiration' and complete the rite in a number of ways.

In Glastonbury then, the dividing line between history and the present, myth and reality, the sacred and secular, or everyday and heightened performative is more porous. The boundaries are blurred; Arthurian legend meets Christian myths of Joseph of Arimathea, signs bearing Holy Thorns and Holy Grails weave through shops selling the tools for witchcraft and fung sui. In this performative town there is space for the improvised, the uncontrolled. This sits alongside what we might expect of Eliade's suggested process of conversion from profane to sacred landscape in response to a theophanic event. But in Glastonbury this change continues, plural narratives are permitted, are continually amended and interact; both nature and a pantheon of

deities can be expressed in a myriad of ways. The mythogeography of the town provides a loose framework of stimulation that creates performative acts that are free-form, and improvised within a wide contract of spiritual expression.

In the Glastonbury procession we were simply given instructions to meet at 9:45am on Sunday morning outside the town hall by our tribe leaders. (We were invited into these sub-groups on our arrival at the start of the conference.) We were also told to wear green and white, or clothing with an animal print. As you can see in the image below the Goddess arrived, borne by men and we proceeded up the High Street led by the priestesses carried along by drums and a simple tune we had learnt the day before. This was appropriate for the perambulating performance; "I walk with the Goddess, the Goddess she walks with me". In one way the town planning was simply subsumed by a mass movement of pedestrians as cars simply had to pull over and wait for us to pass, but in another way it also guided the processions as the High Street formed a funnel that extruded the group from a crowd, into a procession, five or six pilgrims across, bearing drums and flower garlands, gifts for the land. During this procession we walked across the urban break to the liminal chalice well and on to the utopian tor.

Costume: dressing as your better-self.

In these mythogeographic landscapes costume becomes key in the expression of both group and individual identity. Here I am going to focus on the unique clothing practices of Lourdes and the ways in which they facilitate the pilgrim's enactment of their better-self. This is not to suggest that costume is not important at Glastonbury, however it is more homogeneous because the clothing 'theme' of each year's pilgrimage is suggested by the temple in the conference joining pack (Jones 2008: 5). This image below is a particularly elegant manifestation of the performance of the Arthurian aspects of the Glastonbury landscape.

I'd like to begin by asking a question about the pilgrims in Lourdes. In the four images that follow, which of these people is a nun?

I'm not being facetious – the use of clothing as a signifier is an important part of the performative process – particularly if this better self you are presenting in this landscape has a different role from that which you have in the everyday.

In this series of images we see the nurse, become the nun, become the handmaiden, become the postulant. We can trace this myth of self sacrifice; after all hospitals in Europe were common in monastic settings in the medieval period. But this woman is neither nurse nor nun. She is a handmaiden. When some of the large pilgrimages – like Westminster – go to Lourdes they take over a floor in a fully equipped hospital for the week. The malades, those who are too ill to stay in hotels or just need a bit of extra care, stay in the hospital. This is staffed by redcaps (who provide companionship and wheelchair propulsion for those malades who need less care), handmaidens (who are companions and provide some intimate care for those with more pressing needs) and real medical staff (who provide medical care). What is particularly interesting is that the real doctors and nurses wear polo shirts with the pilgrimage logo embroidered and an ID badge, whereas the handmaidens wear all white. The place is full of nuns and nurses and something in between. There is a very gender specific hierarchy at work in Lourdes; it is an unreconstructed representation of appropriate roles for men and women. In order to facilitate the pilgrimage of those who need help there are huge numbers of volunteers who pay for themselves to travel to Lourdes to be of service. Those who need help, men or women, are called malades. Those who help the men are called brancardiers, whilst the women are called handmaidens. For the most part the representation of braces that the brancardiers wear is the only uniform choice shown. Only men carry out the roles demanding physical strength, transfer to and from wheelchair and stretchers, or loading and unloading trains. The women work at the hospitals giving support to medical teams with pushing wheelchairs, feeding, writing postcards, bedpans etc. There is also another cross gender group who tend to have different names depending on the pilgrimage. In my case, I was one of these: a redcap.

But to return to the handmaidens, they dress as nurses. In order to signify their role, they at the very least dress simply all in white. However, and this is a practice that takes place across all

nationalities, they generally dress as nurses in old fashioned costumes with headdresses and aprons that places them somewhere between nurse and postulant. Their clothing identity is placed between nostalgic nurse and traditional nun.

These people then are simultaneously performing themselves, their faith, their Catholicism, their nationality, their rationality, their history, nostalgia, tribe and their social status. I want to suggest that this is because they are performing a role that is different from their everyday selves, whereas for the professional medical team they are carrying their everyday world into the liminal sacred landscape. The uniforms, I suggest, are helping the supererogative pilgrims, who have very different roles when they occupy other landscapes, to perform that caring, sensitive, nurturing aspect of themselves. They are performing being their 'better-self', a role that can only really exist in the particular landscape of Lourdes.

By going to these landscapes pilgrims are able to reflexively re-evaluate themselves and performatively try out new and improved versions. What we might describe as a ludic self. And what happens here is that this creation of the ludic self is a durational performance, sometimes over several weeks.

But these new, improved supererogative, spiritually vernacular, mythogeographic selves are fragile; that is to say, vulnerable to fracture and disappearance when they are returned to the pressures of the everyday landscape. This is something both pilgrimages recognise, and provide a whole host of strategies to help people sustain these supererogative selves into the everyday realm in anticipation of their return to the sacred site of pilgrimage.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that, through the performativity and embodiment of the 'role of pilgrim', facilitated by the interaction with the mythogeography of a sacred place and costume, these events are a performance of an attempted utopia. A location set apart in space and time where, through the sustained enactment of a transposed, ludic self, the pilgrim can be supererogative and foreground aspects of their behaviour that they valorise as morally

preferable in a public expression of their better selves. Through their clothing, enacting the role of nurse and nun, they can express their transformation into a better self.

Chapter 6: Spiritualism, Mediumship and the complexities of Belief

Spiritualism is often presented as a 'new age' practice, but it is also a well established monotheistic religion. Before considering two case studies of public performances of mediumship I want to locate this practice in a wider discourse[74].

This chapter turns on the notion of authenticity: it begins with an examination of spiritual mediumship in an explicitly theatrical space based on my experience as an audience member at the performance of a stage (platform) medium – Sean Dennis. I will then move on to consider another performance that I witnessed, but one that was in a non-theatrical setting, it was a séance in a private home. In this context, my notion of what it meant to be an audience member at a spiritual event radically changed. It then concludes, by considering 'possession' of both a medium and an actor.

In the enduring conflation between acting, mediumship, fraud and pretence there are two positions at work; the first is that for many, mediumship is fraudulent, and in a different but not unrelated way, so is acting. There continues to be an ongoing tension between the Church, and its moral residues in society, and the association of theatre with immorality and pleasure. Mediums are seen as con-artists who, like actors, exploit the vulnerable for financial gain. Actors are placed alongside these con-artists and conjurers, who through a minor shift in perception can be seen to be presenting themselves as fortune tellers and prophets.

The second position argues that spiritualism, and public events that provide evidence of life after death, are acts of religious significance and should not be conflated with, or considered in terms of, 'performance'. This position is antithetical to the former. Spiritualism is often seen to be at odds with the established Christian church but they share a broadly similar distrust of

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[74] Elements of this chapter have appeared in two publications 'Watching the Dead Speak' in *Scripta Instituti Donnerianai Aboensis* (2009) and 'To perform possession and be possessed in performance' in *New Interpretations of Spirit Possession* (2009).

performance because it explicitly 'pretends'. For some it is morally unacceptable to use performance as a means of examining the processes of a truthful spiritual experience. So, what of our relationship to our modern antecedents and their emergent sense of self-identity and self-consciousness? Anthony Giddens suggests, in his book *Modernity and Self Identity* that these questions continue to be of paramount importance:

> What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour. (Giddens 1991: 70)

These performances of psychic mediumship present a particular focus from which to consider our late-modern relationship to the self and our creation of it. Like our modern forbears, for us late-moderns the self and our beliefs about the world are not absolute. For most people, most of the time, the word is made of provisionals and possibilities. We recognise that the playful enactment of make-believe is not the same as the instructive purpose of make belief that attempts to change us. But we do recognise that they share a common point within the consciousness of the super-fluid self, constructed through hybrid-identities. They have the power to change us, temporarily at the very least. The performance of psychic mediumship continues to be a forum where we late-moderns can pretend and change, believe and suspend our disbelief, in order to explore our relationship to mortality. The chapter sets out to re-blur the distinctions between religion and theatre sustained in the chapter on Christianity, in order to consider something more abstract. This is concerned with performers, audiences, and optimal experience and the notion of authenticity.

I am using the term 'late-modern', as opposed to 'postmodern', because the thesis sets out to explore contemporary society's ongoing continuity with its past, rather than its disjuncture. A late-modern focus suggests a society that is a development of what has gone before rather than a reaction against it—as one aspect of post-modern theory might propose. (Bauman 2000: 5–8, 28–9; Giddens 1990: 1–10, 149–50). And with this connection in mind, the thesis will explore one preoccupation attributed to modern society, an emergent sense of self-identity and self-consciousness that was synchronic with the 'golden age' of spiritualism, 1880–1914 (Owen

2004: 7; Warner 2006). It will consider this modern self-awareness in relationship to an examination of the role of the late-modern audience at contemporary demonstrations of psychic mediumship. It will focus on how the performance conditions of these events stimulate the audience's imagination and beliefs and consequently affect their sense of self.

Watching the Dead Speak

The role of the audience, imagination, and belief in the performance of late-modern spiritualism

> let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
> On your imaginary forces work.
> . . . Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
> Printing their proud hoofs in the receiving earth.
> (Shakespeare 1997 (1599): prologue to *Henry V*)

> so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance
> of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that
> *willing suspension of disbelief* for the moment, which constitutes poetic
> faith (Coleridge 1847 (1817): XIV).

> performances of everyday life . . . 'make belief ' – [they]create the very
> social realities they enact. In 'make-believe' performances, the distinction
> between what's real and what's pretend is kept clear (Schechner 2002: 42).

This chapter began, as many do, in the form of a conference paper. In the live action of presenting a paper it is very easy to express, simply through gesture, the divide between actor and audience, watcher and watched. I, who am giving the paper, standing on the platform being watched, am the actor; you, sitting down in the chairs watching, are the audience. However, life is more complex, more provisional, and more ephemeral than that. The performances of everyday experience do not take place only in an auditorium; they happen in a variety of other locations, domestic and corporate, urban and rural. Moreover, the role of the audience, and the individuals within it, is not constant across all performances, nor is it fixed within discrete performances: it has an inherent potential for fluidity.

