

LSE Review of Books and LSE Health and Social Care Literary Festival event

Beyond the Book: new forms of academic communication

Professor Miriam Bernard

Keele University

Dr Gareth Morris

University of Salford

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Ages and Stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of ageing

Miriam Bernard, Keele University.

**LSE Review of Books Literary Festival event:
'Beyond the Book: new forms of academic communication'.**

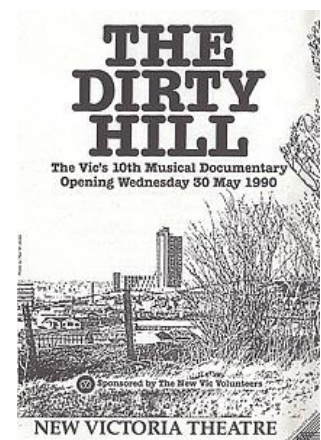
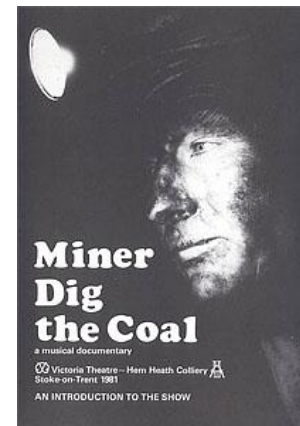
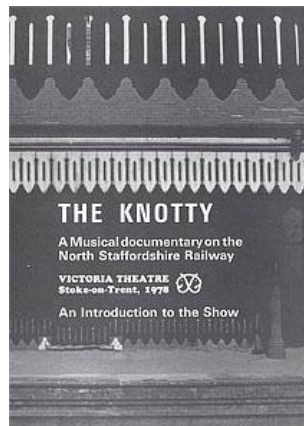
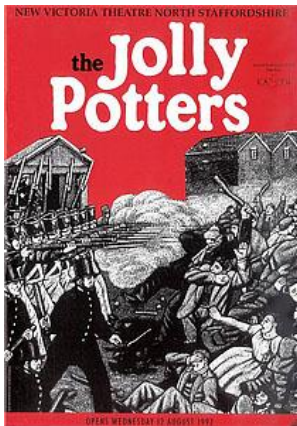
Thursday 28 February 2013.



Research Programme

- **Strand 1: Historical Representations**

- Archival research in the Victoria Theatre Collection.
- Representations of ageing/intergenerational relationships in the documentaries. Detailed analysis of particular documentaries: 'The Knotty'; 'Fight for Shelton Bar!' and 'Nice Girls'.

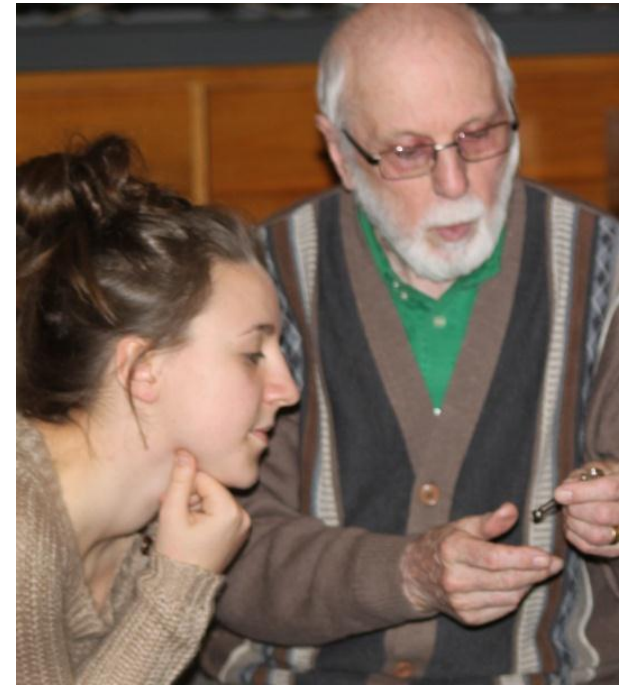


- **Strand 2: Recollections and Contemporary Representations**

- Individual/couple interviews: n=79 (@1.5 hrs) - 95 people in total.
- Group interviews: n=10; further discussion of theatre in relation to ageing, intergenerational relationships and sense of place.
- Ethnography: participant observation with New Vic volunteers.

