Roots and Routes: Kingston-upon-Hull-upon-Stage
During UK City of Culture 2017

Tom Nicholas

For the duration of 2017, Hull, a port city on the North East coast of England, held the title of UK City of Culture. Exploring the contemporary place identity of Hull was high on the agenda of organisers, not only within the cultural texts commissioned for the event but, equally, within the promotional campaign surrounding it. Following 67.6% of Hull residents voting for the UK to leave the European Union in 2016, a tension appeared in the event's promotional literature, between attempts to define Hull by its relationships with the wider world, and celebrations of its distinctiveness from it. This article draws upon this tension in order to discuss two theatre productions commissioned for Hull 2017: *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*. Engaging John Agnew's *three aspects of place*, it seeks to analyse how each performance text represents Hull as a lived environment and communal identity, before considering what the connotations of this might be for the perception of Hull as a cosmopolitan or communitarian city.

Pendant la durée de 2017, Hull, une ville portuaire située sur la côte nord-est de l'Angleterre, a eu le titre de la ville britannique de la culture. Explorer l'identité contemporaine de Hull était haut à l'ordre du jour des organisateurs, non seulement dans les textes culturels commandés pour l'événement, mais aussi, dans le cadre de la campagne promotionnelle qui l'entourait. Après que 67,6% des résidents de Hull avait voté pour que le Royaume-Uni quitte l'Union européenne en 2016, une tension apparut dans la documentation promotionnelle de l'événement, entre les tentatives de définir Hull par ses relations avec le monde plus large, et la célébration de son caractère distinctif . Cet article s'appuie sur cette tension afin de discuter de deux productions théâtrales commandées pour Hull 2017: *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*. En utilisant les trois aspects de lieu, théorisés par John Agnew, cet article cherche à analyser comment chaque texte de performance représente Hull en tant qu'environnement habité aussi que identité communale, avant de considérer les connotations que cela pourrait avoir pour la perception de

Hull comme ville cosmopolite ou communautaire.

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Introduction

For the duration of 2017, Kingston-upon-Hull (more commonly referred to as Hull) held the title of UK City of Culture (UKCOC). Throughout the year, the port city played host to more than 2,800 artworks and cultural events, including Spencer Tunick's *Sea of Hull,* in which 3,200 locals were photographed, naked and painted blue, in popular locations around the city, and Nayan Kulkarni's *Blade,* in which the 75-meter-long rotor blade of an offshore wind turbine was installed across a city square. Elsewhere, Slung Low's multimedia epic *Flood* was told partly through live performance in the Victoria Dock, partly through television broadcast, and partly through online video, while Rembrandt's *The Shipbuilder and his Wife* had an extended stay in the Ferens Gallery. Nevertheless, where these pieces may seem disparate in their artistic form, they were united by a shared focus: an exploration of the identity of Hull and the city's changing place in the contemporary world.

This preoccupation with Hull's identity was no accident. The event's Chief Executive Officer, Martin Green, openly declared a desire to curate a programme 'that speaks

of the city, its people, their creativity and energy'.[1] Yet to imagine that the end goal of this was simply to celebrate the city as it is today (and has been in the recent past) would be naive. For UKCOC, much like the European Capital of Culture initiative from which it takes its inspiration, is as much about economic development as culture. Cities seeking the designation are expected to demonstrate how they will leverage it to engender 'lasting social regeneration' and 'a demonstrable economic impact'.[2] In representing Hull through the cultural texts commissioned for Hull 2017 and the accompanying promotional content, organisers were thus equally interested in how they might position the city—which over the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a sharp decline, from being a hub of the shipping and fishing industries to one of the most deprived cities in the UK[3]—as more appealing to international businesses and highly-skilled individuals who might invest in or relocate to Hull, thereby diversifying its economic base.

To this end, in 2015, Green laid out a vision to reframe Hull as 'an outward looking, progressive European city'.[4] The desire to associate a city with such broadly liberal sentiment has been a mainstay of culture-led regeneration initiatives for decades. According to Jen Harvie, the construction of an aura of tolerance 'is positive because it attracts the highly desired creative worker who generates prosperity and growth'.[5] While such a discourse might have been alluring to corporate sponsors of Hull 2017, including Siemens and BP, it seemed a somewhat jarring characterisation of Hull in the same year that the far right UK Independence Party came third in all three of the city's parliamentary seats. And it appeared bolder still a year later when Hull residents voted by 67.6% to leave the European Union. In the lead-up to the event, then, there was a clear gap between the desire of Hull 2017 organisers to portray Hull as a progressive, internationalist city, and the inferred priorities of Hull's voting population.

Event organisers were clearly not blind to this disconnect, and by the time of

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[1] ""Showtime: Hull Throws Open Its Doors to the World with 365 Days of Culture and a Momentous Year for the City" (news release, Hull: Hull City of Culture 2017 Ltd, 2016).

[2] "UK City of Culture 2017: Guidance for Bidding Cities" (London: Department for Cuture, Media and Sport, 2013).

[3] Charlie English, "To Hull and Back: The Rebirth of Britain's Poorest City," accessed July 24, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/11/-sp-to-hull-and-back-the-rebirth-of-britains-poorest-city.

[4] "Hull UK City of Culture 2017: Strategic Business Plan 2015–2018" (Kingston upon Hull: Hull City of Culture 2017 Ltd, 2015), 7.

