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Turner, Jane  and Campbell, PGW  (2018) Radical Care: Performative Generosity and Generativity in Third Theatre. *Performance Research*, 23 (6). pp. 58-64. ISSN 1352-8165

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2018.1533763>

**Publisher:** Taylor & Francis (Routledge)

**Version:** Accepted Version

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## Radical Care: Performative generosity and generativity in Third Theatre

Jane Turner and Patrick Campbell

### Introduction

There is much discussion regarding the crisis of the left today. This broad phenomenon reflects the collapse of orthodox communism at the end of the twentieth century, the spread of post-industrial, globalized techno-capitalism, the waning international influence of democratic socialism and the proliferation of 'new' ideologies -- ranging from Islamism to ecologism -- that focus on values, beliefs and identity rather than social class and economic interests. Despite the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing austerity measures put into place across the globe, the left has been increasingly sidelined over the past decade, as right-wing governments have swept to power (democratically or otherwise) in nations across Europe, North America and Latin America (Manwaring and Kennedy 2017).

Given an upsurge in nationalistic, xenophobic discourse and the increasing precarity that constitutes daily reality for many across the globe today, how can we effectively frame generosity as a potential site for radical social and political change? Who can afford to be 'generous', and why have they chosen to be so? Can generosity ever be more than a paternalistic gesture of benevolence? Is there space for equality and the respect of difference in the performance of generosity? And, importantly, can contemporary theatre and performance incubate and engender micro-political strategies informed by generosity, and related principles such as hospitality and care, which might potentially have a wider social and cultural reach?

We would argue that the 'Third Theatre' groups Yuyachkani (Peru) and Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium (NTL -- Denmark) have, for the past fifty years, remained sites of resistance to the hegemony of neoliberalism. Existing on the margins of two very diverse political contexts -- social democracy, for the main, in Denmark, and a series of dictatorships and internal conflict in Peru -- NTL and Yuyachkani have both successfully ontologized the remains of Marx's thought, making it present, to paraphrase Derrida (1994: 9). By rejecting the broad abstractions and totalitarian streak within Marxism, while adhering to Marx's belief in the centrality of subjective living labour, both groups have created micro-political spheres in which an ideology opposed to neoliberalism is manifest.

This counter-ideology is, we would suggest, predicated on that which Derrida has termed unconditional hospitality. For Derrida and Duformantelle (2000), 'unconditional hospitality' is an encounter with radical difference, an ethical, creative, even transgressive opening up to the Other, the 'foreigner'. According to Derrida:

In other words, there would be ... a non-dialectizable antinomy between, on the one hand, The law of unlimited hospitality (to give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself, to give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest

condition), and on the other hand, the laws (in the plural), those rights and duties that are always conditioned and conditional. (77)

Far from an abstract utopian ideal, we would assert that unconditional hospitality manifests as a concrete form of performative generosity and generativity in the praxis developed within the Third Theatre. The Third Theatre consists of a global network of practitioners who, since the 1970s, have made theatre the locus of a particular ethical stance predicated on the art form's political valence as a participatory process, means of production and aesthetic product. While this network has always been geographically dispersed, like an archipelago, bonds have been continuously renewed and strengthened over time.[{note}]<sup>1</sup> According to Eugenio Barba, the renowned director of Odin Teatret/NTL who first coined the term 'Third Theatre':

Like islands without contact between themselves, ... people gather to form theatre groups, determined to survive ... It is as if the personal needs ... wanted to be transformed into work according to an attitude ... an ethical imperative, not limited to the profession only, but extending through the whole of daily life. (1979: 145--7)

Importantly, the form taken by this ethical theatre-as-being-in-the-world is not prescribed. At this junction in their historical trajectories, both Yuyachkani and NTL are mentoring young artists whose aesthetic choices vary widely. There is an unconditional acceptance of this difference on a level of form, but equally an insistence that the work of the artist should nonetheless be a micro-political site of resistance and revolt against the inequalities of a hegemonic globalized neoliberal paradigm. Hence, while previous critiques of Odin Teatret, NTL and the Third Theatre as a phenomenon have often emphasized a formalistic homogeneity haunting the work of this theatrical community, today, in contrast, we would affirm that both groups provide potential models for a radical form of democratic intersubjectivity, which is achieved through a difficult, ongoing process of self-negation, predicated on an archi-acceptance of, and commitment to, diversity and otherness (Watson 2002).

