

# Queer Street Scenes: Interruption, Exception, Orientation

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*How might we think queerly about the politics of performance in public space? Inspired by 'queer' as a straying from the straight-and-narrow and by the street as a site of chance meetings and awkward run-ins, I stage in this essay an encounter between two different approaches to thinking the politics of performance in public space. The first approach follows a familiar path: Bertolt Brecht's 'street scene' and Walter Benjamin's account of epic theatre. The second approach follows the walking performances of two queer migrant artists – South Korean-born Jisoo Yoo, now based in France, and Mozambican-born Jupiter Child, now based in Denmark – who interrogate the disorientation of the queer migrant body in Western European public space. Exploring the surprisingly busy intersection between the Brechtian street scene and the work of these two artists reveals a politics of performance in public space that favours orientation over rupture.*

## Introduction: street scene-setting

The street is an urban caesura, an interruption in the built environment that structures the city's morphology. Henri Lefebvre calls the street 'an *incision-suture*' that divides one space from another even as it links them together.<sup>1</sup> If the street is an interruption, it is also a space of flows. As material thoroughfare, the street enables the circulation of people and goods and provides a corridor for utilities. As public easement, the street facilitates and structures social interaction and the construction of forms of community life. The flows of the street can be interrupted in ways both regular (e.g. traffic lights, signage) and irregular (e.g. traffic collisions, barricades, riot police, lockdowns). The interruptions and flows of the street are never far from questions of power and ownership: as recent experiments in low-traffic neighbourhoods have shown, the interruption of one form of movement (vehicular through-traffic) might facilitate the flow of another (pedestrians, cyclists) but also spark protest, even violence.<sup>2</sup> Who – or what – can move freely through the streets?

Citing the legacy of the May 1968 protests, scholars and practitioners of European street performance have long touted its capacity to spontaneously interrupt, suspend or divert the flows of everyday life.<sup>3</sup> The institutionalization and professionalization of European street performance in the 1980s and 1990s did little to dampen such claims. But recent restrictions on public space, from securitization in the aftermath of terrorist attacks to pandemic-era lockdowns, have prompted a shift in European street performance discourse. Where once street performance interrupted the flow of

everyday traffic, stopping passers-by in their tracks, now street performance itself is interrupted, by checkpoints, safety measures and festival cancellations.<sup>4</sup> Such interruptions are but one aspect of a broader reconfiguration of the public – private divide, as ostensibly private spaces are prised open (e.g. homes becoming offices during the pandemic and so subject to new forms of digital workplace surveillance) and ostensibly public spaces become privatized (e.g. through the sale of public land to private developers and the disappearance of public rights of way).

But for whom are such developments exceptional, and for whom have they long been the rule? If reconfigurations of the public – private divide are central to our understanding of the security state, corporatized cities, and lockdowns, they are also central to queer theorizations of the public and public space. Michael Warner, for instance, has noted that not all genders and sexualities ‘are public or private in the same way ... Same-sex persons kissing, embracing, or holding hands in public view commonly excite disgust even to the point of violence, whereas mixed-sex persons doing the same thing are invisibly ordinary, even applauded.’<sup>5</sup> Judith Butler, in a generative updating of the public sphere theory of Hannah Arendt, has shown how queer subjects – be they sexual minorities or European Muslim women who wish to wear the veil – share a struggle to appear in public *as they will*.<sup>6</sup> The experiences of queer subjects offer potent reminders that public and private are neither neatly delineated spatial zones, nor even strict legal distinctions, so much as affective orientations of the body.<sup>7</sup>

This essay is concerned with queer performances of public space in contemporary Western Europe, how we might think queerly about the politics of such performances, and what such performances might queer. What does *queer* name, here? By ‘queer performances of public space’, I do not simply mean ‘performances made in public space by LGBTQIA+ people’, even though two such performances will feature prominently. As queer theorists have been noting since the 1990s, queer’s ‘lexical history’ is relational and spatial, referring not to any specific, positive identity (e.g. gay) but to that which deviates from a norm – the eccentric, the ex-centric, the off-centre – what David Halperin has famously called a ‘positionality vis-à-vis the normative’.<sup>8</sup> Thus queer is always shifting, always on the move; it often sticks to non-normative sexualities but need not refer to sexuality at all. For Sara Ahmed, whose queer phenomenology guides much of this essay, taking seriously the spatiality of queer as ‘oblique’ or ‘off line’ (deviant, not straight) might risk ‘losing the specificity of queer as a commitment to a life of sexual deviation’, but ‘it also sustains the significance of “deviation” in what makes queer lives queer’.<sup>9</sup> Thinking queerly about performance in public space and its politics, therefore, involves thinking about the norms that govern public space and the paths, both social and spatial, that deviate from them.

Inspired by *queer* as a straying from the straight-and-narrow and by the *street* as a site of chance meetings and awkward run-ins, I stage in this essay an encounter between two different approaches to thinking the politics of performance in public space. The first approach follows what Ahmed would call a ‘well-trodden’ citational path, starting from Bertolt Brecht’s familiar ‘Street Scene’ and Walter Benjamin’s well-known

account of Brecht's epic theatre.<sup>10</sup> The second approach follows the walking performances of two queer migrant artists currently working in Western Europe: South Korean-born Jisoo Yoo, now based in France, and Mozambican-born Jupiter Child (also known as Júlia Machindano), now based in Denmark. In keeping with Diana Taylor's influential claim that '[e]very performance enacts a theory, and every theory performs in the public sphere', I engage with Yoo's and Child's respective performances as *public theory*: embodied acts of theorizing 'the public', in public.<sup>11</sup> My hope is that, by exploring the surprisingly busy intersection between the Brechtian street scene and the work of these two artists, we will start to find our way towards a politics of performance in public space that favours *orientation* over *rupture*.

Admittedly, in staging this encounter – and in structuring it the way I have – I risk the charge of subordinating the work of queer-of-colour migrant artists to the oft-cited canonical theory of straight, white, European men (even though Brecht and Benjamin were both exiles from the Third Reich, and though Benjamin's Jewishness fatally excluded him from the protections of whiteness). For the avoidance of doubt: my goal is *neither* to reduce the performances of Yoo and Child to mere exemplars of the 'Brechtian', *nor* to 'read' their performances through a Brechtian 'lens', *nor* to suggest that the import of their performances lies in what they might tell us about Brecht. An earlier version of this essay did not mention Brecht until ten pages in; I had hoped to de-centre him. Unfortunately, the unintended effect was to make Brecht appear as the essay's hermeneutic *deus ex machina* – or its skeleton key, reassuringly within reach, turning up when needed to unlock another door.<sup>12</sup> I offer this not as apology but as an account of how this essay took the form it did. In the first version, I tried to make a diversion of the established road. This version begins on the well-trodden path, with a promise to stray before long.<sup>13</sup>

### Street scenes

Although I begin on the well-trodden path, I will attempt to walk it at an odd angle. What might Brecht and Benjamin's analogies for the epic theatre tell us, not about epic theatre *per se*, but about the spaces – street corner and apartment – in which they are set? What theory of public and private emerges from these scenes? What might these scenes offer a politics of performance in public space?

