Tactics of interruption: provoking participation in performance art

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Additional Information:

- A Doctoral Thesis. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.

Metadata Record: [https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/21786](https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/21786)

Publisher: © Lee Campbell

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: [https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Please cite the published version.
TACTICS OF INTERRUPTION:
Provoking Participation in Performance Art

Lee Campbell

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of Doctor of Philosophy
of Loughborough University
© by Lee Campbell 2016
Abstract

TACTICS OF INTERRUPTION: Provoking Participation in Performance Art

This thesis addresses a research study predicated on practice to explore aspects of participation in Performance Art. The study contributes to knowledge in participative performance practice and the positive deployment of using interruptive processes; this is to provoke participation within the context of Performance Art as well as gain a better understanding of the operations of power relations at play.

Within the discourse of impoliteness study (Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2011 et al.), there is a term that deserves much greater attention: ‘interruption’. Examining interruption and exploiting its virtues using practice brings out some productive insights that go beyond abstract theorisation. Working in response to Nicolas Bourriaud’s conception (1998) of participation in Relational Aesthetics as a means of attacking power relations, I use my practice as an artist/performance provocateur and amplify consideration of my previous usage of interruption to provoke participation and then interrogation of power relations. Slapstick and heckling as extreme versions of interruptive processes that are physical in nature are put forward as tactics of interruption that extend comedy tactics within my practice. Circumventing commentary of interruption that often posits the term and its affiliation with impoliteness and capacity to be disruptive as negative (Bilmes, 1997), interruption is used for the purposes of my study as the key strategy that underpins the performance Lost for Words (2011) and the collaborative project Contract with a Heckler (2013), and are presented as prime examples of the operations of interruption in practice. Lost for Words supports the difficulties of participation when interruptive processes connected to physical and bodily slapstick are structurally engineered into a live performance and Contract with a Heckler supports power relations when live performance is predicated upon physical and linguistic interruptive processes relating to heckling. Both Lost for Words and Contract with a Heckler demonstrate a complex knitting of theory and practice whereby argument is supported by the undertaking of action (by the necessity of experiencing interruption in practice).

The written dimension of the thesis operates in conjunction with the accompanying photographs and video recordings included here as documentation serving to deconstruct the examples of practice presented. Writing adds detail in the form of critical analysis, reflective commentary and personal experience to the supplied documentation and is used as a tool to communicate that working with interruption on a theoretical, practical and emotional level can be exciting, provocative and dangerous.

Keywords: heckling; humour; impoliteness; interruption; participation; Performance Art; power relations; slapstick; slippage; tactics
Instructions to the reader

This thesis works in conjunction with a set of appendices. Clear instruction is given as to when a particular item in the Appendices section needs to be consulted. Appendices are available to view/download via a web link. The links are listed next to each appendix on Page 12. Hover your mouse cursor over the website link and the link will automatically open in a new web page.
Contents

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................................... 7
List of Figures ................................................................................................................................... 8
List of Appendices ........................................................................................................................... 12
Preface ............................................................................................................................................ 13

Introduction
The Research Questions ...................................................................................................................... 21
Research Aims and Objectives .......................................................................................................... 23
Definition and Discussion of Key Concepts ..................................................................................... 26
  i. Tactics ........................................................................................................................................ 27
  ii. Interruption and Impoliteness .................................................................................................... 27
  iii. Performance Art and Participation ......................................................................................... 31
  iv. Power Relations ........................................................................................................................ 35
Thesis Argument ............................................................................................................................... 40
  i. The Practice of Interruption-Making ............................................................................................ 41
  ii. Summary of Works Presented as Prime Evidence to Support Argument............................... 42
Methodology ...................................................................................................................................... 44
  i. Research Strategies: Interruption, Slapstick and Heckling ......................................................... 44
  ii. Anticipation, Action and Analysis: Relationship of Research Process to................................. 49
Forthcoming Chapter Structure and Writing Styles Adopted

Chapter Synopsis .............................................................................................................................. 52

Chapter One: Slapstick as a Tactic of Physical and Bodily Interruption

  1.0 Chapter Aims ............................................................................................................................ 56
  1.1 Anticipation .............................................................................................................................. 58
    1.1.1 Fall and Rise (2008) .......................................................................................................... 58
    1.1.2 Yes/No (2007) .................................................................................................................... 59
  1.2 Exploiting Physical and Bodily Interruption ............................................................................. 60
  1.2.1 A Narrative Account of Lost for Words (2011) .................................................................... 65
  1.3 Self-Reflective Analysis ............................................................................................................ 68
    1.3.1 01:02:34 ............................................................................................................................ 68

Tactics of Interruption 4
Chapter Two: Heckling as a Tactic of Physical and Linguistic Interruption

2.0 Chapter Aims ................................................................. 96
2.1 Anticipation .................................................................. 98
2.1.1 The Experimental Comedy Camp (2012) ......................... 99
2.1.2 Humour, the Host and the Homophobe .......................... 102
2.1.3 Disrupting the Fourth Wall ......................................... 103
2.1.4 Exploiting Physical and Linguistic Interruption ............... 107
2.2 Action ........................................................................... 111
2.2.1 A Narrative Account of Contract with a Heckler (2013) .... 112
2.3 Self-Reflective Analysis ................................................. 115
2.3.1 Two Months and Counting ....................................... 116
2.3.2 One Month and Counting ........................................ 119
2.3.3 One Day and Counting ............................................ 122
2.3.4 Delivery of the Performative Lecture, ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ ................................................................. 122
2.4 Theoretical and Contextual Analysis ................................ 123
2.4.1 Heckler (2013) ........................................................ 123
2.4.2 Power Relation (1): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Contract ........................... 127
2.4.3 Power Relation (2): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Audience .................. 130
2.5 Chapter Summary ......................................................... 133

Conclusion
Overview ........................................................................ 135
Reflection upon the Research Process, Revisiting the Research Questions and Claims to Knowledge.................................................................135
  i. Slapstick as a Tactic of Interruption..............................................138
  ii. Heckling as a Tactic of Interruption.............................................139
Impact of Practice and Further Study.......................................................140

Bibliography..................................................................................................145
**Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, this thesis owes much to the inspirational support of my two supervisors, Dr. Gillian Whiteley and Dr. Mel Jordan. I would also like to thank my two Directors of Studies, Dr. Johanna Hällsten and Dr. Marion Arnold. I would also like to thank the support and guidance of Peter Bond, Central Saint Martins and Dr. Carali McCall. Finally, I want to extend my appreciation to my family (Anne and John) and to say thanks for the on-going support during this long but rewarding journey from my partner Alex and the Newman family.
List of Figures

Figure 1 14

Figure 2 16

Figures 3-5 18-19

Figure 6 30
Promotional material for Impoliteness and Interaction, Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, Poland, 2013. Courtesy of Anna Bączkowska

Figure 7 37
Marina Abramović: Rhythm 0, Studio Morra, Naples (1974)

Figure 8 38

Figure 9 39

Figure 10 41

Figure 11 42

Figure 12 42
Lee Campbell: Contract with a Heckler (2013). Location undisclosed

Figure 13 58
**Figure 14**
A drawing of ‘deadpan’ performer Lee Campbell by Bryan Parsons during Yes/No (2007)

**Figures 15-18**

**Figure 19**

**Figure 20**

**Figure 21**

**Figure 22**
Director Michael Portnoy (RIGHT) the ‘Director of Behaviour’ introduces The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012)

**Figure 23**
A discussion exploring ‘What is Experimental Comedy?’, The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012)

**Figure 24**
Lee Campbell begins an iteration of Lost for Words at The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012)

**Figure 25**

**Figure 26**
Lee Campbell with Hector the dummy, The Experimental Comedy Training Camp, The Banff Centre, Canada, (2012)

**Figure 27**

**Figure 28** (see Page 11 for key)
Floor Plan of Venue. Illustration by Lee Campbell (2013)
Figure 29  114
The speaker is removed from the presentation room by a security guard (2013)

Figure 30  124
Heckler badge for _Heckler_ (2013). Designed by Mel Jordan (2013)

Figure 31  124
_Heckler_, TRADE, Nottingham (2013). Courtesy of TRADE

Figure 32  130
DV8, _Can We Talk About This?_ National Theatre, London (2012)
Key to Figure 28

A. Main Entrance to Building
B. Disabled W.C
C. Concrete Slab Seat
D. Side Entrance Door for Room RR2
E. Room RR1
F. Back Entrance Door for Room RR2
G. Draped Black Curtains
H. Presentation Area
I. Standing Position of Lee Campbell
J. Seating Position of X
K. Seating Position of Katrina Palmer
L. Seating Position of Lee Campbell
M. Seating Position of Rachael Cockburn
N. Standing Position of Security Guard
O. Seating Position of Audience Member No.1
P. Seating Position of Audience Member No.2
Q. Seating Position of Audience Member No.3
R. Room RR2
List of Appendices

Appendix One

*Fall and Rise*, Whitstable Biennale, Whitstable (2008)

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/ji7epwsxmuji9z/Fall%20and%20Rise%20%20%282008%29.mov?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ji7epwsxmuji9z/Fall%20and%20Rise%20%20%282008%29.mov?dl=0)

Appendix Two

Video Documentation of *Yes/No*, Battersea Arts Centre, London (2007)

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/wrmvr7hgxhdqb1h/Yes%3ANo%20%20%282007%29.mov?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wrmvr7hgxhdqb1h/Yes%3ANo%20%20%282007%29.mov?dl=0)

Appendix Three


[https://www.dropbox.com/s/s4ohem2q8ldt7i/Lost%20for%20Words%20%20%282011%29%20.m4v?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/s4ohem2q8ldt7i/Lost%20for%20Words%20%20%282011%29%20.m4v?dl=0)

Appendix Four

Copy of Participation Contract (Speaker/Heckler) (2013)

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/a0wkeyj449g1ym/%20Participation%20Contract%20%20%282013%29.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/a0wkeyj449g1ym/%20Participation%20Contract%20%20%282013%29.pdf?dl=0)
Preface

“We interrupt this broadcast” [author’s emphasis] a phrase that has come to command our immediate attention [...] a phrase that evokes a few heart stopping seconds of anxiety between the interruption and the actual announcement of what has happened. It is a phrase that puts us in the moment; we brace ourselves as we wait to hear the news that follows those four chilling words’ (Garner, 1998)

I have experienced this anxiety as very real. As a child, I used to have an acute fear of television newsflashes, where as I was watching a programme, the transmission would be interrupted by the announcement “We are sorry to interrupt this programme but we go over now to the newsroom at BBC/ITN for a newsflash.” Even now, when I hear those words being spoken out loud, or seeing them written or as I am reading those words somewhere, I hear those words reverberate in my mind and I get chills on the back of my neck, I become dizzy and start panicking.

As an artist/provocateur, I define my practice as playing with the parameters of contemporary art practice by focusing on the performative. I have developed an interdisciplinary research based practice as an artist whose projects encompass Fine Art and Performance related perspectives with an emphasis on participation. Using Dick Higgins’ conception of intermedia practice as related to artists working ‘between media’ (2001:49), I define intermediality in relation to interdisciplinarity as involving the combining of two or more academic disciplines into one activity (e.g. a research project). For me, intermedial/interdisciplinary practice is about creating something new by crossing boundaries, and thinking across them, or as Gavin Butt (1998) describes, ‘[a] cross pollination of ideas and practices between the traditional fine arts and the performing arts/film/poetry’ (1998:8). More specifically, I define my practice as encouraging a fluid ‘[d]isciplinary hybridity of the contemporary field of art/performance’ (1998:8) that is situated within Performance Art as one branch of intermedia art practice.

The key aim of my practice is to provoke participation in Performance Art. Susan Broadhurst, author of Liminal Acts: ‘A Critical Overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory’ (1999), has described my work as ‘playing with various
notions of what performance is and at the same time interrogating liminality’ (Broadhurst, 2011). I relate this application of the term liminality to my work to describe the various phases of engagement that participants experience during one of my performances. The various tactics that I deploy are chosen to provoke participation and shift the status of assembled audiences, bystanders and unsuspecting passerby into co-performers of physical and embodied performance work. Understanding the term liminality as related to shifts in one’s status (Broadhurst 1999; Turner 1969; Van Gennep 1960), I describe the status shift (the conversion of audience member to compliant participating performer of physical and embodied liminal performance) as initiated through the provocative and sophisticated usage of tactics, often related to the mechanisms of comedy (Figure 1). My description of liminal performance can be applied to the tipping point by which invitation (from a protagonist addressing his/her audience) results in a form of audience participation that has been achieved through coercion and manipulation.

![Image](image.png)

**Fig.1** Lee Campbell: *Go Bananas! The Experimental Comedy Training Camp*, The Banff Centre, Canada, (2012). Courtesy of Teresa Foley

Another strand of my practice is curatorial and relates to setting up symposia to engage in public discussion and debate related to the intersection between humour, comedy and participative and performative modes of art practice (Higgie 2007; Kenning 2007 et al.) as well as setting up exhibitions and performances displaying work by artists and performance makers whose practice deals with how humour and comedy may function in art and performance. An example of the
above is *With Humorous Intent*, Mostyn, Wales (03/03/12), the first of its kind to be held in the UK to embrace a diverse range of thinkers and practitioners working with humour and comedy in terms of both theory and practice. The main aim of setting up such an event was for me to provide an international platform for academics and practitioners to explore how comedy tactics may be deployed within art and performance practice.

Firstly, the symposium enabled critical debate and reflection upon how humour functions within contemporary art practice. Secondly, the event provided a platform in which to reflect upon Barbara Pollack’s (2004) claim that ‘humour is one of the most effective means of puncturing pomposity’ (2004:118) about how humour may exist against the ‘serious’ backdrop of the art-world institution where humorous artistic endeavours seek to poke fun at its (the art-world’s) formality and pomposity. This aspect of the symposium emphasising humour’s capacity to be disruptive was designed by me to showcase and discuss aspects of my curatorial project *All for Show*, (2005-2007), an internationally touring exhibition of short films made by British artists that tested the acceptable limits of humour in the white cube art gallery using ‘slapstick theatrics’ (Lack, 2005:55) and ‘an awkward and macabre sense of humour […] cringingly funny. These idiosyncratic films succeed in finding surreal quirks in the banalities of everyday life’ (ibid.). Bob Dickinson in the February 2015 edition of *Art Monthly* paraphrases my sentiments surrounding humour in art considering my experience of how I selected works to be shown as part of *All for Show*. The content of these films had the capacity to provoke participation using laughter and make use of laughter to disrupt the formalities of the white cube (O’Doherty, 1999) in terms of what is (un)acceptable social behaviour:

Perhaps what makes laughter more attractive to curators of contemporary art today is the way that it can change a serious, white cube environment into something approaching an adventure playground as Shrigley’s [David] shows did with interventions that included music and stuffed rodents. As Lee Campbell [has] referred to it […] laughter can be a “device to counter shhh, be quiet” in the otherwise
Thirdly, through the range of different speaker presentations that took place and then in question and answer discussion-centred sessions, the symposium addressed a range of humorous devices within artistic and performance-related practice which could be used to address John Morreall’s theories of humour as connected to ‘superiority’, ‘relief’ and ‘incongruity’ (Morreall, 1983). Of relevance to my practice as a performance maker was Gary Stevens’ presentation relating to his performative usage of repetition and laughter. Stevens’ presentation disseminated elements of his practice relating to the setting up performances consisting of multi-layering speech to build repetition and then through repetition, laughter occurs (Koestler, 1970). A previous example of my practice that has made usage of comedy and repetition within physical participative performance is Careful Whisper (2009), which took place in Bristol (17/10/09) as part of the live Performance Art platform You and Your Work. My performance consisted of me instructing a set of assembled participants to carry out a Chinese whisper game as a live performance (Figure 2). The game involved a particularly long sentence for the whisperers that contained a range of tongue twisters. This was to produce participant awkwardness and discomfort at the embarrassment of mishearing what was being whispered.

Fig.2 Lee Campbell: Careful Whisper, You and Your Work, Bristol (2009). Courtesy of Sylvia Rimat

A further example from within my practice that contributes to the field of artists and performance-makers making positive strategic usage of humour (Klein, 2006 et al.) to produce physical and embodied comedy-related participative performance is the 2012 performance Go Bananas! produced as part of The Experimental Comedy Training Camp held at The Banff Centre, Canada. Billed as comedy to be provocative, the performance in its liminality was centred upon eliciting a form of participation that began playfully but ended painfully; many participants experienced mental and physical discomfort that they did not find funny (Lunn & Munder, 2005). Attempting to build upon generating participant discomfort in previous works such as Careful Whisper, my deployment of slapstick with non-fatal consequences for participants, well, at least, that was my intention, echoed Gillian Whiteley’s comments at With Humorous Intent, that slapstick (in terms of art) has become fairly safe (Whiteley, 2012). Sure enough, Go Bananas! deployed aspects of slapstick (balancing bananas on your head whilst being instructed by me to undertake a series of actions that were designed to force participants to be deliberately clumsy) but the usage of slapstick was not intended to kill anyone through humour. As a calculated interruption, the performance started by me surprising participants and issuing them with consent forms to sign having informed them of the potential risks involved in their participation. This process was a method to enliven proceedings and provoke a heightened sense of danger and excitement and add a further degree of uncertainty, fear and participant risk-taking. I wanted participants to ask themselves the question, ‘What the hell am I letting myself in for?’ That said, the forms could also be a sign of security for more cautious participants: “This (what is written here) is what is going to happen and I’ve got it in writing. Black and white.” Wrong (Figure 3).
My performance finished with participants being instructed to leave the space and me giving one of the audience members a mop and bucket to clean the space. Comedy over. I asked participants after the event how they felt about being instructed to walk in a clumsy, awkward manner (Figure 4), being laughed at by the audience, having their participation recorded on mobile phones and video cameras etc. and leaving the performance space with the stench of banana in their hair and on their clothes (Figure 5). “It left a nasty after-taste”, commented one participant.
Summing up the characteristics of my practice, I define its key concerns as related to the production of tactics to provoke audience participation in performance taking place within an art historical vernacular. In my practice, comedy as a tactic is instrumental in facilitating this process.

In this research, I sought to extend and develop how I generate Performance Art by honing in on the two most important aspects: participation and power relations. I not only attempted to engage in self-reflective and theoretical analysis of how I use selected tactics (that may relate to comedy) to provoke participation, I set out to gain a much clearer understanding of the very specialised and concentrated nature of my performance practice in terms of participatory exchange between a protagonist and audience. Honing in on power relations complicit within that specific exchange, I also sought to address how my performances regularly embody a form of participation that is difficult and uncomfortable in nature. I also aimed to emphasise consideration and learn more about disruption within my performances by reconfiguring my role as the protagonist to ‘interruption-maker’ to not only gain a better understanding of how the term interruption may function in my practice but to also uncover how my practice may extend the field of what could be described as contemporary artistic and performative interruption-making.
Although not an aim within this study, my exploration of interruption could be cathartic: me confronting my anxieties and fear of newsflashes as embodying interruption. I surmise that my anxiety of newsflashes is partly due to the fact that newsflashes are interruptions that I have not planned for and take me by complete surprise. However, I am sure that it is far more likely that it is the content of the newsflash that triggers my anxiety.
**Introduction**

To begin with, the research questions that underpinned my study are defined. I explain some the problematics associated with those questions and what is at stake in terms of practice. Through a series of discussions unpacking the key concepts contained within the research questions, connections are made and parallels drawn as to how my study made use of these concepts in terms of theory and practice. Having identified possible lines of enquiry because of discussing the research questions, the argument that underpinned my study is then put forward and its main aims, objectives and overall methodology used to support the creation of practice to substantiate the argument are laid out. As part of this discussion, the way certain instances of practice are explained within this thesis is set out. At the end of this section, the reader is given an indication as to what to expect in terms of content in the forthcoming chapters.

**The Research Questions**

My research study was underpinned by the following primary and secondary research questions:

**Primary Research Question:**

What are the possibilities of using interruptive processes within Performance Art?

**Secondary Research Questions:**

What are some of the tactics for making positive use of interruption?

What is the potential of interruption to provoke participation within Performance Art?

What is the potential of interruption to explore power relations attached to Performance Art?
Anticipating the unexpected and the contingent nature of making practice, in developing and defining my primary and secondary research questions, I allowed for change. I describe this development as a process of flux and revision instigated by ‘critical incidents’ taking place as a result of practice. Initial research questions related to the relationship between humour and Performance Art – in practice and theory and methods that provoke humour. These questions included: ‘Is it possible to assess the application of humour as a set of methodological comedy tactics within contemporary art practices and if so how are these tactics deployed and their results judged?’ Considering the aspect of participation within my practice and engaging in Performance Art, a shift in research questions lead me to the following primary research question: ‘How can the use of humour provoke participation in the audience?’ My practice aimed to readjust attitudes to the function of comedy in Performance Art and explore the possibility of laughter as a means of participation. As the result of events taking place when I participated in an artist’s residency in Canada in 2012 (discussed in detail in Chapter Two), a major shift took place in developing and finalising the research questions because of a critical incident involving me being interrupted by an audience member at the start of a performance-related artwork that I set up which was dependent upon audience participation. As I describe in Chapter Two, this key moment (the audience member’s interruption) really changed my practice. Existing research questions focusing solely upon comedy tactics and participation at the time were uprooted and the nature of future practice-as-research relating to the questions that I was to then ask of and through my practice re-imagined. The audience member’s interruption was a defining moment of inspiration; I knew at the time I wanted to use my practice to explore participation within Performance Art using tactics related to comedy but I didn’t know that I wanted to include interruption within my repertoire of tactics. Even though the subject of power dynamics at play in participative performance was of personal interest at the time, I certainly hadn’t realised the extent to which I actually wanted to use my practice to seek out tactics (such as interruption) that would enable exposure and analysis of their mechanisms. Honing in on a set of questions (those above) that would take my study down a slightly different

---

2 For the purposes of this study, I use the term ‘critical incident’ to refer to specific moments triggering critical reflection and possible revision of how I proceed with making practice.
tangent (the deployment of interruptive processes within performance), I could then use my practice to examine avenues of performance and specifically Performance Art that I then realised were of huge interest to me: the often tricky and difficult nature of participative exchange and corresponding levels of power relations.

Within participative Performance Art, there are many strategies and tactics that practitioners use to engage participation (Kunst 2003; Sholette & Thompson 2004 et al.). In the discussion of my practice above I referred briefly to how I use tactics often related to comedy. Aligned with how Bojana Kunst in ‘On strategies in Contemporary Performing Arts’ (2003) refers to practitioners as ‘establishing artistic tactics’ and revising those tactics described above as to include and exploit interruptive processes taking place within my performances, the key aim of these questions was to discover more tactics relating to interruption (and aspects of comedy) that could be used as strategies to increase audience participation. More specifically, through practice-as-research, I aimed to uncover tactics that would not only increase the level of participation that I could achieve within my performances but to force audience participation. In other words, I aimed to seek tactics that would not gently encourage audiences to get involved or be seen as invitations for participation as invitations can be, of course, refused (White, 2013) but to uncover and put to work within my practice tactics that would demand participation from an audience (whether they like it or not). Through the production of such tactics and witnessing for myself how these tactics may operate in practice, the questions aimed to provide me with an important opportunity to not only address the operations of participation within performance and discover more tactics that make participation possible but to also use the uncovered tactics to tease out the power relations that underpin participative exchange within contemporary Performance Art.

**Research Aims and Objectives**

The overall aim of my study was to explore Performance Art with an emphasis on participatory processes and to devise tactics that would provoke participation (in terms of increasing the levels of participation). Asserting that interruption is a positive method to provoke participation, my study aimed to use interruptive
processes within the canon of Performance Art. By observing what happens when tactics of interruption are put to work in the practice of participation, my study aimed to interrogate the power relations underpinning participatory processes within Performance Art.

Underpinning all the research questions was the requirement for the undertaking of practice; how interruption and interruptive processes may be used in conjunction with performance related methods and techniques to explore those different aspects of Performance Art practice that interest me as described above. These research questions were generated to assert the importance of using practice-as-research guided by my own practice. These questions were also devised to strengthen understanding of those aspects under scrutiny by adding both practical understanding and emotional investment to their current related theories and commentaries.

The aims underpinning the research sought to:

- Insert theories and practices related to the term interruption into the discourse of contemporary art/performance practice with an emphasis on participatory modes of audience engagement;
- Make positive usage of interruption and interruptive processes in practice as tactics to provoke participation in terms of Performance Art;
- Make positive usage of interruption and interruptive processes in practice as tactics to gain understanding of how power relations may operate in terms of participative exchange in Performance Art

To achieve my first aim, I analysed a selection of existing theories related to the concept of interruption and examples of performance practice including my own to identify how interruption can be structurally inserted into the mechanics of a performance to provoke participation.

To achieve my second aim, I selected slapstick and heckling as offering similar and contrasting understandings of the operations of interruption in practice. Whilst slapstick and heckling both provide useful understanding of the physical nature of interruption, I made useful distinctions and divisions between the two forms: slapstick as related to interruption which is physical and bodily (bodies
being clumsy by falling over etc.) and heckling as being physical and linguistic (you can interrupt using your body by putting your hand up, standing up, running onto a stage, walking out and so on as well as shouting something out to gain a reaction from those you are listening to/watching). Slapstick and heckling are both united by their usage of comedy. Slapstick is physical comedy relating to laughing at the clumsy actions of the body whilst heckling can relate to using jokes, parody, and satire and so on to amuse audiences and prompt them to laugh at and disassociate themselves from those (speakers/performers etc.) addressing them. Another useful comparison I made was that slapstick relates heavily to planned actions being interrupted by bodies; whereas heckling is much more to do with people interrupting other people.

To achieve my third and fourth aim, I drew upon theoretical and philosophical texts and existing practices relating to the concept of slapstick and heckling, which I used to devise a series of performance works incorporating slapstick and heckling as explicit and extreme versions of physical interruption. By doing so, not only did I make use of slapstick and heckling as tactics of interruption, picking out details from within them that relate to both performance and participation and amplifying these features in practice, I worked with slapstick and heckling directly as they could offer me contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, slapstick enabled me to gain an understanding of performance in terms of physical and bodily participation, whilst on the other, heckling allowed me to experience performance in terms of physical and linguistic participation. These useful insights then enabled me to think about power relations as physical and bodily (slapstick) and physical and linguistic (heckling).

Having gained a practical understanding of working with slapstick and heckling and learnt about some of the difficult and complicated emotions attached to both, I used this understanding to provide responses of a self-reflective nature to the research questions. Forefronting my theoretical analysis of slapstick, I drew heavily upon Jacques Derrida’s (2000) critique of the conditionality of hospitality whilst I made use of a range of theories from the field of linguistic impoliteness to analyse heckling (Bousfield 2008; Culpeper 2011 et al.). Underpinning both evaluations, I drew on the work of Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) and Claire Bishop (2004; 2011) to analyse slapstick and heckling in terms of participation within
performance and the work of Michel Foucault (1980) to interrogate power relations connected to that participation.

**Definition and Discussion of Key Concepts**

This section unpacks the research questions by setting up dialogue surrounding the keywords as embedded within those questions as key concepts of my research study. Sub-concepts leading off from those key concepts will also be identified and given room for discussion. The keywords as key concepts are defined through a glossary-style discussion and linked to my practice as an artist/performance provocateur to amplify further understanding as to how I investigated these concepts throughout my study. The keywords within the research questions are identified as: ‘tactics’; ‘interruption’; ‘Performance Art’; ‘participation’ and ‘power relations’. To unpack these terms, the section begins with a discussion of ‘tactics’. This discussion foregrounds definition and investigation of the keyword ‘interruption’ as a term situated within the academic study of impoliteness. ‘Participation’ is contextualised in terms of contemporary art practice that uses aspects of Performance. Although not concerned with producing a historical survey of this field, the reader is informed of the underpinnings of Performance Art with an emphasis on participation as one aspect of Performance Art. The reader is then informed how my study used the terms ‘liveness’ and ‘theatricality’ as important sub-concepts emerging from a scrutinisation of participative Performance Art. Discussion of the characteristics of liveness is given particular significance in how my study and its forthcoming demonstrations of practice exploited the disruptive nature of interruption in the ‘live’ moment. Emphasis on how power relations were understood throughout my study is then discussed. Having addressed how my practice relates to Performance Art, liveness and participation, examination takes place suggesting how my practice with amplified consideration of power relations within participative Performance Art practice offers the field extension and advancement.
i. Tactics

Gregory Sholette and Nato Thompson in *The Interventionists: Users’ Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (2004) refer to ‘tactics’ as ‘manoeuvres’ (2004:13) to describe interventionist practice. They propose that ‘tactics’ can be thought of as resembling tools; ‘Like a hammer, a glue gun or a screwdriver, they are means for building and deconstructing a situation’ (2004:14). I aligned my definition of tactics within this latter definition, as strategies to understand and ‘deconstruct’ (in the context of my study) Performance Art in terms of participation and the power relations that are involved in participatory processes. It was concerned with the deployment of tactics related to comedy mechanisms as my own practice is built upon using a range of comedy mechanisms and tactics. I also aligned my usage of the term with how Helen Freshwater (2009) refers to the various strategies deployed by German theatre director Bertolt Brecht (discussed in Chapter One) as ‘tactics’ (2009:47) for provoking audience participation (and specifically critical engagement as a means of encouraging social change in the context of Brecht).

ii. Interruption and Impoliteness

I defined the term ‘interruption’ as characterised by disruption in terms of action related to the production of stops, pauses and breaks within the otherwise smooth running operations of an event or action in motion at the time of the interruption. I defined these stops, pauses and breaks as surprise moments that derail expectation in terms of what is pre-supposed to occur in the logical narrative of something.

