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Historical and Cultural Background

Liz Tomlin

Part One: Politics, Society and Culture

Introduction

By 1995 the seemingly unstoppable march of globalisation was well underway, and it becomes impossible, in this final volume, to neatly extricate British politics of the period from events of global significance such as the expansion of the European Union, the terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Centre, and the financial banking crisis that struck the economies of the developed world in 2008. Since the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the people of the twelve member states had been European citizens, with common passports and the right to move, live and vote in any country in the European Union (EU). The Treaty also defined the stages that would be required to achieve economic and monetary union, which finally arrived for the majority of member states with the advent of the Euro in 1999. In 2004 the EU expanded to incorporate member states from much of Eastern Europe, with Romania and Bulgaria joining in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

The dissolution of many of the national boundaries that had previously existed on the continent did have an impact on British artists and cultural organisations over this period who found partnerships and movement across and within the continental European countries significantly easier than had previously been the case. The expansion of European festivals, and the development of the British Council support for overseas touring, both discussed in chapter two, offered British companies opportunities to embed themselves in an increasingly

unified European network of theatre and performance, develop international partnerships, and benefit from the often significantly greater financial rewards that accompanied commissions of their work from countries where art enjoyed greater subsidy than was the case at home.

If the identity of a distinctly *British* theatre ecology was to shift under European expansion and increased integration, it was also to be further complicated by the devolution of Wales and Scotland and the prospect of Scottish independence. On 11 September 1997 the referendum for an independent Scottish Parliament was held and proved a decisive victory (sixty three point five per cent of voters voting yes) which granted Scotland devolution and tax-varying powers. A week later the Welsh vote for devolution was also won, albeit by a tiny margin of fifty one per cent against forty nine point nine per cent, for a Welsh Assembly which would be without the tax-varying powers of the Scottish Parliament.

In the 2007 elections, the Scottish National Party (SNP), under Alex Salmond, formed the government in Scotland for the first time, bringing Labour dominance in Scotland to an end. The SNP's vision of a fully independent Scotland was arguably strengthened by the Conservative/Liberal Coalition victory in Westminster in 2010, whose politically regressive austerity measures further alienated Scottish voters always well to the left of the majority of the English. This shift in Westminster was perhaps one catalyst for the SNP's more decisive 2011 victory, this time with an overall majority, which pushed the UK Government to recognise Scotland's right to hold an independence referendum (Curtice et al, 2013, 141) that is set to take place on 18 September 2014.

Political devolution had been pre-empted by the devolution of the Arts Councils of Great Britain in 1994, and would further consolidate the distinct cultural trajectories that were

already emerging in line with the different national agendas, linguistic contexts, and political colours of England, Scotland and Wales, as will be discussed throughout this chapter. In all three nation states, however, the fields of politics, society and culture were to become increasingly difficult to distinguish from one another. One of the most significant characteristics of the New Labour era that dominates this period was the appropriation of society and culture into the politics of government across all departments and in each of the three nation states in question. This chapter examines, above all else, how culture was fashioned into an essential political instrument for the advancement of social objectives, economic prosperity and national prestige, both under the Blair government of Great Britain, and the devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales.

New Labour

After eighteen years of Conservative Government in Britain, the 1997 victory of Labour under Tony Blair was greeted with some relief by the artistic community. Not only did New Labour, towards the end of its first term, virtually double the grant-in-aid available for arts funding but there was a sense that this government understood culture to be central to the country's status and prosperity in a way that had not previously been the case. Before looking in detail at the ways in which arts and culture were to be largely transformed under Blair's 'Cool Britannia' branding exercise, and New Labour's influence on Arts Council policy, it is useful to outline the more general political direction of Britain under New Labour, which was not entirely as anticipated in the celebratory spirit of 1997, the year that we were promised by Labour's election anthem that things could only get better.

Blair's re-branding of the Labour Party was marked decisively at the 1994 annual conference by the removal of a central commitment within Clause IV of the Party's constitution to

‘common ownership of the means of production’. This was the turning point between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Labour; between ‘old’ socialist principles of nationalisation and state ownership and Labour’s ‘new’ neo-liberalist embrace of the free market and privatisation as endorsed by Margaret Thatcher. If politics up to 1989, in the context of alternative cultural movements, had generally been seen in terms of left-wing /right-wing dichotomies, New Labour was to expedite the increasing suspicion of such binaries that had been growing since the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe. Leggett argues that Tony Blair’s New Labour agenda ‘led this tendency, with [its] frequent ... claims that social change has consigned left and right to history’ (Leggett, 2005, 15). This, of course, was the decisive move in Blair’s proposal of a ‘third way politics’; less historical truth than an ideological strategy that resulted in successfully manoeuvring Labour to the centre of the political spectrum, and outlawing everything that stood to the left of it. New Labour’s appropriation of the neo-liberalist agenda set by Thatcher was presented by Blair’s ubiquitous spin doctors as a centre-left third way, in order to rebrand what had been previously seen as a right-wing ideology as a new kind of politics which ‘transcended’ the traditional notions of ideological class conflict and, in Blair’s own words, ‘left the redundant twentieth-century battles between capitalism and communism behind’ (Cockerell, 2001, 574).

Despite New Labour’s embrace of the doctrine of neo-liberalism, to which I will return, there is also ample evidence throughout Blair’s term of office, of a genuine commitment to the redistributive social democracy that had historically characterised the Labour movement. In the wake of nearly two decades of Conservative rule, initiatives such as Sure Start, the minimum wage, the New Deal, the Educational Maintenance Allowance, Tax Credits, Education Action Zones and significant public investment in Health and Education, all contributed to this Government’s success in stalling the income gap between the best and

worst paid, reducing levels of child and pensioner poverty, and maintaining high levels of employment (see Astle and Murray, 2006). However, despite ten years of huge public investment, and the wide reach of the government's social inclusion agenda across all areas of policy, at the end of Blair's term of office there remained, from a social democratic perspective, notable failures.

Although the economy was strong, there were always indicators of the financial crash that was to follow, including high levels of consumer debt, and a housing market bubble that was always fated to be unsustainable. While levels of income inequality had been stalled, if not reversed; wealth inequality, partly due to the rising value of property, was 'higher even than in the 1980s' (Astle and Murray, 2006, 24) with the richest five per cent of the population owning seventy per cent of its wealth by 2001 (Astle and Murray, 2006, 26-7). Social mobility had declined and looked set to decline further, and residual pockets of poverty and social deprivation showed stubborn resistance to Blair's reforms; particularly in black and minority ethnic communities where persistent educational underachievement threatened to sustain the higher than average levels of poverty and unemployment for future generations (Astle and Murray, 2006, 26). New Labour's social inclusion agenda, both in its successes and failures, was hugely significant in shaping arts policy, particularly in the areas of widening participation for black and ethnic minorities, those from less-privileged socio-economic backgrounds and children and young people. A brief examination of the ideological basis of New Labour's policies, at their most fundamental level, can clarify both why the arts became so vital as a means of improving social inclusion, and the reasons behind the rather limited success of their endeavours.

‘Education education education’ was Blair’s personal mantra, and his passion to improve the life-chances of the less privileged in society, from the earliest point possible, lay at the heart of his government’s drive for social inclusion, and its emphasis and significant expenditure on early years schemes such as Sure Start. However, as Astle and Murray observed in 2006: ‘[d]espite the government’s efforts, class and wealth remain key determinants of British children’s educational prospects’ (Astle and Murray, 2006, 30). Eric Shaw argues likewise that ‘while the outcome [of Labour’s redistributive policies] has been a substantial movement of resources to the least well endowed, it falls well short of any significant advance towards equality of opportunity’ (Shaw, 2007, 202). Shaw identified a key reason for this as the persistent and growing inequality of wealth distribution, which rendered Blair’s rhetorical emphasis on ‘equal opportunity’ at the start of a child’s life unable to counter the hierarchy of economic privilege into which that child is born.

The problem, it appears, was that Blair’s efforts to follow a progressively redistributive agenda, was counterpointed at every turn by his contradictory embrace of the neo-liberalist notion of meritocracy. Tony Wright argues, ‘among socialists who have taken values seriously, there has been wide agreement that equality should be regarded as a key socialist value, perhaps even *the* socialist value’ (Wright, 1986, 33 in Eatwell, 1989, 61). Blair, however, was no socialist, and his rhetoric and policy was directed, not towards equality of outcome (a levelling of the gap between the poorest and the wealthiest) but towards equality of opportunity, in the belief that if everyone was given equal opportunity, then the meritocratic principle could be left to itself to ‘level up’ those who took best advantage of such opportunity. However, as Shaw explains ‘relational equality was impossible in a society characterised by cumulative, persisting and entrenched inequalities in the distribution of income and wealth’ (Shaw, 2007, 35).

While Wales, and Scotland in particular, used their new legislative powers under devolution to operate within a more traditional Labour model of social democracy, instigating progressive national policies on health, social care and education; England, under the unfettered control of New Labour, was forced to embrace Blair's preference for the market-driven, neo-liberalist model of capitalism, as advocated by the Anglo-American politics of Regan and Thatcher (Norris, 1999, 27-28). It is not, as Colin Leys notes, that the state becomes impotent in the face of market-driven politics, but more worryingly that 'it is constrained to use its power to advance the process of commodification' (Leys, 2001, 2). Leys describes how the total capitulation of the New Labour government to the market-driven politics of neo-liberalism opened the floodgates for firms to 'constantly explore ways to break out of the boundaries set by state regulation, including the boundaries that close non-market spheres to commodification and profit- making' (Leys, 2001, 4).

The most significant cultural consequence of this intrusion of the marketplace into previously non-market spheres, as Colin Leys warns, is the danger that it threatens 'the destruction of non-market spheres of life on which social solidarity and active democracy have always depended' (Leys, 2001, 4). Education and cultural activities, alongside health and welfare benefits, have historically been considered to be public goods which under 'ethical socialist thinking' (Shaw, 2007, 36) should be 'contrasted with commodities in that they were defined by their intrinsic value: they were particularly "human" in that they were essential to human well-being and fulfilment' (Keat, 2000, 26-7 in Shaw, 2007, 39). As such, they represented vital non-market spheres, in Eric Shaw's words, 'from which market exchange and the commercial ethos should be barred *as a matter of principle'* (Shaw, 2007, 36, original emphasis). David Marquand concurs that '[t]he attempt to force these relationships into a

market mould undermines the service ethic, degrades the institutions that embody it and robs the notion of common citizenship of part of its meaning' (Marquand, 1999, 254). These are the fundamental and deeply ideological consequences of the commercialisation of Britain's public services that began under a Labour government, from the creeping privatisation that invaded the NHS and state education to the commodification of English universities, a process that began with the introduction of student fees in 2006.

The creep of the market into traditionally non-market spheres has also impacted on the independent theatre ecology across the UK. A sector which had been staunchly oppositional and collectivist under Thatcher was incorporated by New Labour into a creative or cultural 'industry' in which companies were now expected to be run like small businesses, with entrepreneurial leadership, mission statements, 'diverse income streams', and sustainable strategies for growth. As Michael McKinnie argues, such a shift enabled the notion of 'culture' and the 'arts' to be captured within a market sector, to subdue its potential to oppose market structures, or function beyond them (McKinnie, 2004). No longer were theatre companies expected to challenge the politics of the state as had been the case under Thatcher. Rather, under Blair's leadership of the Labour Party, the arts had become, as Robert Hewison notes, 'entirely instrumental, a matter of "value for money", and the opposition between culture and industrial society has disappeared' (Hewison, 1994, 30). Precisely how the arts were to be transformed into instruments of government policy, I shall now detail, by first examining their key role in the national branding exercises that were to define 'Cool Britannia' as a union, and Wales and Scotland as newly devolved nations, in the early 2000s.

Cool Britannia and the Creative Industries

The creative industries were central to Tony Blair's 'Cool Britannia' project, but as Andrew Ross proposes, the rebranding of artists and so-called 'creatives' in the UK was part of a much wider global shift that grew out of the surge in internet-based operations that constituted the 'dot-com boom' of the late 1990s (Ross, 2009, 16). This new 'composite "creative economy"', as Ross argues, was 'perfectly adapted to the freelancing profile favored by advocates of liberalization', because of the 'self-directed work mentality of artists', and so 'occupied a key evolutionary niche on the business landscape' (Ross, 2009, 16). Ross credits Tony Blair with creating the most definitive packaging of the 'CI policy paradigm', which was then rolled out as a viable development strategy across the globe, 'to persuade bureaucrats that human capital and IP [Intellectual Property] are the keys to winning a permanent seat in the knowledge-based economy' (Ross, 2009, 20). The arts, of course, could not stand alone in this brave new branding exercise as they were renowned for their resistance to market place imperatives – that is to say that they have always, whether via private patronage or public funding – needed subsidy to survive. The incorporation of the arts into the Creative Industries enabled a whole range of other, more profit-making enterprises, including software, computer services and advertising, to support the balance sheet of the new business model, which became a 'revenue powerhouse' that generated £60 to £112 billion per year (Ross, 2009, 24).