In Brecht's street scene, a witness to a traffic accident demonstrates what has transpired to a gathering street corner crowd. The interruption of the flow of traffic affords the witness the opportunity to repeat the event 'in such a way that the bystanders are able to form an opinion about the accident'.<sup>14</sup> This basic street demonstration illustrates the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which Brecht defines in 'The Street Scene' as 'a technique of taking the human social incidents to be portrayed and labelling them as something striking, something that calls for explanation, that is not to be taken for granted, not just natural'.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the street scene, the demonstrator de-naturalizes both the interruption (the collision, which through the actions of the demonstrator assumes the status of an event) and the flow (of everyday traffic). It is not simply the case that 'accidents happen'; this collision happened for a

reason, and the witness demands (and perhaps offers) explanation. However, that explanation also serves to de-naturalize, to make strange, the ongoing situation from which the event of the collision emerged. The overworking of delivery drivers, the aggressive entitlement of those driving luxury vehicles, the design of a street or intersection, poor signage: all could explain the hypothetical collision, and all would in turn require explanation. The witness's demonstrative work might be occasioned by an interruption, but it is also the preceding and persistent flow that is subjected to scrutiny. Brecht's street scene, like the rest of his epic theatre, demands that we understand the rule to be exceptional, in the sense that it could and should be otherwise. But it also demands that we understand that the exception is the rule. The collision did not emerge from nowhere; it was not a freak accident.

In Benjamin's essay 'What is Epic Theatre?' he posits his own model of Brecht's epic theatre, which proves to be more of a street scene than its setting in a bourgeois apartment might suggest. A stranger enters to witness a startling domestic scene: in the midst of a row, a mother is poised to hurl a bronze bust at her daughter, whilst the father calls for the police from an open window.<sup>16</sup> The stranger's sudden arrival freezes the action, creating a tableau that the audience can then analyse so as to form an opinion. This interruption 'uncovers the conditions of this dramatic situation'.<sup>17</sup> In Benjamin's essay, the whole scene is sudden: it appears in the middle of a paragraph, an interruption in its own right. But it matters that, if we treat this situation as a hypothetical piece of theatre, then the audience of this scene was present before the stranger arrived.<sup>18</sup> The audience's viewpoint is not neatly aligned with the stranger's (or any other character's) in a simple act of identification. The audience has witnessed both the development of the argument, its flow and its abrupt pause, its interruption. Confronted with the tableau, the audience might ask, with the stranger, 'how did we arrive here?', but unlike the stranger the audience should have an answer.

Why do I call this a street scene? In a compelling reading of Benjamin's scenario, Butler draws the reader's attention to the actions of 'the father who, unable to intervene' in the mother's assault upon her daughter, 'gets ready to call upon the greater paternal authority of the police to invade the familial territory and stop a potential murder. Indeed, this seems to be violence directed from the mother against the daughter at the heart of the bourgeoisie, one that depends upon police intervention to be thwarted.'<sup>19</sup> Through the open window, the threshold between public and private, the father calls for the forces of public order, the police, to re-establish order in the private, domestic realm. (Perhaps he attempts to demonstrate what is happening to a gathering street corner crowd.) Public authority is the ideological infrastructure that sustains domestic order.<sup>20</sup> In its own way, Brecht's street scene also reveals the mutual interdependence and interpenetration of public and private: it is important to how the street scene operates that it involves accounting for a traffic collision. The event being repeated by the demonstrator implicates the actions of at least one motorist in that uniquely modern, semi-private enclosure, the automobile. The motorist's actions within the private space of the car's interior are facilitated by public infrastructure – the street – and affect others moving within the public realm.<sup>21</sup> Whether they occur on literal

thoroughfares (as in Brecht) or in porous bourgeois apartments (as in Benjamin), street scenes involve acts of *publicizing*, of making public, of calling private citizens to public account; they reveal the public infrastructures sustaining seemingly private spaces and acts.

The revelation of ideological and material infrastructure in each scene is not merely spatial; both street scenes rely upon *gesture*, ‘that incomplete or fragmented form of action that has been deprived of its traditional supports’.<sup>22</sup> Generated by interruption, gesture, in the Brechtian and Benjaminian sense, is both citational and decontextualized. Its citational aspect is clearest in Brecht’s street scene: the demonstrator is *repeating* the event after the fact for assembled onlookers who did not necessarily witness the collision itself. Gesture’s decontextualized aspect, on the other hand, is clearest in Benjamin’s version: the newly arrived stranger does not see the build-up of the domestic dispute, only a tableau, semi-frozen on its way to violence, somewhere between image and action.<sup>23</sup> In Butler’s words, gesture is ‘extracted from the temporal flow of ordinary action, presented in relative isolation from what precedes and follows ... [It is] no longer propped up by a taken-for-granted world.’<sup>24</sup> However, as I have suggested above, the gestures of Brecht’s demonstrator, themselves characterized by their detachment from the ‘temporal flow of ordinary action’, invite collective scrutiny of both an interruption (the collision) and a preceding flow (of traffic). I have also suggested that if we take Benjamin’s scene as a hypothetical piece of theatre, then the audience of that scene has witnessed the development of the domestic dispute – as well as its interruption – in a way the stranger has not. Gesture might be decontextualized, but it is precisely its relation *to* that context that enables it to be the vehicle of critique, the expression not of an individual’s inner feeling but of a social attitude. In no longer being ‘propped up’, the gesture reveals what had been propping it up. In its lack of support, the gesture reveals the supports necessary to action. The gesture, the incomplete action removed from its supports, makes the familiar strange.

Although ‘making the familiar strange’ is by now an all-too-familiar understanding of the *Verfremdungseffekt*, what is sometimes lost in discussions of Brechtian strange-making is the persistent lure of the familiar. Butler avoids that trap in their analysis of the *Verfremdungseffekt* as disidentification: ‘I become self-aware of the lure of identification as well as its impossibility: I am, yet I am not that character, which means that even as I give in to the lure of identification, I know it to be false.’<sup>25</sup> We might link this important observation to Warner’s insistence (shared by feminist political theorists such as Bonnie Honig) on the non-identity of the public. No subject is identical to the public of which they are a part and through which they are addressed.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, public discourse would not exist without the recognition that the public being addressed is at once me (‘I am being addressed by this public discourse’) and *not* me (‘I am not the only one being addressed here, and the others being addressed are not the same as me’). This is why Warner suggests that the experiences of queer subjects are heightened, intensified, at times even ‘lethally aggravated’ versions of experiences inherent to public life.<sup>27</sup> For Warner, ‘a fundamental feature of the contemporary public sphere is this double movement of identification and alienation’.<sup>28</sup> In Warner’s analysis of the public and in Butler’s analysis of Brechtian spectatorship,

what emerges is an individual's desire to give oneself over to identification, coupled with a recognition of the impossibility, even undesirability, of non-differentiation.