[5] Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 103.

the event itself, official literature had come to refer not to a "European city" but instead to a 'Northern city'.[6] Although this was an attempt to appease corporate sponsors through alluding to the so-called "Northern Powerhouse",[7] it also heralded the arrival of a localist discourse that provided a counterweight to appeals to internationalism. In this manner, the promotional literature surrounding Hull 2017 came to alternately conceive of two Hulls: one defined by its role 'as a gateway to Europe and one of the world's busiest ports[,] its maritime history and global connections'[8] and another by its 'radical independence'[9] and 'unique cultural voice'.[10] Where the event was sometimes characterised as a 'celebration of migration, flux and internationalism',[11] elsewhere it was considered an opportunity to elevate 'the inspiring stories of the city's revolutionaries, the thinkers and innovators'.[12]

The aim of this article is not to posit which rendering of Hull might be deemed "more correct"; vastly different conceptions of a city's place identity can (and do) exist alongside one another. Instead, I take this tension as the starting point for the analysis of two theatrical productions which were commissioned for and premiered during Hull 2017: *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*. Drawing on John Agnew's three aspects of place,[13] I discuss how these performance texts represented Hull as both a lived environment and communal identity, before seeking to suggest how each might engage with Hull as a city defined by its local distinctiveness or international connectivity.

Roots and Routes, Place and Space

The eventual artistic programme for Hull 2017 was curated into four loosely-themed seasons. And it was in the naming of the third of these, *Roots and Routes*, that the

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[6] Franco Bianchini et al., "Cultural Transformations: The Impacts of Hull UK City of Culture 2017" (Hull: Culture, Place and Policy Institute, University of Hull, 2018), 39.

[7] "Northern Powerhouse" is the name given to a controversial set of proposals by the UK Government to improve infrastructure and encourage investment in the North of England.

[8] "Hull City of Culture 2017. Roots and Routes: Season Guide" (Hull: Hull City of Culture 2017 Ltd, 2017), 3.

[9] "Hull City of Culture 2017. Freedom: Season Guide" (Hull: Hull City of Culture 2017 Ltd, 2017), 3.

[10] "Hull City of Culture 2017. Made in Hull: Season Guide" (Hull: Hull City of Culture 2017 Ltd, 2017), 3.

[11] Bianchini et al., 6.

[12] "Hull City of Culture 2017. Made in Hull," 5.

[13] John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographic Mediation of State and Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

conflict between two competing notions of Hull became most evident. Knowingly or not, organisers here drew upon a piece of wordplay employed regularly by cultural geographers. Most often, the phrase "roots and routes" is employed as a manner of articulating the perceived dichotomy between place and space. Unlike their interchangeable use in casual conversation, place and space have developed distinct meanings in the academy, perhaps best summarised by Yi-Fu Tuan, who suggests that 'if we think of space as movement, then place is pause'.[14] In this manner, place has been associated with *roots* (fixedness, consistency, immobility) and space with *routes* (flow, variation, movement).[15]

While most theorists, like Tuan, recognise the mutual interdependence of place and space, there remains some jostling between scholars over which has primacy in the attribution of meaning to geography. Advocates for place, such as Tim Cresswell, argue that space, in its fluidity, is 'a realm without meaning'[16] and that our meaningful relationships with geography principally orbit around 'fixed objective coordinates'[17] such as a specific neighbourhood, city or building. Yet this has potentially reactionary connotations in the suggestion that human migration, for instance, is in some way abstract. Advocates for space have thus sought to suggest that, in Doreen Massey's terms, places are but 'articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings'[18] and that meaning comes to be ascribed to geography primarily through the movement of people, ideas and capital across space. This argument, however, has its own shortcomings, in its tendency to marginalise the experiences of those whose lives may be, through choice or means, relatively static. The conflicting conceptualisations of Hull contained within the promotional discourses surrounding Hull 2017 therefore reflect a longstanding debate over how geography comes to hold meaning, which not even scholars dedicated to the study of such things can agree on.

Nonetheless, the contention over whether Hull should be defined by its distinctiveness as place or through its relationships in space appeared particularly heated in the run up to Hull 2017. Rather than speaking to any unique qualities of Hull, however, I believe

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[14] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 138.

[15] It is worth noting that there are some deviations from this. Michel de Certeau, for example, uses the terms space and place to the opposite effect than that described here. See: Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

[16] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 10.

[17] Cresswell, *Place*, 7.

[18] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Marxism Today* 38 (June 1991): 28.

this to be a symptom of how pivotal conflicting opinions on the relationships between meaning, community and geography have become to mainstream political discourse over the past few decades. Such a debate was not just explicit in the UK's referendum on membership in the European Union, but continues in rising support for, and opposition to, protectionist and anti-immigration policy platforms across the globe.

Providing historical context to this emergent ideological impasse, Étienne Balibar has suggested that, since the eighteenth century, the civic nation-state has occupied a 'highly paradoxical' position between 'combative communitarianism and humanitarian cosmopolitanism',[19] in numerous ways acting as a mediator between the proximate experience of the individual and their less-tangible relationships with global humanity. Contemporary globalisation, however, has increasingly seen nation-states ceding power both to transnational corporations and supranational political institutions. As we enter what Balibar refers to as the 'postnational era',[20] it is perhaps only logical that the nation-state's abandoning of its former mediating role has unleashed fierce debate over the contested loyalties of the individual to the local, the national and the global.