The arts were required in this portfolio of creative activity to add the kind of international prestige that names like Damien Hirst, Irvine Welsh and Oasis could offer. Britpop and Britart in particular, were vital to the marketing side of 'Cool Britannia', which became, as Ross argues, 'a massive PR campaign to persuade the world that the country Napoleon once mocked as a nation of shopkeepers was now a nation of artists and designers, with the future in their enterprising bones' (Ross, 2009, 24). Blair had seized the Cool Britannia initiative as

key to his party's electoral victory in 1997, as Ken Urban, among other commentators observes (Urban, 2008, 39-41). The marketing emphasis on the young, the cutting edge and the risky was cleverly designed to separate Blair's government-in-waiting both from the previous Tory administration and the socialist identity of 'Old' Labour, and it bled into all aspects of artistic and cultural life.

Stephen Daldry, then-director of the Royal Court, towed the Cool Britannia line, seeking to create a 'cult of youth', that was characterised by work such as Sarah Kane's *Blasted* (1995), that caused the media storm of the decade when it opened at the Court in 1995 (Urban, 2008, 42). However, Graham Saunders suggests that theatre always held an 'outsider status on the fringes' of the Cool Britannia project (Saunders, 2008, 9), with writer Mark Ravenhill specifically satirising the superficiality of Blair's branding in *Shopping and Fucking* (1996) and *Some Explicit Polaroids* (1999) (Saunders, 2008, 11). Ravenhill, along with Sarah Kane, was at the core of what came to be known as the 'in yer face theatre' generation (Sierz, 2000), whose violent and often sexually-explicit new writing developed concurrently with the Cool Britannia project in the mid-late 1990s but was always regarded, according to Saunders, 'with some degree of circumspection' by New Labour, arguably because, unlike in Britpop and Britart, they saw themselves implicitly or explicitly satirised in much of the work that was produced (Saunders, 2008, 12). Ken Urban also concurs that Kane, Ravenhill and their contemporaries resisted being co-opted by Blair's rebranding but formed instead 'a youth-based counter-politics to the cynicism and opportunism of Cool Britannia'(Urban, 2008, 39).

The most significant legacy of Cool Britannia was the success of London's bid to host the 2012 Olympics, a prize won by New Labour at the height of the boom years, and delivered by the Lib-Con Coalition at the peak of austerity. The Olympic Ceremony, directed by Danny Boyle (who had made his name directing Welsh's *Trainspotting* in 1996), was a masterclass in brand-Britain promotion. Interspersed with the stalwarts of traditional Britishness – the industrial revolution, Shakespeare, a politically astute homage to the NHS, and a brilliant fusion of James Bond and the Queen – Boyle's opening ceremony presented twenty-first century Britain first and foremost as a land of cultural expertise (particularly in digital developments) and ethnic diversity.

Ben Pitcher notes how central the notion of race was to the success of the 'Cool Britannia' project in his examination of the 1997 Demos pamphlet written for New Labour by Mark Leonard, the self-declared inventor of the term (Pitcher, 2009, 46-48). Leonard's *Britain*, as Pitcher discusses, proposes the slogan 'United Colours of Britain' (Leonard, 1997, 56) after the famous Benetton advertisement campaign. In this way he 'weaves the nation's brand identity on a multicultural loom: both "edgy" and "contemporary", the "United Colours of Britain" perfectly articulates a pluralist approach to national identity as refracted through the imagery of the advertising world' (Pitcher, 2009, 47). This new national identity, Pitcher argues, was required to distinguish itself from an out-of-date nationalism that was known for its implicit racism and essentialism, in order that Blair could reclaim the 'One Nation Britain' that had formerly belonged to right wing politics. To this end, 'the subject of race has recently been approached in a new register that claims an ethos of cultural, religious and racial pluralism as its own. That which had stood outside of or in opposition to the state has become articulated as one of its core principles' (Pitcher, 2009, 34). New Labour's co-option of cultural diversity was central to Blair's image of a Cool Britannia; a project that was

particularly vital to construct in the light of devolution. In an article analysing the displacement of a traditional English identity in UK tourism literature at the turn of the Millennium, José Igor Prieto Arranz concludes that:

> It is a new Britannia aiming to cover all of the British nations; a new Britannia trying to come to terms with Britain's postcolonial reality, fully recognising the richness and variety to be found in an essentially cosmopolitan society; a new Britannia that seems to have left behind the traditional rural presumption and that has taken the great industrial city as a powerful emblem for everything that Englishness was not; (Arranz, 2006, 196)

This was a rejection of 'Englishness', historically associated with a 'bad' brand of nationalism and insular pockets of mono-cultural rural heritage, in favour of an urban, multi-cultural and pluralist Britain that encompassed all of its parts. As such Cool Britannia was the pro-Union counterpoint to the emerging and influential branding and nation-building exercises undertaken by Wales and Scotland on the road to ever-greater independence, as detailed later in this chapter. No degree of emphasis on cultural diversity within this New Britain, however, could neutralise the political and media hostility to those whose citizenship lay outside of it. For not everyone, it seems, was welcome in New Labour's Cool Britannia.

Immigration and Asylum

Andrew Geddes describes the increasing politicisation of migration since the 1990s as a result of the 'third-wave' of post-war migration, 'with a particularly noticeable increase in asylum seeking migration and migration defined by state policies as illegal' (Geddes, 2003,

17). As the numbers of refugees seeking asylum in the UK began to rise, so did the intensity of the press hostility, fed by often spurious statistics from anti-immigration groups such as Migration Watch, to create a climate where the notion of asylum seeker became synonymous with non-white, third world, bogus interlopers who would put pressure on housing, schools, and other public services, drain the welfare system and threaten the 'British' way of life (Finney and Simpson, 2009). Stratham and Morrison's review of media coverage in the mid 1990s concludes that immigration and asylum politics made up '37% of news coverage in *The Guardian*, 46% in *The Times*, and 55% in the *Daily Mail*' (in Finney and Simpson, 2009, 51). Whether the media was following or creating public opinion is a question beyond the scope of this chapter, but responses to a 2009 MORI poll evidence that '[m]ore than a third of the public now regularly cite race and immigration as among the most important issues facing the country, significantly higher than in most European countries and a sharp increase from a decade ago' (Spencer, 2011, 1).

Public hostility to immigrants was further exacerbated by New Labour's spectacularly conservative estimate of the number of Polish migrants who would come to the UK for work after Poland's accession to the EU in 2004. The predicted figure was 26,000 over the first two years, the total figure over that time was estimated (not including spouses and children) at between 427,000 and 600,000 (when self-employed were included) and resident communities in particularly affected areas were woefully unprepared for the volume of migration they experienced (Marr, 2007, 593). The public hostility to asylum seekers and economic migrants, stoked by the right wing press, and particularly evident in economically disadvantaged communities who saw themselves in direct competition with the newcomers for housing and other resources, led to a rise in popularity for Britain's right wing parties, and a swing to the right by the mainstream parties in an attempt to appease public opinion.

Electoral support for the United Kingdom Independence Party's (UKIP) stance on immigration and their desire to leave the EU, evidenced by the party's gains in the 2013 local elections and the 2014 European elections, has already played into the hands of the Tories on the right of the Conservative party and might yet move the national debate for all parties towards increasingly isolationist policy making in the future.

Between 1993 and 2002 there were four attempts to adapt the 1971 immigration legislation in response to asylum seeking legislation, each one seeking to impose tighter controls on entry, and more punitive containment of those refugees who had succeeded in obtaining illegal entry to Britain. The media hostility and the legal sanctions imposed by governments in response have had the effect of galvanising support for refugees and asylum seekers within the artistic community, and precipitated the growth of refugee theatre on a global scale, particularly in the UK and Australia (Jeffers, 2012, 43). Refugee Week, first held in London in 2002, was repeated annually across numerous cities in the UK as Alison Jeffers reports, from 225 events in 2002, to 450 events attended by an estimated 250,000 people by 2006 (Jeffers, 2012, 113). Annual refugee arts festivals were also established in London, Birmingham and Manchester (Jeffers, 2012, 113) and there was evidence of a significant growth in companies working in this area. Banner Theatre - *Wild Geese* (2005) and *They get free mobiles... don't they?* (2007); Red Room Theatre - *The Bogus Woman* (2001) and *Unstated* (2009); Ice and Fire - *I have before me a remarkable document given to me by a young lady from Rwanda* (2003) and *Crocodile Seeking Refuge* (2005); and Cardboard Citizens - *Pericles* (2003) are examples of just four companies that have developed ongoing projects with refugees and engaged explicitly with the politics of refuge and asylum over the 2000s.

War on Terror

Almost 3,000 people were killed as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001. The direct economic cost ran into billions of dollars, and the global political consequences which were to continue into the next decade, and most probably well beyond, immediately began to take shape. The military reprisals were the most visible manifestations of these consequences. On 7 October 2001, less than a month after the attacks and the subsequent identification of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda as the perpetrators, British and American air attacks against the Taliban in Afghanistan, where bin Laden and his organisation were believed to be hiding, began. To prove more controversial still was the invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003, undertaken by British and American troops regardless of the absence of a UN Mandate, raising serious questions surrounding the legality of the invasion and inspiring the biggest ever anti-war demonstration in the UK. Protestors voiced suspicions that this was as much about instigating the regime change that Bush's father had neglected to accomplish in the first Gulf War, and the protection of oil revenues in the Middle East, as it was about Saddam Hussein's harbouring of weapons of mass destruction that constituted a real and genuine threat to either country's national security. Such suspicions were not eased by Bush's insistence on linking Iraq with al-Qaeda without the slightest grounds for so doing, in attempts to justify the invasion as part of his ill-advised declaration of a 'War on Terror', mounted in response to the terrorist attacks on America.

In the UK, the impact of Tony Blair's decision to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with Bush was far reaching. First and foremost, it engendered a deep distrust of Blair and New Labour that almost certainly played a key role in Blair's own subsequent fall in popularity, and arguably had some lasting impact on the fortunes of the party itself. Suspicions surrounding the government's claim that the UK was imminently at threat from weapons of mass destruction

(WMD) held by Saddam Hussein, were exacerbated by a report by Andrew Gilligan on the BBC *Today* programme which alleged that intelligence documents presented as evidence of this threat had been largely fabricated, or at the very least 'sexed-up' for the purpose of justifying the invasion to the public. Moreover, ten years after the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime, no weapons of mass destruction have yet been located and few would now hold to the argument that they ever existed in the first place. The alleged suicide of Dr David Kelly, purportedly as a result of his being outed as the senior government scientist who was the source of Gilligan's report, led to the Hutton enquiry which ultimately castigated the BBC while leaving the Government exonerated, but did nothing to counter public opinion which remained largely cynical of the WMD claim, and the legitimacy of the Government's course of action.

The Tricycle Theatre in London was at the heart of a resurgence of verbatim and documentary theatre that arose in response to the events following 9/11, including Richard Norton-Taylor's *Justifying War* (2003) – a dramatisation of the Hutton Inquiry into the death of Dr David Kelly, Norton-Taylor's *Called to Account – The Indictment of Anthony Charles Lynton Blair for the Crime of Aggression against Iraq – A Hearing* (2007) and Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom* (2004) – constructed from interviews with British citizens who had been imprisoned without trial in America's infamous Guantanamo Bay. David Hare's '*Stuff Happens*' (2004) - produced by the National Theatre, Robin Soans's *Talking to Terrorists* (2005) - commissioned by Out of Joint, Steve Gilroy's *Motherland* (2009) and the National Theatre of Scotland's *Black Watch* (2006) also used verbatim techniques to dramatise issues arising from the British invasion of Iraq and subsequent events.

A further on-going consequence of Blair's complicity in Bush's 'war on terror', was the growing hostility of the Muslim diaspora to the West's, arguably unjustified and illegal, military intervention in the Middle East. Tensions between Islam and the West did not begin with 9/11 rather the attacks were, in part, one result of long-standing tensions, most notably the West's support of Israel in the long-running conflict over Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Nevertheless, it has been claimed by many commentators that the retaliatory action of Bush and Blair supported the growth of al-Qaeda and related terrorist cells better than any recruitment campaign bin Laden could have devised, particularly in light of ensuing scandals such as the Abu Ghraib images, where American soldiers posed for photographs with Iraqi prisoners forced to adopt humiliating and degrading positions. In February 2003, one month before the Iraq invasion, the Joint Intelligence Committee warned the Government that 'al Qa'eda and associated groups continued to represent by far the greatest terrorist threat to Western interests, and that threat would be heightened by military action against Iraq' (Jones 2003 in Hewitt, 2008, 77) and it has been calculated that there was 'a sevenfold increase in worldwide terrorism in the four years following March 2003' (Hewitt, 2008, 5). In 2004 a Joint Foreign Office / Home Office report, 'Young Muslims and Extremism' cited the double standards of Western foreign policy, the bias for Israel in the on-going dispute over Palestinian territories and the recent 'war on terror' as core grievances that underpinned a growing hostility to Western governments, even when these governments were their own (Hewitt, 2008, 78). Consequently, it is difficult to dismiss a causal link between the invasion of Iraq and the terrorist attacks that subsequently occurred in Madrid (2004), London (2005) and Glasgow (2007). One of the London bombers, indeed, made the link explicit in his posthumous video posting on the Arabic news channel Al Jazeera.

The London bombings on 7 July 2005, later explored in Simon Stephens's play *Pornography* (2008), were unprecedented and unanticipated. The Government's anti-terror legislation had been targeted pre-dominantly at foreign nationals, and on 6 July the head of MI5 had assured a group of Labour MPs that no imminent terror attacks were on the horizon. London was celebrating the news that it had been chosen to host the 2012 Olympic games when, at 8.50am, three bombs exploded at different points on the London Underground, the fourth later detonated on a crowded bus passing through Tavistock Square at 9.47am. In total there were fifty two deaths and over 700 people injured, many seriously. All four bombers were British citizens from British Muslim communities, who had launched an indiscriminatory suicide attack on their own people.

