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DOI
10.25932/publishup-50899
Publication date
2021
Document Version
Final published version
Published in
Minor Constellations in Conversation Lecture Series

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Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Bala, S., & Kerrigan, D. (2021). Embodied Practices - Looking From Small Places. In J. Heide (Ed.), *Minor Constellations in Conversation Lecture Series* (pp. 1-11). Universität Potsdam. https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-50899

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minor cosmopolitanisms

Sruti Bala, Dylan Kerrigan

Embodied Practices – Looking From Small Places

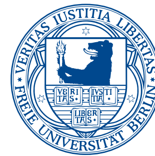
Edited by Johanna Heide

This transcript is based on the online event "Embodied Practices – Looking from Small Places" that was conceived and organised by Tori Sinanan, Jan Dammel and Johanna Heide within the framework of the lecture series *Minor Constellations in Conversation*.

Suggested citation:
Bala, Sruti and Dylan Kerrigan. "Embodied Practices - Looking from Small Places." *Minor Constellations in Conversation Lecture Series*, edited by Johanna Heide, Universitätsverlag Potsdam, 2021, pp. 1-11. https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-50899

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available at http://dnb.dnb.de.

Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – RTG 2130/2 minor cosmopolitanisms – Projektnummer 265331351.



University of Potsdam 2021

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Published online on the Publication Server of the University of Potsdam:
https://doi.org/10.25932/publishup-50899

Embodied Practices – Looking From Small Places

A Conversation between Sruti Bala and Dylan Kerrigan

Moderated by: Tori Sinanan
Conceived and organized by: Tori Sinanan, Johanna Heide, Jan Dammel
Edited and transcribed by: Johanna Heide

Mehrdad Mobasseri
Untitled, 2016, oil on paper

“He (Trouillot) demanded not only that we do research *in* small places but also that we look *from* them—a shift from looking *at* a small unit to looking *from* its place in the world.”

(Agard-Jones, Vanessa. “Bodies in the System.” *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2013, p. 183.)

Inspired by Vanessa Agard-Jones’ take on Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s legacy, this conversation brings together Sruti Bala and Dylan Kerrigan to reflect on embodied practices at the scale of the everyday: How can smaller modes of inquiry make thinking about larger structures, histories and silences productive? What can research on embodied practices, located in the Caribbean or elsewhere, tell us about systems of power and domination that move between the local and the global? Holding this discussion from the vantage points of anthropology and sociology on the one hand, and theatre and performance studies on the other, the event is conceived as an exercise in interdisciplinary exchange.
What follows is a transcript of the online event that took place on November 19, 2020 within the framework of the *Minor Constellations in Conversation* series organised by the current doctoral fellows of the RTG Minor Cosmopolitanisms at Potsdam University, Free University and Humboldt University.

Tori Sinanan (to Sruti Bala): Since 2017 you have been the principal investigator of a research project located between the University of Amsterdam and the University of Curaçao called "Cultural Practices of Citizenship under Conditions of Fragmented Sovereignty: Gendered and Sexual Citizenship in Curaçao and Bonaire."[1] Could you tell us a little bit about the project and which embodied practices you are focusing on?

Sruti Bala: I have to begin by stating that I'm no real expert on the Caribbean, although I happen to be the principal investigator of a successful five-year research grant of the Dutch Research Council. We are a team of four people, consisting of senior researcher and cultural anthropologist Professor Dr. Rosemary Allen at the University of Curaçao and two doctoral candidates at the University of Amsterdam and Curaçao, respectively. So, far from speaking authoritatively from the Caribbean, I do see myself as someone who is learning a lot from all that I have encountered in the Caribbean and from its very rich literary, cultural and political histories.
The Caribbean offers very different insights into the history of colonialism and into the postcolonial condition, than, for example, the Indian subcontinent, where I come from and which I'm somewhat familiar with. So to start off, it could be useful to give a little bit of background about the Dutch Caribbean.

