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## **The Call to Play: New Work and Labor at Artsadmin**

A gospel of life is needed rather than increased production [...] such a gospel must now be put forward or all that work will fail. Morality must be united with economics as a practical science.

—Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England*<sup>1</sup>

*February 2010. The lights are off. As I adjust to the dark I can make out shapes of others scattered around the room. Disoriented and uncertain I wait for some sign or direction of what to do. The air is thick with anticipation but as time drags it becomes clear that no instructions are coming. Then it begins all around me. Sat in the dark in a workshop in the courtroom studio of Toynbee Studios, I begin to feel anxious. I see the outline of another body in front of me and I panic. I should do something. I reach for anything that might keep things working, that might keep play going. Does anyone want to dance, I ask. I waltz. I sense someone dancing behind me.*

In what follows I think through my participation in a 2010 workshop led Anne Bean, recounted in part above, to better understand the role of play in the conditions of production for theatre and performance under capital. Bean is an interdisciplinary artist belonging to (or claimed by) multiple experimental art scenes, including visual, performance and sound art, who has been a central figure of European live art since the 1970s. The workshop, which was conducted largely in the dark and focused on the aestheticization of co-operation through an emphasis on its participants “doing play,” was held at Artsadmin’s Toynbee Studios, the influential UK arts producing organization’s home in East London. This article puts my account of Bean’s workshop in conversation with Victorian economist Arnold Toynbee’s

demand for a new capitalist morality. Toynbee's appeal was, of course, not directed at me or the other workshop participants disoriented and uncertain in the dark. But, I argue, that the situation of play that arose in Bean's workshop is a contemporary iteration of what Toynbee termed a "gospel of life," a term referring to a commitment to self and civic betterment at the core of a burgeoning capitalist morality. The connection between the shaping of Victorian labor practices and the staging of co-operation between participants in Bean's contemporary workshop is the basis for this essay's core assertion: that the value of play as a counterpoint to work within practices and discourses of theatre and performance needs considerable rethinking.

The call to play in contemporary theatre and performance marks a belief that the work being done belongs to the individual or the community, rather than to the market.<sup>2</sup> It appears to hold normative relations of production at a distance all the while conflating aspirations of self-development and social futures with processes of work. Theatre and performance studies' fashioning of play draws heavily on performance theorist Richard Schechner's 1973 reimagining of the workshop, traditionally a site of labor, as a "protected time-space" that escapes the pressures of production. It is worth noting that the dating of Schechner's writing on workshops corresponds with world events that marked the accelerated restructuring of labor and production associated with neoliberal capitalism and deindustrialization.<sup>3</sup> Schechner, among others, positioned workshops as integral spaces for theatre and performance because they served as sites for play. Informed by his interest in cultural anthropology, Schechner framed workshops as a response by local communities to the effects of a homogenizing "global" culture, functioning as sites that sat outside of the impersonal, every day, and competitive order of society.<sup>4</sup> Workshops thus appeared to encompass not only a commitment to the development of craft for its own sake but to stand-in for an alternative community. An effect of this configuration, especially for those caught

up in the cultural politics of theatre and performance, is that the resistant potential embedded in play's imagining functions as a reparative fantasy in which practitioners can disassociate the theatre and performance sector from its own industrial conditions in the context of larger of capital-labor relations.

Anne Bean's weekend workshop at Toynbee Studios is a productive case that draws out the problems of play and work for the sector. It is one instance of a wider package of artist development activities provided by Artsadmin that enables rather than creates "new work." Through a closer look at Artsadmin's robust artist development program catering for the UK's "new work" sector, this article troubles the fictionalized gap between production and play that underpins the maintenance of the "new work" sector.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, I mobilize and problematize the term "new work". New work has operational and disciplinary significance in the UK, denoting a marginal sector in the cultural industries that embraces a collection of practices that cut across and challenge conventional conceptions of performance, visual arts, dance, and theatre.<sup>6</sup> But the term also functions on a theoretical level, referring to wider contemporary shifts in post-Fordist labor practices as one element of a drastic recasting of the relations between state, capital, social control, and social reproduction. As economies in Europe and North America moved from manufacturing to the provision of services, ideas, and experiences, the shift from stable to flexible jobs associated with de-industrialization corresponds with the aggressive disinvestment in social welfare by the state. This rescaling of production to the metropolis also lies at the heart of the new work of capital, with the evolution of urban neoliberalism into what Neil Smith calls "gentrification writ large."<sup>7</sup> Together these changes have put increasing pressure on the ability of people to maintain themselves, their families, and communities. As many have argued, the expansion and consolidation of the social relations of capital have thrown into relief a crisis of social reproduction that is at the core of the capitalist system itself.<sup>8</sup>

The location of Bean's workshop and Artsadmin, on the grounds of the Toynbee Hall estate, throws into relief a sticky historical relationship between the shaping of Victorian labor practices and the new work theatre and performance labor sector. Without pushing transhistorical commonalities Toynbee Hall's aims in the nineteenth century offers an important reference point for re-attending to the material conditions of the contemporary cultural worker that Artsadmin now serves. A grand Victorian civic center with a mission to serve the laboring poor, Toynbee Hall sought to mitigate the effects of the industrial revolution's devastating toll on the increasingly dense and disgruntled constituency of urban working class in the area. Art and craft, according to its founders, were key to reforming and ameliorating, but importantly not ending, aspects necessary for capitalism's continued survival: exploitative labor practices in London and a way of life for London's working class. However, in celebrating a partial account of the artisan's life, its mission mobilized a contradictory value system—deep rooted habits like solidarity and mutuality at the base of craft labor and an individualistic economic order at the base of a middle class social imaginary. In this and other bourgeois configurations, play is framed as work on the self that is authentic, contributing to the formation of an entrepreneurial subject under capital. Play and its relation to work functions as bio-political force that “renders populations at once productive and governable, increasing their capacities together with their docility,” both in theatre and performance and the wider world.<sup>9</sup>

In this first half of the essay I recount my embodied experience of Anne Bean's Weekender workshop and the imperative to play that saturated mine and other's participation. I then situate this experience within the broader regime of play in the discipline and beyond. I argue that the narrative of play embedded in theatre and performance workshops is not only indebted to an anthropological/Schechnerian inheritance but, also owes a debt to eighteenth-century European political philosophy and Toynbee's nineteenth-century social theory. The

second half of this essay grapples with the political significance of the location of Artsadmin's artist development activities at Toynbee Hall. It draws out the tensions in the subjectivities at work in labor, both in the Victorian era and in the present post-Fordist moment, and the role the middle-class imaginary has in both. Without pushing trans-historical commonalities, tracking the significance of Toynbee Hall in the past and Toynbee Studios in the present serves to index a bourgeois ethics of community that saturates ambiguity in the call to play—a call that has serious limitations for the social and material organization of those working in the new work sector and for a more just future.