This interplay of identification and alienation matters, firstly, because it alerts us to the difference upon which identification relies, and secondly, because of the political ramifications that arise when that difference is smoothed over, and identification flattened into identity. 'Identification', Butler argues, 'is at the same time disidentification, defined by noncoincidence and difference', because it 'passes through a difference that cannot be denied or overcome'.<sup>29</sup> In other words, one cannot identify *with* someone who *is* one. Identity,  $A=A$ , is not identification but tautology. A difference, a gap, must exist in order to be traversed by identification, just as touch requires a distance, however small, across which bodies might reach. When political movements attempt to close that space, to convert identification to identity, the resulting identity politics are those of racism and ethnic nationalism.<sup>30</sup> (These politics continue to grow in strength in France and Denmark, the national settings of the performances to which I will soon turn.) *Queer* poses a threat to these politics insofar as it gestures towards the non-identity that is true of *all* subjects, even if some feel it less acutely than others. These others are threatening, not (just) because they are non-identical to a monolithic race or nation – the comforting, constitutive outside, the deviation against which the norm defines itself – but (also) because 'they' remind the 'us' that *we* are not identical to this 'us', either. The stranger arrives in the apartment, and those already there become strangers to themselves. The question is not how the stranger arrived here, but how everyone did.

### Queer street scenes

At last, the well-trodden path has brought us to an intersection, to the possibility of a queer detour. Turning now to the artists Jisoo Yoo and Jupiter Child, I explore how Yoo's *Ma maison en l'air* (*My House in the Air*, 2019) and Child's contribution to the *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* project (2020) reveal the many infrastructures of our being and appearing in public, the conditions of our various arrivals. Yoo and Child create what we might call *queer street scenes*. Again, my point is not to label Yoo and Child's work as 'Brechtian' – Brecht has enough to his name – although their performances might draw out the latent queer potential of the street scene as form, making the familiar street scene newly strange. More importantly, I believe that Yoo and Child gesture towards a politics of performance in public space that accounts for differential experiences of strangeness and familiarity, interruption and flow, exception and rule, distance and proximity, disorientation and orientation. Their performance projects exemplify and interrogate the disorientation of the queer migrant body in Western European public space. By this I mean both (1) the disorientation experienced by migrants as they navigate the obstacles thrown up in their path, and (2) the disorientation occasioned by the appearance of the queer migrant body in a public space that is built upon the exclusion – legal, ideological, cultural, practical – of that very body.

*Scene One: Jisoo Yoo, artist-in-residence*

August 2019. Jisoo Yoo walks barefoot through the streets of Aurillac during the town's International Festival of Street Theatre. She carries with her, tethered to her body by eight long cords, a transparent, inflatable house that threatens at every turn to get caught in a tree or simply float away. Passers-by gawk at the stranger and her gossamer yet cumbersome cargo, shimmering in the sun like a soap bubble. If they stood beside her and looked up, they would see printed on the base of the unwieldy balloon a blown-up image of the receipt for Yoo's application for French permanent residency.

Yoo's *Ma maison en l'air* was prompted by delays in processing Yoo's residency application that stymied her search for housing. She explains, 'My existence and everything that I presented, represented less than that document. I did not exist for the system, without that piece of plastic.'<sup>31</sup> To secure private space to call her own, she must establish a public existence to the satisfaction of the state (and of the private landlords who perform immigration checks on the state's behalf). Yoo's very presence in the streets conjures the risk of homelessness posed by administrative delay. It is a dream of home that has brought her here, to these streets, and it is the lack of home that threatens to keep her here, on the streets. Over the course of the performance, the street turns the soles of Yoo's feet black with grime. Yoo's pale, flimsy shift dress provides little protection; her body seems vulnerable and exposed. In her report on the 2019 Aurillac festival, Marie-Edwige Hebrard remarks that Yoo's slow progress through the town evokes the tortuous – and torturous – processes of bureaucracy.<sup>32</sup> The ways of the French immigration system slow Yoo's way way down.

For the French state to accommodate her, Yoo must be accommodating. More than that: she must make herself abject, apologizing for her out-of-place-ness in hope of securing a place. Video documentation of Yoo performing the piece in Paris earlier that summer shows the artist bending double, then shuffling forward in an awkward crouch, and finally crawling on hands and knees to guide the balloon beneath the branches of a tree.<sup>33</sup> At one point she must break into a jog, throwing her weight forward, to continue on her path against the wind. Despite Yoo's visible, strenuous labour, the cords tying the inflatable house to her body often seem to control Yoo more than they reel in the balloon: the artist becomes a marionette, not yet human in the eyes of the state, her limbs' movements directed by the fantasy looming above her. Looking up, Yoo can only see this fantasy through the visual obstruction of her residency application receipt. She cannot look past it. The residency application is the base, the foundation of the house and the home for which it is a surrogate: the residency card is what would make this home possible; it is also what stands in home's way.

The house itself is transparent but unignorable in scale, and the performance plays on this tension between visibility and invisibility that Yoo felt so acutely as a migrant being processed (or not) in the system. In the absence of documentation, and in its presence in an implicitly racialized public space, Yoo's body is marked as not yet here. If, as Ahmed suggests, 'orientations are as much about feeling at home as they are



about finding our way', then Yoo is not yet oriented.<sup>34</sup> Ahmed describes migration 'as a process of disorientation and reorientation', but the French state's slowness – or refusal – to see Yoo, to recognize her as *here*, keeps her in a perpetual state of disorientation, the limbo between application's submission and its success.<sup>35</sup> Yoo is suspended between two (nation-) states, neither here nor there. She cannot seem to arrive; she cannot have arrived. She is the perpetual migrant, always still in the act and process of migrating.

Although the residency permit will, in the legal sense, permit Yoo residency, it will not necessarily permit her to have done with migrating. As Fatima El-Tayeb has shown, a migrant identity sticks even to those Europeans of colour born on the continent: rather than being called first- or second-generation citizens, they are labelled second- or third-generation migrants.<sup>36</sup> They are always from elsewhere, excluded from European-ness by the presumption of whiteness as a visual marker of the 'here', and of all other phenotypes as visual markers of 'elsewhere'. El-Tayeb demonstrates how 'Europeans possessing the (visual) markers of Otherness thus are eternal newcomers, forever suspended in time, forever "just arriving", defined by a static foreignness overriding both individual experience and' – because Europe has never been racially or ethnically homogeneous – 'historical facts'.<sup>37</sup> Or, in Ahmed's words, 'while "the other side of the world" is associated with "racial otherness", racial others become associated with the "other side of the world". They come to *embody distance*.'<sup>38</sup> The racial markers of not-*from*-here come to signify, simply, not-*here*.

Yet here Yoo is. During the Paris performance, pedestrians and even cyclists stop short or slow down for a better look. Their eyes widen; their mouths hang open. They see Yoo in a way the French state does not: she is undeniably, incontestably here. However, Yoo is hyper-visible not only because of the house floating above her, but also because hers is marked as a body out of place. As Ahmed explains, 'when bodies arrive that seem "out of place", it involves *disorientation*: people blink and then look again. The proximity of such bodies makes familiar spaces seem strange.'<sup>39</sup> (Given where this essay started, the language of making strange should be familiar.) Thus is Yoo disoriented and disorienting. During the Aurillac performance, some passers-by do walk past Yoo without much of a second glance: she is, after all, at an international festival of street theatre, where sights that might otherwise stop pedestrians in their tracks threaten to become bits of visual clutter scattered between the larger-scale performances. The uninterrupted trajectories of these passers-by do not detract from Yoo's work; on the contrary, they become part of it, reinforcing the impression that this living, breathing being has in some way ceased or not yet begun to exist. Yet Yoo and her burden also demand attention by taking up space, clearing large areas of streets and squares that are valuable real estate in the crowded Aurillac festival's competitive spatial economy.