After the attacks of 11 September, and reinforced by the subsequent London bombings, the figure of the terrorist, in the popular imagination, became increasingly synonymous with the Muslim identity, a conflation that was enhanced by the media, the security forces and, arguably, the government to the significant detriment of community and race relations in the UK. The growing suspicion of multiculturalism, with specific regard to Islam, was, of course, already well established by this point in time, as most infamously proposed in Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' thesis which claimed that the values of Islam and the values of the Western World were fundamentally incompatible (Huntington, 1993). The sense, within the UK, that the narrative of multiculturalism was being re-written as 'solving the problem' of Islam, became more acute following the riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001, when the focus turned onto the alleged 'self-segregation' of Muslim communities, rather than any attempt to address the well-documented discrimination and disadvantage such communities were facing. As Charles Husband and Yunis Alam make clear in their study 'Social Cohesion and Counter Terrorism', the riots were in large part

understood by those in power as the result of a ‘collective failure’ on the part of the Muslim communities ‘to embrace their ”Britishness”’ (Husband and Alam, 2011, 3).

After 9/11 there came new legislation in the form of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001, in which the Government proposed draconian new powers for detaining international terrorist suspects without charge, much like the Americans were able to do inside the infamous Guantanamo Bay. The Terrorism Act 2006 swiftly supplanted its 2005 predecessor as the Government responded to the threat of home-grown terrorism evoked by the London bombings, and proposed, among other measures, that the police could now hold terrorist suspects for up to ninety days without trial. This proposal was eventually overturned in the worst Government defeat since 1978 in favour of a twenty eight day compromise that was still double the previous maximum, and quadruple the seven day maximum in place prior to the Terrorism Act 2000 (Hewitt, 2008, 55). Days into Gordon Brown’s taking up of the Labour leadership in June 2007, Kafeel Ahmed, who later set himself alight, and Bilal Abdulla, a diabetes specialist at the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley, drove a car bomb into the passenger terminal of Glasgow International Airport in an attempted terrorist attack, following their previous failed car bomb attempts in London early that month. Brown then continued the swathe of Labour’s anti-terrorist legislation by swiftly proposing new legislation that would, among other things, create a border police force, and renew the government’s attempts to further double the duration of the detention without charge period from twenty eight to fifty six days. The impact of Labour’s counter-terrorism agenda on Muslim communities throughout the UK in this period was to be far reaching and, arguably, counter-productive, as I return to later in this chapter.

The Age of Austerity

If 11 September 2001 marked the first Millennial moment when events in America sparked off a catastrophic chain of global events, then 15 September 2008 could be characterised as the second. When Lehman Brothers went into liquidation, the global banking crisis, already foreshadowed by the nationalisation of Northern Rock (UK) and the rescue of Bear Stearns (US) earlier that year, was now inevitable. Loans lent to those unable to pay them back had been sold from bank to bank around the world, traded in 'the belief ... that these collateralised securities offered high returns at minimal risk. The belief was that not all mortgage borrowers would default at the same time. That belief was wrong.' (Elliot and Treanor, 2013) As Lord Turner, who took over as chairman of the Financial Services Authority in the UK concluded, 'we had created a system by 2006 with such a build up of debt that it was inherently unstable, and that was going to produce a massive crisis' (Eliot and Treanor, 2013). On the 7 October 2008 the Chancellor, Alistair Darling, took a phone call from Sir Tom McKillop, chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland, telling him that within two to three hours the bank was going to run out of cash, and would have to cease trading by the end of the day (Eliot and Treanor, 2013). RBS and Lloyds proved to be too big to fail, and were bailed out by the Government and are still, at the time of writing, being paid for by the British tax payer. The banking collapse was followed by the credit crunch; banks refusing, or unable, to lend, and businesses starved of cash. As businesses began to fail, unemployment began to rise and the economy began to plummet, and there were real fears that the Great Depression following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 might be repeated. While this was ultimately averted, in significant parts of Europe the impact of the banking crisis was not so far removed from that caused by the slump in the 1930s.

For it was not only businesses that were no longer able to borrow the finance they required. National governments had long enjoyed low interest rates and had borrowed heavily over the boom years, building up significant levels of national debt. In this new age of austerity and uncertainty, it became clear that these debt levels were so high in certain countries and the economy now so weak, that there was a risk that they could never be repaid. This was the sovereign debt crisis that hit the Eurozone in 2009, with first Greece, and subsequently, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus requiring bail outs from the European Union to save them from national bankruptcy and the ultimate collapse of the Euro. Conditions in the UK never reached the degree of economic and humanitarian crisis experienced in these countries, but the Tory-led Coalition, elected in 2010, took their opportunity to impose severe, and many believed substantively ideological, fiscal cuts on government spending, ostensibly designed to reduce the country's deficit and maintain its credit-rating and financial credibility. Swathing cuts to public services included the decimation of local authorities and local government funding; the withdrawal of government subsidy for university fees; and sweeping cuts to welfare and disability benefits as well as to Arts Council budgets. While Education, along with the NHS, was ring-fenced from direct cuts, initiatives that had been introduced by Labour, such as the Educational Maintenance Allowance to enable those from poorer backgrounds to be supported in post-sixteen education, were axed. Educational support services and social care, provided in the main by local authorities, suffered severely. Given the spending restraints they were now under, many local authorities withdrew significant amounts of funding previously spent on the arts that were now required to plug the gap to enable them to continue to offer essential services in social care, and basic urban maintenance. Newcastle and Nottingham were two city councils that were driven to publically threaten the withdrawal of one hundred per cent

of their arts spending to balance budgets elsewhere. The knock on impact of such cuts across the UK was the closure of libraries and other cultural and leisure centres, the retrenchment of urban regeneration projects and local participatory arts projects, and a reduction in the levels of match funding required for Arts Council support for regional theatres and companies.

The banking crisis, and the austerity politics that prioritised deficit reduction over the maintenance of essential public services, inspired a whole new wave of global radical activist protest, unseen at this level of visibility for at least a generation. On Saturday 17 September 2011, five thousand Americans set up a semi-permanent protest camp in a park on Liberty Street, as close as they could get to their symbolic target of Wall Street that had been barricaded by police. By October, the occupation was being replicated in forty seven US states, and similar protests in Canada, the UK, Germany and Sweden were in the planning (McVeigh, 2011). On 15 October it was claimed that more than nine hundred and fifty protests were being held in over eighty countries, including Rome, Sydney and Madrid, and the Occupy London movement gathered outside St Paul's Cathedral, ready to march to occupy the London Stock Exchange (Batty, 2011). In the event they found their way barred, and so set up camp outside St Pauls' Cathedral, calling for systemic change to the financial system, on behalf of 'the ninety nine per cent' who were currently being failed by it. On 18 January the City of London finally won its court case to evict the protestors and by the end of February 2012 the camp was gone. But not before it had caused the resignation of both the Canon and the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, who felt their positions had become untenable in light of the Church's own public statements on the immorality of the global banking

system, which seemed irreconcilable with the state's constant threat of forcible removal of the protestors on behalf of St Pauls.

The occupy movement was possibly the first globally co-ordinated protest movement to benefit from the developments in social media technology, and similar direct-action campaigns against tax-evading multi-national corporations such as Starbucks and Amazon, have been likewise co-ordinated by civil disobedience organisations such as UK Uncut since the economic crisis in 2008. A new wave of environmental activism was also mounted against the multinational oil corporations awarded fracking contracts in parts of the UK where reserves had been identified, including Lancashire, Scotland, South Wales, Sussex and Kent. The protestors argued that not only would fracking increase our reliance on fossil fuels that were responsible for rising carbon emissions, but it was a method of extraction that threatened significant local environmental disturbance including devastation of landscapes, air pollution and water contamination.

This resurgence of political activism is also evident in theatre, although not always undertaken by theatre companies, as would have been the case in the alternative theatre movements of the 1960s and 1970s. This current generation of artists tend to commit to political action as individuals within more loosely-based collectives, perhaps as a direct result of the ways in which company identities and bodies of work have been co-opted into the capitalist marketplace of the Creative Industries as earlier described. The most high profile example of such collectivist practice is Theatre Uncut, which was formed in 2010 as a direct response to the 'brutal cuts in public spending'. Theatre Uncut requests protest plays from well-known playwrights (the 2013 event included work from Tanika Gupta, Neil LaBute, Tim Price and Mark Thomas) to be made available for public performances within a limited

period of time. This creates a Theatre Uncut mass action event each year with the plays performed simultaneously around the world; predominantly in the UK, continental Europe and North America, but with some reaching as far as Africa, South America and Australia.

Discrimination and Equal Rights

Improving the quality of life for people with disabilities was high on New Labour's social agenda. John Major's Government had already introduced the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995, an act which was amended in 2005, following Labour's earlier establishment of the Disability Rights Commission, extension of the definition of disability and introduction of 'a public duty to promote disabled people's equality' and 'involve disabled people in decision making' (Close, 2011, 13). In 2010 the UK Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and passed the single Equality Act which covered characteristics including 'age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation' (Government Equalities Office, 2010, 3). New Labour's commitment to raising levels of participation for people with disabilities led to a raft of arts funding being prioritised for theatre companies working with disabled artists and audiences, as I outline in more detail later in the chapter. In 2003, the European Year of Disabled People, the Labour Government allocated two million pounds to promote partnerships and activities designed to raise awareness of disability issues, many of which were arts-based. A period that was characterised by the growing visibility of disabled artists, and growing public awareness of disability rights, culminated in the 2012 Paralympics, but this potential high-point of progress was already undermined by mass protests and rallies against the increasingly brutal welfare cuts and 'fit for work' regime (soon to be joined by the 'bedroom tax'), imposed by the Coalition Government: austerity policies

that were disproportionately devastating to the lives of those with disabilities and long-term physical and mental illness.

However, unquestionable progress in equality legislation during this period was made in the recognition of greater rights for the gay community and significantly increased levels of public tolerance for homosexual partnerships, lifestyles and parenthood. The first gay pride events took place in Manchester 1990, and Brighton and London in1992, and in 1994 the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act reduced the age of consent for male homosexual sex from twenty one to eighteen, reducing it finally to sixteen in 2001. Reversing the homophobic trend of the Thatcher years, the controversial Clause 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 was repealed by Labour in England and Wales in 2003, with the equivalent already having been taken off Scottish statute books in 2000. In 2004 the Civil Partnership Act was passed, giving same-sex couples equivalent legal rights to married couples, and in 2013, a Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill was introduced to both UK and Scottish Parliaments, making lesbian and gay rights in Britain ‘among the best in Europe’ (Park and Rhead, 2013, 14-15). Consequently, the politically activist gay theatre companies of the 1970s and 1980s are not much in evidence in this period, and the gay presence within the independent theatre environment tends towards the exploration or celebration of queer culture, rather than the political argument for its legitimation, with venues such as the Drill Hall, companies such as Duckie, and festivals such as Glasgow’s Glasgay and Manchester’s Queer Up North, platforming artists from across the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Community and beyond, with an emphasis on queer and transgressive performance including a rise in the popularity of neo-burlesque.

Race Relations and Cultural Tensions in the UK

Following the Metropolitan Police's gross mismanagement of the investigation of the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993, the Macpherson Report was commissioned by the Blair Government and published in 1999. Macpherson's inquiry concluded that institutional racism had been at the heart of the investigation, and could be defined as

> the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson, 1999, paragraph 6.34)

Subsequently the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) required a pro-active approach on the part of all public organisations and services to ensure that they were fully complicit with a commitment to the eradication of racism, however implicit, 'invisible', or unintentional that racism might be. This legislation, and the spirit behind it, had a significant effect on arts organisations as I shall later detail, in that it obliged them to put race and diversity at the forefront of their artistic policies.

Racist discourse within wider society, as Chris Allen argues, tended to shift over the period of this study, from an emphasis on race and colour, as had been the case in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, to an emphasis on race and religion which became much more publically explicit and visible, and was often justified with recourse to grounds of reasoned cultural difference as opposed to irrational prejudice (Allen, 2005). Even within traditionally liberal contexts such as the *Independent* and *Guardian* newspapers, criticism of Islam, often from feminist, libertarian or secular positions, was socially

tolerated, or even supported (Allen, 2005, 61). For some, such as Allen, this was racism hiding under liberal colours; for others, it was vital defence of the right to free speech and the right to oppose cultural traditions that were at odds with your own belief systems, without fear of being called a racist for so doing.

In the wider theatre context similar tensions were exposed. In 2004 Birmingham Rep pulled their production of *Bhetzi* (Dishonour), written by the young female Sikh playwright, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, following an evacuation of the theatre in the face of violent protests by the Sikh community who were incensed by the play's depiction of rape and violence in a gurdwara, a Sihk place of workship. Artists almost unanimously condemned the closure of the play as cowardice and capitulation to censorship of the mob, with 700 signatures endorsing a letter of protest, including those of Southbank director Jude Kelly and Richard Eyre. The Christian rallies and protests that greeted the BBC's screening of *Jerry Springer – The Opera* (2005), and dogged the subsequent theatre tour, were also often couched in terms that suggested the militancy of Islamic and Sikh groups had galvanised a traditionally less vocal religious community into action. To cite Stephen Green, national director of Christian Voice, 'If this show portrayed Mohammed or Vishnu as homosexual, ridiculous and ineffectual, it would never have seen the light of day' (BBC, 2005).

