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Finding a thirdspace

The fourth element of creating a pedagogy of utopia concerns the space in which the practice occurs. The practice by its nature is adaptable and flexible, but the effect of the space needs to be considered. In *Crossing Bridges*, the atmosphere of the workshops depended on the three spaces we used: the rehearsal studio on 8th Avenue, New York; the off-Broadway theatre; and the basketball/gym area at Covenant House, with each producing its own particular tensions and opportunities. In the various India projects since 2005, we continue to work in a variety of spaces, which include temples, garages, community halls and the streets. In the prison-based *Children's Theatre Project*, rehearsal spaces and performance areas are often a chapel or prayer room; occasionally the football pitch or a classroom in the education wing. The success of my practice depends on adapting rooms and spaces into rehearsal and performance venues. This is the nature – and a strength – of theatre-making in community and non-traditional theatre spaces. While we should celebrate our ability to slot into a variety of architectural contexts, we must recognize how each of the spaces we use affects our work. The characteristics of each space inflect the drama work created within it. There is an interplay between the space that is occupied as a rehearsal space, despite its original designated use, and the way this affects the work that is created in it, resulting in each project being a unique product of the space in which it is created.

It is nothing new to state that space is a social construct that is neither fixed nor neutral. It is flexible and capable of stimulating oppression and liberation, and of maintaining or resisting the status quo. Henri Lefebvre (1991) asserted that all social relations depend on space,

while geographer David Harvey (2000) makes the claim that space is central in all social interactions and that it, therefore, conditions any potential change. Cultural theorist Eric Kit-wai Ma describes space as ‘a container of power through which people’s biographies are constrained and enabled’ (Ma 2002: 132). As such, space is a seat and means of power and is highly political; therefore, in a pedagogy of utopia which invites participants to see that change is possible, we must carefully consider the nature of the space in which the practice takes place.

The spatial turn in theatre, particularly with regard to site-specific performance, is well documented (Birch and Tompkin 2012; Pearson 2010; Solga 2019; Solga, Orr and Hopkins 2009). Sally Mackey’s work on the ‘performance of place’ is particularly relevant in regard to community theatre-making (Mackey and Cole 2013: 46). Mackey uses this term when referring to planned performances, informal performances, and various interactions and interventions with sites that interrogate perceptions of place. She states that creating performance or becoming involved with a performance can change participants’ and audiences’ relationships with a specific area. It can invite a sense of familiarity and even safety in spaces previously considered to be uncomfortable or hostile (Mackey and Cole 2013: 56). The potential for performance or theatre to change participants’ relationships to spaces and to provoke a sense of safety is one of three ways in which space is central to creating a pedagogy that invites utopic imaginings. The second is how the physical space can provide an equitable meeting of difference through which a hybrid culture or community may be formed, and the third is the way spaces can offer sites of resistance to injustice and the neoliberal hegemony that fosters social exclusion. The first of these two spatial capacities are discussed in this chapter and the third in Chapter 6.

The spatial turn and safety

Sally Mackey’s reference to the ability of performance to render spaces of danger as spaces of safety is an important concept within Applied

Theatre practices. Mackey, though, is referring to actual places the participants frequent or are forced to move through in their daily lives, rather than the notion of the workshop or rehearsal room being a 'safe space'. Often in my practice, as in Mackey's, the two become intertwined, and the complex, difficult or even hostile spaces of my participants' daily lives become both rehearsal spaces and performance spaces and fostering them as places of safety is vital. 'Safe space' is a much-contested term in Applied Theatre. Mary Ann Hunter's article 'Cultivating the art of a safe space' discusses the need for creating a space for drama that is both 'physically and metaphorically safe' (2008: 6). She asks if 'making a space "safe" means making it risk-adverse' (ibid.: 9) and explores the tensions between notions of safety and 'risk-taking' in the creative process. The space for a pedagogy of utopia needs to be one of safety in the sense that the participants need to feel secure enough to take risks. Sharing lived experiences, critical thinking, trust and making oneself vulnerable to the others in the room when making theatre together are all vital to the process. Examining what is and confronting the truth about ourselves and our world is painful, difficult and risky, but it is the start of imagining new futures.

Issues about safety, space and equity abound in the *Halfway House Project*, the first collaboration in India between Divya Bhatia, Central and me which took place in 2005. The *Halfway House Project* was facilitated by two Central BA Applied Theatre students, with Bhatia and me mentoring them through the process. Analysis of this project helps me to understand the complex nature of space in the context of my practice. Such analysis, I argue, demonstrates the inadequacy of the term 'safe space' in the context of the discipline. In the *Halfway House Project*, we worked with women, mainly from the Dalit caste, living in a care facility for abandoned and abused young women. There are more than eleven million abandoned children in India, and over 90 per cent of them are girls. The project was intended to take place in the women's shared living area. The NGO that financed the home wanted us to create a theatre project that would establish a bond between the women in the hope that this would enable them to face their traumatic experiences

together, while building their self-confidence and self-esteem. The home in which we were working housed girls between the ages of 14 and 21 who had been neglected, abandoned, disowned and, in some cases, abused for a variety of reasons that included sexual activity, mental illness, physical disabilities, severe poverty or the remarriage of mothers whose second husbands refused to house their wife's children from a previous marriage. The twenty or so girls in this home had shelter, food and were learning a trade to support themselves. Inside the home the women had their basic needs met and were given a refuge from abuse. Inside the halfway house they were, however, re-creating some of the conditions of their previous lives. They had established a domestic pecking order where the weak and different were bullied and victimized within the home. The space we were to work in was a women-only space, which excluded both Bhatia and Deembe, our translator, for much of the process. The space was used by the residents of the home as a living, sleeping, cooking and work room that changed its function depending on the time of day and the needs of the women, and during the project it had to become a workshop room.

Henri Lefebvre's argument that the social meanings of space are constructed through their social practices and that spaces impose an order is useful here. He argues that spaces are 'tied to relations of production and to the "order" which those relations impose' (Lefebvre 1991: 33). In other words, spaces are tied to established knowledge and codes and, as such, they support hegemonic processes. Lefebvre discusses the 'representation of space' as a process by which space is perceived through and defined by the routines or social production and reproduction that take place in a space. In Lefebvre's words, spaces are 'defined by what people are doing in them'. Spatial practices 'embrace production and reproduction' of space (ibid.) and they are practices in which people passively accept the signs and symbols that have been put on specific places. These practices may also resist social regulations, as people use and adapt the spaces they frequent. The room in the halfway house was a 'representation of space', defined by the daily activities of the women who inhabited it. The way people use a space makes it 'alive

... quantitative, fluid and dynamic' (ibid.: 42). In this sense, spaces can be changed, and they can then, therefore, be a source of oppression and containment that supports the status quo, or they can be wielded as tools of liberation and solidarity. More likely, spaces can offer a mixture of these elements, but individuals, rather than technologies of power, inscribe meaning onto space. In this way, spaces always have the potential to become counter-hegemonic. This happens when users change the spatial practices usually associated with a specific location, such as the adaptation by practitioners and participants of a space into a rehearsal or workshop room by inscribing a new meaning. Our spatial practices etch play and creativity in a place that otherwise does not invite play. A theatre workshop can instil an axiology of equity into a space that otherwise produces or supports inequalities. And indeed, equity was the central theme of the *Halfway House Project*.