Following the Brexit referendum, political commentator and founding editor of *Prospect* David Goodhart went as far as to argue that one's conception of human geography has largely supplanted economic notions of left and right as the most prominent political cleavage in post-industrial nations. Echoing Balibar's invocation of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, Goodhart conceives of a schism between 'Anywheres' and 'Somewheres'. Goodhart writes that Anywheres 'dominate culture and society' and 'have portable, "achieved" identities, based on educational and career success which makes them generally comfortable and confident with new places and people', whereas Somewheres 'are more rooted and usually have "ascribed" identities [based] on group belonging and particular places, which is why they often find rapid change more unsettling'.[21] These illustrations may border on caricature, yet they usefully point to the manner in which the holding of a cosmopolitan or communitarian worldview has become associated with one's social class.

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[19] Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?*, trans. James Swenson (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 55.
[20] Balibar, 13.
[21] David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), 3.

This association—usually by those nearing the other end of this proposed ideological spectrum—of communitarianism with a reactionary working class, and cosmopolitanism with a detached global elite, has come to hold considerable currency in popular debate. For scholars of cosmopolitanism, such charges of elitism are no doubt frustrating. However, as Craig Calhoun argues, for many, 'academic cosmopolitan theories focussed on global governance and global justice' have been largely overshadowed by a 'popular cosmopolitanism […] complicit in a new Gilded Age'.[22] Just as neoliberal capitalism has co-opted progressivism as a marketing tool for aspiring "creative cities", so too has the term cosmopolitanism been used to dress the entrenchment of a global economic and cultural elite, at the expense of the domestic (and global) working class as an ethical—rather than exploitative—mission. As the focus of this article is on the communal formation of meaning, it is these popular perceptions of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism that guide my following analyses, as much as their more scholarly counterparts.

In spite of growing polarisation on these issues, the seasonal brochures and online content surrounding Hull 2017 very clearly sought to reconcile the inherent tension between a communitarian, localist vision of Hull and a cosmopolitan, internationalist conception of the same city. My interest for the rest of this article therefore lies in how two of the theatrical productions commissioned for Hull 2017 might themselves have intervened in such a discursive context, and how they might have supported or subverted that "official" articulation of Hull's place identity.

Theatre and Place

Joanne Tompkins has argued that when it comes to scholarship on the intersection between theatre, space and place, 'Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* [is] often considered the foundational text'.[23] This is certainly true of analyses of theatrical representations of cities, with both Jen Harvie's *Theatre & the City*[24] and J. Chris Westgate's

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[22] Craig Calhoun, "Populism, Nationalism and Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 64.

[23] Joanne Tompkins, "Space and the Geographies of Theatre: Introduction," *Modern Drama* 46, no. 4 (2003): 538. See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

[24] Jen Harvie, *Theatre & the City* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Urban Drama[25] drawing significantly upon Lefebvre's insights. For my purposes here, however, Lefebvre's work is somewhat lacking in its acknowledgement of the meaningful and material distinctions between bounded places and the powerful relationships that exist between them. This perhaps encounters little obstruction in analysing, as Harvie and Westgate do, "global cities" such as London and New York. The dominance of these cities in the majority of their interactions with other places means that these relationships are much less likely to be a pressing concern within artistic representations of them. As we will see below, however, for less-dominant cities such as Hull, such relationships are often of great interest.

Here, then, I draw upon the work of political geographer John Agnew, whose 1987 book *Place and Politics* has had a considerable impact upon contemporary approaches to understanding place. Agnew delineates between three distinct yet interwoven processes through which places come to take on meaning, referring to these three 'aspects of place' as *locale*, *location* and *sense of place*.[26] *Locale* describes the experience of place as a site of habitual human practice, inviting us to consider the demographic make-up of a place and how different groups interact with one another therein. *Location*, responding to the theoretical tension between space and place discussed above, describes the manner in which one place relates to others but also to the political, economic and cultural networks of which it is a part. Finally, *sense of place* describes the meanings and notions of identity which come to be associated with a place, inviting us to consider what attributes might be said to be associated with residents of a place, and how that place's history might have been curated into a coherent, meaningful narrative. As a critical lens for performance analysis, Agnew's model allows us to consider the representation of place fairly holistically. But, crucially, it allows us to retain an awareness that, within Hull as within all places, a tension between distinctiveness and interdependence will be constant.

Below, I engage Agnew's model as an organising principle for my discussion of *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*. Rather than attend to each production separately, I instead interrogate the presence of each aspect of place in both productions in turn. This allows us to observe more clearly where each play's representation of Hull might agree with or dispute the other's. As I do, I will also augment Agnew's model

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[25] J. Chris Westgate, *Urban Drama: The Metropolis in Contemporary North America Plays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[26] Agnew, 5.

with reference to other scholars whose ideas may be beneficial to understanding the depiction of each aspect of place within these shows. Due to the adoption of such a structure, it is worth first giving a brief overview of the narrative of each play, and a description of relevant production elements, in order to provide the proper context for the subsequent analyses.

