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Editorial:

Performance and Radical Kindness

The origin of this issue lies in a research collaboration formed at the University of Auckland in 2018, "Agencies of Kindness." The interdisciplinarly group came together in response to what Aotearoa New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had described in a speech to the United Nations as a politics of kindness: "If I could distil it down into one concept that we are pursuing in New Zealand it is simple and it is this. Kindness. In the face of isolationism, protectionism, racism — the simple concept of looking outwardly and beyond ourselves, of kindness and collectivism, might just be as good a starting point as any" (Ardern 2018). Across a range of fields including politics and policy, education, social work, justice, creative arts and business, members of the group wondered what a politics of kindness looked like in practice: What does it mean to "do" kindness? For this issue, we ask how kindness becomes properly performative in the sense that we understand in performance studies — not simply a description but a powerful transformative action. The issue title, "Performance and Radical Kindness," reflects our interest in how kindness performed might not simply ameliorate suffering but also challenge the very structures that presage *unkindness.* To draw from Shoshana Magnet, Corinne Lysandra Mason and Kathryn Trevenen, we wanted to explore kindness as a "technology of social transformation" and a "microtechnique for both resisting and shaping power relations" (2014, 1-2). In this editorial, I want to consider some of the contextual factors — political and historical — that impact upon the ability of performances of kindness to effect such transformation. This comprises the first half of the editorial. I then draw from the insights of the articles themselves to offer a "lexicon" of kindness — a conceptual and linguistic mapping of the particular qualities involved performance and radical kindness.

Contextualizing Kindness

Beyond the Aotearoa context, kindness has recently emerged as a field of study and practice. *Kindlab* (https://kindness.org/), and the Bendari Kindness Institute at UCLA (https://kindness.ucla.edu/) have been established to promote research into kindness, while organizations like People United in the UK (https://peopleunited.org.uk/), and The Kindness

Institute in Aotearoa (https://thekindnessinstitute.com/) have put kindness at the centre of their identities and practices. Much of the research basis for organizations like *Kindlab* draws from psychological studies of kindness. *Kindlab* research director Scott Curry et al.'s article, "Happy to Help? A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Effects of Performing Acts of Kindness on the Well-being of the Actor" (2018), provides a very useful overview of this scholarship and draws the general conclusion that helping others makes us happy, even if the effect is only modest (328). Whereas the research that Curry draws from focuses mainly on the effects of kindness (altruistic action) for the actor — the person performing kindness — the focus in this issue is on the collective effects of practices of kindness and a deep interrogation of the contexts that shape kindness and its efficacy. Indeed, Curry et. al themselves note that further research is required to understand the impact of individual differences and contexts to the outcomes of kindness (2018, 320). The articles in this issue therefore draw from a broad interdisciplinary framework in general and performance studies specifically to think about kindness both politically and aesthetically. The authors variously offer case studies of performances of kindness, artistic reflections on kindness and theorizations of how kindness might be performed in ways that achieve radical outcomes.

Whilst a performance studies lens unites the articles in the issue, the disciplinary backgrounds of the authors which include sociology, education, poetry, applied theatre, drama, dance, performance art and art history means that collectively the articles draw together a rich set of sources for understanding kindness. In addition to scholarship from psychology, research from the fields of education, history, philosophy and the social sciences provided a starting point for both the broader kindness research group at the University of Auckland and for the authors in this issue. Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor's *On Kindness* (2009) provides a cultural history of kindness that traces its evolution as a social concept and is particularly insightful for its examination of the philosophical roots of kindness, its relationship to gender, and the impact of industrial development on how we perceive the labours of kindness. In the field of education, Stephan Rowland's research (2009) and his joint research with Sue Clegg (2010) have been invaluable for their analysis of the precarities of kindness as a real-world practice that must negotiate differentials of power. Magnet et al.'s research (2014) with its specific feminist interest has been similarly vital and is cited throughout the issue by different authors. In her article, Sarah Burton looks specifically at the concept of "academic kindness" and draws from a number of useful sources including Michael Willis' reflection on how the peer review process might become kinder (2020). From sociology, studies of perceptions of kindness (Brownlie and Anderson 2017, Habibis, Hookway and Vreugdenhil 2016) offer valuable insights into how kindness is both understood and performed, and the Australian focus of Habibis et al.'s research is particularly useful for this journal given its regional emphasis. In his contribution, Daniel Johnston draws from phenomenologist William Hamrick's *Kindness and the Good Society* (2002), which provides a useful touchstone for the many discussions of relationality as it pertains to kindness in the issue. Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kind in the Chthulucene* (2016) appears throughout the issue, as does work from Lauren Berlant on "cruel optimism" (2011) and Sara Ahmed on happiness (2010), two sources that help temper idealizations of kindness. We hope that the wide range of sources and disciplinary approaches