"[F]ar from speaking authoritatively from the Caribbean, I do see myself as someone who is learning a lot from all that I have encountered in the Caribbean and from its very rich literary, cultural and political histories."
— Sruti Bala

The Netherlands is a Kingdom with six islands in the (Dutch) Caribbean. Following the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles, which took place on October 10, 2010, the islands all have different constitutional statuses. Three of the islands—Aruba, Curaçao and the Dutch half of Saint-Martin—are so-called constituent states with their own local governments. Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba are special municipalities of the Netherlands (comparable to Amsterdam and Utrecht in a way, though not comparable in so many other ways). Although these six islands together with Suriname form what is now broadly referred to as the Dutch Caribbean, they are very different. But what unites them in many ways are their colonial legacies.
Three of the islands are close to Venezuela and they have many ties with the continent, including speaking the Papiamento language. The so-called Leeward Islands on the other hand are 900 kilometres away, speak English and also have very different historical and contemporary political conjunctions. All the citizens of these six islands hold Dutch passports. However, they require special residence permits in order to study or live in the European part of the Netherlands. Moreover, the islands are not all part of the European Union. So, to be a citizen in the context of the Dutch Caribbean may mean at once to be a citizen of one of these municipalities or constituent countries within the kingdom, to be a citizen of the European mainland Netherlands, to be a European citizen under special provisions and to be a Caribbean. Given this very complex constellation of these

1 Further information can be found on the project website: http://www.dutch-caribbean-citizenship.info (last accessed: March 12, 2021).

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Sruti Bala is Associate Professor in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She studied German Literature at the Universities of Bombay and Bonn and completed her doctorate in Theatre Studies at the University of Mainz. Her research interests are in the fields of participatory art, pedagogy and performance, art and activism and feminism. Since 2017, she is the principal investigator of the research project "Cultural Practices of Citizenship under Conditions of Fragmented Sovereignty: Gendered and Sexual Citizenship in Curaçao and Bonaire" in co-operation with the University of Curaçao.

tiny little islands in the Caribbean, the research project has set out to understand how citizenship is practiced. In the project we focus on Curaçao and Bonaire. We are looking at citizenship from a cultural perspective, using a framework that scholars like Engin Isin[2] and Mimi Sheller[3] have referred to as 'citizenship from below'. Gendered and sexual citizenship are two of the main lenses of investigation in the project. One of the projects, that of Julian Isenia, asks how citizenship is articulated in the cultural practices of sexual minorities on the islands. His project is paying attention to the role that sexuality and especially deviance from sexual norms played in the colonisation of the islands, as well as in the quest for sovereignty. It looks at various artworks, films, plays and photography as well as at the vocabulary through which sexuality and citizenship are entangled.
The other doctoral project, that of Aronnette Martis in Curaçao, inquires into what performance practices such as tambú and barí—dances that are regarded as part of the national culture—tell us about how struggles around citizenship are entangled with questions of gender.
Rose Mary Allen and I are currently working on integrating key scholarship from and about the Caribbean on gender and sexuality in a reader that can be used in university education. We decided to take this route because accessible textbooks that address the realities and histories of the islands and foreground Caribbean voices are not that easy to find.

© Dylan Kerrigan

Dylan Kerrigan is a lecturer in criminology at the University of Leicester, where he works with a multi-disciplinary team that researches the definition, extent, experience and treatment of mental, neurological and substance abuse (MNS) disorders in Guyana's jails, both among inmates and the people who work with them. He is also a visiting lecturer at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus in the sociology unit, and he currently supervises MSc, MPhil, and PhD students in cultural and political sociology. He received his PhD in Anthropology from the American University in Washington DC. Previously, he completed a Masters in Anthropology and Cultural Process at Goldsmiths College, University of London and a BA in Social Anthropology from the University of Sussex. Researching and writing from a Caribbean perspective, he is most interested in how cultural and economic processes extend over long periods of time in the service of various systems of power.