The Hypocrite and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*

While *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* were both commissioned for Hull 2017, the processes through which each came into being were vastly different. This was due largely to the former being a coproduction between Hull Truck Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), and the latter being the work of the relatively nascent Middle Child Theatre. Thus, while *The Hypocrite* boasted a widely-recognised writer in Richard Bean, a large-scale set and an ensemble cast including Mark Addy and Caroline Quentin, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* drew its creative team, including writer Luke Barnes, from the UK's lively yet often undersung fringe theatre ecology. This discrepancy in available resources is reflected in the venues in which each show was performed: *The Hypocrite* followed a month-long run at Hull Truck with a stint at the Swan Theatre in the RSC's Stratford complex, while *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* premiered at The Welly, a nightclub in Hull, before transferring to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and touring sporadically until November 2018.[27] Nevertheless, these venue decisions also reflect the differing theatrical traditions which informed each production.

The Hypocrite, for instance, very much aims to channel the historical yet populist form of theatre we often associate with Shakespeare. The play is a re-telling of the 1642 Siege of Hull in which, after four tense months, open hostilities first broke out between Royalists and Parliamentarians, marking the start of the English Revolution. The production follows Sir John Hotham, Governor of Hull, as he contemplates whether to declare for Parliament or the King. Keen to keep his head, Sir John's decision rests not upon the consideration of any moral or political conviction, but instead, on a calculation of who is most likely to triumph in the oncoming conflict. Unfortunately for Sir John, Hull is home to a considerable arsenal desired by both parties. The decidedly farcical action of the play thus centres on his attempts to convince both Royalists and Parliamentarians that he will be shortly

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[27] In preparing for this article, I saw *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* at The Welly and *The Hypocrite* at the Swan.

declaring himself, and Hull, to their cause.

This main action is complemented by numerous subplots including Sir John's attempts to coerce his daughter Frances into marrying Puritan MP Peregrine Pelham, the infiltration of the city by flamboyant royalists the Duke of York and Prince Rupert, and a brewing dissatisfaction with both Parliament and the monarchy amongst the Ranters, Levellers and Diggers and the city's peasantry. Despite the play being set 400 years in the past, it is very much angled to speak to the present. Borrowing also from pantomime, the production's many asides and comedic quips allow for numerous moments in which the temporal gap between the characters and audience is significantly reduced. In my analysis, I will therefore assume that, beneath the ruffs and corsets, the play aims to represent the Hull of today as much as that of the seventeenth century.

All We Ever Wanted Was Everything, on the other hand, like previous Middle Child Theatre shows, takes its inspiration from the theory and practice of John McGrath, who sought to foreground elements of popular, working-class culture within his performance texts. Live music, written by James Frewer, is a constant presence throughout the production. The indie-inspired songs which elevate pivotal moments within the show are consistent with a somewhat do-it-yourself aesthetic. Audience members are free to roam the performance space during the show—with frequent opportunity to visit the bar—and the set is limited to a handful of movable raised scaffolds upon which performers play out each scene.

In terms of narrative, the play is structured around three acts, each corresponding to a different decade. Though beginning in 1987 with the birth of the play's dual protagonists Leah and Chris, the action of Act One proper begins in 1997, with Act Two taking place in 2007 and Act Three in 2017. We thus follow the varying fortunes of Leah and Chris from childhood through adolescence to young adulthood. At stake for much of the play is class mobility: Leah's working-class beginnings are a far cry from Chris' relatively affluent upbringing. Leah wants little more than to rise above her father's socio-economic station, yet lacks the economic or social resources to do so. Chris, on the other hand, finds his own background somewhat stifling, recognising that having access to so many opportunities that others do not means that a failure to achieve his goal of becoming a psychologist could only be due to his own lack of intelligence.

I will expand upon particular moments of each production as they become relevant to my discussion. For now, it is sufficient to have a general overview of the central conflict(s) of each play. In order to consider how each performance text engages with Hull as either a communitarian or cosmopolitan city, I will begin by analysing each play's representation of Hull as *locale*.

Locale

It may seem that *locale* is the aspect of place which is most distant from the central discussion of this article. Tim Cresswell, however, has argued that a place's *locale* is heavily implicated in how porous it might be to new people and ideas. He does so by suggesting that, over time, the practices which dominate within a place come to form 'normative geographies': some practices come to be viewed as "appropriate" within that place, while others come to be seen as "inappropriate".[28] Furthermore, Cresswell argues that it is 'by concentrating on the marginal and "low," the "other," [that] we achieve a novel perspective upon [a place's] *central* workings'.[29] Such a methodology is useful, as it allows us not only to consider what forms of practice are represented as definitive of Hull, but also to observe the power dynamics between these and those practices which are depicted as coming from beyond the city's boundaries.