Strand 3: Performance

Intergenerational workshops: Sept 2011 - May 2012



Strand 3: Performance

Agnes and Stages Exhibition: 25th June – 21st July 2012



Strand 3: Performance

Our Age, Our Stage: rehearsals and tour, June - July 2012









Social scientists

(Michael)



(Mim,
Michelle)

(Ruth)



**Theatre
practitioners**

(Jill)



**Humanities
colleagues**

(David, Lucy)





The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing

Ages and Stages is a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, running from October 2009 to July 2012. We are exploring how age and ageing have been constructed, represented and understood in the Victoria/New Vic Theatre's social documentaries from the 1960s to the 1990s; what part the theatre has played in constructing individual and community identities and creating and preserving community memory; the relationship between older people's involvement in the theatre and continuing social engagement in later life; the practical and policy implications of our research findings. This project is funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) cross-council research programme.



Research Programme and Methods

Strand 1 explores historical representations of ageing through literary and cultural analyses of materials relating to the Victoria Theatre's social documentaries, held in the Victoria Theatre Archive.

Strand 2 focuses on recollections and contemporary representations of ageing through 80 individual qualitative interviews and a series of group interviews with older people who were: (i) sources for the Vic's social documentaries; (ii) theatre volunteers; (iii) audience members throughout their lives; (iv) actors and theatre employees who continue to live in the Potteries. In addition, participant observation is being carried out at the theatre, with volunteers and older people participating in educational and social events and activities.

In **Strand 3**, materials drawn from Strands 1 and 2 are being used to work with the New Vic Youth Theatre and older people to create a new social documentary performance. The performance, together with an exhibition and a range of associated educational materials, will be taken out into, and evaluated in, a variety of community settings.

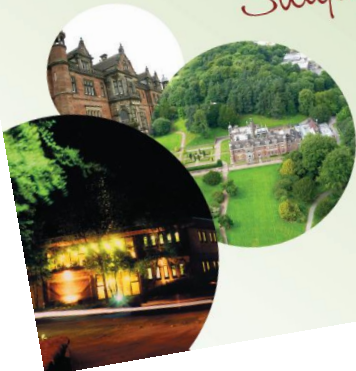
Research Team – Miriam Bernard (PI), Jill Rezano (New Vic Theatre), David Amigo, Lucy Murro, Michael Murray, Michelle Rickett, Ruth Basten, Tracey Harrison. Enquiries: 01782 723845 or e-mail L.J.harrison@kcl.ac.uk

Advisory Group – Anne Basting, Joanna Bernal, Ronny Cheeseman, Janet Fatt, Susan Feldman, Mel Hatzikyriak, Ray Johnson, Nick Jones, James Knowles, Louise Middleton, Gordon Ramsay, Pam Schweitzer, Mary Brown, Tony Carter, Teresa Lefort, Elizabeth Slater

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/agesandstages/>



Ages and Stages



Ages and Stages: Policy Brief

Compiled by: Jackie Reynolds, Consultant;

Michelle Rickett, Research Associate; Miriam Bernard, Principal Investigator.

This policy brief is an outcome of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) funded research project entitled *Ages and Stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of ageing*. The project (2009-12) was a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Combining literary, cultural and historical analyses with qualitative interview work and research-led practice, *Ages and Stages* provided both theoretical and practical understandings of the role that theatre plays in the lives of older people and in the wider community. The research was drawn together to create a new documentary drama *Our Age, Our Stage* and the associated *Ages and Stages* Exhibition. *Our Age, Our Stage* toured schools, colleges, retirement communities and local councils and was performed to a capacity audience of 500 people at the New Vic Theatre on July 11th 2012.