in the issue makes a significant contribution to the growing body of research on kindness and also hope that the authors' work will productively intersect with similarly oriented research in performances studies into topics such as care and listening; see for, example, the forthcoming issue of *Performance Research,* "On Care" (27: 4 2022).

Before introducing the articles in the issue, I would like to spend some time defining and contextualizing kindness and it is worth beginning this task by acknowledging its etymological origins. When defining kindness, most writers direct our attention to its root, "kin," which it shares with the words "kindred" and "kind." In this way, kindness denotes a kinship or sameness (Phillips and Taylor 2009, 6), or, as Stephen Rowland suggests, a natural mode of relating between members of the same family, group or species (2009, 207). Phillips and Taylor similarly explain kindness in terms of sympathetic identification with the vulnerabilities of others (2009, 8), an understanding echoed elsewhere in the notion of "bear[ing] the vulnerability of others" (Magnet et al. 2014, 3; Lampert 2011). These definitions quickly make evident the great challenge in practices of kindness, which is its tendency to affiliate with likeness. Donna Haraway notes this problem in *Staying with the Trouble,* where she argues that social transformation requires "making kin as oddkin rather than, or at least in addition to, godkin" (2016, 2). This injunction to make kin with — and bear the vulnerability of — those different from us certainly has its challenges. A recent Australian Survey of Social Attitudes found that while 96% of respondents considered themselves to be generally kind, only 68% of respondents thought that everyone was deserving of kindness, citing reasons such as others being outsiders or un-Australian (Habibis et al. 2016, 403). While we might generally consider ourselves to be kind and recognize the significance of kindness, kindness in and of itself does not escape the discrimination and inequities that mark the neoliberal democratic contexts in which its exercise has been studied.

In this regard, responses to the championing of a politics of kindness by Ardern and her government in Aotearoa provide rich "data" to draw from. Certainly, there is an element of what political studies scholars Jennifer Curtin and Lara Graves identify as "gentle populism" in Ardern's political rhetoric, which has been generally well-received by the New Zealand voting public (2018, 205-6). The injunction to "be kind to one another," which Ardern has repeatedly expressed, has been widely embraced not just by government agencies in their communication strategies, but by the wider public and indeed by business — see, for example, the AMI insurance campaign (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPgzHi0nXNo) which "centres on the emotion of insurance through the lens of kindness" (Green 2019). Notwithstanding the public popularity of a discourse of kindness, there are, as Curtin and Greaves write, "claims that the use of the term 'kindness' represents a 'wishy-washy' politics with little substance and a new form of virtue signaling" (2018, 185). Such critiques are not solely voiced by Ardern's more conservative political opponents. In 2020, a coordinator for Auckland Action Against Poverty, for example, remarked: "What's happening on the ground in our communities is the opposite of 'being kind' and we're over it. People receiving benefits can't eat kindness […] 'Be kind' means nothing […] without meaningful action and practices behind it" (Pao 2020). In his analysis of Ardern's rhetoric of kindness, Dylan Asafo writes that:

> This strict commitment to the "centre" has meant persistently peddling messages of "kindness," "unity," and "togetherness" in order to appear values-based — all while flatly rejecting any all proposals for equity and transformative change that Māori, Pasifika, Muslim, Black, Peoples of Colour, refugees, migrants and our intersecting LGBTQI+ communities and peoples with disabilities so desperately need. (Asafo 2020)

