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fuller geographies and the care-ful co-production of transgressive pedagogies, or ‘Who Cares?’

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Prelude: setting the scene

This chapter offers a script for a piece of forum theatre – having initially set out to write a more standard text about ‘fuller geographies’ as an emerging practice of transgressive pedagogies. Fuller geographies is a concept that has been called into action and writing recently, not to reinvent but rather connect across long-standing debates around the discipline’s relevance, thinking about public, participatory and activist geographies, and the newly-arisen ‘co-production’ paradigm (e.g. Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010; Cahill, 2014; Fuller & Askins, 2010; Noxolo & Featherstone, 2014; Staeheli & Mitchell, 2005; Wills, 2014). We have been thinking about fuller geographies as an approach that moves beyond defending the public university against neoliberalism, and incorporating *scholé* as a revolutionary project for developing our ‘full humanity’ beyond a capitalist political-economy (Mason & Purcell, 2014; Purcell, 2012). Especially, we wished to write about how theory and practice can be compellingly interlinked - how theory can be (made to be) active, while practice is continually rethought as it is enacted – through an account of engaged more-than pedagogy.

Where fuller geographies extends the aforementioned bodies of work, for us, is in its mobilisation of a feminist ethic of care in (radical) pedagogic practice, as well as in our everyday conducts (Held, 2006). There are close connections here with mrs. kinpaisby’s (2008) notion of the ‘communiversity’, with *reciprocity* as key to transforming power relations, confronting hierarchies and fostering understanding across diversity, paying care-ful attention to the role of space and place in their fuller sense as both constructed and material. By ‘reciprocity’, we mean here a broader interdependency: not that care is equally given and received (precisely because of unequal positions and power relations), rather recognising the need for and ontology of care as reciprocal in wider social relations (Tronto, 2013). We need and offer care at some point in our lives, not necessarily receiving from and giving to those who give

to and receive from us, but depositing and withdrawing from a wider bank of support enacted across social relations at a range of scales. Further, then, when we talk about caring-for and caring-with others as differing practices, we must also consider the ways in which caring about/for the self (ourselves) affects others across both immediate, more intimate relationships and broader social relations.

While such an ethic of care is increasingly gaining purchase across the social sciences, and purportedly underpins progressive social movements and activist practices, it is relatively unexplored as an aspect of transgressive pedagogy. So we set out to discuss care for the *self-among-others*, unpack understandings of 'empathy', and consider the relational space of interdependence, as constituents of lifelong pedagogical projects. We have a sense that care-ful, fuller geographies are *at the heart of* transgressive pedagogies which can be developed across academia, social movements and wider publics. We have also been pondering what such engagement with a feminist ethic of care might mean for broader academic and social movement anarchism.

We decided to focus on our experiences with academic seminar blockades (ASBs) as transgressive pedagogy, drawing particularly on an ASB held together with social movements at Faslane nuclear weapons base (Scotland) in 2012 (Mason & Askins, 2012). Kenrick and Vinthagen (2008: 164) developed the strategy of ASBs, calling for academics to work more immediately alongside oppositional struggles, arguing that "academics can and should be central to this process of envisioning and realising the kind of society we want". In an ASB, relevant research papers, grounded in empirical and epistemological rationales, are presented in publically-staged seminars that simultaneously constitute direct action (Mason, 2013). They are critically about *learning with* others: learning about the issues at hand, learning how we may practice democracy, learning how we can support one another to challenge hegemony and the state. We intended to write this chapter about ASBs as an example of the practice of a fuller geographies approach to engagements and pedagogies beyond the formal university, to emphasise the destabilising of socio-spatial norms and enacting of democratic politics. We wanted to prompt reflection on practices of care in activist and academic spheres, and where they meet.

We also wanted to adopt a strategy of transgressive pedagogy in our writing: to narrate the ASB in ways that destabilise normative structures of academic writing; to sidestep the painful irony of writing alternative praxis in non-transgressive ways, as

part of our own fuller praxis. We've both been interested in forum theatre for some time, and were toying with the idea of writing a piece in that/this vein. Forum theatre is perhaps the most common performative expression of Theatre of the Oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal (1992; 2008) from an epistemological frame that emphasises questioning, rather than giving answers. As pedagogy, it centres on dialogue and the co-production of knowledge by actors and spectators: specifically, it aims to challenge the boundary between acting and watching, and enable the advent of the 'spect-actor', the spectator who takes part in the action. Always in sympathy with the marginalised, forum theatre is about transgression and social transformation: the central theme of performance is an act of oppression and the attempt to confront and overthrow the oppressor. Forum theatre is hopeful, driven by belief in humanity's ability to change, and what matters in performances is often not so much what is said, but demonstrating that it can be said in public as a challenge to hegemony.