The context of practice (interventionist art practice) that Sholette and Thompson (2004) situate their ‘tactics’ is important to discuss in terms of interruption. I referred to the performance practice of Dani Abulhawa who describes her practice

---

3 This description of interruption as a ‘stop’ picks up on French filmmaker François Truffaut’s fascination within interruptive ‘stops’ in filmmaking in relation to processes of narrative. Tom Gunning (1995) suggests ‘When Truffaut (Francois) said that he loved the moments in film when the narrative stops, he seemed to announce a whole generation’s preoccupation with the contingent and non-narrative elements of film practice [...] narrative seems to still carry an ambivalent react, a taint of ideological conformity and containment’ (1995:120).
in public spaces as ‘[…] interruptions rather than as interventions or incursions’ (Abulhawa, pers. comm. March 2015). Abulhawa and myself unite in using interruption as a term over intervention as we do not seek tactics of practice to ameliorate or ‘improve’ aspects of social circumstance as is the case with much interventionist art practice and attempts of social improvements as flagged up by Sholette and Thompson e.g. *Homeless Vehicle* (1988-89) by Krzysztof Wodiczko. Although Abulhawa and myself describe our individual practices as ‘interruption’, the nuances of meaning related to the term are important to highlight. To distinguish our practice from each other’s and for the purposes of this study, I was much more concerned with interruption as a physical, linguistic, bodily action that has the capacity for aggression, as opposed to interruption as ‘interjection’ which I argue denotes action that is less aggressive and disruptive (Cotter and Tawadros, 2009:1-3). I was also far more interested in interruption’s capacity for disruption and its alliance with impoliteness theory. I defined important cultural implications attached to interruption in terms of politeness and impoliteness. Whilst being impolite in Britain has a long tradition of being represented in the arts, it is a surprising omission that *Rude Britannia: British Comic Art* (2010) an exhibition held at Tate Britain, London surveying contemporary art practice’s fascination with rudeness by including works by a range of different artists from William Hogarth to David Shrigley and Doug Fishbone to Grayson Perry did not represent performative and participatory modes of practice (like mine) making usage of comedy tactics to disrupt the boundaries of what is (un)acceptable behaviour in terms of politeness/impoliteness.

Leech’s *Politeness Principle* (1983): ‘Minimise Maximise the expression of impolite beliefs, minimise the expression of polite beliefs (Lee & Campbell 2013: always)’

Diverging entirely from theorist Geoffrey Leech’s approach (1983) who goes so far

---

4 Forms of satire, irony, blue, bawdy humour etc. have intersected with the visual fine arts and the performing theatrical arts. BBC’s *Rude Britannia* (2010), narrated by Julian Rind Tutt, explores historical and contemporary forms of satire opposed to the conventions of polite society in what Tutt refers to as ‘our right to be rude’ citing visual satirist William Hogarth as ‘the first chronicler of rude’ (Rind Tutt, 2010).

5 This is a response by Mel Jordan (Jordan, pers. comm. May 2013) to my annoyance of Geoffrey Leech’s (1983) branding of the term impoliteness as negative.
as to state: ‘Minimise the expression of impolite beliefs, maximise the expression of polite beliefs’ (Leech, 1983:81) and claims impoliteness is ‘behaviour to be avoided’ (1983:105), I aligned myself with thinkers who see the potential for studying impoliteness and its capacity to reveal new knowledge about social relations (Lakoff 1989; Kienpointer 1997; Culpeper 2011 et al.). Aligned with Johnathan Culpeper (2011), I argue that impoliteness can be strategic, systematic and sophisticated:

Impoliteness is assumed to be an unfortunate behavioural aberration, and, as far language is concerned, it is the nasty scum on the margins. Impoliteness is, in fact, of great social importance (2011:xii)

Despite the limited quantity of published literature sources relating to the study of impoliteness, I argue that there is huge potential for interdisciplinary dialogue between academics and practitioners working within performance and participatory practice and social science academics of interactional sociolinguistics invested in studying impoliteness.

Evidence of interdisciplinary dialogue taking place between these disciplines occurred at Impoliteness and Interaction, an impoliteness-themed conference at Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, Poland (23-4/5/2013) (Figure 6) that explored the concept of impoliteness through a range of disciplines including arts and the humanities. Presenting a joint paper at the conference (with Mel Jordan) and by way of referral to previous performances that I have mentioned already as well as performances that were produced as part of this study, I pushed forward the significance of my practice in terms of contributing to the study of impoliteness by using participative Performance Art. Derek Bousfield and Dániel Z. Kádár, leading experts within the field of impoliteness research welcomed my perspective as a Performance Art practitioner. Discussions between myself, Jordan, Bousfield and Kádár after my presentation with Jordan enabled me to draw links between how artists/performance makers understand the terms ‘participation’, ‘power relations’ and ‘conviviality’ through analysis of Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998) and how social science academics working within interactional sociolinguistics (the study of impoliteness is a strand of interactional sociolinguistics) aim to make sense of related concepts through analysis of
A survey of literature related to the field of impoliteness revealed a dearth in examination of how impoliteness in practice can be exploited. Derek Bousfield (2008) refers to a ‘paucity of research into impoliteness’ (2008:2) and suggests that ‘impoliteness has been largely ignored’ (2008:1). On the one hand, commentaries relating to the operations of interruption have branded interruption negatively, as a violation (Bilmes, 1997). My work draws on Juliana Brikey, Kathy Johnson-Throop, Muhammad Walji and Jiajie Zhang’s (2004) past work appearing to support my argument that ‘interruption’ can have a positive dimension. They propose a theoretical framework to help explain the ‘positive aspects of interruptions’ in which ‘warnings & alerts, reminders, suggestions and notifications are examples of interruptions that have beneficial outcomes by changing and influencing behavior (2004:1416). They claim that ‘there is little understanding how interruptions can be exploited for positive outcomes’ (2004:1417). In a January 2015 episode of the BBC World Service’s radio programme The Forum entitled Interruptions, the host Bridget Kendall stated: ‘Interruption can be a cause of disruption, but sometimes [interruption] can strengthen and support us’ (Kendall, 2015). American linguist Debra Tannen stated: ‘What’s so fascinating about interruption is that it’s a negative thing’ (Tannen, 2015). I argue that disruption caused by interruption is not wholly
negative; disruption can lead to positive outcomes. To sum up, commentaries relating to the operations of interruption have branded it negatively; a ‘violation’ (Bilmes, 1997), my review sought allies in commentators positively promoting interruption as ‘supportive’ (Hutchby as quoted in Bousfield 2008; Kendall 2015), ‘creative’ (Arlander, 2009) and ‘poetic, lyrical and unexpected’ (Cotter and Tawadros, 2009). Interruption is typically seen as an unwanted interference into the flow of something, though as Ian Hutchby identifies, interruption can be seen as transformative. He argues that interruption has a positive dimension; ‘we have to do this [interrupt] to save the world’ (Hutchby, 1992 as quoted in Bousfield 2008:233). My study aligned itself with this promotion of interruption.

iii. Performance Art and Participation

For the purposes of my study, the term ‘participation’ was defined as related to the audience’s active involvement within a live performance. My study defined an audience’s engagement with the work as understood through a form of action as planned/unplanned by the work’s protagonist. For example, planned participation may mean the audience responding to a set of instructions as devised by the protagonist and the enactment of the instructions by that audience constitutes the work; thereby the work is dependent upon their participation. As part of my study, I extended the term participation as meaning an audience physically taking part by their bodies entering the space and provoking a reaction from the audience. By doing so, definitions of the term participation can include the following situation: the audience may sit in a chair and laugh, frown and/or giggle etc. indicating as they watch the performance that they are aware of what the protagonist is saying and doing and have been provoked to make a sound/bodily gesture (Arnold, pers. comm. June 2012). These nonverbal and verbal gestural reactions as indications of being provoked thus constitute a form of participation within the live performance.

Claire Bishop (2012) describes contemporary art practice using aspects of Performance with an emphasis on audience participation as a ‘surge of artistic interest in participation within contemporary art practice that has taken place in the early 1990s [and beyond] and in a multitude of global locations’ (2012:1). The historical pinpointing of the 1990s is of no coincidence; Bishop is specifically
referring to a set of practices emerging from a promotion for socially engaged art practice that was defined by Nicolas Bourriaud’s curatorial model *Relational Aesthetics* (1998). *Relational Aesthetics* is a theory of socially engaged ‘relational art’. Bourriaud promotes artists including Felix Gonzales-Torres, Angela Bulloch and Carsten Holler as supporting a theoretical and conceptual curatorial framework that he defines as ‘open relations’ (1998:58-60). The underpinnings of participative performance are rooted in the historic actions of a group of performance based artists from New York who emerged in 1962 as a collective founded by George Maciunas called ‘Fluxus’ whose members synthesised various artistic mediums including music, dance, fine art and film. In terms of Fluxus, choreographers and musicians including John Cage, Merce Cunningham and Yoko Ono collaborated with painters, sculptors and those working in collage and assemblage including Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine and Robert Rauschenberg to produce live public actions known as ‘happenings’, which often involved the complicit participation of an audience. What my study made specific use of in terms of these happenings and their associated practices related to how audience participative performance works, circulating at the time of the happenings, relates to how they deployed the presence of liveness. I defined liveness as a state of operation within the live moment; the quality or condition of being ‘live’. And I identified the specific aspect of liveness pertinent to my study in its capacity for disruption. What I understood by the term ‘disruption’ was defined as meaning the overturning of a predicted outcome, an upheaval of events anticipated when enacted in reality, in *liveness*, as indicating what may happen when theory (anticipation) meets practice (action).

My study acknowledged particularly the work of performance practitioner Tim Etchells and theorist Adrian Heathfield in forefronting its perspective on liveness and its capacity for disruption. Acknowledging that Performance Art is important in terms of participation as all participants, protagonist(s) and audience members alike are cast in the performance as radically present in the here and now of writing a script in the presence of liveness, I proceeded to prioritise liveness in its capacity to produce a dramatic and engaging narrative and incur an irresistible sense of disruption and danger; shifting the status of those present into witnesses (Etchells, 1999). Etchells states ‘The struggle to produce witnesses
rather than spectators is present everywhere in the contemporary performance scene [...] in very different ways, an invitation to be here and now, to feel exactly what it is to be in this place in this time’ (1999:17). Whilst acknowledging philosophical commentary surrounding performance, liveness and recording (Phelan 1993; Auslander 1999), the commentator who helped forefront my study’s perspective on ‘liveness’ is Heathfield and specifically his chapter Alive in Live: Art and Performance (2004). Heathfield considers the sensation of experiencing liveness as being embedded within contemporary culture. His words ‘drive to the live’ (2004:4) suggest liveness has the capacity to be deployed as a method to encourage participation within an action, even a tool for revolt. As RoseLee Goldberg in Performance Art from Futurism to the Present (2001) states, ‘performance’s deployment of ‘liveness’ is a weapon against the conventions of established art’ (2001:7). Furthermore, Heathfield (2004) suggests that ‘the embodied event has been employed as a generative force: to shock, to destroy pretence, to break apart traditions of representation, to foreground the experiential, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning, to activate audiences’ (2004:7).

As an artist/provocateur, my practice is Performance Art with an emphasis on audience participation; I situate my work within what I define as playing with the parameters of contemporary art practice that focus on the performative. I acknowledge the genealogy and critical underpinnings of Performance Art as a form of practice (Heathfield 2004; Hendricks 2003 et al; Hoffman and Jonas 2005) and particularly its usage of performance related concerns, ‘theatricality’ and ‘liveness’ to engage participation. I define theatricality as related to theatre and include these elements: a staged performance and Performance in terms of the behaviour of the actors; actions which are unnatural and exaggerated, overtly dramatic gestures; a marked display of histrionics, using the body and language to demand the attention of others. Many artists discount Performance Art’s ‘theatrical’ elements (Abramović 2011; Parr 2005), which for them represent an art of illusion and over-exaggeration associated with the superficial gestures that comprise ‘acting’ in which an individual adopts a ‘persona’. Theatricality does not subtract the real power and subversive intention of Performance Art, but goes beyond representation and cast an audience of ‘non-actors’ to present. Not a
performance in the theatrical sense but a performative action that is a charge for socio-political change.

Whilst I acknowledge that theatricality may represent an art of illusion and over-exaggeration associated with the superficial (Fried, 1998), artists need a certain amount of theatricality as the material to spark the engagement of a passive audience. Most of my performance artworks do not require participants to learn a script or adopt a ‘persona’ but Fall and Rise (2008) (discussed on Page 58) is an example of one of my performances that deploys a sense of theatricality and invites participants to take on a persona/ ‘get into character’ (Reggie Perrin).

Like the artists of the happenings and those before within the Dadaist movement, I define my practice also as an attempt to undo comfortable differentiations concerning what one has come to understand and expect when we talk about experiencing ‘art’, ‘theatre’ ‘performance’ as separate from each other. Whereby location is understood as the site of production, critique and narrative of a performance artwork, I refer to what I do as combining elements of art, theatre and performance and capitalising on the fact that they are works dependent on ‘live’ presence.

I enjoy both producing and witnessing live performance because I do not know what I am going to get – I cannot anticipate exactly the outcome - what is going to happen. I cannot foresee exactly what is going to happen in the running of events and what my emotional responses will be. Helping me to foreground my perspective is Dwight Conquergood (2002) who describes Performance as ‘a way of knowing’ (2002:152). I suggest that the knowledge that Conquergood suggests here is dependent upon a ‘not knowing’ at the start and throughout the duration of a performance. During a performance, often my expectations of what I foresee may happen are disrupted by actual events. Accepting the serendipitous nature of working with liveness, the question is how do performance protagonists cope with the chaos (the disruptive potential) of liveness? I argue that the answer is found in a bricolage of improvisation (Peters, 2009) and intuition as methodological survival-tactics but are not limited by it.
iv. Power Relations

I define power relations in terms of the relationship between protagonist and audience; **I** (protagonist) do this and **you** (audience) do that’. In participative performance, the notion of democracy (all participants having equal status in terms of power) is suspended; ‘I do this and you do that’ underpins the form. My study positioned its appraisal of participative performance as ontologically rooted in unequal distributions of power. Bourriaud (1998) sees *Relational Aesthetics* as describing participatory art encounters where everyone is nice to one another (being friendly and convivial) and everybody is equal in terms of their power status; in these terms, there are no power relations and there is a shared sense of democracy.

In relation to participation and power relations, I describe my work as not wanting to alleviate social imbalances of power in participative performance nor to reinstate them but simply to draw attention to them and use the practice of participative performance as a vehicle in which to initiate discussion of how social power operates in all aspects of our lives (Foucault, 1980). By using my practice to expand this theory, I argue that *Relational Aesthetics* proposes a false notion of democracy and that any theory of participative practice, and any social relation, must give consideration of power relations. (Unequal) power relations lie at the very core of the practice of participative performance and my work extends the debate on participation by using certain concepts and tactics relating to practice. My practice attempts to make those power relations explicit rather than implicit. The work of Bishop and others (Bishop 2004; Bharucha 2007; Martin 2007 *et al.*) questions *Relational Aesthetics* by drawing inspiration from how Michel Foucault describes power as underpinning social relations (Foucault, 1981), whereas my work uses practice rather than theory to make explicit the implicit power relations that underpin participative practice.

One of the aspects of Bishop’s work that I am most interested in is how she addresses participant power relations in *Relational Aesthetics* within her 2004 work *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*. Bishop’s tactic is to use the work of Jean-Luc Nancy and Chantal Mouffe (1985) who address ideas around democracy through a consideration of the term ‘antagonism’ (2004:65). To summarise, Nancy and Mouffe’s theories of democracy assert that no democracy...
exists without antagonism; there are power relations in democracy (2004:65-66).

In response to the work of Nancy and Mouffe, Bishop suggests the following:

a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased. Without antagonism, there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order—a total suppression of debate and discussion, which is inimical to democracy (2004:66)

This is important if we apply a discussion of antagonism to Relational Aesthetics as this would then acknowledge that there are power relations involved in social relations but more than that, Relational Aesthetics could speak about democracy whilst accepting the role that antagonism plays within it. Picking up on Michel Foucault’s understanding of a social version of the term ‘power’ (1980), I generate performance as mirroring the ‘mechanisms of power’ (1980:51) that takes place in all forms of daily human existence. I describe my practice as using various tactics to explore the implicit power relations involved in performance. I situate my practice within a broad contextual framework of practitioners such as Yoko Ono, and Marina Abramović who use performance and its usage of liveness and the immediate (Auslander, 1999). The element of their work that is most aligned with mine relates to participatory process yet there are clear distinctions between how audience participation is provoked in my work as is the case in theirs. Concerned with the effects of liveness and the presence of an audience, these practitioners like me, aim to destabilise the ‘fourth wall’⁶ and elicit a version of participation where there is no clear distinction between artist/viewer and performer/audience (Bishop 2006; Groys 2008; Horne et al. 2008; Popper 1975 et al.).

Live performance based artworks from the 1960s/70s like Cut Piece (1964) by Ono who sits on a stage and allows people to cut clothing from her and Rhythm 0 (1974) in which over the course of six hours Abramović allows her audience to use a selection of objects placed on a table ranging from a rose, a feather to scissors, a scalpel, a gun and a single bullet, illustrate these points (Figure 7).

⁶ The fourth wall is a term derived from theatrical terminology to describe an invisible wall between the auditorium and the stage i.e. the audience and the performers (Hauthal, 2008).
My work differentiates itself from these examples in terms of audience expectation and involvement. Ono and Abramović set up performative possibilities for their audiences that are implicit, whereas, I tell audiences exactly what to do, when to do it and how I want them to interact with objects that I may give them. Where the distance between my work and these specific performances by Ono and Abramović could be said to be at its most explicit is how I ‘force’ all audience members present to participate, whereas these performances ‘invite’ participation, allowing audiences to choose whether they engage within participatory processes as part of the performance or not and more fundamentally how they choose to participate.

The coercive and manipulative aspects of the participatory processes that I set up speak entirely of the difficulties, the complexities and the many problems associated within participative performance. Often using aspects of impoliteness in my practice to provoke, I align aspects of my practice with those of self-proclaimed ‘purveyor of discomfort’, contemporary artist Michael Rakowitz. Rakowitz has spoken about his practice as a ‘failure of manners’ (Rakowitz, 2012), which I understand as relating to impoliteness (a failure of politeness).

However, I distinguish my work from his in terms of his practice leaning more towards the concerns of interventionist art practice (generating art to fix/ameliorate social conditions) whereas my practice, as previously stated, has other concerns. Historical examples of performances where participant power relations are amplified through deliberate and direct attempts at producing participant discomfort by their protagonist include Performance/Audience Mirror (San Francisco Art Institute, 1975) by Dan Graham, Vito Acconci’s Performance...
Test (1969), Living Theatre’s Mysteries and Smaller Pieces (1964) and Marina Abramović and Ulay’s Imponderabilia, Museum of the Galleria d’Art, Moderna, Bologna (1977). Specific methods that provoke uncomfortable audience participation used within these examples of performance practice align with those that I use in my own practice: 1) verbal language (Graham and Living Theatre); and 2) physical body gesture (Acconci, Abramović and Ulay).

In terms of using verbal language in live performance, Performance/Audience Mirror (San Francisco Art Institute, 1975) uses spoken word uttered by Graham to provoke audience discomfort. Graham holds a mirror in front of an audience where he announces the audience’s every move, every gesture and every sound (Figure. 8) in a deliberate attempt to unnerve.

![Fig 8 Dan Graham, Performance/Audience/Mirror, San Francisco Art Institute (1975)](image)

Freshwater (2009) refers to Living Theatre’s work entitled Mysteries and Smaller Pieces (The American Centre for Students and Artists, Paris, 1964) as generating (possible) moments of confrontation by addressing the audience and saying the following: “You are being looked at [...] You are unprotected [...] Why you are salivating [...] Why you are breathing [...] Why how terribly self-conscious you are.” (2009:51).

In terms of using the physical body in live performance, Acconci’s Performance Test relies solely on non-verbal bodily gesture to create audience unease. Acconci
stares at individuals in an audience for approximately thirty seconds, performing what Freshwater refers to as a ‘confrontational stare’ (2009:50). An explicit form of using the body in terms of audience participation to provoke and thus generating extreme power relations between artist and audience is *Imponderabilia* by Abramović and Ulay who stood naked for three hours at the entrance for a private view of an exhibition taking place at Museum of the Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Bologna in June 1977 (Figure 9). Adopting a liminal position at the threshold into the gallery, Abramović and Ulay interrupted the free-flow of visitors entering the gallery by enforcing that the only means of entrance was by sliding through their doorway of naked bodies and deciding which performer to face as they attempted to squeeze through the narrow space. Physical contact with the naked bodies of the performers was impossible. Walking through naked bodies of strangers and being reminded of their own physical bodies provoked awkwardness and discomfort; most visitors looking straight ahead to avoid a direct gaze with the motionless deadpan performers (Figure 9).

![Fig.9](image)

*Fig.9* Marina Abramović and Ulay: *Imponderabilia*, Museum of the Galleria d’Arte, Moderna, Bologna (1977)
This thesis argues for the positive deployment of physical interruption as a method for provoking participation in Performance Art and therefore, useful in exploring power relations attached. Slapstick and heckling are proposed as tactics of physical interruption that contain explicit versions of interruption: slapstick as an extreme form of the body carefully choreographed to interrupt a process, and heckling as people interrupting each other.

Having addressed commentary towards the term interruption, I begin by declaring my position as an ‘interruption maker’. Whilst I am not concerned with supplying an historical review of artists/performance makers using aspects of interruption in their work, I pick out what I notice to be instances of interruption/interruptive processes within a selection of practices. Such processes become particularly important in terms of the forthcoming examples of my practice presented as prime evidence for my argument, examples of my practice, which I argue greatly amplify and extend the practices and works of others. Discussion of these previous iterations of interruptive practice by others is amplified in the forthcoming chapters.

i. The Practice of Interruption-Making

My argument is for the positive usage of interruption. Despite interruption being perceived as negative by some commentators (Bilmes, 1997), interruption and its alliance with such terms as dissensus, antagonism and disruption has been debated in the arts and humanities. However, little discussion exists focusing upon the potential for interruptive processes within the context of Performance Art and none that specifically addresses the physical dimensions of interruption as a performative technique that directly relates to the physicality of the body and of language. This thesis argues that disruption falls under the umbrella of interruption as a series of possible tactics. This thesis forefronts examples of Performance Art undertaken as practice as research to theorise, articulate and demonstrate that interruption can be used as a tactic to provoke participation. These examples also make evident the powerful role that interruption can play in demonstrating the importance of action and the value of practice in contributing to an understanding of participation by making more tangible the mechanisms of power in play within participation. Examples of practice demonstrate how
interruption works on two levels. By this I mean the experience of generating interruption (being an interruption-maker) and the experience of being interrupted. In both cases, the thesis explains the ramifications, emotional consequences etc. of experiencing interruption first-hand.

As an outcome of my performances Fall and Rise (2008) (Figure 10), and Yes/No (2007) which are described at the start of Chapter One, my study further expands the possibilities of generating interruptive processes through examples of my work as ‘interruptions’: practical demonstrations of the operations of interruption in different locations with amplified consideration of its physical, bodily and linguistic nature as impacting upon engaging participatory processes.

![Image](Fig.10 Lee Campbell: Fall and Rise, Whitstable Biennale, 2008. Courtesy of Simon Steven)

ii. Summary of Works Presented as Prime Evidence to Support Argument

The two examples of my practice presented here as primary evidence for argument are the performance Lost for Words (2011) and the performance-based collaborative project Contract with a Heckler (2013). I argue Lost for Words (Figure 11) supports the difficulties involved in the practice of participation in Performance Art whilst Contract with a Heckler further supports corresponding power relations (Figure 12). Lost for Words, an audience participatory activity that took place in an art gallery provides evidence of how slapstick can be put forward as a tactic of interruption and made use of to provoke participation. Contract with a Heckler, devised in the context of a conference presentation room, provides
evidence of how heckling as a tactic of interruption can be made use of to examine power relations.

Both works attend to the physical nature of interruption yet offer contrasting perspectives. *Lost for Words* demonstrates interruption that is physical and bodily, whilst *Contract with a Heckler* demonstrates interruption that is physical and linguistic. I argue that the use of interruption in both my performances contribute understanding in how we may articulate participation in terms of the body (using your body to participate) and language (using speech to participate) but also in terms of the relationship (and the power structures at play within)
between audience and performer (protagonist). Whilst *Lost for Words* demonstrates my role of instructing others to enact a set of actions that embody slapstick and interruption, *Contract with a Heckler* provides much more insight into how interruption works on an emotional level and demonstrates some of the difficult emotional implications one can go through whilst experiencing interruption.

The positive usage of interruption has received attention in terms of artistic practice: ‘An interruption in the flow of events can be a creative strategy in many ways’ (Arlander, 2009:160). Taking their lead from the work of Hutchby (1992) and Arlander (2009), *Lost for Words* and *Contract with a Heckler* further expand the possibilities of using interruptive processes within performance by building upon DV8’s *Can We Talk About This* (2012) as a key moment in the history of performance practice containing elements of interruption/interruptive processes as engineered into the structure of a performance.

Whilst social scientists insist that there exists a ‘special relationship between impoliteness and power’ (Culpeper in Bousfield and Locher, 2008:18) and ‘impoliteness is an exercise of power’ (Bousfield and Locher, 2008:8), discussion of the term ‘interruption’ within impoliteness study (Hutchby 1992, Bousfield et al.) is extremely limited. I argue *Contract with a Heckler* is a performance-based collaborative project that places ‘interruption’ and all its associations with the term impoliteness right at its forefront and is useful to investigate the arguments made above.

I also argue *Lost for Words* and *Contract with a Heckler* both demonstrate slapstick and heckling as disruptions of process, extreme versions of interruption and incongruity. Arthur Koestler (1970) suggests incongruity as an unexpected reaction that debunks our expectations: ‘it [the interruption] comes like a bolt out of the blue [...] decapitates the logical development of the situation’ (1970:33), this i.e. the disruptive nature of interruption is entirely what slapstick and heckling

---

7 Extending the early 17th century Latin roots of the term ‘incongruity’ from (in) ‘not’ and (congruous) ‘agreeing’, for the purposes of this study, I defined incongruity as an uncomfortable discord between two or more elements and argue mismatch produces a useful disruption to gain a clearer understanding about the operations of something in terms of its potential as well as its limits.
do: they both undo, they both disrupt, they both ‘decapitate’. In other words, slapstick and heckling both disrupt what David Hillman and Adam Phillips (2008) refer to as ‘the expectable environment’ (2008:8). I argue *Lost for Words* and *Contract with a Heckler* address disruption of expectation and provide practical means via slapstick and heckling in Performance Art to reflect upon ‘the whole notion of interruption [as] show[ing] us something about the nature of our commitment to continuity, to sequence, to pattern, to order’ (2008:7-8).