Tori Sinanan: Following the work of Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot, how do you see the position of artists from the Dutch Caribbean? In what way are the artistic practices from these seemingly marginal sites, as you just mentioned, important to understanding systems of power and domination? How do they allow us to see things in comparison to how we see things from Europe?

Sruti Bala: Since I cannot really go into talking about any artistic practices or artists in great detail, I think I will answer this question—and I think it is an important question to ask—by talking about the stakes of the question. When we ask how artistic practices from seemingly 'marginal sites' such as the Dutch Caribbean are important to our understanding of systems of power and domination, we are not just making the argument for a more inclusive canon that gives more space to Dutch Caribbean artists and cultural practices; for instance: poets or spoken word artists who work in the Papiamento language and who would not easily be included in a Dutch poetry canon.
The ultimate issue is, however, not only *whether* they are included in the Dutch art canon. Rather, the question is: *how* to do justice to the complexities of affiliations that such poets and spoken word artists bring with them? *How* to read and appreciate works that resonate with influences from the Americas, Puerto Rico and the West Indies and which borrow and mash up Dutch and other European traditions, but don't necessarily associate with them? These artistic practices demand that we move across and between different

2 Isin, Engin F., and Bryan S. Turner. *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*. SAGE Publications, 2002.
3 Sheller, Mimi. *Citizenship from Below: Erotic Agency and Caribbean Freedom*. Duke University Press, 2012.

scales and geographies. So, we need to interconnect the question of artistic practices with the question of what it means to belong to islands such as Curaçao, Puerto Rico or wherever. Given the complex status of legal rights and national sovereignty on these islands, we need to relate this to a different scale of belonging: an assertion of personal identity through poetry and dance. We need to move across the scale of the community-level dynamics of artistic practices: micro-level analysis of biographies, as well as macro-level analysis of global trends and world systems that underpin them. Only then can certain kinds of connections arise. To me, this is one of the important lessons of Trouillot's scholarship and method that Vanessa Agard-Jones refers to in her article "Bodies in the System", which works as the opening point for this session.

> **"We need to move across the scale of the community-level dynamics of artistic practices: micro-level analysis of biographies, as well as macro-level analysis of global trends and world systems that underpin them. Only then can certain kinds of connections arise."**
>
> — Sruti Bala

Vanessa Agard-Jones refers to Michel-Rolph Trouillot as a point of departure and she cites a study he wrote in 1988, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy*,[4] in which he looks at small villages and at what is happening in the economy of very small hamlets in relation to developments in the world. He asks: is there life beyond neo-colonialism? Can we make sense of what dominated people see and do in their daily lives without keeping silent about their forced integration into the international order—and yet without reducing their lives to the fact of that integration? I think this is the challenge of a call to look at the world *from* small places and also *from* so-called marginal practices. So, beyond looking at artistic practices, the humanities also need to pay attention to the historical reasons for them being regarded as small or marginal places. And we need to find ways to not just reduce them to some sort of 'ewige' (German for forever) small places forever and ever.

But Agard-Jones also gives a very critical appraisal of Trouillot in that very same text in relation to her own feminist approach to critical ethnography. She argues that:

> [w]hile, he [Trouillot] writes compellingly about global capital, about nations, villages, communities and even about individual agency, he only rarely wrote about bodies. In fact, he studiously avoided an engagement with his own as well as those of his interlocutors. (Agard-Jones 186)[5]

So, she critiques Trouillot for not actually taking embodied practices and the scale of the human body into account and she argues that we need to complement Trouillot's observations with the insights of Caribbean feminists like M. Jacqui Alexander, Deborah Thomas, Patricia Mohammed and others in this lineage. These scholars have shown that bodies—especially the bodies of women and of those deemed abnormal or deviant—are used to legitimise and operationalise modes of power in postcolonial states. So, artistic practices can help to draw our attention to the nuances of how this occurs and how struggles against such marginalisation are undertaken.