When first working in the halfway house we found the refuge was a competitive and often dangerous space that harboured isolation, bullying and violence. The conditions reaffirmed the hierarchies of the outside world and constrained the women who lived there. Our assigned aim was to build a community spirit within the house where the young women could support and comfort each other and where they could gain strength in solidarity. We knew, however, such a goal was not possible in a meaningful sense during a five-week project. Beyond the unrealistic timescale, the project, as conceived by the NGO, had two further issues. The NGO had unrealistic expectations of the theatre's power to effect change that were in line with a view of theatre that leads to the hero narratives and overblown statements as discussed in Chapter 1. The other issue was that the goals were not established following consultation with the people living in the home. Although the NGO was not mistaken to assume the residents desired change, the NGO dictated the focus of the work and in doing so denied the women agency within the decision-making process. With these factors in mind we skirted past the NGO's aims when we started the project, telling residents that we would be exploring the arts and theatre-making each day for a month. We simply told them that they would

all be welcome to make theatre with us. The practitioners and the women who volunteered to take part worked together for three hours every afternoon for five weeks. The sessions involved a range of theatre games, devising techniques and skills-sharing, often starting with a song and then some exercises to focus the women's attention on the theatre-making process. In the first session, the women were wary of us, the visitors, and were often self-conscious and appeared withdrawn and introverted. Their lives, before moving into the halfway house but also within it, were often a struggle for survival. This demanded constant vigilance, negotiation and trading with others who were rightly regarded with suspicion. In these ways, their lives recalled those of the young people involved in *Crossing Bridges*, as they were filled with a lack of trust. It was not surprising that they were hesitant to 'play' drama games with the students. The students, who were also tentative, focused on storytelling games, creative writing exercises and some gentle performance skills for the first two weeks. A key part of this process was the chai break midway through each session. The exchange of food became integral in these crucial moments. Food became a meeting point, with the students bringing biscuits and sweets from the UK and the participants bringing mangoes that had been picked from the next door's tree, the boughs of which stretched out over the home's premises. These respective offerings were exchanged as gifts. Session by session everyone became more playful and some of the initial suspicions eased. The process of easing suspicions is largely one of developing trust in the space in which we work and in the methods we use. Part of this process is slowly getting to know each other, through chatting over chai, laughing together, often at the expense of the facilitators, and sharing food, stories, laughter and the *space* each day. Suspicions eased as the participants gradually understood that nobody was going to be asked to do anything which might make them feel uncomfortable. This amounts to creating the 'safe space' that is so often talked about in Applied Theatre contexts. In her analysis of drama spaces, Helen Nicholson does not use the term 'safe space' but argues that 'creative spaces are those in which people feel safe enough to take

risks and allow themselves and others to experience vulnerability' and adds that 'creativity is fostered through networks of social relationships' (Nicholson 2015: 133). I would suggest that the easing of suspicions in the halfway house was a result of the social relationships, particularly around food rituals, that were developed in the room between the students, the women and me.

As the days passed, and as the relationships developed between the students and the participants, the atmosphere in the room became more light-hearted, mischievous even. In response to British songs shared by the students, the residents shared Bollywood dance routines and songs. These became more risqué and riskier each session. The students in return raised the stakes. By the end of the third week, the song that opened and closed each session was 'Big Booty', with some explicit dance moves that had become a firm favourite for the women from the UK and from India. The space felt 'safe'. The risqué nature of the songs and dance routines and the glee that was created as each group dared the other to go one better was part of this process; a trust or bond was created through this risky behaviour. Amidst the twerking and gyrating, the women discovered common ground that would not have been established with men in the room. As the weeks progressed, the young women decided they wanted their performance to be about the power of female friendship or sisterhood. Dance sequences were created, poetry was written, backcloths were designed on sheets and the room decorated with painted paper plates. The play became a series of skits: some funny, some based on real and distressing events, some in Hindi and some in English, some in mime and some with a strange mixture of languages unique to this group of women. A new conjoined group identity was being forged as a result of sharing the space.

The participants' confidence grew day-by-day and in the lead-up to the performance it was difficult to tell who was facilitating and who was participating. The women worked as a team to celebrate what they began to describe as 'the power of sisterhood'. This is a complex term that does not necessarily translate across cultures, but here the women perceived it as a bond created through shared experiences and

living space. One told me that '*only women understand what women go through*', another that '*for women it is the same everywhere*'. The students agreed. 'Sisterhood' united women from different cultures, castes and classes. The residents of the halfway house recognized that they were united by their common experiences as women, even though they did not live together harmoniously. The students became a part of the 'sisterhood', albeit temporarily and fleetingly. The women found commonalities in experiences of being women, across, or perhaps despite, the geographical, cultural, economic and social divides that would usually keep them apart. Together, they could celebrate the commonalities they found in their womanhood or 'sisterhood' as they preferred, as a group.

The NGO's aim of developing a community spirit within the home appeared to be working. The women appeared to onlookers as a confident friendship group who supported one another as they taught each other difficult dance moves, worked on harmonies, helped one another to write poetry and script scenes. More than this, the women, like the men of *The Children's Theatre Project*, started to plan for a future for continuing to work together, writing and dancing once the project was over. They talked together, looking back over the past and the project, and began to move forward, imagining the strength the bonds of sisterhood might manifest in their collective futures. There was an optimism here in this newly found friendship group and a sense of equity between the women of the halfway house, both the stronger and suppressed, and between the women and the students. For a brief while, the women could conceive of a future where they resisted the hierarchy of dominant social systems and lived in a mutually supportive space. This was potentially a utopic space in which contemporary conditions can be questioned and in which an alternative future could be imagined, one which resisted hegemony. It was an instance of a nebulous utopia. In these ways, the halfway house was a simultaneously represented, contested and inverted space. This was possible because of the nature of the halfway house: a secure environment designed to keep vulnerable women and women perceived as at risk to society, apart from the

outside world, separated from society. The multipurpose space in which we worked, and in which the women lived, became a women-only transgressive space in which the rules of the outside world could be disavowed, and power structures could be ignored and inverted. It was a real place and yet a space of the imagination, a counter-site that physically existed and yet was elsewhere, a 'no-where' utopic space.