Our research findings have policy implications that may be viewed in the context of what is often referred to as 'active ageing', as well as a growing interest in older people's arts engagement. This briefing identifies key policy developments relating to older people; reviews their implications and those of our research findings; and makes a series of recommendations for policy makers who might be interested in developing and including intergenerational theatre/drama in their policies and (inter-professional) practices.

Key Recommendations:

- Policies need to reflect the fact that participation in creative activities can be an important aspect of 'ageing well'.
- It is necessary to join up policy agendas on 'arts, health and well-being' with those addressing the needs of 'an ageing society'.
- Policies to promote social cohesion should recognise the potential of intergenerational theatre and drama as a medium for the inclusion of older and younger people.
- Opportunities for intergenerational groups to work creatively together should be included as part of Age Friendly Cities and Communities initiatives, and should contribute to planning processes.
- Better and more widespread information and publicity is needed to encourage the participation of older and younger people in creative activities.



new dynamics of ageing
a cross-council research programme

Ages and Stages: the place of theatre in representations and recollections of ageing

Guest holders: Miriam Bernard (PI), Professor of Social Gerontology; David Amigo, Professor of Victorian Literature; Lucy Murro, Senior Lecturer in English; Michael Murray, Professor of Social and Health Psychology – all Keele University; Jill Rezano, Head of Education, New Vic Theatre; Research Associate: Michelle Rickett; PhD student: Ruth Basten; Administration: Tracey Harrison



Ages and Stages is a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme. Between October 2009 and July 2012, we explored historical representations of ageing within the Vic's social documentaries and interviewed 95 older people who have been involved with the theatre as volunteers, actors and employees, audience members and sources for the documentaries. The research was drawn together to create a new piece of documentary drama called *Our Age, Our Stage* and the associated *Ages and Stages* Exhibition.

Our research demonstrates:

- The importance of challenging stereotypes that creativity declines/ceases in old age.
- Connections between identity, belonging, well-being, self-esteem and self-confidence, and how they can be enhanced through theatre and drama.
- The role that theatre and drama can play as a medium for the inclusion of older and younger people.
- Positive health outcomes and a sense of well-being for both older and younger participants, with practical and policy implications for community cohesion.
- The necessity of joining up policy agendas on arts, health and well-being with those of an ageing society.



Our Age Our Stage
The Ages and Stages Company
2012

© The Ages & Stages project
Website: www.keele.ac.uk/agesandstages
j.rezano@newvictheatre.org.uk



Where next?



- **Follow-on-Funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)- (01.08.12 – 31.07.13)**
 - Establish an intergenerational theatre company at the New Vic.
 - Develop and evaluate new performance pieces/two week tour.
 - Develop, deliver and evaluate an inter-professional training course.
 - Scope out, with a range of partners, the potential for a 'Creative Age Festival' in Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire.



For more information



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<http://agesandstagesproject.blogspot.com/>



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Gareth Morris

Beyond the Book



Billy, aged 23



There are worse things in Life than living in temporary accommodation. Sometimes a stay in a hostel is just what we need to gain control of our Lives.

Life's easy as a Little Kid because you've got, you don't need to worry about nothing yourself. You're parents are there to look after you, you've got food on the table made by your parents, your clothes are done by your parents.



It seemed like normal life. It wasn't something you'd go and share on the playground. Like, "Oh, my dad beat my mum up." I just thought it was a normal way of life.



It went on for... I'd say I started seeing it when I was about 7 up until she left him when I was about 14 I think.



Like I say, it was a normal part of life at the time.



It was when I was about 15 when I realised my dad was my step-dad. My mum and my brother told me because my brother got kicked out by my step-dad. As soon as he turned 16, he got kicked out of the house, so then it was just me and my sister left.

Me and my brother saw that my sister got a lot more than we did. I don't know if that was because she was the younger one at the time or whether it was favouritism because she was his actual daughter and we weren't his sons.