Due to the presence of the much-desired arsenal, *The Hypocrite* sees many who have never previously visited Hull arriving at its gates. This includes Sir John (Mark Addy) who, though only travelling the short distance from Beverley, is treated by many of Hull's permanent residents as a complete outsider. This is particularly clear in attitudes towards Sir John's constant avoidance of conflict. When Lord Mayor Barnard (Martin Barrass) challenges Sir John on his commitment to self-preservation over principle, for instance, Sir John is astounded at Bernard's failure to couch his criticism in flattery (as he himself might have done). In his response, Barnard clearly articulates his understanding of Hull's normative geography: ''ull[30] folk are direct. My truths, which you call insults, are the least of your worries'.[31] Indeed,

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[28] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 10.
[29] Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place* , 149. (emphasis in original).
[30] For the avoidance of doubt, "'ull" is how "Hull" is pronounced in the local accent.
[31] Richard Bean, *The Hypocrite* (London: Oberon Books, 2017), 88.

when Sir John attempts to use verbal trickery to flatter King Charles (Ben Goffe), while at the same time barring his entry to the city, various citizens and soldiers interject, telling him, for example, to 'go wipe your arse', to the general amusement of the gathered peasantry.[32] In this manner, the perfidiousness of Sir John's polite yet empty words is depicted as being in stark opposition to the tendency of the people of Hull to be honest to the point of offence. Yet, while in these cases it may seem a virtue, the pragmatism and plain-spokenness of Hull's *locale* elsewhere proves more problematic.

The Duke of York (Jordan Metcalfe) and Prince Rupert's (Rowan Polonski) clandestine mission behind the city walls is already clearly transgressive: they are present in a site from which Parliament's forces are actively trying to bar them. Moreover, the heightened effeminacy with which both characters are performed, paired with the bright floral patterns of their clothing and long, flowing hair, reads as equally antithetical to the drab grey of Max Jones' set design. During their first appearance onstage, an unimpressed Bernard sternly advises them that 'I wouldn't wear that 'at[33] in 'ull',[34] drawing attention to the nobles' incongruence with the hyper-masculine military preparations, and the political proselytising the ensemble has been engaged in prior to their arrival. Taken alongside reactions to Sir John's duplicity, we can therefore see that, in its portrayal of Hull as *locale*, *The Hypocrite* suggests the city tends towards a hegemonic pragmatism, plain-spokenness and heteronormativity which quickly marginalises practices which are seen to deviate.

A less cohesive *locale* is presented by *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* where, in contrast to *The Hypocrite*'s depiction of the city as uniformly working-class, characters herald from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, here, conflicts between different forms of practice can be observed between different social groups *within* the city. We get a taste of this early on when we are introduced to Leah's (Bryony Davies) and Chris' (James Stanyer) childhood homes. Though the sparse set means these are only ever described to us through monologue, these descriptions are highly indicative of the aesthetic stylings and economic priorities of each home. Chris' house in the leafy Avenues is said to boast a constant aroma or lavender, an array of John Lewis furniture, and a "Dream Wall" on

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[32] Bean, 80–81.
[33] As before, "hat".
[34] Bean, 45.

which he has been encouraged to map out the many things he wants out of life.[35] In contrast, Leah's house is largely defined by what it lacks; she bemoans, in particular, their lack of 'satellite TV and a computer with the internet'.[36] Behind closed doors, these practices are able to amiably coexist, yet when Leah and Chris age and come to transpose them into social settings, they reveal a tangible power dynamic.

The social spaces which dominate *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* are nightclubs. Leah and Chris both describe these venues as being somewhat tragic and unruly, filled with what Leah calls 'wannabe wags/ In their super high heels and their Gucci bags'[37] and Chris describes as 'hustle and bustle of fists and pheromones'.[38] Such characterisations are not exactly contradicted by the aesthetic of the performance space itself. While The Welly retains a certain air of "authenticity" in its independent (non-chain) status, it is somewhat unkempt, and its drinks menu consists mostly of cans of cheap beer from a fridge. However, though both the performance space and Leah's and Chris' descriptions may initially imply a disdain towards such spaces and the practices which occur within, Leah, when challenged, defiantly defends her favourite club: 'This isn't shit./ […] This room is full of memories'.[39]

Leah's admiration towards the *locale* of Hull's nightclubs becomes further indicative of the city's underlying power dynamics when she bumps into an affluent friend from school, Holly (Alice Beaumont). Their meeting takes place while both are on a work night out. However, where Leah is having a genuinely enjoyable time with her colleagues from the toy shop where she works, Holly is back on a visit, having moved to Leeds, and has brought some of her new friends in order to show them 'all the shit places I used to go'.[40] Both Leah and Holly are partaking in the dominant practices of Hull's nightclubs, yet where Leah is sincerely enjoying herself, Holly is engaging only ironically. Both Holly and Chris, then, show a considerable amount of contempt towards the dominant practices of Hull's night-time *locale,* yet both Chris' complete disengagement and Holly's ironic subversion suggest that the site's normative geography is so hegemonic as to be impossible to alter.

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[35] Luke Barnes, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* (London: Oberon Books, 2017), 14–15.
[36] Barnes, 20.
[37] Barnes, 42.
[38] Barnes, 46.
[39] Barnes, 43.
[40] Barnes, 43.

Though *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* represents Hull as having some level of socio-economic diversity, it joins *The Hypocrite* in suggesting that it is the city's working-class community which has the greatest influence over the city's normative geography. The implications of this, however, differ. *The Hypocrite*'s peasantry shows a considerable correlation with Goodhart's conception of Somewheres; their reactions to the Duke of York and Prince Rupert in particular suggest they 'place a high value on security and familiarity' and 'are suspicious of "anything goes" attitudes'.[41] *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, on the other hand, refrains from drawing a connection between working-class values and intolerance. The play's reification of "traditional" working-class practices and the strong sense of place attachment its characters display do portray the city as more communitarian than cosmopolitan, and yet it draws upon this to imply that such a situation might lead to increased social mobility within the city when, during their chance encounter, Holly offers Leah a more profitable job. Therefore, where *The Hypocrite* seeks to suggest that a "rooted", working-class community within Hull might be highly defensive against outside influences, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* is far more optimistic about the potential positive consequences of such a close-knit city community.