**Methodology**

In this section, I explain how I approached addressing the research questions and provide a series of points as to why I selected certain strategies to push forward my study. Following this, the research process that was established to underpin my study is stated and discussion is then given towards the rationale of combining written and visual components within this thesis.

i. Research Strategies: Interruption, Slapstick and Heckling

To address the research questions, I conducted practice as research relating to: 1) generating practice in the form of live Performance Art; 2) writing and reflecting upon those performances to critically analyse their proceedings from the viewpoint of the protagonist, and 3) relate the findings of the analyses to my questions. My study was underpinned by three strategies to be deployed within live Performance Art practice: interruption as its overall strategy and slapstick and heckling as tactics related to interruption.

1) Interruption

I selected physical interruption as the key strategy to provide my investigation of live performance with useful insights relating to participatory processes and the power relations at play within participation.

---

8 I extend upon this quote on Page 91 to address laughter produced as an effect of interruption (mismatch and incongruity).
Tactics of Interruption

Physical interruption can be described as containing aspects that are bodily and linguistic in nature as well as having the capacity (through its disruption) to provoke humour. I also selected interruption to extend how I use these aspects (comedy, humour, disruption) as commonalities within my own practice, as previously discussed.

To see what level of disruption I could produce in liminality (Broadhurst 1999; Heathfield 2004; Phelan 2004 et al.) and defining liminality as ‘the space between’, referring to interruption’s etymological roots as a derivation from its Latin origin; ‘interrumpere’; (inter) ‘between’ and (rumpere) ‘break’, I engineered interruptions, actions related to the performative characteristics of slapstick and heckling into the proceedings of an event. In other words, my role as the protagonist involved injecting interruptions (‘breaks’) into performance proceedings (the liminal space ‘between start and finish’) and making full use of the performance as being live (Auslander, 1999).

2) Slapstick

I selected slapstick as a key strategy in which to provoke and then analyse participatory processes in Performance Art because it provides my investigation of interruption with an understanding of the physical and bodily dimension of interruption. I selected slapstick over other forms of physical and bodily interruption e.g., flash-mobbing, streaking, and protest marching because slapstick is directly related to the body in performance and is underpinned by methods related to comedy and the production of (anti-social) humour. To expand, I defined slapstick’s performativity as being characterised by the following:

- Disruption of events predicated upon an interruption that demonstrates the unruliness of the body (Dugnat, 1969);
- Aspects of performance in terms of physical comedy and bodily humour; laughter caused by someone falling over, tripping up, being clumsy etc.;
- Non-convivial participation in terms of the social implications of Schadenfreude meaning ‘the malicious enjoyment of another’s misfortunes [German from Schaden ‘harm’ + Freude ‘joy’]’ and superiority theory (Morreall, 1983); ‘as long as it is in our nature to laugh at the
misfortunes of others, slapstick will survive’ (Hart, 2009);

• Incongruity and repetition;

• Historically rooted within the popular Commedia dell’arte from the sixteenth century to Vaudeville to silent films of the early twentieth century;9

• ‘Play[ing] with the construction of expectation, deliberate disillusionment and delayed punch lines’ (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2014);

• Divisive in terms of presenting itself as an intelligent sophisticated usage of the body: ‘anyone can do it/anyone can fall over’ 10. I argue slapstick is sophisticated.

Chapter One entitled ‘Slapstick as a Tactic of Physical and Bodily Interruption’ scrutinises and examines slapstick’s performativity in relation to the subject of participation within Performance Art. Discussions taking place within this chapter concentrate on my performance Lost for Words, a performance that I argue really supports the problems and difficulties involved in participation within Performance Art. My definition of slapstick in this performance relates to undertaking a set of actions which forces participants’ bodies to interrupt how it normally behaves. The chapter achieves this by addressing what happens when, as part of the structural framework of the performance, interruptive processes related to bodily incongruity and repetition are engineered into activities undertaken by participants engaging in physical and bodily processes. The chapter also amplifies consideration of how the performance can be used to provide useful insights into the importance that collectivity and conviviality plays

---

9 Despite common perceptions that slapstick originates from North America in the early 1900s, the antics of its most popular protagonists Charlie Chaplin (British-born), Buster Keaton and Laurel and Hardy owe a great deal to late 1800s British music-hall culture and way further back to sixteenth century Italian Commedia de l’Arte, ‘when comedians discovered a way of hitting one another that didn’t cause pain’ (Hobbs, 1967:90).

10 Alain Burton and Larraine Porter (2000) urge for an examination into British slapstick comedy as ‘many of the surviving films surprise in the sophistication of their wit, their use of irony, and their modernity’ (2000:3). This is a move forward from perceptions of slapstick from the 1950s when in The Story of Slapstick (2009), a BBC television documentary narrated by comedian Miranda Hart, Hart states that slapstick was marginalised to children’s television and cartoons as it was deemed ‘juvenile’ and ‘unsophisticated’.
within participatory processes.\textsuperscript{11} By way of contrast, the chapter explores how the anti-social nature of \textit{Schadenfreude} can also play its part as well as the, as argued, contradictory nature of hospitality in examining how the performer and audience relation can be construed as host/guest.

3) Heckling

I define physical interruption within verbal communicative exchange to be an instance of when disruptive processes are at their most explicit in terms of the motives or purposes behind why people interrupt. The action of people interrupting people is widely associated with the act of heckling.

I selected heckling as a key strategy because it provides my investigation of interruption with an understanding of the physical and linguistic dimension of interruption as well as a method related to comedy and performance in which to analyse power relations.

Heckling’s performativity as embodied through the trope of the heckler can be characterised by the following:

- Disruption of events predicated upon an interruption that demonstrates a sophisticated usage of language in conjunction with split-second timing and ‘wit, volume’ and a sharp tongue (White, 2012);
- Using interruption to command the immediate attention of others (Garner, 1998);
- Participation and aspects of performance: someone’s opinions being challenged by another in front of a live audience through the usage of comedy and humour in language, as exemplified in the ‘put-down’ (Hound, 2011);
- Power relations in terms of \textit{Schadenfreude} and superiority theory (Moreall, 1983);
- Actions taking place within the historical context of the Roman gladiatorial games in which the audience shouted, “Habet! Hoc Habet!” (‘He’s had it!’)

\textsuperscript{11} For the purposes of this study, I defined the term collectivity as meaning being a member of a group of people with possibly shared experiences, interests and motivations.
“Mitte!” (Send him back!) (Auguet, 2012: 48-9);

- Divisive in terms of heckling being ‘relegated to the realm of vulgar and uncouth’ but also ‘outspoken, courageous’ (Jordan, 2013b).

Chapter Two entitled ‘Heckling as a Tactic of Physical and Linguistic Interruption’ scrutinises and examines the trope of the heckler’s performativity in relation to the subject of power relations at play within Performance Art. The chapter achieves this by drawing threads from the previous chapter’s concern of slapstick as interruption and highlighting that slapstick and heckling both relate to disruption via interruption which is physical, yet makes the reader aware that heckling is much more to do with interruption that is physical and linguistic in nature. Relating heckling and the trope of the heckler back to discussions of slapstick and bodily interruption from the previous chapter, I refer to how slapstick can be used as a tool for the heckler. Discussions taking place within this chapter concentrate on a collaborative project entitled Contract with a Heckler that really supports the problems and difficulties involved in terms of power relations within Performance Art. The chapter also underlines the fact that heckling and slapstick both relate to aspects of the anti-social nature of comedy (Schadenfreude) and power relations involved in performance; slapstick relates to audiences laughing at performers making fools of themselves on purpose by using a combination of physical bodily action and interruption whilst heckling is argued as a deployment of physical and linguistic interruption that uses verbal parody, mockery and sarcasm etc. to insult and denigrate a performer (who often replies to the heckler with similar verbal barbs). Chapter One supports discussion of a top down version of participation (I [the protagonist]) do this, you [the audience] do that) and presents a version of participation where power relations between an audience and a performance protagonist are fixed. Chapter Two supports a far more complex and difficult version of power relations which are constantly in flux and shift between different sets of participants: a speaker, his

---

12 Although my study was not concerned with the physical and bodily nature of heckling, within the context of the Roman gladiatorial games, spectators used their bodies to express disapproval; pollice verso meaning ‘downturned thumb’ (Corbeill, 2004:4).
audience and a third ‘awkward’ participant, a heckler.\textsuperscript{13} The chapter also relates points made by speakers at the symposia \textit{Heckler} (2013) to key aspects of \textit{Contract with a Heckler}.

ii. Anticipation, Action and Analysis: The Relationship of Research Process to Forthcoming Chapter Structure and Writing Styles Adopted

1) The Relationship of Research Process to Forthcoming Chapter Structure

Described as ‘present[ing] an original, practical and imaginative way of demonstrating reflective practice’ (Newbold, pers. comm. December 2015), how I structured, planned, carried out and reflected upon the practice produced during my study adopted a three-stage process which I designed and entitled ‘Anticipation’, ‘Action’, and ‘Analysis’, an extension to an existing model of reflective practice (Rolfe, 2001) referred to below.

This process consisted of devising a series of projections, planning a sequence of actions within a performance, carrying out those actions and then writing about those experiences using different strategies. These strategies consisted of making notes, annotating diagrams, writing narrative accounts and listing the different stages that participants (protagonist and audience) underwent. The writing that follows in each chapter of this thesis is structured to reflect the exact process that I underwent in my role as the researcher/protagonist. This echoes the aforementioned three stages; terms that are used as subheadings to provide the basis for my following discussion. These three stages are:

1. ‘\textit{Anticipation}’: making a set of predictions informed by theory and argument relating to interruption and using one’s intuition and experience;

2. ‘\textit{Action}’: executing practice based on those predictions, to gain experience of the operations of interruption in practice and to lend a different understanding to its associated theories;

\textsuperscript{13} I refer to the heckler as ‘awkward’ in terms of his/her embodiment of liminal status. The heckler is neither audience member nor person(s) officially advertised as those addressing an audience; his/her status is liminal.
3. ‘Analysis’: reflecting upon what happened in the last stage, considering how the practice extends the theory and context of interruption in practice through embodied and emotional response.

To provide the reader with analysis of the forthcoming practice presented in the chapter that encourages both self-reflection through embodied and emotional response as well as discussing how the practice can be situated and analysed amongst key theoretical, philosophical and contextual debates, for the purposes of this thesis, ‘Analysis’ is divided into two sections: ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’ and ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’.

2) Writing Styles Adopted

In this section, I explain how within the four sections that comprise each chapter there are clear divisions in writing styles with distinct functions to provide the reader with different evaluative dimensions to the practice of interruption-making.

In the first section, ‘Anticipation’, I write using the past tense to explain to the reader how I designed and structured (then) forthcoming practice as building upon previous performances that I had made.

In the second section, ‘Action’, I adopt a style of writing akin to a factual report written in the past tense to provide narration to a series of events taking place prior, during and post an example of my performance practice. My strategy of recording the performance using a writing-up style that is objective in tone resembles a similar strategy adopted by artist Chris Burden (1974) whose take on a police report excludes the personal.14 The writing style adopted in the following section marked ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’ offers the reader by way of contrast, personal first-person embodied and emotional response as a manner of recollect demonstrating an outcome that only practice not theory could produce.

---

14 Burden (1974) gives no personal response to events, no indication nor insight into what he was thinking during one of his performances. For example, in his recollection of Shoot (1971), he states: ‘At 7:45 PM I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me’ (1974:24). The significance of Burden’s strategy to that of my own is that by adopting a style of writing that is impersonal, objective and ‘almost neutral’ in tone (O’Dell, 1998:1).
In the third section, ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, I reflect upon my experience as a performer. Supporting my perspective of the importance of reflection is Maggi Savin-Baden (2007) who states: ‘when we are engaging with reflective spaces there is sense that we are located in an interrupted world’ (2007:69). In the discussion entitled Reflection as Interruption, she ties reflection to interruption suggesting: ‘Reflection can be seen as interruption because reflection tends to disturb our position, perspectives and views of the world’ (ibid.). The importance of reflection and ‘choos[ing] to interrupt everyday actions through reflections and interrupt current stances by attempting to expose new perspectives and positions’ (ibid.) can be argued as being essential in learning about how certain things (including the term ‘interruption’) operate. Indeed, it can also indicate how practice and subsequent reflection upon practice can make aspects of theory on practice more tangible. Moreover, and most importantly, it can highlight how reflection (provoked through interruption) can produce huge shifts in practice. I reconfigured reflection and interruption in terms of interruption as reflection to argue interruption as not only ‘enabl[ing] learning to happen’ (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 2009:3) but to push forward interruption as provoking an immediate reaction and call for reflection. Interruption as prompting a radical reimagining of practice.

In this section, I provide the reader with a response to my performance that is often colloquial in tone as to describe my feelings at the time. The writing style is also immediate in a diaristic form and sometimes takes the form of a conversation with myself to accentuate personal and emotional response. This is to clarify the role and importance of practice within my study and demonstrate how the nature of these responses speaks of practice. I provide the reader with a personal account of the performance that is written in such a manner for the reader to be able to understand both the practical and emotional implications involved with interruption: enacting slapstick, heckling and being heckled. A strategy that I adopt in this section to provide the reader with a frank account in terms of my personal description of tension and anticipation in relation to the performance in question is by structuring narrative elements contained within that section in the form of a ‘countdown’. This is to inform the reader of how I felt at a specific moment in time in the build-up to the performance and through its
duration with emphasis given to my deployment of interruption. I use this method to relate time-chronological events with emotional impact.

In the fourth section, ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’, I reflect in retrospect. I draw comparisons and similarities between my performances and the performances of others, which operate in parallel contextual frames of reference. I also consider how my performances advance what other people have said in terms of theory. Whilst in the ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’ section I focus purely on my personal response to my performances, in this section I also include response to my performances from others.

Both analyses sections referred to above make use of the past tense to look back and reflect in retrospect to analyse. The past tense is also deployed to look back to look forward. Using reflection helps me identify the implications of my practice and reflect upon them with a view for acting upon those realisations in the future. Referring to this aspect of my study as a learning process (the pedagogic implications of studying interruption upon my personal development as a practitioner), I draw upon the concept of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and link it to Gary Rolfe’s reflective model (2001), which concerns the questions: What? So What? and Now What? to engage in self-reflective processes. These are then applied to my Anticipation, Action and Analysis model with a particular emphasis on asking ‘Now What?’ as a procedure to extend the last stage ‘Analysis’ for building further practice upon existing practice. There are also instances in my writing within all three sections where I attempt to engage the reader by addressing them through direct speech that often involves questions being posed.

Chapter Synopsis

The following chapters both provide the reader with two different dimensions to physical interruption and two different aspects of Performance Art. Chapter One concentrates on participation in Performance Art whereas Chapter Two focuses on power relations. Chapter One explores physical and bodily interruption whilst Chapter Two amplifies consideration of interruption’s physical and linguistic properties.
1) Chapter One: Slapstick as a Tactic of Physical and Bodily Interruption

The focus of the first chapter is using slapstick as a tool to engage participation in interruptive processes. The aspect of interruption that is explored here is physical and bodily interruption in the form of slapstick.

In section 1.1, ‘Anticipation’, I refer to how I sought to make more of physical interruptive processes at play within my practice by developing previous works *Fall and Rise* (2008) and *Yes/No* (2007). I describe these works as performances that are directly physical and bodily in nature and make use of various comedy tactics to provoke participation. In section 1.2, ‘Action’, I provide a narrative account of my performance *Lost for Words* (2011). This is to demonstrate that the possibilities of using slapstick as an interruptive process within Performance Art relate to how it may be deployed to provoke participation and further practical understanding regarding the complexities involved in participatory exchange. In the next sections of this chapter, I provide the reader with two commentaries of the performance. In section 1.3, ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, I refer to key critical incidents taking place during the performance and describe how these shaped the work’s outcome. I talk openly, honestly and frankly about these incidents through personal response to add detail in terms of emotional and embodied impact of the performance. This is by way of contrast to the less personal account of the work provided in the previous section. Section 1.4, ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’, engages in further reflection that is less self-reflective in writing style and draws links between a range of theories and practices that relate to key concepts that emerge from a scrutinisation of *Lost for Words*. This is to clarify the importance of this performance in terms of how it advances slapstick and interruption on several levels: theoretically, contextually and practically. Underpinning my review of *Lost for Words* is the term ‘incongruity’. Having defined what I mean by this term in relation to interruption and aspects of Performance (Brecht, 1978) and linked these to definitions of slapstick (King and Paulus, 2010), discussion then concentrates upon bodily incongruity (Casey, 2000) and repetition (Heiser, 2008) in relation to physical and bodily Performance Art. Linking slapstick with meaning slippage (Derrida, 1979), discussion is then given to the social implications of slapstick within this performance in terms of some of
the motives and purposes behind engaging in slapstick by the two parties (the protagonist and audience). Reconfiguring the protagonist/audience relationship in this performance as ‘host/guest’ (Derrida, 2000), I refer to how Lost for Words embodies tension between collectivity and conviviality (Bourriaud 1998; Clayton 2007) on the one hand and the anti-social nature of slapstick (Kuipers, 2012) and laughter as a gesture relating to the emotion Schadenfreude (Glenn, 2003; Miller, 1993; Svendsen 2010 et al.) on the other.

1) Chapter Two: Heckling as a Tactic of Physical and Linguistic Interruption

The focus of the second chapter is power relations within Performance Art and using interruption to examine these. The aspect of interruption that is explored here is physical and linguistic interruption in the form of heckling.

In section 2.1, ‘Anticipation’, I refer to how I sought to extend my repertoire of comedy tactics and usage of slapstick as an outcome of Lost for Words by participating in an artist residency entitled The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012). I explain how I experienced physical and linguistic interruption directly via being heckled whilst performing during the residency. I speak of how this critical incident enabled me to extend the possibilities of using interruption during my study and how I sought to explore heckling in practice. In section 2.2, ‘Action’, I provide a narrative account of my performance-based collaborative project Contract with a Heckler (2013). This is used to demonstrate that one of the possibilities of using heckling as an interruptive process within Performance Art relates to developing practical understanding regarding the complexities involved in power relations. In the next sections of this chapter, I provide the reader with two commentaries relaying various stages in this project. In section 2.3, ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, I refer to key critical incidents taking place during and before the delivery of the key component of the project, a performative lecture that contained staged interruption to provoke the audience. I discuss how I rethought the contents of the contractual arrangement underpinning the working relationship between myself and my collaborator as generating an exciting opportunity to engage in a dramatic contest between a performer and a heckler. I speak about how I sought triumph over the heckler by devising three approaches. I then provide a direct description of the emotional implications involved in
experiencing heckling first hand. In section 2.4, ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’, I engage in further analysis that is less self-reflective in writing style. I extend my own response to the project to those of others including a member of the audience who attended the lecture. I also make usage of comments and observations about my project as informing my ideas about heckling and physical and linguistic interruption from speakers and audience members at Heckler (2013). In my first review of the performance, emphasis is given to power relations within contractual arrangement (Feral 2002; O’Dell, 1998) between myself as a speaker and my collaborator as a planted heckler. In my second review, I discuss how aspects of Contract with a Heckler extend a specific performance by DV8. Emphasising discussion of the role of the audience during the performative lecture aspect of the project, I draw parallels between my work, the relationship between art and disruption (Roelstraete, 2012) and Bourriaud’s (1998) convivial participation and conclude the chapter by setting out the varying levels of power relations at play in the presentation room where the performative lecture took place.
Chapter One: Slapstick as a Tactic of Physical and Bodily Interruption

1.0 Chapter Aims

The subject of this chapter is slapstick. The main aim of this chapter is to theorise, articulate and demonstrate its potential as a process that is connected to physical interruption in terms of bodily incongruity and how this may be used as a tool for provoking participation. To achieve this, the chapter provides evidence of practice that makes usage of slapstick within a performance entitled Lost for Words (2011). Key theorists and commentators that I draw upon throughout this chapter to theoretically and contextually analyse this performance include: Leslie M. Beebe (1995; 2011); Derek Bousfield (2008); Ian Bruff (2013); Edward S. Casey (2000); Alex Clayton (2007); Jacques Derrida (1979; 2000); Michel Foucault (1980); Jorg Heiser (2008); and Giselinde Kuipers (2012).

The aim of Lost for Words for me as the protagonist was to generate a situation by framing what I was doing as performance, in which a group of audience members, many of whom did not know one another, would engage in physical and embodied participative performance that combined interruptive processes. These processes made use of slapstick to provoke a form of audience participation that was bodily and physical in a direct way and can also be seen in terms of possible mismatch in relation to the motives and purposes of engaging with slapstick by the protagonist and audience (the relationship between slapstick and possible misinterpretation). In Lost for Words, this mismatch relates to contrasting effects on participants in terms of being convivial and part of a collective on the one hand and being inhospitable and enjoying the anti-social nature of slapstick (Schadenfreude) on the other. Lost for Words is a lesson in how to influence others (to force them to do what you want them to do) by using a mixture of convivial hospitality, coercive impoliteness and interruption.

The first section of this chapter, 1.1, ‘Anticipation’, provides the reader with information regarding the most important decisions that I made in anticipating Lost for Words. The section centres upon discussion of where I sought to exploit slapstick-related processes already at play within two previous examples of my practice. In relation to my focused aspects of slapstick (participation, conviviality,
Schadenfreude etc.), I refer to how Fall and Rise (2008) relates to some of the difficulties involved in audience participation and address the relationship between collectivity and conviviality. In my discussion of an earlier performance entitled Yes/No (2007), I refer to how the work relates to incongruity and repetition and the anti-social nature of Schadenfreude. I draw this section to a close by making the reader aware of some of the most important decisions that I made in relation to the structural engineering and contextual framing of Lost of Words as revising focused aspects addressed.

In the following sections of this chapter, distinct writing styles with alternative voices are used to give the reader an understanding of my experience of working with slapstick in performance on different levels. These analyses provide the material in which to evaluate the extent to which slapstick can be used within activities framed as performance to increase levels of participation. They also provide important information for my discussion of heckling in the next chapter, as they help the reader to understand my rationale for proposing how slapstick can be used as a tool for the heckler. The section 1.2, ‘Action’, provides a write-up of events taking place during my performance Lost for Words that involved audience participation centred upon physical and bodily interruptive processes. The section 1.3, ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, adds detail to the previous section by incorporating personal and emotional response to events indicated. I begin section 1.4, ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’, with an examination of the interplay between incongruity and elements of physical and embodied performance and habit (Koestler, 1970), body memory (Casey, 2000) and repetition (Heiser, 2008). I then refer to mismatch in terms of motivations and purposes by using a model of hospitality (Derrida, 2000), which I use to explore the interplay between participation and slippage (Derrida, 1979). I explain how Lost for Words embodies potential limits bound in the desire for collectivity and conviviality (Clayton, 2007), which I then relate to the anti-social nature of slapstick in terms of laughter and Schadenfreude (Glenn, 2003) and power relations (Kuipers, 2012).

1.1 Anticipation

In this section, I refer to my performances Fall and Rise (2008) and Yes/No
(2007) and foreground discussion as to how events taking place during these performances provided the rationale for decisions that I made when anticipating *Lost for Words* (2011).\(^{15}\)

### 1.1.1 Fall and Rise (2008)

*Fall and Rise* (25/06/08), a participative art performance that took place on a beach on the Thames Estuary as part of Whitstable Biennale, was entirely dependent upon my ability as its protagonist to engineer a carefully timed moment of physical and bodily interruption within performance (Figure 13).

What I learnt from performing *Fall and Rise* was how to generate an activity that may be seen in British culture as impolite behaviour (stripping off in public for some is considered rude and socially unacceptable) by using interruptive processes that were directly physical and bodily. Akin to flashmobbing as a form of performative interruption disrupting the process of people’s habitual day-to-day goings on, e.g., the Guerilla Girls’ flashmob-style interruptions from the 1970s, the performance began with demonstrations of physical and bodily interruption. These took the form of participants (myself included) marching down Whitstable High Street blowing whistles, banging drums and chanting using a megaphone.

---

\(^{15}\) For video documentation of *Fall and Rise* and *Yes/No*, please refer to Appendices One and Two on the accompanying CD.
(me) to provoke the attention of passersby. We made our way onto Whitstable beach and undertook a collective act of streaking that would re-appropriate the moment where Reggie Perrin strips and runs into the sea in the BBC TV programme *The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin*.

### 1.1.2 Yes/No (2007)

Similar to *Fall and Rise*, *Yes/No* (27/01/07) engaged in physical and bodily interruptive processes in performance and was a solo performance that took place at Battersea Arts Centre. However, the performance distinguished itself from its successor in terms of how it sought to explore slapstick’s relationship with incongruity and repetition. This was demonstrated by my ability as the (sole) performer to undergo a process of performing physical and bodily interruption that was repetitive in nature.

*Yes/No* involved me standing in front of an audience seated in a black box performance space and attempting to engage their attention in watching me perform a process that examined the relationship between what the audience heard and what they saw. Because of this experience, I learnt how to set up an uncomfortable discord (incongruity) between bodily gesture and spoken word utterance that disrupts expectation in terms of the socially ascribed norms of behaviour that relate to how body action and verbal language function together. However, what I had not anticipated when planning this performance related to an important discovery; I learnt that laughter could be produced when an audience encounters the sight of a person purposely performing slapstick upon themselves. The audience produced laughter during *Yes/No*, as I appeared to them to deliberately force my body to be clumsy not just once, nor twice but many times repeatedly. Me enacting a form of physical and bodily clumsiness and then reenacting the same clumsiness repeatedly heightened the nonsensical nature of what I was doing whilst at the same time generating more and more laughter from the audience. Audiences may well have been captivated by the performance as

---

16 A *black box* theatre is a space where the walls are painted black and the floor painted white. *Black box* refers to the traditional bog-standard spatial arrangement for theatre where audiences sit in ‘featureless box filled with light and abstract figures’ (Carlsson, 1989:196-197) and watch a performance in relative darkness.
they wanted me to fail (an example of Schadenfreude); they wanted me to get the action wrong which would have meant me nodding when saying yes and shaking my head when saying no.

![Fig. 14 A drawing of 'deadpan' performer Lee Campbell by Bryan Parsons Yes/No (2007)](image)

The absurdity in my performance was increased further by me maintaining non-emotional facial expressions throughout the entire performance, making me appear serious and deadpan (a continual trope in slapstick) and not at all bemused by the slapstick activities that I was engaged in (Figure 14).

### 1.1.3 Exploiting Physical and Bodily Interruption

Performing *Fall and Rise* and *Yes/No* taught me how I could extend my repertoire of tactics to provoke audience participation in performance by including physical and bodily interruptive processes. As a result, in planning *Lost for Words*, an audience participative Performance Art that took place at South Hill Park, Bracknell in 2011, I sought to exploit and make much more of interruptive processes that I had previously been engaged in by making direct reference to slapstick.

The main aspect that I wanted to draw upon from *Fall and Rise* and accentuate in *Lost for Words* related to how participants in *Fall and Rise* use their bodies as part of a collective action. Making usage of the process of confusing what is spoken and what is enacted through the body that I performed as part of *Yes/No*,
I wanted to engage a group of participants in a similar process. This was for them to gain direct experience as to what happens when we engage our bodies in an activity that really accentuates its physicality as to interrupt process. Furthermore, in relation to my focused aspects of slapstick, this decision would also enable me to witness first-hand the social implications at play of performing slapstick as a collective. Based on my own experience in Yes/No of performing slapstick by myself in front of an audience (and the potential embarrassment and shame that can take place in getting slapstick wrong), in Lost for Words I wanted to make participative exchange and the subsequent power relations at play within that participation much more complicated by confusing the distinction between audience and performer. To explain, in Lost for Words the action that audience members would undertake would be a simulation of the actions that I undertook as a performer in Yes/No. Rather than an audience watching me undertake a series of actions i.e., ‘do slapstick’ by generating a series of actions confusing sound and verbal elements resulting in a (laughter-inducing incongruity) as in Yes/No, on this occasion they would simultaneously witness and produce slapstick. I wanted to find out how other participants would react when another participant fails to perform an act of deliberate clumsiness correctly.

Referring to the difficulties in engaging all participants to carry out a very specific form of activity whilst enacting the same activity myself, documentation of Fall and Rise reveals that not all the performers enacted my instruction to run into the sea naked. Some of the performers kept their underpants on/wore swimming costumes (note the performers in the far left hand side of Figure 13). A mismatch had occurred in terms of my experience of events taking place at the time of the performance and what actually occurred. I had understood at the time that everybody who ran into the sea was naked but the documentation proves otherwise. Rather than seeing this as a failure within the work, I viewed this mismatch between my perception of events and what happened in actuality as revealing information about the boundaries/limits that performers set themselves. The performance had been set up for participants to be exhibitionists but revealed that some persons taking part were quite conservative. In Lost for Words, I wanted to play with mismatch and incongruity in a far more direct manner by generating a specific kind of physical bodily participation that
contained incongruous ‘interruptive’ elements, but to also consider how potential mismatch may occur in terms of motives and purposes amongst all parties involved.