We may alternatively understand this rehearsal space as a 'heterotopia,' to employ a concept introduced by Michel Foucault, describing these places as being 'outside of all places' (1986: 24). Heterotopia are 'sites with no real place'; they are 'fundamentally unreal spaces' (Foucault 1986: 25). Such statements demonstrate that Foucault uses the rather narrow, traditional definition of utopia as a kind of blueprint for a perfect place, rather than seeing utopia as an iconoclastic means of effecting change, as I do within my pedagogy of utopia. In contrast to 'unreal,' he conceived heterotopia as real spaces that contain unreal notions of utopia. In other words, heterotopia are real spaces in which utopias can be momentarily realized and where power structures can be disrupted or inverted. In this way they become 'simultaneously mythic and real contestations of the space in which we live' (ibid.).

Heterotopia and the *Halfway House Project*

Foucault states that heterotopias exist in all societies, either as 'crisis heterotopias' or as 'deviant heterotopias.' The former are 'privileged or sacred or forbidden' and reserved for those living in a state of change or crisis, such as adolescents or pregnant women. And so examples of these might be boarding schools, nursing homes, mental health facilities or perhaps youth theatres. Emerging in recent times, 'heterotopias of deviation' (Foucault 1986: 25) are spaces in which people considered irregular, wayward or dangerous are placed, such as rest homes, prisons and psychiatric hospitals. The halfway house in India is perhaps at the intersection of both types. Like the crisis heterotopia, it is cordoned off from the rest of society. The women living there were in crisis due

to their homelessness or abandonment, while at the same time many were considered deviant due to their sexual experiences, abuse and tactics of survival sex. The home contains these 'deviant' women, for both their own safety and that of the outside community. Foucault explains that heterotopias 'have a function in relation to all the space that remains' outside, in that they create a space of illusion that exposes real space partitions as illusory, or social constructs (ibid.). Once we see and acknowledge them as constructs, they can be deconstructed and re-envisioned to be spaces that give us opportunities to create Ricoeurian gaps in the 'ideological spiral' and invite people to see that change is possible. In the halfway house, some of the short scenes depicted violence perpetrated by men on women and some focused on women-on-women abuse within extended family spaces, particularly between mother and daughters-in-law. The final performance showed these acts of aggression happening outside the walls of the home and also within it. These scenes were juxtaposed with songs and poetry about the solidarity and strength of women and they raised questions for the participants and audience about equity, inequality, race, gender, class and caste. The performance which took place within the closed heterotopic space of the halfway house demonstrated that, although segregated from the rest of society, these women were no different in many respects than women outside the home. They were preoccupied with the issues that women face everywhere. By bridging the spaces within the heterotopias to the outside world spaces, the performances demonstrated that the spatial partitions created to keep these women apart are illusory.

I have argued that, in the context of a pedagogy of utopia, theatre can provide the means of stretching ideology's spiral so we can identify the workings of hegemony while residing within it. Such enhanced perception and analytical capacity is made possible by the Foucauldian heterotopia. Foucault writes that heterotopia are 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' (Foucault 1986: 25). He gives the examples of the cinema and garden – and, indeed, the theatre. In these heterotopia it is possible

to bring several locations into the same space simultaneously. The contiguous placement of incompatible sites invites inhabitants to question the similarities and differences between them and critique the way they function, thus giving heterotopia an 'analytical edge', according to geographer Arun Saldanha (2008: 2091). Kevin Hetherington observes that heterotopias 'reveal the process of social ordering to be just that, a process rather than a thing' and function as 'spaces of alternate ordering' (Hetherington 1997: viii). In the halfway house, the women re-ordered their tiny society to allow the most marginalized in the group to teach the others a poem they had written about suffering, which they would perform in a choral section of the show. In this way the social order of the home was deconstructed and questioned, and the drama invited an 'alternate' or at least fluid ordering of the social norms. In *The Children's Theatre Project*, a less popular prison inmate helped a gang leader learn the moves for the pirate dance in their cell at night. And in *Crossing Bridges*, a shelter-dwelling teenager directed a well-known actress in a scene he had written. Foucault claimed that heterotopias are real places 'that have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invert the set of relations they happen to designate, mirror or reflect' (Foucault 1986: 24). In a pedagogy of utopia, projects like these appear to enact heterotopic space by using theatre practices to question what is, in order to invite imaginings of what might be, while remaining grounded and searching for social justice. In the examples discussed in this book, multipurpose rooms, multifaith rooms and homeless shelter gyms are heterotopic spaces in which theatre workshops unsettle social relations, allowing participants to 'suspect' and 'invert' the hegemonic structures.

The qualities of the physical spaces we used in these projects re-order the feeling in the room, via the so-called 'safe space'. 'Safe space' is not quite an adequate term here as it belies the risky nature of the activities undertaken in these and other Applied Theatre spaces. In a pedagogy of utopia that pursues social justice, the spaces in which we fashion equity, negotiate, disagree and create in fact rarely feel *safe*. Recently,

the term 'brave space' seems to be gaining traction with academics and practitioners and it is not difficult to see why this tweaked version of the term is gaining popularity. In 2013, Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens suggested the notion of creating a safe space is too simplistic for complex situations that require the acknowledging and sanctioning of difference while challenging 'entrenchment in privilege' (2013: 140). By introducing the alternative term 'brave space', they acknowledge the courage it takes to open oneself up to the other, to make oneself vulnerable and to listen to that which is, to quote Alison Jeffers, 'hard to hear' (Jeffers 2012: 1).

Not safe space or brave space, but a thirdspace

I am as uncomfortable with the term 'brave space' as I am with the term 'safe space'. 'Brave' seems to contain an inherent idea that everyone in the space is able to step up, without acknowledging that people in the room start from different, and unequal, positions. Spaces as we have seen are not neutral and seeing them as such implies a sense of privilege that not all participants enjoy. Both adjectives oversimplify matters because a workshop room is always dynamic, in flux and volatile. It is a space away from the outside world and yet inextricably linked to it. It is a space where participants need to feel safe enough to take risks and challenges, where they can be brave enough to speak, act or move, and yet also be strong enough to let others do the same. Brave is too narrow and too loaded to describe what this heterotopic space could be and what it should feel like. Over both of these terms, I employ another more neutral term: 'thirdspace'. The term 'thirdspace' is chiefly associated with Edward Soja, who employs the term in work that responds to Foucault's heterotopia. Soja describes thirdspace as a space of 'extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange ... a space where issues of race, class and gender can be addressed simultaneously without privileging one over the other' (Soja 1996: 5). Homi Bhabha's use of the term is also relevant to the present discussion. He uses it with

respect to intercultural thinking in *The Location of Culture* (1994) to describe the hybridization of culture. When two cultures meet, they produce something new, a third perspective created in the thirdspace between the first two. I also draw on the social science use of the term, where it can more literally be a *third* space, two words, not one, as in not the first or second space. This thirdspace is different from the domestic, usually more relaxed, but still regulated space and the more intensely regulated work or education spaces. This does not imply that people only occupy and move through two spaces. There are many differently regulated spaces that individuals traverse: places of worship, sports clubs and other spaces where people are under surveillance.