Then we heard about (Johnston, 2014) and read (Johnston & Bajrange, 2014) recent work on forum theatre foregrounding the possibilities of public theatrical space to open up public engagement with issues of social justice in context and more immediately - forum theatre as a socio-spatial tactic. This specifically geographical aspect/potential resonates with ASBs, with their intent to positively re-make public space by reflecting on the world *by acting in it*, by reclaiming a commons of democratic debate and accountability - ASBs as socio-spatial tactic. We started to explore further parallels that we see between forum theatre and ASBs: both aim to transgress boundaries of all kinds (academic/activist, actor/spectator, educator/learner, classroom/theatre/public space); both try to precipitate social transformation and collective political engagement; both can build situated solidarities or relational militant particularisms (Featherstone, 2005); while both must recognise difference and work with disagreement as part of a radical (agonistic) politics in place (Mason & Askins, 2012).

Inexperienced as we are in forum theatre and scriptwriting, we decided to present this *chapter as play*, in the fuller sense of, and with a fuller geographies approach to, play: in the spirit of creativity and exploration that we read in Boal and others (e.g. Freire, 1993), wishing to destabilise our own positions, and *hope* that our efforts offer possibilities to open out debate for you – the *reader as spect-actor*. Key is our intention for main arguments to come through the characters: while the characters herein are not depictions of real people, the setting is real and the action is based on events we have witnessed and/or actively participated in. We offer a bibliography

beyond the citations in this prelude, with work that has informed and inspired us in writing the play but which we do not (cannot) directly reference in the script. Moreover, we do not explain points of theory or how we interpret various interactions in the ASB: you aren't being told about 'reciprocal care', the relational spaces of activism or transgressive pedagogies directly - rather we are posing questions for you to work through for yourselves and with others.

We do offer a brief context here, however. In forum theatre, actors initially perform a scripted play, such as that we present below, in three scenes. At the play's heart must be an oppression/obstacle that is recognisable to the audience, often based on shared or local issues, and which the main protagonists in the play are unable to overcome. Scene 1 is 'exposition', in which the main conflict and characters are revealed; scene 2 is 'complication', where the plot is developed; scene 3 is 'resolution' in which the conflict comes to a conclusion whereby (in the scripted version) the protagonist remains oppressed/does not resist injustice. When the play has been performed, members of the audience can take to the stage and suggest alternative options for how the protagonist could have acted to challenge injustice. The actors explore the results of these choices with the audience/spect-actors, creating a theatrical debate, in which experiences and ideas are rehearsed and shared, generating potential solidarity and a sense of empowerment. In subsequent performances, any audience member may intervene and stop the play at any point, become a spect-actor and take the part of one of the oppressed. A 'Joker' adopts a neutral stance to facilitate participation, and space is made for the audience to reflect collectively on the success or otherwise of each intervention. If/when the interventions of spect-actors succeed in resisting the oppression, the play can continue with a fresh wave of spect-actors taking the parts of oppressors and trying to reinstate oppression. The political pedagogy is to learn about all the ways injustice might be resisted, overthrown, reinstated, resisted and overthrown again. The ultimate aim of forum theatre is to empower the audience to take political action beyond 'the theatre':

"What would also be wonderful would be a theatre show where we, the artists, would present our world-view in the first act and where in the second act, they, the audience could create a new world. Let them create it first in the theatre, in fiction, so as to be better prepared to create outside afterwards, for real." (Boal, 1992: 29)

Our hope is that you will at least relate intersubjectively with the text, and further that this writing can be taken off the page and 'staged'. For academic educators, it could be an action/activity for a small group of students to prepare and perform to their wider peer group; and/or for students to take to a wider student body; and/or to wider local communities. For academics/activists it may be useful to work through with communities in research, recognising none of these as fixed or stable categories. We intend to take this piece to activist groups we're engaged with, and involve other academics, to think through how 'we' (whichever 'we' we claim) relate to a range of people and places in social movement actions, raising questions about how we *care for and with* each other.

Although the ASB scenario can be readily adapted to a range of direct actions, e.g. teach-ins and occupations, we recognise that it may be less relevant to other pedagogic contexts and/or local issues, in which case it is suggested as a catalyst for writing your own piece – together with students and/or local communities as part of the learning process perhaps. We also recognise that this kind of pedagogic approach and activity presents a range of challenges to educators and students, one of which is sensitively destabilising the power inequalities across differentially experienced positions. As mentioned above, this is central to the forum theatre ethos, and we link here Torre et al.'s (2008) concept of the 'contact zone', which draws on contact theory to question the contexts, conditions and consequences of intergroup contact, and the processes that may bring about change. Their interest is in the contact zone as a research method as well as a theory, attempting to create:

“a politically and intellectually charged space where very differently positioned [people] are able to experience and analyse power inequities, together.... we work on and through power inequities, and across and through differences.” (Torre et al. 2008: 24)

This approach, situated within participatory action research (PAR), involves working collaboratively with those who are conventionally situated as research subjects (also Askins & Pain, 2011), and is equally valuable, we believe, in both forum theatre and ASB contexts. Certainly, a care ethics is vital when challenging social positions and relations, as much in forum theatre as in 'staging' ASBs. As such, in acting out this script (or another) we advocate a fuller geographies sense of the need to be open and aware of others' feelings and experiences, in relation to our own.