While there is no doubt that what makes play central to theatre and performance is the way it might enable different possibilities for reality to appear, this article is interested in what possibilities are obscured when play is valorized and imagined as “not just work” in the context of artist development, liberalism, and capitalism. In doing so, this exploration seeks to set new terms for considering how sectoral artist advocacy organisations, like Artsadmin, might support the development of material solidarities across a range of people who continue to have their common means of survival expropriated through capitalist urban transformation.

### **Playing in the Dark: Anne Bean's workshop**

*You will be working in darkness.*

*There are chairs along the sides of the room.*

*Please bring in water.*

*Don't bring in phones or watches.*

*Please don't leave unless there is an emergency.*

*The door will open at the end of this morning session. You will have an hour for lunch.*

*Please return to the studio by 2pm.*

*Make yourself comfortable.<sup>10</sup>*

Those were the instructions I read before walking into the Courtroom Studio to begin Anne Bean's weekend workshop at Artsadmin in February 2010, part of the organization's Weekender series. The workshop appeared as an opportunity for Bean to experiment with creating an aesthetic space to make a performance of co-operation. Her aim, she explained was to "introduce artifice in order to escape the norm."<sup>11</sup> Time, darkness, and silence had been conceived as a mode of being in a room together. These materials offered up, for Bean, an initial starting space for collaboration among the group. Bean's work often makes a virtue of the performance of process, rather than a finished or complete product. Through her collaborations, she sets up playful yet sticky situations where ideas of collectivity, ownership, and art forms are practically explored and negotiated in an ongoing and decidedly challenging fashion. True to her description of her workshop, she aimed "to find a way in which we [could] feel intimate or comfortable enough with each other to produce or conceptualize a piece which would come from true collaboration, a space between us all."<sup>12</sup>

While Bean, an artist who resists categorization, might recoil at my attempt to situate her practice as part of the new work sector in the UK, she is a sectoral player. The initiator of the irreverent pseudo pop-band Moody and the Menstruators (1971-74), a regular collaborator with the audacious duo the Kipper Kids (1970-2005), and a co-founder of sound art collective Bow Gamelan Ensemble (1983-90), she continues to develop solo and collaborative practices locally, nationally, and internationally. Bean was an inaugural Live Art Development Agency and Tate Research Legacy Thinker in Residence awardee (2008-13) and is an Artsadmin associate artist, both key organizations in the UK supporting, disseminating, and producing new work.<sup>13</sup>

Once all of us participating in Bean's workshop had read the instructions posted on the studio door we walked, without introductions, into the darkened room. The lights were off

and rubbish bags were taped up to cover the windows. As I adjusted to the dark I could just make out the shapes of other workshop participants sitting on the floor, scattered around the studio. Disoriented and uncertain, I waited. In the early moments of this darkness I felt a heightened sense of anticipation for some sign or direction of what to do next. But nothing came. Bean did not materialize to set us on a course. As the time dragged on it became clear that there was nothing for us to do. Rather, the unfolding of the session and the collaboration between us was being staged as the work at hand. For the first three hours of the workshop we were in the dark, both literally and figuratively, and this created uncertainty over the rules of operation of the session. When this uncertainty was coupled with the shared context of being in a workshop it produced instances of people doing play. In answer to a fundamental ethical question “How shall I act,” as posed by Nicholas Ridout in *Theatre and Ethics*, the response in the room seemed to be “I should act playfully.”<sup>14</sup> As the morning session continued I registered my own and others varied, and at times forceful, attempts at making something happen. With nothing explicit to guide our collective or individual attention to the ways we might be responsive and responsible there was an internal drive to perform play—to take initiative and make something creative happen. It was immediate, ongoing and insistent throughout. The workshop’s focus on an aestheticization of co-operation was overwhelmed by participants doing play in the dark.

Doing play often took on familiar forms and qualities. Attempts to generate group play by some, successful and aborted, included things like the human train and follow the leader. The dark may have cloaked our play but there was little attempt by workshop participants to keep it undeclared. At times participants employed various play forms outlined by Roger Caillois’ study of play and games, for example creating competitions by throwing shoes or playing tag; pretending to be explorers; or altering perception by spinning rapidly for a long period.<sup>15</sup> In what felt like midway through the morning session I recall sitting on



the studio floor in the dark a few feet behind another seated participant. I was faced with a fundamental problem. I knew that this workshop was focusing on connections and interactions between us, but I was stuck. I felt I should do something, make contact with this other person, but I was unable to move. Disoriented and uncertain, my inability to act was making me anxious. If individual action has become the measure of oneself then this inertia coupled with my embarrassment, characteristic of depression rather than play, might have served as a window of opportunity to break the political flow of post-Fordist production.<sup>16</sup> Instead, I panicked and reached for something that might keep things “working,” that might keep play going. I asked if anyone wanted to dance. I waltzed. I sensed somebody dancing behind me.

This is a flow that demands action—I must communicate, I must express myself, I must collaborate. These are the imperatives of play. The theory of play as flow, articulated for example in Mihály Csíkszentmihályi’s *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, is proffered as a universal experience of being that can permeate all aspects of life and work.<sup>17</sup> According to Csíkszentmihályi, “To overcome the anxieties and depressions of contemporary life individuals must become independent of social environments [...] To achieve such autonomy, a person has to learn to provide rewards to herself.” “In normal life, we keep interrupting what we do with doubts and questions. ‘Why am I doing this? Should I perhaps be doing something else?’” Csíkszentmihályi explains, “But in flow there is no need to reflect, because the action carries us forward as if by magic.”<sup>18</sup> Play as magical flow is, I suggest, the articulation of the affective traces of capitalism in this particular moment. The challenge with breaking the flow is that fleshy existence, as an embodied and embedded infrastructure supporting capital’s “flow of intensities,” requires a radical and painful qualitative shift in material embodied consciousness.<sup>19</sup> Instead, I panicked and reached for

something that might keep things “working,” that might keep play going. I asked if anyone wanted to dance. I waltzed. I sensed somebody dancing behind me.

Sometime after the weekend workshop with Bean, she explained to me that she sought to allow space for provocation and boredom and had been quite shocked by the “greediness of pulling the space” that quite quickly broke the sensibility she had set up.<sup>20</sup> Installing herself in the darkness unbeknownst to the participants, she had committed to not making any value judgments on what might be produced in those first three hours but had expected that there would be a sense of time passing and energy building before anything would manifest between participants. Informed by improvisational practices that celebrate the chaotic and polyvocal and driven by a deep interest in materials and what they might be able to do, Bean’s practice has been influenced Joseph Beuys’ concept of social sculpture.<sup>21</sup> While Bean has an affinity with the politics embedded in Beuys’ metaphysical approach to making performance, hers is also associated with a particular lightness and irreverence found in the DIY punk and performance art scene of 1970s and 1980s Britain. She had not anticipated the degree to which the regime of play reigned within the psyche and bodies of the participants.