In 'The Street as Thirdspace', cultural geographers Matthews, Limb and Taylor describe the perceived 'progressive retreat from the street by urban children' in the UK (Matthews, Limb and Taylor 2000: 63). In this sense the thirdspace of the street is neither the school nor the home, both sites of regulation and control, but a third space where children were once free of surveillance. Their essay laments that the widespread use of CCTV means the street is no longer unsurveilled, and thus no longer qualifies as a thirdspace. Other thirdspaces could be football pitches, playgrounds and disused buildings, unsurveilled spaces in which groups can construct their own environments, and formulate and test their developing identities. Hillman, Adam and White-Legg in 1990 observed that 'More of our lives are now spent in cocoons of house and car, and the outside world has become impersonal. As the streets fill with traffic, they tend to empty of people, and as street life retreats ... the world outside also becomes more menacing.' Writing five years later David Sibley expanded on this idea in *The Geographies of Exclusion*, arguing that there is a spatial binary that results in people remaining within the 'safe' boundaries of the home, the school and other institutionally organized spaces where they are subjects of the technologies of discipline, and he suggests that there is a perceived withdrawal of people from unregulated spaces. More recently it has been argued that there are no unregulated spaces that youth can inhabit in the Global North. Henri Giroux observes that young people are victims

of a 'punishment-and-control complex' that pervades every aspect of young people's lives through 'surveillance and criminalization' (Giroux 2009: 14). In a society in which youth have become demonized and in which the streets, parks and libraries are observed through CCTV cameras, loitering in public places has become a crime. Matthews et al. support this observation, writing that young people are 'increasingly confined to acceptable "islands" by adults and so are spatially outlawed from society' (Matthews, Limb and Taylor 2000: 63).

The participants in the *Halfway House Project* had been removed from the public sphere and effectively detained within the home. While the space in the home had become these women's 'acceptable island', the drama workshops turned this space into an outlawed space where the young women could meet in less regulated conditions. Matthew, Limb and Taylor assert that spaces like these are 'an important part of [adolescents'] everyday lives, a place where they retain some autonomy over space' (Matthews, Limb and Taylor 2000: 64) and the Indian women enjoyed this kind of autonomy in the rehearsal space in this project. They made the rules, they decided what was to be included in the performance and what was not. In these ways, the multipurpose room became a thirdspace: a space in which the young women could 'gather to affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging' (ibid.). It was a 'lived space' where they developed their own identities and challenged hegemonic interests by contesting social conventions and asserting their independence. In terms of a pedagogy of utopia, it is also important to note that the young women also wanted to perform their narratives, to witness each other's stories and to have them witnessed by others. Not only did they have autonomy in this process, but they wanted that autonomy to be visible.

The workshops provided a temporary reprieve from the routines of the home, hosted in a thirdspace in which Ricoeur's third stage of utopia could be enacted. In the workshops, albeit only for a brief part of the day, this group of young people explored the 'possibilities of living without hierarchical structure and instead with maturity' (Ricoeur 1986: 310). They were still living within the ideological, and thus

hegemonic, circle of Indian patriarchy, but within these workshops and during performances, they were not entirely conditioned by it. Nobody in the room talked about creating a community bond or worked towards that goal as a strategic aim, but by the end of the project the sense of community spirit was tangible in the room, in the content of the performance and in the care the performers took of each other. It was a brief interlude and a short pilot project, and without returning to the home, which has not been possible, it is impossible to know if there are any long-term effects or if the community in the halfway house retained this sense of unity and sisterhood. Although the work may not have had long-term consequences for the participants, the project created a thirdspace, different from that referred to by social scientists; it created a meeting point between two cultures, that of the women who were residents there and that of the students and myself from the UK, making it a thirdspace in the sense that Homi Bhabha uses the term, that is, to signify an intercultural meeting point.

Thirdspace as intercultural meeting point

Homi Bhabha uses thirdspace when describing the interaction of two cultures, and the new 'positions' that arise as a result of such interactions. These new positions can only emerge if neither culture is privileged during their interaction – they must meet in a thirdspace that is neither the space of one culture nor the other, but a space in between. Bhabha says that 'hybridity to me is the thirdspace which enables other positions to emerge' (1990: 211). The thirdspace is a means to avoid cultural polarity and undermine binaries. The thirdspace resonates with the kind of space, or 'pluriverse' Bhatia and I wished to create with our work in Dharavi, in that we sought to bring young inhabitants of the sub-city together with the students from Central without privileging the knowledge or skills of either party. By 'exploring this third space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves' (Bhabha 1994: 56); putting it even more clearly, he

writes that it is 'precisely about the fact when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them' (Bhabha 1990: 216). Creating thirdspaces, then, is central to a pedagogy of utopia, which elides or at times collides communities together to make theatre. It can be seen in the *Halfway House Project* and the extended Dharavi project where the young people from London and Mumbai encounter each other, forging a new and unique community that leaves neither the same as when they started.

I am not alone in identifying Bhabian thirdspaces within Applied Theatre practice. Janinka Greenwood uses the term, directly referencing Bhabha, when she describes her work on a cross-cultural project in New Zealand that brought together indigenous people and migrants, claiming she 'was working in the intervening space between cultures' and that this space was 'an emerging rather than a fixed space' (Greenwood 2005: 4). Greenwood describes the 'emerging' space that 'opens up in the interactions of different cultures' (ibid.: 13) specifically as a thirdspace, that is, as a metaphorical space that emerges through intercultural interaction of theatre workshops. Dirk Rodricks (2015) also uses the term in this sense in his article 'Drama education as "restorative" for the third space', in which he draws on Bhabha, Soja and hooks. Similarly, Young Ai Choi draws on Bhabha's concept of thirdspace when writing about her work with the National Theatre Company of Korea describing it as a safe environment in which youth working in theatre can create a new space of their own in which they 'risk exploring the unfamiliar' (2018: 43).

