

2022-05-12

Performing Resilience: Anchorage and Leverage in Live Action Role-Play Drama

Harper, J

<https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/handle/10026.1/21661>

10.1515/jcde-2022-0006

Journal of Contemporary Drama in English

Walter de Gruyter GmbH

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Performing Resilience: Anchorage and Leverage in Live Action Role-Play Drama

Jamie Harper, Senior Research Fellow in Participatory Arts

De Montfort University, Leicester, UK

I sat on one of the plastic chairs of the new primary school, sipping instant coffee, munching biscuits, and staring at the projected image of a stunted tree, blown horizontal by the wind but surviving, nonetheless. The speaker described how the tree could withstand the elements, as the crowd of twenty or so local people, who thought they were just coming to a community get-together, looked on in bafflement. It turned out that the community event had an agenda: to promote resilience in the local area, the village of Trumpington on the outskirts of Cambridge. I was not attending this event as a local resident. I was undertaking an artistic residency at Trumpington Community Orchard and the coffee evening at the newly built primary school seemed like a good opportunity to get to know some local people. What I discovered was a collision of an older community and a newer one that had recently moved into thousands of new homes near the new school. The resilience event was intended to promote community cohesion so that neighbours could make friends and help each other in times of adversity. It was also made plain to me, however, in a discreet conversation with one of the organisers, that the initial investment in community gatherings had the longer-term aim of allowing the state to withdraw its services thanks to the newfound resilience of residents.

As this example shows, in the era of austerity, resilience is conceived as the capacity to ‘bounce back’ from shocks (Joseph 2013). As such, it is an inherently conservative concept, which stands in marked contrast to an ecological understanding of the term. Ecological systems that are resilient do not simply ‘bounce back’, they are sufficiently diverse in their composition to be able to radically transform themselves when their typical mode of operation is threatened (Folke 2006). Having attended the resilience-themed event, I focused my residency in Trumpington on the question of how participatory performance might foster resilience. Drawing on the outcomes of this work, and subsequent creative practice, this essay proposes that live action role-play drama, or larp, as it is commonly known, can support the resilient changeability of players by inviting them diversify their capacities through intersubjective exchanges with diverse others. Larp is a creative practice that has emerged from fantasy role-play games, but it also incorporates methods of improvisational drama and participatory art, leading to the evolution of Nordic larp as a hybrid practice that is simultaneously theatre, art and game (Stenros 2010).

In keeping with the interdisciplinary diversity of larp, the enactment of each role-play is necessarily a diverse hybrid that combines a designed framework for participation, provided by the artist(s) who have created the work, alongside the co-creative input of the players who play the larp into existence (Stenros 2010). Larps in the Nordic tradition often include preparatory workshops that lead players through a sequence of activities through which they collaboratively develop scenography and character roles as the basis of collaborative story-making (Karachun et al 2017). Marjukka Lampo describes the co-creative development of larp as an ecological approach to performance, drawing on the terminology of Tim Ingold to suggest that participants in larp construct the fabric of play as an emergent ‘meshwork’ (Ingold, cited in Lampo 2016). As players ‘mesh’ with others, they forge new relational connections and absorb new capacities from each other and I suggest that this diversification of capacities within the ecologies of play can promote resilient changeability. Essentially, in much the same way that ecological systems gain resilience through a

diversity that enables radical transformation, role-players can perform resilience by exploring potential alteration in their subjectivities through intersubjective exchanges with diverse others.

In considering player subjectivities as the foundation of Nordic larp practice, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful for designing role-play drama in response to the cultural particularity of the players. The habitus can be understood as the array of capacities, or capitals, that individuals can deploy in pursuing their interests within the social domains, or fields, that they occupy (Maton 2008). This article describes two participatory performance projects that used habitus as a conceptual tool for understanding the subjective vantage point of participants, in preparation for role-plays that invited them to actively reflect on their cultural values and practices. I discuss my residency at Trumpington Community Orchard in the autumn of 2017, in which I worked with the small group of volunteers who managed the orchard as a community space, followed by descriptions of another outdoor residency in the park spaces of the Peartree Bridge estate in Milton Keynes in the summer of 2018. Both of these projects explored the subjective attitudes of participants towards their local area. Consequently, I sought to investigate the habitus of those involved, inviting participants to describe places and people in their fields of social experience as the basis for inventing fictional scenarios.