I shared Bean’s surprise as did other participants on the day. On returning to the workshop after lunch, we sat together with the lights on in the room we had left an hour earlier. To everyone’s astonishment, only one participant identified themselves as not participating in the frenzy of the morning session, instead finding a corner in the dark room to take the time to lie down and rest. Their approach to the first half of Bean’s workshop was the exception and not the rule. All of us registered shock at the level of intense affect and activity that had been maintained from almost as soon as the doors had closed until the morning session broke. Some participants reflected on their discomfort in not knowing what Bean expected of them and considered how that uneasiness and uncertainty manifested into doing something, anything. A few commented on the pressure they felt waiting in the dark,

and how the anxiety it created overwhelmed them into joining in activity as it arose. Some participants mentioned that they felt harassed to take part, when others' play was insistent and loud. It seemed that, overall, participants felt that they should play. Added to this mix of accountability and fear, having had little experience of running workshops in the past, Bean did not fully anticipate the degree to which expectations of delivering a product, in this case her practice, shaped the initial behavior of participants.<sup>22</sup>

Using the parameters of the workshop as a starting point to work with strangers Bean had sought to be part of a temporary group, connecting with different people to bring out something unknowable to all.<sup>23</sup> In doing so she unintentionally disavowed the ways workshops are configured as a simulation of work, places for practicing work through an escape from it. What Bean's disavowal of workshops threw into relief is the way participation in such settings is determined by an authoritarian discourse of play that underpins new work practice. Play together, now.

### **The Regime of Play**

Schechner's broad spectrum of performance is a potent reference for thinking about the role of play in workshops, drawing heavily on anthropological and social scientists' readings of its cultural importance. Influenced in part by Hindu metaphysics, Schechner's writing draws together two lines of thought in twentieth century anthropological studies on play: one assigns play to a separate unproductive sphere in everyday life characterized as voluntary, free, and excessive and the other offers play as a serious meaning-making activity that represents cultural truths of a particular time and place.<sup>24</sup> The melding of play as cultural form and experiential reality coalesces in various forms in Schechner's writings, for example in that of dark play and in the playing that happens during workshops.<sup>25</sup> Play, according to

Schechner, is slippery, volatile, and dangerous because it brings an awareness of the existence of multiple realities and possibilities.

The promise is that playing around with reality does more than focus the individual's somatic and cognitive awareness on the contingency of movements and beliefs. The potential for individuals to move in new ways is linked to a further possibility; through playing, individuals are closer to breaking the hold of a normative reality, or set of rules and conventions, that are immobile, concrete, and oppressive. Playing in this configuration is conflated with an innovative creativity that shifts norms towards social justice—it not only breaks rules but also creates new, potentially more just ones. Tim Etchells of UK's Forced Entertainment closes his polemic on the importance of risk and investment in the performance encounter by asking of what he has witnessed “Will it change you, will it change me, will it change things? If not it was a waste of time.”<sup>26</sup> In *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*, Jill Dolan offers theatre as a site for imagining a better world. Dolan's argument for revitalizing humanity is centered on utopia as playfully processual; a “what if,” rather than a more restrictive, finite image of the “what should be,” and on theatre and performance as a site for modelling and inspiring social change.<sup>27</sup> “For what is our field”, she has written elsewhere, “if it doesn't demonstrate modes of embodied civic engagement”.<sup>28</sup> Play, like the performance encounter it is linked to, is valued for its productive ability. It is put to work. Ideally, its instability and uncertainty prepares the way for something better.

The political ideals of the Enlightenment also linked play with virtuous commitments to individual and social futures. Exemplary of the role play has in the development of the liberal individual and its productivity is Friedrich Schiller's concept of the play-drive. In Schiller's schema, the play-drive is configured as a psychic necessity for the development of the individual, representing a subjective state of internal self-

determination. It is a drive for freedom. Writing in his 1794 treaty, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Schiller explains, “man only plays when he is the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.”<sup>29</sup> Play, understood as surplus vitality, is expressed as affect, a destabilizing embodied intensity, and one that Schiller seeks to reconstruct into a new reality principle. As conceived under liberalism, play is rendered as a productive force that signals the individual’s private capacity for freedom. It expresses the absolute power and responsibility of the individual to feel itself pulling itself together.

The opening of virtuous commitments to social and cultural economies embedded in cultivating the self through play remained central to liberal democratic rhetoric and practices of aesthetic education into the early twentieth century. US educational reformer and pragmatist John Dewey developed an influential pedagogic philosophy, also featuring a revision of the workshop, and resting on the value of growth, play, and experience as keys to individual and social good. Dewey’s work heavily influenced Allan Kaprow’s 1972 writing on play and artwork, which seems animated by Schiller’s idealized play-instinct. Kaprow insisted that:

[r]eplacing *artist* with *player*, as if adopting an alias, is a way of altering a fixed identity. And a changed identity is a principle of mobility, of going from one place to another. Art work, a sort of moral paradigm for an exhausted work ethic is converting into play.<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, Kaprow’s attempt to describe an alternative to capitalist production processes directed by play reflects, instead, the burgeoning phase of its post-Fordist development. Within contemporary neoliberal labor practices, play has become the precursor for aestheticizing a different kind of scene—one that arises through the individual’s relationship to its own labor.

The relationship between theatre, performance, and shifts in labor has been the subject of much recent critical discussion in theatre and performance studies.<sup>31</sup> Bojana Kunst's critical reflection on the proximities of contemporary theatre and performance making processes to contemporary modes of labor underlines the uneasy tension between play and work in both.<sup>32</sup> Giulia Palladini's argument that the emancipatory pleasure associated with participation in New York's 1960s underground theatre and performance scene should be viewed as a potential that is not only a prelude to neoliberal value capture throws into relief the urgency to attend to problems in differentiating between utopian sites created through collective action and specialized sites for capital's reproduction.<sup>33</sup> The resistant and radically flexible subject imagined by theatre and performance from the 1960s onwards now strongly resembles the post-Fordist flexible worker as it is imagined in much more recent managerial literature.<sup>34</sup> Pat Kane's 2004 *Play Ethic*, with its description of workers in the cultural and digital industries, is exemplary of this shift.<sup>35</sup> Substituting play for Max Weber's work, Kane's book and subsequent writings champion playing as an essential vital force that combats psychological and economic depression and promotes future economic growth. Countering the immobility I experienced in Bean's workshop, Kane proffers the player as the ideal identity to re-authenticate the organizational structures of capitalism and its spatio-temporal shifts. The rhetoric of the player rather than the worker obscures the ways an emphasis on play, and its partner creativity, serves to continue to legitimize not only the expansion of work into all hours of our lives through technology but also the spreading precarity, inequality, exhaustion and (self)-exploitation that accompanies shifts in the capitalist political economy.