The rules of engagement

In order to discuss the two performances of psychic mediumship, I need to first set out the theoretical discourses from theatrical theory I will be using to deconstruct and analyse the events. Here we return to the notion of the interrelationship between rules and beliefs, contracts and exchanges, introduced in the examination of improvised performance in Church of England buildings. Both audiences and actors bring a set of expectations with them to a performance – a set of beliefs, if you will, about how this interaction will operate: these are the ways they, as individuals, expect this world of performance to work. These implicit expectations are rarely articulated either internally, by the individual to him/herself, or aloud, to the collected participants. These expectations are, most often, in the terms of Roland Barthes, 'naturalised' and beyond question. That is not to say that all parties are in agreement. Each set of individual beliefs varies, one from the next, some subtly, some radically. This variation is negotiated in the collective interaction of these individual beliefs. Here, through their points of contact, and the spaces between them, implicit negotiations take place which lead to the formation of contracts of collective consensus about how a particular performance operates.

A commonly held view of theatre, which is broadly naturalist and often euro-centric, suggests that an actor does not begin a performance by coming out in front of the curtain to speak directly to the audience in order to explain the mechanisms of imagination that make a performance possible. There is a presumption that the audience know what the collective consensus is, about how this performance will work, and that this consensus includes an expectation that the actors will pretend they are part of a real world that has no sense of being watched. There is no need for a pre-show statement that says, 'you sit down there and watch us up here, as we pretend to be people other than ourselves, in order to enact a narrative through the physical construction of an imagined world'. The implicit agreement here is that there is an invisible fourth wall through which the audience look. This prevailing view would have it that to give such a statement, in front of the curtain, would demystify the live performance, break the contractually sustained 'spell' between actor and audience, and render it impotent. But

audiences are more sophisticated, complicated, and fluid that that. They, with the actors on stage, are active participants in this process of make-believe.

In the opening epigraph of this chapter, I quote from the prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V,* where this breaking-down of the fourth wall, and the explicit articulation of implicit expectations, is part of the script. Here the audience's complicity in creating the pretend, performed world is part of the performance itself. The actors ask the audience to forgive them for being unable to recreate the Battle of Agincourt in its entirety on stage, and to 'play along' by pretending to believe that they see not one man, but an army, not floorboards, but muddy fields with horses '[p]rinting their proud hoofs in the receiving earth' (Shakespeare 1997 (1599): prologue). Shakespeare's classic script challenges one of the prevailing assumptions, the commonly held view of theatre under consideration about how performances work; an assumption that suggests it is a process that divides actor from audience. Shakespeare exploits this implicit complicity of the audience, by stipulating that it is not only the actor who plays, who imagines, but also the audience who actively engages in this process of make-believe. This is how performances operate, not as processes of division between watcher and watched, but as a provisional concordance of belief and imagination between all parties.

These provisional rules of engagement set up a framework within which the audience's set of beliefs about how this world of performance works can operate. It is a world that is set apart from the everyday where space and time operate differently: it is a liminal world. Just like its epistemological source, the architectural limen, the liminal world of performance is a threshold, it occupies the metaphorical space between the everyday and the extraordinary, the natural and the supernatural, and it even bridges the worlds between the living and the dead.

So, how do this interaction of implicit and explicit beliefs and processes of reality and make-believe make themselves manifest in performances of psychic mediumship? We have already established that audiences are not passive, fixed vessels but active in the process of making meaning in a performance. The ways they do it change, across different performance

genres, and even during the performances themselves. It is clear that audience members have an inherent potential to change their role, but where does the impetus to change come from?

The suspension of disbelief

The second epigraph for this chapter comes from a letter that Coleridge wrote to a fellow English poet, Wordsworth. In it he explains that readers, and for the purposes of this chapter, audiences, fully engage with a performance by creating a moment of 'poetic faith', a process by which they draw on an internal, personal truth in order to *willingly* suspend their disbelief. For Coleridge, this is done in order to find a closer connection to the 'supernatural' world of the Absolute. By suspending their disbelief audiences are setting aside the inconsistencies between the real and performance worlds. They do this in order to 'play along' with – and within – the liminal world they are occupying, creating and sustaining. But Coleridge identifies a further point of significance: that this suspension of disbelief is in fact, a *willing* suspension. Audiences choose to be complicit in the world they are sharing with the actors who are performing.

This suspension of disbelief is not fixed or sustained in one state, because audiences are fluid. They change what they do, and what they think, during the course of a performance. Here we are reminded of the key distinctions between social sciences and performance scholarship in the significance of liveness. This impetus to change roles is not simply forced on the audience from the outside. Audiences are self-aware, and reflexively engage in personal observation as the event proceeds. Should I be laughing at this bawdy joke if I'm sitting with my children? Should I like Macbeth this much; he's just murdered someone? And, in the case of public demonstrations of psychic mediumship, how do I feel about myself now my father has just forgiven me from beyond the grave? These moments of internal reflection challenge the beliefs and expectations the audience brought with them. And, as the performance continues, they are processed, fed back, and challenged anew in relation to the continuing events of the performance. They are interpreted by the audience through a process of comparison to the meaning-making contracts that were constructed at the outset. These contracts, like the audience members who agree to them, are in a state of constant change.

This fluidity means audiences are 'multiphrenic'[75]. They are in a place where plural truths, rational and irrational, are embodied, processed, lived, and deconstructed, simultaneously. The particular performances under consideration are, like all performances, full of enticing contradictions: they present tensions between truth and fraudulence, the sacred and the secular, entertainment and efficacy. In the following critique of performances of psychic mediumship, we will see how audiences negotiate these complex contradictions, and how performances create conditions that allow both actors and audiences to sustain multiphrenic states both as individuals and collectively. The first performance is a public demonstration on the stage of a provincial theatre, and the second is a closed séance in a private home.

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[75] Multiphrenic' is a phrase Michael Mangan uses in his book *Performing Dark Arts: a cultural history of magic* (2007) to explain the capability of audiences, in an age of technological rationalism, to move beyond the apparently dominant discourse of 'modern knowing as rational, sceptical and scientific' to sustain a simultaneous engagement with 'a rich alternative culture . . . saturated with images of magic' (p. 191).

Performance 1: Shaun Dennis

> *The auditorium of six hundred is full. The medium on stage is in full flow and he says, 'I'm getting a gentleman – I can feel a tightness in his chest. Can anyone own this?' Several dozen hands are raised. He continues, 'I'm getting the letter B or D.' Some hands go down, others go up. He closes his eyes and nods. He says, 'Please more slowly, one at a time.' He opens his eyes and explains that there are several spirits coming forward to speak through him and he's having difficulty hearing the gentlemen with the chest pains clearly. He closes his eyes again. And apparently listens, nods again, and says, 'Thank you'. He opens his eyes and says, 'I've got a name, Helen: he says he's sorry about the car.' There's a gasp from a group of four people in the row in front of me – they whisper an agreement: it must be a message for them. The medium looks directly at them, makes eye contact, and says, 'Can you own it?' One voice says, 'Yes. It's my Dad.' And the psychic's colleague, wearing a black t-shirt emblazoned with the word 'Crew', brings a microphone up to their row that is passed, with great solemnity, down to the voice. Again, the medium makes eye contact and says 'Can you own this?' And the, now amplified, voice rolls around the auditorium with the words, 'Yes, it's my Dad'.*
> *(Field note extracts, Goldingay 22nd March 2006)*

I saw the work of Shaun Dennis, 'psychic medium, stage and platform demonstrator', in a traditionally styled, proscenium arch theatre, where he, the actor/medium on stage was separated from the audience in the auditorium. In order to discuss the relationship between the watcher and the watched at this event, this section will focus on a small, apparently insignificant moment, as described by the preceding field notes. It is a moment where Dennis speaks directly to the audience members, who, through their process of response, change their roles. As the event opened the rules of engagement were clear.

We waited facing an empty stage: the actor was to be separate from the audience. The clarity of this separation was not fully exploited by lighting, with the usual dark auditorium and lit stage. However the architecture of the building, with the framed platform the medium was about to occupy and the audience seating lower down, was sufficient to set up clearly defined, implicitly accepted, power structures for the engagement. We would follow his lead. His arrival is announced by a voice off-stage that says, 'Please welcome, Shaun Dennis.' It seems most likely that Dennis announced himself. This is a technique often used by comperés and stand-up comedians. But here, in particular, it highlights one of the implicit agreements audiences have with their performers, that, in this liminal space, one man can be an army, floorboards a battle field, and there is more to human experience than 'meets the eye'. The disembodied voice off-

stage sets up two potentials. Firstly, and primarily, it prepares the audience for the actor's entrance so that they can be appropriately welcomed. Secondly, in this case another, more subtle, implicit, possibility is also reinforced; it suggests to the audience, that by suspending their disbelief, they may be able to perceive possibilities that are beyond their everyday experience.

Dennis enters: we clap. We know this is part of the appropriate behaviour expressed by those in the role of the audience. We, through this action, explain that we have already decoded signs, and consolidated our broad, collective rules of engagement for the performance. We have understood what is taking place, and made distinctions between different kinds of performances of platform mediumship and the appropriate behaviour an audience should demonstrate. Through clapping we show we understand the distinctions between a public demonstration of psychic mediumship in a theatre and a demonstration in a Spiritualist church service. In a church setting, although the medium is announced by their local sponsor, they are not usually welcomed with applause; it is not one of the rules of engagement for a sacred event. In this case, we are in a secular building, but, are we witnessing the sacred or the secular? Which rules of engagement should we apply? The edges between entertainment and efficacy are already being blurred. The set of beliefs each individual has brought with them, their consolidation, and their fluidity is already in evidence.

Our clapping subsides: Dennis explains what he will be doing during the course of the event, and what techniques and processes he will be employing in order to speak on behalf of the dead. This gives our roles further clarity; we are the watchers and he is the watched. Dennis then begins to communicate with 'the other side' and to speak the words of the dead that he has been given. Here, the previous clarity of roles fogs as another performer is introduced, a third party at the event who was previously mute, the dead. Now there are two performers, the newly-apparent dead, whom Dennis is able to hear, but the audience cannot, and Dennis, whom the audience is able to see and hear. With this introduction of further actors, a second liminal world is constructed within this performance event that is itself already set apart in space and time. A liminal location within a liminal location is created.