Who Cares?

Actors, spectators and spect-actors:

Banji, an activist helping facilitate an academic seminar blockade (ASB). Banji is the emerging voice of a feminist ethic of care in the conception and practice of radical pedagogy and creative resistance.

Alex, a local woman who can't get her kids to school because police have closed the road, blaming the blockade. Alex is the voice of what politicians construct as 'real people' or 'hard-working people', citizens who are individualised, depoliticised and cast as consumers by neoliberal government, and misinformed by mass media.

1485, a woman police sergeant, drafted in for the day, not local: seemingly professional, distant, stoic. 1485 gives voice to the institutionalisation of authority and coercion by the state, deploying a homogenising legalistic notion of justice as democratic requisite. She is also a human being, affective, moral and reasoning.

ASB participants (from 3 upwards, depending on available space and people), sitting and linking arms and legs. While participants can easily choose to unlink themselves, Police must break people's grip on their own wrists to end the blockade (see for instance <http://occupywallst.org/media/pdf/practicalprotest.pdf>)

Mo, one of the ASB participants, an independent researcher and para-academic (c.f. Wardrop & Withers, 2014) and nominated spokesperson for the affinity group. Mo voices collective resistance and solidarity, which tends to deafen her to the particular needs of different situations, cultures, groups and the individuals within them, including her own.

Other participants (members of the audience): academics, peace campers, local people, the media, Police etc who are watching the blockade from the sidelines.

Scene 1: Making space for change?

Setting: *Outside the main gate of Faslane Naval Base, home of the UK's nuclear submarine fleet during a day of protest against the Trident missile system and its replacement. Protesters have woven flowers and ribbons into the chain-link fence of the base, illustrating and spelling out messages of non-violence. It is a cold and dry October day but rain clouds are gathering. Participants in an academic seminar blockade (ASB) sit in the road in front of the gate in a circle, arms and legs linked, presenting and discussing papers. They are preventing traffic from getting in and out of the base, including both military and civilian personnel arriving for work. The*

tailback of cars has brought traffic on the road past the base to a standstill. Drivers are impatient, hooting horns and shouting out of their windows: 'Move on!' and less polite directions. Protesters sing and chant in response: 'No Trident! No Replacement! No Trident...' Umbrella under arm, Alex bustles up to Banji, who is standing near the ASB and talking to police sergeant 1485.

Alex: (pointing at Banji with her umbrella) Do you live here?

Banji: Er, no, why?

Alex: Are you even from Scotland?

Banji: (distractedly) No. (to 1485) How long before your release team get here, do you know?

1485: I'm afraid not, Miss.

Banji: Odd isn't it, calling them a release team: Police releasing people so you can arrest them?

Alex: Are you Scottish?

1485: Are you in charge, Miss?

Banji: I'm not Miss. Banji, if you like.

1485: (wryly) Miss.

Alex: I said, are you Scottish?

Banji: No, I live in Newcastle. I'm from the US. Why?

Alex: Do you have a job?

Banji: (to 1485) I'm concerned that my colleagues are getting very cold, and it looks like rain...

1485: Probably should have thought of that before, Miss.

Alex: *Do you have a bloody job?*

Banji: Pardon me? Er, I've just finished my PhD, actually.

Alex: (mimics sarcastically) I've just finished my PhD, actually.

Banji: (to 1485) These drivers are so aggressive. Will you make sure they don't hurt my friends?

1485: That's our job, Miss, our duty: ensuring public safety.

Banji: Banji. What about the abuse, it's horrible, can't you...

Alex: You're not from around here, you're not even Scottish, you're just a wee student who knows shite about shite in the real world.

Banji: I'm not a student anymore, actually. Unemployed.

Alex: Unemployed! All that education and no job?

Banji: Not many jobs in universities these days...

Alex: Maybe you'd have more chance if you got rid of the pink hair, piercings and tattoos?!

Banji: My thesis was on the relationship between austerity, precariousness, youth identity and appearance. Good work, well received. If contemporary academia hadn't turned the relation between wealth and knowledge inside out, I could be pursuing my research and teaching.