It is the giant inflatable house that marks Yoo's as a body that belongs in this space, at this festival, as an artist. She is part of the official programme. In the terminology of French festivals, she is 'In' rather than 'Off'. But promotional materials for and media coverage of the festival also identify Yoo as the first Korean artist to be part of that 'In' crowd. Her sanctioned presence, her official 'In'-ness, is unprecedented and thus



the occasion for white self-congratulation. The white 'we' has welcomed the Other 'In'. 'We' are so generous, so cosmopolitan. Meanwhile, the state that acts in the name of this 'we' keeps Yoo perpetually at the border; she cannot quite arrive. Yoo sits, exhausted, in a public square. She needs a rest. She looks longingly up at the idea of home, bobbing in the breeze.

*Scene Two: Jupiter Child, public obstruction*

2020. Copenhagen, like so many cities, locks down. Metropolis, 'an art-based metropolitan laboratory' initiated by Københavns Internationale Teater in 2007 to commission and develop performance interventions in urban space, sends scouts into the altered cityscape for a project called *Wa(l)king Copenhagen*.<sup>40</sup> Each day for 100 days, a new artist sets out from their home and moves through the streets. Every hour on the hour, regular as a church bell, the ambulatory artist livestreams a 'sign of life' (via Facebook and Metropolis's website) to create a diary, both embodied and virtual, of a city in lockdown. Lockdowns and other restrictions on mass gatherings led to cancellation of major street theatre and outdoor arts festivals.<sup>41</sup> But, as Metropolis note on the *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* website, 'whilst the majority of arts and culture institutions were in lock-down due to the coronavirus, the public space was still open'.<sup>42</sup> The once-daily permitted walk – stretched here to twelve hours, from noon to midnight – becomes the time and space for artistic creation.

On 18 July 2020 (day seventy-nine of 100), Jupiter Child sets out from their home in the Nørrebro neighbourhood 'to locate queer spaces and occupy' them in 'a Black queer diary' of Copenhagen. In their video introduction they explain:

Self-preservation is an act of political warfare; therefore, I find it very important to connect with other Black people, other Black queer bodies, locate them and occupy space with them, or see how they occupy it. And that alone is an act of resistance, as I defy hyper-invisibility and isolation. Otherwise, our lives are hidden, and our experiences are censored. So going out, locating queer spaces and occupying them, is an act of self-preservation.<sup>43</sup>

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Child's contribution to *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* asks, for whom is this exile from public space queer (as in, outside the norm)? For whom is this displacement the exception, and for whom is it the rule? Whose way would be eased by a return to normalcy? The 'queerness' of space here is relational, produced via embodied encounters rather than inhering in any given locale. In a subsequent video, streamed eight hours into their walk, Child explains how they identify such queer spaces based on 'a feeling' they felt or based on their own experiences of and in those spaces.<sup>44</sup> Rather than mapping out a precise route in advance, Child allows themselves to be attracted, drawn, even 'dragged' to certain places or down certain paths. They describe Nørrebro station, one of their early stops, as 'resonating' to them with a 'queer energy', in part due to the presence of so many bodies who are from somewhere else. Crucially, this is not just a feature of the comparatively multicultural and multiethnic Nørrebro neighbourhood, home to a sizeable percentage of Copenhagen's immigrants, but of the station as a hub of movement: *everyone* here is

coming from somewhere other than where they are, and everyone here is headed somewhere else. The intersection of different trajectories is a subject of Child's addresses to the camera and the form of the performance walk itself.

Several of Child's livestreamed signs of life depict *collisions*, the coming together of bodies in space and the creation of space through such frictional encounters. At 14:00, two hours after the start of their walk, Child meets up with artist Arnold Foyen-Tetga to create a movement piece. The two remain physically connected through most of their ten-minute dance, even when they are jumping to the percussive drumming soundtrack that they have brought with them. The two bodies balance and counterbalance, sharing and exchanging their weight. When they do finally leap apart, they quickly come back together, spinning in opposing directions while retaining some form of physical contact. Their touch seems alternately supportive, protective, sensual, playful, combative, even parental. At one point Child, crouching down in a squat, picks up their dance partner and rocks him back and forth as he curls into a semi-fœtal position around them. The movement sequence evokes the messy interdependence of bodies as they encounter each other in – and so give form to – public space.

By the start of their 16:00 video Child has assembled a long strand of discarded, empty bottles that they tie to their ankle. As they continue their walk, the strand stretches several metres behind them, curving and undulating like a snake with every step. The bottles create a racket as they scrape and bounce against the asphalt; Child's journey now has the soundtrack of a recycling bin being repeatedly emptied. It is a politically loaded sound: later, Child observes that, for their two Black sons, the most visible Black men on the streets of Copenhagen are the ones retrieving recyclable bottles from rubbish bins. (Copenhagen's bottle collection system allows people to earn a small amount of money for every bottle deposited in a *flaskeautomat*.) Child laments the lack of other visible role models but also demands dignity and respect for the men who make Copenhagen green: 'I don't see them as *flaskesamlere* [bottle collectors]; I see them as environmental activists. ... These men are cleaning our streets. These men are recycling. And we should give them better names.'<sup>45</sup> The sight and sound of Child's encumbered walk attract plenty of attention, but the bottles still manage to trip up one or two less attentive passers-by. They hinder Child's progress as well, and at one point someone at a sidewalk café must help Child disentangle themselves from a street corner obstacle. Like Yoo's awkward negotiations of the streets of Aurillac and Paris, Child's trajectory through public space is hindered by what they drag behind them.

The third collision is not necessarily (or not entirely) by Child's design. At 18:00 Child lies on the ground amidst the bustle of Amagertorv, Copenhagen's most central public square and hub of its pedestrianized Strøget shopping district.<sup>46</sup> Visible behind Child is the Stork Fountain, an 1894 anniversary gift to Crown Prince Frederik and Crown Princess Louise that from the 1960s became a meeting point for youth protests.<sup>47</sup> Child's body appears twisted; they lie partly on their stomach and partly on their side, their arms splayed out, their face and head covered by a small pile of clothes and shoes. For most of the ten-minute video, passers-by give Child a wide

berth, not coming within a metre or two of their prone form. At one point, however, two young white people enter the camera's frame on a near collision course with the artist. They do not alter their trajectories. Rather, the young white woman shoves her male companion so that he trips over Child's ankle, wrenching it to the side. The young man and young woman laugh before meeting up with two other white people. The four of them climb into the passenger seats of two rickshaw bicycle taxis and are driven away. Some rickshaws position the passenger car behind the driver, but these seats are positioned at the front. From the perspective of these young, apparently able-bodied white people, they will glide, as if effortlessly, through the streets of Copenhagen, their views of the historic city centre unimpeded by the cyclist whose bodily work propels them forward. They will benefit from the cyclist's work without having to watch it. Pedestrians will part before them; the space will take their shape. It has many times already.