There are now also two audiences, Dennis, who observes the dead, and we the audience who observe him. This is where we, the audience, are now more richly engaged with suspending our disbelief. Whether we believe he is speaking to the dead or not, we are still prepared to engage sufficiently with this performance on some level, so that it, in part, fulfils its purpose as it sets out to change us, to convince us that there is something taking place that we cannot see. Dennis has become multiphrenic, simultaneously being watcher and watched. He is also taking on the more complex, intermediate role of conduit. Here he listens to the dead, 'watching', then becomes a conduit for the dead as he interprets and communicates what he 'hears' to the audience. This takes place whilst he, in the role of narrator and compére, simultaneously sustains and 'holds' the performance space for the audience. There are two processes at work for Dennis as 'medium' as he works to engage his audience. As conduit he is concerned with the efficacy of his communication whilst as compére he is concerned with the entertainment of the audience. The audience's multiphrenic position at this time is more subtle; they are still separate from the actor, but during this exchange they are embodying several possibilities as they suspend their disbelief. They sustain both the residue of sceptical technological rationalism and the possibility that this presentation is indeed evidence of a supernatural realm.

Dennis shifts role again: he begins to communicate more directly with the audience. He no longer closes his eyes in order to listen to something apparently behind him, but opens them in order to take in the width of the auditorium and shift his dialogue from the dead to the living, asking, 'Can anyone own this?' This is an interesting choice of language; he is encouraging us to 'own' his message, to take responsibility for it, to confess to our complicity in it. There is a well-established discourse in performance studies, developed, in part, from the work of Bertolt Brecht and his 'active spectator'. It asks questions about the responsibility of an audience member at a live performance. It argues that rather than being simply passive, (as with the broadly naturalist, Aristotelian view of theatre presented in the introduction) that audiences have a great deal of power: the collective, and in particular the individuals within it, have the ability to change the thing they are watching, to intervene if they wish, and to alter their world as a

consequence of what they experience. With this power to change the world comes responsibility, and this responsibility makes us not watchers, but witnesses.

Dennis, then, is asking the audience to explicitly admit to an implicit potential within the performance – to own what he is saying. Once it has been 'owned' with a response from a member of the audience, things begin to change again. The respondent's role shifts from that of watcher to that of a potential witnesses to what is about to follow. The audience's shift is more subtle. If we have the potential to intervene in what we see, then we, even if we are sceptical of what is taking place, are complicit in it and, on some level, our non-interventional presence bears witness to its validity. Once the person the message is 'intended for' has become clear by a process of elimination, and someone has indeed come to 'own' this communication from the dead with the whispered words, 'Yes, it's my Dad', she then shifts fully from being an audience member to becoming a performer. She is about to witness to her belief, and in part, to our 'belief' also.

The apparent fixity of the power relationships between actor and audience are challenged further when Dennis introduces a theatrical device into the auditorium that is usually reserved for the stage, a radio microphone. As the extract from the field notes describes, once Dennis identifies an audience member for whom he has a specific message, they are given a radio microphone so they can be heard more clearly. This is an apparently simple action, using an apparently benign, 'naturalised' piece of technology. However, the processes involved are much more interesting if we consider them in relationship to how the role of the audience might change in response to its introduction, and how the action of an audience member speaking through the microphone is, in fact, the culmination of several implicitly agreed transactions of change.

The introduction of this device again changes the roles of the performer and spectators. The entire audience become performers in two ways. Firstly, we are placed in a state of potential: although we have not been selected for this message, we may be selected for the next and this anticipation encourages us to invest ourselves further into the event. Secondly, as we look

around the auditorium to see where the microphone is going, we are all watching each other. The microphone means we all become simultaneously both watcher and watched. This shift then, for some, becomes concrete, physicalised as they are given the microphone to pass down the row to the person for whom the message is intended. They too, for a fraction of time, are fully performers. The increase in energy and excitement, instigated by the shift in our role from observers to participants, slows, quiets and shifts again as our attention returns to Dennis who has, in the interim, continuously held eye contact with the respondent. He says to her, 'Can you own this?' She replies, now amplified with the microphone, 'Yes, it's my Dad.' Dennis responds. At this point several things take place simultaneously. First, space and time collapse as specific members of the living speak with specific members of the dead. This process means a third liminal space is constructed as the watchers disappear. They move to occupy a world that is outside that which is sustained within the gaze between Dennis and the respondent, which contains the spirit he speaks for. The actors apparently lose all awareness of us; we are no longer there, as their intimate bond is constructed.

Second, the majority are now audience again, but watching a new performer, who is not on stage, but in the auditorium. Third, the liminal space now extends from the bounded safety of the 'other' world of the stage, into the more everyday world of the audience. The introduction of the microphone challenges the power relations on stage. It gives authority to the respondent who was formerly watching and facilitates their newly accepted role of being watched. However, it simultaneously challenges this new found authority, because in this performed exchange of intimacy the performers share a volume and this is a volume that is not ordinary, but one that allows the audience to become voyeurs, to listen in. We are now able to hear private moments where intimate family secrets and personal anguishes are exchanged. With the arrival of the microphone the members of the audience are reaffirmed as witnesses to beliefs; the respondent's belief in life after death and our own belief that this intimate exchange is not private but part of a product to be consumed for our pleasure.

How does this event, and other demonstrations of psychic mediumship, challenge belief, and the expectations we negotiate through the process of performance? We, as audience, accept our part in the performance through our own suspension of beliefs and disbelief, becoming willing witnesses to a collective engagement with an unseen liminal world. We embrace the possibilities that performance, and the performative roles and techniques it uses, present us with. We become active spectators and complicit witnesses to that which we engage with. To witness is to step beyond Shakespeare's 'make-believe' – which asks its audience to pretend they can see the Battle of Agincourt on stage – to allow the performance to become more concrete, to seep out into the reality of our everyday experience.

In the final quotation of the epigraph I cite Richard Schechner who makes a helpful distinction between 'make-believe' – the playful, act of 'pretend' that Shakespeare asks his audience to engage in – and 'make belief ' – the type of performance that requires its audience to accept that what they are seeing, in the enactment of certain public events, is true (Schechner 2002: 42). Such a performance is exemplified by the party political television broadcast or political rally that asks its audience to believe what they see and hear is factual, that they are witnessing a force for good in their world and therefore the party is worth voting for. These performances set out to 'make-belief' in their audience, rather than to engage their audience in 'make-believe'. (We return to this idea in light of the next performance.) But as I experienced in Dennis's performance, as we will go on to explore in the next example of a public demonstration of psychic mediumship, these apparently clear binaries between real and pretend are not sustainable. They collapse in the complexity of lived experience. Shaun Dennis, although working in the 'pretend' world of a theatre, is himself asserting that there is life after death. He is attempting to make the audience believe that the living can communicate with the dead.

Performance 2: Soul Rescue

> *In the suburban sitting room the clock on the mantelpiece reads eight o'clock.*
> *M says, 'Shall we begin?'*
> *All the lights, except a small lamp in the corner, are extinguished. M turns on a tape of soothing music. The small, closed séance begins. The group collectively speaks the Spiritualist 'Great Invocation' that begins: 'From the point of light within the Mind of God, Let Light stream forth into the minds of Men.' It ends with a rousing 'May Christ return to Earth!'*
> *I feel a tap on my knee, look up, and M points towards J. He is slumped in his chair, his breathing slow, but laboured. I can hear a rasp in the back of his throat. The criss-cross of muscles over his face is flickering, contracting. J grunts, nods his head, and, with great fluidity and rapidity, lifts up straight from his hips, rolling along his spine until it is fully extended. His chest expands and he looks straight ahead with his eyes closed. M says, 'Welcome friend' and J begins to speak.*
> *(Field note extracts, Goldingay 2006)*

This chapter now moves on to consider of the findings of a six month study I conducted into the work of a UK-based group of psychic mediums, the Soul Rescue Group, who, by working with states of full and partial-trance at their bi-weekly séances, become channels for the dead. They meet to hold a closed séance, 'a circle', working without an audience, a single affiliation to a larger religious group, or any financial exchange, from the home of one of their members. They performed these altruistic interventions; we might even call them supererogatory acts, in order to facilitate the transition of 'trapped souls' from a postulated 'limbo' onto the 'Realms of Spirit'. The circle has nine members. During séances the group's three 'mediums' enter into full or partial clairvoyant, clairsentient or clairaudient trance. This is in order to allow the dead to speak through them to a convenor. He, along with the rest of the group, the 'sitters', helps this trapped soul to 'find the light' and move on to the next realm. The group sees this private aspect of their work as their 'moral duty to heal the world' and as something of equal importance to their paid work of clearing unwanted spirits from homes, or giving private psychic readings, in addition to their other public, altruistic church based work as healers and platform demonstrators (Evans 1997: 2006).

The soul-rescue process, which the group has been following since its 1991 foundation in response to the Gulf War, is described by the group's convenor Michael Evans in *Billy Grows up in Spirit: A Cockney Lad returns after death to tell his story* (1997).

> [F]or me, the evidence that there is Life after Death [...] is overwhelming. Yet I have found that some people do get stuck after death and remain 'earth bound' until they are rescued, whether by helpers on the other side [the realm of spirits] or by a rescue group on earth. Because, after death, people find themselves in a spirit body which is exactly like the earth body they have just left, some do not realise that they have died and they try to go on living as before. [...] Our mediums go into trance so that the spirit can speak to us through him and in quite a short time he [the spirit] agrees to move on to his proper place in the next world. (Evans 1997: 1)

Evans is describing how the medium enters a state of trance to become the vessel of communication by which the 'stuck' dead soul can speak with the living rescue-group. The group then facilitate the soul's acceptance of the death of their physical body thereby enabling them to move on into the Realm of Spirit.

The séances follow a regular pattern. The evening begins over tea and cake as these old friends pick up conversations about families and current affairs. The séance opens with the question: 'Shall we begin?' And, here, in my nodded response, that mirrors the behaviour of everyone else, I am already complicit in what is about to take place. We collectively speak the *Great Invocation,* all watchers, all watched. There is an assumption that I know the prayer's words: I do not. And from here on, from the beginning of this experience, the rules of engagement between actor and audience, as suggested by our commonly held view of theatre, shaped by the division between the watchers and watched, are challenged and moved: the balance is changed. This shift can be seen most clearly in terms of numbers, particularly if we begin by considering the audience. I am the audience – the *one* person who has come into this liminal world to watch, and thus the assumption that the audience is in the majority is already lost. I cannot lose myself in a crowd. In this setting I am as visible as the actors. As with other performances, I have expectations about patterns of behaviour that will be appropriate for this performance and, during the event, I continually decipher and respond to cultural signs and signifiers. However, unlike other performances, not all the rules of engagement are implicit. One key aspect of my role as the audience is made clear to me from the outset.