My brother used to come down and see me all the time like, or he'd ring me, and he used to say, 'You've got to come and meet your proper dad with me. You've got to come and meet your proper dad', but I wasn't interested. Where had he been for past 15 years if he knew where we were?



As far as I was concerned I was happy, because my mum had a new boyfriend at this time....

I saw things change a little bit. I started getting €5 pocket money a week....



I wasn't seeing my mum, getting beat up. Life was just better....



I needed money to fit into this, in with these people like, so I went the wrong way about getting money. Used to pinch it off my mum and that...

I didn't really care about getting qualifications at the end of school because I just thought something would fall into place....



But Luckily I had my form teacher at school, Paul. I had respect for the guy because he spoke to me normally. He had respect for me, so I showed it back.

I was convinced I didn't need school because I was going into the Army. I didn't need nothing to get into the Army. I just needed to pass the Army tests. I didn't need qualifications....



Paul left in Year 9 like. So through Year 10 I had a pretty rough year really like and then left school. I used to meet up with Paul and he used to take me pool or bowling or something like and we just used to talk about things. He used to ask me how school was going, telling me to keep up the good work. Just basically encouraging me.



The night before the Army interview. I was cleaning my boots.



Mums boyfriend just started going dead angry with me and all it was is I'd put the polish on with the off brush instead of using the on brush. So I'd got the brushes mixed up. That that led to me being kicked out at 16. the day before I was due to go for the interview.



The first person who came into my head to help me was Paul and it was about ten o'clock at night. I'd gone to the nearest phone box and I had his house and mobile number like....

His wife, Laura, made me a brew and that. They set up a bed in the spare room and said, "You can stay here. I'll take you to your interview tomorrow and we'll see how it goes from there."



I said to mum, "I'm not being funny mum, but I'm not coming back to that house until he's gone. You've basically made me do this". If my mum's my mum, she was meant to love me, she was meant to look after me. She let another man control her life again and that's my mum's problem. She falls in love easily and lets men just walk all over her.



I went for my interview with the Army. The officer said I wasn't quite confident or fit enough....



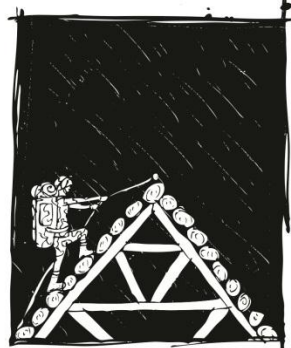
They asked me to go on an Army preparation course. It was to help you with the two day selection test, to get the fitness levels up, to help them with team building, to help them get their confidence up. I said, "Yeah, I'll give anything a go."



I was doing my two day selection again and I nailed it. I completely fixed it this time..



I soon completed the 24 week infantry basic training with flying colours...



I got picked for the Para selection course and I was like, "Whoa, I've only just done my training man." I was twelve weeks doing my Para course, came back and I was fully qualified. On your rank slide you have a parachute with spread wings. So I'm walking about my camp with these wings on me, everybody all of a sudden knew me, knew my name.... I'd never experienced that kind of respect before.



In 2005, we got shipped out to Iraq for seven months and that was a horrible place to be...



I'd got into a top job straight away. I was. Like. everybody was my friend.

We were in a group of four Land Rovers, called Snatches. I got to my orders a bit late. I should have been in the second van.

C'MON BILLY YOU'RE LATE!



Because I was late, I got chucked into the third one...



That second snatch hits a roadside bomb.



I saw two of my pretty good mates get blown to pieces in front of my eyes...



There were so many people there, so many Iraqis there. It was like they knew what was happening. Well obviously they had planned it. It was madness. We were there trying to calm things down, calm the situation down. We got a vehicle on fire, we got people. The guy who was on top cover, half of his body, it had just destroyed half of him.