Despite the theatre community's condemnation of Birmingham Rep, there was nevertheless a notable absence of plays that directly challenged religious fundamentalism in the name of free speech. One notable exception was the theatre company DV8 who produced two courageous and highly critical pieces of work, *To be Straight with You* (2007) and *Can we talk about this* (2011). The first addressed the high, and often fatal, extent of homophobia within fundamentalist African/Asian

Christian and Muslim communities, the second addressed the murder and persecution of individuals who had been seen to commit offence by their representations of Islam in artistic material. In both cases the company explicitly charged its audience with cowardice in permitting prejudice and censorship rather than risking being castigated as racist.

Community Cohesion

In 2011, the worst riots in thirty years erupted in London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham, Manchester and Salford, with public order temporarily suspended as police struggled to deal with thousands of youths on the rampage, and the Army were placed on alert to intervene. The riots were initially seen as a response to the shooting of Mark Duggan, a young black man who was killed by a Metropolitan police officer who mistakenly thought he was armed, and austerity politics were also widely considered to have played their part, but a study undertaken by the Guardian and the London School of Economics evidenced that a more widespread anger against the police, and in particular their day-to-day treatment of black and Asian communities, was a much more significant factor (Prasad, 2011).

This would be borne out by Steve Hewitt's report that within a nine month period in 2006, '22,700 stops [and searches] led to 27 terrorism-related arrests and the Metropolitan Police Authority described the counter-terrorist programme as doing "untold damage" to community relations' (Hewitt, 2008, 113). The shooting of Jean Charles de Menezez the day after a failed attempt by would-be terrorists to mimic the London bombings on 21 July 2005, had done nothing to instil confidence. De Menezez was a Brazilian plumber, with no terrorist connections, who was mistaken for a suicide bomber and shot dead by armed police in a

London tube station. In attempts to alleviate this ‘untold damage’ to community relations, the on-going project of community cohesion, galvanised by the 2001 riots and ensuing inner city disturbances such as the Lozells riots in Birmingham in 2005, was now reined into service as a key strand of the counter-terrorism strategy, published in 2006.

The need to engage Muslim communities in, what were strategically and ideologically defined as ‘shared values’, and to ‘assimilate’ them into social arenas that were multi, rather than mono, cultural, became one of the key targets of the community cohesion agenda, and one which was to have a notable impact on arts policy, as will be described later in the chapter. There were significant concerns around certain aspects of this agenda that are worth highlighting here in their wider social context. Firstly, assimilation was always conceived as a one way street. Community cohesion was less about all communities finding common ground and establishing shared values by mutual compromise and tolerance, and much more about specific communities (Muslims) adopting cultural practices and values that were authorised by the Government as desirable and British. As Husband and Alam succinctly paraphrase, ‘[f]or members of the British Muslim population the message of Community Cohesion appeared to be: *We want you to be more actively engaged as citizens, but we want you to be more like us’* (Husband and Alam, 2011, 3). Secondly, the shift from New Labour’s earlier emphasis on ‘social cohesion’ to one on ‘community cohesion’ resulted, as proposed in the Cantle Report, in a move away from addressing socio-economic factors and social class, to one focused on ‘identifiable communities defined by faith or ethnicity’(Cantle, 2008, 50). As such, the issues of economic disadvantage underlying many inner-city Muslim communities were side-lined as potential causes of tension. De-segregation, as Kalra and Kapoor observe in their report, was now less about promoting material equality and more about removing cultural difference, a significant departure from the aims of the multicultural

project in Britain up to this time (in Husband and Alam, 2011, 55). The ideological basis of the community cohesion project ensured that when Government funding was made available to promote wider access to cultural activities for black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, it was done so with the clear understanding that only the 'right kind' of cultural development should be supported. As Communities Secretary Ruth Kelly announced in 2006, only those Muslim groups who were seen to be 'taking a pro-active leadership role in tackling extremism and defending our shared values' could expect to receive funding for their activities (Hewitt, 2008, xxi). As Spalek and Lambert have argued

> It appears that government projects aimed at fostering dialogue and community participation tend to be underpinned by broader questions and debates around what sort of Muslim identities should be encouraged in the UK… and what kinds of Muslim identities should be actively discouraged and/or suppressed. (Spalek and Lambert, 2008, 261)

Surveillance, Digital Developments and New Technologies

The counter-terrorist agenda heralded in a raft of measures which were to infringe the civil liberties of those beyond, as well as within, Muslim communities. The action group, Liberty, highlight as particularly concerning, the frequent use of 'section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 allowing stop and search without suspicion which has been disproportionately used against peaceful protestors and ethnic minority groups'; the 'banning of non-violent political organisations'; and 'the dangerously broad definition of terrorism' (Liberty, 2013). Identity cards were proposed in 2005 on the back of the London bombings but, despite Blair's best efforts, were never introduced, and the scheme was eventually scrapped by the Coalition

Government, probably due to pressure from the Liberal Democrats, in 2010. Surveillance of other kinds, however, rose steadily throughout New Labour's term of office.

According to Professor Clive Norris, in the mid 2000s the British were under surveillance by approximately 4.2 million closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras – 'one for every four citizens', with Londoners picked up on average three hundred times per day (in Marr, 2007, 580-81). GPS systems in mobile phones and cars could also now easily enable the geographical tracking of their users. In June 2013, The *Guardian* published interviews it had held with Edward Snowden, an employee of defence contractor Booz Allen Hamilton at America's National Security Agency, which drew from internal NSA documents suggesting that the agency had 'direct access' to data held on millions of private citizens by Google, Facebook, Apple and other US internet providers (Gidda, 2013). Snowden was immediately charged with espionage by the US Government who demanded his extradition, but he was granted temporary asylum in Russia. Snowden's initial leaks were followed by revelations in the autumn of 2013 that the NSA routinely spied on its European allies, collecting tens of millions of European phone records, including those of Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel. The NSA countered that the European data had been collated by NATO, and that security agencies in Europe were fully complicit with the practice, despite the denials of their leaders.

The developments in new technology, however, could work both ways. The website Wikileaks, established by Julian Assange and launched in 2006, has established a reputation for publishing high level secret documents from government and security organisations, that the public were never intended to see. Most famously the site released hundreds of thousands of secret US military logs detailing its operations in Iraq and posted a video showing a US

Apache helicopter killing Iraqi civilians and journalists during an attack in Baghdad in July 2007. Wikileaks has also revealed ‘a report on toxic waste dumping on the Ivory Coast, Church of Scientology manuals, Guantanamo Bay detention camp procedures and material involving large banks such as Kaupthing and Julius Baer, among other documents’ (Hiscock, 2013). Like Snowden, Julian Assange is wanted by the US for espionage, and has been living within the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since June 2012.

It was 1991 when Tim Berners-Lee, celebrated in the London Olympics Opening Ceremony, launched the world –wide-web browser that was going to change global structures of communication from that point on. By 1995 internet shopping on ebay and amazon had already begun for a limited market, in 1998 Google was founded, and by 2000 forty per cent of Britons had accessed the internet at some time. By 2003 nearly half of British homes were connected and by 2006 seventy five per cent of British children had internet access at home (Marr, 2007, 573). The first ever smartphone was launched in 1994 and in 2001 Apple’s iPod was born. Both of these items of technology were to have real impact on performance practice over the first decade of the twenty first century, as companies began to experiment with audio soundtracks where iPods were provided for the audience and interactive models of performance where mobile phones were increasingly assumed to be something that every spectator would be carrying.

In 2005 the Facebook Social Networking Site was launched, a site which grew to boast more than a billion users each year and was valued at more than 104 billion dollars when sold on the stock market only seven years later (*Guardian*, 2012). YouTube was also created in 2005, and in 2006 the micro-blogging service Twitter was launched. The advent of social networking media, and open access documentation sites such as YouTube, were to change

the face of marketing for cultural activity, especially once websites became easy for anyone to create, and digital stills and films could be shot from mobile phones and downloaded directly to websites and YouTube. Where theatre companies had previously required professional designers, photographers and technical resources to focus on press releases, flyers and posters, it was now all about spreading the word virally online, getting information and links to promotional footage to vast networks of people at the push of a button, and cultivating an on-line presence, with friends and followers numbering in the thousands through constant posting and sharing of news and information. Online blogging, made more accessible to large numbers of readers by the advent of Twitter and Facebook, has also significantly changed patterns of reception for performance work, with many blogs such as those by Matt Trueman and Jake Orr now established and respected as sites of theatre criticism that are given at least equal weight to the more traditional critical reviews in the broadsheet media.

The advent of social media also further enhanced the growing appetite for self-promotion and voyeurism that had underpinned reality TV shows like *Big Brother* (2000-) which had first appeared on Channel 4 in 2000; formats described by Richard Kilborn as amalgamating 'game-show, talk-show and peep-show elements while retaining vestiges of the observational documentary' (Kilborn, 2003, 12). The cynicism engendered by the ubiquity of reality TV and talent shows such as *The X Factor*, permeates the cultural zeitgeist of the 2000s, also notable in films pre-empting the period such as *The Truman Show* (1998) and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), and is reflected in the deconstructions of 'the real' that underpin the sceptical postmodern aesthetic of many companies in this period including Forced Entertainment, Stan's Cafe and Desperate Optimists to name only a few.

The digital economy had been promoted by New Labour throughout the creative industries, both for its capacity to generate significant levels of income, and for its automatic claim to 'innovation' that is a by-product of all technological development. Seen as vital to the future of theatre from one of its earliest policy appearances in the Boyden report (2000), by 2008 it featured in the Arts Council's manifesto '*Great Art for Everyone'* as one of four development priorities for the next three year period. 2009 saw the launch of NTLive, which enabled filmed versions of National Theatre productions to be screened live in cinemas around the country, and in 2012 the online resource 'The Space' was developed by a partnership of the Arts Council and the BBC, providing free and on-demand access (via computers, tablets, smartphones and connected TV) ' to the work of some of the UK's greatest artists and arts organisations – including full performances and premieres, original commissions and rare archive material' (ACE, 2013, 18).

Part Two: Arts Councils, Funding and Policy

Grant-in-Aid Funding 1994-1997

In 1993 the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) had pre-empted political devolution and set out its plan to dissolve itself into its national constituents. From 1994, the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils, which had up until then been sub-committees of the ACGB, became independent bodies with their own Royal Charters to be funded by the Scottish and Welsh Offices. In Wales this also resulted in the merger of the new Welsh Arts Council with Wales' existing three regional arts associations to form one single Arts Council of Wales / *Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru*. Art in England would now be funded, under a new Royal Charter, by a newly established Arts Council for England.

For all three countries, the final years of the long-standing Tory Government were characterised, in financial terms, by the effects of the recession. The first cut to the ACGB in 1992/93 was initially of two per cent, and by 1997 the Arts Council of England (ACE) was reporting a cut in real terms, over the previous four years, of nine per cent (Allen, 1997, 8). Not only were the Government cutting their grant contribution to ACE for the first time since the Arts Council's formation in 1946, but local authority partnership funding, sponsorship and earned revenue were also falling due to the economic effects of recession. In a policy document published in 1996 it was estimated that there had been a thirty two per cent real terms reduction in sponsorship and donations income between 1986/87 and 1994/95. The same document reported that 'the persistent real-terms increase in average ticket yields at building-based repertory theatres – up 37% between 1986/87 and 1993/94 - went into reverse in 1994/95', showing a real-terms reduction of six per cent (ACE, 1996, 3).

Despite having to endure the same dismal financial climate, with the re-organisation of local authorities and steep decreases in local government funding for the arts causing particular headaches in the Welsh and Scottish contexts, independence from the ACGB meant that, unlike their English counterparts, the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) received a small increase in funding at this time, and the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) grant was at least held at a standstill. Over the same period of 1986/87 to 1997/98 spending on drama as an art form in both Scotland and Wales actually enjoyed an eighteen per cent rise, compared with a thirty eight per cent fall in England (ACE, 2000a, 33-5). There were few new franchises offered to English theatre companies over this period, due to the dire funding situation, but companies to buck the trend included motiroti, The Right Size, Open Hand Theatre Company, David Glass Ensemble and Graeae Theatre. In Scotland, a number of new companies were funded to apply for fixed term touring funding in 1997, out of which Suspect Culture and Boilerhouse

were successful, at the expense of the long-standing Wildcat from which revenue funding was removed. There was very little movement in Welsh theatre over this period, with Theatre West Glamorgan joining other Theatre-in Education (TIE) companies for regular funding in 1995/96, and no other significant gains or losses.

The National Lottery

In the economic climate of the mid-1990s, the potential of the National Lottery, introduced by John Major in 1993, was heralded as no less than the saviour of the arts. Funding from the Lottery was to come on stream in 1995; the money to be raised from the public's purchase of lottery tickets to be split among five good causes: Art, Charity, Heritage, Millennium Projects and Sport, with the Art component to be administered by the Arts Councils. The financial impact of the Lottery, more than doubling arts funding in its first full year of operation, can be seen by a quick comparison. By 1995/96, the arts Lottery fund of £255.4 million was already exceeding the Arts Council of England's Government grant of £191.1 million. By 1997/98 the Lottery funds had increased to £297.6 million, while the Government grant had fallen to £185.1 million. In 1995/96 SAC's government grant stood at £24.5 million alongside Lottery income of £27.3 million. By 1997/98 the Lottery funds totalled £32.5million in comparison with government grant in aid of £27.1million. ACW received £14.2million in government grants in 1995/96 alongside Lottery income of £15.3million. By 1997/98 the figures were £14.5 (government) and £17.8 (lottery) (ACE, 2000a, 43). No surprise that in the 1996 annual report the Chair of ACE reported nothing less than a 'cultural revolution' (Gowrie, 1996, 6).