Location

Though both plays suggest that it is Hull's working-class contingent which has dominance over the normative geography of the city, this does not mean Hull is impervious to the power dynamics of the wider political, economic and cultural networks of which it is a part. This is made clear in *The Hypocrite*'s foregrounding of the attempted imposition of cultural and political values dominant in the wider UK upon the people of Hull. Having some knowledge of the English Revolution, one might be forgiven for assuming that the production will focus on the conflict between Parliamentary Hull and the Monarchy. Certainly, one of the most enduring stage images in the show is that of King Charles, sat on a hobby horse outside Hull's Beverley Gate demanding to be let in. Yet my own experience of watching the show led to a somewhat less binary conclusion.

The Hypocrite's preoccupation with the relationship between Hull and London rests on the assumed perception of the latter as the centre of the UK's political and cultural life.

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[41] Goodhart, 24.

The play in fact opens with a slight towards the capital with Connie (Laura Elsworthy) quipping that 'our play begins in London, unfortunately,/ A terrible place, unlike mi' cultured 'ull'.[42] And this is emblematic of the manner in which *The Hypocrite* suggests Hull's peasantry views the cultural and political attitudes of the newly-arrived Londoners: not as dominant, but as decidedly other. Repeatedly, this occurs through a disparaging of the works of Shakespeare. When King Charles states, for example, that he 'will not reprise King Lear! Harassed from daughter to daughter, begging a meal', Sir John and the Hull garrison are unimpressed at what they consider an unengaging plot and an excessive runtime.[43] Furthermore, when Sir John's daughter Frances (Sarah Middleton) returns from a brief visit to London, she decides that she will no longer submit to an arranged marriage but instead, inspired by her copy of the First Folio, will 'choose, swoon, and be wooed'.[44] Frances' romantic outlook on life, along with the verbal and physical affectations with which Middleton performs the character, are presented as equally contradictory to the hegemonic pragmatism of Hull. As well as providing a playful engagement with the involvement of the RSC in the production, then, the work of Shakespeare is conceived of as a cultural fragment of a London-centric nobility, with little relevance to the lives of the people of Hull.

Yet it is not just the nobility who stand accused of seeking to impose their cultural tastes upon the people of Hull: a similar motive is attributed to the more stoic Parliamentarians. We see this in the case of Durand (Pierro Niel-Mee), Sir John's son, who, in contrast with Frances' embrace of Shakespeare, has returned from Merton College, Oxford with a love of the law. Durand's embrace of legalese is depicted as being prescriptive, pedantic and of little practical use. When Sir John attempts to arrange a loan from Hull's moneylender Albert Calvert (Paul Popplewell), for example, Durand's legalistic interjections only serve to confuse matters. The Parliamentarians, who are as puritanical about adherence to the law as they are to scripture, on the other hand, are more than impressed. Both the Royalists and Parliamentarians, then, are presented as attempting to impose London-centric cultural and political attitudes upon the city of Hull. In this way, both groups are framed as mere factions of London-based institutions who are far more interested in the role Hull might play in the English Revolution than in how the revolution might further the interests of the people of Hull.

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[42] Bean, 17.
[43] Bean, 99.
[44] Bean, 27.

A similar power dynamic can be observed within *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, yet here, rather than being so clearly articulated through the presence of warring factions, we instead witness Hull's place in the wider neoliberal economy through the affective experience of Leah and Chris. In order to interpret this, we can usefully draw upon Una Chaudhuri's notion of 'geopathology', a term she uses to describe how a place can become either an enabling or obstructive force to a character within a performance text, and to posit what the meaningful implications of this affective relationship might be to that site.[45] Leah and Chris, for instance, both choose to leave Hull during the course of the production: Chris by enrolling at Manchester University to study psychology and Leah by taking up Holly's job offer and moving to Leeds. These physical migrations thus come to suggest that, within the neoliberal economic system of which Hull is a part, the pursuit of success often necessitates leaving.

We can further unpack the geopathological implications of these journeys through observing how each character's move away from Hull comes to alter their meaningful relationship with their home city. Despite his privileged upbringing and genuinely strong work ethic, Chris struggles to achieve the necessary grades at university. Thus, as well as representing a step closer to his career goals, Manchester also makes the potential that he might fail to do so seem far more real. As such, when he returns to Hull to celebrate his birthday, he spends much of his time hunched over, consoling himself by lashing out at his friends who chose not to leave the city. He says of his friend Tom (Marc Graham) that 'his mediocrity makes me sick because he hasn't even tried […] him not trying is even more disgusting than me not succeeding'.[46] It is in Leah's aesthetic tastes, however, that we see the most notable change. In Act Three she storms out of her Dad's (Joshua Meredith) kitchen, no longer happy with a celebratory dinner of oven chips and now openly derides the nightclubs she once so passionately defended.