Came back from Iraq, my head was messed up man and I came back home. I had three weeks off when I got back from Iraq and I must've had about fifteen grand in my bank, what I've saved up. There's not really much you can buy over there so just saved my money up. I wasted my money and I got involved in drugs. I met up with my elder brother, Mark, and he was involved in drugs at the time and he got me involved in pills and that like and I started taking pills....



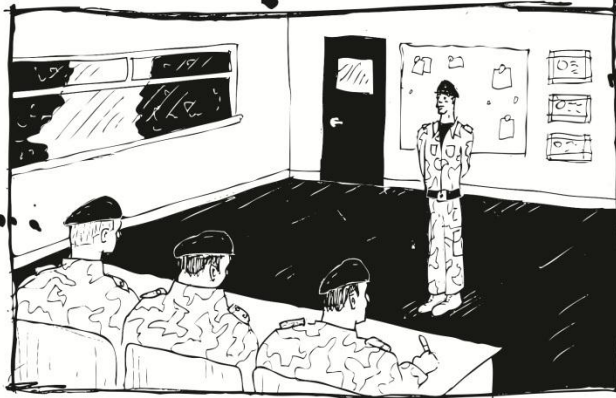
In my eyes it did me good, because it stopped me thinking about the things that'd just happened and I went and enjoyed myself instead....

But then after the three weeks I got back to my Army camp....



We had a piss test....

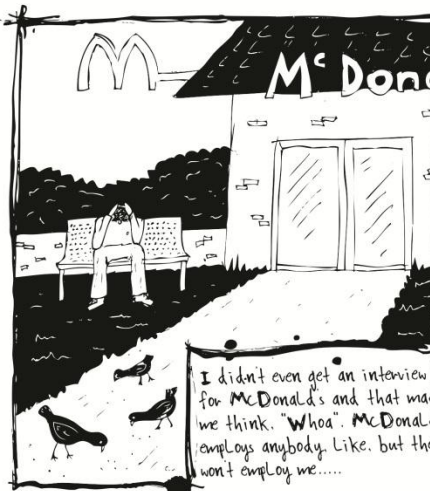
I knew I was going to fail



I goes into my commanding officers office and he goes, "Why did you take it?" "I want out of the Army mate and I didn't want to wait." "You've got to stay in for four years unless you get medically discharged or kicked out for drugs. A lot of people would take drugs purely to get kicked out. Dishonourable discharge. I come out of the Army and that's basically when my life turned upside down really...."



Come out of the Army and it was hard to get another job. Even though I'd been in the Army for two and a half years it was still hard to get another job because of the reasons why I got kicked out of the Army.





Because I couldn't get a job I turned to crime more to fund my drug habit. I was used to being able to walk to my bank, put my card in and withdraw 200 quid whenever I wanted. When I came out of the Army, I realised that I took money for granted.



I'd bungled my mum's house before. I'd taken money off Paul....

He obviously didn't want me living there no more...



I was like, "I wouldn't move into the hostel. It's full of bagheads. I'm alright ta".



I slept rough for one night and it was horrible. I didn't like it at all....



I had no choice but to come here. I met some real good friends like. You get new faces all the times, which are bound to arrive, but I've seen people arrive and get attached to Cider. Cider's the main one. I went on it for a bit. No good that....



I want my own place. I've got a nice girlfriend now, we're both living here. I want my own kids. I want my own car. I want my own place and I want my own decent job. You're never going to get that unless you're bothered to do something. I saw that I wasn't going to get all that by going out and committing crime all the time. That was just going to get me my own one-man jail cell for another God knows how many years and I didn't want that. I'd been there once and that was enough. It taught me not to do anything again like.



I went to the Job Centre and they told me about something called the Future Jobs Fund. They'll get you a job, thirty hours a week. The Government pay you national minimum wage. It's only a six month temp thing like, but it'll be good for you. I'll get you another job. She went through the list of jobs. I'll go for that one please duck. A week later she rang me up. Hi Billy, you start next Tuesday cutting grass and picking up litter.

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