For the independent theatre companies the impact of lottery funding was somewhat delayed by the terms the Arts Councils themselves had requested. With good reason, given the

economic climate and public spending cuts of the time, the Arts councils, and arts community in general, had foreseen a danger that lottery funds would be seized on a replacement, not an addition, to statutory funding of the arts. To prevent this, and protect the principle of core statutory funding, lottery proceeds could not be used to fund what was described as 'core' activity, but must work on the principle of what became known as 'additionality'. This meant that the lottery could not pay for the running costs and ongoing primary activities of companies, but only projects and resources that could be defined as 'additional' to those core costs and activities. Consequently, in the first instance, lottery funds for the arts were restricted to capital – mainly building - projects, and were not able to be used for revenue, thus effectively preventing the funds from having any significant impact on the level of arts activity itself, which continued to struggle for survival under the public spending cuts and general economic downturn.

However, by 1996 the paradoxical vision of gleaming new buildings with declining numbers of artists to fill them, or companies to run them, was becoming apparent. The Arts Councils entered into conversations with the Secretary of State for the Department of National Heritage, Virginia Bottomley, to discuss how a percentage of lottery funds might be shifted from capital spend to artistic development and content, albeit practice that could still be defined as 'additional' to the core activities of the company. The subsequent lottery funded schemes including Arts for Everyone (A4E), A4E Express, Awards for All and the Regional Arts Lottery Programme (RALP) had much to offer the independent theatre sector. Their objectives (new audiences, increased participation in the arts, skills development, youth projects and new work) were perfectly suited to the development, not only of artistic practice rather than buildings, but of new and experimental artistic practice and new approaches to

audience, access and participation which situated independent theatre companies as perfectly placed recipients for the new money.

Of greatest impact on the future of the independent theatre ecology was the introduction of the A4E Express scheme which was targeted at small organisations who could bid for up to five thousand pounds. In its first two rounds the A4E Express delivered twenty one million pounds to over five thousand small projects (FitzHerbert and Paterson, 1998, 46). As a result, there was to be an explosion of new theatre companies across Britain who were benefitting from funds which were both significantly greater, and significantly easier to win than anything that had previously been available for start up companies from the Regional Arts Boards or National Arts Councils. As FitzHerbert and Paterson confirm, 'projects that met the criteria and the necessary technicalities were accepted pretty much on the spot' (FitzHerbert and Paterson, 1998, 46).

The impact of the lottery went further than funding an explosion of new work, it also, to some degree, began to shape what that new work might be. Certainly for the main programme, the criteria outlined by the A4E application form encouraged projects to be designed with a distinctly greater emphasis on widening audience, access and participation than had previously been the case with Arts Council funding. This can be seen in the nature of the work of the companies who were among the first beneficiaries of generous lottery awards. Mind the Gap (£302,050) and Strathcona Theatre (£396,797) were both companies supporting people and artists with disabilities; Cardboard Citizens (£253, 754) focused on working with and for homeless people; Tara Arts (£605,534) were a leading Asian theatre company, and Pop Up Theatre (£220,218) and Pegasus Theatre (£222, 239) both produced theatre for young people. Mind the Gap and Strathcona, although funded by the Arts Council

under their touring scheme, did not receive core funding, and Cardboard Citizens were not funded by the Arts Council at all, so this lottery money, and its particular objectives, can be seen to have made a genuine contribution to the existing theatre ecology of the time, both in the kind of work that met its particular objectives, and in the degree of funds it could make available to support this kind of practice.

Arts Council Policies for Theatre 1995-98

The *Policy for Drama of the English Arts Funding System* addressing the crisis in funding for drama in England in 1996, offered real seeds of hope for the independent theatre sector in subsequent years (ACE, 1996). Many of its recommendations were picked up and nurtured by the Boyden Report (2000) which was written a few years later in a much more auspicious period for significant financial investment. Throughout it emphasised the importance of new work and new writing for the growth of the theatre ecology in England; it also suggested that a shift in emphasis from allocations of funding according to historical precedent to one which was more responsive to emerging artistic initiatives might be desirable. Perhaps most crucially, for independent touring companies in the following decades, it stressed the importance of the development of long term partnerships between companies and venues, as the venue's traditional role as producing house was under strain and could benefit from a more mixed economy that included receiving and co-commissioning independent touring productions. Many of the additional initiatives which were going to influence the direction of arts strategy and impact on the independent theatre sector into the new millennium were also proposed here – an emphasis on access, audience development, international exchange, diversity and inclusion, and theatre for young people.

1993 had seen the publication of two key strategy documents for Scottish Arts, the Charter for Arts in Scotland and SAC's four-year Corporate Plan. In common with the developments in England noted above, and in common with emerging arts policy in Wales, there was an emphasis on access and education, artist-led innovation, audience development, international exchange and the development of partnerships between building-based organisations and independent companies, co-productions and a greater sharing of existing resources. Where the English strategy's emphasis on access and greater cultural inclusion predominantly focused on the multicultural diversity of its population, in Scotland and Wales, strategies highlighted the importance of promoting each nation's indigenous languages. In Scotland, policy was directed towards increasing the momentum for the sustainability of indigenous arts, and for greater support to be given to companies working in Scots or Gaelic. One of the first outcomes of this initiative, in 1995, was the establishment of an umbrella organisation to improve the funding, promotion and development of Fèisean, festivals for young people to develop skills in the Gaelic arts of song, dance, drama and traditional music. The development of indigenous arts remained a priority in the subsequent corporate plan covering 1997-2001, leading, among other initiatives, to a commitment to support the newly independent Gaelic touring theatre company, TOSG, by offering it revenue funding from 1999. In Wales, the early initiatives outlined to promote Welsh language theatre took a little longer to come to fruition, and were not without controversy, as I will later detail.

The other big question for Scotland at this time was the resurgence of discussions around the potential remit and repertoire for a Scottish National Theatre. Before such discussions could progress, however, the ongoing issues with the four existing national companies (Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra) had to be resolved. In 1998, after two years of arduous conflict and mutual

hostility, the Scottish Arts Minister, Sam Galbraith, finally released the additional funding that had been withheld from the companies, pending their acceptance of significant changes in their financing, strategic management and infrastructure. This resulted in an agreement whereby, among other things, the companies were obliged to work much more collaboratively and share resources more centrally between them. To some degree, this emphasis on partnership and collaboration might be seen to lay the ground for the conception of the National Theatre that followed; although significantly the model of the National Theatre was put forward by the artistic community in the first instance, rather than the Scottish Government. Perhaps more portentously, the distrust expressed by the Government in the internal management of these organisations can also be seen, with hindsight, as a key factor in their decision further down the line to take the national organisations, including the new National Theatre, out of the Arts Council's remit, to answer directly to Government ministers.

In 1998, the Federation of Scottish Theatres, representing all the professional theatres in Scotland, took the findings of their report into the options for a National Theatre to the Scottish Executive. The plan was, as is now widely acknowledged, a radical departure from existing models; proposing, not a building-based producing house but, as Robert Leach describes, 'a kind of parallel Arts Council … but with 'new' money to promote particular productions, and to be controlled by artists rather than bureaucrats' (Leach, 2007, 173). The working group's proposals were accepted by the Executive and in 2003 the Minister for Finance and Public Services was to allocate £7.5 million over two years to develop a National Theatre along the lines that had been recommended. The auspicious start to this national project, as Leach confirms, was that it ensured that pretty much the entirety of the Scottish artistic community 'was deeply committed from the outset to support a venture which

complied with virtually all their ideas'(Leach, 2007,174). Moreover, the collaborative nature of the model (with no building of its own partnership was virtually a requirement for each of the company's productions) ensured that a comparatively significant percentage of the four million pound annual grant could go directly into artistic costs, rather than overheads. In addition, Scotland's existing theatres and independent companies stood, as it seemed at that time, to benefit significantly – in terms of profile, opportunity and economic dividends – from the national project that was designed to 'commission existing theatres and theatre companies, or bring together directors, writers, designers, and performers in new combinations to create productions that will play in theatres and other venues up and down the country' (Leach, 2007, 174).

English Arts Policy under New Labour

In the summer of 1998 ACE received its first rise in government grant-in-aid since funds had begun to drop in real terms in 1992-93, with an additional £125 million pledged over the following three years. The immediate rise to grant-in-aid enabled the Arts Council to go some way to re-dressing the crippling five year standstill in core funding which had been imposed on regularly funded clients since 1993. In 2000 a further significant spending review took place which resulted in a government commitment to subsequent increases to the arts grant-in-aid budget that would see Treasury spending on the arts rise by 'an additional £100m a year by 2003/04'(ACE, 2000b, 5). Theatre was to be highlighted as one of the three strategic priority areas to benefit from the substantial rise in grant-in-aid funding and was allocated an additional twenty five million pounds per year, thus taking the total annual spend on theatre from forty million in 2000/01 to seventy million in 2003/04. A second priority of the government's additional funding was to address core funding across all arts organisations, so many theatre companies benefitted twice over, with their core funding set to increase by an

average of seventeen per cent in 2002/03. Some companies, such as motiroti and Yellow Earth Theatre were awarded triple their existing grant allocation and Pilot Theatre for young people went from an allocation of £49,300 in 2001/02 to an allocation of £240,000 in 2002/03. In addition the rise in funding meant that the number of regularly funded independent theatre companies rose astronomically from around thirty in 2000/01 to well over 100 by 2002/03.

This expansion of the sector was seen as an opportunity for 'theatre to reinvent itself' in accordance with the National Policy for Theatre, published in 2000 and drawing on the Boyden report and the Arts Council's subsequent response, *The Next Stage.* While Peter Boyden's report focused on the crisis facing regional repertory theatres, or producing houses, it addressed these within an assessment of the theatre ecology as a whole (Boyden, 2000). In the Boyden report we can see the consolidation of the strategic imperatives that were going to become a regular feature of arts funding policy in the new Millennium, in particular digital experimentation, cultural diversity, grass roots participation and internationalism. One further recommendation stands out as being central to the way in which independent companies were set to develop. Boyden recommended that producing houses, who were to be the main beneficiaries of the additional theatre funding, took on a much more central role in the development of independent companies than had previously been the case, thus leading to significantly increased support for independent companies in the making and touring of new work, as I will discuss further in chapter two.

The additional funding allocated to the sector by the Government did not come without its own implicit or explicit ring-fenced directives. Under New Labour the Department of National Heritage was re-branded as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The four key themes for the department – access, excellence, education, economic value – were precisely replicated in the Arts Council objectives of 1998, and ultimately foregrounded the arts under New Labour as serving two primary purposes: firstly their contribution to the economic growth area of the creative industries (Smith, 1998, 50), and secondly, their contribution to the 'cross-governmental attack on poverty and social exclusion' (Smith, 1998, 139). In line with New Labour's balancing act between the neo-liberal market and the social-democratic imperative to address disadvantage, discussed earlier in this chapter, it saw artistic practice as likewise serving both agendas. In addition to their economic role within the 'Cool Britannia' project, the arts were committed, as I will now detail, to support government objectives in urban regeneration, reducing unemployment, juvenile crime and social delinquency, improving access for young people to culture and education, supporting diversity initiatives and greater community cohesion and improving equal rights for minorities and those with disabilities. While such aims undoubtedly have merit, they do, as Michael McKinnie observes, reduce artistic practice to an instrumentalist role that 'is wholly affirmative. [New Labour's] policy does not acknowledge that art might be critical, subversive, or socially dissonant, conceptions of art which Labour Party policy once thought possible, and, to a limited degree, tried to encourage.'(McKinnie, 2004, 188)

In the annual report of 2000, the Arts Council declared that it 'no longer simply gives out money. We now set national policy […]' (ACE, 2000b, 7). No degree of emphasis in Arts Council literature on the 'arms-length from government' principle of arts funding could disguise the Government's strategic objectives which were as evident in their increased funding of the arts as they were in health, education and all other publically funded services during their administration. From 2004 the Arts Council annual reviews were required to report against the official requirements of their public service agreement that focused, in

particular, on their commitment to increase levels of participation and widen social inclusion in the arts. This move towards a more target-driven cultural policy was underpinned by a shift in perspective which, from then on, began to frame the public funding of the arts, 'as an "investment" with an anticipated return, as would have been the case with any other industry, rather than a "subsidy" offered to some supplicant, grant-dependent entity' (Ross, 2009, 25). In contrast to the message of the outgoing Chairman Lord Gowrie, who invoked Shakespeare and Wagner in his conclusion that 'the high arts have always been subsidised' (Gowrie, 1998, 8); the subsequent appointment, Gerry Robinson, the first Chairman under New Labour, is clear that from this point on 'we don't want to create dependencies: a leg-up from the Arts Council will not mean a free ride for life' (Robinson, 1998, 2). Re-configured as 'investment', public funding could now legitimately have several strings attached, and arts organisations under New Labour were rather to be seen as small businesses which could support the economy, the education of young people and the social fabric of a multicultural society.