To ensure that everybody in the audience participates in slapstick, I rethought my role as the performance protagonist in terms of how I direct them to enact instructions that would lead them to produce slapstick. This meant employing a sidekick to help me ensure everyone in the audience enacts the instructions given out. The actual nature of the instructions that I would give participants during Lost for Words would demand that they enact slapstick interruptions repeatedly to increase them being clumsy and make other participants laugh at them (a direct expression of the emotion Schadenfreude). To make the clumsiness even more deliberate than in Yes/No, participants would have to contend with not having the sound element of the work pre-recorded; they would have to produce the sound themselves through speech. I anticipated that this shift in the work would add a further complication to make much more use of the effects of liveness in terms of the possibility of actions going wrong when performed live. I anticipated that what participants would get back in return for their act of commitment/consent to participate would relate to a range of reasons. First, participants would be part of something collective, secondly they would step outside the routines and habits of their daily lives and thirdly, participants would be given my permission to behave in a way that could be seen as subversive/dissensual in terms of social norms of behaviour relating to the body and language and also in terms of behavioural norms related to the context of location. There was also the ‘cool’/credibility factor to consider; participants may think that, for them, it is fashionable and trendy to participate in Performance Art.

The slapstick protagonist is continually prone to attack through either a bodily revolt or loss of self-control, or from an external source that aims to dismantle his dignity [...] the body is utterly malleable and infinitely resourceful. At the heart of slapstick is the conceit that the laws of physics are locally mutable, that the world can rebel against you,

17 Whilst aspects of my study of interruption acknowledged impoliteness in the context of British culture, my study was neither culture-specific nor class-specific. I acknowledged that if I were to have made Lost for Words within a Chinese white cube space, for example, then I would have needed to apply a whole different set of tactics and challenge different norms.
or that a person can be suddenly stripped of their ability to control their environment or anticipate how it will behave (Stott, 2005:93)

I also anticipated that some participants might experience a form of mental and bodily discomfort because of their participation. What would be their survival tactics? How would they cope with the (potential) chaos of retraining the operations of the body and the mind so that they work incongruently to one another? That said, how would I as the slapstick protagonist, considering Andrew Stott’s (2005) appraisal of slapstick above, deal with performing slapstick? Would I remove myself from the process of performing the slapstick myself and instruct audiences to enact slapstick whilst I occupy another space to them to reduce the risk of me being ‘prone to attack’?

Other aspects that emerged from my analysis of *Fall and Rise* that I wanted to prioritise in *Lost for Words* related to how I contextually frame my performances. I define this as relating to how context directly impacts upon the narrative, execution and subsequent critique of what I do. This is in terms of framing a specific set of collective actions as ‘performance’ that take place within a specific kind of space in front of a certain kind of audience. An audience often comes along to my performances with very fixed kinds of expectations because of the contextual framework that is in place. In terms of *Fall and Rise*, audience members could be described as those who were assembled in a particular place at a particular time on such and such a date to experience an activity classified as ‘performance’ (Schechner, 2002) and on this occasion they expected a very specific form of interruption to take place i.e. when the performers run into the sea. Alternatively, passersby, in this case these persons may be defined as those strolling along the promenade, could be said to be implicated within the performance as accidental witnesses who chance encountered upon an activity that was framed as ‘performance’ and the nature of that performance involved participants undertaking various acts of interruption in public spaces. Emphasising less the potential for interruption as a tactic to produce witnesses in performance (Etchells, 1999), in planning *Lost for Words*, I removed any aspiration of including these ‘chance’ passerby audience members and the implications interruption may have on witnessing. In *Lost for Words*, I wanted to focus my attention on a specific kind of audience who had agreed to participate in
an advertised event of performance within a white-cube art gallery. This location would provide me not only with a site for assembling a group of audience members of whom I wanted to engage in a very disciplined form of participatory process (a form of collective participation that would engage their bodies in interruptive processes relating to using slapstick in a directly physical manner) but it would also give me a contextual frame (performative art practice) that would prove useful in terms of analysing the final outcome of the performance in relation to thinking about aspects on contemporary art theory including Bourriaud’s (1998) perspectives on collectivity and conviviality for instance.

1.2 Action

This section provides a time-chronological narrative account written in the past tense of selected events taking place during my performance Lost for Words included as part of Testing Grounds' 2011 programme of performances loosely conceived around the concept of failure. My performance took place in the gallery at South Hill Park, Berkshire. The space adhered to white-cube conventions: walls painted white, polished wooden floors and slightly abrasive artificial lighting. This description concentrates on the first eighteen minutes of the forty-five minute performance. This is to foreground analytical discussion taking place in the next section relating to how, during this period of the performance specifically, I (the protagonist) demonstrated an ability to make use of interruptive processes that were physical and bodily in nature to provoke participation. The following narrative account begins at the start of the performance when my sidekick and I walked into the gallery space. Twenty or so audience members are stood in one corner of the gallery with a cameraman video-recording the performance positioned to one side of them in an opposite corner. The account ends after an activity during the performance involving aspects of audience participation and slapstick has finished.18

1.2.1 A Narrative Account of Lost for Words (2011)

My sidekick and I had a quick gin and tonic and walked out of our makeshift greenroom (the store cupboard) and into the performance space. We didn’t

---

18 For video documentation of Lost for Words, please refer to Appendix Three on the accompanying CD.
welcome the audience. The audience had been instructed by one of the gallery staff to stand in one part of the space. I addressed the audience and read out a quote by Lisa Le Feuvre (2010) relating to the topic of failure: “To talk of failure [is to] to embrace possibility in the gap between intention and realisation.” We sat in the middle of the space and began a conversation in front of the audience (Figure 15). “So,” I began, “I’ve been asked to do a performance about the concept of failure.” My sidekick responded, “I said I would help you with that but I am not quite sure what to do. But I’ve come up with a few ideas. We spoke about them earlier.” I replied, “Do you remember any of it? Can you remember the order that we’ll do everything?”

![Fig.15 Lee Campbell: Lost for Words, Testing Grounds, South Hill Park, (2011). Courtesy of Testing Grounds](image)

I grabbed the sidekick’s notes relating to the running order of events from out of his hands and turned it over. I said, “No looking. How many parts are there?” The sidekick replied, “Six” to which I responded, “Wrong! Twelve. See, you did not do your homework, did you!” I then asked my sidekick if he was suitably dressed to do a performance and said, “You should have gone for green. Poor audience. Red. Green. Their eyes are going to be all over the place like a tennis ball. We both decided that we would use the audience in some way.” The sidekick put his right hand on his chin and said, “Maybe ‘use’ is not quite the best word.” I replied, “We’re going to help the audience understand the performance by incorporating them within it. But actually we’ll use them.” An audience member made a huff. “Me and you are going to move over there and do something that the audience
will find very funny,” I told my sidekick. The sidekick replied, “I’m not hearing very much laughter at the moment. I think it is more sneer.” A coughing sound came from the audience. “Telling someone what to do and how to act is bad isn’t it? I would not do anything like that would I,” I said to my sidekick. He did not reply.

Audience members are then instructed to form two groups with roughly the same number of people. Allocating myself to one of the groups I gave each person within my group a different number between one and eleven. My sidekick did the same activity in his group. Participants were given a plastic cup to hold up against their ears with cup outward pointing.

![Image](image.png)

**Fig.16** Lee Campbell; *Lost for Words*, Testing Grounds, South Hill Park, (2011). Courtesy of Testing Grounds

We instructed the audience members to occupy different parts of the performance space and told them to not move until instructed. We then exited the space. We re-entered the space. I did so by repeatedly shouting “RIGHT!” whilst placing my hands on my hips and moving my chest and head in a leftwards direction whilst my sidekick shouted “LEFT!” whilst placing his hands on his hips and moving his chest and head in a rightwards direction.

Audience members watched the action and listened to the sound through their cups as extended earpieces (Figure 16). I turned to address the audience and said at the top of my voice, “Now it is your turn. You’re with me and you’re with him. Let’s go!” Following this, my sidekick led a group of audience members to
march around the space shouting “RIGHT!” whilst placing their hands on their hips and moving their chests and heads in a leftwards direction whilst I led the remaining group of audience members to march around the space shouting “LEFT” whilst placing their hands on their hips and moving their chests and heads in a rightwards direction (Figure 17). Just as we were about to complete a full circumnavigation of the space, I interrupted the march by halting proceedings and turned to one of the audience members and asked, “Are you happy with right? Do you like right or do you like left? Well if you want to change over then you can come and change over.”

Fig. 17 Lee Campbell: Lost for Words, Testing Grounds, South Hill Park, (2011). Courtesy of Testing Grounds

The audience member chuckled at my question. I responded, “Oh am I not that popular then?” The march around the space began again. Realising that I had been doing the action wrong, whilst everyone else had been doing the action
correctly, the march was then interrupted again by my announcement for it to stop. Seeking confirmation, I turned to my sidekick and asked him if he was ‘right’ or ‘left’. The march began again once more. I performed the slapstick correctly thanks to being helped by the sidekick. Audience members performing the action started to make mistakes. Laughter filled the space (Figure 18). The march ended.

1.3 Self-Reflective Analysis

The aim of this section is to reflect upon my performance and look back in retrospect at events taking place to gauge some of the emotional implications that are involved with engaging in slapstick as a form of physical and bodily interruptive process. For the purposes of this study and to accentuate moments within Lost for Words where participants were directly engaged in slapstick, attention is given to analysis of the first eighteen minutes of the forty-five minute performance. The manner in which I write up these reflections is in the style of a countdown, in terms of hours, minutes and seconds until and including me engaging the audience in physical slapstick. Five sub-sections comprise these reflections: 1.3.1) 01:02:34; 1.3.2) 00:11:45; 1.3.3) 00:06:34; 1.3.4) 00:00:59; and 1.3.5) 00:00:00.

1.3.1 01:02:34

Having rehearsed aspects of the performance with my sidekick and drew up a rough script to remind ourselves of what we had planned, I sat in the bar area adjacent to the gallery where the performance was about to take place and anticipated what was about to come. I asked myself, “What if nobody turns up to the performance?” “Will I forget the running order of events”, “Will I forget my lines?” and “What if nobody wants to do the activities that I have planned as part of the performance?” I knew that the part of the performance where I had planned for audiences to participate in physical and bodily interruptive processes was a risky strategy e.g. I acknowledged this part of the performance had the potential to exclude certain members of the audience who weren’t physically able to join in and I reflected upon how this would make them feel. Maybe audience members would be too shy to want to participate. I reminded myself of one of the
key aims of the performance: to evaluate the potential of interruptive processes for increasing levels of audience participation. I knew that Mrs Taylor (the elderly lady of whom I was renting a room from whilst I took temporary residence in Bracknell) was planning on being in the audience. I couldn’t imagine her participating in slapstick. What would she do with her walking stick? I could not envisage her using it in the manner of Charlie Chaplin. I reminded myself why I hadn’t advertised that audience participation would form a major component of this work in the publicity for my performance that had been sent out by the gallery. I was keen to find out what would happen in terms of audience participation when I instruct the audience to engage in bodily slapstick without having given them any prior-warning that direct physical involvement of the audience was integral to the success of the performance. I looked at my watch. There was only an hour to go. I ate a couple of cheese sandwiches and drunk a double espresso. I had learnt from performing slapstick in the piece Yes/No that slapstick is hard work; you need as much fuel as possible to cope with the rapid expenditure of bodily and mental energy that slapstick requires.

There were to be two significant changes that I had made to Lost for Words as an updated version of Yes/No: 1) spatial dynamics in terms of the physical space the performer(s) and the audience adopt and 2) the nature of the slapstick enacted. In Yes/No, there were clear spatial divisions between the audience and myself. The physical space where Lost for Words was performed adhered to conventions most commonly associated with the theatrical tradition of the fourth-wall aesthetic. This was to establish a power relation between the audience and myself as a performer. Whilst I had anticipated that the physical performance space would at times follow a similar spatial dynamic as that described above (most noticeably at the start and towards the end), there would be many moments during the performance that I had planned where the audience would occupy the same space as me and join me as co-performers to engage in bodily mismatch and incongruity. Either way, performing the action correctly or not, the slapstick that I hoped to engage my prospective audience in had the potential to generate laughter (laughing at getting the slapstick correct and laughing at getting the slapstick wrong). Great! Double possibilities for (anti-social) laughter and I love Schadenfreude. I also had to remind myself that audiences might well laugh
at me performing the slapstick correctly and not. I didn’t care because the (potential) embarrassment and the humiliation that I may feel would be worth it. If everyone who had signed up to attend my performance actually turned up and participated in the slapstick, then I would have nearly thirty people to not only engage in interruptive processes but to make fun out of their deliberately clumsy bodies and ironically, when their clumsiness was not deliberate too. The second adjustment related to the removal of me using pre-recorded sound as part of the process of making slapstick. In Yes/No, the audience saw me perform a set of body gestures and hear me uttering words that came from a recording being played on a CD player behind me. In Lost for Words, participants would have to contend with not having the sound element of the work pre-recorded. I anticipated that this shift in the work would add a further complication to make much more use of the effects of liveness. I related participants producing the sound element of the slapstick process by themselves with the possibility of actions going wrong when performed live (Auslander, 1999). This possibility meant potentially even more laughter and Schadenfreude.

1.3.2 00:11:45

My sidekick and I engaged in discussion in front of the audience about what was going to happen in the later stages of the performance. To reflect upon this part of the performance, I begin by reflecting upon the content of what was said and then reflect upon how this aspect of the performance inadvertently shaped the nature of my Anticipation, Action and Analysis working process.

For the purposes of this study, the aspect of the verbal exchange with my sidekick that I particularly reflect upon relates to how our communication embodied many aspects of Leslie M. Beebe’s (Beebe, 1995 in Culpeper: 2011) three considerations of impoliteness. These are: 1) ‘appear[ing] superior and this includes insults and putdowns’ (2011:227), 2) ‘get[ting] power over actions (to get someone else to do something or avoid doing something yourself). This includes sarcasm and ‘pushy politeness’ used to get people to do something’ (ibid.), and 3) ‘get[ting] power in conversation, to get the floor’ (ibid.). In the first stage of our communication utterances were loaded with sarcasm, put downs and insults, using humour to appear superior (Morreall, 1983) in terms of me
attempting to proclaim my authority over my sidekick. By way of contrast, there were then moments during our communication when power dynamics between us were reversed, for example when my sidekick referred to the chuckle that he had heard in the audience, which he interpreted as sneer. I interpreted this response as mockery of me by my sidekick by way of the audience and a possible attempt by him to get the audience on his side. During our discussion, my sidekick and I also enacted many ‘countering strategies’ (Bousfield, 2008). This moment in the performance can be argued as a demonstration in practice as to what happens when one is ‘faced with impoliteness’ (2008:99). Bousfield includes within his definition of such strategies acts involving ‘condescend[ing], scorn[ing] or ridicul[ing] [...] emphasis[ing] your relative power’ (2008:114). Whilst not stopping the performance, I interpreted the interruptions from the audience (the cough and the huff) during our discussion as meaning one of two things. Firstly, they could have been responses of natural bodily operations or secondly, they could have been deliberate strategies of interruption by that particular audience member to affirm their presence and potentially disrupt the performance, affecting its outcome. Maybe these ‘interruptions’ were to signal that I should stop being such a bastard to my sidekick or indeed persist my verbal assault towards him. Was the chuckle intended to mock or support me I wonder?

1.3.3 00:06:34

My sidekick and I handed out plastic cups to audience members. I suspect that some audience members were disappointed that we did not come around with a bottle of wine and start pouring. Bearing resemblance to a Franz West’s adaptive, a wearable sculpture that ‘[disrupts] the natural poise of the body, [leads] to comic scenarios and [turns] even the most adroit participants into Buster Keaton performers’ (Marcoci, 2007:21), audience members were instructed by my sidekick and I to use these as extended earpieces. Audience members stood with cups pressed to their ears whilst my sidekick and I performed a set of actions that would foreground the slapstick activity that was to take place in under five minutes. “Phew!” I thought to myself, “I didn’t make any mistakes.” I also wondered how the audience would react when I instruct them to do an iteration of these actions. I started to feel anxious but the adrenaline had kicked in and I was ready to interruption-make.
1.3.4 00:00:59

My sidekick and I were still engaged in our slapstick routine with only one minute approximately to go before the planned slapstick march. The audience’s attention had started to wane. Their laughter had reduced and one audience member had exited and returned with a glass of red wine. If I were to succeed in getting all the audience members engaged in the following activity, I needed to gain their attention and fast. Although I accept I do need a certain amount of conviviality to get audience members to do what I want them to during my performances, this time I needed to be far more assertive in my manner and much more aggressive in my usage of instruction. There was no time left for please and thank you.¹⁹ So, I amplified the impolite tone of my instruction and put Beebe’s ‘pushy politeness’ into action to make positive performative usage of instruction and impoliteness. Thus, Lost for Words extended the field of practice in relation to artists and performance makers deploying instruction (Brotchie 1995; Hodge 2006; Friedman et al. 2002) by not only relating instruction to the canon of participative Performance Art, but by also inserting the language of impoliteness into the manner of instructions given to audiences to engage their participation. In other words, I (the protagonist) instruct you (the audience) to enact this instruction.²⁰

1.3.5 00:00:00

I ordered audience members to form a line behind either my sidekick or myself. This was achieved by way me pointing to them and shouting, “You’re with me, you’re with him.” As we marched around the gallery performing slapstick using our

¹⁹ In my previous performances where I had attempted to convert audience members into co-performers never would you hear me say in a convivial manner, “Hello. How do you do? Fancy taking part in a performance? Would you like some time while you make up your mind?” You would more likely here me say, “Hello, (now do it!)”

²⁰ My usage of instruction related to enacting power by using language; an instruction through its being uttered and it being enacted embodies language, the performative speech act and power. My definition of the performative speech act was taken from John Langham Austin’s version (1962): ‘Performative utterances constitute an action being done as a result of the utterance i.e., “I do” in a marriage ceremony or “I name this ship”. Peggy Phelan (1993) offers a useful definition of Austin’s theory; ‘J. L. Austin argued that speech had both a constative element (describing things in the world) and a performative element (to say something is to do or to make something, I promise, I beg, I bet). Performative speech acts refer only to themselves, they enact the activity the speech signifies’ (1993:149).
bodies, I thought to myself, “Bloody hell! They are all doing it (everybody is doing the slapstick)”. Nobody said “No.” to my instruction. Nobody refused. Maybe that was because nobody wanted to kick up a fuss, appear the odd one out or maybe they were all curious to find out what was going to happen. I couldn’t believe that I had been so rude to audiences and had still managed to engage everybody to take part. I had never realised how bossy I could be and still get people to do what I wanted them to do. However, if audience members had not have been so obliging, I am sure that I would have been hurled with an inflammatory remark or two when I turned to the audience and said, “Right you lot, your turn!” Goodness knows how the audience members must have felt when I (unintentionally) forgot to include them in the march. On reflection, it could be argued however that audiences did not interpret my instruction as impolite and actually construed what I said as being quite reasonable. There was also the possibility that audience members participated out of politeness and pretended to enjoy enacting the slapstick when actually they had thought “What a load of shit this is but I will smile and go along with it for the sake of this performance.” Maybe they all stuck two fingers up at me behind my back.

This part of the performance furthered my inquiry into interruption and participation by making their relationship visible through the sight of bodies engaged in physical interruption. I also gained an understanding of the complexities involved with bodily interruption by performing the slapstick myself. The moments when I interrupted the marching taking place around the gallery were genuine; I didn’t halt the marching process because I wanted to annoy the participants on purpose. Enacting slapstick is not easy. Reflecting upon the moment during the march where I stopped proceedings because I had forgotten to include fifty percent of participants was caused by my anxiety at the time about enacting the slapstick properly. The fact that it was I, the slapstick protagonist, who made the most mistakes possibly helped contribute to the laughter and the Schadenfreude of getting the slapstick wrong. Participants probably thought what a stupid idiot I was for getting my own instruction wrong.

1.4 Theoretical and Contextual Analysis

The aim of this section is look back in retrospect at events under examination in
terms of what others have said and what others have done in terms of theory and practice in relation to slapstick. This section contains four commentaries making links between selected aspects. These are: 1) 1.4.1 Interruption and Incongruity; 2) 1.4.2 The Body in Participative Performance Art; 3) 1.4.3 The Habitual Body, Repetition and Clumsiness; and 4) 1.4.4 Collectivity, Conviviality, The Inhospitable and Schadenfreude.

In the first discussion, I define what I mean by mismatch and incongruity (Brecht 1978; Freud 2003) in relation to slapstick (King and Paulus, 2010). I connect slapstick as an explicit form of bodily mismatch and incongruity to theories and practices within physical and bodily Performance Art and give emphasis to consideration of habits (Koestler, 1970), body memory (Casey, 2000) and repetition (Heiser, 2008). In the second discussion, I take a different approach to thinking about mismatch within the performance. This is in terms of possible mismatches or ‘slippages’ (Derrida, 1979) behind the motives or purposes for participation in slapstick by the protagonist (me) and the audience as distinct categories of persons involved in a complicated participative exchange that encourages social conviviality and collectivity whilst at the same time undermining it. I explain how Lost for Words extends my previous practice of seeking to produce incongruities in the form of planned interruptions by setting up structures for misinterpretation to occur on purpose.

**1.4.1 Interruption and Incongruity**

Man is incongruent with himself. Human existence is an on-going balancing act between being a body and having a body [...] it is also possible that the sense of humor repeatedly perceives the in-built incongruence of being human (Berger, 1997:2019)

The aim of this section is to foreground discussion into how Lost for Words deploys slapstick to produce a form of physical and bodily ‘slippage’ (Derrida 1979) i.e. the body misinterpreting instructions as much as a cognitive misinterpretation of language. I relate my definition of incongruity and interruption to a usage of these terms within performance (Brecht, 1979) and talk about how this helped me drive the decisions that I made when devising interruptive processes to be put to work in Lost for Words. I then relate incongruity to
Epic theatre [...] does not reproduce conditions but, rather, reveals them. This uncovering of conditions is brought about through processes being interrupted (Benjamin, 1999:3)

The key practitioner who initially helped me think about inserting interruptive processes into performance was the German theatre director Bertolt Brecht whose Epic Theatre heavily interruption to provoke: ‘the more frequently we interrupt someone engaged in an action, the more gestures we obtain... interrupting of action is one of the principle concerns of epic theatre’ (ibid.). Brecht (1978) refers to the interruption of generating illusion in theatre (akin to naturalistic drama) by means of disrupting the unities of time, space and action in terms of plot through what he describes as Verfremdungseffekt (alienation effect) (1978:143), a dramaturgical ploy that ‘constantly goes against the public’s theatrical illusion’ (Benjamin, 1970:94). To pull audiences and spectators out of what Brecht believed to be the trappings of illusionist/dramatic theatre (over-sentimentality and lack of criticality in terms of what was going on on stage and in the minds of the spectator), he made visible the means of theatre production by using methods such as captions & projections, half curtain and visible lighting (Benjamin, 1999) (‘interruptions’ to other dramaturgical conventions in place at the time). In The Author as Producer (1970), Benjamin refers to Brecht’s usage of interruption as having an ‘organizing function’ (1970:94) and a means of uncovering new situations. Linking Brecht’s usage of interruption to concerns relating to the body, comedy and Performance in my own work, slapstick is useful in terms of mismatch, incongruity in comedy and performance as it combines consideration of all of these aspects. It provides a tool (or in Brechtian terms, a ‘situation’) for thinking about the body in performance as well as supplying a helpful shortcut for (bodily) humour.

Slapstick’s relationship to the body and potential for bodily mismatch and incongruity has got lost in terms of art history (Maude and Macnaughton 2009; O’Reilly 2007). Operating in total opposition to negative commentary of slapstick; ‘despised and rejected by people of culture and intelligence [...] critical obsolescence’ (King and Paulus, 2010:1), ‘cultural neglect [...] coarse farce’ (Seldes in King and Paulus, 2010), I aligned myself with Jorg Heiser (2008) who
refers to slapstick as a ‘technique, attitude, approach’ (2008:17). *Lost for Words* extends how we may articulate slapstick in terms of artists working within the canon of physical and bodily participative performance. Even though *Slapstick!* an exhibition combining arts and comedy practitioners including Francis Alÿs, John Bock, Charlie Chaplin, Laurel & Hardy, Bruce McLean, Buster Keaton and Gordon Matta-Clark held at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg Germany between 2013 and 2014 attempted to align contemporary artists (Bock, Matta-Clark, McLean etc.) with comedians using slapstick (Keaton, Chaplin etc.), no provision was made in the exhibition for artists like me using slapstick in terms of audience participative performance practice. Furthermore, the exhibition did not give any consideration to the nature of slapstick as being directly related to the physicality of the body (Clayton, 2007). Slapstick historian Alex Clayton (2007) proposes greater emphasis be given on discussion of how the body’s physicality may be further understood through an examination of slapstick, arguing the brutal force of slapstick essentially disturbs the body and has ‘the capacity to reawaken us to the fundamental physicality of the world’ (2007:12) and provokes curiosity ‘what it means to have a body, to be a body, to inhabit the world here and now’ (2007:207). *Lost for Words* advances the history of embodied and participative performance by linking Ian Bruff’s (2013) positive promotion of using the body and its materiality and physicality to be disruptive and slapstick historians like Clayton. The substance of Bruff’s argument is explored in the next section.

### 1.4.2 The Body in Participative Performance Art

The aim of this section is to explore the potential for slapstick in terms of physical and bodily participative Performance Art. In this discussion, I begin by addressing the body in terms of power relations within the discourse of participation within contemporary art practice. Making use of the work of Foucault (1980) in terms of the body and power relations, I use *Lost for Words* to argue that more attention needs to be given to the body in terms of the discourse related to participative performance in view of the work of contemporary practitioners such as Branko Miliskovic and Michael Portnoy whose practice like mine sets up performative scenarios in which audiences enter into forms of participation which are overtly physical and bodily and often generate mental, physical and bodily discomfort. I argue that *Lost for Words* extends the work of Miliskovic and Portnoy in terms of
how it is far more concerned with the body in terms of interruption, mismatch and incongruity. I then draw upon the work of Ian Bruff whose work makes links between the physical body and interruption only to differentiate what I do from him to argue that *Lost for Words* provides a means of looking at physical bodily interruptive processes through the lens of slapstick as an explicit form of bodily mismatch and incongruity.

Even though critical interrogation of *Relational Aesthetics* is nothing new (Bishop 2004; Bharucha 2007; Martin 2007 *et al*.), how it addresses participation as a set of complex power relations emerging from a consideration of the body is not forefronted by *Relational Aesthetics*’ fiercest opponents. Despite considerations concerning the body within wider discussions relating to contemporary art practice existing in numerous amounts of literature (Maude and Macnaughton 2009 *et al*.; O’Reilly 2009), in terms of the contemporary discourse surrounding participation within an artistic context, discussion in relation to the use of the body is not given prominence. I construed participation as a concept within *Lost for Words* less of a group of people ‘participants’ but more of an assembly of ‘bodies’; an assembly of bodies whose exchange is underpinned by power relations. The key theoretical commentator who helped me forefront my perspective on the body and power relations during my study was Michel Foucault. He asserts that ‘power’ permeates all social relations. What I assimilated further from his work on power and applied to my study are his theories on how power is intrinsically connected to the body. This proved helpful in reflecting upon the body and power relations within *Lost for Words* as an examination of participant power relations through an appraisal of the body. Foucault says, ‘there is nothing more material, physical and corporeal than the exercise of power’ (1980:57-8). To expand upon my configuration of audiences as bodies, I referred more specifically to his concept of *biopower*. In *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (1977), he suggests that power is achieved through techniques of bodily control he calls biopower. In other words, enacting power through the body (1977). Referring to audiences as ‘bodies’ rather than participants accentuates the fact that within a collective of people, with varying subjectivities, their body is their commonality; they all have a body, which can be, extending Foucault, controlled and managed.
Cynthia Morrison-Bell’s (2013) perspectives on the body helped me to forefront my perspective on the body in relation to Performance Art: ‘the body was an important departure from much art of the 1960s and 70s. Performance Art uses the body as the tool and medium, as sculpture even, making it endure the limits of the language of art, testing it to its extremes, just as you would any material, to find out how much you could mould it, push it, twist it or break it’ (2013:1). Key practitioners in the field of embodied and physical performance whose work is predicated upon audience participation relating to the body and its physicality are Branko Miliskovic and Michael Portnoy. Miliskovic’s *Curfew* (2013) performed at TROUBLE #9, Les Halles, Brussels is an example of the artist’s practice of producing various forms of crowd control amongst his audience as participants by ordering them into various crowd formations by undertaking a series of often difficult pain-enduring exercises that physically discomfort the body (Figure 19).