This ethical stance resonates with Giles' notion of radical care:

in a political situation in which care is both exceptionally necessary and exceptionally underprovided, acts of care begin to look politically radical. To care is to act against the grain of social and economic orthodoxy: to advocate care is, in the present moment, to advocate a kind of political rupture. (2016)

Thus hospitality and radical care interweave in the performative generosity of Third Theatre groups, offering us generative models of participatory theatrical processes and performances that help establish both long-lasting and ephemeral intersubjective communities, predicated on a recognition of diversity and a negotiated way of being together mediated by art.

## Revolutionary Violence, Reconciliation and Generativity: The Performative Generosity of Yuyachkani

Founded in 1971 in Lima, the Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani has developed a body of theatrical work that critically engages with the political and cultural reality of Peru in a number of innovative ways. The group is formed of a nucleus of permanent actors (Teresa Ralli, Rebeca Ralli, Ana Correa, Débora Correa, Augusto Casafranca and Julian Vargas) and director Miguel Rubio. In Quechua, the word yuyachkani means 'I am thinking, I am remembering', and the group's praxis fuses European and Asian theatrical forms with elements taken from the traditional sacred rites and festivities of the Andes in order to interrogate and reflect upon Peru's past and present. Yuyachkani have a vast repertoire of performances, passacalles (street performances), performative installations, work demonstrations, desmontajes (scenic deconstructions revealing the creative processes underpinning key productions), workshops for professional actors and community members and open laboratories for young practitioners wishing to gain a greater understanding of the group's methodology.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, particular weight is given today to workshops and laboratories, as the group opens up to new creative input from younger collaborators and members.

Initially influenced by both the overtly politicized Latin American Group Theatre movement and the documentary theatrical techniques of Peter Weiss, from the late 1970s Yuyachkani participated in the Third Theatre Encounters organized across Latin America by Mario Delgado of the Peruvian theatre group Cuatrotablas, and collaborated with Eugenio Barba of Odin Teatret. As the development of the Third Theatre community shifted at this point from Europe to Latin America, Yuyachkani would become important members of this transnational community (Watson 2002: 197-221). Rubio drew on the Barter model of theatre developed by Odin Teatret (discussed below), along with Barba's notion of the pre-expressive level of performance and the need for rigorous psychophysical actor training (Rubio 2017). However, Yuyachkani's work within community settings took on perhaps its most powerful form during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) following the 'Internal Conflict' in Peru.

From 1980 to 2000, an Internal Conflict was waged in Peru between the Maoist guerrilla group Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso), the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru -- MRTA) and the military and paramilitary forces sent by the Peruvian state to combat both revolutionary groups. Atrocities were committed by both the revolutionary and counter-insurgency forces, and an estimated 70,000 people died over the course of the Conflict, the vast majority Indigenous and mestizo inhabitants of the Andean and Amazonian regions of the country. While a number of artists and intellectuals fled Peru during this period, the members of Yuyachkani chose to stay in Lima, despite the significant risk they ran by doing this, transforming their theatre space into a permanent theatrical laboratory, and developing a number of iconic performances detailing the political chaos of the period and its effect on Peru's population. These performances, which include *Adiós Ayacucho* (1990) and *Antígona* (2000) were characterized by a scenic fusion of European, Asian and Peruvian performance forms that at once affirmed and problematized Peru's culturally diverse heritage. These devised productions would form the bedrock of the material that the group used in their peripatetic performances in Andean villages during the TRC, which took place in the province of Ayacucho in 2002. Another piece, *Rosa Cuchillo* (2002) was developed specifically for the TRC. These performances offered a performative, participatory way of

engaging local people in the reconciliation process, encouraging them to come forward and give their testimony to the Council. The performances offered an effective way of mediating communication, facilitating effective dialogue as a part of the national healing process.

In light of the horrific violence perpetrated on Peru's subaltern populations by far-left militia and reactionary military forces alike, the original Marxist thrust behind the group's political performances of the 1970s had given way, by the early 2000s, to a rejection of the revolutionary violence underpinning orthodox Marxism. This finds an echo in the discourse of Italian philosopher Augusto del Noce (2014). A key problematic aspect of Marxism was, for del Noce, 'The ennoblement of violence [which] is tied to the idea of total revolution ... This transition implies a radical, necessarily violent break with history up to now' (20). According to del Noce, revolutionary violence springs from a reaffirmation of a Gnostic structure of thought that radically rejects the world as it is, denigrating the past while positing all good as a future potentiality that will only be achieved by erasing that which has gone before.