Alex: Never mind all that. You've *actually* got no job, sponging off hard-working people – tax-payers like me, by the way. You're not local, you're not Scottish, you're not even bloody British...

Banji: And I've got a stud in my tongue! (Banji playfully sticks her tongue out at Alex)

1485: Are you in charge of this protest, Miss?

Banji: Please, even Doctor is better than Miss! It's such an oppressive term, you should see that: please stop using it.

Alex: What gives you the right to come here and stop folk getting into their work, blocking the road, keeping me and the other mums from getting our bairns to school...

Banji: Nuclear weapons are a global issue: everyone's entitled to a voice.

Alex: Aye well, have your say and bugger off home then: No need to block our bloody road, causing bother.

Banji: Your children..?

Alex: Stuck, waiting in the car with my sister, thanks to you. Driving her nuts, no doubt!

The sound of a distant siren from off-stage

(this sound may be downloaded from the internet or reproduced physically by a participant; a whistle is a simple alternative).

1485: If they move now, M... If they move before the release team arrives, we can avoid making any arrests.

Banji: Nuclear war isn't limited to the local, nor even the national, it knows no borders: this Trident weapons system and what they plan to replace it with threatens us all...

Alex: Islamic terrorists and those North Koreans, they need a bit of threatening!

Banji: The threat of violence can't be a valid basis for dialogue.

1485: I think your friends have made their point. All academics are you?

Alex: (disparaging) Academics indeed! I'd not let them teach my kids, I'm telling you that!

Banji: Not all academics. Civil society activists, campaigners, people from the peace camp down the road: the seminar call was open to everyone, encouraging the widest participation.

Alex: Humph. Well, no one asked me.

Banji: If you want to join in, we're reflecting on geography and security, discussing nuclear weaponry, securitisation and discourses of 'terror', as well as linking to issues of environmental and social justice in an era of 'austerity'.

Alex: What the hell does all that mean?

Banji: (laughs) Sorry, we use a lot of jargon, don't we!? We're asking why, for one thing, the government plans to replace Trident at a cost of more than one hundred billion pounds rather than spending that money on the health service, creating jobs, and protecting the environment. Would you like a copy of the call for papers and the abstracts? (offers Alex a sheaf of papers)

Alex: (half turning away, declining) You're kidding me!?

Banji: (offering papers to 1485) How about you?

1485: I'm afraid I can't accept that, Miss.

Banji: Banji, remember – you nearly had it before. Shame, I think you'd be interested in several of the papers. There is actually one on policing and institutional oppression of both us and you...

Alex: Your wee bundle of paper isn't going to stop terrorists and create jobs around here though, eh? Replacing Trident will, they say.

Banji: But are nuclear weapons an appropriate deterrent against terrorism? And how many jobs will Trident replacement create, and at what cost, compared to, say, investing in renewable energy and building sustainable social housing? How many jobs will be local? Then there's the nature of those jobs and the psychological and physical effects on the people doing them...

Alex: (to 1485) A job's a job, eh Sergeant?

Banji: Neither building nor protecting weapons of mass destruction is work that anyone should have to do.

Alex: The newspapers say replacement will bring in millions of pounds, benefit the area...

Banji: But who *really* benefits, proportionally, local people or transnational corporations? Who is at risk in the event of a nuclear accident? *And* who controls what the newspapers say? Those are the sorts of questions we're asking today, at this seminar. We're critiquing the ethics of a policy of mutually assured destruction – are we really going to blow each other up with nuclear bombs? What sort of justice is that? What does basing peace and security on such a threat say about us and the

kind of world we want to live in? Isn't that the kind of macho, violent politics that governments want because it validates them, but not what we want because it destroys our humanity?

1485: (into radio) Roger.

Alex: I just want to get my bairns to school.

Banji: Maybe they'd learn more here?

1485: (steps nearer to Banji) Once the release team is deployed, there will be arrests.

Alex: Your lot of beardies and weirdies are blocking the public road: why don't you ask your questions in the proper place?

Banji: Which is?

1485: If you could just get them to move now...

Banji: I'm not in charge, no-one is. I'll speak with Mo, she's the spokesperson for the blockaders in our affinity group.

Alex: (looking sideways at the blockade, sniffs) The one shivering? She looks peely wally to me – that's 'ill' to you Americans. And to you, Sergeant, wherever you're from. England, is it?

Banji: Mo does look pale...

A sudden rise in the volume of abuse from people in their cars who are waiting to get into the base to work (participants can 'garble' this noise without articulating discernibly offensive words).

Alex: *Och, the language!* That's not nice.

Banji: Racist, homophobic, sexist - laden with the threat of violence.

Alex: Aye, maybe the Sergeant *should* have a word.

Banji: (to 1485) My responsibility is to care for my colleagues, feed them and give them water. Linked like that, they can't even scratch an itch.