Given my concern with exploring resilience as the capacity for radical transformation, it may seem surprising to reference the theory of Bourdieu, who is often criticised for affirming cultural determinism (Postill 2015; Yang 2014). Indeed, his arguments for the likely reproduction of cultural practices might be seen to align with conservative concepts of resilience that emphasise stability and stasis. Consequently, in arguing for an ecological understanding of resilience, I also draw upon Spinoza's theory of affects to propose that the habitus can be diversified by actively cultivating a wider array of capacities. Spinoza asserts that when humans are affected in a great many ways, they gain an equal capacity to take volitional action. In other words, by expanding the multiplicity of affects that a being receives, their *potentia*, or power of action, is enhanced (Sharp 2011). In linking these theoretical propositions to larp practice, I suggest that affective diversification through spatial defamiliarization can enable players to shift their perception beyond immediate familiarity, stimulating a reflexive perspective that opens them to new relational connections, new capacities, and resilient changeability.

The Familiar and Unfamiliar in Live Action Role-Play Design

The proliferation of participatory performance forms in the last twenty years has been accompanied by a growing recognition that performance scholars often disregard the particularity of audience members. Helen Freshwater (2009) argues that the audience is often viewed, not as a collection of individuals, but as an undifferentiated bloc. Gareth White (2013) also calls for increased attention to the particularities of audiences in participatory theatre, citing Bourdieu's theories to argue that individuals have a 'horizon of participation' that shapes the capital affordances they bring to the event and the types of interaction that they can undertake within it. Following White's reading of Bourdieu, my creative practice in live action role-play design has sought to engage with the perceptual horizon of participants in the specific contexts that they occupy. In the Trumpington residency, my work started with getting to know the area and the small committee of volunteers who had created the orchard in 2006 by renovating a patch of waste ground and planting a selection of Cambridgeshire heritage apple trees. As I have noted previously, the neighbourhood was in the process of rapid expansion with thousands of new houses being built and judging from my interactions with the volunteers there appeared to be a veiled hostility towards this new

community, which was evident in their sceptical reaction to the resilience event that I described at the start of this essay.

Having been prompted to think about resilience at the community coffee evening, I continued to consider this concept in relation to the biological composition of the orchard. In discussing the emphasis on growing Cambridgeshire heritage apples, one of the committee members, Cerys,¹ made strong arguments for maintaining biodiversity (a key feature of ecological resilience), but this focus on apples native to Cambridgeshire also connoted a somewhat exclusionary attitude. This was highlighted by discussions of Brexit, which Cerys had voted in favour of as a way of championing 'localism', and the expansion of the village, which, in her view, threatened to undermine it as a 'cohesive community' (Cerys 2017). I subsequently sought to explore this defensive attitude towards change in the local space by creating a two-player role-play about the meeting of strangers, called *Passage*. Essentially, this piece was about an encounter with difference, inviting two players to go on separate journeys during which they would meet, decide (for whatever reason) to spend a winter together and then either proceed on their journey together or go their separate ways. My aim in designing this piece was to investigate how spatial diversification through encounters with the unfamiliar might promote reflexive awareness of resilient changeability.