Tori Sinanan: Thank you. Leading from this discussion of systems of power and domination, the next question is for Dylan. You do a lot of work with respect to justice systems in both Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. Could you tell us a little bit about the project in Guyana and what Guyanese prisons tell us about systems of power and domination that go from the global to the local?

Dylan Kerrigan: I'm currently one of the lead investigators for a three-year, ESRC-funded project into mental, neurological and substance abuse (MNS) disorders in Guyana's prisons amongst both the prisoners and also prison staff and fam-

4 Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

5 Agard-Jones, Vanessa. "Bodies in the System." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2013, p. 186.

ilies.[6] The project is interested in looking at the relationship between empire and the development of mental health disorders within Guyana more generally. In many ways, we're looking at this through the lens of coloniality and are trying to understand how you can make links between the past and the present. Previously, a lot of this work was focused on things like discourses, how ideas travel through time. But when you have a three-year project and you are on the ground in Guyana working with researchers from the University of Guyana and you are able to go into the prisons and look behind the scenes, you start to see other ways to make these connections across time. You start to see how prisons in the Caribbean, and I think elsewhere, form social control regimes. They are there to develop a sort of underclass and to maintain class hierarchies.

"In a nutshell, prisons through criminalisation and incarceration transform bodies into tiny units of extraction for accumulation processes that I would describe as racial capitalism and that you might say are the contemporary form of imperialism in the Caribbean."

— Dylan Kerrigan

In fact, an insight from prison research from an anthropological perspective is that prisons are key institutions of what we might call racial capitalism. And analyses by scholars like Ruth Wilson Gilmore point out how prisons today—much like colonial prisons—extract profit through incarcerating bodies. Prison infrastructures, salaries, surveillance and basically the whole economy around prisons require the circulation and accumulation of capital for their existence. So, from this point of view, prisons from their colonial origin to today are not there for justice, families or societies. Rather, they are there for a kind of extraction, which is a sort of enforcement of inactivity of people and their bodies within prisons. In a nutshell, prisons through criminalisation and incarceration transform bodies into tiny units of extraction for accumulation processes that I would describe as racial capitalism and that you might say are the contemporary form of imperialism in the Caribbean: as long as a body is incarcerated, capital starts to flow, circulate and accumulate and in this sense, Caribbean prisons—just like colonial slavery and plantations—extract money by capturing and enslaving people's time. In humanistic terms, once you become cognisant of this trans-historical logic of carceral colonialism and carceral capitalism, it starts to push you towards thinking about social change. Because when you walk into Caribbean prisons, it is like returning to the nineteenth century: the infrastructure is the same, the horrible prison walls and small rooms that accommodate fourteen men, but were built for six, are the same. It is very intense and you end up going in there feeling the need to change this.

Raising awareness for these circumstances is another aspect of our project. Because people who never go into prisons don't understand how bad it is inside and therefore the general population of Guyana says something along the lines of: "Well, you know these people in prison, they deserve it. Keep them in prison…" What we tried to do is to provide a podcast, radio show appearances and newspaper articles to get our work into the public sphere in order to change the public imagination about what is happening in prisons so that the public will eventually lean on the government, because we cannot really lean on the government.

Tori Sinanan: Having also taught and lived in the Caribbean for a long time, why do you think it is important to start from these small places and look outwards? What can we achieve when we do this?

Dylan Kerrigan: In my prison research in Guyana and in Trinidad and also in my research into court systems in Trinidad and communities that have been underdeveloped—especially youth gangs with whom I do performance work—I try to connect the micro or everyday experiences of Caribbean people to trans-historical and transnational processes of the global political economy. As I said earlier, to think about racial capitalism and how social structures emerging from colonialism produce a sort of proto-capitalism across time, for me, is very important.

6 Further information can be found on Dylan Kerrigan's website: https://www.dylankerrigan.com (last accessed: March 12, 2021).