When the circle's convenor, M, invited me to the séance, he explained that if I was to attend, I would have work to do, that I would act as a 'sitter'. The sitter's role is to join with the circle in order to supply the collective energy that enables the medium to enter into, and sustain,

their trance state. M described how sitters provide the 'power' for the intensification of the liminal world that bridges the realms of the living and the dead, thus creating the right conditions for the medium to become a vessel[76] of communication for those who have 'passed over'. In this engagement the rules of interaction, unlike the previous performance, were discussed explicitly beforehand: what was expected of me was articulated clearly. However, the opportunity to discuss what my supplying of this energy might mean, and how I might produce it, never arose. So when I agreed to attend the event I was already accepting that, beyond the privilege of entering a closed séance, I had a responsibility to the group and the success of the event: I was a witness. We conclude the *Great Invocation* and wait in silence. I mirror the posture and behaviour of the other sitters. At this point to call myself 'audience' is inadequate; the terminology is too broad. There are other terms that might better describe my multiphrenic role.

The group sees part of its purpose in the world as evangelical, a position that is not uncommon in classical spiritualism. They believe that they should be sharing their experiences and providing proof of life after death. And so, on some level, my presence as a researcher was welcome – although that does not mean I was free from suspicion. The role of 'researcher' shares points of commonality with the role of the audience through the actions of watching and interpreting. My role might also be understood in terms of 'observer'. In discourses surrounding ethnographic methodologies the term 'observer' is often placed at one end of a continuum that connects at the other to the term 'participant'. This participant-observation pairing is a useful means of describing the oscillation of my role in relationship to the event. But, what of my relationship to the group? A further discourse, prevalent in the sociology of religion, considers the 'insider versus outsider' status of the researcher (Arweck & Stringer 2002; McCutcheon 1999). At the séances, I was always an outsider, not part of the community I was studying. However, I did have specific responsibilities for the functioning of the event, and at the séance's close I was thanked for my contribution and asked for feedback and observations along with the

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[76] The mediums of the Soul Rescue Group refer to themselves as "vessels". I have therefore retained the term, which in a feminist context might be deemed problematic and unreconstructed. Whilst retaining hte participant's term, this section sets out to challenge the equivalency of the term vessel with passivity.

rest of the circle. So, at times, I was in part an insider; here this clear distinction of my relationship to the community fogged. As the séance begins, my multiphrenic state is particularly complex: I am the audience, the researcher, the witness, the participant, the observer, the insider, and the outsider. My role is super-fluid.

J begins to speak: M touches my knee to direct my neophyte attention. And, the circle's collective focus shifts to the primary actor, the medium. The audience now watch. Those previously separated by their designations, of sitter or medium, share the same role as we wait for the message. Earlier, settling down as a group and preparing for the séance, we all watched J as he transformed from his everyday, pedestrian self – with a body that had struggled to take a cup back through to the kitchen only minutes before – into the medium before us, sitting upright with great ease. In the moments preceding his first words he transforms again, becoming the vessel who, on entering a trance, goes through a series of observable physiological changes. These include shifts in body position and mobility, muscular contraction and breath patterns. In a later interview he puts these changes down to 'transfiguration', the moment when the soul of the dead person enters the vessel's body to speak (Goldingay 2006). J's changes in role are clearer than mine. With the words 'Shall we begin?' his pedestrian-self becomes his medium-self. And then, as he enters his trance, his medium-self becomes a vessel, carrying a simultaneously separate and inherent 'other'.

The way that J enacts that aspect of himself that is 'a medium', is different from the way that Shaun Dennis enacts this 'medium-self '. The clairvoyant Dennis is an interpreter who sustains multiple awareness of three worlds whilst demonstrating; the world of the dead, the everyday world of the living, and the liminal world of the performance. J however, as a full-trance medium, does not remember anything that takes place in any realm from the moment he enters trance to the moment he leaves it. He explains that this loss of consciousness 'is just the way I like it' (Goldingay 2006). J argues that he is not interpreting what the dead wish to say, nor locating who the message is intended for, but simply allowing the soul who is to be rescued to occupy his body and to use his vocal chords in order to speak their own words. For J then, as

he enacts his medium-self, his role as a facilitator is sharply defined. He is not multiphrenic but 'mono-phrenic', choosing as he does to enter full trance and to be completely unaware of the performance he is giving. J speaks and an 'other' appears. This is someone who is expressed through J's body as the voice of a dead person. Those who are sceptical of the possibility of communicating with the dead would say he is now, most fully, an actor. They might argue that he is creating, for the watching audience, a living, breathing fictional character. There is a particular popular mythology surrounding acting that suggests that for an actor to create a character they must undergo a process that requires them to embody full transformation in a way that is not dissimilar to J's description of his working process. The suggestion is that actors need to become their characters and to do so they need to be an empty vessel, devoid of themselves, for the character to fill: that to act is to be taken over by another. This particular technique would be commonly recognised as 'method acting'. Here actors do not make a distinction between the world of performance and their everyday life. During the performance period they claim to fully become, to be taken over, if you will, by their character. This comparison is an interesting one but it disregards the importance of the lengthy process of creation an actor goes through, via rehearsals and direction, scripts and props, costumes and the other players, that help actors create their characters.

This position is challenged further if we consider the mythology of 'method acting'. In a comprehensive survey of more than 300 UK and USA based actors completed in 2007, Eric Hetzler demonstrated that one of his key findings contradicted the popular assumptions held by some members of the media, and even some performance theorists, that actors fully experience themselves 'becoming' their characters (Hetzler 2007). For the majority of his respondents this was an untenable position. He explains that, for example, if an actor is playing the role of a serial murderer, it is hardly appropriate for them to live this character in the real world. Actors then, like audiences, sustain plural awarenesses of their roles and states of self. They simultaneously have a sense of their everyday self, themselves as an actor, and themselves as a character, in addition to a reflexive sense of how they are simultaneously both like and unlike the character they construct.

However, there is another position. This is not one that would sustain the assumptions of the sceptic who argues that mediums set out to be actors, but one that suggests that actors, like mediums, seek to become the vessel through which 'others' speak. This ability to become a vessel, to quiet the contradictions that living plural, simultaneous roles presents the actor with, is sought by some actors because it is perceived to be a means to create better performer focus and therefore better performances. They, through training, often based on Eastern martial and meditative practices, seek states they describe as 'optimum performance' or 'flow'. These are usually expressed in the metaphorical terms of 'when the body becomes all eyes' or 'standing on the edge of the breath looking' (Zarrilli 1998, 2004). Here the actors are seeking the means to create, during their performance, a state of conscious trance where they are able to move beyond their sense of sustaining multiple, separate awarenesses, to find a seamless single state of being at one with their character, fellow actors, the liminal world of the performance and their audience. Here they are not, as in the approach taken by Shaun Dennis, interpreters connecting plural worlds, or mono-phrenic and in full trance like J, but 'omni-phrenic', simultaneously occupying the parallel real and pretend realms of the performance. What I saw happen to J was more complex than simply pretending. I saw physiological changes in his body preceding the trance and I heard a voice speak that was of a similar vocal range and quality to J's everyday voice. However, the soul that was being 'rescued' spoke freely for twenty minutes using words and accents that were other than the medium's everyday language. I did not see a dead person speak again, but I did see a living person transformed by a performed process.

Make-believe and make belief

> *. . . performances of everyday life . . . 'make belief ' – [they] create the very social realities they enact. In 'make-believe' performances, the distinction between what's real and what's pretend is kept clear (Schechner 2002: 42).*

In the transitions taking place in, and in-between, these two performances of psychic mediumship, the edges of the pretend and the real, the sacred and the secular, that which is entertainment versus that which is efficacious, merge. As late-modern audiences we are very good at decoding the information we are presented with, and reading it in relation to our expectations. We recognise that performances contain aspects of both make-believe and make belief. When watching performances that most obviously set out to make belief, to convince us of their truth, we expect there to be elements of pretend and elements of entertainment within it. Even liturgical worship contains jokes and humour as part of its ephemeral engagement process in the sermon.

Our interpretation of the performance's explicit message is tempered by our knowledge of its subtext: we suspect that politicians lie, that company boards want our money, and that churches want Believers. And, whilst we watch performances that invite us to make-believe, to play in a pretend world, we expect to connect that world sufficiently to our own realities to be deeply moved, challenged and uplifted by what we experience. The ephemeral effects that performances have on audiences – the effects that change audiences as a result of make-believe – are those same effects that those who seek to make belief would like to create in their potential believers.

Thus, any simple, clean divisions between entertainment and efficacy, sacred and secular, make-believe and make belief are not sustainable. If we take the example of the work of Shaun Dennis, its setting is make-believe. It is created in a theatre; a building that we know is constructed to hold a pretend, performed world. This world of course reflects and recreates the real world outside, but it is, by its very nature, a forum of pretend. We buy tickets knowing that he sets out to capture and sustain our attention by entertaining us. However, through these

devices and processes established for the pretend of theatre, Dennis is asking us to engage with the supernatural, to suspend our disbelief in the possibility of communication from 'the other side', and believe that what he does is in fact true. He wants to make us believe that he can give messages from the dead, to believe in life after death.

In the example of the Soul Rescue Group their primary purpose is efficacious: their séances set out to rescue souls who are trapped in a sort of limbo; entertainment is not part of their intention. The distinction between the clairvoyant, as the vessel of truth, and the entertainer, as a misleading showman, is counter intuitive for many outside spiritualism, who are sceptical of its members' ability to discern subtle differences in intention and delivery. They would expect her to have only one relationship to the 'truth' content of a psychic's demonstration of life after death: they would expect her to believe it absolutely and unconditionally.

However, the 'truth' of the medium's process is similarly provisional, paradoxical and complex. To conclude part two of the thesis I will next turn to testing the validity of the assumptive equivalence of the actor with a medium. As part of my fieldwork with the Soul Rescue Group I interviewed J, a partial-trance medium. I was intrigued by her ability to describe her experience of trance as an optimal-state of spiritual expression and identified parallels with my own acting experience, so I interviewed B, a professional actor about her experience of heightened performative consciousness as experienced through moments of 'optimum performance'.

Performance 3: Performing Possession?