I concur with these scholars that the thirdspace invites new positions to evolve, and risks are part of this evolution. In my own use of the term, I am also referring to the actual physical space in which the workshop takes place and in this I am influenced by Edward Soja (1996) who makes the claim that the concept of the thirdspace is one that crosses both the imagined and the real world. I would argue that Soja provides the most comprehensible and, for me, useful discussion of thirdspace in which he brings together Lefebvre, Foucault, Bhabha and

a range of other post-modern thinkers including bell hooks, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said. For Soja, the thirdspace offers an invitation to enter a space of openness and exchange which allows for a variety of perspectives that eliminate privileges connected to race, gender and class. Soja's thirdspace includes a kind of imaginative forward thinking that is commensurate with a pedagogy of utopia. Soja states that '*Thirdspace* too can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the "real" material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through "imagined" representation of spatiality' (ibid.: 6). Since thirdspace builds on the real and the imagined, it is akin to a nebulous utopia. The workshop space, the prison chapel, the multipurpose living and working space in a halfway house or the street outside a temple in a sub-city invite a critical dialogue on what is, in order to imagine what might be: these are all thirdspaces. It is the intersection of physical space and the imagined future, and a powerful site of resistance of what does not have to remain in the imagination. In *Crossing Bridges* this became a tangible real-world invitation when the young shelter-dwellers crossed the street in New York en route to the rehearsal studio and then again as they took up temporary residency in the Helen Mills Theatre. This was only a temporary thirdspace for these young people, but theatre spaces can, and do, present the opportunity to develop more needed long-term thirdspaces for young people. For many young people the private sphere of the home offers a space with limited agency and if Matthew, Limb and Taylor are correct in their view that young people are being encouraged to remove themselves from public spaces, and Giroux's opinion that youth are demonized when they are in them, there are few places where young people have agency. Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson caution that 'as we move into a post-normal world, the sector of the population at most threat are young people who know of no other time than the post-normal. They are at the greatest risk of harm' (2015: 17). I believe that youth theatre can offer a valuable thirdspace which is less regulated than other spaces available to young people. The artistic director of London-based youth

theatre, Company Three, Ned Glasier, draws directly on the company's offering of a thirdspace to the young people involved in the company and highlights it as being one of the company's strengths.

Youth theatre as thirdspace: Company Three

I have been involved in various forms of youth theatre as a practitioner since 1995 and, like other forms of community and Applied Theatre, it hasn't always been treated with a great deal of respect by the wider theatre and professional world. Although still often dismissed as lacking in artistic quality, in recent years the perception of youth theatre has started to shift with the work of a few companies reaching mainstream audiences. Writing in *The Guardian* in 2015, Matt Fenton noted that

There's something exciting happening in British theatre. Innovative shows made with and by young people, for the most part in their teens, are receiving mainstream attention. Companies such as the Liverpool-based 20 Stories High, Bradford's Common Wealth, Islington Community Theatre and our own Manchester-based Contact Young Company are performing at high-profile venues and festivals, and getting widespread public acclaim and, importantly, serious critical coverage which discusses the work as intended: as *art*. (Fenton 2015)

Youth theatre is an underrepresented form of theatre in both theatre criticism and academic research. In 2004, Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson undertook the most extensive research into youth theatre in the UK to date. In their report they comment on the lack of recognition of youth theatre and note that it has 'attracted little interest from the research world and there is a scarcity of publicly available literature' (Hughes and Wilson 2004: 61). While this is the case, they also note claims that involvement with youth theatre can change its participants and that it has benefits for young people's personal and social growth (Hughes and Wilson 2004). One such claim is found in the Arts Council

England's Boyden Report which stated that youth theatre develops both 'creativity and self-confidence' (2000: 38).

The notion that youth theatre can be the starting point of transformation is not novel. Hughes and Wilson (2004) recognize that youth theatre is perceived to have both personal and social effects on participants who have been marginalized by their socio-economic circumstances. The impact of youth theatre and Applied Theatre on participants has been contested, and I am mindful of researchers who counsel restraint when making grand claims about the instrumental value of participating in theatre, discussed in the introduction to this book. These cautions should however not prevent us from considering ways to engage with these difficulties by offering young people opportunities to explore the world and their place in it through theatre. We do need to be mindful of making the claim that drama changed and transformed them, as it is unlikely that theatre alone can do this; however, it can become a contributing factor for young people to re-examine their surroundings, the injustices at play in their worlds and to imagine ways in which they can resist the assumption that change is not possible. It can allow young people who are participants, co-creators and performers to glimpse a utopic vision of how things might be different as a starting point to imagining a different future. Youth theatre could, and I would suggest for some does, provide a thirdspace which invites forward thinking when it offers young people a place to explore who they are in their world. That is not to say that all youth theatre spaces operate in this way. In their study, Hughes and Wilson describe youth theatre as 'a broad term used to describe a whole variety of organizations that engage young people in theatre-related activities. It takes place outside of formal education and is founded on the voluntary participation of young people' (Hughes and Wilson 2004: 58). They go on to describe a range of activities that fall under this umbrella heading and name four models for youth theatre: theatre/ arts, community, youth arts and Applied Theatre (Hughes and Wilson 2004). Each of Hughes and Wilson's models has the potential to provide youth with a vital thirdspace. To explore this, I turn to Company Three,

a youth theatre whose aims are consistent with much that Hughes and Wilson describe. Company Three seek to provide 'access to professional quality drama and theatre processes', 'to reflect and represent concerns of specific communities', in this case the youth themselves, and 'to support the personal, social and political development of young people'. Applied Theatre is the only activity on Hughes and Wilson's list that Company Three do not actively support. In Hughes and Wilson's model, Applied Theatre seeks to 'address specific issues and deliver non-arts related outcomes using theatre as a tool' (ibid.: 62). Company Three do not intend to deliver non-arts-related outcomes; in fact, they aim to 'make theatre for adult audiences' (Company Three 2020). I would argue, however, that Company Three engage in, albeit on an unconscious or unintentional way, a pedagogy of utopia through their practice. At the same time as producing theatre that is creative, engaging and with high production values, they amplify the voices of the young members through long-term, deeply embedded partnerships. Matt Fenton is correct when he says that Company Three are pushing the boundaries of what youth can do in mainstream theatre venues.