It could be argued that it was this violent devaluation of past values that manifested in the genocide of the Indigenous populations of the Andean region of Peru during the Internal Conflict. Importantly, Yuyachkani have invited audiences to critically reflect on Peruvian cultural memory through the manifold iterations of their participatory theatrical work. By integrating the traditional masked performances, folk dances and Quechua-language and Aymara-language songs of Peru into their poetics, Yuyachkani have not only promoted the aesthetic richness of local Indigenous cultures, they have also foregrounded the diversity of Peruvian national identity during the ongoing reparation period that has followed the end of the Internal Conflict.

Yuyachkani's director, Miguel Rubio, suggests that today the grand narrative of Marxism has ceded, and that in its place the members of Yuyachkani place an onus on a micro-politics of care and wellbeing (Rubio 2017). Generosity is an important principle for the group, and one that Rubio feels they learnt by following the example of Barba and the Odin, with their tradition of barter, work demonstrations, publications and pedagogic concerns. The word 'generosity' resonates for Rubio with the Quechua concept of *ainí*, or reciprocity. Thus generosity is always already community-building and participatory, an equal exchange rather than an inequitable gesture of benevolence; an autochthonous, Peruvian notion of intersubjectivity inherently colours Yuyachkani's praxis (Rubio 2017).

Over recent years Yuyachkani have hospitably opened their theatre up to new members from a younger generation of artists in Lima. While the group have worked with collaborators throughout their history, they have now consciously adopted what they call 'a mixed project' approach, in order to integrate younger performers into the collective (Rubio 2017). Rubio sees this intergenerational exchange as a key way of keeping Yuyachkani alive; up until now, the core collective was made up of those actors who had renounced everything during the period of Internal Conflict in order to remain in the group. They were -- and continue to be -- united by a powerful sense of shared history. Nevertheless, the group members -- self-denominated 'beginners with experience' (Correa 2000: 93) are, after almost fifty years, opening their doors to less experienced actors, many in their early

twenties, and generously sharing with these novices a lifetime's worth of learning and knowledge. In exchange, the young members are expected to collaborate as volunteers during workshops and laboratories, developing key skills in communication, project organization and community outreach. They are also being supported to develop their own creative artistic voices, and thus to generate new directions for the group's work.

A number of younger actors were recently incorporated into Yuyachkani's latest performance *Discurso de Promoción* (2017), which confronts revisionist takes on Peru's history in the run up to the 2021 Bicentennial celebrations. The devised performance, developed over fourteen months through open workshops, was developed through a process that Rubio calls *reciclaje* (recycling); old props from the group's repertoire were taken out of storage and given a new life and other scenic elements came from the secondary school opposite the group's building, which was recently purchased by local property speculators and closed down (Rubio 2017). In a similar fashion, the group are 'recycling' themselves on a deeper, structural level, ensuring a future for the collective that surpasses the careers of the permanent core members by welcoming these younger artists, who Rubio affectionately terms Yuyachkani's 'allies' (2017). This preoccupation with legacy and continuity reflects the group members' pedagogic concerns and the importance given to memory and heritage. It is also an important mark of the group's care and generosity -- their willingness after so many years to incorporate a younger generation of artists and integrate them into the small theatrical tradition that they have established in a meaningful, sustainable way.

#### Artistic Residencies and Festuges: NTL's Activities in Holstebro

Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium (NTL) was founded at the same time as Odin Teatret moved to its base in Holstebro, Denmark in the mid-1960s. The status of NTL has transformed over time, as a response to the drives and necessities of the projects being developed. As an independent organization, it incorporates the majority of activities generated by Odin Teatret and members of Odin Teatret, including the Magdalena Project, Transit, the tri-annual Festuge (Festive Week), among other activities. Around the group's fiftieth anniversary, an article in the local press noted that while the theatre had benefited from local support over fifty years, more often than not the group was not in residence and the theatre spaces were inactive.<sup>[note]3</sup> As a result of the article, it was decided that NTL needed to initiate and grow a new branch of its activities; it now employs staff specifically to promote and realize a wide range of residential opportunities at the theatre that provide space for emerging artists to develop and share their work, as well as become involved in co-productions.