Alex: You could write to your MP, start a petition...

Banji: People have done that, of course. But it's not enough. Vested interests in government, the system is corrupt, self-interested. We have a right to peaceful protest and not to have public space policed to facilitate systemic violence.

1485: Under the Highways Act of 1980, you are committing an offence: obstructing free passage along the highway without lawful authority.

Banji: Lawful authority and moral authority are not the same...

Alex: You're inconveniencing all we folk trying to get to work, to the shops, to school...

Banji: This academic seminar blockade is a creative act of resistance in solidarity with the peace camp, celebrating that it's been here for more than thirty years, maintaining a space of non-violent dissent. Our action is part of a fuller project to transform the everyday practices of the academy, to move beyond the university – to co-create a more public university in public space *with* the public.

1485: If I could speak to the person in charge?

Alex: It shouldn't be allowed, teachers acting like that. I'd sack the bloody lot of you!

Banji: Teachers, lecturers, researchers, students, activists, even unemployed foreigners like me: we claim the right to be here and to do this because we care.

Alex: Are you saying I don't, like? I've got kids, remember.

Banji: Of course you care. That care with your kids, that's how we might all begin to care for the world.

Alex: (snorts) I'm knackered already with just the three weans!

Banji: In this seminar blockade we're exploring care as an ethic, the basis of a system of moral principles that changes power relations and ends discrimination across class, race and gender ...

Alex: Where women are in charge, like? Then you've got my vote, hen!

Banji: On an equal basis with everyone else, yes.

1485: (into radio) Awaiting release team, Silver Leader. Over.

Alex: Silver, is it, hen? You'll be onto the Lone Ranger next!

Banji: (laughs)

A siren/whistle sounds offstage again, louder, closer...

Alex: (concerned, pointing skywards with umbrella) I hope they get here soon, but, those clouds are getting darker by the minute... (changes tone) Then they can clear this high-brow lot out of the road. We'll see how power relations are transformed then eh, Sergeant?

1485: The rule of law must be applied. Regardless of moral arguments, no one can be allowed put themselves above the law. Where would society be without laws to protect the majority?

Alex: That's quite a speech from you, Sergeant.

Banji: Care means taking responsibility and meeting the needs of particular others in specific contexts. It rejects abstracts and universals like the rule of law. An ethic of care values emotions, empathy, cooperation and interdependence – caring for each other. Justice is distinct from the rule of law, and an ethic of care is the basis from

which we must re-imagine justice. And we have to create the spaces to spark and nurture that re-imagining: spaces like the peace camp, like this blockade.

1485: I don't want to see your colleagues arrested...

Alex: Better than being soaked by freezing rain, maybe.

Banji: (to 1485) Then don't arrest them.

Alex: She's just doing her job!

1485: (acknowledging her radio) Roger. (to Banji) They're here, the release team, in the car park down the road, getting kitted up. You haven't got long: decide.

A drop of rain lands on Alex's cheek, she wipes at it, looks at the water on her hand, and they all look to the sky.

Scene 2: Authority, ideology, and care of the self-among-others

Setting: *Banji leaves 1485 and steps over to the ASB, followed by a curious Alex, who casts anxious glances about her, uneasy about entering this space of transgression and imminent policing, and about being in the public eye. Banji bends down to talk to Mo, who is part of the entwined circle of the ASB.*

Banji: Hi, Mo. Can we talk?

Mo: Sure, we're taking a break to mull over some emerging themes.

Banji: Are you okay? Is everyone all right? Do you need anything, food, a drink?

Mo: No thanks. We're all trying to drink a minimum so we don't have to pee. (fidgets a bit in her confined position and stretches her neck, her expression conveys pain). I've been better, comfier and warmer but... (shrugs)

Banji: (using a handkerchief to mop Mo's brow which is damp with sweat, despite the cold) I've been talking to a police sergeant...

Mo: You shouldn't engage.

Banji: This sergeant seems okay: she's worried about you all being arrested.

Mo: Huh!

Banji: Maybe we've made our point. The blockade has closed the base for more than two hours. The sergeant says...

Mo: You shouldn't listen to them, Banji! Don't trust them. They have a single agenda: to keep this death factory open so the profits of the arms industry are ensured. We're just an irritant, midges. If there weren't so many people here with camera-phones to bear witness, they'd rub pepper spray in our eyes and drag us

away, breaking as many arms and heads as they saw fit. You've seen how they treat people on peaceful demonstrations in the streets, on your campuses.

Banji: They're not all... I think the Sergeant I've been talking to is probably against nuclear weapons. She hasn't said it outright but... She almost took a seminar blockade programme.

Alex: I think you're right, hen. She seems a bit of a softie.

Mo: (turning her head awkwardly) Who're you?