The preparation for the role-play sought to draw upon the habitus of players by asking them to share stories from their past as stimuli for creating fictional characters. The process began with three questions: *Where have you come from today? Where have you come from as an adult? Where have you come from since childhood?* Following the sharing of responses, participants made a drawing of a character about to set off on a journey, based on what they had heard from the other player. When Cerys played this piece with me, she invented a character called Celia who had left her husband and come to a new town with her two young children. Along the way, she met my character, a brooding young man called Jan, who had fled the war-torn context of his childhood. Celia subsequently helped Jan to find a place of safety over the winter by working for a farmer living next to her home, before proceeding on his way the following spring. In reflecting on the meeting of trajectories between Celia and Jan, Cerys commented on how this new relation changed Celia which, in turn, invited her to reflect on her own changeability:

I didn't know what to do with you at first...I thought 'he's quite difficult to deal with' and then suddenly I became much more – I became like – quite a together person and I realised I was quite together and had quite a lot to offer this rather – sort of troubled young man – which is kind of – not like how I feel in life so maybe that's something I need to take seriously... But with this troubled young man – although I wasn't 100% about you...I started to feel quite warm towards you by the end and I really wanted to know what happened to you in the future. I wanted you to come back – and to include you in my family. (Cerys 2017)

As this example indicates, the *Passage* role-play invited Cerys to respond to an encounter with an unfamiliar place (the imaginary landscape of a new town) and an unfamiliar person. As a result of this diversification in her relational connections in space, she seemed to develop new capacities, becoming 'quite a together person' in order to help Jan. It cannot be claimed that this exercise transformed Cerys' attitudes towards encounters with unfamiliar others in the 'real world' spaces of Trumpington, but I suggest that it does illustrate the potential of spatial defamiliarization in play to

¹ In order to maintain confidentiality, I use pseudonyms for all participants mentioned in this article.

prompt reflexive awareness of resilient changeability, enabling players to recognise how they can develop new capital affordances by forming new connections with others.

My emphasis on the value of spatial defamiliarization and reflexivity runs counter to the theory of Bourdieu whose logic of practice is focused on immediate needs. He argues that the 'ultimate values' of social groups "are never anything other than the primary, primitive dispositions of the body, visceral tastes and distastes, in which the group's most vital interests are embedded, the things for which one is prepared to stake one's own and other people's bodies" (Bourdieu 2010, 476). In other words, the habitus is a set of dispositions that emerge in practice in response to immediate conditions and the 'vital interests' of bodily needs within the close proximity of social groupings. This focus on the necessity of responding to the material conditions that define an individual's immediate requirements grounds Bourdieu's logic of practice in the 'time of action' (Bourdieu 1990, 81) which can be clearly seen in his references to game play, in which he suggests that 'a player who is involved and caught up the game' makes his ludic choices "'on the spot", "in the twinkling of an eye", "in the heat of the moment", that is, in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflexion' (82).

In a similar vein to Bourdieu's theory, Spinoza's philosophy asserts that although human beings are most strongly affected by events in the spatio-temporal present, their *potentia*, or power of action, is aided by the endeavour to seek out a broader plurality of affects. He states that 'the more the body is apt to be affected in many ways or to affect external bodies in many ways, the more apt is the mind for thinking' (Spinoza 1992, 195). This suggests that the powers of reasoned thought and agential action are supported by moving beyond a narrow spatial immediacy to perceive a broader multiplicity of affects in a wider relational space. Nigel Thrift affirms this argument, building on Spinoza's ideas to call for an expansive spatiality of manifold relations. He argues that a 'complex body' can only emerge from a wide plurality of relationships in social space, suggesting that "The simple political imperative is to widen the potential number of interactions a living thing can enter into, to widen the margin of 'play'...increasing the number of transformations of the effects of one sensory mode into another" (Thrift 2004, 70). In other words, by pursuing an expansion of relational space, manifold affective exchanges are enabled. Subsequently, as beings increase their ability to be affected and to affect others in a great many ways, their *potentia* and resilient changeability are increased.