Tony Blair's mantra on the importance of education and opportunities for young people was reflected in the Arts Council's emphasis on provision for this age group – indeed it remained a strategic priority beyond New Labour's term in office, appearing as one of the four strategic priorities for the period 2008 to 2011. In the wake of the spending review in 2000, and the significant rise in grant-in-aid money allocated to the theatre, the Arts Council committed to a fifteen per cent increase in the funding of young people's companies throughout the country. In schools, Creative Partnerships was the flagship programme for New Labour and the Arts Council and ran from its conception in 2002 until 2009 when it was finally disbanded as the squeeze on public spending began. The scheme placed artists into schools to work with teachers and pupils on often long-term projects and provided a significant funding stream for

independent theatre companies and freelance artists over this time period. By the end of its run it had worked 'intensively with more than 2,700 schools, with a further 10,000 involved. More than 915,000 young people have taken part in over 14,000 sessions.' (ACE, 2009, 40) Creative Partnerships was quintessentially New Labour in its vision. Artists, in this instance, were not to teach their artistic practice for its own sake, but to offer schools their creative skills and strategies as a means to enhance educational provision across the curriculum, raising educational standards by re-engaging children in learning and skills acquisition.

The New Labour Government's drive for community cohesion, as detailed earlier in this chapter, stepped up the Arts Council's ongoing attempts to establish a much wider ethnic diversity amongst the artists that they funded and the audiences for that work. The Black Regional Initiative in Theatre (BRIT) was designed to improve the opportunities for the national touring of work by black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) artists and gave rise, in 2002, to the Eclipse Theatre project that focused specifically on middle-scale African Caribbean touring theatre, as discussed further in chapter two. *Decibel,* a showcase platform for the work of BAME artists, was first established in 2003, and proved influential in introducing promoters, producers, programmers, artistic directors and venue managers to BAME work across the country.

Although disability theatre had been active on the fringes since the 1980s with companies such as Graeae and Theatre Workshop leading the vanguard, the 1990s and 2000s were to see a significant expansion and increase in the profile of such work in line with increased funding, changes in political legislation and progressive ideological shifts in public and media perception as noted earlier in the chapter. Companies introduced to regular funding in 2001 included Mind the Gap, New Breed, Heart n Soul, and Full Body and the Voice

(renamed Darkhorse in 2012), with Deafinately Theatre brought into the portfolio in 2005. Graeae saw its regular funding rise from £115,000 in 1999 to £225,566 in 2001. An even wider pool of artists benefitted from a series of showcases over the 2000s designed specifically to promote the work of disabled and deaf artists. DaDaFest is an annual showcase of disabled and deaf art, supported by the Arts Council and delivered by the North West Disability Arts Forum since 2001. The Unlimited Festival at the Southbank Centre was established in 2009 as part of the run up to the London Paralympics, and was presented as part of the Cultural Olympiad in 2012 featuring not only specialist disability companies such as Graeae and Mind the Gap, but also productions featuring deaf and disabled artists, by the National Theatres of Wales and Scotland.

The Arts Council's strategic initiatives in relation to much of the above activity were informed by their Public Service Agreement with the Labour Government and their need to meet the targets which were set for them as a condition of their receipt of public funds. In 2006 the Arts Council Public Service Agreement targets were to 'increase the proportion of people from priority groups' who took part in, and who attended, arts events. The three priority groups were defined as the disabled; black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities; and the 'socially excluded' (those from socio-economic groups C2, D and E). What was clear from the Arts Council's annual reporting on these targets was that something was not working: despite the initiatives highlighted above, in the first year (2007) no targets were reached; and black and minority ethnic rates of participation and attendance actually went into reverse. By 2009 the final assessment of progress against the targets told much the same story, except for one single year when attendance of black, Asian and minority ethnic attendance at arts events had shown a slight increase, which the Arts Council credited to their Decibel initiative as mentioned above (ACE, 2009, 57). I will return to a number of possible reasons for the failure of these targets throughout this and the following

chapter.

Scottish Arts Policy after Devolution

Both the 1999 election and the subsequent 2003 election produced a Scottish Labour-led Coalition Government with the Scottish Liberal Democrats. As Gavin Reid notes, in comparison with its Westminster counterpart, Holyrood Labour operated less in the 'post Thatcherite realm of markets' and more in a 'social democratic and ... nationalist environment' (Reid, 2007, 70). This was not all good news for the arts in terms of spending priorities. In defence of why Scottish theatres had not received a comparable funding boost to Westminster's additional £75million, a Scottish Labour Culture Minister retorted that 'England did not benefit from free personal care for the elderly, the abolition of university tuition fees, or generous teachers' pay deal' (Wade 2002 in Reid, 2007, 71). The Executive's National Cultural Strategy, published in 2000, was seen by many, Reid reports, as a 'missed opportunity' that focused on 'discussing culture's role in social policy rather than its evaluation' (Reid, 2007, 72) or simply as 'dour public-service utilitarianism with art tagged onto social policy' (Reid, 2007,71).

Even more inauspiciously, from the very start of the new Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Arts Council's policies were yoked firmly to the Government's Cultural Strategy, with Allan Wilson, MSP and deputy minister for sport and culture, commenting that he was 'pleased to see how well the Scottish Arts Council's Plan for 2001/02 ... responds to the priorities set out in the [National Cultural] strategy' (SAC, 2001, 3). The key messages in the Cultural Strategy were to improve quality, diversity and inclusiveness, and it was clear that the Arts Council were required to help the government deliver objectives in this area in return for a

significant increase in grant-in-aid funding which would amount to more than £150 milllion for the arts in Scotland over the subsequent five years.

The Scottish Arts Council were set targets between 2003 and 2006 to increase participation in general, the numbers of under-represented groups taking part in cultural activity (in particular children and young people), and the number of cultural programmes in areas of economic and social disadvantage. There was increased financial support for theatre companies working with children and young people, and those working with disabled artists were also particularly well supported over this time. Young people's companies such as Wee Stories, Catherine Wheels and Visible Fictions were brought into the core funding portfolio over this period, and Theatre Workshop and Lung Ha's also gained core funding for their work with disabled artists, including the former's 'Degenerate Festival' that was launched in 2003. Unlike its English counterpart, the targets set on access and inclusion appeared to have been met and exceeded by 2006, perhaps due to a greater rigour on the part of Scottish funders to tie the strategic objectives directly to the activities of the companies that were allocated core funding, or perhaps due to the much more pivotal role of Local Authorities in Scotland's cultural provision, thus enabling more focused, local-level initiatives.

An additional Governmental objective that can be seen to exponentially increase over the 2000s is the importance of arts and culture to Scotland's national identity and profile as presented to the rest of the world, with a particular focus on Europe and America. Here there are clear parallels with Tony Blair's exploitation of the arts in his 'Cool Britannia' project, and perhaps early signs of the 2007 victory of the Scottish Nationalist Party, and Scotland's subsequent commitment to a 2014 vote for independence, in which the case for Scotland's capacity to thrive as a fully independent country in an international climate will be key to the success of a yes vote. In

addition to the participation and inclusion objectives, therefore, the final target set was for the Arts Council to 'develop the means of identifying the number of Scottish world class artists, companies and institutions for 2006' (SAC, 2004a). The Arts Council also highlighted, among their four objectives, the necessity of 'promoting Scotland internationally' (SAC, 2004a). It is noticeable, in the annual reports over this period, how much space is increasingly taken up by a roll call of Scottish cultural success, not only via the Creative Scotland Awards made to individual artists, but also to international recognition for film stars, (Sean Connery, Maggie Smith) novelists (Ian Rankin) and popular music (Franz Ferdinand, KT Tunstall), who arguably might be less validly claimed as 'recent' subsidised success stories (SAC, 2006). The importance of marketing a 'confident, cultured Scotland' appears many times throughout the Arts Council documents (SAC, 2003, 1), and in the 2004 report the potential of culture to offer a new and important brand to Scotland is explicitly spelt out: 'the arts are a universal language, ideal for promoting the positive image of a contemporary Scotland as an attractive place to visit, and to live and work in' (SAC, 2004b, 3). Gregory Burke's *Gargarin Way* (2001) and *Black Watch* (2006) are two notable Scottish exports over this period. The latter, in particular, has been described by Joanne Zerdy as a 'Scottish operative' whereby 'the production becomes the face of the NTS [National Theatre of Scotland] as the NTS acts an as international delegate for Scotland's performing arts' (Zerdy, 2013, 183). She continues, '[i]t may also stimulate interest in American audiences about Scottish culture and politics, which could lead to financial investment in tourism initiatives such as Homecoming Scotland' (Zerdy, 2013, 190). If *Black Watch* had performed a successful 'outward facing' national identity, then the inaugural production of the National Theatre of Scotland in 2006, *Home*, had been notable in the dialogue it established with all corners of Scotland about itself, made up of work 'by ten different directors, each charged with making a work round the word "home", and each working with local people in a different part of the country' (Leach, 2007, 176).

The early signs that forewarned of the eventual amputation of the arm that was intended to maintain the independence of arts funding and policy from Government control came to fruition with the publication of the Scottish Executive's plan for the future of arts funding, *Scotland's Culture,* in 2006. Some of its most inauspicious conclusions had already been foreseen in the recommendations made by the Cultural Commission in 2005, which saw a raft of last-ditch attempts by over ninety leading Scottish organisations, including Scottish National Opera and the Edinburgh International Festival, to urge the Commission to retain the arm's length principle, and preserve the Arts Council or a body like it, which acts, in the words of the Scottish Arts Council's chief executive, 'as a check, or balance, against unhealthy concentrations of power which can skew the ultimate aims or purpose of any endeavour' (Calvi, 2005). In the event, arts organisations might have preferred more, not less, of the commission's recommendations to be taken up, including the necessity for additional annual funding of £100million and the maintenance of the arm's length principle which the report did, to some degree, advocate. The Executive's preference, as detailed in *Scotland's Culture* was to award only an additional twenty million annually, and to fund national arts companies directly from that point on, with, as Reid notes, 'increased funding tied to minimum standards of performance, touring, outreach and governance'(Reid, 2007, 73). All other companies would come under the strategic remit of a new organisation, Creative Scotland, which would replace both the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen.

If this was potentially politically catastrophic for the arts in Scotland, the economic impact would be felt even more directly, as it was announced that the 100-plus arts companies currently being core funded would no longer be able to rely on a continuation of automatic funding, but would have to apply for either long term 'foundation funding', or 'flexible funding' that could last for up

to three years. In the event, foundation funding was predominantly reserved for venues and ongoing development initiatives, with previously-core-funded theatre companies, other than the NTS which was now going to be taken under the Government's remit, being required to apply for flexible funding in the future. Long standing core-funded companies, Borderline and 7:84, were told that they would have their funds withdrawn from March 2007 as part of, in the words of SAC chairman Richard Holloway, 'a root-and-branch investigation of the whole landscape of arts funding in Scotland with a view to getting this logjam moving, as we'll be building in space for the surprises of new talent and new approaches' (BBC, 2006). In the event, the majority of theatre companies on core-funded contracts were re-established on comparable budgets (if not comparable expectations of stability) within the new flexibly funded system, and new beneficiaries of the 'space for surprises' included Grid Iron, Giant Productions, Plan B and Vanishing Point.

Welsh Arts Policy after Devolution

In 1998 Arts Council Wales launched a fundamental review of their support for professional theatre in the context of three years of standstill funding and an unbalanced portfolio of revenue companies, with only four out of twenty clients receiving over £150,000 per annum. The review, particularly focused on Theatre in Education (TIE) and new writing, was drawn up after a significant public consultation, but despite the arts council's insistence that there was popular support for their view that they were funding too many companies too thinly, its final recommendations were to prove hugely contentious on both fronts.

It was inarguable that the eight TIE companies in Wales – Arad Goch, Clwyd TIE, Cwmni'r Frân Wen, Gwent Theatre, Hijinx, Theatr Iolo, Theatr Powys, and Spectacle Theatre - were now experiencing severe financial difficulties due to their historic links with the old eight

Local Education Authorities which had recently been dismantled and restructured, resulting in Local Authority funding for TIE dropping by half. In June 1999, ACW put out tenders for only five fixed term funding contracts for what was now termed Theatre for Young People, to replace the eight TIE funding agreements that currently existed. However, the proposed axing of funding for the long established Gwent Theatre and Theatre Powys in particular, not least in the light of potential legal challenges to the franchise process itself, sparked a sustained and impassioned assault on the directorship and management of ACW from arts professionals, politicians and the public, with MP LLew Smith calling for the Arts Council to be 'scrapped and replaced with an organisation that is democratic, accountable and fair, with an understanding of the aspirations of communities right throughout Wales' (Theatre-Wales, 1999). With Arts Council staff threatening a vote of no confidence in their own management, and imminent legal challenges to the funding decisions, ACW was forced into a U-turn and reluctantly announced the suspension the Theatre for Young People element of the Drama Strategy and the re-instatement of three-year funding agreements to all eight existing TIE companies with effect from April 2000.

A similar strategy, running parallel to the developments in young people's theatre, was at the heart of ACW's new theatre writing initiative, which invited three existing revenue-funded companies, Dalier Sylw, Made In Wales and the Sherman Theatre Company, to bid for the running of a single, bi-lingual new-writing centre, producing plays in Welsh and English. In the event, only Made In Wales was to have its funding axed, with Dalier Sylw, (renamed Sgript Cymru and ultimately, in 2006/07, to be merged with the Sherman), gaining increased funding, but still £90,000 short of the combined budget that had supported the two companies previously. There was an outcry at the decision from playwrights and supporters of new writing, who saw the new bi-lingual strategy as a cynical money-saving move that actually

cut the budget for new writing in both languages under the auspices of a review that was purported to be developing the capacity of new writing throughout Wales.