On 23 July 2015 at 6.45 pm I was in an auditorium waiting for a piece of youth theatre to start. What was out of the ordinary on this occasion was that the theatre was fully packed with people of all ages. I was sat next to a secondary school drama teacher and her elderly mother, and in front of me was an excitable group of schoolchildren. I could see middle-aged men in suits, teenagers, children and a wide diversity of people; what was more extraordinary still was that this was the auditorium of one of the spaces in London's National Theatre (NT). The piece, *Brainstorm*, created by Company Three, then called Islington Community Theatre, was being performed in the NT's Temporary Theatre. This space seats 450 people and the night I was there *Brainstorm* was midway through a sold-out run. On their website, the NT describes the Temporary Theatre as 'a brand-new theatre celebrating adventurous, ambitious and unexpected theatre' (National Theatre 2016). *Brainstorm* was indeed adventurous, ambitious and unexpected, and I would say that the NT's decision to programme the

piece in July 2015, and again in March 2016, is also all of these things, and much more. *Brainstorm* was initially a forty-five-minute-long scratch performance of theatre devised by Company Three in 2013. The piece drew on the life experiences of young people in the cast and was inspired by a TED Talk on the working of the adolescent brain by cognitive neuroscientist Sarah-Jayne Blakemore. This short piece was then developed into a full-length play in partnership with Blakemore and her colleague Kate Mills. Company Three were invited to perform *Brainstorm* at the NT twice (21–25 July 2015 and 29 March–2 April 2016) – not as a part of a youth theatre festival, or run of community performances, but as part of the main programming. The play was also produced for BBC iPlayer as part of BBC and Battersea Arts Centre's Live events broadcast from Television Centre in November 2015.¹ The script (or blueprint as Company Three prefers) was published by Nick Hern Books in 2016.

Brainstorm

As a piece of theatre, *Brainstorm* was vibrant, energetic and highly original. It was performed and devised by young people who clearly were not trained writers and performers; nevertheless, their performances were engaging, professional and delivered with a brutal honesty that was impressive to watch. Kate Maltby, theatre critic for *The Times*, wrote of the production: 'this is everything youth theatre could hope to be ... there's a deep honesty matched by an artistry and creative format that puts many of The National's recent projects to shame' (Maltby 2015). With *Brainstorm*, youth theatre was brought out of the school and community hall, and into the mainstream. Matt Fenton (2015) observed:

Traditionally, work made by young people within main-house theatres has been the domain of education, creative learning or outreach departments, often slightly side-lined within the public programme,

and not really concerned with the core business of commissioning and producing. The tendency has been to mirror and, in a benign way, educate young people to appreciate rather than challenge what is happening on our main stages. The audiences for the resulting shows have often been mainly the friends and family of those taking part.

In this case the piece had been 'commissioned' by the NT and the audience were not merely the friends and family members of the cast – and it challenged rather than mirrored mainstream work. In this way, Fenton argues, young people's theatre was 'tearing up the script' for British theatre.

The play conveys two primary messages: first, that the teenage brain is not a dysfunctional version of the adult brain and that it has evolved to generate behaviours that facilitate development, such as risk-taking and self-consciousness; and second, that during adolescence, the limbic system, the part of the brain region that makes risk-taking rewarding, develops far more quickly than other areas of the brain, making risk taking extremely attractive to young people. The young people, as part of the process, learnt about neuroscience in ways that made sense to them, helped them to understand their emotions and behaviour, and then communicate that to their parents and caregivers and then beyond to a public audience. One 18-year-old male cast member said in a focus group, *'Biologically, I've learnt why we are like this and telling this to my mum, we both understand things now, so it's helped at home.'* Another said, *'Brainstorm is like something that is different, the meaning to it and what it's about definitely interested me ... I wanted to learn and experience it ... I learnt that the reason I am like this is that my brain is not fully developed.'* Another described how her mother responded to a scene in which teenagers hold up placards with the things that they feel they cannot say to their parents' faces. *'After my mum saw that scene',* the company member reported, *'she was crying to me, saying, "Oh I'm so sorry, sorry I treated you this way"'* (Behrmann 2015: 3). One of the 14-year-olds in the cast explained, *'Brainstorm is a way of telling adults that teenagers are like they are because that's their brains, it's not bad it's supposed to happen ... it's true that teenagers are treated differently'*

and I really want to change people's minds.' He continued to explain the difference being in Company Three had made to him, telling us that he valued the sense of community spirit and collegiality that being in the company engendered. For bell hooks, when one knows 'extreme estrangement and alienation ... home is no longer just one place. It is locations' (hooks 1989a: 19). Many of the young members of Company Three have certainly felt such estrangement and alienation. hooks describes home as a place that encourages and supports different and changing viewpoints that form part of the 'construction of a new world order' (ibid.). They are spaces of 'radical openness' and 'without such spaces we would not survive' (ibid.). This sense of home, and of survival, is echoed in the young people's words when they talk about Company Three. They are echoed in the way Glasier has conceived the space of the company and the ethos of their working methods. When Glasier opened our conversation in 2016 with the words '*I have this story about how youth theatre saved my life*', he is only partly joking. Ideas of 'radical openness', of home and of survival are also implicit in my thinking about thirdspaces and a pedagogy of utopia.

It is clear when talking to the participants that they relate the quality of the work to the atmosphere created by Glasier and the rest of the company and that this relates to trust in the process, each other and Glasier, and the ownership they feel over the work. One of the female cast members stated,

I like the atmosphere and I feel like I can be myself when I am here, anything I want to express I can express ... I feel like I can express myself here more than I can at school ... If you want to develop yourself and find out who you are you should come here ... At the start I was like, I don't know how this is going to be ... I didn't know how it was going to talk to parents. I didn't know it was going to have that effect. It was everyone's idea, it came from all our heads. I have changed, I still got my politeness, I have changed in a good way ... I have found my confidence, I am more open to challenges since I came here ... we explore things we wouldn't know, you wouldn't get asked these questions you wouldn't know you could write ... even if

you are having a bad day, its good here ... I am studying business ... you have to get your head in the books, but I would like to continue with drama ... the way things go to people ... it helps me with my English ... maybe I think I have to be committed, it shows me that you have to be committed and show commitment.

Brainstorm is undoubtedly 'art', but it is also a product of a pedagogy of utopia. Glasier and Company Three's methodology provided a long-term, deeply sustained engagement in a thirdspace that invited the young people of the company to co-create art while developing critical thinking and confidence. The young people talk enthusiastically about the confidence Company Three has enabled them to find:

It's made me really confident, I am able to speak my mind and say whatever I want now, I used to be a bit shy and hold back ... I respect other people's decisions and skills ... it's given me a different eye to things. The research and development is the best bit, my favourite bit is the start of the process because there are so many possibilities.