The pursuit of manifold relations was a key priority in my residency at the Peartree Bridge estate in the summer of 2018, which was organised by Arts for Health, Milton Keynes, an organisation focused on providing participatory art opportunities in the city's hospital and its surrounding areas. The brief for the project suggested that Peartree Bridge was a very isolated community, and in my explorations of the neighbourhood, I found this description to be accurate. This stimulated my interest in making role-play activities that might enable participants to expand their view of the local space beyond the limits of habitual familiarity and forge new relational connections in the process. The challenge of looking beyond the familiar to pursue greater affective diversity in the neighbourhood space was highlighted by one of the early workshop sessions, which featured a play activity that I called *Platform*. This exercise involved laying a blanket on the ground and inviting participants, one by one, to place objects from a random assortment of play materials onto the platform to build an imaginary landscape. Players added further objects to represent characters in the landscape, then narrated a sequence of actions and reactions between the characters. One participant, James, began his contribution by selecting an object which was not part of my assortment of things. His selection was a brick that was lying around in the park space in which we were playing, and when placing the object on the platform, he described it as a power station

because the colour tone of the brick was similar to the visual texture of the iconic Battersea Power Station. In reflecting on the exercise, James expressed frustration at the choices he had made, stating that his power of imagination was limited by his inability to look beyond the familiarity of objects and their literal function. I went on to ask James some further questions about what aspects of the imaginary landscape he had found to be valuable and his answers prompted me to think about the imaginative limitations of looking at familiar objects:

It's nice to see some water there (referring to a river that had been constructed on the platform). I guess that's the most attractive thing to me, personally...I used to be an oceanographer...and I was born near the sea. So, with the river, being literal, having identified the brick as Battersea, then obviously that's the Thames and the sea is down there somewhere – but that's been my problem today – I've been very literal – not very inventive (James 2018b).

These comments suggest that James' choice to deploy a familiar object (the brick), rather than choosing something more unfamiliar from my assorted junk, limited his imaginative range. By identifying the object as something very similar to the brick itself (a power station composed of red bricks) and then creating more landscapes that were familiar to him (in the form of the river Thames and the sea), he seemed to limit his power to create a diversified imaginative space. This was made manifest within the fictional story when James converted the power station into an art gallery, mapping onto the transition of the Tate Modern Gallery on the real-world River Thames.

In another session, James encountered something different to the experience noted above by taking on a highly unfamiliar role. The exercise in question involved collaborative drawing between pairs which invited players to create an imaginary landscape and a character for their partner. In this instance, James' partner made the somewhat surprising choice of giving him the character of a sheep and he reflected positively on the experience of playing this unfamiliar role:

I think I concentrated too much on the actual drawing...but then in the conversation it was easier being a sheep than a human being (everyone laughs). There was greater freedom in where my imagination could go – instead of sort of being – bound to – bound too much to reality (James 2018a)

As this example shows, being bound to the realities of familiar roles in familiar social spaces was a limitation that could, to a certain extent, be overcome by composing unfamiliar spaces of encounter and establishing relations between a broader multiplicity of beings.

As the workshops progressed, engagement with unfamiliar relations in space, in the form of animals, become something of a running theme. At the end of one session, I asked one of the participants, Lysbeth, what topics the next workshop might focus on, and she replied that she would like to play with the theme of pets:

Lysbeth: I'll tell you one thing – my friend got a Yorkshire terrier. I've got two Border terriers. They're supposed to be the same – they're not the same. They're terriers – that's it.

JH: So, you're interested in the differences between different types of animals?

Lysbeth: Yeah.

JH: Why's that interesting to you?

Lysbeth: Well – my little Frodo likes hedgehogs – now how crazy can you get? Full of fleas and – horrible. But he curls up and goes to sleep with them – confusing or what? (Lysbeth 2018a)

Lysbeth's description of the surprising relational connections that her dog could establish with other animals chimed with a comment that another local resident, Susan, had made when she took me for a walk around the neighbourhood. She spoke about her perception that although people in the area were relatively isolated from each other, their pets helped them to expand into new spaces and form new relations with people:

We've recently got a dog – so we're walking more, and I thought I knew Peartree Bridge really well – but we've found all these new spaces...cos with a dog you've got an excuse, haven't you? To go and see what's happening somewhere...and I would say I know quite a lot of people in Peartree Bridge, but I've got to know more people since having a dog. Cos people come and talk to you, don't they? When dogs stop and want to meet each other – the people do the same thing (Susan 2018).