> "What is abolished is the memory of the historical processes that created the hierarchies that we live within in the present."
> — Dylan Kerrigan

I often think about Trouillot in the sense of colonial amnesia and the silences that are created in the historical record, because he is very clear that what is abolished is not history. It is not the past. What is abolished is the memory of the historical processes that created the hierarchies that we live within in the present. My work thinks about these things on different levels. As Sruti was saying earlier, you have the macro global level, which I say are the social structures of capitalism and racial capitalism from which everything starts to unfold from the 1600s onwards. For example, I am thinking about how feudalism turns into colonialism within a Caribbean context. I am also thinking about how those structures had inbuilt hierarchies and inequalities, many of which were racialised, gendered or sexualised. These hierarchies then become embedded in institutions and impact forms of governance, democracy, policing, language and cultural practices. Contexts of structural racism and structural oppression emerge and cultures of prejudice within institutions keep people at the bottom. When you go to court or prison systems in the Caribbean, much like here in England, it is all about social class: those people you put in prison don't get social mobility. This has impacts on their families, who also don't really get social mobility. Consequently, you get this class of people who are stuck at the bottom. Some of them turn to substance addiction and other things, which then creates more problems, because weed and other substances are usually what get you arrested in the Caribbean. So on a meta-level, I think about how structures become embedded in the institutions. But I also think about the micro-level. As you know, my anthropological background is very much about talking to people and about trying to understand their experiences and their bottom-up pictures of the world. In doing so, I see how structural things such as hierarchies and inequality within institutions are experienced by people in their everyday lives. And I find that there are all these linkages between the past and the present. For example, when you go to the present-day Caribbean, historically underdeveloped communities are often the most violent and most murderous communities. So, there is this long-standing relationship: governments and outside agencies look at these communities and they classify them as criminal. They blame the individual, when really you need to think about how long-standing social problems impact your psyche once they are your lived experience.

> "From the 1970s forward and with a cultural shift to neoliberalism, we move from having this connected way of seeing the world—which was previously very dominant—to narratives about personal responsibility."
> — Dylan Kerrigan

And when they impact people's psyche, they leave people with life-skill deficits: this means that they make bad decisions, have problems with anger management and might choose to do crime. But it is not that they suddenly woke up one day and they are like: "hey, I'm going to commit a crime." Rather, you have to put their lives within this kind of sociological imagination, this trans-historical imagination, in order to understand the decisions people make as connected to broader processes.

From the 1970s forward and with a cultural shift to neoliberalism, we move from having this connected way of seeing the world—which was previously very dominant—to narratives about personal responsibility. When you are thinking about court systems and you are thinking about prisons and you are thinking about how those things are usually run by elites, who are not really connected to society, you start to see that the decisions that people make are not simply a matter of individuals. Rather, they are individuals—as any anthropologist here will say—finding cultural ways to adapt to social processes: exclusion, lack of opportunities and so forth. I see Caribbean prison systems as part of the project of postcolonial state building that extends racial hierarchies, class hierarchies and the past into the present. And when you go into the prisons, they are overcrowded, they are run down, they are full of inhumane conditions and they echo

colonial times. The creaking of metal and other prison sounds haunt you; a soundscape that we might not necessarily think about starts to appear and you see the afterlives of colonialism and slavery in the present. And so in that sense, a lot of my work is about thinking about how racist, classist and sexist forms of colonial social control are connected to capital and how they extend from the past to the present.

Tori Sinanan: This leads us very nicely to the notion of global asymmetries, which is a central term in your work, Sruti. When performance practices take place, they are framed, perceived and they are also structured; and the discourse about performance and the way it is produced and transmitted is also structured.
What do you mean when you talk about global asymmetries and why is it important to talk about them in theatre and performance studies?

Sruti Bala: If you don't mind, can I ask Dylan a question before I come to this?

Tori Sinanan: Of course!