From these comments we see two interlinked issues. The first is the perception that declarations of kindness are merely "performative" in a pejorative sense; Austin's so-called infelicitous or unhappy performatives — declarations that *don't* do what they say (1975, 14). Sara Ahmed's critique of what she calls unhappy declarations of anti-racism makes this same argument: "I suggest that declaring whiteness, or even 'admitting' to one's own racism, when the declaration is assumed to be 'evidence' of an anti-racist commitment, does not do what it says" (2004). The key problem with such unhappy declarations — the second issue here — is not simply their emptiness but that in purporting to be "evidence" of kindness, such declarations may have the opposite effect. In the same sense that Ahmed suggests that such declarations may in fact advance racism, Asafo writes that the unhappy performativity of declarations of kindness doesn't just fail to fulfil a promise; much more troublingly, it actually performs violence through engaging a rhetoric of kindness as populist national project to silence marginalized voices. After all, nobody wants to be a killjoy when it comes to kindness.

Core to the problems of kindness that Asafo points to, as care studies has made evident, is that practices such as care and kindness have historically often been feminized in ways that undermine women and other marginal communities while remaining easily co-optable for those in positions of power. Moreover, the feminization of care has taken place alongside the neoliberal valorization of individualism. In his essay, "Happiness in a Society of Individuals," Zygmunt Bauman calls this an "ideology of privatisation" that shifts the responsibility of care away from government and back to the individual, positing each person as responsible for their own circumstances and survival. He writes:

> This ideology proclaims the futility (indeed, counter-productivity) of solidarity: of joining forces and subordinating individual actions to a "common cause." It derides the principle of communal responsibility for the wellbeing of its members, decrying it as a recipe for a debilitating "nanny state," and warning against care-for-the-other on the grounds that it leads to abhorrent and detestable "dependency" (2008, 21).

This is perhaps what has made Ardern's rhetoric so striking in its attempt to reclaim kindness and indeed wellbeing as core governmental values and aims and measure (see, for example, the New Zealand government "wellbeing budget" in 2019 https://www.treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-05/b19-wellbeing-budget.pdf). Indeed, in 2020 following a large pay equity settlement for carers working in the health sector in

Aotearoa, The Equal Pay Amendment Act came into force as a "a practical and accessible process to raise and consider claims of systemic sex-based pay undervaluation in pay in female-dominated occupations" (MBIE 2020). Contemporarily, however, kindness remains a double-edged sword for the vulnerable and marginalised, where expressions of kindness are at once prescribed and prohibited. For example, Burton and Turbine (2019) explain that the allocation of women and people of colour to this work is based on cultural interpretations that frame them as naturally suited towards caring labour, which then becomes circuitously taken up as expectations. Citing Ahmed, they explain that when women and people of colour refuse to perform to these expectations, they are interpreted as ungrateful, unfriendly and lazy and suggest women of colour in particular are siphoned into caring roles and are at an even greater risk of being accused of anger, hostility and irrationality should their role be transgressed (Magnet et al. 2014).

Underlying what Magnet et al. and others point to is the problematic relationship between kindness and whiteness, in particular kindness understood as a marker of white moral subjectivity (indeed Phillips' and Taylor's book is a history of precisely this). In an imperial context, kindness was one way white Europeans came to construct themselves in relation to their others; colonisation was justified as an act of benevolence in which the "civilised" kindly bestowed their knowledge onto the "primitive" (Magnet et al. 2014, 3). This acknowledgement of the specific whiteness of kindness is important, and whilst the issue collectively examines how kindness might be performed in service of radical change, I am keenly mindful of Fred Moten's injunction against what he calls "the terrible interplay of universalism and force" (2018, 4). Indeed, in an interview I conducted with Indigenous Māori scholar Hirini Kaa for another forthcoming special issue on kindness in journal *Knowledge Cultures* (Kaa and Willis 2021), Kaa highlighted the vital importance and indeed radical potential in turning away from such generalized values as kindness towards specific indigenous concepts. In the context of Aotearoa, for example, he suggests that the Māori concept of manaakitangi (a specific form of care centred on upholding the mana — sanctity — of others) has much more radical potential than the notion of kindness, enmeshed as it is in local politics. Thus, whilst the broad concept of kindness unites the issues in the article and the broader research programme of the wider group, we are ultimately interested in kindness as a point of departure rather than a destination; as Kaa persuasively argues in the Aotearoa context, kindness might be most useful simply as a doorway through which to step into a richer and more meaningful values-based terrain that draws on a much more diverse set of knowledges.