Working with the idea that pets could bring people into contact with the unfamiliar in wider relational spaces, I created a role-play activity called *Superpets* which invited participants to collaboratively draw a landscape, create human and animal characters and then narrate a story about the superpets taking their humans into new territories. In playing this activity, Lysbeth created a cat character called Eyes. Thanks to her night vision, Eyes was able to lead her human through the night to the local pub, which was the centre of social life within the fiction, even though the human character was afraid of the dark. When I asked Lysbeth to reflect on her play experience, this was her reply:

Lysbeth: Interesting. Really interesting. Cos I never knew I could creep in my cat's skin so much that I'm so like a cat. Friendly one minute and the next (she makes a scratching action, and everyone laughs).

JH: What was it like to creep in the cat's skin?

Lysbeth: Well, you know what they say – an owner takes after their pet – and the beautiful eyes. Looking into the dark – to be like that – it's nice. Never need any lights – just look in the dark with the beautiful eyes (Lysbeth 2018b).

These examples suggest that whereas remaining bound by a focus on familiar objects, beings and social spaces can limit the scope of imagination, seeking out a wider multiplicity of affects can strengthen the power of imaginative thought as new territories are explored, and manifold relations are established with both the human and non-human.

To summarise this section, I argue that participatory performance forms that seek to engage with the cultural particularity of their participants can use habitus as a conceptual tool to create work in response to the subjectivities of those involved. The live action role-play activities that I have described were shaped by the environmental and cultural contexts of Trumpington and Peartree Bridge and the participants in these places were invited to apply their subjectivities in co-creating the meshwork that made up their ecologies of play. In some cases, participants found it difficult to look beyond the immediate familiarity of their existing perceptual horizons. By pursuing unfamiliar encounters in space, however, and establishing a broadened array of connections with unfamiliar relations, I suggest that role-players can absorb new capacities from unfamiliar others that strengthen their powers of action and their resilient changeability.

Habit and Reflexivity in Play

The Trumpington and Peartree Bridge projects both explored spatial defamiliarization in play, with the aim of stimulating the reflexive criticality of players. Notions of reflexivity can appear to affirm a cognitive distancing that separates the minds of individuals from the material actualities of their world, but my conception of reflexivity does not reject the immediate pleasures of play or devalue the habits that are forged in immediate action. On the contrary, I argue that habit is the foundation for change, as existing knowledge and capital affordances are reconfigured. I conceive this approach to play, which combines habit and reflexivity, as *anchorage-leverage*. Anchorage can be understood as analogous with habitus, composed of the accumulated affects that an individual has encountered over the course of their life trajectory. The choice of this term might seem to imply a deadening weight that enforces stasis, but I see anchorage as a platform for leverage as subject agents redeploy their capitals in pursuit of their desires.

As I have noted previously, Bourdieu's logic of practice downplays the possibilities of reflexivity, suggesting that the ability to apply reflexive criticality is an affordance that is typically limited to people with high levels of cultural and educational capital (Adams 2006). Critics of Bourdieu's work such as Margaret Archer (2003) take issue with this sceptical attitude and suggest that reflexivity is the essence of all human agency and that automatic habit can only be broken through reflexive thought. The binary between habit and reflexivity that Archer's draws is problematic, however, because it disregards the necessity of habit for performing basic daily activities. Ian Burkitt argues that even highly reflexive individuals need the foundation of habit to function successfully, claiming that if habit is absent from daily life 'even predominantly meta-reflexives will struggle...to establish purposeful projects and sustainable practices' (2016, 328). Burkitt also challenges Archer's sharp separation between the reflexive mind of the individual and the practices of the body in the social world, claiming that reflexivity cannot function as an individual cognitive process. Rather, he suggests that it occurs intersubjectively 'as a dialogical process' that 'should be understood as an aspect of the relational fabric in which bodily selves are embedded' (2012, 463-464). Essentially, reflexivity occurs as a social activity through which individuals adapt their habits based on what they imagine other people think of them.