Watching this moment of footage, I find my attention drawn from Child's queer Black body, the (still) body (still) out of place, to these white bodies whose movement through public space is eased by the work of others, and for whom the obstacle of a Black body lying on the ground is the opportunity for a potentially injurious joke. Thinking about this moment along with Ahmed's queer phenomenology alerts us to which flows proceed uninterrupted, and which do not. Some ways are more unimpeded than others. Ahmed attunes us to the background, to what is behind us, which in turns gives 'an account of the conditions of emergence for something, which would not necessarily be available in how that thing presents itself to consciousness'.<sup>48</sup> What is behind us is the story of our arrival, but 'we only notice the arrival of those who appear "out of place". Those who are "in place" also must arrive; they must get "here", but their arrival is more easily forgotten, or is not even noticed'.<sup>49</sup> Behind Jupiter Child is a string of clattering bottles, noticeable to all and, based on the reactions of passers-by captured in the video documentation, an object of amusement to some and a nuisance to others. Those others, too, carry their arrivals behind them, but theirs are invisible, inaudible, unnoticed. Behind them is perhaps another rickshaw driver, propelling them forward, as the way seems to clear of its own accord.

As Mille Højerslev observes in her critical reflections on *Wa(l)king Copenhagen*, Child uses their contribution to the project to explore their ability to 'be human in a currently inhuman world'.<sup>50</sup> Crucially, in Højerslev's formulation it is the *world* that is inhuman rather than the queer bodies that have been historically (and presently) rendered inhuman; it is the world that is ill-fitted to, ill-equipped to accommodate, these queer bodies, and not the other way around.<sup>51</sup> The street has a direction; it might not be one-way, but it favours some trajectories over others. If, as Ahmed suggests, 'public spaces take shape through the habitual actions of bodies', so that 'spaces acquire the shape of the bodies that inhabit them', then the space of Copenhagen has not (yet?) taken Jupiter Child's shape.<sup>52</sup> It will not do so magically or automatically just by virtue of Child arriving. It will take hard work. Over time, through the repeated act of sitting, an office chair assumes the contours of its primary user, becoming at once more comfortable for that user and less comfortable, more

awkward, for any other body (and, lest we forget, it was probably designed for a six-foot-tall man in the first place). Usually, it is the queer migrant who is expected to alter their contours so that others might remain comfortable. Child set out to locate queer spaces and occupy them; they queer space by how they occupy it. Through their obstinate occupation of space that has not taken their shape, Child calls attention to what is behind all of us, to our differential experience of public ease.

### **Strangely familiar or, bodies and their arrivals**

In their performances, both Yoo and Child appear as bodies out of place. Recall that, for Ahmed, '[t]he moments when the body appears "out of place" are moments of political and personal trouble ... when bodies arrive that seem "out of place", it involves *disorientation*: people blink and then look again. The proximity of such bodies makes familiar spaces seem strange.<sup>53</sup> The body out of place is thus akin to the gesture, the incomplete action removed from its supports. The unsupported gesture and the body out of place fail – or decline – to reproduce the pre-existing situation, which is why Brecht and Benjamin (and Butler) are interested in the former and Ahmed in the latter. But Ahmed is also concerned with how the strange becomes familiar. Orientation, for Ahmed, 'is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, [and] disorientation occurs when that extension fails. Or we could say that some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others.'<sup>54</sup> This, again, is the double meaning of the disorientation of the queer migrant body: such a body has not yet arrived, it is not yet oriented, the space – the street – around it still seems strange; *and* the proximity of such a body conjures strangeness to those who otherwise feel at home.

But what *makes* Yoo and Child bodies out of place? How have the public spaces through which they move come to be structured around the exclusion of bodies such as theirs? What is the 'pre-existing situation' that they fail or decline to reproduce? As I have already alluded to, Yoo and Child live and work in countries where parties that promote xenophobic nationalism are gaining strength (and votes).<sup>55</sup> But the vagaries of national electoral politics are, on their own, insufficient to explain the structuring of French and Danish publics and their spaces. Parties such as France's National Rally and the Danish People's Party grow because the ground is fertile. The racist and anti-migrant ideas they espouse have not 'entered' the mainstream; they were already there, nourished, however paradoxically, by French universalism (in France) and Nordic exceptionalism (in Denmark).

French universalism – associated with the rallying cry of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – provided some of the ideological justification for French imperialism, long portrayed as a civilizing mission.<sup>56</sup> French values were universal, and universal values happened to be French. Today, French universalism's disavowal of difference manifests in numerous ways, including a refusal to recognize race as a category in demographic data collection and, most famously, the 2011 ban, still in effect, on wearing a face-covering veil in public space.<sup>57</sup> As these examples demonstrate, in universalism's war on the particular, some particulars are more particular than others. The universal comes to

be coded as white and secular (but culturally Christian), or rather the white and secular (but culturally Christian) come to be coded as universal. 'Other' bodies, bodies that depart from these universalized particulars, are seen precisely as bodies that depart, bodies that deviate.<sup>58</sup> Their mere appearance becomes a failure to assimilate.

Whereas French universalism whitewashes France's colonial and imperial past (and its present population), Nordic exceptionalism disavows the Nordic countries' participation in colonialism at all.<sup>59</sup> As Michael McEachrane explains, 'A widespread self-conception of the Nordic countries is that they were mere bystanders to European colonialism and slavery and are largely unscathed by racial worldviews.'<sup>60</sup> But this self-conception runs counter to historical fact: from the mid-seventeenth century, both Denmark and Sweden operated slave-trading forts on Africa's Gold Coast (now Ghana), and by 1733 Denmark had purchased the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John for sugar production. (Denmark sold these islands to the United States in 1917.) Nonetheless, Nordic exceptionalism draws on the region's progressive reputation to locate colonial history *and* present-day racism as always elsewhere. This externalization of racism creates a bind for migrants: if racism is always elsewhere – or at least originates from elsewhere – then the migrant who experiences racism and names it as such must have brought it with them. When Northern Europeans of colour identify racism, the accusation is only slightly different; they are supposed to have imported a critical framework from elsewhere, most likely the United States. Either way, the person who names the problem becomes the problem.<sup>61</sup> Artist and scholar Temi Odumosu describes Danish society as one 'that has weaponised its reputation for tolerance, insisting on seamless and quiet (no complaints) integration, while concurrently pointing to, even laughing at, the colour of your skin'.<sup>62</sup> Odumosu's commentary evokes the distinction, discussed above, between identification and identity, and shows how identity politics play out across the public spaces of Denmark. The demand for *seamlessness* suggests a disavowal of difference, a dissolving of self into homogeneity, and yet to integrate 'seamlessly', in the Danish context, is to leave undisturbed *both* Denmark's (mythical) ethnic homogeneity *and* its multicultural self-regard.

These are the grounds on which Yoo and Child perform and in which they appear as bodies out of place. I call their performances queer street scenes not because they are scenes made by queers in the street (though they are also that). If the street scene is, at least in part, about making the familiar strange, then queer street scenes are about differential experiences of strangeness and familiarity, and how such bodily orientations and disorientations come to be felt, and by whom. Indeed, the relationship between a queer street scene and 'the street scene' might be akin to the relationship Warner describes between the experiences of queer subjects and the nature of public life. Yoo and Child play on their status as seemingly unfamiliar strangers, proximate bodies embodying distance, making familiar spaces strange. Their performances reveal the infrastructures that make possible our shared presence in public space and the unequal access to and experience of those infrastructures. They reveal what is behind all of us, the histories of our arrival, and the differential nature of those histories, the impediments that make some arrivals more arduous

than others. The queer street scene plays on the relationship between sudden *moments* of arrival and *histories* of arrival, between decontextualized gestures and historicized trajectories. Recall that, in his analysis of Benjamin's domestic scene, Freddie Rokem argues that the interruptive arrival of the stranger 'uncovers the conditions of [the] dramatic situation'.<sup>63</sup> And Ahmed, in *Queer Phenomenology*, contends that what is behind us, the history of our arrival, gives 'an account of the conditions of emergence for something'.<sup>64</sup> What emerges in Yoo and Child's queer street scenes are the everyday conditions of being in (this) public and being in (these) publics. By arriving on the scene, they ask how the scene arrived.