![Fig. 19 Branko Miliskovic: Curfew (2013) Les Halles, Brussels. Courtesy of Hitchem Dahes](image)
Portnoy’s work attacks *Relational Aesthetics* by setting up audience participatory encounters that often involve the audience enacting instructions that produce bodily discomfort. For example, *27 Gnosis* (2012-13), a game show where players are constantly instructed by Portnoy to adopt certain (uncomfortable) body gestures (Figure 20). The artist uses performance to enact his concept of *Relational Stalinism* which he describes as ‘*Relational Aesthetics* with a shifty iron fist [...] anti-feel good [...] *Relational Stalinism* subverts attempts at harmonious community by introducing destabilizing mechanisms to create a kind of voluptuous panic’ (Portnoy, pers. comm. October 2012).

In BBC Radio’s *The Forum* (2015), speaker Claudia Roda links interruption and interrupting to the body and bodily gesture; ‘We (Italians) use our bodies a lot when we talk, and that’s also a way of interrupting’ (Roda, 2015). Where *Lost for Words* extends the work of practitioners like Portnoy and Miliskovic is by inserting what Roda suggests as ‘the body interrupting’ (ibid.) into physical, bodily and participative performance. When I co-organised *Heckler* (13/07/13), a conference at TRADE, an artist-run space in Nottingham which aimed to examine the trope of the heckler in relation to art and performance practice, I identified commonalities between the operations of the body and interruption in *Lost for Words* and how Ian Bruff articulated this relationship during his presentation ‘The materiality of the body and the viscerality of protest’ which argued for ‘the purposeful physical projection of bodily practices through impolite/disobedient uses of space and creative ways of using your body to be impolite, to resist, to heckle [heckling as a tactic of interruption]’ (Bruff, 2013). Even though the emphasis on heckling within my study as discussed in Chapter Two was specifically on physical and linguistic interruption, Anthony Corbeill’s work (2004) was useful in terms of extending that to physical and bodily interruption; within the context of the Roman gladiatorial games, where spectators would use their bodies (their thumbs) to express disapproval at what they were watching. Corbeill

---

21 I refer back to this conference on Page 123 in Chapter Two in relation to heckling and the trope of the heckler in more detail.
identifies the ‘semantic link between thumbs and power’ (2004:43) and refers to the etymology of pollex, the Latin word for ‘thumb’, as sharing an etymological link with pollet, the Latin word for ‘power’, by which X would display the hostile thumb (infestus pollex) (ibid). Bruff’s argument extends that of Corbeill’s in terms of including aspects of interruption within consideration of the body and power relations. Lost for Words extends both arguments by Bruff and Corbeill by applying a consideration of slapstick as a form of bodily incongruity to the body, interruption and power relations.

There are important contrasts to be made between the work of Clayton (2007) and Bruff (2013). Both argue for the importance of the physicality of the body. Bruff argues for the body as a tool. In the context of his work, this relates to using the body’s physical presence to symbolise protest/resistance over something i.e., we can stage protest using the presence of our bodies as well as/opposed to verbal language (2013). Clayton also argues for the body’s physical materiality but where his argument differs from Bruff’s is where he suggests that the body’s physicality has limits and slapstick attests ‘to the incongruity and rightness of certain actions and gestures, to the physical laws and properties that restrict and permit human activity’ (2007:12). Lost for Words advances the history of embodied and participative performance by putting Bruff and Clayton’s theories of the physical body (and its limits) into practice and demonstrating the body’s potential for incongruity and mismatch. To expand upon this point, I draw a parallel between my usage of slapstick and marching. Slapstick and marching both relate to the body and aspects of interruption and repetition. Similar to how Bruff (2013) speaks about the importance of the physical body and its presence, marching in the context of protest relates to using one’s physical body to interrupt space (Reiss, 2007). Marching often relates to chanting repeatedly and repeating various bodily actions. Repetition of the chant/slogan etc. is the marchers’ attempt at getting a message across. Marching became the strategy within the work for me to engage participants in repetitive bodily actions and verbal gestures whilst at the same time be immersed in interruptive processes (slapstick) that could obstruct their attempts at regimenting their bodies whilst marching.

In terms of the stated aims of this section, Lost for Words demonstrates that slapstick as an interruptive process enables consideration of the physical body in
terms of participative performance. Slapstick encompasses understanding of the body not only in terms of its physical capabilities; it can also be used to demonstrate the body’s physical nature. In the next section, I make more of these physical and material ‘shortcomings’ and talk about how I, as the protagonist of *Lost for Words* set about to purposely engineer deliberate clumsiness amongst my audience of ‘bodies’.

### 1.4.3 The Habitual Body, Repetition and Clumsiness

The aim of this section is to provide discussion into the specific aspects that I used as the protagonist of *Lost for Words* to produce a moment in the performance where everybody would engage in participation that forced slapstick; bodily clumsiness. I define these methods as relating to bodily memory and habit and talk about repetition as a means of speeding up the process of achieving clumsiness. I refer to *Lost for Words* as an act of performative public pedagogy in terms of prompting participants to think about the relationship between spoken word utterance and bodily gesture by instructing them to immerse their minds and bodies in interruptive processes related to slapstick. I unpack the moment in *Lost for Words* where all the participants marched around the gallery moving their bodies in a certain manner and speaking certain utterances, which I named as the key moment within the performance where my usage of slapstick is at its most explicit. This moment in the performance is put forward as evidence of participation that makes direct usage of the principles of physical and bodily interruption in practice.

I understood slapstick in *Lost for Words* as related to the disruption of body habits and body memory and the usage of repetition to contribute to this disruption. I re-examined possible mismatch and incongruity in the relationship between bodily gesture and verbal language by drawing upon the work of Arthur Koestler (1970) to explore habits, Edward S. Casey (2000) to provide insight into bodily habits and body memory and Jorg Heiser (2008) who was useful in terms of his evaluation of repetition within his analysis of slapstick in contemporary art practice.

By which Koestler (1970) suggests that ‘if often repeated under unchanging conditions, in a monotonous environment they [habits] tend to become rigid and
automatized' (1970:44), the work of phenomenologist Casey (2000) was useful for my study and understanding of slapstick as an extension of Koestler in terms of his consideration of bodily habit. Casey suggests that habitual memories help us gain a sense of orientation within our daily lives and that our bodies are bound in ‘habits’ (2000). *Lost for Words* demonstrates the limits of habitual behaviour in terms of bodily gesture and verbal language in practice. My performance achieves this by incorporating disruption into body memory. One of the potentials of engaging others in planned mismatch of the taught actions of the body and spoken language (Clayton 2007, Chion 2007) is that they became more aware of the felt emotions and bodily responses attached to mismatch and incongruity. As performer and witnesses, participants could experience first-hand the emotional and bodily implications of what Casey refers to as *enchevêtrement*, a form of complication or entanglement by an overlapping of different elements (2000:168).

In the final section of this chapter, I refer to the relationship between participants marching around the gallery enacting slapstick and how that action relates to the term *Schadenfreude*. To increase the level of *Schadenfreude*, I employed repetition as a tactic to speed up the process of participants using slapstick incorrectly. Forcing participants to retrain their minds and bodies to say yes when they shake their heads and nod when they say no and then asking them to repeat this action repeatedly served two purposes. First, I used aspects of repetition (in this case, enacting the same action until being told to stop) to discipline the participants and secondly, I knew from my previous experience of engaging in the same activity in *Yes/No* that it was only a matter of time before participants would begin to make errors. Forefronting my attitude and shaping my usage of slapstick and repetition were comedian Reece Sheersmith, theorist Jorg Heiser, practitioner Anthony Howell and Daniel Moews in relation to his views concerning veteran.

---

22 Michel Chion (2007) writes ‘if physical comedy involves itself in a forceful declaration of the body, slapstick seems antithetical to the ‘spoken utterance’ (Chion in Clayton, 2007:127). Expanding upon this claim, Clayton (2007) considers the actions of certain performers such as Woody Allen and Groucho Marx as ‘deny[ing] or de-emphasis[ing] the body’ (2007:128), because they *speak*. *Lost for Words* pushes forward an emphasis of the body and its capacity for interruption/disruption as being dependent upon on its relationship with spoken language.
slapstick performer Buster Keaton in terms of embodied and physical performance that uses repetition.

What I made use of in terms of how Heiser (2008) and Shearsmith (2009) articulate repetition in slapstick concerned its complicated and contradictory nature; Shearsmith suggests that slapstick and repetition provokes laughter, kills it and then by recurrence moments later, has the power to reinstate it (laughter). In The Story of Slapstick (2009), he suggests that slapstick is ‘funny then not funny and then funny again cos it is going on’ (Shearsmith, 2009). Heiser emphasises the contradictions in repetition more explicitly when he suggests that it can operate as an adversary to playfulness (2008:92) (implying that repetition does not allow for experimentation or the production of new, original ideas) whilst legitimising it (2008:62). Heiser states that ‘flogging a joke to death is a legitimate slapstick technique, even when pushed to the level of compulsive repetition’ (2008:62). The awkwardness I felt when enacting slapstick in Lost for Words and the fear of getting the action in front of others wrong that I spoke about in ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’ embodied these ideas. In the first instance, I found performing the slapstick quite enjoyable but much less so after the twentieth iteration and more of the same action. The funniness of the action resumed when performers started getting the action wrong (myself included). On reflection, there was not enough repetition, not enough compulsion as I explained in the previous analysis. I relate this moment of funniness to ideas about repetition and duration by Simon Critchley (2002) who suggests in On Humour that:

In being told a joke, we undergo a particular experience of duration through repetition and digression, of time literally being stretched out like an elastic band. We know that the elastic will snap, we just do not know when, and we find that anticipation rather pleasurable (2002:06)

In my performance, I did not tell the audience jokes in the verbal sense to engage laughter but I instructed the audience to undertake a certain set of actions that I had anticipated would provoke laughter through their repetition. Linking Rudolf Frieling’s theory (2008) that consensus in participative art performance is borne out of a curiosity to find out what the nature of the participation itself constitutes,
to the quote above, the ‘anticipation’ that Critchley speaks of is important in terms of duration and participation. Entering into a participative piece of Performance Art with possible uncertainty as to what was to come, audience members engaged in the activity that I had set them did not know long how it would last. I argue that what they did know was that because of the repetitive nature of the action they were engaged in at the time, at some point during their participation laughter would occur.

I linked Howell’s writings on the relationship between repetition and performance with how Moews’ (1977) critique of Buster Keaton refers to the slapstick performer’s deployment of repetition and its relationship to provoke laughter i.e. repeating various actions, ultimately performed to force laughter. Howell (1999) refers to one of the ‘primary colours’ (1999: xiii) of Performance as being related to repetition and echoes Casey (2000) in respect to body memories and habits by suggesting that ‘We may take something unknown from the outside and by repeating it to ourselves turn it into the familiar. But repetition is more than a process of familiarisation. Repetition causes us to continue - through our breathing and our heartbeats for example. And repetition can strengthen our motivation or weaken it’ (1999:30). Moews suggests ‘logically, an action having been completed, should lead to a new action, not to its own repetition’ (1977:25).

He argues there is absurdity in seeing Buster Keaton perform slapstick in repetition. For him, repetition in Keaton’s actions facilitates not deters the provoking of laughter. This was exactly the strategy I adopted in Lost for Words. I made use of repetition in terms of bodily mismatch and incongruity and use slapstick to convert participants’ bodies into laughable (Henri) Bergsonian machines, all for the purposes of producing the emotion Schadenfreude and to complexify the power relations between myself and audience members.

1.4.4 Collectivity, Conviviality, The Inhospitable and Schadenfreude

The aim of this section is to explain the social implications upon using slapstick in this performance through the motives and concerns of the protagonist, as a host and my audience as guests (Derrida, 2000). I begin by referring to a public event that discussed slapstick and its associated meanings that I participated in at De Appel, Amsterdam in 2012. I address how Lost for Words emphasises interruption within slapstick as to provide a viewpoint to a discussion that took place during
the event on the democratic nature of slapstick (Kuipers, 2012). I use Derrida’s (2000) understanding of hospitality to underline the position that I adopted during this discussion regarding power relations. I configure the performative interplay during Lost for Words as between protagonist (host) and audience (guest) and examine the social implications at play within the participative exchange that took place during my performance. This enables me to argue that Lost for Words uses slapstick as a trope to demonstrate implicit ‘slippage’ in participative Performance Art: the importance of collectivity and social conviviality (Bourriaud 1998, Clayton 2007) coupled with the antisocial, the non-convivial (Schadenfreude) and the inhospitable (Derrida 2000, Roelstraete 2012).

As part of Three Artists Walk in A Bar (2012) an exhibition at De Appel in Amsterdam, I organised a public discussion exploring slapstick. As part of the discussion, Dr. Giselinde Kuipers, editor-in-chief of the journal Humor: International Journal of Humor suggested that ‘slapstick is democratic’ (Kuipers, 2012). I take this to mean that Kuipers is suggesting that within slapstick there are no power relations. In the following paragraphs, I examine the substance of Kuipers’ statement and offer an alternative viewpoint. I argue that slapstick is not democratic. Lost for Words demonstrates that there are many levels of power relations involved with the operations of slapstick in practice. Examples of a power relation that took place in my performance were between the audience and myself, my sidekick and I, and between audience members. Examination of how the host/guest relation provides a helpful analogy to that of protagonist (performer)/audience as both bearing resemblance to one another.

Bourriaud (1998) claims that ‘[t]he constitution of convivial relations has been an historical constant since the 1960s (1998:30) and refers to Relational Aesthetics as producing a kind of social conviviality; audience participatory artworks set out to provoke ‘convivial situations’ being developed as part of a ‘friendship culture’ (1998:32). The aspect of Bourriaud’s usage of conviviality that I am most interested in relates to interpersonal power relations that are implicit within participative Performance Art. Bourriaud acknowledges conviviality within Relational Aesthetics may have its limits; ‘reproached for denying social conflict

---

and dispute, differences and divergences’ (1998: 82). *Lost for Words* enables consideration of these limits in terms of power relations at play in ‘constructed conviviality’ (1998:44). *Lost for Words* proposes the activity of hosting less as a convivial gesture, more as an act of welcoming as a form of governance (Foucault in Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991). In other words, hosting as a ‘control tool’ (Fusi in Domela and Tallant, 2012).

Derrida’s version of hospitality (2000) is useful here because it acknowledges that there are power relations involved in all social exchanges and enables an examination of conviviality (as a version of hospitality) in terms of interpersonal power relations. Derrida takes a top-down position to power: ‘I do this and you do the same’, ‘I instruct and you comply’. I argue that hospitality and the activity of hosting is synonymous to Foucault’s (1980) conception of power insofar that it is ‘tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms’ (1980:86). My performance was a means of planning a situation where the limits of hospitality (its ‘hostileness’) were visible. It functions as a performative embodiment of the Derridean (2000) concept of hostipitality, a portmanteau of ‘hostile’ and ‘hospitality’ that plays upon a language slippage (Derrida, 1979) to suggest that hospitality is etymological rooted in the terms ‘hospitable’ and ‘hostile’. Derrida (1979) refers to ‘slippage’ as a theoretical concept that suggests language does not have a fixed meaning but rather a multitude of possible meanings dependent on the subjectivity of their user. Sigmund Freud (2003) has also referred to language and meaning interpretation. He suggests that words and their associated meaning are dualistic, transformable and ‘malleable’ (2003:37). In terms of slippage in meaning associated to the term ‘hospitality’, Derrida (2000) states:

I quote this title in German to indicate that the word for ‘hospitality’ is a Latin word, Hospitalität, a word of Latin origin, of a troubled and troubling origin, a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by it opposite, “hostility,” the undesirable guest [hôte] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body (2000:3)

Exploring contractual agency through *hostipitality*, wherein a host may be as
hostile as hospitable, Lost for Words reimagines the event of performance as an event of hospitality (Figure 21). My performance embodies an ambivalent conviviality and employs hosting to disrupt convivial participation as predicated upon a situation where everyone is happy, respectful of one another and gets on with each other. The relationship between performer and audience is drawn and redrawn as host and guest and the limits of hospitality are rethought by complicating distinctions between the terms hospitality, nurture, protection, generosity and self-preservation (Domela 2005, Domela and Tallant 2012 et al.).

Fig. 21 Lee Campbell: Lost for Words, Testing Grounds, South Hill Park, (2011). Courtesy of Testing Grounds

Actions associated with conviviality and welcoming such as handing out cups took place to generate conviviality and collectivity amongst strangers but also as a bid by me as the protagonist to secure compliance in actions that would later comprise the audience’s complicity within the performance.

Visual arts exhibition Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art at the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago in 2012 explored how artists and performance makers have interrogated the term ‘hospitality’. As a support for the exhibition, the museum staged a symposium where one of the panel sessions entitled Being Bad asked speakers and audiences to reflect upon artistic situations that deploy being a ‘bad host’ to explore the intersection between art, hospitality and ‘badness’ i.e., the ‘inhospitable’. Exploring participation modelled as hospitality, Dieter Roelstraete explored the intersection between art and hospitality, announcing ‘distrust at courtesy’ and that we should remind ourselves
of ‘art’s long interest in the inhospitable’, citing terms such as dissent, disgust, discomfort, dismantle, dissatisfaction etc. (Roelstraete, 2012). These ideas are significant to my study and to an analysis of Lost for Words in terms of my position as the performance protagonist. To relate their importance to my performance, attention will first be given to how ‘slippage’ operated during this work.

To define and redefine (subvert) how we frame and reframe the possibilities of liminal performance, in Lost for Words I aimed to generate a physical working space that applied Derridean slippage to performance practice. The outcome was an ambivalent participation as echoed by a response at the time by a participant:


Expanding on the above response, I purposely set up an ambiguous state of uncertainty with regards to the terms ‘performer’ and ‘audience’ and with regards to the nature of the actions that I had instructed audience members to do. In this moment, all participants present were engaged in the performance as performers and spectators simultaneously. In other words, they witnessed slapstick (watching others perform slapstick) whilst they also enacted slapstick themselves. Analysing actions by me during Lost for Words as displaying (bad) hospitality, my behaviour towards the audience fluctuated between displaying visibly outwards gestures of being hospitable and then the goodwill and convivial nature commonly associated with these actions being undermined (actions that may be construed as me being a ‘bad host’; an inhospitable host). My sidekick and I handed out plastic cups (a convivial welcome to the performance) but these were not filled with drinks. An immediate uncertainly with regards to their function was set up. Did the audience perceive me as being inhospitable in this instance? Were they expecting me to come round with an aperitif I wonder in order for them to discuss what I may have had in-store for them)? Their first function (the second being used as part of the cup-string-telephone activity later on in the performance) eventually became clear; the cups functioned as extended earpieces. These served to obstruct the

24 I give greater attention to considering the substance of Roelstraete’s claims in Chapter Two.
ease of audiences enacting the slapstick. By participants engaging their bodies in the interruptive process I named as slapstick, different levels of laughter were produced as an outcome of their participation. Analysing what form(s) this laughter may have taken as a result of participation in physical and bodily interruptive processes is important in developing greater understanding of the social implications of slapstick in practice. To analyse, I revisit the work of Dickinson (2015) and relate the significance of his commentary on laughter to my study.

Laughter is of the body, like speech, but interrupting, punctuating and interfering with it. At the same time, laughter is a social act, underpinning social bonds but also capable of undermining them. Its role in the debunking of power is well known to artists but so too is its horrific mocking accompaniment to acts of extreme violence. And when it comes to contemporary art, the urge to provoke laughter, often through absurd or bizarre means, is being felt more and more [...] Provoking laughter through an innate acceptance of certain blunt facts about the body is vital (Dickinson, 2015:3)

The significance of Dickinson’s assertion about the power of laughter relates to how slapstick in Lost for Words can be thought of in terms of laughter as participation provoked by interruption that is directly physical and bodily. When analysing the social nature of this laughter in terms of Lost for Words, in line with ideas suggested above, laughter can be thought of as having paradoxical functions. Linking Dickinson's insistence that laughter can ‘underpin’ as well as ‘undermin[e] social bonds’ (2015:3) to Don Nilsen’s (1993) views that humour can be used to ‘in-bond’ and ‘out-bond’ (1993:292), I defined this paradox as a three-pronged axis that contained alternative motives and purposes by all parties involved. These three prongs relate to: 1) social control, 2) social conviviality and collectivity, and 3) the antisocial nature of slapstick. In terms of ‘social control’, at the symposium Dialogues in Performance I: Collaboration at Central Saint Martins in 2011, Professor Jane Collins suggested that ‘nothing is more controlling than laughter’. I related Collins’ perspective to my intentions of using laughter within my performance and made use of laughter as an effective control tool to help maintain participation by those involved in the interruptive process that I had set up. In terms of social conviviality and collectivity, individuals may want to be part
of a collective whilst at the same time wanting attention to be steered away from the protagonist and onto them. By performing the slapstick, audience members reaffirmed their presence within the performance and the physical space they were in by engaging in an action that drew attention to their physical body in a visible manner. This set up a confrontation between me getting my attention (as the chief protagonist/performer) and everybody else (audience members as co-performers) wanting theirs.

Clayton (2007) describes the slapstick performance of Laurel and Hardy as related to:

[...] the physical dimension of togetherness, stressing the fact that being together is very much an embodied experience. Such an account allows the comedy of Laurel and Hardy to counterpoise the awkwardness, annoyances and complications thrown up by physical proximity against the necessity, value and joy of companionship (2007:12)

By way of contrast to this statement, and referring back to my description of audience members as ‘bodies’, Lost for Words is a performance that embodies the anti-social aspect of slapstick and makes explicit what Clayton appears to be suggesting above (building positive convivial social relations). My performance extends Clayton’s statement in terms of the comedy, laughter and Schadenfreude that can be provoked when witnessing bodies being clumsy. I argue that the fact that participants agreed to take part in an activity that made their bodies deliberately clumsy increased the level of comedy and laughter.

Lost for Words demonstrates that one of the possibilities of using interruption is that it can produce laughter (both social and anti-social). This supports the work of Koestler (1970) in terms of his theory of mismatch and incongruity as a form of ‘collision ending in laughter’ (1970:45) and Michael North’s (2009) suggestion that interruption specifically in terms of disruption of expectation (contra expectatum) has been identified as ‘a comic technique since Cicero’ (2009:201). It also demonstrates Jeffrey Palmer’s (1987) notion of ‘peripetia’ a term used by Palmer to describe, in Nicole Matthews’ (2000) words ‘the moment that leads us to laughter’ (2000:27).
The succession of tension by relief in humour is an essentially bodily affair. That is the joke invites a corporeal response, from a chuckle, through a giggle into a guffaw. Laughter is a muscular phenomenon (Critchley, 2003: 7).

More forcefully than ‘leads to laughter’, participants within Lost for Words had to contend with engaging in activity involving interruption that was directly physical and bodily whilst dealing with how their bodies were reacting to that situation by way of an ‘explosion’ of laughter (Koestler, 1970:33).

I drew upon John Wright’s claim that ‘comedy can wreck anything’ (2006:4), replaced the term ‘anything’ in this quote with ‘convivial participation’ and reflected upon how anti-social laughter produced by slapstick in my performance could overturn/’wreck’ convivial participation. Referring back to Dickinson’s (2015) claim that laughter can help conviviality and dissolve power relations whilst wreck (2006:4) this aspiration, Lost for Words contained both versions of this laughter (social and anti-social). The first version of this laughter was social. When participants engaged in physical and bodily slapstick a shared sense of mirth and convivial collective laughter was produced. There are many reasons that could account for the nature of this (convivial) form of laughter. For instance, as I had anticipated, participants enjoyed engaging in a process that not only meant they would be part of something collective, it enabled them to subvert habits that occur in their daily lives. They enjoyed the permission that I had given them to be playful, to have fun ‘interrupting’ how their bodies pertain to social norms, codes of behavior and ideologies that condition bodily gesture, like men shaking hands with men, but not women, for instance.

The tragicomic boom-bash as fates entwine and bodies collide. Why is this funny, even the thousandth time? Schadenfreude. Another is the exact opposite: empathy and a feeling of solidarity in moments of misfortune. Slapstick as a sudden jolt in a smooth sequence, an absurd attack on hiccoughs in everyday life and world events, allowing us to catch glimpses of the truth about ourselves and our relations with others’ (Heiser, 2008:17)

On one level, I interpreted the laughter that was produced by participants when engaged during Lost for Words in slapstick as positive in terms of helping to
promote social conviviality amongst a group of people, many of whom were strangers to one another. I drew links between Clayton’s declaration of slapstick and its ability to reproduce social bonds (‘necessity, value and joy of companionship’) as quoted above with Heiser’s echoing of this (‘empathy and a feeling of solidarity in moments of misfortune’). By way of contrast, on another level, Lost for Words demonstrates that one of the dangers of using interruption is generating anti-social laughter and provides extension to Heiser’s useful connection that he makes above in terms of joining together slapstick, repetition and Schadenfreude. Lost for Words was instrumental in helping me understand what is meant by the emotion Schadenfreude (Miller 1993; Svendsen 2010) and why and when people laugh at the misfortunes of others into practice. It enabled me to draw links between what is said about Schadenfreude in terms of slapstick in practice (Miller 2009) and a useful theory distinguishing important nuances in meaning between the terms ‘laughing at’ and ‘laughing with’ (Glenn, 2003).

Forefronting my perspective on Schadenfreude was William Ian Miller (1993) who has written about the term in relation to the term ‘humiliation’. In Humiliation And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort and Violence, he describes Schadenfreude as ‘the pleasure occasioned by another’s failures’ (1993:125) and ‘mild discomfiture of others’ (1993:159). To examine laughter as a corporeal reaction to slapstick and an audible reaction indicator of Schadenfreude, I linked Miller’s ideas with these of Phillip Glenn’s in Laughter in Interaction (2003):

The phrases laughing at and laughing with suggest a long-recognised distinction between the power of laughter to promote distancing, disparagement, and feelings of superiority; or, conversely, to promote bonding and affiliation (2003:13)

This is helpful in terms of relating laughter provoked by slapstick to collectivity and conviviality and also to the anti-social nature of slapstick. The statement above implies that these terms can be seen as distinctive and (possibly) existing independent from one another. I suggest that when participants engaged in slapstick during Lost for Words, they complicated this ‘distinction’ in their dual role of witnesses and performers. To explain, participants embodied slapstick and Schadenfreude in terms of ‘ha ha not me!’ (Miller, 1993) by ‘laughing at’ another performer and also ‘laughing with’ others within the collective of performers they
belonged to. They also embodied the humiliation (Miller, 1993) attached to Schadenfreude and experienced the emotions attached to being confronted with being ‘laughed at’ themselves in their role as performers.

By being humiliated we take turns providing a kind of illicit mirth for others […] For just as our humiliations provide others for their Schadenfreude, so do their humiliations provide us ours. Such a nice gift could hardly do without an equally nice return (Miller, 1993:X)

As described in the section ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, even though I took it on the chin and carried on with the rest of the performance, the humiliation that I felt when I had (genuinely) mis-performed the slapstick was real. The situation where I interrupted the performance because I was confused as to whether I was ‘left’ or ‘right’ was a critical incident in terms of shifting power relations. This can be understood in terms of the levels of power that I had previously embodied and the levels of power that the audience now embodied. A power relation was set up between the audience and myself when I engaged their participation in interruptive processes by my usage of a set of instructions. A different power relation was set up between the audience and myself when I attempted to enact the same set of instructions that resulted in me getting them wrong. My performance embodied the difficulties of engaging in slapstick interruptive processes in terms of their potential for humiliation (by all involved).