In the Peartree Bridge project, the value of social reflexivity was apparent in the final piece of work which concluded the residency: a two-player role-play called Ridge Walk. This piece invited players to walk through the neighbourhood together and collaboratively reimagine it as an alternative society called Ridge, which was divided into two regions: East and West. The play used of a map of Ridge (overlaid onto the actual layout of Peartree Bridge) with which players navigated a set route that criss-crossed between East and West. As they walked, written instructions prompted them to use their surroundings as stimuli for imagining the fictional histories and futures of their respective regions. One playing of Ridge Walk was enacted by two residents who had lived in the area for over twenty-five years: James (who I have mentioned earlier in this essay) and a woman called Lottie. In reflecting on their play experience, they commented that although they had lived in the same small neighbourhood for considerable period, they were strangers. Despite their initial hesitancy in playing together, they created a complex story of two societies recovering from a war that had created the separation between East and West. Lottie suggested that because her meeting with James had occurred in the context of a dialogic role-play, this had enabled them to share their feelings about the area (which were overwhelmingly negative) in ways that they would not normally feel able to, given that they did not know each other:

Playing a game as an adult is really quite difficult – it takes a real leap of faith – especially when you’re talking to a stranger. But actually – it – you know – gave us a bit of insight and made us use words about the area that we wouldn’t have said if we hadn’t done it through a story...I think both of us have sort of – negative views on things – that we kind of played out through the story. They weren’t sort of like – constantly berating the area – but they were kind of – like very dark and the story kind of evolved that way. It enabled both of us to use these words that we wouldn’t normally with a stranger...in my story the landscape started off quite barren and then grew and matured as the character did – but then was broken, but not beyond repair – it was then evolving again, kind of like a continuous cycle which is how I think the community is (Lottie 2018).

What this example suggests is that the dialogical play between Lottie and James enabled them to engage with habitually embedded attitudes (a generally negative view of the area) and habitual practices (a certain reserve in relation to strangers) and explore the possibility of changing them. In Lottie’s case the frame of play implicitly gave her permission to express a ‘dark’ perspective that she would not normally feel able to express but it also altered her perspective somewhat, enabling her to recognise that the war-torn landscape within the fiction, like the landscape of Peartree Bridge itself, was ‘not beyond repair’.

Reflexive play that shifts between habit and resilient changeability can be summarised as a process of *anchorage-leverage* which involves an oscillation between anchorage in the established practices of the habitus and leverage through reflexive criticality that supports volitional action. Bourdieu’s vision of habitus can be understood as a form of anchorage since individuals tend to remain constrained by a limited range of possibilities that they mimetically reproduce. He argues that the practices produced by the habitus are ‘relatively unpredictable’ but ‘also limited in their diversity’ (1990, 55). Consequently, within the limited horizon of experience that he envisages, ‘the evocative power of bodily mimesis’ produces a ‘universe of ready-made feelings and experiences’ which, despite appearing to be ‘choices’ actually ‘imply no acts of choosing’ (2010, 476). In contrast to this apparently deterministic position, Antonio Damasio’s response to Spinoza’s philosophy offers convincing ideas on how, in the broad span of evolutionary history, the primary emotions of the body had led to self-aware feelings in the conscious mind:

The first device, emotion, enabled organisms to respond efficiently but not creatively to a number of circumstances conducive or threatening to life...The second device, feeling, introduced a mental alert for the good or bad circumstances and prolonged the impact of emotions by affecting attention and memory lastingly. Eventually, in a fruitful combination with past memories, imagination, and reasoning, feeling led to the emergence of foresight and the possibility of creating novel, non-stereotyped responses. (Damasio 2004, 80)