Sruti Bala: I'm curious to know more about the theatre and performance work that you mentioned you are doing.

Dylan Kerrigan: Obviously, as you would know, oral cultures have a lot of currency in the Caribbean context for a variety of reasons. And a lot of the young people that I work with in prison may have joined gangs or may have dropped out of school at the age of fourteen or fifteen and they often have literacy issues. So, one of the things that we try in order to help them talk about their experiences is to set up spoken word workshops. What we do is we get experts in spoken word, who come in and give a performance. We also get experts on certain topics to come and speak about, for example, how guns are transferred in the country, or how crime is connected to poverty. The aim is to give them a little bit more technical knowledge. We then use the rest of the session to develop spoken word poems. Another thing that we have done once in one of our workshops with these prisoners is to think about how to take some of the findings about the conditions in prison to create a sort of performance verbalisation. So, they do a little performance based on some of the insights that we give them and then they perform that for other people in the prisons. The spoken word workshops have been quite successful, because what you find with a lot of young people we work with is that they are scared to write things down. But when you give them examples of other ways to talk about their experiences, they embrace it. The other format in which the prisoners through performance disseminate information was also well liked by the youth, because they feel like they matter. Suddenly, there are other people there just to talk to them. So, spoken word or data verbalisation are the two main performance methods that we use. Generally, we have found that it is a lot easier to collect data from young men who don't really want to write and be in interviews if you give them a kind of performance culture (spoken word or data verbalisation). So, that is really what we have done, not proper 'theatre theatre,' but aspects of performance.

"What does it mean to translate performance in the context of global asymmetries?"

— Sruti Bala

Sruti Bala: To me it is proper; there is no reason to not call it proper theatre. It is very interesting to hear and it also gives me a kind of bridge to come to the question of global asymmetries. I think you (the organising team, editor's note) picked up that concept from an article[7] that came about in the context of a project I was involved in with colleagues from Cape Town and Delhi. That project was about translation and performance and asked: what does it mean to translate performance in the context of global asymmetries? So, the focus was not on translation in the linguistic sense, although this was not ignored. Rather, it was referring to translation in this kind of root-etymological sense of 'carrying over/across' a much broader range of sensorial and other intersubjective practices: the conveying of gestures, styles, dramaturgy, genres, mov-

7 Bala, Sruti. "Necessary misapplications: the work of translation in performance in an era of global asymmetries." *South African Theatre Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2020, pp. 5–13.

ing across media, moving across different cultural contexts and physical spaces. What you (Dylan, editor's note) were saying earlier about bringing in a spoken word artist as well as people who are knowledgeable about themes that are of concern to the research such as substance abuse and who are working across these domains is an example of translating from one domain to another in performance.
What is at stake are both pragmatic issues as well as bigger political, philosophical things. Similarly, our interest in translation was both pragmatic as well as conceptual. And we were particularly interested in the question of what it means to translate across uneven terrains, across cultural, historical contexts that cannot be assimilated into any easy comparison with each other.
Often art and theatre practice are ascribed some kind of bridge-building and healing capacities that are somehow innately able to overcome disparities. I am very sceptical about that, because art can also just as well do harm. And I think it is pretty naive to assume that art is always necessarily benign. But we found it important to think about translation not as a practice of finding equivalence or of seeking equilibrium, but rather as practice of grappling with asymmetries.
For example, from the South African context: what does it mean to build post-apartheid society in South Africa? This question can be taken and translated into the context of the Caribbean in certain ways. And it can be taken to the Indian context and thought about and connected in certain ways. Likewise, the rise of fascism and white supremacy in the US is translatable to the rise of fascism in other parts of the world. But we need to be attuned to the asymmetries in this translation process, just as we need to be able

Mehrdad Mobasseri
Untitled, 2016, oil on paper

“It is one thing to say, ‘oh, it is not possible to translate.’ But what if we think that even though it is inconvenient, difficult and impossible, it needs to be done.”