Alex: Only a body who cannae get her kids to school.

Mo: These blockades are necessary. We have to rid the world of the abomination of nuclear weapons.

Alex: (sniffs) Aye well, good luck with that, sitting, freezing your backside off in the middle of the road, talking shite.

Mo: If I had my way, I'd be in there taking a sledgehammer to those submarines so they couldn't menace innocent civilians with death on a daily basis.

Alex: Very peaceful, I'm sure!

Mo: Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act states that 'A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime'.

Banji: (to Alex) And surely mutually assured destruction is the most terrible crime imaginable just waiting to happen?

Mo: That said, this blockade isn't an act of civil disobedience, not a plea for the state to have a change of heart. If we're arrested and taken to court, we're not going to appeal for validation by their law.

Banji: (a little jadedly) I know, I know: this is a *direct action*, we're challenging norms not reinforcing them, taking responsibility and physically intervening to stop an injustice, validating ourselves.

Mo: Critique in action, constructive resistance. Having a seminar in the road is a way of defending academic inquiry and critical reflection by engaging politically.

Banji: (to Alex) If we expect others – and ourselves – to take our intellectual critique seriously, how can we not put it into practice?

Alex: You're both away with the fairies, bonkers, wasting your time. We're the little people, even you egg-heads, *even the Police*. Them who make the rules don't take any notice of us, never have, never will!

Another rise in the volume of abuse from workers in their cars.

Mo: (sadly) I wish the abuse wasn't quite so vile, it's so... Dispiriting.

Banji: (speaking urgently to Mo) The Police's special release team have arrived from Glasgow, they're in the car park down the road. When they get here...

Mo: They'll give us the chance to disperse then break the blockade and arrest us if we refuse to leave of our own volition, right?

Banji: The sergeant says they'll have no choice.

Mo: They each have the choice not to do the bidding of a government acting to facilitate the machinations of the military-industrial complex. Listen, Banji, you can't trust them. If they're institutionally so minded, they'll arrest us even if we leave voluntarily: they have all the power. It's still oppression, whatever the individual intentions of *your* sergeant.

Banji: (offers Mo something to eat, wordlessly, Mo shakes her head 'no') She may be sensitive to our arguments, empathise even, but she's been denied the individual space to respond: she can't fully relate to us.

Mo: Ach, the power relations between domination and resistance in this situation are so skewed, so complex, all entangled. Spatially, we're trying to resist an element of systematic global oppression that is amorphous, impossible to pinpoint or pin down...

Banji: With an embodied local act which has no counterpart to relate to...

Alex: Except the Police!

Mo: Who operate under the deception of neutrality, as if the state didn't make laws to benefit the elite.

Banji: Institutionalisation leaves the Police no individual space to consider, express or enact care for those who challenge the law they are disciplined to uphold without question.

Mo: They are constructed as 'them' to our 'us'.

Alex: (exasperated) What do you *expect* them to do, hen, bring you a cup of tea, sit down and join your little circle, discuss the issues, see what 'themes emerge'!?

Banji: The people we really need to confront simply aren't here, while the dialogue we are compelled to have with Police is not on the issues we really want to discuss. So, is the agonism we're enacting meaningless?

Alex: It *means* I cannae get my kids to school, remember?

Banji: Maybe that's it... (frowns, looks at Alex, her mouth drops open, confounded) *You?*

Alex: It means all these people can't get to work and can't understand why you lot are stopping them.

Banji: We do need to rethink this, those people, everyone, the relational...

Mo: Those of us still in the blockade have made a collective decision to hold this ground and risk arrest. Robin had to drop out, though. He has to look after his kids tomorrow morning and couldn't risk still being in custody. He's lecturing tomorrow afternoon too, though he'd have risked missing that. Could you talk to him, Banji? He's feeling guilty, thinks he let us down.

Banji: Okay, I'll find him later. But I hate to think of you all having to go through arrest: fingerprinting, being searched, DNA sampling, stuck in a cell alone with nothing to do or read, no one to talk to – it's so boring!

Mo: I try to meditate.

Alex: (articulating archly) Zen, hen?

Banji: (mopping Mo's brow again) It's the confinement that gets me, the physical loss of liberty, it does my head in, has me almost literally climbing the walls. I don't want to go through that again unless I have to. Are you all sure about your decision? You don't look so well, Mo?

Alex: You daft lot better make up your minds, Sergeant Softie's on her radio again over there: the cavalry must be on the way.

Mo, Banji and Alex stare off-stage, searching for signs of the Police arriving... which they do, coming from positions in the audience and initially halting at one edge of stage, assessing the situation: waiting, ominous.

Mo: (loud whisper to Banji) Remember we're not going anywhere unless we choose to, like Robin has chosen because of his kids.