A queer street scene is a scene of multiple arrivals, both marked and unmarked. Like the street scene, it asks, 'how did we arrive here?' The unsupported gesture, that bodily citation lifted from the flow of movement, calls attention to the conditions of its arrival precisely because those conditions are absent. For Brecht, Benjamin and Butler, the gesture is an incomplete action, interrupted, deprived of its supports. Yet, for Achille Mbembe, drawing on the work of Frantz Fanon, the gesture is that which makes possible a relation of care. Humanity's 'common content', Mbembe writes, 'is its vulnerability', and a relation of care emerges from 'a reciprocal recognition of this vulnerability ... Humanity in effect arises only when a gesture – and thus the relation of care – is possible; when one allows oneself to be affected by the faces of others; when a gesture is related to speech, to a silence-breaking language'.<sup>65</sup> A gesture, then, is a recognition that one will always be affected by others and an invitation to be so affected. This gesture is incomplete because of the fundamental relationality of the body and life, and because it awaits reciprocation from the others who might sustain and be sustained by it.<sup>66</sup> Here the gesture, *as yet* unsupported, is that which might make possible a system of mutual support, grounded not in identification (even if the temptation is there) but in solidarity that leaves room for difference. A queer street scene is made of, and occasions, such gestures, and it invites us to experience the *street* as the scene that might support them.

Where does this leave the politics of performance in public space? In *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy*, Bonnie Honig moves to 'de-exceptionalize the exception', shifting our attention from the decisive moment of the suspension of law to the workings of the exception in ordinary democratic politics – in short, from *rupture* to *orientation*.<sup>67</sup> Honig's goal is to locate opportunities for everyday democratic action for which dominant theories of the exception – notably those of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben – leave no space. I suggest that street performance, and performance in public space more broadly, would benefit from a similar move. Making the familiar strange is not just the classic formulation of epic theatre; it is also the predominant understanding of how street performance works. Street performance, it is suggested, interrupts the flow of everyday life, casting familiar environments in a new light. By asking, 'for whom is this strange, for whom familiar?' Yoo and Child begin to queer the street scene. They re-orient the politics of performance in public space away from the *rupture* of interruption – inherited from the Latin root *rumpere*, to break – and toward the *inter-*, the between – in other words, toward this very question of orientation. Recent 'exceptions', from the security

state to pandemic-era lockdowns, have shown the insufficiency of the rupture as a model for the politics of performance in public space.<sup>68</sup> Yoo and Child gesture towards an alternative way. This is *not* to say that such performance must simply aim to disorient its audiences, or to celebrate disorientation itself as inherently radical. As Ahmed insists, '[i]t is not that disorientation is always radical ... The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do.'<sup>69</sup> Through their performances, Yoo and Child invite passers-by to alter their trajectories, to register their trajectories *as* trajectories, to experience their own arrivals *as* arrivals, and, perhaps, to join them in re-shaping public space so that other bodies might more comfortably collide there – not without friction, but without violence.

### Coda: a thought in passing

Traversing this essay are many passers-by. They gather around Brecht's demonstrator, arrive at Benjamin's apartment (or pass beneath its open window), gawk at or ignore Jisoo Yoo and her balloon, and get caught in Jupiter Child's string of bottles. Some alter their trajectories; others do not. Some are witnesses; all are strangers. In writing about street theatre and performance in public space, I have found myself turning and returning to this figure of the passer-by, or perhaps the passer-by keeps turning up. For one, the passer-by can flit between *audience* and *public* in a way that speaks to the partial, fragmentary conditions of reception for much performance in public space.<sup>70</sup> How many stay for 'the whole thing'? What would 'the whole thing' even be for a touring performance such as Yoo's, or for a performance such as Child's that consists of both an analogue flow (the twelve-hour walk) and its digital interruptions (the livestreamed signs of life)?<sup>71</sup> The spectator of performance in public space is often distracted, often caught unawares, often on their way somewhere else.

On its way somewhere else, though, the figure of the passer-by carries with it helpful baggage. In his epilogue to *Necropolitics*, Mbembe proposes an 'ethics of the passerby'. 'Becoming-human-in-the-world', Mbembe argues, 'is a question neither of birth nor of origin or race. It is a matter of journeying, of movement, and of transfiguration.'<sup>72</sup> Mbembe's aim is not to romanticize rootlessness; rather, he asks us to recognize 'the fugitive character of life', the destiny of *all* humans to pass from one place or state to another, and the responsibilities that emerge from such a condition.<sup>73</sup> With each place through which they pass, passers-by develop a '*twofold relation of solidarity and detachment*'. This experience of presence and distance, of solidarity and detachment, but never of indifference' is what Mbembe names 'the ethics of the passerby'.<sup>74</sup> In the street we encounter strangers, but familiar faces, too; sure enough, Mbembe's twofold relation of solidarity and detachment evokes for me, not just the interplay of identification and alienation so central to Warner's theory of the public and Butler's analysis of Brecht, but also Lefebvre's description of the street itself as an incision-suture. (We have wandered back to where we started.) Perhaps queer street scenes are scenes that foster this twofold relation, scenes where passers-by meet, bringing their arrivals with them. For, as Jupiter Child observes, 'all human beings ... we all are born with a cargo, and we come to bring that cargo'.<sup>75</sup> No one passes by empty-handed.