Damasio goes on to argue that the development of self-conscious feelings has enabled human beings to break with habits that have become deeply embedded in the body. Taking racism as an example, he argues that racial prejudice may be based on the important evolutionary development of the ability ‘to detect difference in others because difference may signal risk or danger and promote withdrawal or aggression’. He goes on to argue, however, that although this ability might once have been vital to survival, in contemporary society ‘we can learn to disregard such emotions and persuade others to do the same’ (40). Damasio’s argument is that although habits that are anchored in the body are highly durable, they can be altered through rational feeling. My contention is that such alteration requires leverage out of habit, but that this leverage still depends on the anchorage of habit as a foundation.

Play anthropologist Brian Sutton-Smith draws on Damasio's ideas in discussing dreams as a form of play that keep the brain 'labile' by building new neural connections during sleep that take human beings beyond the limited horizon of their lived experience, preventing the mind from becoming ossified through simple repetition of a narrow range of existing knowledge (Sutton-Smith 1997, 61-62). He extends this idea to describe play as a form of *adaptive variability*, allowing humans (and other animals) to reconfigure their knowledge of the world in flexible new ways, not in order to adapt the present requirements of their environments, but in preparation for uncertain futures (221-224). Sutton-Smith's concept of play as adaptive variability offers a strong link between the anchorage of the habitus and the leverage of reflexivity. Just as Bourdieu's habitus describes the capitals possessed by individuals and the ability of individuals to deploy them, play is composed of knowledge gained through sense perception and the capabilities that players have developed through lived experience. Rather than seeing habitus and a limited range of existing play affordances as deterministic restrictions, however, the theory of adaptive variability suggests that play can enable players to reconfigure elements of the world as they know it in new forms of affective relationality, expanding their capacity to be affected in a great many ways and enhancing their powers of volitional action.

A useful example of the play of adaptive variability can be found in Sutton-Smith's discussion of ritual performances which involve both reiteration of existing cultural practices and innovative developments that reconfigure cultural norms to imaginatively project how a community might function in potential futures. He argues, with reference to Victor Turner's work on rituals, that innovation within rituals enables deviation from, and reversal of, traditional roles, 'so that each person can become the joker in the pack, the card who can be all the cards' (Turner, cited in Sutton-Smith 1997, 210). Similarly, by inviting participants in Trumpington and Peartree Bridge to establish manifold relations with unfamiliar others in their role-plays, they were enabled to reconfigure the anchorage of their habitus, leveraging new capacities by adopting alternative roles. Cerys found that she could become 'quite a together person' through her exchange with Jan, while Lottie discovered a newfound capacity to express her 'dark' perspective on the local environment thanks to the implicit permission that the fiction offered to her. Beyond the limits of human expression, James found a surprising sense of freedom in pretending to be a sheep, while Lysbeth crept within a cat's skin and imagined the extra-human power of night vision through beautiful eyes. In all of these examples, I suggest that individuals were able to provisionally reconfigure their habitus through play, leveraging themselves beyond habitual viewpoints and practices and expanding their resilient capacity to reshape the ecologies of which they were part.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have argued in this essay that resilience in participatory performance requires an oscillation between anchorage and leverage that invites participants to apply their subjectivities in constructing the work, whilst also exploring the possibility of altering their cultural perspectives and practices through intersubjective exchanges with diverse others. In considering the possibility of performing resilience, I have rejected the conservative conception of this term which offers a simplistic narrative of bouncing back from adversity. Instead, I have followed ecological accounts of resilience which emphasise the capacity of systems to radically reconfigure themselves when placed under strain. Diversity is key to such resilient flexibility, and I have applied the theory of Spinoza to articulate how such diversification may be achieved in performance. In contrast to Bourdieu's logic of practice which downplays the possibility of reflexive criticality and emphasises the likely reproduction of cultural practices, the affective diversification that Spinoza calls for suggests that

human beings can look beyond the immediate familiarity of their existing experiential horizon and expand their capacities by seeking out manifold relations.