Alex: Maybe he wants to look after mine too, while he's at it!?

Mo: (louder now to Banji) So if ... When they start separating us using force, when they arrest us, make sure you're watching closely, take notes. (to Alex) And you're witness to this too. We need a record. There's one of us especially... Someone who's not so well, very cold and cramped. That person is in quite a lot of pain. The group suggested they de-link voluntarily too, before arrest. But they're not going to; they are not!

Banji: Well, I think maybe they should! (looks round ASB participants, who are casting worried looks at the Police) No one wants to be pushed and dragged and arrested at the best of times. Who is suffering so badly? Who is it?

Shouting from cars increases again as the Police move to surround the ASB protesters (physically at each side of the group, not between group and audience to block visual but clearly 'closing in').

Alex: (stepping away from oncoming Police and towards Mo) Whoah! I'm not sure which is worse, the shouting or them (nods at Police). And I always thought they were the good guys!

Banji: (urgently) Mo, who needs to unlink, who's not well? There's still time and I'm here to help with this kind of thing, please!

Mo: I shouldn't have said anything. We're here in solidarity, mutually supporting each other in resistance.

Alex: Doesn't mean that you have to be mutually stupid, hen!

Banji: Yes, and I'm here in solidarity too – and Robin. There are different ways of supporting each other! *Who is it?*

Mo coughs, shivers and winces, turns her face away from Banji.

Banji: (to Mo) It's you, isn't it? Oh come on, Mo, you need to think of the bigger picture ... that's what you were saying in your own paper earlier, right? About how violence to the submarines, to the physical base, isn't violent if we think of it as care for people elsewhere, if the damage means they don't get bombed? And you need to think of looking after yourself so you can resist another day, another way! Solidarity, that can mean relations of care in the wider sense, not rigid dogma.

1485: (looking nervously around the assembled police, her voice reflecting the tension, loudly but falteringly addresses ASB participants) You are... You are unlawfully blocking the highway. Disperse now or you will be arrested.

Mo: Ha, *that's* rigid dogma (nodding at 1485), refusing to see the bigger picture of care we're calling for here.

Banji: Yes exactly, and you're vulnerable just now, you're not well, what use is it for you to be locked up – you're the one who can write a piece for the press, or get onto academic forums and spread the news of the blockade. That'd be in solidarity too right!?

Alex: Solidarity? I don't know. Always makes me think of Russia in the Cold War, not such a caring regime by anybody's standards! I do know it's going tae piss down rain any minute and (to Mo) you're not looking so good, hen.

1485: I repeat: *you are unlawfully blocking the highway. Disperse now or you will be arrested.* (more whispered but still a command in Banji and Mo's direction) *Please!*

Alex: (to Mo) I always tell my kids to help each other and help me, but that means doing what *they can*. The five-year old can't do what the nine-year old can. And they need different kinds of help from me. Give and take but not an eye for an eye, right?

Scene 3: Distress, outrage, shame and compassion

Setting: *Initially, the scene is frozen with Mo still in the ASB, Banji and Alex in attendance. A voice is heard over the tableau:*

1485: (preferably in a darkened space or turned away from the audience, so the monotone voice is depersonalised) You are all committing a criminal offence. You have been asked repeatedly by Police officers to disperse, but you have not done so. This is a final opportunity for you to clear the highway. If you do not disperse you will be arrested, is that clear?

A pause and tense silence, Alex looks at Banji, Banji looks at Mo, Mo looks away. 1485 steps over to the ASB.

1485: Very well. We are arresting you for obstructing free passage along a highway in accordance with the Highways Act 1980. You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence, if you fail to mention, when questioned, something which you may later rely on in court. Anything you do say, may be given in evidence. Do you understand?

No one in the ASB acknowledges the warning.

Two or more Police officers begin to forcibly separate the blockaders (N.B. Actors must take care here not to hurt anyone while making the scene realistic) A mixed chorus of cheers from the waiting workers and boos from protesters.

Mo: How dare you! No! We have a moral right to do this. Your actions perpetuate oppression and injustice. What's your name, officer, and your number? Ow!

Banji: (to 1485) Can't you stop this, please?

1485: Too late, I'm afraid.

Alex: (indicates Mo). You should let that one go. I know she's obstreperous, but she's not strong enough to be roughed up like this and dumped in a Police van.

1485: Nothing I can do now. Please stand back, let the officers do their job.

Alex: Och, have a heart!

Banji: Can I go with them, take some food?

1485: I'm afraid not, M... Doctor.

Mo: (addressing 1485) Do you have children, Sergeant? Will you tell them tonight, how brave you were, what a hero: arresting peaceful protesters who only resisted passively, who were trying to save their lives and those of others like them around the world.