To perform possession and to be possessed in performance: the actor, the medium and an 'other'

> I know I'm here, sitting on this sofa, but I'm also there – drowning. My eyes are closed here, but I can see through her [the dead person's] eyes too.
>
> J, Medium.

> I felt as if it was the energy of Mrs. Hardcastle that was leading me, and that all I had to do was get out of the way.
>
> B, Actor.
>
> (Goldingay, 2006a; 2006b)

As an actor myself, this *intra*cultural study gave me a further avenue for research beyond working with the Soul Rescue Group. It presented me with an opportunity to reverse the traditional premise of a performance ethnography that asks, what might be revealed about this event and its context if it were analysed *as if* it were a performance? It enabled me to investigate, with my colleagues as respondents, what might be revealed about acting if it were analysed as a process more akin to mediumship. That is to say, one that uses trance-based processes to allow its practitioners to become a vessel for an 'other' in order to enable this 'other' to communicate with those who watch. I wondered, is acting in part a process of possession and possession in part a performance? Moreover, what is it to perform possession and to be possessed in a performance?

In order to begin to answer these questions in a contemporary British context, I established a dialectic of interviews; the first of these being with J, one of the Soul Rescue Group's partial-trance mediums, and the second with professional actor, B. I found strong resonances in J's description of channelling as a medium with the way the actor B explained her embodied, 'transcendent' performances. In their interviews, the respondents described their non-ordinary experiences of channelling an 'other' and identified the importance of their own continuing self-development. For both of them this took the form of embodied, imaginative and non-ordinary

consciousness skills training. In this section I will examine how they used these skills during a performance in order to sustain the conditions that enable an audience to perceive an otherwise unseen entity, the 'other'. Both respondents described this state as being an 'optimal state', which, I suggest, contains within it three distinct, but overlapping, states of consciousness. Later I will explore these states in detail; describing how they are constructed of elements I will term 'the pedestrian-self', 'the technical-self' and 'the self-as-other'. But, before we go on to consider these constituent parts of an optimum state of performance, I would like first to clarify my position on some of the ethical and methodological issues raised by placing performance and mediumship in a dialectic.

Truth and Authenticity: 'He's a good medium, but frankly...he's a bit of a showman.'

The process of comparing mediumship and acting is immediately problematic: the threads of belief, fraud and authenticity are intimately interwoven. Traditionally, the interrelationship of actors and mediums has been described in polar ways. On the one hand, those who are cynical of a medium's ability to communicate with the dead refer to the clairvoyant's public performances of psychic skill as merely 'acting'[77]. Here, the term is taken to be equivalent with fraudulence and pretence; ostensibly a means of extorting money from the gullible. On the other hand, those who believe in the psychic's ability to communicate with the dead describe mediums who are, for them, less skilled or perhaps less 'authentic' than other psychics as 'overly theatrical'. This second position was exemplified for me by one of the Soul Rescue Group's regular séance sitters. She explained – as we were discussing the work of a platform medium I had seen in the previous week – 'He's a good medium, but frankly...he's a bit of a showman' (Goldingay, 2006b). In this statement the apparent binary of truth and fraudulence

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[77] For an interesting exploration of the cultural and historical interweavings of theatre and mediumship see Alex Owen's excellent books, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (2004) (p. 1-16; 63-66) and *The Darkened Room: Women, Power and Spiritualism in Late Victori n England* (1989) (54-55; 73).

collapses, as authenticity and in-authenticity are simultaneously embodied by the fallible, but gifted psychic.

Actors too continue to be treated with suspicion, perhaps because they also necessarily embody two states simultaneously - the real and the pretend. Beyond a historical (and perhaps continuing) reputation for being mystic, mysterious and morally lax – Michael Mangan suggests they test the 'boundaries of the human' by intentionally shifting between the real and the pretend, the natural and the supernatural (2007: 76-96). This testing of the boundaries of the human is something both respondents identified in their interviews, and in acknowledgement of this resonance, I will be describing both actor and medium as performers[78]. This is not in order to undermine their roles or beliefs, or to make universal claims for the processes at work, but to highlight the connections in their practices of embodied communication.

Actors, like mediums, carry out a complex negotiation between performance events and belief-structures. B describes her optimal performances in metaphysical terms. But not all actors would describe their experiences of training, rehearsal and performance as spiritual. Many of us train in practices like yoga and tai chi, which were originally developed in an apparently religious context, but do not necessarily adhere to the sacred qualities attributed to these practices. This removal of performer training methods from their religious context is problematic for some, who argue that without this spiritual framework the training is misunderstood, and therefore its efficacy diluted. As a consequence there is a complex range of vocabulary and practice at the interface where spirituality meets the acting profession and its associated academic discourses. Consequently, terms like trance, the shamanic actor and finding transcendence, have become mainstream terminology.

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[78] I am using the term performer, rather than actor, in order to make a clear distinction from the way the term 'actor' is used in some types of social sciences writing; that is to say, to indicate someone who is undertaking an embodied action, rather than it being a term to denote someone's profession or a participant demonstrating agency.

Both performers enable the audience to perceive an 'other', but they understand the term in different ways. For J, as a medium, the 'other' is the energy of a trapped soul that is, for her, very real. For B the 'other' is a character. In earlier theatre or drama scholarship 'character' might have been seen as merely a fiction, a product of the author. However, for more recent performance theorists, this term forms the catalytic centre of complex discussion. Character is interpreted differently across different performance genres and cultures. The distance between actor and character is no longer fixed in a binary opposition, but placed along a shifting continuum. Performances require different things from their actors; sometimes that they should perform themselves, sometimes that they should 'empty' themselves, and become 'neutral' in order to fully embody their character – or to allow their character to fully embody them. (And here it is interesting to note a resonance with classic descriptions of the female medium as an empty vessel). Increasingly theatre events require actors to perform both themselves as 'actor' (or perhaps their everyday, pedestrian-self) and an 'other' in the same performance. Thus, the relationship between where the actor ends and character begins, is not fixed but porous[79].

I am not suggesting that B perceives her character to be 'real' in the same way that J experiences the trapped soul: their individual frameworks of contextualising beliefs and understandings are different. But, in B's case, character is not as prosaic as the traditional view of the term might suggest. She describes her 'other' as an energetic construction that is formed of elements of the self, of the text, and of direct spiritual intervention, or inspiration. And therefore, although J's description of the trapped soul is not directly interchangeable with B's description of character, there are significant points of resonance between the experiences of both respondents.

Performance too is an ambiguous term. Its definition and usage continues to be a significant topic for discussion in theatre, drama and performance studies scholarship. And these discourses are, at times, at odds with the way the term is used in social sciences or anthropology. I will be

[79] For an excellent overview of the negotiations at work in the actor/character relationship see Kirby *On Acting and Not Acting* in Zarrilli (1995) (40-52).

using it in two ways. First, in a narrow sense, to describe an event and a process, rather than a fixed object of analysis; that is to say, the respondent's enactments of embodied processes set apart in space and time where the audience and actor directly interact. But these processes can only be fully understood in the context of a second, broader sense of the word. Therefore, I will also be using 'performance' as an organising concept that includes the performers' expectations and personal narratives, their pre-performance training and emotional responses, in addition to the events' surrounding and constructing ideological contexts. This is in order to utilise the term's ability to describe something that is not inside or outside a given temporal boundary, but a continuum of creative exchange and influence.

Ephemerality and ambiguity, belief and make-believe, exist at the very heart of the performer-audience dialogue. This is because performers ask the audience to suspend their disbelief, at least for a time, in order to treat what they experience as being, provisionally 'authentic'[80]. Audiences at performances of mediumship bring different expectations with them to their reading of the event. Believers, who are performing or watching, are sure that what the audience experiences is not make-believe, but belief at work; while for audience members who are certain that they are witnessing a fiction, what takes place on stage is only make-believe. This dialectic suggests that demonstrations of psychic mediumship are on one level – at the level of the spectator – either real or pretend depending on the audience members' existing belief-structures. However, this clarity of binary conviction does not exist for many of those who watch. For these uncertain spectators, potentially, both cases are simultaneously true. As a colleague put it to me; 'I don't believe what they do, but I'd still hope for a message from my Mum'. Moreover, in a further challenge to this binary, some theatre too asks its audience to believe that what they see on stage is not make-believe but, in fact, an accurate recreation of the words of a real person; a verbatim account of a real event. All performance is a complex of change between the performance's construction and intended purpose, the actions of the

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[80] For a fuller discussion of the relationship between the medium and the audience in demonstrations of platform mediumship see Goldingay (2009).

performer and the expectations of the audience. Through their relationship to the supernatural, performances of trance and possession highlight these mechanisms at work.

In the next section of this chapter I am going to introduce the interviews I held with B and J into this fluid network of belief and make-believe, performer and other, real and pretend. This is in order to understand how during their performances, which by testing the boundaries of the human enable the audience to perceive an otherwise invisible other, they actively intervene into their non-ordinary states of consciousness. They do this in order to create and sustain the conditions for an optimal performance which are constituted of elements I will be terming the 'pedestrian-self', 'the technical-self' and 'the self-as-other'.

Optimum States: true-trance and transcendence.

Both respondents describe how their 'sense of self' is simultaneously unified and fragmented within the performance process, that the success of their performance is predicated on their ability to sustain a unity of self in response to this potential fragmentation, and moreover, that their sense of self contains multiple and multi-faceted plural-selves which have different purposes and motivations. This multiplicity is identified by both B and J, who explain that during a performance event they have a simultaneous awareness of different 'selves'; their 'pedestrian-self',' technical-self', and 'self-as-other'.

In this model the 'pedestrian' characterises a *residual* awareness of the quotidian in the performer, their sense of a continuing everyday, ordinary world and body beyond the boundaries of the performance, whereas the 'other', is the performer's awareness of a non-ordinary, heightened-self that is closely connected to a supernatural force. These selves compete for finite cognitive resources and therefore need to be prioritised and managed through the application of a series of pre-performance training approaches and pre-performance preparation practices. The technical-self, the third element of the performer's sense of self, makes these interventions during the performance in an attempt to prevent fracture. Such a fracture does not lead to a permanent schism in the performer's unified self; it simply means that conditions in

the performance which sustain the more fragile, transient 'other' are lost. However, if the technical-self is successful, these interventions enable the respondent to reach, and sustain, a particular state of sought after perfection; optimal performance. For J, this perfection is being in a state of 'full-trance', and for B it is being in a state of 'transcendent performance' (Goldingay 2006a; 2006b).