The residencies allow individuals and groups to share their work and receive feedback in 'artistic safety'. A requirement, at the point of application, is that applicants, in addition to proposing their project and explaining why they want to work at/with NTL, must also propose how their project can work in/with/for the local region. They are required to identify how they will collaborate with institutions, for example, the local Women's Crisis Centre, or Refuge and Asylum Centre. The integration of this recent branch of their activity extends the Barter model developed by Odin, which Watson has described as an ongoing process of 'accumulating social capital generated by a complex reciprocity cycle' (2015: 189). Watson makes the point that reciprocal generosity has formed the

basis of Odin Teatret's existence as an organization since the group struck up a collaborative partnership with the Danish municipality of Holstebro in 1966, and this particular dynamic, characterized by what Mauss (1954 [1925]) would term 'gift exchange', underpins the way in which they engage with other artists, groups, organizations and communities.

The NTL project has been transformative and might be described as a rebirth: numerous projects have been gifted to the local region and have produced a more extensive and complex dialectical network of artists constituting a plurality of professional performance identities, who are ensuring an ongoing living legacy of arts projects with and across the region. The project also promotes the continued importance of making and sharing theatre work with an audience, or group of participants, who do not necessarily have a shared language; this ethos has been integral to their work from the beginning.

Pierangelo Pompa is a founding member of the Altamira Studio Theatre and has benefited from the extended hospitality of NTL and the residency scheme.<sup>[note]4</sup> He spent eight years with NTL in Holstebro. During this time, a time he referred to as being 'like an apprenticeship', he has conceived projects that reach out to local communities that have afforded him and the laboratory group 'open possibilities ... a dance can be achieved (not for but with) the artistic and local community' (Pompa 2016). Pompa, who comes from Italy and works with performers from Italy and France, describes the NTL residency model as countercultural to the more pervasive landscape of arts practice in Europe that is dominated by work that, by economic necessity, is not interested in craft or discipline. Pompa suggests that the residencies are 'old-fashioned' in that they offer artists the opportunity to work in depth, developing their artistic identity and craft through rigour and self-discipline (2015).

There is something in Pompa's description of the NTL residencies that resonates with philosopher Michel Henry's attempt to reclaim Marx's thought from what he suggests is its misappropriation by Marxism. Of particular interest here is Henry's attention to the notion of life and living work. Henry (2014) suggests that the distinctive feature of the worker is his living work, understood as a sensuous human activity. This living work is a praxis, a productive force that is utterly subjective and individual. Equally, social reality is the combined subjective praxes of living individuals, and hence consists of a social praxis that transcends schematic social or economic dogma. The NTL residency model requires performers and theatre groups to commit to an ethos that might be described as a living work. They are expected to work in the studios daily, schedule interim showings of their work for feedback, organize and facilitate the outreach aspects of their proposal and contribute to the cleaning and effective running of the theatre spaces.

NTL was founded on and sustains the principles of a co-operative. Barba has spoken at length in the past of his ambiguous relationship to orthodox Marxism and other scholars, such as Maria Shevtsova (in Watson 2002), have identified an ambiguous political thrust in the activities of Odin Teatret and NTL (Rasmussen, 2016). In many ways, NTL's ideological impulse seems much more akin to Henry's phenomenologically inflected reappropriation of Marx. It is evident that the model of the Festuge developed by NTL operates to reverse the alienation of labour that Henry (2014) identifies at the heart of both socialism and neoliberalism. By generating a form of alternative social praxis that

counters the normative condition of experiencing art and performance in an alienated state of partial distraction, a range of expanded creative practices are accommodated that share a space, time and an ethos of communal sharing mediated by performance. Locals residing in Holstebro and West Jutland are invited to experience their environment differently: live differently, see differently, do differently for the duration of the Festuge. Hence, as noted previously, the Festuge is a further vehicle that promotes generosity, the importance of cultural exchange and reciprocity -- all values that are inherent in NTL's operations.