Despite early similarities, there is a notable conflict in the geopathology of the conclusions of each character's narrative. Chris ultimately fails to become a psychologist and returns to Hull where he marries Carly (Alice Beaumont) with whom he has a son, despite a deeply unfulfilling relationship. This seems to confirm his notion that a return to Hull would

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[45] Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 55.
[46] Barnes, 48.

mean a life of what he perceives as mediocrity. Leah, however, despite achieving career success, finds herself socially far more isolated than she was when working at the toy shop. This is made expressly clear when Holly leaves Leah's birthday meal early to meet up with a Tinder date.[47] While not contesting the idea that one must leave Hull in order to achieve success in the neoliberal conception of the term, Leah's experience thus positions Hull as a city in which success can be measured instead in the strength of the social bonds one is able to build.

Both plays, then, ultimately suggest that Hull is fundamentally disempowered within the wider political, economic and cultural systems of which it is a part. *The Hypocrite* goes the furthest in suggesting that, even when the city has become important to these systems, it has been valued only in terms of what Hull might offer those systems, rather than what they might offer Hull; in short political and cultural elites might occasionally come to value Hull as a node in *space* but never as a meaningful *place*. *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, on the other hand, emphasises the notion that Hull might be conceived of as resistant to neoliberal forces, in its suggestion that social bonds within the city are far stronger than those which might be achieved elsewhere. While both play's representations of Hull as *locale* implied a certain level of communitarianism, then, when viewed through the prism of *location* we begin to see a subversion of the perception of this as inherently reactionary. Instead, the privileging of local allegiances is reframed as a necessary resistance to dominant political and economic forces.

Sense of Place

In viewing *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* through the critical lenses of *locale* and *location*, we have largely reached into the subtextual elements of each performance text. In approaching the representation of Hull's *sense of place* within each, our attention turns now to the more conscious, critical engagements with what meanings might be attributed to Hull, and what its place identity might be. With both plays being so heavily interested in such a discussion, the invocations of Hull's *sense of place* within each are many and multitude. Nevertheless, both productions display a keen interest in the history of Hull, and I have therefore chosen to focus on how each production might parse that history as being highly distinct, or interwoven with more global historical narratives.

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[47] Barnes, 61.

In choosing the Siege of Hull as its subject matter, *The Hypocrite* certainly places great value upon the impact Hull has had on the wider world. The notion that the action taking place will begin 'the English road to parliamentary constitution'[48] is repeated often. Furthermore, the involvement of the RSC in the production, the period costumes, grand set and regular mentions of the plays of Shakespeare position *The Hypocrite* in direct dialogue with Shakespeare's "History Plays", which occupy a revered place not just in the theatrical canon but in the wider narrativization of English history. Yet despite such an appeal to the "national" canon, there exists beneath this a more subversive discourse, suggesting that though the siege may have had a significant impact upon England as a whole, its consequences for Hull itself may have been less notable.

As hinted at in the above section, *The Hypocrite* portrays the people of Hull as largely disinterested in the conflict between Parliament and the monarchy, but invested instead in more material matters. Connie, for example, deems the enclosure of common land and the lack of a popular vote (whether the revolution succeeds or not) to be of far more significance to her life.[49] Both these concerns become significant to the performance text when taken as the subject matter for songs by the chorus of Ranters, Levellers and Diggers (led by Josh Sneesby) who intersperse the action of the production with sung interludes. While much of the play privileges the actions of the visiting nobility and bourgeoisie, it is through these musical interjections that the concerns of Hull's peasantry are heard. Most telling is a song which refers, in its refrain, to 'a world turned upside down'.[50] Originating in a folk song of the period, this phrase was taken by Christopher Hill as the title of a book in which he argues that groups such as the Ranters, Levellers and Diggers can be viewed as a 'revolt within the revolution'.[51] Though broadly supportive of deposing the monarchy, these groups sought far more extensive reform than simply the replacement a feudal political system with a bourgeois republic. Here, this notion is folded into the performance text of *The Hypocrite*'s representation of the people of Hull, with whom it associates the ideals of English Radicalism.

Rather than seeking radical reforms ascribable to some kind of nascent idealism, however, when viewed in relation to the play's representation of Hull's *locale*, the radicalism

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[48] Bean, 131.
[49] Bean, 104.
[50] Bean, 21.
[51] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 12.

of Hull's peasantry seems to stem simply from these issues being more pressing to their livelihood than a preoccupation with who governs them. This becomes particularly illuminating when we follow through with the notion that the English Revolution is employed here as an allusion to more recent political tensions. In an interview with CNN in the wake of the EU Referendum, one man from Hull suggested that 'people like us, no one is listening to us, that's why [Hull] voted out'.[52] This argument, that the working-class Leave vote was motivated as much by the vastly uneven economic geography of the UK as by active Euroscepticism, has been oft repeated, and while we may lack the sociological evidence to back this up conclusively, it does seem that *The Hypocrite* draws upon a similar idea. The play suggests that Hull's *sense of place* is one defined by a scepticism towards political and economic elites, born of being consistently overlooked.