These utopian states have two key outcomes for the performer. First, to achieve them is an expression of the performer's virtuosic skill. And second, they provide fixed points of control around which the fluid performance can continue to evolve and change over time. However, these states are unstable, and both respondents have only glimpsed or had fleeting experiences of them in the past: B has reached her optimal transcendent state, whereas J has only seen full-trance in others.

But, J has achieved a stable state of partial-trance, where she simultaneously sustains an awareness of her pedestrian-self as well as her self-as-other. And, although this means she is able to explain her experiences with greater clarity after the event, this partial-state remains problematic because, for her, full-trance is the utopian optimal. She explains;

> the true trance medium sits there and just goes, they blank out completely and someone takes them over, their features, their body – a bit like G. (Goldingay, 2006b)

J is describing, via the bodies and narratives of other full-trance mediums, her optimal state which requires that the pedestrian-self is fully removed in order that the self-as-other can fully manifest. Yet, she describes herself as a partial-trance medium, who because of fear and yet undeveloped potential, is unable to reach 'true' trance. She continues;

> I have this thing with letting go. I know I do. It's been the bugbear. I've had messages from my guides – I've had automatic writing – saying we know the problem... and it's this thing of not wanting to lose control (I will one day: I know I will). [...] I said [to my guides],'Just zap me!'. And they said, 'We do not zap. We want full, willing participation of the medium.' So, I'm still trying, I mean so far it's been about eighteen years, so give me another twenty-five! [laughter]. (Goldingay, 2006b)

In this extract, J is describing her attempts to fully surrender her body by removing her pedestrian-self in order to make space for another force and achieve the optimum state of full-

trance. But, as a partial-trance medium her pedestrian-self remains in her consciousness while

she is channelling a trapped soul. She therefore needs to manage the relationship of her

pedestrian-self and self-as-other throughout the performance.

B identifies a similar experience and process, but uses different terminology to quantify her

two experiences of optimum performance. She explained to me that they were:

> [...] transcendent. I could tell you the two times I felt it very acutely. [...] One was when I was understudying the part of Mrs. Hardcastle. I knew at some point that once we got to the National [Theatre] we would have understudy rehearsals and that sort of thing, but we were not there yet. We were still on tour. [...O]ne night I got a 'phone call saying that the actress playing the part would be off, and would I go on the next night? (Goldingay, 2006a)

> [...] I knew that evening [of the performance] the only way I would be able to get through the performance, on no rehearsal – you know, no bedded in rehearsal – with less than twenty-four hours notice, was if I completely surrendered ego; if I did not allow fear, self-judgement, desire for approval, or anything like that; I had to be a completely empty vessel into which the words would flow. (Goldingay, 2006a)

B's description, like J's, describes a perceived need for the willing surrender of the pedestrian-

self. However, here the language takes a psychological turn where it is the 'ego' driven self that

is removed in order that B could be a 'completely empty vessel into which the words [given by

the playwright to the character] would flow'. As she continued to speak, she contextualised her

experiences by attributing the cause of her feeling of transcendence to a supernatural force.

> I can't remember in absolute detail what I experienced in the process of the performance, but I know the overall feeling was, I wasn't quite sure I was in three dimensions, I couldn't quite sense if this was real or not – it was like flying [...] I felt very strongly that I had to plug into - this is going to sound so pretentious – a cosmic energy. [...] I'm not overly religious though I do believe in something, and before I went on stage that evening I did... well, I suppose, pray is the closest thing you can call it – I said 'please just service me tonight, I'm going to surrender myself to you and please just get me though it'. (Goldingay, 2006a)

For B then – sharing similarities with the practices and pre-performance preparation process

of J – this transcendence is brought about by a process of prayer, surrender and connection to a

controlling, yet nurturing, 'cosmic energy'. For both respondents these experiences are

ephemeral and unstable, infrequent and hard to create. B utilises a set of technical skills in order

to come close, at least for some moments of the performance, to transcendence, whereas for J,

although her ability to reach partial-trance is relatively consistent, it is not optimum. I would

suggest then, that for these two respondents at least, their experience of trance states is, in fact, a two-phase process of 'trance' and then 'possession' that allows both senses of self to be simultaneously present, rather than a single, fixed journey from their pedestrian-self to a self-as-other.

Geoffrey Samuels in his article, *Possession and self-possession: spirit healing, tantric mediation and āveśa* (2008: 2), makes a useful distinction between these two terms by examining their etymology. He explains that 'trance' comes from the Old French, *transir,* 'to die', whereas 'possession' owes its etymological roots to the Latin, *poidere* 'to occupy'. For both B and J their process might be described as the 'death' of the pedestrian-self in order to create an 'empty vessel', followed by the 'occupation' of another force enabling the creation of a self-as-other; that is to say, they intentionally enter 'trance' in order to become 'possessed'. But in this case two critical points of clarification are required. First, trance – the death of the pedestrian-self – is neither negative nor absolute: for both respondents a strong presence of the pedestrian-self remains. Although, as we will explore in the next section, managing this aspect of the self in order to make space for the occupying force is a difficult process that requires rigorous training. Secondly, possession is welcomed. J does – with her pre-performance prayers of protection – acknowledge that malevolent forces exist for her, but broadly speaking the occupying force is seen to be nurturing and beneficial.

This two stage trance/possession process is neither full nor fixed, directly incremental or linear. Both respondents explain that they have an awareness of their pedestrian-selves throughout. For J her awareness of her pedestrian-self means that she remains a partial-trance medium, someone who has not attained the perfection of 'true' trance. This pedestrian-self is negative, something to be eradicated. Whereas for B, it is an inevitable, although differently problematic, part of the acting process; that is to say, an aspect of self that needs to be managed, rather than removed.

Both respondents are able to articulate this sense of retaining the pedestrian-self during the shift in consciousness. As J explains;

> I know I'm here, sitting on this sofa, but I'm also there – drowning. My eyes are closed here, but I can see through her [the trapped soul's] eyes too. (Goldingay, 2006b)

J is describing in this extract a stable state of dual consciousness with her pedestrian-self and self-as-other existing simultaneously, of being both 'here' and 'there'. However, this binary model becomes problematic when we attempt to quantify the complex and fluid experiences of B. She explains that during a performance she makes active interventions in order to overcome the ongoing difficulty of maintaining a stable relationship between her-selves.

A state of crisis, of not knowing what to do next, often occurs in performances when things go wrong; we forget our lines, other actors forget theirs, or the gun you are about to shoot your adversary with is not in the desk drawer where it should be. This challenges the actor's ability to sustain their self-as-other because too much cognitive resource is being demanded by the pedestrian-self's need to resolve the problem. As an experienced actor B explains that when potential fractures do occur, she finds opportunities in the text, something intended for the self-as-other, to placate the demands of the pedestrian-self and sustain the performance.

> [W]ith the part of Masher, my first line was 'I dunno, I dunno' and often, when I was having moments when I thought, 'I don't know what I'm doing' and I thought, just use that line, 'I dunno, I dunno'. I was consciously blurring the boundary between being in the scene and doing the negotiation of the scene to... erm, hide the fracture? To divert the fracture? Not to make a thing out of the fracture? (Goldingay, 2006a)

Here B is describing how she is blurring the two realms she is simultaneously occupying. Whereas the expectation would be that the actor would use their experience of reality to generate the imagined world of the performance, she explains that, in fact, in a moment of difficulty – of not knowing what to do next as an actor – the words of her character became inspiration. Because the character's line, was 'I dunno' she could intentionally use those words to express the confusion she was feeling as her pedestrian-self, rather than herself-as-other. This enabled her to articulate her difficulty without interrupting the audience's perception of the world of the performance.

Thus, B is making a distinction between herself-as-other and her pedestrian-self, but these states are not binary and oppositional but synchronous and intentionally sustained. She manages

both states simultaneously to avoid 'fractures', moments when the stable state of optimum performance is challenged, or worse is lost. This occurs because the balance between her plural selves is too heavily weighted towards her pedestrian-self, necessitating, as we will come on to explore in the next section, an intervention on the part of the 'technical- self'.

Three in one: multiple states of consciousness.

As an actor, B's awareness of these multiple states, and how they might be manipulated, is not uncommon. Double or dual consciousness is a well-established discourse in acting theory; this was identified by enlightenment philosopher Diderot (1713-1784) in his classic 1751 text, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des metiers*[81]. This discourse suggests that during a performance actors do not fully become the characters they are playing[82], but that they necessarily sustain another sense of self; one that enables them, among other things, to modulate their voice correctly so they can be heard at the back of the theatre, to find their light on stage and to remember their lines. However, through an examination of B and J's experiences of optimum performance, a development of this position has become possible. Thus, I suggest that, rather than these performances being an embodiment of dual consciousness, they are, in fact, embodiments of three overlapping states of consciousness. These are the pedestrian-self, the self-as-other, and the 'manager' of these selves during the performance, the technical-self.

Understanding how consciousness works, or 'the hard problem'[83], is an ongoing discussion for science, social science and the humanities. It identifies that a binary model, whether that is a description of two simultaneously occurring states of consciousness, embodied in the 'here' and

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[81] For an excellent discussion of the relationship of Diderot to the development of the discourse and practice of acting, see Roach (1993).

[82] This position appears to be counter intuitive, particularly when it is compared to how the media, and popular actors themselves, describe 'method-actors' living and 'becoming' their characters for weeks at a time in order to deliver a convincing performance.

[83] For a detailed discussion see Blackmore (2003) and O'Shea (2005).

'there' approach, or simply a description of a drug-induced altered state of consciousness does not fully account for the complexities of consciousness. This informs an evolving discourse in theatre, drama and performance studies, which is intimately interwoven with an increasingly popular rejection of Cartesian mind-body dualism, where the 'theatre of consciousness' is no longer seen as a material absolute. In acting theory the traditional model of dual consciousness accounts for the pedestrian-self and the self-as-other. It also explains the necessary shift in focus from, or quieting of, the pedestrian-self in order to create space for the self-as-other; a process where one enters into 'trance' and 'dies' in order to become 'possessed' and 'occupied'. The binary model also supports well established narratives in Spiritualism which suggests the performers, even if they are intentionally entering the state of trance, are only active at its inception and become passive at the point of occupation. This contradicts what B explicitly, and J implicitly describe; that is, the selves' continually active role during a performance.

In development of this position, I suggest that another self is also at work here; the technical-self: the self who manages the relationship between the pedestrian-self and the self-as-other by intentionally carrying out specific tasks, informed by pre-performance training, in order to manage the stability of the performers' performance. This is exemplified by J's explanation of how she mitigated for tiredness in order to 'tune-in' (Goldingay 2006b) and B's description of using the text to allow her pedestrian-self to express its anxiety while her self-as-other was simultaneously able to continue communicating with the audience.