In capital's long moment, theatre and performance's reliance on the resistant potential of play resonates with Kane's call to play and Arnold Toynbee's call for a new morality "that is united with economics."<sup>36</sup> During periods of capitalist restructuring, these

calls, in different ways, seek to secure work as an affective site that supports self-fulfillment and ethical responsibilities while obscuring the inequity at the base of capitalism itself. Toynebee's gospel and Kane's play-ethic emerge from and re-entrench a market based socio-economic relation controlled by the capitalist class. Both seek to reform work rather than resist capitalist production. Similarly, the rhetoric of play in theatre and performance invites workers to re-authenticate their commitment to the work of theatre and performance while claiming it is an expression of "real" work. In doing so, play functions as an affective fantasy akin to what Lauren Berlant has termed an attachment of "cruel optimism" that enables while disabling, muddying the sector's material conditions in the context of broader systems of capitalist production.<sup>37</sup>

### **Artsadmin and New work**

Anne Bean's Weekender is one instance of the regular Weekender workshop series hosted by Artsadmin since 2009. When the organization's bursary scheme briefly lost its funding from the Arts Council of England in 2007, the organization sought an economical way to address the gap in their provision.<sup>38</sup> Weekenders (now called Weekender Labs) were devised as one of three projects that were inexpensive to run.

Bean's workshop, like all Artsadmin's Weekenders, took place over the course of a weekend. The use of the term weekender and its relationship to ideas of "non-productive" time is worth remarking on. Both weekend and weekenders are terms that first come into use in the late nineteenth century alongside industrialism's restructuring of life and the factory's discipline of workers. The establishment of the weekend, as a unit of supposed "free" time to counter the strains of the working-week, has historically been contested terrain in struggles between workers and capital. Bean's Weekender, like the weekend, is framed as a playful

immersive escape from the drudgery, pressures, and restrictions of work, although for many in attendance it extends the working week from five to seven days.<sup>39</sup>

The structuring of leisure, as a form of morally regulated recreation, an opportunity for individual betterment and an attempt to increase labor's productivity, was a key aspect of Victorian bourgeois culture. When the term weekenders was first employed, it referred to the social elite travelling for a weekend country excursion. Re-imagined by English DJs in the 1980s, weekenders became synonymous with hedonistic subcultural opportunities to dance off the working week. More recently, several high-profile cultural organizations in London have mobilized the term for varied weekend participatory immersive and creative learning activities through appeals to play and pleasure seeking.<sup>40</sup>

For Artsadmin, Weekenders require minimal support and financial outlay—facilitating artists are given a wide brief and receive a fee to run the workshop and studio space at Toynbee Studios is more readily available during weekends. Participants, who pay sixty pounds to take part in the two-day encounter, are kept below twelve. There have been over thirty Weekender sessions to date, led by a range of established artists in the live art and contemporary performance sector, including Lois Weaver, Franco B, Ivana Müller, and Gob Squad. Nikki Tomlinson, a former Artsadmin artist advisor and producer, as well as an independent artist, explained that the organization's Weekenders aim to serve as a form of academy training outside the academy. They are, Tomlinson hoped as curator of the program, an opportunity for sharing and collaboration that raises questions or concerns attached to disciplinary genealogies. Tomlinson's aspiration is that these concerns build conceptual and practical skills for participants to develop their own working practices.<sup>42</sup>

The opportunities offered through Artsadmin's artist development team are a central resource of support for new work theatre and performance practitioners in London and beyond. Their one-to-one advisory services and other programs, like Weekenders, focus on



ways of working with and supporting artists in an open-ended and short term manner. These activities are evidence of their work in supporting a productive community to the wider industry and funding bodies, an opportunity to meet other artists and future collaborators, and an opening to reflect on questions of capacity and the kinds of support they can provide to a growing pool of artists coming through their doors.

Housed within a former 1930s industrial community and arts school, Artsadmin's Toynbee Studios forms part of a series of buildings that compose Toynbee Hall's current site. The organization became the lease holders of the Studios in 1995 and oversaw a major capital refurbishment with support from several local, national and European government bodies, private trusts, foundations and individual donations. The building's reopening in 2007 included a site-specific celebratory installation by Anne Bean to mark the occasion. An Arts Council of England (ACE) national portfolio organization, which offers organizational stability and status through periods of sustained funding, Artsadmin's inception in 1979 was driven by a perceived lack of infrastructure to support, promote and disseminate artists producing work outside of the dominant theatre, dance and visual art circuit to national and international audiences. From its early subsistence days to the present Artsadmin has sought "continuity for the work" it supports.<sup>43</sup>

Artsadmin has, over the years, pursued new methods to support artists whose practices have been historically marginalized in the arts sector. It has become a model for other arts organizations throughout the UK and the world, often hosting visiting administrators seeking to get a better understanding of how the organization works.<sup>44</sup> Theatre scholar Jennie Klein confirms the importance of Artsadmin in the development and promotion of experimental performance work in London and the UK and notes that since the 1990s it has become one of several professional enterprises for live art production in the city.<sup>45</sup> From the multi-disciplinary company Curious to artist-activist the vacuum cleaner's

solo and participatory interventions, Artsadmin helps to maintain and care for a diverse range of practitioners in the UK and beyond.

Along with the Live Art Development Agency and the now defunct New Work Network, Artsadmin set up the Live Art Advisory Network to support opportunities for emerging and established live artists. While it continues to support and manage artists who work in the intersections of visual art, dance, theatre, and activism, its remit has gone beyond producing work to include education and advisory services for artists of all ages and levels of experience, festivals and international residencies focused on climate change, a weekly e-bulletin covering a wide range of arts-related activities, opportunities and jobs in and around London, the UK and internationally. The significance of the organization as a central support for new work, and pressures on it to become more entrepreneurial in its fundraising, are most certainly a sectoral concern.<sup>46</sup>

I use the term sector rather than field in writing about new work in London to insist on its economic base and to draw attention to how the work Artsadmin supports is implicated in wider cultural and urban economies under capital. Unpaid, underpaid, temporary, or intermittent employment and fierce competition characterize the sector's working conditions. New work activities might be subsidized by the state or supported through a do-it-yourself approach; the forms that animate the sectors ongoing operations are likely made up of a mix of individual practitioners, ad hoc groupings, charities, and not-for-profit ventures; the conditions of this part of the cultural sector are marked by ideas of having a practice and rely on informal networks and communities to access work. New work players are, more often than not, university educated and the sector itself is deeply tied up in higher education pedagogy. The sector might also be imagined, by those who populate it, to have an anti-institutional sheen.

New work practices supported by Artsadmin draw attention to a relationship between practice and maker that is characterized by a rejection of traditional forms and modes of cultural production, an embrace of risk and experimentation and a celebration of self and collective determination as a guiding force of creation. The term new work both encompasses a range of aesthetic forms that cut across disciplinary categories and describes a subsector of the cultural sector in the UK. It also denotes a relationship between maker and practice that fosters a complex and confusing subjectivity, one whose experience of work is both liberating and harmful.<sup>47</sup> New work intertwines a bourgeois concept of work, where the individual associates itself with its work, with a commitment to an ethico-communal scene that counters dominant society.<sup>48</sup> In other words, while the nature of the politics between participants in the sector is supposedly open, the relationship to labor is fundamentally private.