## NOTES

- 1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003 [1970]), p. 37. My neighbour's cat offers a helpful example. She must cross the street with care so as not to get hit by a car on her way to poop on my husband's dahlias. But the same street that divides my flat from my neighbour's links that neighbour to me *as* my neighbour and binds my home to his as part of the cat's territory, her stomping ground and *al fresco* litterbox.
- 2 For a sense of one such controversy in Oxford, UK, see George Monbiot, 'Ignore the Culture Warriors – Low Traffic Neighbourhoods Don't Close Streets, They Liberate Them', *Guardian*, 3 August 2022, at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/03/low-traffic-neighbourhoods-streets-drivers-violence-oxford>.
- 3 For scholarly examples, see the introduction to Susan Haedicke, *Contemporary Street Arts in Europe: Aesthetics and Politics* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Sue Harris, 'Dancing in the Streets: The Aurillac Festival of Street Theatre', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14, 2 (2004), pp. 57–71. Haedicke emphasizes street theatre's fugitive invasion of public space, whilst Harris emphasizes (among other factors) street theatre's spontaneity. Both discuss the persistent influence of the Events of May 1968 on contemporary street theatre practice. For a critique of the deployment of May '1968 in street theatre discourse, see David Calder, '2CV Théâtre: Transgression, Nostalgia, and the Negative Space of French Street Theatre', *Theatre Journal*, 69, 1 (2017), pp. 1–20.
- 4 My point here is not to conflate the policies of the security state and the public health measures implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, though some (including street theatre makers, festival organizers, and philosopher Giorgio Agamben) have made that mistake. See David Calder, 'Publics and their Health: La Grande Manifestive, Aurillac, 2021', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 32, 3–4 (2022), pp. 276–80; and Adam Kotsko, 'What Happened to Giorgio Agamben?', *Slate*, 20 February 2022, at <https://slate.com/human-interest/2022/02/giorgio-agamben-covid-holocaust-comparison-right-wing-protest.html>.
- 5 Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), p. 24.
- 6 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 49–50, 81–2.
- 7 The shifting legal fiction of public and private still has tangible effects, and we can still experience public and private *as* spatial zones. But this experience is grounded in the encounter of body and space rather than in any inherent quality of the space itself. In Warner's words, 'The terms [public and private] are complex enough and shifting enough to allow for profound change; yet in practice they often do not seem theoretical at all. They seem to be preconceptual, almost instinctual, rooted in the orientations of the body and common speech ... Like those of gender, the orientations of public and private are rooted in what anthropologists call habitus: the conventions by which we experience, as though naturally, our own bodies and movement in the space of the world.' Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, p. 23.
- 8 'Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without essence. "Queer" demarcates not a positivity but positionality vis-à-vis the normative.' David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 13. More recently, Lee Edelman reminds us that '*queer* can refer to anything that thwarts, contradicts, or departs from a norm. ... By rejecting the positivity of *queerness*, or the prospect of owning it as an identity', Edelman claims to 'keep faith with its lexical history and its various social applications'. Lee Edelman, *Bad Education: Why Queer Theory Teaches Us Nothing* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), p. xv.
- 9 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 161.
- 10 Ahmed explains that citation is one way 'a history is kept alive – citation as a reference system. You are asked to follow the well-trodden paths of citation, to cite properly as to cite those deemed to have already the most influence. The more a path is used, the more a path is used. The more he is cited, the more he is

- cited.' Sara Ahmed, *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), p. 167.
- 11 Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 27.
  - 12 I thank the anonymous peer reviewers, the editors of *Theatre Research International*, Maggie Gale and Daniel Nield for helping me think through this re-structure.
  - 13 Even so, a reader wishing to follow an alternative route could conceivably read the remaining sections in this order: 'Queer street scenes', 'Street scenes', 'Strangely familiar', 'Coda'.
  - 14 Bertolt Brecht, 'The Street Scene', in Marc Silberman, Steve Giles and Tom Kuhn, eds., *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. John Willett (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 203–12, here p. 204.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
  - 16 Walter Benjamin, 'What is Epic Theatre? [Second Version]', in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: NLB, 1973 [1939]), pp. 15–22. I refer here and throughout to the second version of Benjamin's essay, from 1939. In the first version (from 1931, unpublished in Benjamin's lifetime), the mother is poised to hurl a pillow rather than a bronze bust. From 1931 to 1939, the threat of physical injury in this scene intensified. For more on the different versions of this scene in Benjamin's writings, see Freddie Rokem, "'Suddenly a Stranger Appears': Walter Benjamin's Readings of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre', *Nordic Theatre Studies*, 31, 1 (2019), pp. 8–21.
  - 17 Freddie Rokem, "'Suddenly a Stranger Comes into the Room': Interruptions in Brecht, Benjamin, and Kafka', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 36, 1 (2016), pp. 21–6, here p. 23.
  - 18 My reading here differs from that of Sruti Bala. Strictly speaking, Bala is correct that '[t]he scene, as Benjamin describes it, does not necessarily occur on a theater stage but is an imagined domestic scene. ... It becomes theatrical because of the appearance of a stranger, who, by virtue of assuming the position of a spectator, makes of the occurrence "a scene" and this shifts it from the quotidian realm to the register of the theatrical.' Sruti Bala, 'Interruption and Interpellation: Leaving the Theater in Search of the Theater', in Shirin Rai, Milija Gluhovic, Silvija Jestrovic and Michael Saward, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Politics and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 455–70, here p. 456. My reading – perhaps my willful misreading – emerges from the space opened up by Bala's 'not necessarily'.
  - 19 Judith Butler, 'Theatrical Machines', *differences*, 26, 3 (2015), pp. 23–42, here p. 40.
  - 20 Rokem reminds us that, in the original German, the father signals to *ein Schutzmann*, from the German *Schutz*: 'protection'. Rendered temporarily impotent, paternal authority calls out for protection. See Rokem, "'Suddenly A Stranger Appears'", p. 12.
  - 21 As for the police, they occupy the same 'offstage' space in Brecht's scene as they do in Benjamin's: Brecht does not mention them at first, but if the witness feels able to demonstrate what happened to a street corner crowd, then one can imagine the police already having arrived (or been called). That, or another witness is in the process of flagging down the police, like the father in Benjamin's scene signalled to them through the window, freeing up Brecht's witness to do a bit of demonstrating. Or perhaps the police are *in* the street corner crowd, and the witness is giving a statement. Later in Brecht's essay, the forces of law and order do make an 'onstage' appearance: Brecht imagines his witness testifying in court. He also notes a practice he attributes to French police, that of 'making the chief figures in any criminal case re-enact certain crucial situations before a police audience'. Bertolt Brecht, 'The Street Scene', in John Willett, ed., *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964 [1938]), pp. 121–9, here p. 127.
  - 22 Butler, 'Theatrical Machines', p. 39.
  - 23 For an important analysis of gesture as situated between image and act, with profound implications for the politics of participation in art and performance, see Sruti Bala, *The Gestures of Participatory Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), especially pp. 15–17 and p. 139.
  - 24 Judith Butler, 'When Gesture Becomes Event', in Anna Street, Julien Alliot and Magnolia Pauker, eds., *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 171–91, here p. 183.
  - 25 Butler, 'Theatrical Machines', p. 27.