— Sruti Bala

to see the connections and historical links. So, this is the work of translation in the context of global or perhaps even planetary asymmetries; and this is somewhat different from the somehow banal claim of ‘untranslatability.’ It is one thing to say, “oh, it is not possible to translate.” But what if we think that even though it is inconvenient, difficult and impossible, it needs to be done.
In that sense, working with asymmetries is a necessary task—also in Trouillot’s spirit of working across different skills and making sense of them. It is a labourious work and it is a work wherein you come across various contradictions, but that is required.
What was important to us when we were doing the research project around translation and the notion of global asymmetries came into our minds was to a) leave behind innocent claims around theatre being somehow in itself transformative and to b) examine how artistic practices attempt to handle both macro- and micro-levels; for example, how do we translate a myth into stage performance, both in its pragmatic dimensions as well as its larger issues of dealing with cultural, historical disparities and unevenness.

Tori Sinanan: Dylan, we have talked a lot about bridging scales and also a lot about work between fields. You are an anthropologist by PhD. But you have also branched into the fields of sociology and criminology. How did this come about and how does this add to your work? And also tacking on to global asymmetries: how does that concept show itself to you when you are working in the Caribbean?

Dylan Kerrigan: If you look at the fifty countries that have the highest homicide rates in the world, something like forty-six of those can be found in former colonies across the Caribbean, Latin America and Central America and I have often thought that this is a good symbolic reference to how asymmetries function in terms of deadly violence. I will spin back to this, but to answer your first question: I have always loved anthropology and I feel at heart I’m always going to be an anthropologist. But when I got my PhD, I ended up getting a job as a sociologist. And even though they wanted me to also teach anthropology, it was technically a sociology department. I kind of had a second PhD then; and I often feel like I suddenly had twelve years in which I had to learn how to be a sociologist because of my new job.
Within the context of the Caribbean, political sociology then became the heart of everything I do. This was partly because within my anthropological fieldwork, I had always been very interested in political anthropology and questions around systems of power such as: how does power play out? Who has it, how do they use it and what are the cultural examples that can be tied to systems of power?
Because Trinidad deals with a lot of violence at the present time and over the last twenty years, I ended up doing a lot of work in the sociology of crime. One of the problems that I encountered was that a lot of the researchers in the Caribbean (and the organisations that are funding research there) did not have access to people who could go into communities and build up relationships with people who are—in terms of economic and social class—at the bottom. All my ethnographic skills suddenly became very useful for studies of the sociology of crime.
Then, because I had become a sociologist of crime, I started getting invited to do more criminological work. And before I knew it, I was applying for jobs as a criminologist. Now I use all three of those backgrounds—and I would add that history and the humanities more broadly are another huge component of what I do as well. I guess it has made me a better scholar, because I don’t see things as *just* anthropological or social. I see how it all fits together. Moreover, I want to make the world better and fairer for everybody. So, there is a deliberate bias in my work to go in and try to really affect social change. When I first got to my job as a criminologist, I was not aware of how conservative the field was. Coming from all these other backgrounds it really came as a shock to me. I remember giving a presentation about my work in prisons and how a few of the criminologists in

the room came up to me saying: "you are doing what criminology really should be about, you know, mattering to people's lives."

"I don't really feel the Caribbean is a small place, I feel the Caribbean is a massive place. [...] What has happened is that people have now told us that the Caribbean is a small place."