I would suggest that Company Three are opening up Ricoeur's field of the possible – both in artistic terms and also within the lives of the young people they work alongside, and potentially for the audiences who see the work. This field may also be opened up for those who use the Company's 'blueprints'. These blueprints provide a structure to follow and ideas for script development. The nature of the blueprints means that no two productions of the play will ever be the same as new casts in different places will incorporate their own stories. As of November 2020, there have been over eighty productions worldwide; Glasier told me there had been three happening in three different parts of the world in the week prior to our conversation. *Brainstorm*, like the other productions Company Three have made, is a piece of art. In 2019 the company had a quote from the renowned theatre critic Lyn Gardner on their website's landing page: 'What Company Three is doing is not social work but art, art that stands shoulder to shoulder with some of the most inventive and high quality theatre currently being made in the UK.' She was right, and I would say that through this

work the Company also engage the social imaginations of its young members, and that their approach to ‘integrated investment’ allows them to configure a nebulous utopia. They are now sharing the means of creating a nebulous utopia through their director workshops and the publication of the blueprints by Nick Hern Books.

The Company Three methodology

Ned Glasier, the artistic director of Company Three, describes the ‘den’ of the Company’s offices as a vital space the young people of the theatre can use as they see fit: as a hangout space, a space to do homework, to gossip, to read. He describes it as a space over which they have ownership. He also cites this concept as being important to the formulation of the Company and its ethos. In the last eight years he and the Board have changed the company’s name from The Islington Youth Theatre, to Islington Community Theatre and finally its current name, Company Three. Glasier says they settled on this for several reasons. He jokes that it was because it is the Company’s third name, but aside from this, Glasier explains that the name relates to the way the theatre space and its office in a nearby library function as a thirdspace for the company’s young members. It is a thirdspace in the sense that it is unregulated; that is, not school or the family home (Glasier 2019). As a thirdspace, it is one in which young people ‘can gather to affirm their sense of difference and celebrate their feelings of belonging’ (Matthews, Limb and Taylor 2000: 64). This thirdspace is a ‘lived space’ where young people develop their own identities and challenge hegemony by contesting social conventions and asserting their independence. Glasier also says the name represents the three rules that this youth theatre operates on: be kind; be brave; be yourself. The name deliberately excludes the words ‘youth’ and ‘theatre’. The removal of the term theatre, Glasier says, reflects that they wanted a name that the company could ‘morph’, a name that does not require them to make theatre but which ‘has allowed’ them ‘to make theatre for all the right reasons’. Having

'company' in the title also carries a good deal of weight; the young people work as a legitimate theatre company in which they are given credit as creators of the work alongside the creative team. According to Glasier, adults sometimes say that seeing the work is like spending time in the company of teenagers (Glasier 2019).

Through their creative work, the young members of Company Three are able to create alternative versions of themselves and imagine different futures. This is made possible through the practice of 'integrated investment', as described in Chapter 2. This methodology pulls a diverse group of young people together into a unified and sustained creative community. They pool their skills and invest their time for mutual benefit and, in the case of Company Three, produce high-quality theatre for audiences of all ages. The Company Three website proclaimed in 2018 that it was an award-winning 'permanent company of 75 theatre makers, aged 11-19' based in Islington, London. This statement tells me two important things for the context of this book: first, that it is a 'permanent' group of 11- to 19-year-olds, that is, there is a reciprocal long-term commitment between the young people and the Company, and second, that they are a theatre company. The second statement on the website at that time told us that 'we make theatre for adult audiences that speaks deeply of what it means to be a teenager, through long-term collaboration between our company members and professional theatre-makers'. Teachers, youth workers or social workers nominate Glasier's team's young members who they believe would benefit from long-term and in-depth training and guidance. Company members attend weekly workshops during term-time and intensive projects during the school holidays and the core company members make public performance work. In addition, Company Three provide a programme of satellite projects which enable them to engage with a wider cohort of more than five hundred young people each year. These projects are thematically linked to the core company activities and vary in length from one-off workshops to a year-round programme of weekly, open-access 'drop-in' classes. Satellite projects also provide an additional referral route for young people to access the Company. Glasier explains that in recruiting

for the core Company he is not '*looking for talent*' but that he is looking for '*young people who want to tell their story but may not have the space, confidence or platform to do it. Or perhaps who do not even know they want to. We look for young people with the capacity to be kind and brave, but who may not always be able to do both yet. We are looking for people who can grow and develop and change and young people who have a bit of spark and who are a bit weird ... in the nicest way. And curating a group that aren't all the same ... it's a balance. It's a mixed group: ethnically, class experiences and school – difference is great*' (Glasier 2019). Glasier frames the opportunity to join the company as something exclusive, something to be valued and he talks about it being like getting an invitation to the guest list of a really good party.

The young company members all live in the London Borough of Islington,² and the company's demographic reflects that of the borough in which it is housed. Long-term commitment allows Glasier and other Company Three artists to get to know the young people well. He believes that this deeply embedded and integrated investment offers stability to those who may be lacking this in other areas of their lives. This long-term engagement is emphasized when a new young person joins the group. When they are introduced to the company, they meet the older members and, in Glasier's words, '*they see the journey ahead of them*' (Glasier 2019). This is a long journey. Some of the youth are as young as 11 when they join and may stay until they are 19. One young person, describing her first meeting with the group six years earlier, recalled Glasier telling the group that '*the newest member is the most important member of the company*' (ibid.). The end of a young person's experience with the company is as important as that first day. Glasier is adamant that the end of their time with the company is age bound and that the moment is marked with a ceremony called *Bonfire*, described as

When they leave they get burned on a bonfire and ascend into adulthood, and the gesture of that is that they should be sad that they are leaving their teenage years rather than celebrate that they

are leaving their teenage years. But they also talk back, the point of being burned in the bonfire is that you do a two-minute performance solo, back to the whole company and part of that is that you are saying goodbye to the company ... the heart of that I think is about saying goodbye and proper endings, but it's also about showing the youngest what the future is and the youngest all talk about what they are going to do at Bonfire. (Glasier 2019)

In this way the newest members can see that they are part of a long-term project. Company Three, though, do not keep all seventy-five of its members for the whole nine years. Glasier talks candidly about those who leave sooner but emphasizes that they do this in negotiation with the company, citing examples of people who have left for a short while to concentrate their energies in other places or who are looking for a more traditional youth theatre environment that perhaps favours working on scripts rather than devising. He also discusses how hard the company fights to keep its young people:

We spend a load of resource and energy on looking after people, I think that's really important and if you are not there a week you'll get chased and if you're not there two weeks you get a massive chase because that's danger zone, and we try and have some kind of holistic approach, we have a member of staff ... whose job is making sure people are all right. (Glasier 2019)