Artist development activities in the sector, like Weekenders offered at Artsadmin, draw on a constituency of artists seeking autonomous opportunities to develop their ideas and practices among a network of peers away from the pressures associated with the creation of an artwork—apparently away from the scene of production. These activities also arise with an excess of labor as a means to keep the surplus active/busy/connected/engaged. Put differently, the saturation of the labor pool and the stationary and shrinking labor market means that there is a substantial reserve army of laborers in the sector. These activities offer an opportunity for workers to re-authenticate their commitments to work, their practice, and the wider world of theatre and performance.

To understand the pressure that organizations like Artsadmin and the artists they serve face when expected to demonstrate their productivity, I turn briefly to *Supporting Growth in the Arts Economy*, a 2011 report by Arts Council England. Shot through with neoliberal rhetoric, the report recognizes a creative labor force populated by productive and

passionate workers—“with a desire to explore, innovate [...] and collaborate.”<sup>49</sup> In a very different way than Bean’s attempt to stage a space for collaboration in her workshop, the report stages a performance of the sector as a passionate collaboration. Theatre scholar Jen Harvie has challenged the report’s insistence that artists should become entrepreneurial. In *Fair Play* she explains that “[s]ince the late 1990s at least, government and ACE policy obliging artists to become entrepreneurial has been pervasive, increasingly naturalized and [...] uncompromising.”<sup>50</sup> Harvie’s concern is that emphasizing entrepreneurialism and an economic case for the arts will threaten artistic effects, collaborative sociality among those practicing the arts and promote the exploitation of human assets.<sup>51</sup>

While I primarily agree with Harvie’s critique, I am not wholly convinced that the arts do not already, and always have, functioned in a “business-like” fashion. Although there is no doubt that the principles Harvie valorizes about the arts are important, the degree that artists’ practices can or do challenge the contemporary political economy is complex. Harvie, rightfully, takes umbrage at the report’s valorization of the creative economy’s “commitment to ‘sweating’ assets and ideas.”<sup>52</sup> Sweating, according to Victorian social historian Robert Gray, is “most meaningfully defined not simply as ‘under-pay and over work’ but as those systems where the worker hired part of the fixed capital employed, either because he worked on his own premises or he was obliged to rent working (and often also) accommodation from the employer.”<sup>53</sup> It was a common practice in the Victorian labor market of the East End where many laborers lived and worked in overcrowded tenements and lacked the protection of the wage or the support of a trade associated with skilled labor. The promise of payment for pieces of work encouraged overwork and under-payment, while workers also bore the costs associated with paying rent to their employers on tools and properties to work and live.<sup>54</sup> The theatre and performance sector has historically functioned in a similar manner.

Through a commitment to play, workers invest in themselves as the means to a collaborative sociality and their practice becomes the long-term asset of the enterprise.

In 2010 as part of the Live Art Development Agency (LADA) professional development initiative *Everything You Still Wanted to Know About Live Art but Were Afraid to Ask*, Daniel Brine, former associate director of LADA recorded his top tips for artists. “My first tip is that you need to remember that your practice is your main asset and you need to keep your practice fresh and refreshed throughout your career.”<sup>55</sup> When practice is framed as an asset, as something of utility that can be traded and pooled together, it valorizes the individual’s labor by exploiting temporal and emotional investment. Practice becomes a linguistic marker that re-positions the labor of the romantic, rebellious, and anti-conformist artist away from the manual work of trades and toward the conceptual work of scientists, academics, politicians and business people. However, unlike salaried professionals, artists’ relationship to the wage in the new work sector resembles a different stratum of workers, bobbing between the investor/entrepreneur (investing their free labor in the hopes of building value and in the hopes of a return) and the secondary service laborer (working on discounted wages and in contingent conditions). The discourse of “my practice” in the new work sector, of practice as personal capital, throws into relief the ways new work workers sweat themselves, propelled by desires for meaningful work and the instability of the labor market.

### **Toynbee Hall: urbanism, play, and social reproduction**

As British society went through the beginning scenes of the industrial revolution, transforming itself from the “workshop of the world” to the “industry state,” capitalism and urbanism became a more common mode of organization for all classes.<sup>56</sup> William Fishman’s detailed snapshot of Tower Hamlets in 1888, the borough in East London that is home to Toynbee Hall and now Artsadmin, indicates that its constituents “shared a common socio-

economic definition: a strong continuing tradition of small workshops industrially important in the aggregate, sited in deteriorating slum property, largely dependent on the traditional skilled labor of local families.”<sup>57</sup> With its mix of workhouses, sweatshops and workshops and reservoir of potentially cheap labor, the area lacked substantial employment opportunities and was rife with competition. As the terms unemployment and the unemployed came into general usage, domestic mass protest and “looting” by the laboring classes in the late nineteenth century inflamed fears that public chaos and “social revolution” were close at hand. While geographic and temporal separations between work and home became more common, forms of existence associated with craft that had been a way of life for many centuries, such as home working and overcrowding, were transformed into social ills.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, with its high concentration of laboring poor the East End became a source of deep anxiety in the imaginary of the Victorian bourgeoisie.<sup>59</sup> For a small section of philanthropic reformers it also became a workshop for developing a form of social consciousness where truthful being was articulated as honesty, kindness, and helpfulness.

This was the urban backdrop for Toynbee Hall’s debut in 1884. As one of the grandest educational and leisure centers in London, it was established to serve the local “laboring classes.”<sup>60</sup> Envisioned as a class-bridging institution the rhetoric of fraternal bonds of brotherly aid sought to replace the language of class division.<sup>61</sup> Founded by the Reverend Samuel Barnett, parish priest of St. Jude’s, and his wife Harriet Barnett, it was one of the first secular university settlements, a place for men from Cambridge and Oxford to come and live among the laboring poor, to help “raise man to his highest both in body and soul.”<sup>62</sup> Named for moral economist Arnold Toynbee, it sought to mitigate the effects of the industrial revolution’s devastating toll on the increasingly dense and disgruntled constituency of urban working class in the area. Bourgeois social reformers who called Toynbee Hall home sought to make the conditions of industrial capitalism more just and their romantic visions linked

craft with self-betterment. Key architects of England's social democracy, including Clement Attlee and William Beveridge, spent time there and visitors inspired by its work included Jane Addams of Hull House.<sup>63</sup> As a leisure organization, Toynbee Hall staked out "a middle ground between liberal individualism and collectivist politics."<sup>64</sup>

Arnold Toynbee was committed to a capitalist economy coupled with a humanist ethic, reflecting wider concerns among those with power about the techniques and rationales for managing labor and class divide. These anxieties coalesced, according to literary theorist Matthew Kaiser, around the spirit of play and its management.<sup>65</sup> Idealized forms of play, as a civic and individual good, intersect for Toynbee and others with concerns about the social and psychological capacities of workers. While launching an attack on the moral ills of industrialism and laissez-faire capitalism Toynbee declared that society must seek to "secure his [the working man's] complete material independence" while reinstating in the worker "feelings of kindness and gratitude, of filial reverence and paternal care, of political fidelity and patriotism- in sort [sic], of all the sentiments which welded society into a whole."<sup>66</sup> The nascent stirrings of a more just capitalism, one that positioned the worker as human rather than merely a cog in the machine indicated that "management [had] entered a period in which workers began to be considered potential 'citizens' of a new industrial civilization, rather than merely 'wheelhorses' in the productive process."<sup>67</sup> Narratives of desire and filiality that underpinned artisanal labor were, in the Victorian era, recycled and reinvested into commitments to a capitalist national social economy.