— Dylan Kerrigan

This was a long answer to your first question, but to jump back to the second question of asymmetries: I don't really feel the Caribbean is a small place, I feel the Caribbean is a massive place. And I don't think you can talk about capitalism without understanding how the Caribbean is the genesis of where these processes start. What has happened is that people have now told us that the Caribbean is a small place. Of course, this is not to say that demographically in a small place there are particular cultures and social realities. But in terms of the impact on the world and what has unfolded in terms of factories, of bookkeeping and the racialisation of capitalism, the Caribbean is a huge place. And I don't think you can be doing any work in the world without some kind of historical background that includes how colonialism, capitalism or proto-capitalism emerge out of the relationships and the room that was set up

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by slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean. In the UK context, you can easily see how during emancipation, billions in today's money were given to slaveholders rather than to those who were enslaved. We are talking about the families of people like David Cameron, which went on to be massive parliamentary families, we are talking about the founding of banks in the UK, we are talking about insurance companies, we are talking about the rail networks. All of that is built with money from slavery or colonialism. So, for me, what going back to Trouillot is about is these hierarchies that determine the world today: for example, how the Caribbean is treated in terms of climate change or debt relief. So, I like to think while the Caribbean is small in some ways and it is hard to get its voice out there, it is so large if you want to understand how we got to where we are today.

Tori Sinanan: Thank you. So we have one more question for Sruti: since we were talking about anthropology and given the vexed history and relation of theatre and performance studies with this field, could you talk about how you use anthropological methods in your work?

Sruti Bala: I want to echo Dylan's last point and the importance of that. It is really great if we conclude this session by beginning with the quote of 'looking *from* small places' and actually realise that they are not small in so many ways.
To anthropology in relation to theatre and performance studies: there is a very difficult relation to anthropology for historical reasons. At the same time, theatre research and performance studies have benefited from methods common in anthropology such as participant observation. And there are some good models for conducting anthropological research in theatre and performance such as the work of the late Dwight Conquergood. But I actually want to talk about two other interesting examples, which engage in what is called reverse ethnography—a mode of doing research that mirrors and models the problematic aspects of anthropological participant observation research, but speaks back and holds a mirror up to those very same categories. One example is that of the Cameroonian anthropologist Flavien Ndonko. He did a study about Germans' obsession with dogs and his study tried to pay attention to it in the same way that classic anthropologists come to Cameroon and look at Cameroonians' rites, rituals and ceremonies.[8] He comes to Germany and studies how

8 Ndonko, Flavien. "Deutsche Hunde. Ein Beitrag zum Verstehen deutscher Menschen." *Inspecting Germany. Internationale Deutschland-Ethnographie der Gegenwart*, edited by Thomas Hauschild and Bernd Warneken, Lit Verlag, 2002, pp. 53–73.

Germans relate to their dogs. In this kind of reverse ethnography the tools are turned around to speak back to the ones who have treated Cameroonians as the object of their research all this while. This method has a very performative component, because it is, of course, very ironic. But it is serious at the same time; and the combination of that irony and that sincerity lends it a certain power of giving insight into what the field of anthropology and the methodology of ethnography are, as well as some actual truth into Germans' relations to dogs.

Another interesting example is a classic performance artwork by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco. This is an old work from the early nineties called "The Couple in a Cage: Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West."[9] There is a whole documentary film about it.[10] The two artists exaggerated the stereotype of indigenous people, who are to be discovered by the West in a performance in the Smithsonian Art Museum in New York. At the time when it appeared, it was scandalous and caused a lot of provocations. But as an art piece it served as a kind of anthropology of the gaze. Because it was a reversal of the gaze of the anthropologist by measuring it, blowing it out of proportion and throwing it back to that. So, I think there are examples of art practices, which are helpful for us in showing us the relation between anthropology, the problems of anthropology and the way in which theatre and performance relate to it.

Tori Sinanan: Thank you to both our speakers!

Special thanks to Saskia Köbschall for her conceptual input to the event, to Rachel Pafe for proofreading the transcript, to Mehrdad Mobasseri for letting us use his artworks and to Tobias Kauer for the design and layout of the poster and transcript.

9 Fusco, Coco. "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," *TDR (The Drama Review)*, vol. 38, no. 1, 1994, pp. 143-167.

10 *The Couple in the Cage*. Directed by Paula Heredia and Coco Fusco, 1993.