The collection of events that come together under the banner of Festuge began in 1989 and the festival runs for nine days and nights every three years. Watson usefully describes the programme of activities as a 'community event, a festive occasion for the people of Holstebro' (1993: 179). The programme is often driven by a theme that local groups and individuals respond to; it also incorporates creative work from a range of foreign theatre practitioners and artists, which includes NTL artists-in-residence. The programme can appear eclectic: the 2017 Festuge was themed *The Wild West Roots and Shoots: Re-think* and incorporated collaborative creative events from local community groups such as the Scouts, but also involved institutions like the local council and library, who accommodated events in their buildings -- one of which involved Shetland ponies racing around the shelves in the library building. Thirty-eight overseas groups and individual artists were involved in the events, working alongside over eighty local groups and individuals .<sup>[note]5</sup>. Local residents enjoyed a daily schedule that began with an opening parade and included two directed events incorporating performances from all the contributors. These large-scale, site-specific events frame the Festuge and weave the theme into a broad narrative that resonates throughout the nine days and nights of further activities. Central to the 2017 event was the contribution made by Théâtre du Centaure from France, who, along with their horses, camped outside the library in makeshift stables and were involved in activities every day.

Captured here is the essence of the ethos of Festuge: the hospitable inclusivity of the many encounters, the delightful and playful disruption of the everyday, and the breathtakingly beautiful spectacle that, in this instance, was produced by horses and riders who created an experience that will be fixed in the memory of those fortunate enough to have witnessed it. Inherent in the act of situating the horses in the town centre is an act of care; the stables became a place where people were invited to slow down and spend time with the creatures, the artists and experience a different sense of being in the world; a different sense of living work. Returning to Giles' notion that to advocate care is to advocate political rupture (Giles 2016), consequently, performance, in this context, might be considered an act of reciprocal care and as such can be deemed both radical and political.

## Conclusion

According to Derrida, in *The Spectre of Marx* (1994),



Marx remains an immigrant chez nous, a glorious, sacred, accursed but still a clandestine immigrant as he was all his life. He belongs to a time of disjunction, to that 'time out of joint' in which is inaugurated, laboriously, painfully, tragically, a new thinking of borders, a new experience of the house, the home, and the economy. Between earth and sky. One should not rush to make of the clandestine immigrant an illegal alien or, what always risks coming down to the same thing, to domesticate him. To neutralize him through naturalization. To assimilate him so as to stop frightening oneself (making oneself fear) with him. He is not part of the family, but one should not send him back, once again, him too, to the border. (1994: 81)

The spectre of Marx cannot be relegated entirely to the past, or remain tied to the former socialist regimes of the Eastern Bloc built upon revisionist, Stalinist Marxist ideological foundations. Neither has his spectre been completely lost in today's Western techno-capitalist society. The messianic thrust of Marx's philosophy -- the ghost of his thought -- remains, as Derrida suggests, in emancipatory micro-political actions and, in the case of the Third Theatre, in the body of the group, which is itself a new way of thinking -- and challenging -- borders, notions of belonging and cultural value. Yuyachkani and NTL have managed to cultivate a performative way of remaining on the borders while effecting social change without taming or neutralizing their initial radical impulses. While this Marxian ethical stance might well seem passé, it nevertheless offers an ethos of performative living labour predicated on generosity, hospitality and radical care. That a new generation of young artists in Europe and Latin America are eager to engage and participate in this small theatrical tradition is perhaps a sign of its lasting significance and relevancy.

## Notes

1 Between 1976 and 2018, ten international encounters of group theatre took place across Europe and Latin America that served to indelibly shape the Third Theatre community. Organized by key figures such as Eugenio Barba of Odin Teatret and Mario Delgado of Cuatrotablas (Peru), these encounters allowed a wide range of groups to share their praxes, further strengthening the sense of an international theatrical community.

2 In 2017, Turner and Campbell took part in Yuyachkani's 9th Open Laboratory, and were able to witness and experience the group's work, and carry out interviews with Miguel Rubio and Ana Correa.

3 A year after Odin Teatret's fiftieth anniversary, Turner and Campbell went on a week-long research trip to Holstebro in order to carry out a number of interviews with key figures including Eugenio Barba and Julia Varley. We were able to also interview a range of young artists from NTL.

4 For further information on Altamira Studio Theatre, see [www.thirdtheatrenetwork.com](http://www.thirdtheatrenetwork.com)

5. See [odinteatret.dk](http://odinteatret.dk): online.

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