Toynbee Hall's emphasis on art and culture as a guiding beacon for social and moral development differentiated it from other civic projects that took form in East London around the same time.<sup>68</sup> As did Toynbee Hall's grand appearance on Commercial Street, one of London's busiest and most cosmopolitan thoroughfares, which set it apart from neighboring tenements. On top of that, the Hall's entrance charges to common areas meant that "what was

on offer was for the likes of the aristocracy of labor rather than the most gifted and needy of working men.”<sup>69</sup> The catchall category of the laboring poor indicated a shared experience of working conditions among laborers that did not bear out in practice. In addition to differing temporal or attitudinal relationships to work there were also distinctions to be made: between the skilled or artisanal worker and the unskilled worker, and between the small master and the laborer. The historical conditions of late nineteenth-century Britain ushered in the economic circumstances that granted significant concessions for the national working class, for example, the beginnings of what would eventually become the weekend. A certain stratum of that group negotiated notably better conditions for themselves by means of their skills, strategic position, and organizational strength. The rise of this group, which a range of social historians call the labor aristocracy, was a nineteenth-century social phenomena that played out through hierarchies in the labor market.<sup>70</sup>

With links to the skilled work of pre-industrial craft or the semi-skilled labor of a protected trade, members of the labor aristocracy identified their elite status through job control, lifestyle, an ethics of work, and a protected wage while regarding themselves as part of, if not the ambassador for, the working class.<sup>71</sup> However, as social historian Robert Gray illustrates, the ascent of the labor aristocracy set limits on the articulation of working-class consciousness through its channeling of “accommodative responses to industrial capitalism.”<sup>72</sup> There are also tensions between value systems at play in the labor aristocracy, as Gray points out, in that such “deep-rooted habits of solidarity and mutual aid were not completely obliterated by the rhetoric of self-improvement and self-help.”<sup>73</sup> The labor aristocracy was an ambivalent and unstable category.

The labor aristocracy served by Toynbee Hall can be viewed as a historical precedent for those served by Artsadmin’s support services. New work workers are a particularly strange modern day version. While scarcity marks the new work sector and its



players, so does a commitment to community and (un)professional expertise, a peculiar sort of respectability that claims both authenticity and social superiority in relation to other workplace groups. Indeed, possessing one's own practice requires that workers align their labor with a specialized stratum of workers who take care in what they do. When work is fulfilling and a source of pleasure, when it is an expression of play seemingly initiated by the individual, exploitative conditions are rationalized by many who can afford it as the price of doing what you love. Troublingly, this approach to precarity disguises both the class and racial privilege of the new work sector and the quickly eroding ability for many in London to reproduce themselves and their communities. In doing so it depoliticizes and individualizes inequities that extend to a wider range of workers who do passionless poorly paid jobs that keep the cultural sector, its institutions and the city operable.<sup>74</sup> Advocating for the new work labor aristocracy often relies on making a special claim for arts and culture that precludes wider critical attention to the very idea that capital's ongoing growth is necessary.

More than a century since its inception, Toynbee Hall continues its operations from the same site in Aldgate, in inner East London. The area's demographic has shifted from the predominately white working class of the nineteenth century to a working class of South Asian descent. More recently economic migrants from Africa and "urban seeking" professionals have also helped to shift the area's composition.<sup>75</sup> Located just to east of the financial center, and close to Liverpool Street Station, the estate sits within what the Greater London Authority calls the City Fringe/Tech City Opportunity Area. In 2000 Charles Landry's *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (2000) offered Tower Hamlets as an exemplary "creative city."<sup>76</sup> Marked for a range of spatial initiatives for urban development, Tower Hamlets continues to be an area with high incidences of child poverty, worklessness and housing deprivation.<sup>77</sup> And the present-day Toynbee Hall provides

services and support for those in poverty, continuing in the tradition of the late nineteenth century charity's origins.

A seventeen-million-pound redevelopment scheme began on the Toynbee Hall estate in 2013. Funded primarily by the lease of part of the land to private developers London Square, Artsadmin's Toynbee Studios is now tightly nestled within a newly built private housing development that has transformed the site. "Spitalfields: London Square," where one bedroom flats are on the market at £766,000, is pitched to "City professional[s], tech entrepreneur[s] or [those] starting a family" as an opportunity to live in "a global hub for art, design and technology."<sup>78</sup> The fourteen "affordable" units on offer, at up to eighty percent of the market rate, are far beyond the reach of what most people in London might actually be able to afford, never mind those that Toynbee Hall and Artsadmin now serve. The development stands as another example of the now familiar script of gentrification that accompanies competing discourses around the creative city and its "authentic" players.<sup>79</sup>

The lack of truly affordable and social housing in the city sits in stark opposition to the rhetoric of the protected time space of play. Hypergentrification, worsening labor conditions, and economic scarcity in London have placed intense pressure on the lives of workers in the new work sector and the cultural sector more broadly. A time when artists could scrape together enough for food and rent and still have time to eschew efficiency for resistant ideals of experimentation and risk has long passed. Following critic Jasper Bernes call to SFMOMA in response to its desire to address the scarcity facing the artistic community in the San Francisco Bay Area, perhaps artist development activities at Artsadmin should "give out crowbars and lockpicks and a map of available properties, and then, if necessary, hire some lawyers."<sup>80</sup> This may be the real aesthetic development work of artist support services that a reliance on the rhetoric of the resistant potential of play obscures. As dance scholar Olive McKeon writes in her piece "Oh what a mess I've made: on aesthetics

and political praxis”: “We will not add a bullet point on our CV for abolishing capitalism and ourselves as workers, which will be perhaps the most aesthetically satisfying moment of our lives.”<sup>81</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Activities imagined as apparently separate from the scene of production, like Anne Bean’s Weekender at Artsadmin, offer insight into how tensions produced by the labor conditions of the new work sector are managed and where there might be opportunities to organize differently. While levels and qualities of productivity for organizations and individuals are sustained by play, individual workers are also regenerated through commitments to practice and community. And this is what makes commitments to play, fostered through apparently nonproductive activities like workshops and professional development activities, so confusing. Historically, play has been positioned as a means to “ensure the reproduction of the self” while maintaining the economic register of reproducing the self be, for the most part, kept from the room.<sup>82</sup>