Clinical neurologist and Zen practitioner, James Austin, in *Zen and the Brain* (1999) and its companion book *Zen-Brain Reflections* (2006), following Charles Tart, offers an intriguing alternative model to the problematic binary. He describes a model where multiple overlapping states of consciousness operate simultaneously as a;

> conglomerate of subsystems, functioning in many separate, but interacting, dynamic configurations. [...] Each subsystem might be operating at a high, normal, or low level. And each might be invested with attention to a greater or lesser degree. Given all these permutations, any single one of our discrete states of consciousness would seem to be a mere temporary aggregation of substates, a 'temporal clustering of the content and organization of consciousness'. (Austin 1999:306-8)

This is a useful model if we think about the performer as a 'conglomerate of subsystems' or in this case, a conglomerate of selves, and recognise that the performers are investing different selves with different levels of attention. During a performance however this conglomerate of selves is not a discrete fixed state: the performers reflexively and proactively manage their selves – controlling the demands of the pedestrian-self in order to protect the needs of the self-as-other. They are, metaphorically, applying a method of volume control. They do this by using techniques learnt during pre-performance training in order to sustain an optimum state.

Both B and J explain that they make interventions during performances; that is to say, they change the volume of their competing selves. This process of volume control requires another self to operate it; the technical-self. This is the reflexive aspect of the performer that identifies when a 'fracture' is going to take place and takes action to prevent it. Once equilibrium is restored, the technical-self can operate, almost silently, until it is needed again at the next point of fracture. The multiple selves work harmoniously to sustain an optimal state, to making an 'other' perceptible to an audience, by operating at differing volumes at different times during a performance. This requires a proactive trance-performer, an active empty vessel.

The active empty vessel and sustaining the 'other'.

Pre-performance training, for J, took the form of psychic development circles and individual practice that centred on meditation, automatic writing and a participatory apprenticeship, where she learnt through séance-based experience. For B, like J, the training process was both practice and archive driven. Embodied knowledge, gained through psychophysical training practices, was of equal importance to cognitive/imagined processes and experience gained from live performance. The unpredictability of live performance creates the stressful conditions where this pre-performance training is applied and tested. In this final section, we will explore how both B and J describe the role their technical-self takes during difficult performances.

In the following extract J describes a performance that is not optimum, the self-as-other is not heard by the audience: in this performance the technical-self is unable to make a sufficient intervention to turn down the pedestrian-self's volume.

> I was seeing someone Scuba Diving – sort of in my mind. I had a feeling that there was a need somewhere but I wasn't able to relax enough and I wasn't able to pick up. And I was told [by Spirit] that my batteries were very low - I've been tired since we got back from holiday. And, although I was physically feeling the energy, I couldn't at that point change it, and use it to channel, which was interesting because it highlighted for me how different it is when I do. (Goldingay, 2006b)

Here then, when J cannot channel, cannot achieve a state of partial-trance, she is via-negativa able to articulate the intrinsic processes at work because much of her attention is invested in her pedestrian-self: without the physical demands placed on her pedestrian-self when she is channelling she has more space to perceive and reflexively consider the processes at work.

She went on to explain how she feels, by comparison, when a performance is successful; that is to say, when she 'picks up' and 'changes' the energy and begins to channel.

> I sit there and can feel the general hum and all of a sudden it's as if my aura's being pressed on, it's almost like a hum – I mean I don't hear a hum, but it's sort of like that vibrational (sic) feeling [...] My heart rate accelerates and I feel my breathing start to change. If it's quite a traumatic rescue then it's sometimes quite an emotional and physically difficult thing. [...] I know that I'm still on the chair but I am that person as well. First, they start talking to me, and then, I'm almost seeing what happened, well, I am seeing what's happened – living through it. They see through my eyes and I through theirs. It's a sort of take over. (Goldingay, 2006b)

Throughout her interview J described her relationship with her body as a difficult one. It was an incompliant instrument that would not fully submit to the will of Spirit, one that resonated with an increased heart rate and breathing caused by her fear of 'letting go'. And, this fear of letting go, this retention of her pedestrian-self, caused an even greater awareness of her body. She explained what happened when she described her experience of a particularly traumatic rescue at the post séance debrief to another circle member:

> Afterwards she said to me, 'Do you know where she was?' and I'll say 'Oh yes' I mean the one who was buried alive – that was really scary and I knew exactly what had happened, you know I couldn't breathe. Once I was actually drowning and I could actually feel it, actually feel it! P. was next to me once and she thought I was going to have a heart attack – I'm absolutely gasping for breath and yet I know I'm me. Now that's the strange thing, how can you be you and know you are safe, but I'm there and I know that someone is still using me. (Goldingay, 2006b)

After such a graphic explanation it is easier to understand why, for J, to be in full trance – and not to remember what had taken place during a channelling – is preferable to 'living' through it. But as a partial-trance medium, she does not follow the classic form and become a passive empty vessel that is occupied by another. She is, in fact, active throughout the performance. Her technical-self uses pre-performance training techniques to manage the almost overwhelming sensations in her pedestrian-body so that the trapped soul, expressed through herself-as-other, can be perceived by the watching audience. She is testing the boundaries of the human.

The active intervention of the technical-self is something B is able to articulate explicitly. She too is testing the boundaries of the human by balancing the relationship of active intervention whilst being an empty vessel for the 'other' to fill. But, for her, this experience is less physically distressing, although not physically or psychologically easy. For B, to be in an optimal state is to have her technical-self engage pre-performance training and preparation in order to enable her 'to fly' in close relationship to a cosmic energy.

These optimal states – states of partial-trance for J and transcendence for B – are not snapshots, fixed in time, where the performance freezes. They are continuously active negotiations between the conglomerate of pedestrian-self, technical-self and self-as-other. These negotiations seek to sustain a state of optimum performance in order to avoid fractures where both the performers' and the audiences' perception of the 'other' are interrupted. Both B and J identified with the concept of becoming an empty vessel for the energy of the other to fill. But, this did not follow a traditional model of active-trance followed by passive-possession (where they simply abdicated their pedestrian-self) as a binary, full-trance model of being 'here' or 'there' might suggest. Instead they used a portfolio of psychophysical pre-performance techniques to manage the competing volumes of the pedestrian-self and self-as-other. This

process was facilitated by the monitoring and managing technical-self. The optimal state, where by testing the boundaries of the human the audience could perceive an 'other', was for these two performers, a process undertaken by an active empty vessel.

For all their rich similarities there were two key distinctions in the respondents' explanations of what was taking place. The first, unsurprising from the outset, was that both respondents perceived the source of their 'other' differently. For J this was a trapped soul who was brought to her attention by Spirit. For B this was a character, but a creation that was a combination of her, the text, and divine intervention/inspiration. The second distinction is more complex and involves the relationship between the pedestrian-self and the body. For B her body was a biddable vessel she could proactively control and enjoy. Her ability to reach its full potential was only challenged by the ego. For J, the role of the pedestrian-self was also significant, but in relationship to her body. The body itself was a faulty device that would not fully yield, was exhausted by the channelling, and potentially, could be taken over by unwanted energy. For her, her body, until she was able to lose her pedestrian-self completely and become a 'true' trance medium, was an unreliable ally.

We might then see this divergence in terms of a post-modern versus late-modern reading of spirit-possession. A post-modern reading suggests that texts, and many experiences, are unreliable truths for performers like B, and the only source of 'real' truth lies in the somatic experience of living breathing flesh. Whereas a late-modern reading, where the residue of the past is carried forward into a new present, might suggest that it is the body that is at fault for its unwillingness to surrender to a higher *residual* metanarrative. Yet here – where belief and make-believe, life narratives and the construction of personal identity, altruism and performance meet – perhaps, both readings are true.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Performing efficacy and the construction of belief

This thesis has explored how contemporary English spirituality is constructed and reconstructed by performance. It has journeyed through manifestations of popular culture and civic identity, mediaeval cathedrals and Glastonbury High Street, to understand how the arrival of the twenty-first century has marked an increased urgency in the need to understand the complex nature and implications of religious and spiritual belief in contemporary society. In this process there are numerous paradoxes at work; the desire of governments to find points of agreement and understanding in the search for international peace, which operates in tension with the reluctance of the post-enlightenment academy to engage with questions of religion in a society that is predicted to become fully secular. Moreover, this rise in performative interventions by groups that have been termed, or indeed term themselves, fundamentalist (characterised by a post-9/11 society), in addition to the apparent increase in behaviour that has been termed 'spiritual seeking', contradicts the fall in regular worship practice across monotheistic faiths. Society's engagement with religious belief is simultaneously rising and falling.

The 2001 census, which crystallised much of this investigative urgency, has done little to clarify what is taking place. It statistically showed that the majority of British society has a religious affiliation, with seventy-seven percent of the population describing themselves as Christian. (National Statistics Office 2007: np) However, when compared to the less than one percent of the population who are Christian practitioner s, this demonstrates that England is Christian through enculturation rather than practice. (Church of England 2001)Thus, religious identity for the majority of British is an imagined, encultured one. This creation process is shaped in a particular way by the forces of 'Englishness' that interweave politics, history and race through a complex arena of apathy and vicarious practice in popular culture.

In performance culture, at first glance, it seems that little has changed in the relationship between theatre and religion since the time of the sixteenth-century Puritan, for whom performance was the opposite of religious belief, as night opposed day and good opposed bad. The *dominant* narrative has rejected religion as the origin of theatre, to place its roots in ritual, whereas the *emergent* has inverted this narrative in order to reject both religion and ritual as potential sources for performance. Rather, they suggest that the paradigm of performance is, in fact, the crucible in which performance was formed. The relationship between theatrical performance and religion in Western culture has always been complex and often troubled, we have seen how each still claims to be able to 'save' the other. Theologians argue that they can bring performance back to its authentic, pure form as a 'true'; reflection of God's intent, while performance scholars claim that religion has failed society, and theatre and drama can transform our quotidian experience through a transcendent transformative process. Yet, this point of encounter, when religion and spirituality meets theatre and performance still provides fertile ground for exploring questions about how our identity is constructed through public performances with a sacred component.

Through my participation in, and observation of, numerous worship communities in a variety of sacred and non-sacred settings I see that performance affects belief. This is not however, the radical or permanent transformation that practitioner s advocating a Holy Theatre might desire. The affects of most performances are ephemeral and transitory – although some rites of passage do of course change the actor permanently. I see that for some people, some of the time, in its creation of the ludic-self and the manipulation or sustaining of pre-existing expectations, performance *produces* belief. Grace Davie identifies the gap between believing and belonging; I am suggesting that performance offers a way of bridging this gap.