Company Three's long-term commitment to its young people is described by Glasier as being 'love', not in the romantic sense, but a deep, caring approach to the young people as individuals, as who they are now and for the creative process. The physical thirdspace that the company provides is an integral part of this embedded engagement. He states that their first mission is to '*create space ... physical space that people have ownership over*'. Glasier asserts that one such space is the '*den*' which he describes as '*a space which is entirely theirs, which they can come to any time, which isn't ever hired out to adults ... that they can break, that they can move around, where they can come and have genuine agency*' (Glasier 2019). The den is an extension of Glasier's interest in

'play work'. In such work, the agency of those who play is central. He states that this is the concept behind the artistic work the company makes, and this philosophy extends to the den space. That the company has a space specifically for its young people to take complete ownership over, to decorate, use as they wish, to experiment in, to retreat into, to seek refuge in or even 'to trash' (ibid.) is an index for the ethos at the heart of the company. The young people have complete agency over this space and to a very large extent the subject matter and devised contents of the theatrical work the company produces. The den, like the company, operates within the three cardinal rules, that the young people need to be kind, brave and true to themselves. In focus groups the young people quote these rules back and explain their importance. One 17-year-old male participant said, '*I live by those rules ... every human should. I live by them not just at [Company Three] but outside ... it's like you're not judged ... make[s] you believe that you can do it ... it makes me want to come back ... I think I am more aware of things, how I treat people*' (Holt 2015). An 18-year-old female, almost at the end of her time with Company Three, expanded on this point by adding that Company Three '*is the place where I can be me, people don't judge you that's what makes me go back ... the three rules keep me coming back*' (ibid.). The non-judgemental ethos pervades the creative work that the company makes. The three rules ensure equity in the room for all the participants and invites them to take creative risks and for them to have agency within the creative process. This agency and Glasier's directorial skills combine to ensure that the company's performances are both edgy and innovative. Theatre critic Lyn Gardner's review highlighted this aspect of *Brainstorm*: 'This is a very cunningly put together piece, drawing with unflinching honesty on material excavated from the young people's own lives (the things that cannot be spoken are written; the things that cannot be admitted in public are gamified ... capturing the hormonal rush and wild mood swings of teenage existence' (Gardner 2015). As an audience member, the risks the young people are taking in the show are palpable and the teenage hormonal rush is infectious, or at least *Brainstorm* evokes powerful memories for the adult audience of

that period in their own lives. The sense of exhilaration that the show produces for its cast and audiences is a result of the risks taken by the young people. The sustained engagement with young people produces a suitable environment for risk-taking and enables the youth to devise work with 'unflinching honesty'. Glasier says, '*If you want them to take risks ... you have to make it really safe.*' He criticizes those who 'assume that you can meet people for a short space of time and ask them to open themselves up in a really vulnerable way'. He talks of how he used to 'contort' himself to work with inappropriately short timescales, but is adamant that they cannot work (Glasier 2019). This commitment to long-term partnership aligns the ethos of the company with a pedagogy of utopia, as does its use of the thirdspace and its commitment to the amplification of voices less often heard.

Company Three stages autobiographical material that has been fictionalized. The work has a rawness and directness that comes from their experiences of being young Londoners. Their experiences are written into the work, sometimes their specific stories, sometimes as composite characters. The young people say that this aspect of the devising process allows them to share real feelings, thoughts and experiences. One of the 14-year-old young men said, '*it's a warming community we are like a small family, spending time together sharing personal experiences having a laugh and making things.*' A young woman, aged 16, said,

I feel the fact that we can be honest, I can say it, whatever it is, it's something to look forward to, you never have to do anything you don't wanna do ... so it's not like school where there are rules that you have to follow no matter what. I keep coming back because I have great friends here; everyone is like a family, but better. (Holt 2015)

In this respect, the young people of Company Three were offering reflections on the work and the process that are remarkably similar to those members of *To Protect, Serve and Understand* at Irondale Theater in Brooklyn, discussed in the previous chapter. However, for these young people that engagement is often over a period of years rather than weeks, and so the company and its ethos become more

deeply embedded in their lives. The young people also recognize the importance of the long-term engagement: '*It's long term ... till I am nineteen and not just for six weeks, and so it gives you stability*' (Holt 2015). New pieces are often devised in the context of residencies which gives the company a chance to bond as a group and to explore ideas and issues in depth. One of the participants explained how a summer residential had affected both him and the piece they were creating:

Nobody will ever forget it, it was amazing ... we stayed for three nights and we wasn't this close but now we are really close ... It's important because we know we have each other's backs on stage, off stage, we understand each other, it's a safe place, because when we was doing our R & D for the show it got into a lot of deep stuff ... We used to record conversations we had ... like [name] has epilepsy so we all know that we work with that and have her back and we will pick it up and not panic ... We've spent a lot of time with each other and we have fun and do everything together. We are not the same, we are all different but we can all have fun ... even if we are different there is always a way for us to be together and join in. Nobody is left alone, everyone is always thinking about each other. We put as much or as little input that we want. I don't think all companies ... if your teacher doesn't like your idea they will change it but we do a compromise. It's our words, its autobiographical and its 100 per cent true. They take everything we give them and it all goes in ... you can take things out if you don't feel comfortable with something in the play ... so we can take things out whenever we want to. It's always a safe place no one ever feels pressure. [Name] takes out personal info depending who from her family was in the audience. Or we didn't say it was us, so as audience members we don't know whose story it is ... it's anonymous. No one would ever know whose story is whose. (Holt 2015)

The trust enabled by the ethos of the company helped create *Brainstorm*, one of the most astonishing pieces of theatre I have seen in recent years. When asked how the cast felt able to share the aspects of their lives that went into the development of the script for the show, one of the cast simply said it '*was easy [because] we knew each other ... we could give*

so much but wasn't forced to. The conceptual and physical thirdspace that Company Three creates for its young people is key to all of this, as are long-term partnerships, the invitation to engage in aspirational thinking, and the articulation and amplification of the young people's voices. In this respect, the work of Company Three meets the first four elements of a pedagogy of utopia. Company Three is a space that opens possibilities in individual young people, their families and wider audiences. As such, it is a theatre that challenges hegemony and demands change, helping it to meet the fifth element: it is a practice that encompasses the notion of resistance and it enacts a pedagogy of utopia that is political, equitable and which resists the status quo. hooks calls on 'those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practices to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision' to find spaces of radical openness and spaces of resistance (hooks 1989a: 15). For hooks, the margins offer such spaces and with them the 'radical possibility of a new perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds' (hooks 1989a: 20). In the following chapter, I explore how a pedagogy of utopia can provide geographies of resistance which invite new resistant imaginings for participants.