As the imagined boundaries between work and play, production and reproduction, week and weekend, collapse in the wider world, how do claims for a space that escapes work bind those in the new work sector to the capitalist mode of production in complex, confusing and possibly dangerous ways? Eager for alternative models, artists and organizations of the new work sector often respond to the unequal access and precarity of jobs through the establishment of artist-led and artist-support initiatives, projects, and spaces. At the base of this commitment to keep practice going appears to be an assumption that the interests of a sector and of the worker are no different and that these interests coincide in the performance of labor experienced as love. It holds steadfastly to the essential value of “the work” and its endurance. But micro-political questions of how one returns to endure each day, how

communities reproduce themselves to return, and what they want to return to each day, do not feature centrally in new work organizational, institutional and artist-led conversations. This should be a cause for concern, particularly in the face of the contemporary scarcity that characterizes the economic reality of most artists and arts organizations, and wider populations, in London.

Maintenance activities, like professional development activities, are sites where contemporary performance makers (and wider constituencies) might find value in their own creative capacities and communities, where they supposedly do more than engage in the capitalist mode of production.<sup>83</sup> They are imagined as sites for more than work. Concurrently, these spaces manage the reproducibility of the sector as part of a broader capitalist system based on the extraction and accumulation of value, the exploitation of wage labor and dispossession of individuals' and communities' means of reproduction. It is urgent to reconsider affective spheres of maintenance and support like artist development activities, what is imagined happens there and what is obscured, to encourage solidarities and organized collective action across a range of marginalized bodies, practices, and forms of social organization facing the expropriation of the common means of survival through contemporary capitals urban transformation of London.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England: Popular Addresses, Notes and Other Fragments* (London: David & Charles Reprints, 1969), 25.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Dymphna Callery, *Through the Body: A Practical Guide to Physical Theatre* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2001), and Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 24-44.

<sup>3</sup> The oil shocks, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of international financial governance and the assassination of President Allende in Chile are all discussed in David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10-12.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Schechner, "Drama, Script, Theatre and Performance" first appeared in *TDR: The Drama Review* 17.3 (1973): 5-36. Here I consult Schechner's, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003) where the essay can be found on 66-111. This mention of the workshop is at 110. There isn't scope here to fully unpack the history of the workshop in theatre and performance and its relationship to theatre and performance more broadly. However, at the time of writing, I am in process on an article tentatively called "Workshops, new work and the cultural sector."

<sup>5</sup> This article develops on ideas I introduced in "The Passion Players", *New Left Project* 23 (January 2013),

[http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article\\_comments/the\\_passion\\_players](http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/the_passion_players)

[accessed 28 July 2018].

<sup>6</sup> In the UK the New Work Network, which ran from 1997 and 2012, and a more recent call for the establishment of a London New Work Network in 2014 in a piece of research on artist development funded by Arts Council of England are useful points of reference. See Hanna Nicklin, "Artist Development: Camden People's Theatre and Artist Development – How are we doing? Can we do better." (December 2014): 37-38 While there isn't scope in this article to fully unpack the history and myriad function of the term "new work" in the UK and its potential in a national and transnational context, I claim that this term is central to

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understanding the sector and its associated practices, how they relate to the wider cultural sector and shifts in labor more broadly.

<sup>7</sup> Neil Smith, “New Globalism, New Urbanism Gentrification as a Global Urban Strategy,” *Antipode* 34. 3 (July 2002): 427-50, at 430 and 447.

<sup>8</sup> Tithi Bhattacharya, “Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory,” 1-20 and Nancy Fraser, “Crisis or Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism,” 21-36 in *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentring Oppression*, ed. by Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017)

<sup>9</sup> Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Instructions on a paper affixed to the door of Toynbee Studio’s Courtroom Studio, welcoming participants to the start of Anne Bean’s Weekender, 27 and 28 February 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Bean, conversation with the author, London, 24 June 2011. All references going forward refer to this interview.

<sup>12</sup> Artsadmin Weekenders, Anne Bean, <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/events/2521> [accessed 13 June 2018].

<sup>13</sup> “Artists we work with: Anne Bean,” *Artsadmin*, <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/anne-bean/>; Anne Bean, *England & Co. Gallery*, <https://www.Englandgallery.com/anne-bean/> [both accessed 7 July 2019].

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Ridout, *Theatre & Ethics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Caillois sets down a rubric for play forms that includes competition, chance, simulation and vertigo. See Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (University of Illinois Press, 2001), 11-36.

<sup>16</sup> Public Editing Session 3, “Conversation with Maurizio Lazzarato,” *Joint Issue Le Journal des Laboratoires and TKH Journal for Performing Arts Theory* 17 (October 2010): 12-16, at 15.

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<sup>17</sup> Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>19</sup> Lisa Baraitser, “On Reading Transpositions: A Response to Rosi Braidotti’s Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics,” *Subjectivity* 3 (2010): 125–30, at 127, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Bean, conversation with the author.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971) and Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*; Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in *Culture and Politics: A Reader*, ed. Lane Crothers and Charles Lockhart (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 176–201; and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1995 [1969]).

<sup>25</sup> Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment* (Routledge, 1999), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>28</sup> Jill Dolan, “On ‘Publics’: A Feminist Constellation of Key Words,” *Performance Research*, 16 (June 2011), 182-85. Accessed from Dolan’s website The Feminist Spectator, <http://feministspectator.princeton.edu/articles/on-publics-a-feminist-constellation/> [accessed 01 April 2019].

<sup>29</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, edited and translated by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford and Clarendon Press, 1967), 107.

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<sup>30</sup> Alan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. by Jeff Kelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 125. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>31</sup> Recent writing on the relationship between labor and performance includes Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and the special consortium issue of *TDR: The Drama Review*, 56 (Winter 2012) entitled Precarity and Performance, ed. by Nicholas Ridout and Rebecca Schneider.

<sup>32</sup> Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism* (Alresford: Zero, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Giulia Palladini, *The Scene of Foreplay: Theatre, Labour and Leisure in 1960s New York* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> See Peter Felming's review of Niels Åkerstrom Andersen's book *Power at Play: The Relationship Between Play, Work and Governance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) in "The Playing Fields of Capitalism," *Ephemera*, 11 (November 2011) <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/contribution/playing-fields-late-capitalism> [accessed 13 July 2018].

<sup>35</sup> Pat Kane, *The Play Ethic: A Manifesto for a Different Way of Living*, New edition (London: Panmacmillan, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> French historian Fernand Braudel argues that capitalism should be viewed through a *longue durée* (a long moment) rather than through periodisation. Giovanni Arrighi on Braudel's *longue durée* in *The Long Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 2010) 6.