While the concern over the loss of funding for new writing is well documented in the media, less noted was the loss, in the same year, of revenue funding for Brith Gof, arguably the most innovative and politically edgy company in recent Welsh history, with a significant academic and international following. It seemed that as the control over new writing was becoming more and more centralised, as I will further detail, genuinely alternative theatre in Wales – in both a political and aesthetic sense – was to be pushed to the very margins of existence. In 2000, in the wake of the calamitous drama review, a report on the management of ACW was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly, and compiled by Richard Wallace, who concluded that 'the council has lost the confidence of those it serves in the arts community and in itself' (BBC, 2000). The report was followed by the resignation of the Chief Executive, Joanna Weston, and the start of a large-scale restructuring process of ACW itself, which was, as in Scotland, to ultimately lead to control over arts funding and strategy being diverted further away from the Arts Council and ever closer to the directives of government ministers.

In 2002, the re-structured Arts Council was rewarded by the Welsh Assembly with a twenty three per cent increase in funding – an announcement in the annual report ominously followed by the news of the Government's cultural strategy (*Creative Future: Cymru Greadigol)* that would provide 'the framework for the Arts Council of Wales' strategy and includes many challenging targets for ACW' (ACW, 2002, 6). Clearly, in the minds of the National Assembly, the additional money was allocated with some considerable strings attached. One significant project to be launched was the plan for a Welsh-language theatre powerhouse with a national brief. In an unprecedented move, rather than identifying an

existing company to take this agenda forwards, or putting the opportunity out to tender, the Arts Council itself established a steering committee, 'charged with formulating the vision statement of the new company, registering the new company and recruiting the Chair and Board' (ACW, 2002, 21). In effect, the ACW, now tied to some degree at least to government objectives, were creating their own company – Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru – to which they then awarded £430,150 for its first year of trading; a considerable sum in comparison to Sgript Cymru's allocation of only £284,000. The rationale, it might well be argued, was to increase the funding of Welsh language theatre to somewhere near its English language theatre counterpart - Clwyd Theatr Cymru – which had now been afforded the status of a National Performing Company and was in receipt of revenue funding of £1,383,819, but this could equally have been achieved by raising the funding of existing Welsh language theatre organisations, such as Sgript Cymru had been before it was required by ACW to offer a bi-lingual remit. In the event, the blurring of lines between the objective and disinterested role of a national funding agency and the Arts Council's now quasi-artistic affiliation to a governmental priority was a worrying sign of things to come.

In 2004 the worst appeared to be on the horizon, with the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, announcing his intention to redefine the relationship between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Arts Council of Wales as part of a wider programme to reform public services focusing in particular on the abolition of 'quangos' (Rhydderch, 2004). A Culture Board, chaired by the Minister, would be established, in which the Arts Council, along with others, would participate. However, the crucial role of policy making would be removed from the Arts Council, and the six 'nationally' significant companies, including the English-language theatre, Clwyd Theatr Cymru; and the newly established Welsh-language theatre, Theatr Genedlaethol, would be directly funded from the National Assembly from 2006,

leaving the Arts Council to develop the predominantly lottery-funded smaller organisations. The new funding agreements would, predictably, tie the national companies in to governmental objectives, committing them to ambassadorial cultural work on behalf of the country, and a contribution to the access, participation and inclusion agendas of the Welsh Assembly. Given the same direction of travel in Scotland, it is no wonder that Christopher Frayling, the Chairman of Arts Council England, was driven to note in his 2005 annual report that '[l]ines must be drawn between elected politicians or civil servants and an independent funding body, and we are monitoring developments in Wales and Scotland with some concern' (Frayling, 2005, 2).

However, in January 2006, after fourteen months of debate, and finally spurred into action by the controversial decision by the Labour-led Assembly not to renew the contract of Arts Council chairman Geraint Talfan Davies in favour of a more pro-government appointment, the leaders of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Plaid Cymru demanded that the country's culture minister reverse a string of policies that they feared were seriously jeopardising the arm's length principle, including a suspension of the decision to directly fund the six national companies and remove the policy making remit from ACW. Following a vote in Plenary, the Wales Arts Review was commissioned by the Minister of Culture to review the role of ACW, and the plans to directly manage the six national companies was put on hold pending the conclusions of the review. Among the report's recommendations were that a dual-strategy board should be established; in effect a partnership between ACW and the Welsh Assembly, but crucially that the six national companies should not be directly funded. The report did, however, acknowledge that the role, remit and strategic development of national companies needed addressing by the strategy board, and it also recommended the designation of 'beacon companies' among its clients, which would be allocated additional

funds from a ‘merit pot’ on the strength of ‘consistent best practice in their field, which may be art form or development based’ (Stephens, 2006, 26). So ACW, unlike the Scottish Arts Council, was to survive, but the strategic and economic prioritisation of the ‘national theatres’ that was now in train, was to have significant impact on the future of the independent theatre ecology throughout Wales, particularly in the wake of the imminent global economic crash.

Into Austerity: 2008 – 2014 (England)

In January 2008 the McMaster review of the arts was published, a document that did much to address the tide of instrumentalism that had engulfed artistic policy throughout the previous decade. The report re-instated the notion that excellence, innovation and risk-taking must be at the heart of artistic practice, and acknowledged the need to free such practice, in the words of Culture Secretary James Purnell, ‘from outdated structures and burdensome targets, which can act as millstones around the neck of creativity’ (McMaster, 2008, 4). Even McMaster’s references to the familiar priorities of audiences and diversity were weighted distinctly differently: advising against second guessing what audiences wanted, and advocating a culture where audiences might be productively challenged; and stressing that an understanding of diversity must go beyond race to encompass all aspects of society.

The McMaster review was undertaken in 2007 alongside a spending review which saw Arts Council England receive an above-inflationary increase in funding for the arts with the caveat of a fifteen per cent reduction in administration costs that was to see their staffing reduced by twenty one per cent by 2010. The spending review also heralded in the Arts Council’s controversial investment strategy for the arts which proposed using the additional funding to increase the regular funding of selected Regularly Funded Organisations (RFOs) and introduce new RFOs at

the expense of removing regular funding from others. Across all arts sectors there was an increase in funding for seventy six per cent of existing organisations, eighty one new organisations brought into the portfolio, with 185 having their funding withdrawn. As the Arts Council Chair Stephen Frayling expressed it: 'to champion innovation and excellence by bringing new organisations and giving others above-inflation increases rather than simply give all existing funded organisations a little more' (ACE, 2008, 2). Not only was this one of the rare occasions when a significant cull of existing arts organisations was the result of deliberate strategy and increased funding, rather than cuts, it was also spectacularly mismanaged.

There was never any public dissemination of the strategy, rationale or criteria that lay behind the decision making, leading many to doubt, as Lyn Gardner noted, 'that a genuine national strategy is being implemented. The Arts Council should immediately take steps to reassure us and prove that it really has been doing some joined-up thinking and not just been wielding the knife where it fancies' (Gardner, 2007). This was all the more vital given that, as Gardner among others were quick to point out, 'the RSC and National and larger regional reps seem to be sitting pretty and the main burden of the cuts appears to have fallen on smaller organisations and the independent sector' (Gardner, 2007). Raising further concerns over the lack of transparency was the decision to notify those whose grants were being cut privately, with no initial publication of gains or losses, thus shrouding the overall picture in secrecy. There were also some decisions that had been taken on astoundingly incorrect evidence, such as the decision to cut funding for the Bush on the strength of audience figures that had been miscalculated by two-thirds.

The Bush, along with the Orange Tree, the Northcott Theatre and the National Student Drama School all eventually won appeals against the original decision, but these successful appeals

were rare and, probably not incidentally, ‘backed by the likes of Ian McKellen, Judi Dench and Sam West’ (Edwardes, 2008). Long-established theatre companies to lose their regular funding in this review were many including Compass Theatre, David Glass Ensemble, Doo Cot, Kaos, London Bubble, The People Show, Pop up theatre, Red Shift, Rejects Revenge, Sphinx and Station House Opera. Companies who quietly benefitted from the debacle and were introduced to regular funding included Punchdrunk, Ockham’s Razor, Metro-Boulot-Dodo and Fevered Sleep. If there seemed to be little rationale, as Gardner had argued, in where the axe fell, there certainly seemed to be evidence, given the theatre companies benefitting, that formalistic experimentation within the independent sector of the theatre ecology was being highly prized in the new awards being made. The funding review also saw the introduction of production company, Fuel, to regular funding, a pioneer in the rise of the independent theatre producer that I will discuss in detail in chapter two. Probably not incidentally, Fuel was a staunch promoter of the type of experimental performance that also characterised most of the newly recognised companies.

The most ominous consequence of the Arts Council’s mishandling of the whole affair was the hostility and distrust engendered in the arts community, demonstrated by the mass showing of disapproval at the Young Vic in January 2008 when high profile actors and theatre artists gathered to publically express their anger to Arts Council chief executive Peter Hewitt. The *Evening Standard’s* theatre critic Nicholas de Jongh even argued that

> The Arts Council is an overstuffed bureaucracy. It is high time that government tried something different. Let the council be mothballed, its staff dismissed and its functions be taken over by the Department for Culture, which could draw up a diverse cultural blueprint for each art form. (de Jongh, 2008)

This was not an auspicious start for the year in which, come the crash of Lehman Brothers, everything was to change, and de Jongh might yet feel he should have been careful what he wished for.

By the summer of 2010, the arts were not only facing the worst national financial crisis in the Arts Council's history, but were dealing once again with a Tory-led government for the first time in nearly twenty years. 'We all knew this year would be tough' the Arts Council's annual report begins, and they were not to be proved wrong (Forgan, 2010, 2). In May 2010, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, announced an initial round of public service cuts of six billion pounds for the 2010/11 financial year. This resulted in a cut to the Arts Council's grant from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, of nineteen million, in addition to the four million they had already cut from the coming year's budget, and on top of the previous twenty one per cent reduction in Arts Council staff in line with the 2007 Spending Review.

The opening of the 2011 annual report was no better, beginning 'this was the year in which the whole nation, including the arts, had to face fundamental choices about where real priorities lay in the context of a severe recession and a government determined to reduce the public spending deficit' (Forgan, 2011, 4). Just three years after the strategic overhaul of 2008, there was to be another significant revision of the national portfolio, this time out of necessity rather than choice. Again the Arts Council resisted calls for the changes to be spread evenly across existing RFOs, and instead drew a line under all existing partnerships, requiring all organisations to apply from the outset to be taken on under the new National Portfolio agreement to take effect from 2012. Perhaps learning from previous mistakes, this

was undertaken with much greater transparency and organisations were asked to explain, in their application, precisely how they expected to contribute to the realisation of the Arts Council's ten-year strategy for the Arts, 'Achieving Great Art For Everyone' which focused on excellence, increased access, increased participation for young people, sustainability, leadership and diversity.

While the requirement for artists and organisations to now fit their plans to the given framework might have been transparent and equitable, it also concluded, in explicit terms and counter to the recommendations of McMaster, the inevitable trajectory set on course by New Labour, and already established in Scotland and Wales, for the artistic agenda to be set, not by artists, but by the Arts Council, who in turn were answerable to the government via the public service agreement targets. The national portfolio was to mark the point where accountability to targets would finally become the over-riding concern for arts organisations in receipt of regular funding, and smaller organisations with less administrative capacity, and the most propensity to take artistic risks that had no certain outcome, would inevitably suffer the most. Risk-taking, it seemed, was to be supported principally by the lottery-funded grants for the arts programme, which from this point on would be available only to artists outside of the National Portfolio, who would arguably enjoy greater freedom from the more punitive target-driven culture of the NPOs, but at the considerable cost of the insecurity and lack of sustainability of project-by-project funding.

New organisations to join the portfolio included Gecko Theatre, Red Earth Theatre, Clod Ensemble, Coney, 20 Stories High, Dreamspeakthink, Propeller Theatre Company, NoFit State Circus, Eclipse Theatre and Slung Low. Among the existing RFO organisations who failed to win portfolio status were Action Space Mobile, Box Clever, Faulty Optic, Forkbeard

Fantasy, Foursight, Nitro, Proper Job, Quicksilver, Reckless Sleepers, Shared Experience, Third Angel, Trestle and Yellow Earth. Despite the high regard in which many of the above were held by the arts community, and the significant international profiles many enjoyed, the response was much more subdued and submissive than the unified, high profile outcry in 2008 for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was now the age of austerity and there was a certain degree of 'cuts fatigue' across society as a whole. Secondly, the Arts Council had approached the situation with a much greater sense of responsibility and transparency for its actions and, thirdly, the Arts Council had tried to take the brunt of the cuts to its own organisation as much as was possible, limiting the cut to the budget from which they funded arts organisations to fifteen per cent, rather than the twenty nine point six per cent cut to the Arts Council as a whole. This necessitated a further reduction in the Arts Council's own operating budget of fifty per cent by the end of the spending review in 2015 – a cut which, on top of its previous fifteen per cent cut - would ultimately, by the time of writing, see the Arts Council reduced to a skeleton of its former self, with its capacity to lead on strategy, to envision and manage change for the sector, and to lobby for support seriously diminished.