- 26 In Warner's words, 'our partial nonidentity with the object of address in public speech seems to be part of what it means to regard something as public speech'. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, p. 78.
- 27 Ibid., p. 182.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Judith Butler, 'Solidarity/Susceptibility', *Social Text*, 36, 4 (2018), pp. 1–20, here p. 5. Butler is building upon the work of Stuart Hall and José Esteban Muñoz.
- 30 For Butler, 'the most prevalent and toxic forms of identity politics during our time are white supremacy and white nationalism. So for those who blame the current political situation on a left that is supposedly too concerned with identity politics, let us remember that white identity politics is the most virulent form around, and that to be opposed to racism, to misogyny, to homophobia, is to appeal not to a common identity but to an alliance that knows, and opposes, these life-destroying forms of power.' Ibid.
- 31 Quoted in Marie-Edwige Hebrard, 'Un havre fragile comme une bulle', *La Montagne*, 24 August 2019, p. 2. Translations from French are mine unless otherwise specified.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Performance documentation can be found at Jisoo Yoo, 'Ma maison en l'air', *JisooYoo*, at <https://www.jisooyoo.com/ma-maison-en-lair.html>.
- 34 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 9.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 180 n4.
- 37 Ibid., p. xxv.
- 38 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 121.
- 39 Ibid., p. 135.
- 40 Metropolis, 'Metropolis – Performance and Art in Urban Space', *Metropolis*, at <https://www.metropolis.dk/en/about-metropolis/>.
- 41 As just two of the larger-scale examples, the Aurillac International Festival of Street Theatre (France) and the outdoor Oerol Festival (Netherlands) were cancelled in 2020 and 2021.
- 42 Metropolis, 'Wa(l)king Copenhagen', *Metropolis*, at <https://www.metropolis.dk/en/walking-copenhagen/>. Nonetheless, as the examples in Note 41 demonstrate, Covid-19 restrictions also 'shuttered' outdoor festivals.
- 43 Jupiter Child, 'Dokumentation 18 juli', *Metropolis*, 18 July 2020, at <https://www.metropolis.dk/julia-machindano/>. In the *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* videos, Child speaks mostly in English, occasionally slipping into Danish. In an interview, Child observes, 'In order to tell my story, I have to speak Makonde, Portuguese, English, and Danish. ... Being from Mozambique, my national language is Portuguese. However, the language of my ancestors is Makonde. I understand quite a lot of it and know how to say a few words, but I cannot have a fluent conversation in Makonde. My tongue has been colonized.' Marronage, "'This Silence is Like an Invisible Wall that Needs to be Shattered and Broken": An Interview with Jupiter Child', *Periskop*, 25 (2021), pp. 79–87, here p. 80. Child capitalizes Black in their printed interviews, so I have followed that example throughout this essay.
- 44 Jupiter Child, '20.00 h – 1', *Metropolis*, 18 July 2020, at <https://www.metropolis.dk/en/julia-machindano>.
- 45 Ibid. Bottle collection has long been a means of survival for Copenhagen's poorest. See Laura Hanson and Lea Kryger Olsen, 'Bottle Collectors: An "Invisible Minority" in Kongens Have?', *Humanity in Action Danmark*, July 2007, at [https://humanityinaction.org/knowledge\\_detail/bottle-collectors-an-invisible-minority-in-kongens-have/](https://humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/bottle-collectors-an-invisible-minority-in-kongens-have/).
- 46 By day seventy-nine of the *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* project, the city's Covid restrictions had eased somewhat.
- 47 The fountain's name, 'Storkespringvandet', even became the title of a 1966 protest song by Danish folk singer Cæsar (also known as Bjarne Bøgesø Rasmussen).
- 48 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 38.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 9–10.

- 50 Mille Højerslev, 'Wa(l)king Copenhagen 10–19 juli – refleksioner og film', *Metropolis*, at <https://www.metropolis.dk/en/walking-copenhagen-10-19-july/>.
- 51 Lee Edelman might suggest that *queer* is precisely what cannot *be* accommodated, that queer names whatever is relegated to the outside of being and thus outside the category of the human. However, queer's power might lie in its vibration between the negative and the relational and between the non-identitarian and the identitarian. If queer (imperfectly, partially) names the outside of order, it also (imperfectly, loosely) names those that the prevailing order regularly bends out of shape. See Edelman, *Bad Education*, especially pp. xv–xvi and pp. 19–20.
- 52 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 129.
- 53 Ibid., p. 135.
- 54 Ibid., p. 11.
- 55 In France, Marine Le Pen was placed second in the last two presidential elections, outperforming all left-of-centre candidates and improving her run-off vote share from 33.90% in 2017 to 41.45% in 2022. Her party, the National Rally (formerly National Front) gained eighty-one seats in the 2022 legislative elections. In Denmark, support for the Danish People's Party (DPP) has declined since its peak in 2015, when it won thirty-seven of 179 parliamentary seats. But the DPP's anti-immigrant platform has not declined with the party, finding support among larger parties on both left and right. In 2018, Denmark's right-wing coalition government enacted the most anti-immigrant legislation in the country's history. Mette Frederiksen, then leader of the opposition Social Democrats, backed much of that legislation and called for a cap on 'non-western' immigrants. See Richard Orange, 'Mette Frederiksen: The Anti-Immigration Left Leader Set to Win Power in Denmark', *Observer*, 11 May 2019, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/11/denmark-election-matte-frederiksen-leftwing-immigration>. Since taking power, Frederiksen has implemented her own anti-immigration policies and become an inspiration to the European right. See Jean-Baptiste Chastand, Alexandre Pedro and Anne-Françoise Hivert, 'Immigration: The "Danish Way" Appeals to the European Right', *Le Monde*, 28 May 2023, at [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/28/immigration-the-danish-way-appeals-to-the-european-right\\_6028236\\_4.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/28/immigration-the-danish-way-appeals-to-the-european-right_6028236_4.html).
- 56 One of the best discussions of the paradoxes of French universalism remains Naomi Schor, 'The Crisis of French Universalism', *Yale French Studies*, 100 (2001), pp. 43–64. For an excellent analysis of how immigrant-rights groups in Paris navigate French universalism through theatre, see Emine Fişek, *Aesthetic Citizenship: Immigration and Theater in Twenty-First-Century Paris* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017).
- 57 For a discussion of the 2011 ban, see Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, pp. 49–50 and pp. 81–2. For a discussion of the earlier 2004 ban on 'ostentatious' religious symbols in French schools and its relation to French colonialism, see Joan Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- 58 As Ahmed suggests, 'Perhaps some have "ways of life" because others have lives: some have to find voices because others are given voices; some have to assert their particulars because others have their particulars given a general expression.' Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 160.
- 59 Mai Palmberg appears to have coined the term 'Nordic exceptionalism', which now features in much of the scholarship on race and racism in Northern Europe. See Mai Palmberg, 'The Nordic Colonial Mind' in Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori, Sari Irni and Diana Mulinari, eds., *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 35–50.
- 60 Michael McEachrane, 'Introduction', in Michael McEachrane, ed., *Afro-Nordic Landscapes: Equality and Race in Northern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–13, here p. 1.
- 61 Sara Ahmed has diagnosed a similar dynamic in institutional contexts. A university's anti-racism policy can become a way of rejecting a scholar's claims of racism: the scholar must be mistaken, because she works at an anti-racist institution. See Sara Ahmed, 'The Nonperformativity of Antiracism', *Meridians*, 19, S1 (2020), pp. 196–218.

- 62 Temi Odumosu, 'What Lies Unspoken: A Remedy for Colonial Silence(s) in Denmark', *Third Text*, 33, 4–5 (2019), pp. 615–29, here p. 618.
- 63 Rokem, "Suddenly a Stranger Comes into the Room", p. 23.
- 64 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 38.
- 65 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), pp. 175–6.
- 66 As Butler writes, 'we cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body, and what its relation to that support – or lack of support – might be. In this way, the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living.' Butler, 'When Gesture Becomes Event', p. 179.
- 67 Bonnie Honig, *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. xv.
- 68 See David Calder, 'Street Theatre in a State of Exception: Performing in Public After Bataclan', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 30, 3 (2020), pp. 308–25.
- 69 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 158.
- 70 Christopher Balme helpfully distinguishes between a theatre audience, the discrete group of spectators assembled for a specific theatrical event, and a theatre public, a more diffuse group (similar to Warner's public) created in the act of its hailing by theatre institutions. Theatre institutions can address their publics outside the confines of an event; as just one example, through advertisement they might attempt to convert publics into audiences for whatever the next event might be. See Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 71 This is before we even account for the fact that Child's is one walk among 100 that together make up the *Wa(l)king Copenhagen* project.
- 72 Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 187.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid., p. 188, my emphases.
- 75 Jupiter Child, '20.00 h – 1'.

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