<sup>37</sup> Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism," *differences*, 17.3 (2006), 20–36. Please see Elyssa Livergant, "Belarus Free Theatre, Labour Mobility, and the Cultural Politics of the Border," *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 26.2 (2106) 241-257 at 251-252 for more extensive engagement with Berlant's idea of cruel optimism in the context of the "new work" theatre and performance sector.



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<sup>38</sup> Running annually for the last twenty years the scheme supports a period of open-ended research for a group of 7-10 early-to-mid-career UK artists.

<sup>39</sup> With thanks to Adam Alston for articulating so clearly how Weekenders expand the working week.

<sup>40</sup> For example, the Barbican, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Battersea Arts Centre and London International Festival of Theatre have all used the Weekender label to promote participatory activities for audiences between 2010 and 2011.

<sup>42</sup> In conversation with Nikki Tomlinson, London, 12 January 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> See Kate Tyndall, *The Producers: Alchemists of the Impossible* (London: Arts Council of England, 2007), 35-6.

<sup>45</sup> Jennie Klein, "Developing Live Art," *Histories and Practices of Live Art*, ed. by Klein and Deirdre Heddon (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 12-36, at 26, 34.

<sup>46</sup> The consortium of Artsadmin, LADA and Home Live Art received an investment from Arts Council England of £117, 6000 in a very competitive bidding process to support creative approaches to private and philanthropic fundraising. Artsadmin, media release, "Live Art Organisations Benefit from Arts Council England Award," 8 May 2013, <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/press> [accessed 20 April 2018].

<sup>47</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between de-industrialisation and literature that resonates with elements of my discussion here see Jasper Bernes, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> I am also drawing here on Ernst Bloch's reading of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* where, as Bloch explains, "Marx's "concept of activity" developed in the new bourgeois age and presupposes as a base a society where the ruling class sees or wishes to see itself in activity, i.e. work. However, this is only the case in capitalist society in so far as work, or rather: *the*

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*appearance* of work around the ruling class, in contrast to all pre- bourgeois societies is here no longer a dishonour, but is respected”. Emphasis in the original. Ernst Bloch, “Commentary on ‘Theses on Feuerbach’” from *The Principle of Hope*, Marxist Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bloch/hope/commentary-theses.htm> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>49</sup> Tom Fleming and Andrew Erskine, *Supporting Growth in the Arts Economy* (London: Arts Council England, July 2011), 15.

<sup>50</sup> Jen Harvie, *Fair Play: Art, Performance and Neoliberalism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 93-103, at 103.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>52</sup> Fleming and Erskine, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 53, FN3.

<sup>54</sup> David R. Green, *From Artisans to Paupers: Economic Change and Poverty in London, 1790-1870* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>55</sup> “Daniel Brine’s Top Tips for Artists,” May 2010, <https://vimeo.com/12101228> [accessed 1 May 2019].

<sup>56</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 196.

<sup>57</sup> William J. Fishman, *East End 1888* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2005), 10.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Ball and David Sunderland, *An Economic History of London, 1800-1914* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 5.

<sup>59</sup> Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Oxford and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>60</sup> Fishman, *East End 1888*, 383.

<sup>61</sup> Koven, 236.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

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<sup>63</sup> See Shannon Jackson's *Lines of Activity: Performance, Historiography, Hull-House Domesticity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), which brings aesthetics and performance into conversation with social history to tell a story about the social activism of Chicago's Hull-House.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>65</sup> Matthew Kaiser, *The World in Play: Portraits of a Victorian Concept* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13-19.

<sup>66</sup> Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England*, 152, 23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 14.

<sup>68</sup> The Whitechapel Picture Exhibitions, which were a regular event at Toynbee Hall, would eventually spawn what would become the neighbouring Whitechapel Gallery.

<sup>69</sup> Fishman, *East End 1888*, p. 304

<sup>70</sup> Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour*, 227. In addition to Hobsbawm, Raphael Samuel and Lenin were among those thinking through the problem of the labor aristocracy.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 237-38.

<sup>72</sup> Gray, *The Labour Aristocracy*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>74</sup> See the excellent work of the Precarious Workers Brigade, *Training for Exploitation? Politicising Employability & Reclaiming Education* (London: Journal of Aesthetics & Protest, 2017).

<sup>75</sup> Tim Butler and Chris Hamnett, *Ethnicity, Class and Aspiration: Understanding London's New East End* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2011), 22.

<sup>76</sup> Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators* (London: Earthscan, 2008 [2000]).

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<sup>77</sup> See Tower Hamlets, London Poverty Profile, Trust for London and the New Policy Institute, [www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/tower-hamlets](http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/boroughs/tower-hamlets) [accessed 20 April 2018].

<sup>78</sup> “Developments,” London Square, [https://londonsquare.co.uk/developments/detail/spitalfields?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI4crkzJOJ4gIVjrftCh0t3QtWEAAYASAAEgInTvD\\_BwE](https://londonsquare.co.uk/developments/detail/spitalfields?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI4crkzJOJ4gIVjrftCh0t3QtWEAAYASAAEgInTvD_BwE) [accessed 30 April 2019].

<sup>79</sup> See Laura Levin and Kim Solga, “Building Utopia: Performance and Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Toronto,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 53 (Fall 2009): 37-53.

<sup>80</sup> Jasper Bernes, “Shop Talk 2 Respondent: Jasper Bernes,” *SFMOMA Open Space* 25 April 2011, <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2011/04/shop-talk-2-respondent-jasper-bernes/> [accessed 7 May 2019].

<sup>81</sup> Olive McKeon, *Journal of Aesthetics and Practice* 8 (Winter 2011), <http://www.joaap.org/issue8/mckeon.htm> [accessed 9 May 2019].

<sup>82</sup> Isabell Lorey, “Virtuosos of Freedom: On the Implosion of Political Virtuosity and Productive Labour,” trans. Mary O’Neil, in *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the ‘Creative Industries’*, ed. Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray, and Ulf Wuggenig (London: MayFly, 2011), 79-90, at 87.

<sup>83</sup> Both Shannon Jackson’s reflections on props and social works and Laura Levin’s writing on camouflage and environmental art consider the maintenance art of Mierele Laderman Ukeles. For Jackson Ukele’s work exposes the vital but often devalued systems of support that ensure the ongoing functioning of institutions, artistic creation and human welfare. Levin draws out the ways Ukele’s maintenance aesthetic, in appearing as domestic labor, formalises a material relationship of care between artist and environment. More recently the term maintenance, and practices of repair, have been of interest to contemporary scholars and activists seeking to counter capital’s contemporary emphasis on innovation and growth. My

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use of the term draws on these related strands of inquiry, moving beyond specific artworks to consider the social reproduction of sectoral economies and how these sites might be re-imagined as places to organise against capital. Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York & London: Routledge, 2011), 75-103; Laura Levin, *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 110-34; Sharon Mattern, “Maintenance and Care,” *Places Journal* (November 2018), <https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/> [accessed 30 July 2019].