1.5 Chapter Summary

In response to the stated aims of this chapter and the research questions underpinning my study, this chapter provides evidence through description and analysis of the performance Lost for Words that one of the tactics for making positive usage of interruption in Performance Art is slapstick. This chapter’s exploration of slapstick extends the work of Bishop (2004; 2006) and Bourriaud (1998) and others who address participation in Performance Art by offering discussion of a performance that is useful to think about provoking participation in terms of: 1) interruption; 2) the body; and 3) antisocial humour (in terms of Schadenfreude).
Slapstick may have been forgotten about in terms of both the history of contemporary art practice claiming authority surrounding the body and in the discourse of art participation. One of the main possibilities of using slapstick within Performance Art is that its explicit usage and hyperbolic exaggeration of the physical body provides a practical means of understanding how the body operates in terms of participation in a direct manner that is both physical and visible. Slapstick forces the body’s physicality to be recognised in terms of how we articulate participation. Interruptive processes that underpin the body in slapstick demand the body be recognised as unstable and temperamental. By using slapstick to explore the body’s capacity for incongruity (interruption) herein lies its subversive potential and ability to provoke and disrupt.

By including myself in the performance and enacting the slapstick, I did not reduce the risk of me being ‘prone to attack’ (Stott, 2005:93) but I did gain an embodied understanding of the mechanics of slapstick and how it may relate to a form of Schadenfreude by being engaged in both action and observation (as a performer and a witness). As a result of Lost for Words, I gained understanding of some of the emotional risks involved (e.g. humiliation) when people are collectively engaged in an activity that combines physical and bodily interruptive processes and repetition. Lost for Words can be thought of in terms of how, as a performance, it embodies the tension between convivial participation and collectivity on the one hand and the antisocial (through humour) on the other and how interruptive processes at work throughout the performance have taught me about the social implications of slapstick in practice.

In the next chapter, emphasis is given to discussion of a collaborative project that expands on my usage of interruption as a performative technique to demonstrate how Performance Art embodies power relations.
Chapter Two: Heckling as a Tactic of Physical and Linguistic Interruption

2.0 Chapter Aims

The subject of this chapter is heckling. The main aim of this chapter is to theorise, articulate and demonstrate its potential as a process connected to physical and linguistic interruption for exploring some of the power dynamics at play from the standpoints of those doing the interruption (the heckler), those person(s) for whom the interruption is aimed at (the speaker/performer), and those persons who witness the interruption (the audience). To achieve this, the chapter provides evidence of practice that inserts the act of heckling into performance, through the performance-based collaborative project Contract with a Heckler (2013). To assist theoretical and contextual analysis of this project, I pull together comments and observations from speakers and audience members that took place at Heckler (2013), two public symposia which I co-organised with Mel Jordan that explored the possibilities of addressing the heckler in terms of contemporary art and performance practice.

The aim of Contract with a Heckler (2013) for me as one its protagonists was to generate a situation that revealed the implications upon power relations between an audience and performer/speaker by using processes relating to physical and linguistic interruption. Whereas my write-up of the performance Lost for Words, contained, in the most part, a description of working with interruption from the standpoint of the person(s) engaging others in interruptive processes, my write-up of Contract with a Heckler (2013) includes discussion on the motives or purposes for interrupting, and the possibly contrasting effects of an interruption on different categories of persons involved – namely the person who interrupts (the heckler), the person who has been interrupted (the speaker) and the third parties listening to the exchange (the audience). My discussion includes reporting of the audience voice as well as capturing the immediate reactions of the speaker to ascertain the marriage or mismatch between the interrupter’s purpose and the outcomes achieved.

The first section of this chapter 2.1, ‘Anticipation’, provides the reader with
understanding of how I re-imagined the potential of working with interruption for my study as a direct result of me experiencing physical and linguistic interruption (heckling) during my participation in a residency held at The Banff Centre, Canada, in 2012. In the following sections of this chapter, distinct writing styles with alternative voices are used to give the reader an understanding of my experience working with heckling in performance on different levels. These analyses provide the material in which to evaluate the extent to which heckling can be used within activities framed as performance to examine power relations.

The section 2.2, ‘Action’ provides a write-up of the project Contract with a Heckler from when I was issued with a participation contract by a friend to the end of a performative lecture that knit theories of heckling with direct demonstrations. In 2.3, ‘Self-Reflective Analysis’, I provide a direct and personal description of tension and anticipation related to heckling and interruption from the standpoint of me being the person/speaker interrupted during the lecture. I explain that as a result of thinking about the possibilities of physical and linguistic interruption drawn from my research into heckling before the lecture, I had become supersensitive/overly aware of the implications. This section expands upon my previous usage of ‘countdown’ as a writing-style effect to punctuate my emotional state of mind during events underpinning the project.

The final section of this chapter, 2.4, ‘Theoretical and Contextual Analysis’, addresses how I overcame my initial anxieties of signing a participation contract permitting a heckler to interrupt my delivery of a performative lecture (O’Dell, 1998). To assist in my analysis of this project, I relate key events to points made by speakers at the symposia Heckler (2013). I explain how I came to view this direct demonstration of heckling as providing a useful means to enquire into social convention focused upon an uncomfortable audience-performer relationship (as opposed to one where everyone is trying to be comfortable with each other). I speak about how I re-thought the potential of using physical and linguistic interruptive processes as embodied in the performativity of the heckler to disrupt the comfort, undo the conviviality (between an audience and performer) and upset the status quo. Describing events during the lecture as a live contest between a speaker (myself) and a heckler (my collaborator), I refer to how the interruption to my paper was designed by my collaborator, to not only come...
aggressively at me to upset me, but to upset the audience and make them feel as uncomfortable as possible. Extending the possibilities of using physical and linguistic interruption in performance in relation to the work of DV8, I make usage of an audience member’s immediate response to the work, discuss the different levels of discomfort at work within Contract with a Heckler and draw useful parallels between convivial participation (Bourriaud, 1998) and Roelstraete’s claims (2012) that art can be disruptive; a form of dissent, dismantling, deconstructing etc. I draw this section to a close by reflecting upon the different levels of power relation discussed during various participants’ phases of engagement during Contract with a Heckler.

2.1 Anticipation

This section discusses how my study incorporated consideration of physical and linguistic processes into my study of interruption in four discussions: 1) 2.1.1 The Experimental Comedy Camp (2012); 2) 2.1.2 Humour, the Host and the Homophobe; 3) 2.1.3 Disrupting the Fourth Wall; and 4) 2.1.4 Exploiting Physical and Linguistic Interruption.

I refer to my participation in The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012) and discuss how a critical incident that occurred led me to study the performativity of the heckler as a means of thinking about the possibilities of physical and linguistic interruption. Having identified several distinct reasons for interrupting in a physical and linguistic manner, I explain how I initially sought to make more of these processes in subsequent performance work that I produced whilst in Canada. I address how these operated as a means for me to experience physical and linguistic interruption from both the standpoint of audience member and performer. I suggest that these performances were extremely useful in preparing for a collaborative work that I made shortly after my return from Canada. This collaborative project entitled Contract with a Heckler, provided my study with another interpretation of interruption beyond the physical and bodily (slapstick) and forced me to engage directly in the practice of heckling (of interrupting and being interrupted).
2.1.1 The Experimental Comedy Camp (2012)

Up until September 2012, my study of interruption had concentrated on physical and bodily interruption. This dimension of interruption heavily underpinned the performance *Lost for Words* and other performances that I made in addition. Whilst all of these performances were connected in some way to the body, audience participation and aspects of comedy, I selected *Lost for Words* to support my thesis argument as it makes direct usage of slapstick as an extreme version of physical and bodily interruption. Building upon *Lost for Words*, I hoped that by participating in *The Experimental Comedy Training Camp* (2012), a seven-week residency, I would be able to extend my usage of comedy tactics relating to the body beyond slapstick. This residency set out to interrogate an emergent genre of performance coined as ‘experimental comedy’ by exploring the intersection between comedy, performance, fine art, and humour theories (Billig 2005; Critchley 2002; Morreall 1983 et al.).

I welcomed the potential of gaining different perspectives to my study from comedians working in stand-up, ventriloquism etc. including performer Reggie Watts, illustrator/cartoonist Steven M. Johnson, as well as practitioners including Michael Portnoy who work across art and comedy disciplines (Figure 22). A discussion held at the start of the residency encouraged participants to define what the term ‘experimental comedy’ may mean. Although ‘discomfort’, ‘disruption’ and ‘expectation’ as terms amongst others related to my study of interruption were suggested (Figure 23), the term ‘interruption’ was not included. I saw this as an opportunity to use my forthcoming practice of interruption making as part of the residency to encourage participants to build interruption into their critical vocabulary of ‘experimental comedy’. What I had not anticipated on commencement of the residency would be the specific form that interruption would take.
The camp included a multi-cultural range of residents; the majority of participants (25 in total) were of North American and Canadian nationality with two Brits (including myself) and a participant from Finland. In *Laughing in a Foreign Language* (2008), Mami Katoaka states the following: ‘much of what we find funny is linked to the shared history and memory of our given community or language group’ (2008:8). From the start of the residency, myself and the other participants were expected to perform in nightly skits (short comedy performances lasting approx. 10-15 minutes). Their purpose was to: 1) gauge audience reaction to our existing strategies of generating comedic performance; 2) test out different methods relating to comedy to extend our repertoire; and 3: play around with what the term ‘experimental comedy’ may mean.

One important point raised in BBC’s *The Forum* (2015) related to intentionality and cultural specificity of interruption by which the presenter states: ‘Intention is interesting [...] your cultural intention [...] what you think is polite or rude’ (Kendall,
I learnt how important it was to consider whom I am addressing in terms of audience in terms of cultural specificity of the content of my material. And direct the performance as needed. As a performer, I needed to react and respond to my audience. Most these skits by other participants relied upon spoken word and verbal humour and exploited the idiosyncrasies of a particular culture. Although it was not discussed during the residency amongst participants, I felt that as most the audience were North American and Canadian, the content of the materials used by those performing was designed to be of a comic value to those nationalities exclusively. I related this situation to Ralph Rugoff’s (2008) suggestions that what people find funny and what they do not is ‘culturally-specific’ (Rugoff in Kataoka, 2008). On reflection, it could be argued that performers did not exploit cultural oddities for their comic value to appeal to one particular crowd in the audience, who were in the majority. Rather, performers considered that their material would be of amusement to all listeners regardless of their cultural subjectivity. However, on many occasions, I experienced what Rugoff (2008) refers to as ‘incongruities that arise from acts of mistranslation and cross-cultural misunderstanding’ (2008:6). I did not laugh at moments in these performances when my North American and Canadian peers did.25 By not laughing or expressing to the performer that what he/she was saying I found funny and sitting stone-faced and deadpan, I provoked an interruption. My visible reaction as expressed through my facial gesture and body language caused another form of physical and bodily interruption. Indeed, there was something comic in this situation itself; audiences provoked into laughed through the content of the performer’s verbal puns whilst I sat silent and unprovoked. On reflection, this situation may have been the result of my own subjectivity rather than being exclusively from a culturally subjective standpoint. Regardless of the finer details as to why or why not I found the comedy efforts of others funny, this situation prompted me to think about the cultural importance of comedy within my study.

A review of literature of this field yielded possible avenues for me to direct my study at the time. I linked Critchley’s (2008) claim of the ‘enduring popularity of mime and silent comedy, Charlie Chaplin, Monsieur Hulot and Mr Bean’ (2008:17) and ‘verbal humour is notoriously resistant to translation’ (ibid.) to my previous usage of slapstick (as a form of comedy that is generated through the clumsy actions of the body similar to the pranks of Chaplin et al.). What I understood from Critchley’s commentary is that non-verbal comedy such as slapstick relies on the sight of physical bodily gesture to make laughter rather than verbal humour, as that is problematic in relation to language, culture, class etc.

When it was my turn to perform for the first time at the camp, I presented an iteration of *Lost for Words* as a skit that sought to emphasise physical bodily gesture and make much more direct usage of slapstick comedy. I wasn’t bothered about demonstrating to the audience how clever (or not) I could be with verbal language. I didn’t care if my audience saw my usage of slapstick as a philistine’s form of humour. By repurposing aspects of *Lost for Words*, I wanted to explore whether there could be a universal form of slapstick that anyone can find funny.

### 2.1.2 Humour, the Host and the Homophobe

When I began my iteration of *Lost for Words* by handing out plastic cups to audience members (Figure 24), one of the audience members shouted at me, “Do it your fucking self!”

![Lee Campbell begins an iteration of Lost for Words at The Experimental Comedy Training Camp (2012)](image)
Never had an audience member reacted to my invitation for their participation in this manner. I was stunned for a moment and thought that he was joking. I replied, “Here you go.” and attempted to give him one of the cups. He responded, “Participatory shit!” and walked out of the room. Although his verbal assault did take me by surprise, I did not engage in conversation with the audience member. I shrugged my shoulders and carried on with the skit. The same audience member refused to participate again in one of my later skits that was audience participative in nature. On this occasion, not only was his behaviour aggressive and his language rude in tone, he insulted me with homophobic jokes. Whilst the audience member (to be referred to as ‘the homophobe’ thereafter) thought these were very funny, I did not and neither did anyone else in the room. I named these exchanges with the homophobe as interruptions. Their purpose was to, first, disrupt my process of audience participative performance making in terms of gaining audience consensus to take part and, secondly, disrupt the convivial and well-spirited nature of exchange between protagonist (me) and an audience member (the homophobe). Despite me thinking to myself, “You fucking arrogant homophobe, drop dead!” I classed these interruptions as marking important critical incidents that would steer my study in a new direction at the time.

2.1.3 Disrupting the Fourth Wall

By way of contrast to my initial investigation of physical and bodily interruption (slapstick), these exchanges with the homophobe as interruptions provided my study with a means of exploring the physical and linguistic dimension of interruption. Using the remainder of my time on the residency to explore this aspect of interruption specifically, I began by thinking through the reasons why we interrupt in verbal exchange. I identified several distinct reasons. These included first; the interrupter disagrees with what is being said; and secondly, the interrupter seeks to ‘score a point’ (Cowan, pers. comm. January 2016) over the speaker. ‘A common example of this is to show up a speaker by posing a question that they cannot answer’ (ibid.).

I would like to thank Prof. John Cowan for helping me think through these ideas. In personal correspondence with Cowan in 2016, he also usefully pointed out that we interrupt to ‘urgently deal with lack of understanding and compel greater depth in the speaker’s statement’ (Cowan, 2016.).
Relating these reasons to aspects of my study, I noticed that the activity of heckling to be a common form of physical and linguistic interruption that has threads within comedy and performance. The results of a literature review (Double 2005; Dougherty 2003; McIvenny 1996 et al.) demonstrated a lack of a certain type of engagement with the heckler and the activity of heckling in terms of: 1) comedy, 2) theatre/performance, and 3) contemporary art practice. What I mean by ‘certain type of engagement’ relates to my argument that how the performativity of the heckler is predicated upon a sophisticated usage of physical and linguistic interruption.27

My experience of being an audience member during the skits that residents made early on in the residency taught me how comedy can be seen as a situation in which participation (in terms of exchange between performer and audience) already goes back and forth. In other words, direct participation between the audience and the performer is more common than in, for example, a blacked-out cinema/black box theatre where people (the audience) aren’t acknowledged. My engagement with the homophobe’s interruption as an act of aggression and expression of hate enabled me to think about physical and linguistic interruption in terms of power relations attached. Comedy and Performance Art as contexts that underpinned my study are those in which the audience are often acknowledged and engage in varying levels of participation (with many levels of power relations attached). Furthermore, comedy is a performance forms that acknowledge heckling. Yet, surprisingly, as the results of my literature review revealed, the heckler is under discussed in comedy and does not feature at all in the discourse of Performance Art.

Thinking through why the heckler should be discussed, I drew inspiration from a conversation that I had with Manick Govinda (Govinda pers. comm. December 2012) who told me that his most embarrassing moment of heckling was at a performance club night in Birmingham in the early 2000s. During the

27 For example, whilst the exhibition The Hecklers, New Art Gallery, Walsall (2013) The Hecklers used the figure of the heckler as a curatorial trope to assemble a group of artists, it did not advance understanding of the heckler’s direct usage of interruption that is predicated upon impoliteness and how this may be linked to aspects of contemporary art practice.
Tactics of Interruption

performance *I Miss You*, performer Franko B attempted one of his signature catwalks where he purposely cuts himself to bleed. The artist inserted tiny pins into his feet and then walked fully unclothed repeatedly up and down a stretched canvas as the pins slowly released blood.

Govinda told me that during the performance a member of the audience shouted out, “Flaming hell. Big deal! What a bloody farce! Every woman bleeds.” By way of contrast, I had experienced an iteration of this performance at Tate Modern, London the same year and I stood amongst an audience who were silent throughout its entire duration. The performer demanded our silence and commanded our gaze (Mulvey, 2008). There was no interruption and no heckling. I related this situation to the concept of the fourth-wall as a term that is derived from theatrical terminology and describes imaginary spatial conventions to my reflection of these contrasting situations and thought about the relationship between the following: 1) direct exchange between the audience and the performer, 2) the importance of site/context, 3) (im)politeness, and 4) the heckler.

Through various techniques (of interruption) such as Epic Theatre’s *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), Western avant-garde movements and theatre directors including Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud have attempted to undermine the fourth-wall as an artificial illusory device that separates performer(s) ‘on-stage’ and audiences sitting in an auditorium. This imaginative barrier has long been criticised amongst theatre and performance scholars as a...
form of control for its reinstatement of hierarchy and denigration of the audience. Aiming to do away with this derogatory boundary, the emergence and popularity of Performance Art in the 1960s and 1970s directly implicated audience members into a work, often inviting them to join in and perform themselves. I related the fourth-wall to the concept of politeness. Nobody (the audience during Franko B’s Tate Modern performance) wanted to upset the status quo in terms of us (the audience) watching, listening and being respectful of the performer’s wish that we remain silent and concentrate 100% on his actions during his performance. I argue that audiences were mindful of the fourth-wall effect. Audiences were polite. Even though the fourth-wall is a term reserved for describing theatre behaviour, there is no corresponding term used to describe similar audience behaviour within art galleries. Audience participation and spectatorship in contemporary art practice does not include the term in its vocabulary. Referring to the work of Dickinson (2015) and my own comments about the (often frowned upon) presence of laughter in the white-cube, we can certainly think about the white-cube in terms of establishing a similar fourth-wall effect and relating to an expected ‘polite’ behaviour by the audience. Although exchange between performer and audience in comedy may begin by bearing similarity to the fourth-wall i.e., the comedian speaks whilst audiences listen, this can evolve into direct verbal and non-verbal exchange with the audience with heckling even encouraged at times by both the audience and the comedian (Hound, 2011).

I reflected upon the two iterations of Franko B’s performance and considered how the two different contexts (art and comedy) yielded alternative polite and impolite responses from the audience. Relating these to my own audience-performer behaviour in terms of how I generate performance practice, there is an implicit contract when I (the performer) do this and you (the audience) do that. Performers often have strict rules for managing the audience and if a performance goes badly - the heckler. Yet whilst in Banff, I saw the heckler as positive; heckling as an important means of increasing the possibilities of interruption within my study.

2.1.4 Exploiting Physical and Linguistic Interruption
Whilst still in Banff, I planned to generate a series of performances on my return to the UK from Canada that I would frame as Performance Art taking place in art galleries. During these performances, I planned to use a range of comedy tactics to provoke heckling, as I had never experienced heckling in terms of Performance Art. The rest of my time in Banff was spent refining my usage of existing comedy tactics and trying out some new ones in subsequent skits. This was to first, learn more about the relationship between audience, performer and (non-convivial) forms of comedy by noticing everyone’s reactions; and, secondly, in reference to the performances of David Hoyle which involve the audience being insulted by Hoyle to provoke their participation, instil audience members to become hecklers (engage in physical and linguistic interruption during the skit) by me using the mechanisms of comedy.

Whilst I acknowledged that heckling does have a physical and bodily dimension (you can interrupt by standing up, walking out of an event etc.), the aspect of heckling that I was interested in was how I could provoke an audience to participate in physical and linguistic interruption. In other words, interrupt my skit using speech. During a useful studio visit from Michael Portnoy (01/10/12), he told me to always aim for a ‘punch-line’, a term normally referred to when talking about telling jokes (Raskin, 2008) in my performance practice. When I had the opportunity to use ventriloquism (Figure 26), I linked Portnoy’s comment to the content of what my dummy named Hector would say. With the intention of provoking those audiences to interrupt my skit in opposition to what I (Hector) had said to them, the ‘punch-line’ would involve a sentence that was intended to make one or more of the audience members feel very uncomfortable. I was initially motivated to work with ventriloquism at the camp upon meeting ventriloquist Teresa Foley who works with a dummy she calls Hector. Early performances that Foley gave at the camp saw her present short performances with the dummy and it was clear that she had well mastered the craft of being able to not move her lips whilst speaking and move the dummy machinery in order for it to appear that Hector was talking to the audience. Despite my initial bemusement of seeing the operations of Foley and Hector in action, I was less excited by the verbal content of her performances: sentimental monologues. When Foley allowed me to try my hand at operating Hector (the first time I had
ever engaged in ventriloquism), I saw this as an opportunity to generate punch lines whose verbal content was rude in nature and designed to disrupt any chance of a convivial atmosphere between performer and audience. My strategy was much more aligned to the practice of ventriloquist Nina Conti who uses her dummy named Monkey to discomfort members of her audience through various puns and put-downs as generated by Monkey.

![Lee Campbell and Hector the dummy, The Experimental Comedy Training Camp, The Banff Centre, Canada, (2012)](image)

For my first ventriloquism skit, I walked onto the stage, sat down on a chair and turned to face the audience directly. I suspected that most of the audience members thought that, in the style of Foley, my skit would be jovial and light-hearted in spirit. I discarded the requirement for me to master perfect ventriloquism skills (I wasn’t interested in mastering a craft), and started by speaking with my lips moving whilst operating my dummy. The content of what I said was well-meaning and friendly in tone; “Hello everybody, welcome to our show. Thanks for coming. Please make yourselves comfortable. The bar is fully stocked.” etc. I had already irritated many of the audience members by not doing ventriloquism ‘properly’. “Get off the stage!”, shouted one audience member. I did not flinch and carried on.
For my second attempt at ventriloquism, I did not use Hector but set up a skit I entitled *Pointing the Finger* (Figure 27). This involved me having a conversation with the audience and one of my fingers (which I referred to as ‘Finger’).

The homophobe was the first person that I wanted to attack. The homophobe was present and Finger and I were not going to let him leave in a good mood. Finger began by teasing the homophobe that there were photos of him in a clinch with the local grocery store assistant and whether the homophobe’s girlfriend should be informed. “Bullshit!,” shouted the homophobe. I took a photograph out of my pocket. Finger told the audience that the homophobe and the grocery store assistant appeared to be in an intimate sexual position in the photograph and then remarked on the size of the homophobe’s penis. The homophobe shouting, “Suck my dick, faggot!” interrupted Finger asking the homophobe whether he had or would like to have sex with men too. The homophobe stormed out of the room. “Did I say something to upset him?”, said Finger to the remaining members of the audience. Some members of the audience commented upon the nature of my skit with some saying that they found it offensive. “Don’t blame me for offending you,” I told them, “blame the dummy (the finger)!” They warned me to either tone down its verbal content or face being reported to The Banff Centre officials. I did not want to generate light entertainment. I did not want to present a watered-down/radio friendly version of my skit. Furthermore, I had not insulted the audience directly during my skit. I had not sworn at them or walked into the room and pulled my pants down.
For my next skit, I tried my hand at impersonation and live caricature drawing in the style of a ‘lightning sketch’ (Crafton, 1993). In the buildup to this skit, I sought particular audience members’ individual characteristic traits to exaggerate and make fun of. Accents, odd shaped noses, nervous twitches and fidgety habits etc. all became subjected to my analyses predicated upon the opposite of flattery. I achieved my aim of provoking heckling. As I produced caricatures of select members present in the audience and impersonated their voices as I drew, those persons under scrutiny would often attempt to interrupt me by either shouting to oppose me (“That looks/sounds nothing like me!”) or to express surprise at what I was doing (“Crikey, do I really look/sound like that?”). On my return to the UK from Canada, I increased my understanding of physical and linguistic interruption in terms of heckling by engaging in activities where I would participate as both a speaker and a heckler. For example, I attended various Performance Art events where I would interrupt the performance by shouting at the performer(s) and noting the audience’s visible reactions (usually disgust and awkwardness at what I was doing). I replicated different levels of physical and linguistic interruption that I had learnt by watching physical and linguistic heckling taking place at various events such as People’s Question Time (7/3/2013) at Broadway Theatre, Catford, London which provoked heckling at then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson’s plans to shut Lewisham Hospital’s A&E department. I attended Nick Sun’s show Death is a Work in Progress at Soho Theatre (18/1/2013). As part of his performance, Sun told the audience:

Don’t feel like you can’t participate. Heckle me if you want. The dialogue will be fun. In England, no one heckles you; they just sit there with their folded arms and let you die in silence. Have some balls and tell me that I’m shit to my face. Engage with me. This guy said to me, “You’re an embarrassment to the race!” How fucking awesome a heckle is that!

On Sun’s invitation to the audience to heckle him, I surprised myself at how aggressive I could be whilst not having to use a ventriloquist dummy to verbally ‘wound’ (Butler, 1997). Sun fought a good match.

To underline the importance of my argument (that heckling is a positive and
sophisticated form of interruption) and ignite discussion of the heckler in the public realm, I attended various public discussion platforms relating to different forms of Performance and stirred up public debate of the heckler by asking speakers and audience members the question “Can the heckler ever be positive?”28 Whereas in Banff, I had anticipated instilling hecklers during events framed as Performance Art, on my actual return to the UK, I adopted a different tact. A lecture that I had written shortly after my return entitled ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ was accepted for a conference in London on performance practice-as-research. The contents of my paper to be read out as part of my lecture argued in favour of heckling in terms of, first, destabilising the fourth-wall effect, referred to in the paper as a liminal threshold of politeness, and secondly, reminding the audience that there is no fourth-wall. When I asked a friend to document my lecture, her response was not what I had anticipated.

In the following section of this chapter, I address how her response set in motion a performance work involving physical and linguistic interruption in a direct manner which supports the power relations attached to heckling in terms of: 1) the speaker and the heckler (by means of a participation contract); and 2) the speaker, the heckler and the audience.

2.2 Action

This section provides a time-chronological narrative account written in the past tense of selected events taking place during the collaborative project that I undertook entitled Contract with a Heckler (2013). The collaboration encompasses events leading up to and during a performative lecture relating to the topic of heckling. This description concentrates on events leading up to and during the lecture. This is to foreground analytical discussion taking place in the next section relating to how during the lecture, myself and my collaborator engaged the audience in a physical demonstration of heckling. The narrative begins when I first approached my friend and told her that I had been invited to

---

28 I refer to a specific instance of when I asked this question to a group of panelists at the Popular Performance Working Group panel session at the 2013 annual TaPRA (Theatre and Performance Research Association) conference in section 2.3.2.
present a conference paper. The description ends after the question and answer session that accompanied the lecture has drawn to a close and my collaborator and myself reflect upon our staged interruption whilst smoking outside the venue.

2.2.1 A Narrative Account of Contract with a Heckler (2013)

When I invited someone to present a joint paper with me at Collisions: A Festival of Practice as Research in Performance (17/01/13), the individual (termed as ‘X’) responded in a way that I did not anticipate.29 X responded by presenting me with a written participation contract. The contract was an agreement between me as a presenter and X as a documenter. The contract was nonnegotiable i.e., I could not modify any of the clauses that X had written. I told X that I had developed an interest at that time in heckling and the trope of the heckler and had reworked the paper to form a lecture entitled ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’. She responded by significantly modifying the contract. The contract was now an arrangement between me as a speaker and X as a heckler.30 By signing the contract, I was under contractual obligation to permit X as a heckler to interrupt my delivery of an academic research paper. All I had told X about the paper’s content was that it would concern the contextual, philosophical and historical frameworks related to the philosophies and practices of heckling. All I knew about X’s participation within my delivery of the paper was that at some point X would interrupt me and I did not know when or how she would do this. By X interrupting me, she would have completed her main contractual obligation. The future events of our collaboration hung on the contract being signed by both X and I.