As an essentially contested term, belief necessarily has plural meanings: to use it with precision is to acknowledge the broadly accepted meaning at its abstract core, whilst recognising simultaneously the numerous, often contradictory, ways in which it is applied. Yet, particularly in popular culture, religious belief, or simply 'Belief', is deemed homogeneous: it is

often used as a shorthand to describe a group's apparently common outlook, or as a means to articulate a complex coalescence of cognitive, somatic and emotional elements within the individual. Although this action of a-historicising processual belief systems into ossified taxonomies is problematic, it does point to an interesting question. If belief is not homogeneous, either within or between faith groups and their individual believers, then how do we analyse such a complex and fluid cultural phenomenon? I would argue through the optics provided by performance scholarship.

An envoi of sorts: pre-expressive territory and the rules

To provide an envoi of sorts, I want here to set up a model that uses performance to better understand the way that religious and spiritual belief is changed, challenged and sustained through enactments in public settings. To do this I need to make some temporary typographical distinctions. I will be using the upper case, Belief, to describe an individual's or community's overarching perception of, and relationship with, a divine Absolute. And I will be using the term 'rules' to denotes the smaller, every day beliefs and expectations an individual might adhere to in their lived expression of a particular understanding of how the world works. It is these rules, I suggest, that coalesce to construct a belief in a divine Absolute. And it is these smaller, pre-existing expectations that are more readily tested through performance, rather than it providing a challenge to an overarching coalescence of Belief.

Such terms are problematic: not everyone has a Belief in a divine Absolute, and some might even suggest that 'fundamental' atheists have a belief in an absolute that is not divine. Moreover, the diverse potentials of belief are so numerous and variable as to be beyond analysis. However, I want to suggest that this model, where rules layer to form the strata of Belief within the confines of one performance, offers a way of understanding how rules and Beliefs interact between performers. One of the Oxford English Dictionary definitions of belief is:

> The thing believed; the proposition or set of propositions held true; in early usage, esp, the doctrines believed by the professors of a religious system, a religion. In modern use often simply = opinion, persuasion. (Oxford English Dictionary 1989: np)

This definition presents a rich complex of possibilities. It begins by asserting that belief is singular, "*the* thing believed": in this case a belief in the divine Absolute. It then goes on to state that it can also be "*[a] set* of propositions," what in this model might be termed the rules, or pre-expressive rules. I wish to argue that by seeing these pre-expressive rules as a "set of propositions" connected to, rather than disconnected from, "the thing" divine Belief, we might better understand how performances over time, change Beliefs, as rules, change, layer and coalesce.

Actors arrive at the beginning a performance with a spiritual intent, with their own particular set of knowledges and expectations about what is about to take place. These pre-performative expectations are a set of rules about how the rite will work. They are constructed from cultural, material, emotional, affective and cognitive elements that have interacted over time. They are the creation of a;

> pre-expressive territory that prepares the actor to work on actions and a score, [in addition to articulating] the nature of impulses and physical actions, the inner action concealed between bodymind, consciousness, and sensory awareness in the actor's work. (2009: 5)

Phillip Zarrilli is speaking here of his training of theatrical actors towards their creation of optimum performance - a transcendent moment for themselves that creates a transcendent experience for the audience. If we refocus Zarrilli's pre-expressive (that which takes place before the performance) model, and move the notion of the pre-expressive territory into the quotidian performance, it then becomes a useful vehicle to move us beyond the notion of *habitus* (and the related *doxa*)*;* Bourdieu's concept (drawing on Aristotle and Mauss) that describes an individual's internalised, rather inflexible relationship with social structure – *the field.*[84].

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[84] See Bourdieu (1972; 1984)

This notion of pre-expressive territories enables us to account for the necessary 'work' central to live performances that are both transient and transformative. This 'work' is the drive required during these performances for them to progress. It operates via both visible and invisible actions (both gestures and thoughts), in addition to an awareness of the changing conditions of the performance over time (for example if someone else enters the Lady Chapel as you are lighting a candle), as well as the submission to or denial of a series of impulses (in response, getting up and leaving sooner that you might otherwise have).

Performance scholars have long been analysing theatrical performances as ideologically formed, transactions of meaning that set out to change people (temporarily and permanently) via the emotional effect it causes. They have sought to analyse performance efficacy. To carry this out, numerous approaches have been created and combined. (During the thesis I have found Kershaw's descriptions of partial-contracts to be particularly helpful - (Kershaw 1992)). Importantly, these treat performances not as fixed units of data, or as a-historicised past events, but as live performances taking place over time through knowledgeable bodies and containing an emotional element. In this way, the notion of performance being an exchange of pre-expressive rules is expanded beyond the cognitive to include embodied and emotional practices that are learnt as part of a pre-expressive territory. These rules are honed in other times and other contexts in order to be (re)enacted through the 'work' of the performance.

The actor therefore is not innocent. They do not arrive at any given performance as an empty vessel: they bring their unique set of rules with them. However, these rules are propositional and provisional; that is to say, they can be kept or broken as they interact with material culture that houses the performance. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, these rules also interact with the rules of other actors that are being expressed in other performances. These rules and Beliefs may not share a cultural touchstone, and can therefore be, at times, more challenging than affirming, transformational than sustaining. Therefore, if we assume that Belief is not *a* thing, but rather a network of interrelated, congruent, and sometimes contradictory smaller rules, - a potential opens to consider how an individual's divine Belief is

made manifest as they engage with the world. It is expressed via their articulation of pre-expressive rules, demonstrated in the detail of their lived practices and social interactions.

In these performances we articulate our self-identification, affiliation and values. We performatively enact interrelated, complex, and often paradoxical, spiritual and civic identities as an expression of what might be seen as Hervieu-Léger's 'chain of religious memories'(1985) in collision with Taylor's 'subjective turn' (1991: 14, 25-27). Thus, it is perfectly possible for our Belief to be Christian by enculturation but 'Jedi' on a census return, and for us to see benefits in sending our child who attended a faith school to Camp Quest (a Richard Dawkins atheist summer camp) whilst practising T'ai chi and meditation ourselves for well-being.

Society's relationship to religion and spirituality is changing. As a generation, many of us relate to organised religion in a different way from that of our parents and grandparents. Generational change is unsurprising, it is the nature of human progress, but what is surprising is the distance each generation appears to be travelling from the religious practices of their preceding community. It would be easy to explain this shift simply in broad postmodern terms: the death of the meta-narrative and the rise of the individual, the increase of globalisation and decentralisation of economic power. As we have seen, there is evidence that these processes of change are at work in the interplay between religion and society. However, what is taking place is more nuanced, contradictory and reversionary than this linear model, which assumes a journey from modern to postmodern, can account for. In order to bridge this gap between believing and belonging, performance offers a means to understand;

> the difficulties brought up by multiculturalism, the misunderstandings, broken languages, and failed transactions occurring when and where cultures collide, overlap, or pull away from each other. (Schechner 1992: 7)

Performance gives us the opportunity to better understand how English spiritual identity is being constructed and reconstructed in the early twenty-first century.

Glossary

The Church of England is complex and changeable; to draw on an analogy made by Dairmaid MacCulloch in his excellent monograph, *The Reformation* (2003), the terminology of Christianity is like a Russian doll, where one word or phrase can stand for several interrelated definitions (xix). 'The Church of England' is such a doll. In common usage the word is largely interchangeable with 'Anglican' and 'Protestant'. However, clarification of these mutable terms and their etymology allows us to gain a better understanding of the Church today, its relationship to its formation at the 1534 Act of Supremacy and its continuing process of evolution in the intervening years.

How the term 'Protestant' is used has shifted with time and geography. Today, in its broadest sense, it refers to any European church that can trace its foundations to those that broke from Catholicism during the Reformation. But historically this process of change took distinct, national routes in England, France, Austria and Germany. Each nation, in addition to their shared scholarly language of Latin, created new words locally to describe what was taking place and to identify those taking part. In 16th century Germany it was important to make distinctions between the two key groups challenging the Catholic Church: where the 'Reformed' referred to the Calvinists and 'Protestant' referred to the Lutherans. This collective noun for the Lutherans came about when a collection of German cities, and their ruling princes, as an act of solidarity issued a 'Protestatio' – a protest, against the 1521 Edict of Worms. By 1547 it had reached England when, in order to denote the processional place of visiting reformist German diplomats, the organisers labelled them 'the Protestants'. (MacCulloch: xx) By the 17th century the Church of England was the established religion of England and being challenged. These challengers revived the term Protestant to represent their actions as protestors. It becomes the means whereby the new non-conformist, non-Episcopal sects of Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and Separatists marked themselves as distinct from the established Church. This usage remained current in parts of England and Ireland at least until the late 19th century but with the

Anglo-Catholic revival the term fell from favour being seen as divisive in a collection of churches that are keen to celebrate their shared catholic heritage.

The adjective 'Anglican', like Protestant, describes a collection of religious traditions that can trace their roots back to the creation of an English church distinct from the Roman Catholic Church of Rome. Etymologically deriving from the latin Anglicanus, references to Ecclesiae Anglicanae began in the 12th century, but it is first used to describe a non-Roman church in John Jewel's Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae -- Apology for the Anglican Church (1562), and is first recorded being used as a derogatory term by James VI ofScotland in 1598 when he was convincing The Church of Scotland that he had no love for The Church of England. (MacCulloch: xx). Today, the Church of England refers to itself as being part of the Anglican Communion which is a worldwide collection of sects that stem from the Church of England. Currently, the Anglican Church unsurprisingly dominates nations where England as a colonial force also dominated politically. These Churches, though not ruled by the Church of England - having economic autonomy—still hold the Archbishop of Canterbury as their spiritual guide. The Church however emphasises that he is a guide not a leader. Hence the Church of England forms part of the Anglican Communion rather than Anglican Church, as demonstrated by the title chosen for their websitewww.cofe.anglican.org.uk.

Throughout the thesis I have been using the term Church, with a capital C, to denote the larger organisation that is the Church of England, and with a lowercase c to denote the building that a congregation meets in to worship. In the Congregation's hierarchy, the ordained Priest (vicar, president and minister) is senior to the ordained Deacon who is senior to the un-ordained laity (reader, server, warden). As with congregation and audience, I have preserved the distinction between priest and actor although direct comparisons are made at times.