1485: (strained and pale, clamps her mouth firmly closed, does not respond)

Banji: Please, I know you understand, let them go.

1485: Can you give me your word that they won't come straight back?

Banji: I... (silent, drops her eyes)

1485: I thought not.

Alex: (to Mo) Give it up now, hen, you've made your point. Don't make them hurt you.

Mo: Nobody makes them hurt anyone but themselves. Shame on you, Sergeant! Shame on all of you!

Banji: (shouts to the Police) Be careful, don't hurt them!

Mo: (to 1485 and her colleagues) Congratulations, you've countered the terrorist threat – oh no, whoops, that's still there behind that razor-wire fence. Great policing, ensuring public safety: Not!

Alex: Good on you, hen! (then to Banji) I'm even beginning to like her. Only a wee bit, mind.

Banji: (almost crying, facing up to 1485, getting physically close) You should arrest the people who work in this place, those who maintain and arm the nuclear warheads, the submarine captains...

1485: Please step away. Do not force me to arrest you too.

Alex: She's done nothing!

1485: And why don't *you* go back to your car, Madam. Traffic will be moving again soon.

Alex: Don't you Madam me, Sergeant. I'm going nowhere.

Banji: (imploring 1485) You should be making arrests in cabinet offices and corporate boardrooms not here: no crime has been committed here.

Mo: (screams loud and piercingly in pain as her grip is forcibly broken and she is hauled from the blockade)

A stunned moment of frozen silence.

The ASB is then broken up and participants, making themselves limp, are carried away like sacks.

Banji: (trying to step around 1485 to follow Mo and the others) Please, they need me.

1485: (physically blocking her way) I'm warning you for the last time: if you don't want to be arrested...

Alex: (takes Banji's arm) Och away, Sergeant. (Then to Banji) Come on, hen, let's go and find you a nice cup of tea. (she takes the ASB programmes from Banji's unresisting grip). Here, Sergeant, I think you *should* read one of these after all.

1485: (a momentary hesitation perhaps, but then shakes her head, looks away)

Banji: (begins to sob into Alex's shoulder)

Alex: (to Banji as she puts her arm around her and leads her away). There, there, hen, you did your best. Here comes that hard rain.

As they reach the edge of the stage...

1485: (shouting to colleagues) Right, get this traffic moving, let's get staff into the base...

***Banj looks forlornly at Alex, transferring a lingering gaze to the audience.
Her face conveys hopelessness: we did nothing, accomplished nothing...***

THE END?

Prompts for the Joker and spect-actors

Joker: Ask spectators to choose where they want to intervene in the play. Take a show of hands on the most popular scene or part of a scene where spectators want to make a change. Spectators will probably come up with their own questions and ideas for intervention as spect-actors. However, the questions below may help get the forum theatre process started, and perhaps act as prompts thereafter if there is a stalemate.

- Who are the oppressors/oppressed in this play?
- What are the oppressions and how are they enacted?
- How do different levels of oppression occur in Scene 2?
- What might the effects be of changing the gender of one, some, or all the main characters?

- What ethnicity/sexual orientation/age/class position do you assume for the characters?
- Does where the characters come from matter?
- What if the blockade action had been taken by musicians, health workers, miners or some other group?
- Where and how is care expressed?
- How are trust, empathy and compassion expressed, if at all?
- How might relational care be conceived and practiced differently to 'mutual aid'?
- Should protesters give more attention to engaging with Faslane workers?
- (How) Should Mo and Banji be attentive to Alex's problem?
- (How) Should Mo and Banji be sympathetic to 1485/the police?
- Should/could 1485 do something about the abuse directed at the ASB?
- How is Robin's decision considered here?
- What is the impact of Mo's conduct on/for others?
- Would it make a difference if 1485 accepted an ASB programme?
- As example of how an oppression might be confronted by care, discuss Alex's change of heart in the final scene where she takes care of Banji

Encore

As a note of caution. We recognise that staging plays requires time, energy, effort, cooperation and collaboration, and will be emotionally demanding. If we/you are to take such a fuller geographies approach to pedagogy, it cannot be on top of already significant demands on us as academics. In suggesting theatre as transgressive and transformative pedagogy, we also call for increasing resistance to exploiting our own labour (Koopman, 2008). Appreciating the responsibility of convening forum theatre (similar to ASB convening), we intend and hope for *pedagogic interventions as direct action*. And we suggest (urge!?) taking care of yourselves-among-others as ethic and praxis.

Links

Ethics of Care network <http://ethicsofcare.org/>

Care Ethics <http://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>

The Forum Project <http://theforumproject.org/whatisto/forumtheatre/>

Active Inquiry <http://www.activeinquiry.co.uk/>

Cardboard Citizens <http://cardboardcitizens.org.uk/>

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