On the morning of Collisions, I met X at a coffee shop in Victoria Rail Station, London. She presented me with two copies of the participation contract. I signed both copies. I then performed the first of my obligations as stated in the contract; I bought X a caffé latte drink and paid for this using my Visa credit card. X photographed the events comprising the payment transaction with a digital camera. Having drunk her drink, X and I travelled to the venue of the conference

29 For legal reasons, I cannot disclose the location or identity of my collaborator who I refer to as ‘X’.
30 A copy of this contract can be found on the CD, under Appendix Four.
by Tube. We arrived at the venue and had lunch together, after which we made our way to the room in the building where I would deliver my lecture. Once inside the room (Figure 28), I checked that I had the correct technical support for me to be able to present images during my paper. We then each took a seat on one of the purple flip-up chairs in the room. I sat myself one row in front of X and three seats to her right (L). X sat at the end of her row; X took an aisle seat (J). Members of the audience arrived. Three speakers were scheduled to make presentations that afternoon: Hannah Ballou, Shaun May and myself. Ballou presented first and then May. Approximately thirty people were present in the audience.

Fig. 28 Floor Plan of Venue. Illustration by Lee Campbell (2013)^31

When it was time for me to present my paper, I got up out of my seat, made my way to the presentation area and began to read my paper. My spectacles

^31 N.B Please refer to Page 11 for key to this illustration.
repeatedly slipped at one side and I corrected this fault. This was caused by me intermittently looking over the top of my paper towards X (J) who had a pen and a notebook in her hand. After 2 minutes, I was waiting for X to interrupt me. After 5 minutes, I was still waiting for her to interrupt me. After approximately 10 minutes, a security guard walked into the room. He was approximately 6ft 2’ tall and weighed approximately 18 stone. His stomach size was disproportionate to the rest of his body. He had short black hair and dark eyes. He wore black shoes, black trousers, and a white shirt. He instructed me that I must stop reading. I refused and continued reading. The guard put one of his hands on one of my shoulders and demanded that I stop. The guard began to get flustered and grabbed my paper out of my hands and put it on the table in the presentation area and escorted me out of the room via (D) (Figure 29).

Fig. 29 The speaker is removed from the presentation room by a security guard (2013)

I was told to sit on the seat (C) and not to speak. I asked the guard how long I would have to stay seated there. The guard said, “Not long.” After 10 minutes, the guard allowed me to go back into RR2 and told me that I must enter via (F). I re-entered RR2 via (F). X was sitting down at the presentation table. She was reading something but I was unsure what. X looked panicked and flustered, possibly nervous at my return to the room. I realised that she was reading my paper (badly). I allowed X to read further. X stopped reading, handed me back my paper and indicated the point in the paper that X had stopped at. Once I had finished reading the end of my paper, I made an announcement. I informed the audience
that before I gave my paper, I had signed a contract between X and myself who had been sitting somewhere in the audience.

During the subsequent question and answer session, Audience Member 2 (P) expressed frustration at what she had witnessed and said she was unsure what exactly she was meant to ‘get’ from the interruption to my paper. Audience Member 3 (Q) expressed disapproval at my promotion of heckling and interruption as a positive. I could hardly hear this audience member speak. All I could hear amongst his American accent was that he had referenced an example of performance practice, which I presumed that the audience member considers deals with heckling ‘properly’. Audience member Katrina Palmer (K) interjected. I could see the anxiety on her face. She responded to him by suggesting that Audience Member 3 was insinuating that heckling is okay as long as it is not too disruptive, for which she would have liked a response from him and other audience members. The conference convener who then informed everybody in the room that it was time for the event to close and we must all leave seemed to deliberately cut short discussion of Palmer’s comment. As audience members left the room, X attempted to issue a third set of participation contracts to audience members stating that they had been complicit in an act of participation and therefore required after the question and answer session to sign. Nobody did.

After X and myself had left the building, we smoked rolled-up cigarettes outside the main entrance to the building hosting Collisions. As we smoked, X informed me of her anxiety concerning the Guard. She told me that she had been nervous in the build-up to her interruption, as the Guard had been stuck in traffic on the M20. X had been worried that Guard would not be able to reach RR2 on time to undertake his duties, which X had paid him in advance to do. X also informed me that as a way of dealing with a no-show by Guard, then Palmer would have played his role. After finishing smoking our cigarettes, X and myself went to the pub opposite and had a few drinks (which I paid for as part of my remaining contractual obligations).

2.3 Self-Reflective Analysis

In this section, I reflect upon events written about in the previous section and give
details about how I felt at the time. I explain my emotional response to being presented with two different versions of participation contract. I discuss how the second contract first generated tension, anxiety and ambivalence towards its being signed. I then go on to explain how my initial feelings of animosity towards the contract subsided when I rethought the potential significance of its performative aspect as enabling me to experience heckling as a form of contest between a speaker and an audience member first-hand in practice. The manner in which I write up these reflections is in the style of a countdown, in terms of the number of months and then days until and including the delivery of me reading my paper at Collisions. Four sections comprise these reflections: 1) 2.3.1 Two Months and Counting; 2) 2.3.2 One Month and Counting; 3) 2.3.3 One Day and Counting; and 4) 2.3.4 Delivery of the Performative Lecture, ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’.

2.3.1 Two Months and Counting

When X first issued me with a participation contract, I initially responded with bemusement at the contract’s formality but saw the potential within it to address the relationship between an artist and viewer that O’Dell (1998) refers to as a ‘contractual arrangement’. This was the first time that anyone had ever issued me with a participation contract. I contemplated whether X issues contracts as a method to all joint projects or had she done so just on this occasion. I was curious to know how the contract would affect our working relationship and whether or not I would feel bound by or attempt to transgress X’s terms and conditions. I speculated on how the contract would play itself out in reality in terms of enacting the many written obligations.

The term ‘contract’ relates to first, an agreement which contains sets of propositions and secondly, a document which operates performatively, performative in the sense that an action must take place to fulfill a propositional statement that has been contractually agreed on. Rather than me undertaking an action that results in a document(s) as records of a live performance, here myself and X flipped this process and started with a document (the contract) to provoke an action. I linked the contract as a performative document to my performative usage of instruction (as demonstrated in Lost for Words for example) and started
to think about the contract as a list of instructions that require enactment. I initially saw the contract as tongue-in-cheek and a playful performative prop. However, I became concerned that by X writing down specific actions that I must perform and instructing me how and when to do these actions, her usage of contractual arrangement was a form of control mechanism insofar as controlling my actions and behaviour. Reflecting upon our future usage of the contract, why did X want to enforce as/this much control by reformatting our collaboration as contractual arrangement? I was concerned that this level of formality and procedure would kill any form of spontaneity that could take place during my presentation. Thus the contract, rather than encouraging creativity and experimentation, was a ploy to control my participation and would be instrumental in affecting what would happen in terms of events leading up to, during and after the presentation of my paper. Despite my initial reservations about the contract (the stifling of formality by ‘getting everything in writing’, being told what to do and when to do it), I was interested to see how X would react to playful aspects of chance and serendipity in our future work (aspects of the work that X could not control). I was intrigued to find out how I would exercise personal voice in the work by finding lee-way in the form of loopholes in the instructions that she had written down in the contract, in relation to my discussion on language, meaning and slippage in the previous chapter.

As the day of the colloquium drew nearer, working with X produced a lot of interpersonal tension. X and I referred to our working together as collaboration and situated our work within the genre of collaborative art practice (Billing, Lind and Nilsson 2007). Although X constantly asserted their status within our collaborative project as equal to mine, I progressively felt more and more uncomfortable with her trying to assert herself as the lead contributor. This did not feel like a democratic collaboration.

The key aim of reading my paper on slapstick with aspects of heckling in public at the conference was first and foremost to gauge audience reaction (remember that at this time, I had not revealed to X the content of my paper). Nevertheless, I was intrigued to find out what X’s recording strategies would be in her position of power as documenter as an extension of the role of the witness as explored by Tim Etchells (1999) and others including Jane Blocker (2009) and Slavoj Zizek.
An exchange of power relationship was set up as soon as X and I took on the roles of speaker and documenter. X’s position of the witness/documenter of my paper furthered my curiosity in the relationship between the power relations involved in witnessing and recollection (how an action/event may be accessed through representation in its absence). Connecting the work of Blocker (2009) who describes the ‘privileges such a position [being a witness] can claim’ (2009:xvi) with that of Zižek (1994) who refers to the witness as ‘the one who ‘sees’, whose point of view organises and dominates the field of vision, is also the bearer of power’ (1994:73), I drew a link between the ‘witness’ and power and reflected upon X’s potential strategies of documenting as extending the act of witnessing as solely relating to visuality. A witness can become implicated in an event by catching the slightest glimpse. This is important in terms of whether X would incorporate other senses including the haptic and the oral into her definition of witnessing, as you do not necessarily need to ‘see’ something to be a witness. In other words, you can be implicated in something through an oral connection of what I or somebody else has said to you. The reportage bestows upon you a certain involvement, a certain moral dilemma.

I had previously pointed out to X that there is no slapstick without witness. In response to this, X suggested that she wanted to generate a document for those who were not able to witness my presentation first hand and expressed that she wanted to defy the strategy of documenting work from the position of witness since it generates a sense of missing out.32 Similarly, the narrative accounts which we wrote to state our own versions of the project’s events also problematised the complacency of shared experience. Written as a contractual obligation, upon completion of all the obligations being performed, X and myself wrote narrative accounts, which we referred to as factual analyses at the time. These personal accounts of the project became useful in not just filling in the ‘missing’ gaps in terms of our individual knowledge concerning what the other

---

32 I linked X’s assertion that this sense of ‘missing out’, which she argued as a device that has been used historically for deeming certain work and certain people culturally valuable to Rebecca Schneider's (2004) conception of the term ‘missing’ in relation to the document; The paper, frame, and photo of the action all represent to the viewer that which the viewer missed - that which, standing before the document, you witness yourself missing again [Schneider’s emphasis] (Schneider in Butt, 2004:42).
person was thinking and doing at a specific moment in the project (e.g. helping me to understand what was happening inside the presentation room when I sat outside whilst X attempted to read my paper) but in revealing similarities, incongruities (interruptions) in terms of how we came to recognise and interpret our actions and feelings at any given time. I looked forward to seeing how X may ‘infiltrate the space between presenter and witness’ (X, pers. comm. November 2012). I linked X’s referral of this ‘in-between space’ of the presenter and witness to the fourth-wall effect. Consequently, I became a little anxious that I might lose concentration on presenting my paper and prohibit full engagement from both myself and the audience being too sidetracked on X’s actions (yet that may prove the effectiveness of her interruption in terms of disruption). However, X’s ‘infiltration’ may reveal itself as a useful interruption to the smooth-running delivery of my paper in reinstating the various points I wished to make concerning the virtuosities of slapstick and aspects of heckling. I had to wait and see.

2.3.2 One Month and Counting

When I told X that I had shifted the emphasis of my paper’s content from being an analysis of slapstick to an exploration of the act of heckling and she responded by revising the participation contract from presenter to speaker and documenter to heckler, I had a mixed set of reactions. First, I was keen to discover how our planned interruption would play itself out in terms of managing the audience to my paper. What would be their responses? Would they engage positively with the interruption in terms of its potential or would they shun it as negative disruption to their ease of listening to my paper? I could not envisage any complaints; audience members were to experience heckling on a theoretical level (my paper) as well as be provided with a physical demonstration of heckling in practice. And after all, my paper was to be included in a practice-as-research festival supposedly celebrating the importance of practice.

I was about to experience what is really at stake in terms of the operations of heckling and interruption both practically and emotionally. Rather than present a version of heckling, I anticipated that my performative lecture would demonstrate heckling on many levels and in a direct way where everybody in the room would get to experience first-hand the disruption, the discomfort and the awkwardness
that takes place in the exchange between speaker, heckler and those other audience members. I was excited by this prospect and how staged interruption may bear future implication upon my study. A literature review on heckling I had undertaken had alerted me to the effects of interruption on a speaker/performer. I used these results to devise three approaches that I could adopt in the face of X's interruption. These were:

**Approach 1)**
Abandon speaking and leave the room as an effect of being so deeply affected by the nature of the interruption on an emotional level;

**Approach 2)**
Carry on with speaking at the point before the interruption or ‘start again from scratch’ (Dacre, 2013). Appear emotionally unscathed even if feeling a bit bruised. This approach works in conjunction with stand-up comedian David Alan Grier's advice for comedians presented with a heckler: ‘ignore him’ (Grier as quoted in Dougherty, 2003: 258);

**Approach 3)**
In opposition to Grier as quoted above, revel in the interruption as engaging the heckler in a form of live contest. In the spirit of much heckling that takes place in stand-up comedy, see the interruption as an opportunity to engage with the heckler in a battle of the put-downs. Stand up to the heckler and regard their interruption as ‘positively contributing to the show’ (Double, 2005:195). Demonstrate resilience. Defeat the heckler!

In anticipation for my interruption by X, I adopted the latter approach. However, the nature of her interruption provoked me to adopt approach two. I did not feel bruised however. I was pleased that she had bungled reading my paper in my absence and this provoked the audience to demand for my immediate reinstatement in the room as the paper’s speaker. Even though X had told me that she had stage fright and would never be a performer or a speaker (in the traditional sense), her failure to read my paper (properly) generated another form of interruption to my paper. Whilst on reflection, it could be argued that our
planned interruption was contrived in nature because I had expected it, this begs ‘is a heckle a heckle if you know it is going to happen?”, a question bought up in a conversation with performance practitioner Jane Munro (Munro, pers. comm. January 2016). Maybe X had not foreseen that she would deliver my paper with such incompetence. Then again, maybe that was entirely her strategy. Maybe she deliberately made a mess of reading my paper not only to mock me but also to force audience disapproval to the point where they would interrupt her because they wanted her to stop (and for me to replace her). Although X did not reveal herself as the perpetrator of the interruption (my removal) until much later in the question and answer session, the audience may have assumed that she did not play a role in my removal and that by her attempting to finish my paper was an act of generosity on her part as an audience member, rather than being an intentional act by X to provoke further interruption, further irritation.

In response to when I asked a selection of panelists, all stand-up comedians, the question, ‘Can the heckler ever be positive? at the TaPRA conference in Glasgow in 2013, one panelist responded by saying that the heckler is useful and necessary. In dealing with X’s staged interruption, I had initially adopted the third stated approach, as I understood the heckler to be useful in terms of expanding upon many of my chosen aspects of slapstick as discussed in the previous chapter. I envisaged how those elements of slapstick (Schadenfreude, the antisocial nature of humour, laughter etc.) could be extended through the performative exchange between the heckler (in this case, X) and the speaker (myself). The heckler, through her performance, could extend these aspects of slapstick into the realm of physical and linguistic interruption. I anticipated the complex nature of power relations at play in this exchange and its relationship to those particular aspects of slapstick. First, a power relation exists between the heckler and myself. We demonstrate the dialogic nature of Schadenfreude in practice by using antisocial verbal humour order to humiliate each other. Secondly, another set of power relations between the speaker and the audience and the heckler and the audience. Both the speaker and the heckler attempt to engage the audience’s support in mocking their opponent.

2.3.3 One Day and Counting
I rehearsed reading my paper ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ several times. As well as devising and preparing my own, I had also recited my favourite heckler put-downs as listed in Standup Put-Downs (Hound, 2011), ‘a catalogue of weapons used to defend, parry, attack and destroy’ (2011:6). X’s participation contract stated that her interruption would involve abusive comments or actions. Even though the term abusive is so ambivalent, I could deal with X potentially drowning me out with the sound of a trumpet, intermittently shouting me down with expletives or even subtly heckling me with a giggle, a frown, a sideways glance, or falling asleep as an act of intention rather than as a natural bodily response to tiredness. Concerned with the performative element of the contract and its capacity for violence between X and I, I contemplated wearing a bulletproof vest while delivering my paper at Collisions the next day. There was still time left for me not to sign the participation contact.

2.3.4 Delivery of the Performative Lecture, ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’

I was unperturbed by what may have lurking behind X’s smile when I met her on the morning of me presenting my paper. What was she plotting? What was hidden inside her bag? A trumpet, a rat, a snake, a knife, a gun, a bomb? Although X told me that she was nervous, I had no sympathy. Have you ever heard of a nervous heckler?

After 5 minutes of reading my paper, I was pleased with the audience’s initial response. Whist the audience appeared engaged with what I was saying. I was still waiting for X’s interruption and hoped that she would hurry up and interrupt me. The moment when the security guard instructed me to leave with him, I felt slight disappointment. ‘Was that it,” I said to myself, “Was that the interruption to my paper?” I had hoped for verbal exchange with X and to put into practice my approach for dealing with physical and linguistic interruption. I was also annoyed that I had spent time devising a paper, which I may not have chance to finish reading. Sitting outside the presentation room, I wondered what kind of reaction amongst the audience had X’s interruption to my paper elicited and what was going in inside the room in my absence.
2.4 Theoretical and Contextual Analysis

The aim of this section is to reflect in retrospect at events taking place during Contract with a Heckler in terms of what others have said and what others have done in terms of theory and practice that incorporates aspects of heckling and power relations. To assist my analysis, I refer to points made by various speakers and audience members at the conference Heckler (2013), which I co-organised with Mel Jordan at TRADE in Nottingham and Artsadmin in London. Relating what was said during both instances of Heckler to my Contract project, this section contains two commentaries that relate to heckling and power relations. These are: 1) 2.4.2 Power Relations (1): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Contract, and 2) 2.4.3 Power Relation (2): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Audience.

Having discussed key aspects relating to the symposia Heckler (2013) and referred to a BBC Radio Nottingham interview that served as a useful foreground for the first symposium, I make use of the work of Josette Feral (2002) and Kathy O’Dell (1998) to situate the term ‘contract’ in relation to examples of practice relating to the history of Performance Art and propose how Contract with a Heckler offers extension. This discussion concentrates on the usage of participation contracts within my project and how the contract became a tool in which to explore power relations between X and myself. In the second discussion, I emphasise consideration of how myself and X’s interruption to my paper implicated upon different levels of power relation in operation between the speaker (me), the heckler (X), and the audience. I refer to multiple interruptions to the delivery of my paper as irritations for some members of the audience and inspirations for others.

2.4.1 Heckler (2013)

In a bid for me to argue for the heckler to be discussed beyond the parameters of comedy, politics and public speech and reconstituted through the language of contemporary art practice in light of my direct experience with heckling during not just events taking place during Contract but in terms of the various examples of practice that I have referred to during this chapter, Heckler (2013) was an international platform for academics and practitioners that I co-organised with...
Mel Jordan, first in Nottingham (gratefully supported by Loughborough University’s Graduate Culture Research Fund) and then London (Figure 30) to disseminate practice outcomes of my study.

![Heckler badge](image1)

**Fig. 30** Heckler badge for Heckler (2013). Designed by Mel Jordan (2013)

![Heckler event](image2)

**Fig. 31** Heckler, TRADE, Nottingham (2013). Courtesy of TRADE

We invited leading practitioners and academics to interrogate the notion of the heckler (Figure 31). Both events brought together interdisciplinary research enabling collaboration between political science, language studies and social sciences and the arts. TRADE supported the symposium in Nottingham (13/07/13) whilst the London event was supported by Artsadmin (19/09/13). Whilst my approach in both versions of Heckler in Nottingham and then London sought to knit theoretical discussion of heckling whilst provoking demonstrations of heckling (audience members interrupting speakers and vice versa), the
inclusion of live online discussion via Twitter and other social media channels during the London event incorporated consideration of heckling in virtual space.

Whilst the key aim for me in generating Heckler was to uncover the possibilities of heckling in terms of physical and linguistic interruption and disseminate the findings of Contract with a Heckler, the following question was used during both the Nottingham and London events by Jordan and I to provoke discussion: ‘How can contemporary art practice utilise the concept of the heckler to overturn the relationship between audience and artwork?’ We also encouraged participants at our events to consider the following questions: ‘What sort of public speaker is the heckler?’ ‘Are there existing rules for heckling?’ and ‘What does an examination of these rules tell us about democracy?’ To situate the events within the context of my study at the time, I had carried out a full literature review on the topic of heckling and, as previously discussed in this chapter had found very little across the disciplines. Heckler attempted to remedy this dearth in research and available literatures concerning the heckler which gave me an opportunity to promote the heckler and provoke participation in its philosophies and its practical workings as timely, vital, necessary; a matter of urgency. Interrogation through debate and reflection by speakers and audience members of heckler-related issues within the canon of contemporary art practice and other fields including social and political science, via a symposium-style environment similar in set up to With Humorous Intent (2012), provided an opportunity to assess the theoretical and practical considerations concerning the possibilities of the heckler’s specific usage of interruption.

In addition, a recent editorial for Art and the Public Sphere journal written by Jordan (2013a) had created debate and interest around the notion of the heckler as a new type of public speaker and Jordan wanted to further explore how this could contribute to new knowledge about art and its publics. The events also provided extension in terms of discussion of Jordan and I’s joint paper entitled ‘Oh heckler, where ART thou?’ that we delivered at the conference Impoliteness and Interaction in Poland in May 2013, which attempted to contextualise the concept of the heckler as a tool to explore audiences in contemporary art practice. Heckler enabled us to further discussions that had taken place with Dániel Z. Kádár in
Poland; we invited Kádár to speak at our symposium in Nottingham and developed a new paper for the event.

A live radio interview for BBC Radio Nottingham (12/07/13) was set up to inform listeners about Heckler taking place at TRADE. Joining presenter Andy Whittaker in the studio were TRADE director Bruce Asbestos, artist Steve Fossey and myself. In response to Whittaker’s first question as part of the on-air interview: ‘What is a heckler?’, I suggested the following: “The heckler is metaphorical figurehead of impoliteness. The heckler is a person who makes explicit usage of interruption to gate-crash the spotlight of those being listened to whilst maintaining a presence amongst an outraged public who give him his name, the heckler”. I went on to state that the heckler is unfettered by politeness and social protocol and uses physical and linguistic interruption to express their opinion, as well as those of others around him who dare not criticise the named presenter.” “Thus, the heckler,” I went on to suggest, “is one in the eye for politeness. The heckler should be congratulated by those ashamed of their lack of nerve to heckle. His sophisticated usage of interruption should be thumbed-up for discussion.” In response to a further set of questions by Whittaker: 1) ‘Have you ever experienced heckling first-hand?’ 2) ‘What happened?’ and 3) ‘How did everyone react?’, my direct experience of heckling during my delivery of my performative lecture ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ came in useful and I modelled my answers accordingly. “Yes, I’ve experienced heckling first-hand,” I replied in response to the first question, “I have been in the position of a speaker whose speech has been interrupted. I have been in the position of the person interrupting. I have also been to the extreme of planting hecklers to provoke the audience.” As I answered the remaining questions by selecting moments from my performative lecture, I extended my experience of planting hecklers by inviting Fossey to interrupt my responses. As opposed to X’s strategy in Contract with a Heckler, Fossey directly engaged in physical and linguistic interruption, thus enabling me to put into action my approach for dealing with hecklers and use aspects of linguistic impoliteness (Beebe 1995; Bousfield 2008) in terms of verbal barbs, sarcastic humour and mockery live on-air.

2.4.2 Power Relation (1): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Contract
Contract with a Heckler was a performance-based collaborative project involving two sets of physical and written participation contracts that set out conditions to be performed. Both X and myself understood the contracts as having a multi-function as: legal agreement; artwork; a durational prop, which simultaneously developed and tested the boundaries of our collaboration in terms of power relations. In this section, I emphasise discussion upon the possibilities of contractual arrangement within the second contract and highlight different moments during our project as providing useful examples of shifting power relations.

Our usage of contractual arrangement contributed to the current field of artists and performance makers who use the term ‘contract’ as a trope with a specific performativity in their practice. For example, beyond literature that deals with the contract as setting out legal rights for artists and other parties (for example, in 1971, gallery owner Seth Siegelaub produced The Artist’s Contract), artist Carey Young has produced a series of artworks using legal jargon relating to contracts to explore the relationship between artist and viewer within a visual arts context. In O’Dell’s (1998) appraisals of masochistic Performance Art from the 1970s, she suggests participation between performer and audience can be viewed as modelled upon ‘tacit or specified terms of a ‘contract’ (1998:2) and refers to contractual arrangements underpinning all social relations; ‘everyday agreements - or contracts - that we all make with others but that may not be in our own interests’ (ibid). Josette Feral (2002) combines the terms ‘tacit’ and ‘contract’ to suggest ‘the tacit contract between spectator and theater’ (Feral, 2002:104).

There is, of course, the specific quality of such conventional set-ups in art: that the audience is either expecting or delighted or disturbed by their being broken or exceeded.

My engagement with X as a form contractual exchange provides extension to O’Dell and Feral’s work by using a physical and written contract to condition the nature of collaborative exchange. Explicit contractual arrangement was not only used to premise the two protagonists’ actions (myself and X) but to also (implicitly) organise exchange between the protagonists and the audience. During my presentation, X maintained a dual status as both protagonist and audience.
member whose purpose was to manage the other members in the audience through the enactment of her interruption. By myself and X agreeing to keep the contract confidential from visitors and organisers until after I had delivered my presentation at which point the contract could be discussed, we had also generated a situation for the audience to reflect upon how their actions during my presentation resulted from contractual obligation unbeknown to them at the time.

Power relations between X and myself during our project can be construed as existing in a perpetual state of flux and re-definition. The issuing of a physical, written and visible participation contract by X to me at the start of the project made visible the power relation between us; the contract made visible X’s assertion of authority over me. She told me she wanted to have physical hard-copy written evidence of our specific roles within the collaboration, as this would protect her in the event of a dispute between us. I took this to mean that she did not trust me. Likewise, the contract also acted as a form of self-assurance for me and could be used as a point of reference considering any disagreements or misunderstandings. I started to think about the enforceability of the contract, which would in fact make it legally binding.

Referring to slapstick as language slippage in Chapter One, X performed slapstick on me by using terminology provocatively within the contract that was ambivalent in nature to arouse my anxiety; e.g. the term ‘abusive’ is so ambivalent. What did she mean by ‘abusive’ actions? Audience members present at the start of my performative lecture (apart from X and her assistants) may indeed have construed the power relation between myself and X (in her role as an audience member) as replicating speaker/listener behaviour in terms of an audience listening attentively to the speaker. However, the audience was unaware of my engagement with X during this time (before and after her interruption). I tried not to externalise the trepidation that I was feeling at the time to the audience by way of facial expressions or punctured moments in what I am saying/displaying anxiety in the tone of my voice. The majority of the audience was unaware that my emotional investiture with X was entirely different from that which I had with everyone else in the room at that time. Although X did not reveal herself as the perpetrator of the interruption to my paper until later in the question and answer session, audiences were unaware of the power relation at play in terms of me
being at the mercy of X.

Upon X handing me a participation contract at the start of our project together my initial reaction was one of astonishment: “Gosh, how formal” I thought to myself. This sentiment was echoed by an act of physical and linguistic interruption by an audience member during a joint paper that X and I gave during Heckler in Nottingham that discussed our joint engagement with contractual arrangement. As we read aloud our paper, “How bourgeois” shouted the audience member, “A really nice bourgeois way of ordering a relationship so to heckle you are constricted to a very bourgeois order to allow the heckler to stand outside it.” I argued, in response to these comments that our heckling participation contract was useful in terms of thinking about collaboration and the problematics involved and the relationship between heckling, language and power relations. I understood the audience member’s dismissal of our contract as meaning that he thought we had written out the possibility for the heckler to be disruptive and transgressive of the implicit power structures that underpin all aspects of our lives (Foucault, 1980). I underlined my claim further by drawing upon how X and I sought exchange of power relation during my delivery of ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’. I went on to suggest that heckling is useful as a physical, visible demonstration of the implicit power relations that are at play in terms of direct exchange between performer and audience and secondly, the heckler actually use a combination of impoliteness and interruption to reinforce the status quo in terms of power relations between audience and performer. Whilst one can experience heckling taking place in different contexts, and in some more than others, e.g. stand-up comedy, Dániel Z. Kádár’s presentation, ‘Heckling: A Mimetic-Interpersonal Perspective’ that day supported my claim that understanding and analysis of the issues involved in heckling across several contexts and disciplines is scant. This underlines the significance of Contract with a Heckler in terms of demonstrating heckling as a performative technique that speaks of interdisciplinary practice.