In a similar manner to the sung interactions of *The Hypocrite*'s radicals, *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* employs a narrator, "The MC" (Marc Graham), in order to allow the play to make very direct reflections upon Hull's *sense of place*. He usually does so by correlating or contrasting the characters' immediate experiences with the feelings of the city as a whole. After the birth of Leah and Chris, for example, he tells us that 'the smell of rain hangs like a memory as new life breathes into Hull./ But despite the rain giving an air of possibility Hull is full of negativity'.[53] Where the play's invocation of Hull's *sense of place* differs from that of *The Hypocrite* is that, rather the attempting to conjure up a static characterisation of the people of Hull, it instead seeks to place the city within a certain trajectory. The MC is, as the play text has it, 'in the same space with us, at this time, on this night'[54] and, rather than being personally involved in the lives of Leah and Chris, instead shares the perspective of the audience, often observing from a separate scaffold on the other side of the performance space. This perspective includes an awareness of the context of the performance, and, thus, of the trajectory of Hull into the present. The notion that Hull in the 1980s was 'full of negativity' is thus stated less because the play is interested in that particular moment in time, than because the supposed decline of Hull during the late twentieth century is a required pretext for a narrative of civic resurgence. This reaches its denouement in Act Three when The MC welcomes the audience back into the space with the declaration that 'it's 2017 in Brexit Britain

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[52] Phil Black et al., "Happy in Hull? Why This British Town Backed Brexit," CNN, accessed November 14, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/27/europe/happy-brexit-hull/index.html.
[53] Barnes, 11.
[54] Barnes, 11.

and Hull is the UK City of Culture. Blades, blue people[55] and belief'.[56] The play therefore draws on periods of past negativity in order to suggest that contemporary Hull is experiencing a civic renaissance.

The recounting of this narrative also has implications for how the play values events within Hull's past. And just as *The Hypocrite*'s grandiose set and costumes were reflective of that production's attempts to articulate Hull's role in historical narratives of global importance, so too was *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*'s more commonplace aesthetic and venue an indication of which events it would foreground. The production's epic form sees it take place over three decades, and due to the three time-jumps, there are moments where it is necessary for The MC to re-establish in which year the current action is taking place. To do so, he provides us with some political and cultural context, such as who is prime minister and what bands are currently topping the charts. However, he also tells us of the changing fortunes of Hull City Association Football Club. In some ways, this serves to reinforce the trajectory of negativity to optimism as the team drops down the English Football League in the 1980s and 1990s before successive promotion sees them rise from what was then Division Three to reach the Premier League for the first time in 2007. Yet this insistence on using Hull City as a marker of time makes a claim for the notability of Hull's local history on its own merit, taking a series of events that many outsiders would likely have little knowledge of or interest in, and presenting them as definitive events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In seeking to characterise Hull's *sense of place*, both *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* acknowledge the porousness of Hull's history. *The Hypocrite*, however, contests the notion that the occurrence in Hull of a supposedly globally-significant event (generally perceived as a positive one) necessarily means that event was a boon to the city itself. *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* takes the opposite approach, subverting the attribution of importance to events by suggesting that the fortunes of a local football team can be just as definitive as the passing of prime ministers. Drawing on these assessments of Hull's history, both plays proceed to make suggestions as to Hull's *sense of place* which once again attribute aspects of communitarianism to the city while refuting the notion that this is an inherently reactionary position.

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[55] 'Blades' and 'blue people' being references to Nayan Kulkarni's *Blade* and Spencer Tunick's *Sea of Hull*, two other prominent artworks created for and exhibited during Hull 2017.
[56] Barnes, 55.

Conclusions

Initiatives such as UKCOC have attracted a considerable weight of literature over the past few decades. While the economic and social impacts of these have been heavily critiqued, there has been little inquiry into how the cultural texts presented as part of such events might confirm or contest the promotional discourses that surround them. Through analysing two theatrical productions presented during Hull 2017, I hope to have demonstrated that such a study can provide considerable insight into the contemporary structure of feeling of a city. Against a political context in which popular understandings of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism were becoming increasingly dominant, Hull 2017 brochures, press releases and online videos sought to present Hull as distinct from the wider world yet necessarily imbricated in it. Implicit in such a characterisation, however, is the suggestion that the relationships between Hull and the wider political, economic and cultural networks of which it is a part are equitable.

Both *The Hypocrite* and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything* emphatically disputed this notion, instead foregrounding Hull's continued disempowerment. I argue that both productions conceived of Hull as an essentially communitarian city, yet rather than attributing this to a lack of tolerance to people, cultures and ideas from outside the city, this attitude is born of being historically overlooked and undervalued by political and economic elites. In addition to reconceptualising communitarianism in this way, both productions also critique elitist cosmopolitan discourses, positioning them, not as humanitarian appeals to co-operation across borders, but as little more than apologia for historical and contemporary uneven economic development.

In both *The Hypocrite*'s recasting of Hull within the English radical tradition and *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*'s celebration of the strength of social bonds within the city, we find the formulation of a progressive communitarianism which holds that place and "rootedness" can be a unifying, affirming force in a city which has consistently found itself on the global periphery. Where the two plays differ is in their suggestions of what this might mean for Hull's future. *The Hypocrite* frames Hull's communitarianism as indicative of an anti-establishment sentiment at the core of Hull's *sense of place,* and thus suggests that the city might continue to resist any move towards greater cultural or economic connectivity. *All We*

Ever Wanted Was Everything, on the other hand, indicates that the strength of social bonds within Hull has provided the foundation for a civic renaissance. In doing so, it indicates that, through increasing its standing within national and global frameworks, Hull might be beginning to conceive of itself as more and more a part of those systems, and thus on a trajectory towards embracing cosmopolitanism and internationalism on its own terms.

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