Both the immediate consequences and the long-term implications of these cuts to the Arts Council were explicitly highlighted in the aftermath of the second round of NPO decisions which were announced in July 2014 for the subsequent three year funding period. Unlike the 2011 round, where there were significant changes to the small-medium scale theatre company sector, bringing in a number of companies who had relatively recently begun to gain high profile attention to replace a similar number of long standing companies from whom RFO status was withdrawn; in this round the cuts to the independent theatre sector far outweighed the gains, with those losing 100 per cent of their NPO funding including Ridiculusmus, Dark Horse, Theatre Sans Frontieres, Whalley Range All Stars, Propeller, Big Brum, Carnesky

Productions and Red Ladder. Theatre companies producing their own work to be introduced to the portfolio were Chol Theatre, Third Angel, Tangle and Wired Aerial. Of these, both Chol and Third Angel had been regularly funded organisations prior to the 2011 round, making their 'new' NPO status from 2015 read rather more like the reinstatement of established companies which should never have been dropped, rather than an embrace of up and coming new practice. Both the contraction of the field of emergent core-funded and independently constituted theatre makers in England, and the financially-necessitated reduction of the Arts Council's strategic role are, as I will now discuss, aspects of a path already well-trodden by this point north and west of the borders.

Into Austerity: 2008 – 2014 (Scotland)

In Scotland, the proposed new organisation for the arts, Creative Scotland, took an inauspiciously long time to come about. In 2007 the Joint Board of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen took over the old functions of each organisation and the remit to strategically plan for the incoming Creative Scotland. But not until 2010 was the new organisation clearly established and equipped to take over the funding and strategic management of the arts (other than the national organisations) – albeit within the now-too-familiar co-ordinates set by the Scottish Executive. As the chief executives of the out-going SAC and Scottish Screen confirm:

> The Scottish Government has given a very clear indication as to what Creative Scotland's four national priorities should be. Both Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council are committed to delivering against these priorities during 2010/11 as we move towards Creative Scotland and the development of its first full corporate plan in 2011/12. (SAC, 2011, 5)

The four priorities were again focused on the combination of encouragement of artists, the necessity of improving access and participation and the raising of the international profile of Scotland, in the words of the corporate plan, ‘to extend and increase the wider benefits of arts and culture, including their contribution to the promotion and development of our unique national culture and its wider place in the international sphere’ (SAC, 2011, 5). The arm in the arm’s length principle seemed to have undergone its final amputation with the arrival of Creative Scotland. In 2012 *Guardian* critic Charlotte Higgins noted that:

> at no point in my extensive reading about Creative Scotland have I come across an example of the organisation challenging the government. The point of an arts council is to act as a buffer zone between artists and the government and at times to challenge it. Creative Scotland insists it is at ‘arm's length’ from the government, but if it is breaking ranks, it is happening behind the scenes. This seems particularly important when some fear that Scottish culture is being harnessed as a semi-political tool in the branding of ‘Team Scotland’. (Higgins, 2012a)

It was possibly unfortunate that Creative Scotland, having already been inauspiciously conceived, and already having suffered a difficult and prolonged birth, was finally delivered at the height of austerity. Just like its English counterpart, it had to come to terms with the fact that there might well be less grant-in-aid funding from the Executive in the future than there had been in the past. Although an additional share of Lottery money had been allocated to attempt to alleviate the cuts, and would, in fact, increase the overall total spend, this could not be used for core funding, due to the additionality clause in the original lottery legislation.

As a result, as Joyce McMillan summarises, ‘the organisation, therefore, needs to withdraw regular grant income from some arts companies, to reduce the regular element of the funding of others, and to set up some large project funds open to all comers, and it needs to make these decisions on the basis of current artistic performance’ (McMillan, 2012). Not, as McMillan concluded, ‘rocket science for any well-run arts agency’, but Creative Scotland decided instead to announce the withdrawal of funding from the entire portfolio of flexibly-funded companies, resulting in throwing ‘some 49 Scottish arts organisations from a condition of modest security into a state of complete insecurity, in which they have to bargain from project to project for their right to exist’ (McMillan, 2012).

One of the longest standing and most politically astute arts commentators in the UK, McMillan was clear where the blame for the debacle should lie, stating that ‘this review raises serious questions about the board of Creative Scotland, which has knowingly appointed to key roles in Scotland’s cultural life people who clearly embrace a commerce-driven ideology that Scotland in general, and its cultural community in particular, has rejected at every available opportunity’ (McMillan, 2012). The ‘”supposedly” social-democratic SNP government’ also had questions to answer about ‘why it continues to preside so complacently over such needlessly controlling systems of administration, and so much insidious market-inflected corrosion of the values for which it says it stands’(McMillan, 2012).

Where previously there had been a distinction between a fairly small cohort of flexibly funded companies (core in all but name), and a much larger raft of companies which were awarded reasonably regular project funding, the revised category of flexible funding was a kind of hybrid of the two, enabling a maximum of just two year funding to previously flexibly funded companies, in addition to a number of newcomers from the old project

funded cohort including Ankar Arts, Mischief La Bas, Fire Exit, Theatre Cryptic, Vox Motus and Birds of Paradise. Foundation funding, from this point on, was targeted at buildings and programmes, leaving none of the independent theatre companies, however well established, with the capacity to plan for more than twenty four months at a time.

By October 2012 the artistic community's dissatisfaction had come to a head with over 100 Scottish artists - amounting to the bulk of the Scottish arts establishment - signing an open letter to Creative Scotland's chairman, Sir Sandy Crombie, protesting against the routinely 'ill-conceived decision-making; unclear language, lack of empathy and regard for Scottish culture'. The letter continued, 'We observe an organisation with a confused and intrusive management style married to a corporate ethos that seems designed to set artist against artist and company against company' (in Higgins, 2012b). In December, the chief executive who had overseen the establishment of Creative Scotland, Andrew Dixon, resigned from his post, and Creative Scotland began the process of restoring trust with the arts community. In the annual report of 2013, Sir Sandy Crombie acknowledged that 'During the year it became clear that we were not getting everything right and that elements of the way we were working and our approach were alienating a significant proportion of the people and organisations that we are here to support' (Creative Scotland, 2013, 3). One significant change to appear in Creative Scotland's subsequent ten year plan, published in 2014, was the restoration of three year regular funding contracts, open to application in the summer of 2014.

Into Austerity: 2008 – 2014 (Wales)

In 2007 plans began in earnest for the development of an English Language National Theatre for Wales, with an additional £250,000 pledged by the Welsh Assembly. In 2008 the artistic director, John McGrath, was appointed to lead an organisation which, like the National

Theatre of Scotland, would be a building-less company which would seek to collaborate with the existing infrastructure of theatre companies and venues to create 'a new theatre ecology for Wales' (ACW, 2007). The model of the company's launch in 2010 also echoed the NTS's strategic approach, with 12 inaugural productions taking place across Wales, beginning with *A Good Night Out in the Valleys* at Blackwood Miner's Institute in March of that year.

2010 also saw, in Wales as in Scotland and England, an austerity-provoked root and branch review of its revenue funding resulting in thirty two existing organisations having their funding withdrawn or significantly cut. Established theatre companies to be hit included Hijinx, Theatre Powys and Gwent Theatre. There was an inevitable outcry from those companies and communities affected by the cuts, and accusations that the decisions would cause irreparable damage to the whole arts ecology in Wales. New companies introduced to revenue funding were few with NoFit State Circus and Theatr Ffynnon representing the theatre sector, as well as a strategic injection of increased funding into a significant number of community and grass-roots organisations in some of Wales' most deprived regions.

Interestingly, there was little in the media coverage of such reports which correspondingly emphasised the significant gains made by the national organisations; the newly established National Theatre Wales', for example, received a funding increase of £335,000 to take its annual revenue funding in 2011/12 to £1,685,000. Taken alongside the allocation to Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru, the Welsh Language National Theatre, of £1,052,942, it becomes clear that, whatever might prove to be the benefits of the two national companies established by ACW, the money that was no longer available to fund independently established and constituted companies was not inconsiderable.

Looking ahead....

It is notable that between 1995 and 2010, prior to the introduction of NoFit State and Ffynnon, not one independently-founded, project-funded theatre company was introduced into the Welsh revenue portfolio, and none have been introduced since. Companies who were revenue funded in 1995 have been continued, folded, or amalgamated to produce fewer and more centralised and building-based organisations, to the sacrifice of a diverse independent sector with progression opportunities to sustainable funding contracts for young emergent companies seemingly non-existent, beyond theatre for children and young people, and theatre for people with disabilities which both continue to be relatively well supported. Conversely, by 2014, Wales had no fewer than four establishment institutions funded at over £1 million, two of which had been founded by the Arts Council (National Theatre of Wales and Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru) and one of which (Sherman Cymru) was the result of a merger between formerly independent companies and a building based theatre.

The relative absence of Welsh companies in chapter two is precisely down to this deficit, and it is noticeable that since its first production in 2010 the National Theatre of Wales has worked with Nofitstate and Volcano, two of the very few remaining experimental independent companies in Wales, but this number is dwarfed by partnerships with companies from across Europe, including Rimini Protokoll, and companies core funded by the English Arts Council, including Told by an Idiot, Fevered Sleep, Wildworks and Frantic Assembly. There is no lack of imagination or innovation in John McGrath's artistic directorship, and Welsh artists and writers feature heavily in the National Theatre of Wales' portfolio of work to date, but the innovations fostered by emergent companies sustained by regular revenue funding are simply not there for the NTW to draw on as they are sadly no longer part of the theatre ecology in Wales. Artistic innovation, it seems, is now entrusted to the National

Theatres that are inescapably part of the political establishment, which seriously limits the potential for Welsh theatre to mount any meaningful challenge the Welsh 'brand' as designed and authorised by the Welsh administration in the years to come. It is ominous in the 2013 ACW report, for anyone who values the arm's length principle, quite how many times the Welsh Government is praised for its support, or 'applauded for its foresight', and the conclusion of the chief executive, Nick Capaldi, that 'arts and culture ... are a proper matter for our celebration, and for government's closest attention' (ACW, 2013, 10), seems to confirm the future direction of arts policy in Wales.

Despite the general sense that Creative Scotland made a welcome change of course in 2013, it is still notable in the 2014-15 annual plan that the entire ecology of independent theatre making companies is now being funded solely from lottery money that is still nominally reserved for 'additional' rather than 'core' spending. The implication is that, culturally, these organisations are now seen as merely 'additional' to the building-based and national organisations that are either funded from grant-in-aid or directly from the Scottish Executive, and are thus entirely dependent on the fortunes of the Lottery, as is the sector's long term survival. This may, of course, change when the new funding regime comes into force, but it seems much more likely that what will happen is that the majority of currently flexibly funded companies will become regularly funded companies over a three year period, in line with the National Portfolio Organisations in England. The important distinction is that much of England's independent sector remains funded by core, statutory, grant-in-aid funding, leaving the independent ecology in Scotland somewhat more vulnerable. Joyce Macmillan offers some seeds of hope in her support for Scotland's Culture secretary, Fiona Hyslop, and her cautious optimism about the 'better shape' of the institutional landscape, but she does express concern about Creative Scotland's continuing 'silence' with regards to 'addressing

the question of exactly how it will make its funding decisions', noting that Scottish arts policy of recent history has

> undergone a triple challenge; first from those who rightly rejected the old, rigid canon of "great art"; then from the shock-troops of extreme individualism who wrongly argued that artistic judgment can never be anything more than individual and subjective; and finally from the purely social, economic and bureaucratic measures of the value of art that rushed in to fill the vacuum. (McMillan, 2014)

Creative Scotland's ten year plan itself, sets out five priorities of experimentation, access, quality of life, a skilled workforce and, unsurprisingly given the pending referendum, the distinctiveness of Scotland as a creative nation that is connected to the wider world.

If the Arts Council of England was prescient, in 2005, to monitor 'developments in Wales and Scotland with some concern' (Frayling, 2005, 2), any hope it might have had of averting the foreseeable shortening of the arm's length, the reduction of the Arts Council's capacity for strategic leadership and the constriction of the independent theatre company ecology turned out to be short lived. The 2014 funding round confirmed the direction ACE had been heading since 2010, seeing the ecology of small companies suffer so that flagship buildings and national organisations, predominantly in London, could be sustained. Moreover, there was a further raid on lottery funding, previously restricted under its 'additionality' clause for project grants, to fund some NPO organisations with 100 per cent lottery money for the first time. On raising the danger of this with Mags Patten, the Arts Council's National Director of Communications, in a public meeting in July 2014, she responded that it had been essential to counter the government cuts in grant-in-aid funding, and so long as the Arts Council 'can be

seen to be using lottery money in a distinct and transparent way', and the percentage of lottery money used for core company costs remained 'proportional', she felt that the perceived threat of it ultimately replacing grant for aid was minimal (Patten, 2014). Her following assurance that the Arts Council had received 'commitment from both political parties to the principle of grant-in-aid' proved unsurprisingly less reassuring to the audience of artists whom she addressed, than it seemingly had to the Arts Council itself (Patten, 2014).

To conclude, for different ideological reasons and under different ideological administrations, the future of the independent theatre sector in the UK is looking increasingly fragile at the time of writing, and we have come a long way from the golden age of the expansion of the sector, in Scotland and England at least, under New Labour and the Scottish Parliament in the 2000s. In the following chapter I will examine in detail how this ecology grew over the period of this study, and how it has secured an artistic legacy within mainstream theatre that might yet prove, ironically, more sustainable than the independent sector itself.