2.4.3 Power Relation (2): The Speaker, the Heckler, and the Audience

Examples of contemporary performance practice that contain direct physical and
linguistic interruption include Forced Entertainment’s Bloody Mess (2002-2011) and And On The Thousandth Night (aka The Kings) (2003), in which the storytelling structure has a rule where performer and audience members can interrupt and change the story throughout its long duration (up to 12 hours). Showtime (1996) uses interruption to provoke and discomfort the audience. Having listened to performer Cathy Naden describe in detail an imagined suicide, performer Terry O’Connor (dressed in cardboard as a tree) ‘break[s] the mood’ (Etchells, 1999:63) and starts shouting out towards the audience: “What the fuck are you looking at? What the fuck is your problem? Fuck off! Voyeurs! There’s a fucking line and you’ve just crossed it. Where’s your human decency?” (ibid.), decrying audiences as having an unhealthy ‘appetite for gore, sensation, and Schadenfreude’ (Freshwater, 2009:52) who ‘[watch] spectacles of suffering when there is no possibility of making a useful intervention’ (ibid). DV8’s Can We Talk About This (2012), a performance aimed at provoking discussion around issues relating to multiculturalism, freedom of speech and censorship, makes direct usage of heckling in performance by including a moment in its structural engineering where an audience member shouts, "This is Islamophobic shit" two-thirds of the way through (Figure 32).

Fig.32 DV8, Can We Talk About This? National Theatre, London (2012)

This strategy is similar to that of Contract with a Heckler in terms of its purpose of using planned interruption to offer another dimension to the presentation of ideas (multiculturalism, freedom of speech and censorship) that are being embodied through the performative actions of those acting on stage.

The planned heckler in this performance (DV8’s) becomes a means of including the audience and their response within the presentation of these ideas. However, the major point of difference between how planned interruption operates in
Contract with a Heckler and Can We Talk About This relates to how heckling by means of physical and linguistic interruption underpins one aspect of DV8’s performance whereas the planned interruption that myself and X set up as part of our performative lecture holds much greater significance. Whilst in my role of a speaker who anticipated some form of interruption to take place, I was uncertain of what would be its actual content, whereas the exact nature and content of the planned interruption in DVB’s performance was known to performers prior the performance as a routine part of the performance’s narrative structure. Also, the content of the paper discussed throughout my performative lecture related directly to heckling whereas the content of DV8’s performance was not. Whereas DV8’s performance involved actors on a stage attempting to use performance to embody and illustrate different ideas through their actions, my work proposes a performance about heckling via the act of heckling.

Rather than present an illustration of heckling, Contract with a Heckler demonstrates the act of heckling and the power relations attached to heckling on many levels. First, there was the interruption to my paper by X that was planned but whose content was unbeknown to me at the time. Then there were different demonstrations of heckling taking place during a heated and uncomfortable altercation between myself, X and audience members as part of the question and answer session. Different interruptions during ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ provoked so many moments of irritation for the audience. Through the interruption that myself and X set up, we used practice to demonstrate that some audience members could deal with the theory of heckling but had problems when being confronted with heckling and its associated interruptive processes.

In Contract with a Heckler, I achieved my aim of being an antagonist using aspects of physical interruption to discomfort my audience; to use interruption to shock the audience and make them feel as uncomfortable/irritated as possible. Whilst Bourriaud (1998) refers to convivial participation as a means of generating consensus, I sought to use interruption to disrupt convivial participation and consensus making by deploying the discomfiting effects of interruption to generate disssensus. Simply put, what I mean by this is that I used interruption to generate a dissensual atmosphere amongst audience members in terms of their
reactions to the nature of the discomfort provoked. Whilst some audience members berated X’s interruption for ruining their enjoyment of my paper and felt uncomfortable at being part of an artwork without their consent and prior knowledge of exactly what was going to happen in terms of the delivery of my lecture paper, others, for instance audience member Farokh Soltani, were (positively) provoked by the discomfort embodied in the interruption to my paper:

I really enjoyed it [the discomfort Soltani experienced being in the presentation room]. After a while the discomfort gave way to ‘ooh that’s interesting’. What is happening is clearly an act of thought; it is an act and it’s an act of thought. I can clearly understand even if the paper was not about [heckling] [...] its about interruption and disruption and the only way that comes across is that it is completely unexpected and unacceptable and if what happened was completely acceptable, if it [the interruption] had been announced and if it had not been so uncomfortable there would really be no point in it. And when it ended and the Q and A started, I thought people would say ‘Wow! That was cool!’ but [they said] ‘Oooh you should have warned us!’ It was completely ethically justified, exactly for that reason (Soltani, pers. comm. July 2015).

I drew a parallel between Dieter Roelstraete’s (2012) insistence that art has the capacity for disruption and my staged interruption taking place during ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ as a moment of disruption to argue that Performance Art (and Art per se) is predicated on rule-breaking, even on discomforting audiences, especially the elitist audiences of Live Art and Performance. Furthermore, Soltani’s reaction to my staged interruption really speaks of the (positive) nature of discomfort at work insofar as it helped me to set out how interruption differs from or aligns with notions like antagonism, dissensus, disruption, etc. Extending when alternative comedian Tony Allen shouted out “heckling is the shortest, briefest, most neatest, tidiest way of getting an idea across quickly” during discussion taking place at Heckler (2013) in London, I suggest that interruption distinguishes itself from related terms (antagonism, dissensus, disruption, etc.) specifically through its sophisticated
deployment of physical linguistic impoliteness to communicate and establish an uncomfortable power relation with those person(s) their interruption is aimed at.

X's 'interruption' also taught me about using interruption to control an audience by disrupting their expectations of 'the presentation of critical ideas within academia' (Soltani, 2015) by using practice-in-action related to physical interruptive processes deployed as tactics to undermine those critical ideas (in this case, theories of heckling) from having to be 'controlled and framed within a very specific set of regulations' (ibid.) As Soltani suggests 'I found the discussions after the presentation as much demonstrative of the idea of presentation as the presentation itself' (ibid). Underlining the importance of practice to my study, without the staged interruption to my paper, I would not have been able to reveal that some audience members considered that heckling to only be acceptable if it is done politely and announced beforehand. In response to Audience Member 3, have you ever heard of a polite and pre-announced heckle?

2.5 Chapter Summary

In response to the stated aims of this chapter and the research questions underpinning my study, this chapter provides evidence through description and analysis of Contract with a Heckler that one of the tactics for making positive usage of interruption in Performance Art is heckling. This chapter not only extends existing commentaries of heckling within language studies (Kádár 2013 et al.) and performance–related forms such as comedy and public speaking, by offering discussion of a performance that deploys heckling directly rather than implicitly (as in the case of the example of work of by DV8 aforementioned), it advances knowledge of using interruption to explore the contingent nature of power relations attached to participative art performance. Exchange of power relations throughout this chapter can be thought of in terms of heckling as a tactic of interruption to establish, undermine, then re-establish power relations between different sets of participants.

The structural narrative of Lost for Words as bearing resemblance to my ‘Anticipation, Action and Analysis’ working model was significant in terms of developing my practice as an artist interested in setting up performative
situations to interrogate aspects of theory and practice. Contract with a Heckler, was a major development from Lost for Words in terms of me making usage of the performative lecture format to explore interruptive processes. As discussed, Contract with a Heckler was a collaborative project centred upon a performative lecture, ‘Slipping and Slapsticking: In Promotion of the Heckler’ that not only presented the theory of physical and linguistic interruption, by making more of Beebe (1995:2011) and Bousfield’s (2008) work on linguistic impoliteness, it also demonstrated physical and linguistic interruption in practice.
Conclusion

Overview

This concluding section serves to clarify my study’s claims to knowledge and pull together the many points made throughout the thesis in response to addressing the research questions and aims of the study. It then indicates how aspects of the practice contained within this study have begun to positively impact upon my own practice and that of others. I draw this section to a close identifying areas of for future postdoctoral research.

Reflection upon the Research Process, Revisiting the Research Questions and Claims to Knowledge

Practical examination of the operations of interruptive processes to, first, interrogate my assumptions and those of others and, secondly, exploit their virtues and advance theory and practice within the field of participative art performance were the key motivations that led me to undertake this study. Whilst interruption has been discussed within the arts and humanities, no single study has focused upon the insertion of interruptive processes within Performance Art to exploit their physical properties in terms of provoking participation. Whilst discussions taking place during the public symposium With Humorous Intent underlined the lack of knowledge and potential for gaining knowledge about the relationship between comedy and interruption, these discussions also clarified the need for amplified consideration be given regarding the possibilities of interruptive processes within contemporary art (and Performance-related art) practice.

Having found gaps of knowledge relating to art, performance and interruption, my study prioritised the importance of practice and practical action deploying methodologies that combined aspects of my practice (different ways of), conferences/symposia and discussion (varying aspects), theories and historical narratives. Research questions that were used to guide the study sought to engage interruptive processes and evaluate their potential as opening new ways of theorising, articulating and demonstrating two key components as regularities
through the history of Performance Art practice: participation and power relations.

Through the contents of the evidence presented and discussion thereof, each chapter demonstrates how I have actively set out to develop aspects of interruption through direct engagement and how this has caused important reimaginings to the possibilities of my research and subsequently practice, and more importantly contributing to the field of interruptive processes within live performance. Whereas examples in the history of performance by companies such as Forced Entertainment and DV8 have woven aspects of interruption into their live performance works, key examples of practice addressed in this study promote interruption as the key component in the planning and production of a performance, from anticipation to application, by which the outcome of a performance hangs entirely upon one or several carefully pre-designed moment(s) of interruption.

Reflecting upon both my participation as the chief protagonist of the examples of practice evidenced throughout this thesis as well as the participation of the audience, practice that I have undertaken as part of my study has enabled different forms of knowledge to emerge relating to the act of inserting interruptive processes that are physical in nature into live performance. My performances Lost for Words (2011) and Contract with a Heckler (2013) are put forward as case studies that evidence different aspects of the physical nature of interruption in practice. This is to enable evidence to be drawn together in support and provide a useful and practical approach to developing working with physical interruptive processes within art performance-making, mindful of some of the problematics involved. Whilst I created edges and parameters in which to guide my practical study of interruption, I encouraged a degree of anticipation as methodology. Interruption was the topic of my study and ironically, the most important critical incident that re-shaped the conditions of my practice and expanded the possibilities for examining different forms of interruption related to an act of physical interruption (the audience member shouting “Do it your fucking self!” in Canada). As I operated in my role of a protagonist using interruptive processes in live performance, I realised the problematics of doing so. It would have been impossible for me to have theorised those; I could only presume certain things (for instance, some members of the audience in the case study provided having
conventional views in terms of heckling), which I proved. I accepted that in my role of a protagonist working with physical interruption might have limits (e.g. in the heckling case study I set myself up for someone, ‘X’, to interrupt me and this initially caused me great concern).

Using writing as a process throughout my study in which to constantly reflect upon working with different forms of interruption, this thesis, the culmination of that writing, contributes to our understanding of interruption by using two different writing styles, narrative account using the third person in the first instance and reflective commentary that is less objective and accentuates personal and embodied response in the second. This is to evidence important phases of both my engagement with interruptive processes and that of the audience. If I hadn’t have allowed myself to have been at the mercy of interruption to the extent described, then my knowledge of the practicalities and emotional implications of working with interruptive processes wouldn’t have been so tangible and I would not have been able to write about them from a first-hand perspective as contained in this thesis.

Pulling together and emphasising the varying forms of evidence presented in this thesis, I shall make the following claim in response to the primary research question: ‘What are the possibilities of using interruptive processes within Performance Art?’ My claim is as follows: The chief possibilities of inserting interruptive processes within Performance Art can be theorised, articulated and demonstrated through deployment of slapstick and heckling as tactics to provoke participation, and then facilitate examination of power relations attached to participative exchange.

Wrapped up in a study of interruption, heckling and slapstick combined is a consideration of its cultural baggage; the act of interrupting punches upon the study of impoliteness. I also claim that interruptive processes not only serve up tactics in which to provoke participation, their associated meanings with rudeness and the antisocial (as examined in the field of impoliteness study) is useful for thinking about how these processes incorporate and make use of the body and/or language within participative art performance to discomfort/disrupt participation as modeled upon the concept of conviviality (1998) and bound in a
rhetoric of ethics that makes few allowances for provoking deliberately uncomfortable versions of participation.

**I. Slapstick as a Tactic of Interruption**

I claim slapstick as a tactic that makes positive usage of physical and bodily interruptive processes to engage participation. To substantiate my claim, Chapter One presents a performance using slapstick to achieve participation within Performance Art by engaging audiences to immerse their bodies in physical and bodily interruptive processes.

Unpacking this claim in more detail in terms of different knowledge gained from my participation and the audience’s participation within my performance Lost for Words and linking these with the stated aims of my study, my direct involvement with slapstick as a means of provoking participation within Lost for Words taught me to underline the significance of recognising the body as having an agency within participatory processes. To that effect, for any analytical discussion to reflect upon the actuality of what happens when we engage in participatory processes, importance must be placed upon consideration of participation as an experience that is physical and bodily in nature. Current theories on participation lack substantial critical engagement with how the physical body operates in terms of participative performance in practice. No theory of participation can hold intellectual claim if it fails to recognise the physical bodily dimensions that are implicit within participatory processes. Slapstick is directly specific to performance practice; it makes explicit usage of the body and bodily gestures as enacted, performed and witnessed. What is so important about slapstick is that it is so bodily. In other words, a performer of slapstick, the ‘slapstick protagonist’ (Stott, 2005:93) does not need to be sophisticated in using verbal language or required to use any verbal language at all to demonstrate slapstick. To test that, I employed a similar strategy to the manner of the performative action that I undertook when I performed Yes/No. Lost for Words demonstrates that by making use of the body in practice and forcing it to engage in interruptive processes combined with repetition to produce mismatch and incongruity, an intuitive undoing of (verbal) language through the body can be achieved. Through the physical bodily nature of the participation that I generated in Lost for Words,
the complexities involved in mismatch and incongruity between the body and verbal language were demonstrated and made explicit through immediate and direct bodily engagement. A shared collective knowledge was gained by participants of being able to do what language tells us to do at the moment when the body takes over was produced. As the protagonist, I used the mechanisms of performance to underline that only through the participants being directly engaged in the interruptive processes that I instructed them to take part in did they (and me) remember the problems created when we disrupt habitual norms of behavior pertaining to verbal utterance and physical bodily gesture. Interruptive processes at work throughout the performance have also taught me about the social implications of slapstick in practice in term of antisocial humour and non-convivial forms of laughter at seeing somebody being (deliberately) clumsy with their body.

**Heckling as a Tactic of Interruption**

I claim heckling as a tactic that both engages participation by using physical and linguistic interruptive processes as well as enables examination of power relations between performer and audience.

To substantiate my claims, Chapter Two presents a verbal exchange that took place in Canada between myself and an audience member that demonstrates physical and linguistic interruptive processes directly. Aspects of practice relating to the project *Contract with a Heckler* present a demonstration of heckling and power relations. The participation contract attached to this demonstration embodies the many difficult phases of engagement attributed to being someone at the mercy of interruptive processes.

To clarify the various levels of power relation discussed in the examples provided in Chapter Two, in terms of different knowledge gained from my participation and the audience’s participation, first, power relations between a performer and an audience are discussed in terms of a member of an audience using physical and linguistic interruption (heckling) to disrupt e.g. the audience member expressing disapproval by using physical and linguistic interruption of Franko B’s performance. Power relations between a performer and an audience member
(heckler) are then discussed as being in a state of flux and negotiation as evidenced in the example of my aggressive verbal exchange with the homophobe in Canada. The content of what I said during my performances provoked him to interrupt me and vice versa. Sentences are punctured by the other person’s vocal intervention as an indication of their aggravation at the time at what they are hearing. Secondly, participant power relations in terms of Contract with a Heckler can be understood in terms of underpinning the interplay between the speaker (me) and the audience present. Thirdly, and unbeknown to the audience at the time during my presentation, a power relation existed between X and myself as collaborators. Lastly, a power relation existed between X and those assistants (the security guard, Rachael etc.) whose participation and successful carrying out of their duties X was reliant upon during my presentation in order for her to stage her interruption. In terms of those power relations shifting, the tension that I had experienced in the build-up to my presentation involving me signing the contract with X shifted from intimidation to competition. I anticipated using the various tactics of comedy (mockery, parody etc.) that I had made use of Canada to present triumph over X’s interruption. I wanted X to think she had ‘one up on me’ by thinking that she was putting me into a vulnerable position where she could publicly humiliate me when in actual fact I was preparing to shift power relations and humiliate her. In reality, she humiliated herself in her role of speaker as I sat outside and the audience grew increasingly irritated by her attempts to finish my paper. On reflection, maybe X didn’t mind the fact that she was being badmouthed at as she had provoked discomfort for some audience members. When I re-entered the room and revealed to the audience that everything that the audience had witnessed today including my removal from the room had been pre-planned, the audience grew more and more irritated. That was the aim of the staged interruption after all.

**Impact of Practice and Further Study**

The study was instrumental in helping me to exploit interruptive processes implicit within my Performance Art practice by working with slapstick and heckling to make these explicit and help distinguish my usage of interruption in performance as distinctive from the work of others. Contributing to discourses related to
contemporary Performance and Fine Art practice with an emphasis on discussing ideas surrounding ‘audience’ and ‘participation’, I am now keen to publish the findings of this study in journals that support the integration of theory and practice including Performance Research Journal. I also aim to disseminate these findings through events organised by the research network Performance Philosophy and other performance-related research clusters as well as conferences/symposia etc. that I initiate myself.

The study was also significance in terms of helping me review how I use Performance-related methods to knit theory and practice. To explain, the narrative structure of my performance Lost for Words relates to my Anticipation, Action and Analysis reflective model. On reflection of events that took place during this performance, these can be broken down into three ‘sections’ that were roughly identical to the three stages that form my reflective model. To explain, Lost for Words started with a discussion anticipating events that would take place as part of a forthcoming performance (Anticipation). The performance then took place (Action). It was then analysed and reflected upon (Analysis). By structurally engineering Lost for Words so that it replicated elements of Anticipation, Action and Analysis, the audience gained insight into how I devise, execute and reflect upon my performance practice. Practitioners often allow time directly after a performance for discussion of its working processes and rationales and enable the audience to enter into discussion with them to gain feedback to feedforward (gauge audience reception to make readjustments to future performances).

Although I did not allow the audience in Lost for Words to contribute to how they felt about their direct participation during the performance, on reflection, this would have been a worthwhile exercise to gauge mismatch and incongruity in terms of how I deemed their participation and how they understood their involvement. An important question that Lost for Words raises is ‘When did the performance begin?’ The ‘performance’ for the audience may have started after my initial discussion with my sidekick had finished and ended when we discussed in retrospect all the activities that had just taken place. However, I suggest that the ‘performance’ began the moment that my sidekick and I walked into the gallery and started our discussion. I also suggest the performance ended after I had read out the quote by Lisa Le Feuvre for the second time and by me saying
‘thank you’ to the audience as this signalled that the event had now ended and everybody must leave. Starting the performance by making the audience aware of an aspect of theory (Le Feuvre’s views on the topic of failure), exploring that theory through practice and then ending the performance by repeating the aspect of theory in question helped me (and I am sure everybody else involved) to reflect upon the relationship between theory and practice and how the practice that was set up helped inform the theory and vice versa. *Lost for Words* was the first time that I had tried out making a performance that started with addressing theory, punctuating that theory with elements of practice and concluding by re-addressing the theory to reflect. In subsequent practice, I have often adopted a similar strategy of utilising the format of the performative lecture (Husemann 2004; Frank 2013; Ladnar 2013) as exemplified in the lecture component of *Contract with a Heckler* and interweaving practical demonstrations into discussions of theory.

Towards the end of my study, I began sharing my Anticipation, Action and Analysis model with other practitioners. Whilst this study really helped to reinforce self-reflection as underpinning my working methodology, the development of Anticipation, Action and Analysis has impacted upon my teaching of Fine Art and Performance practice. Encouraging experiential learning, critical thinking and self-reflexivity, I now encourage my students to try Anticipation, Action and Analysis out for themselves and/or use it as a basis for developing their own autonomy by generating a similar model that encourages reflection upon action. Students that I have spoken to who have carried out the process have found it beneficial, an effective conceptual tool for anticipating practice, executing practice and reflecting upon that practice; one student told me that using my process and then appropriating it to suit her own practice trajectory has helped her initiate a free flow from theory to practice, an aspect of her learning she had previously struggled with. Other students have reversed the three stages and found that sequence of actions clearer.

One possible avenue for future examination of heckling and interruption could be situating these terms within an analysis of performance forms that constitute audience participation differently (i.e. in comedy, participation and interruption is often encouraged) compared to a situation where you are not really invited to
participate and you interject. Another avenue may include the examination public space interruptions and consider how the norms of the street (Reiss, 2007) have been ‘interrupted’ i.e. flash mobs and protest demonstrations. The study could incorporate consideration of means of interrupting ‘beyond’ the body and language (you can’t always work things out using language) i.e. tear gas (Bruff, 2013).

Links between my experience of heckling during this study and sadomasochistic Performance Art from the 1970s, which centred upon inflictions of pain upon an artist’s body, as exemplified in the works of Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Marina Abramović and Gina Pane et al. (O’Dell, 1998) could also be addressed in more detail. Joining Dániel Z. Kádár’s (2013) statement that the purpose of interrupting the performer(s) is to ‘harass or disconcert’ with Peter Bond’s (2013) appraisal of the work of Polish theatre director Tadeusz Kantor as relating to the production of Performance-related methods that deliberately set out to humiliate the actor another study could explore the following question: ‘At what point does a heckle become abuse?’

Future study could examine the relationship between heckling and interruption and the concept of ‘political dissent’; ‘from religious foundation and English Dissenters tradition etc., i.e. those who spoke out against the mainstream orthodoxies etc.’ (Whiteley, pers. comm. January 2014). If social relations of any kind are to be democratic, then this must include everybody’s opinion and actions and allow itself to embrace potential confrontation otherwise it is morally and ethically problematic if opinions and actions seen as confrontational are somehow denied or quashed.

In my analysis of Lost for Words, deploying analogy-making and language substitution as tools were helpful in terms of helping me reflect upon my role as the protagonist (host) and my relationship to my audience (guests). Possible research to be undertaken in the future could interrogate the relationship between participation in Performance and how Foucault conceptualises his neologism ‘governmentality’. I suggest that using the following analogy can draw

---

33 I define the term ‘governmentality’ as related to the enactment of power over people by government, a version of regulation, a conduct of conducts (Foucault in Burchell, Gordon and

**Tactics of Interruption** 143
parallels between state power and participative performance: State is the performer/Subject is the audience.

Finally, in Chapter One, section 1.4.3, I refer to *Lost for Words* as an act of performative public pedagogy in relation to my usage of slapstick as a means of encouraging participants to think about the relationship between the body and language. The relationship between performative pedagogy (Meller, 2015) and interruption (as a tactic to provoke participation) is an aspect of the research that I am keen to examine closer through practice-as-research. Although discussion of my usage of interruption within the controlled environment of the classroom was not given consideration in this thesis, this is an area (alongside performative pedagogy in general) that I am keen to explore as the next step in my research by addressing the question ‘What is the potential for interruptive processes within performative pedagogy?’

Miller, 1991), or more succinctly, the means by which political power manages to regulate the population (ibid.).
Bibliography

Authored and Edited Books


University of Chicago Press
— 1995. Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle, and Narrative in Slapstick Comedy in
Classical Hollywood Comedy, (eds) Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry
Jenkins. New York: Routledge
CULPEPER, J., 2011. Impoliteness: using language to cause offence. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press
Lang
University Press
Cambridge: Zone
Continuum
Press
DIXON, S., 2007. Digital Performance: A history of New Media in Theatre,
Dance, Performance Art. Cambridge, Mass: MIT
Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art Ltd
— and TALLANT, S., 2012. The Unexpected Guest: Art, writing and thinking on
Hospitality, Art/Books; 01 edition
a Comic. Seiten; Verlag: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers Inc
Image. Faber and Faber Ltd
FOUCAULT, M., 1981. The history of sexuality, translated from the French by
— 1977. Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison, translated from the
French by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin


GARNER, J., 1998. *We interrupt this broadcast: relive the events that stopped our lives– from the Hindenburg to the death of Princess Diana*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks


MILLS, S., 2003, Michel Foucault. London: Routledge


NILSEN, D., 1993. Humor scholarship: a research bibliography. Westport, CT:
Greenwood
York: Routledge


**Journals, Periodical Articles, Essays and Unpublished Theses**


Tactics of Interruption 152


BILLINGTON, M., 2015. ‘Can we talk about this-review The Guardian’. http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/mar/13/can-we-talk-about-this- [Accessed 19/05/15]


JORDAN, M., 2013a. ‘Heckle, Hiss, Howl and Holler’, Art & the Public Sphere. Vol. 1 No. 2. 117–119

LE FEUVRE, L., 2010. ‘If At First You Don’t Succeed Celebrate’ TATE Etc Magazine, Spring 2010

WHITE, M., 2006. A brief history of heckling

2012. ‘Andrew Lansley-style heckling is a dying art’,

WILKINSON, C., 2011. ‘Noises Off: What’s the difference between Performance Art and theatre’, [Online], Available


Exhibition Catalogue and Ephemera

COBLENTZ, C., 2009. Seriously Funny, exhibition catalogue. SMoCA


Modern Art, Oxford


London: Hayward Publishing

KUNSTSMUSEUM WOLFSBURG, 2013-2014. Slapstick!, promotional ephemera

Websites and Other Electronic Sources
American slapstick (DVD) 2006. Produced by Calif CHATSWORTH. Image Entertainment
Tonight: Happy slapping produced by Jeff ANDERSON. Imprint Granada TV, 2005
F*ck / produced and directed by Steve ANDERSON. Mudflap Films, 2005. DVD (93 mins)
The World’s most offensive joke. 2006. Dir. Bruce HEPTON. Visual Voodoo / Channel 4
Sauce, satire and silliness: the story of British comedy. 2007. Produced by Garry John HUGHES. BBC
Rude Britannia. 2010. Produced by Alastair LAURENCE. Narrated by Julian RIND TUTT. BBC
The story of slapstick. 2009. Produced & directed by Breid McLOONE. Narrated by Miranda HART. The Comedy Unit / BBC
The best of British cinema The Ealing comedies: and, Slapstick. 1995. Produced by John MILLS and Ashley SIDAWAY. Aylesbury: Tring Video
Ha Ha Road. QUAD. Derby. [viewed 14/07/2011] Available from http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/Ha-Ha
FINN, F., and WHITTAKER, A., BBC Radio Nottingham interviews, July 2013. Produced by BBC
Lectures, Interviews and Personal Communications

ABULHAWA, D., Personal communication in discussion on interruption  
(March 2015)

ARNOLD M., Personal communication in discussion on art participation  
(September 2012)

BOND, P., 2013. ‘Off-side’, Presented at Heckler, Trade, Nottingham

Presented at 26th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

BROADHURST, S., 2011. Personal email. (January 5th 2011)

BRUFF, I., 2013. ‘The materiality of the body and the viscerality of protest’, 
Presented at Heckler, TRADE, Nottingham

COWAN, J., Personal communication in discussion on interruption (January 2016)

GOVINDA, M., Personal communication in discussion on heckling (December 2012)

JORDAN, M., 2013b. ‘Welcome and Introduction’ and ‘Closing thanks’, 
Presented at Heckler, TRADE, Nottingham

– Personal communication in discussion on heckling (May 2013)


MILOSKOVIC, B., Interviewed by L. Campbell, (3rd February 2014)

MUNRO, J., Personal communication in discussion on interruption (January 2016)

NEWBOLD, C., Personal communication in discussion on reflective art practice  
(December 2015)

O’DONNELL, L., Personal communication in discussion on Lost for Words  
(February 2011)

PORTNOY, M., Interviewed by L. Campbell, (29th October 2012)

RAKOWITZ, M., 2012. Artist presentation, Presented at Smart Museum of Contemporary Art

ROELSTRAETE, D., 2012. Responses to presentations, Presented at Smart
Museum of Contemporary Art

SOLTANI, F., In discussion with the author (July 2015)


SUN, N., 2013. ‘Death is a Work in Progress’, Presented at Soho Theatre, London

WHITELEY, G., 2012. ‘Silly, sick, slick: the fall and rise of comedic art’, Presented at With Humorous Intent, Mostyn, Llandudno, Wales

— Personal communication. (January, 2014)

WINSTON, B., 2013. ‘Right to Offend’, Presented at London South Bank University

X., Personal communication. (November 2012)