In practical terms, my role-play practice in Trumpington and Peartree Bridge has sought to apply Spinoza's thinking by pursuing spatial defamiliarization and reflexivity that invites players to adopt new perspectives and form new relational connections in their play. Despite my emphasis of reflexivity, I have suggested that the anchorage of the habitus and the structures of habit need not be seen to work in opposition to resilient changeability. Rather, I argue that play as adaptive variability involves a reconfiguration of existing experiential knowledge in preparation for uncertain futures. The practices of Nordic larp exemplify adaptive variability by drawing upon the cultural particularity of players in the co-creative preparation of the work as a precursor to potential habitus alterations in the process that I have described as anchorage-leverage. The habitus, forged in the immediacy of practical action, is the foundation of play, but critical reflexivity allows players to oscillate between action and thought, habit and alteration. As a result, they can engage with a wider plurality of affects, strengthen their powers of action and play their way towards a diversified habitus that enhances their resilient capacity to reconfigure the ecologies that they play, and live, within.

References

Matthew Adams, 'Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity?', *Sociology*, 40:3 (2006), 511-528 (pp. 521-522).

Margaret Archer, *Structure, Agency and the Internal Conversation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), cited in Ian Burkitt, 'Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues', *Sociology*, 46:3 (2012), 458-472 (pp. 462-464).

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 86-91.

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2010), p. 476.

Burkitt, Ian, 'Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues', *Sociology*, 46:3 (2012), 458-472

Ian Burkitt, 'Relational Agency: Relational Sociology, agency and interaction', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 19:3 (2016), 322-339 (p. 328).

'Cerys', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Trumpington Community Orchard, Cambridge (23 September 2017). See Appendix A: 'TrumpingtonCommunityOrchard1'.

Damasio, Antonio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (London: Vintage Books, 2004)

Carl Folke, 'Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social-ecological systems analyses', *Global Environmental Change*, 16:3 (2006), 253-267

Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

'James', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (13 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge1'.

'James', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (20 June 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge3'.

Jonathan Joseph, 'Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: a governmentality approach', *International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, 1:1 (2013), 38-52.

Karachun, Maryia, Yauheni Karachun, Olga Rudak and Nastassia Sinitsyna, 'The Workshop Pyramid', in *Once Upon a Nordic Larp... Twenty Years of Playing Stories*, ed. by Linn Carin Andreassen, Simon Brind, Elin Nilsen, Grethe Sofie Strand and Martine Svanevik (Oslo: Knutepunkt, 2017), pp. 105-108

Lampo, Marjukka, 'Ecological Approach to the Performance of Larping', *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 5 (2016), 35-46

'Lottie', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (30 August 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge8'.

Lysbeth', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (4 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge4'.

'Lysbeth', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (18 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge5'.

Karl Maton, 'Habitus', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), pp. 49-65.

John Postill, 'Fields: Dynamic configurations of Practices, Games and Socialities', in *Thinking Through Sociality: An Anthropological Interrogation of Key Concepts*, ed. by Vered Amit (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 47-68.

Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 31.

Spinoza, Baruch, *Ethics: Proved in Geometric Order*, ed. by G.H.R. Parkinson, trans. by Andrew Boyle and G.H.R. Parkinson (London: Everyman Classics, 1992)

Jaakko Stenros, 'Nordic Larp: Theatre, Art and Game', in *Nordic Larp*, ed. by Markus Montola and Jaakko Stenros (Stockholm: Föa Livia, 2010), pp. 300-315 (p. 303).

'Susan', interviewed by Jamie Harper, Peartree Bridge, Milton Keynes (23 July 2018). See Appendix A: 'PeartreeBridge6'.

Sutton-Smith, Brian, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

Thrift, Nigel, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Analer: Human Geography*, 86:1 (2004), 57-78

Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 56-59.

Yang Yang, 'Bourdieu, practice and change: Beyond the criticism of determinism', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46:14 (2014), 1522-1540 (pp. 1530-1531).