Great sensitivity and attentiveness are therefore required in any attempts to theorize and champion the potential of kindness as a radical performative practice. As Clegg and Rowland write:

> Feeling kind is not enough. Intellectual judgments are involved and not just empathy. Empathy, understood as an affective interpersonal capacity, would limit acts of kindness to particular sorts of imaginary others. Kindness is not simply the projection of one's own needs and desires onto people who are in

> fact not like us and/or do not share our values, considerable rigour is entailed in working out what would be kind in relation to the realisation of the projects of others […] Kindness, therefore, requires the recognition of different power and positionality, and a recognition of the projects of other people not just our own. (2010, 723-4)

I suggest that such care and thoughtfulness is evident in the articles throughout this issue, which are rigorous in their examination of the contexts in which kindness is applied. The title of this issue is therefore as a much a provocation as a declaration: what intentions, conditions and actions are required to radicalize the practice and performance of kindness? Indeed, kindness requires companions: commitment to justice, critical (and self-critical) acuity, affirmation of equity. But it also requires many of the qualities explored in the articles in this issue: gentle relationality, touch, reciprocity, vulnerability, openness, de-centring, listening, care, imagination, creativity. Thus, whilst aware of the problems of kindness, collectively the articles in this issue ultimately affirm its potential as a point of departure for social transformation.

A Lexicon of Kindness

What then does a performance studies lens offer to the study of kindness? In the first instance, and most broadly, both performance examples and the application of a performance-informed lens allows us to think about kindness as *enacted* — as a doing that has both motivating causes and material affects and effects. The articles that follow offer a rich range of examples of just this. Broadly, we have organized the work into two sections. The first comprises a range of theorizations of kindness performed, which variously consider: kindness within institutional contexts (see Burton and Haughton), kindness as critical and artistic methodology (Samuels and Ehn), kindness as an analytical lens (Korporaal and Zisman), and kindness as a lens for reading dramatic texts (Johnston and García-Martín). The second section focuses on performances of kindness in contexts spanning applied theatre, protest, participatory performance and performance art. In these articles, the authors explore the felt and affective dimensions of kindness as well as its role within creative processes. This section spans a rich range of examples including: UK applied theatre projects (Low and Mayo), protests of the 2019 Chilean democracy movement (Longley), screen-dance workshops with Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica (Guzzanti), socially-engaged participatory arts practice in Melbourne (Newman), and Villetaneuse, Paris (Harper), and reflection on the place and practice of kindness within artistic methodologies themselves (Hunter and Dennis). Whilst the issue is divided into these two sections, the modality of the writing does not distinguish itself so neatly; Ehn's discussion of an artistic methodology of silence, for example, is itself highly performative, for example, while many of the works in the second section of the issue are as critically astute as those in the first. Most significantly, across the two sections, the articles collectively assemble a lexicon of kindness, which we hope will be of great value to other scholars, and it is to this lexicon that I now wish to turn as a way of more fully introducing the authors' works.

The Performativity of Kindness

Resistance, Refusal, Solidarity

When Alys and I were beginning to think about the issue, one of our points of orientation was a blog post written by Sarah Burton and Vicki Turbine, "We're Not Asking for the Moon on a Stick: Kindness and Generosity in the Academy," which examined the relationship between solidarity and kindness in the context of academia. In that piece they wrote:

> The work of collegiality is continuous, consuming, and at times even monotonous. Care and kindness is not simply a particular attitude of geniality or occasionally "brightening someone's day." Instead, we need to comprehend it as both radical dispositions and radical acts: speaking truth to power, refusing damaging hierarchies, rejecting restrictive and exclusionary interpretations of "professionalism." (2019)

Burton and Turbine's argument for kindness to be viewed as a radical practice has been an important provocation for many of the authors in the issue, in particular their argument that "[r]adical kindness is the creation of space for vulnerability" (2019). When we were assembling the issue, I reached out to Sarah and Vicki and was thrilled when Sarah agreed to write an article that extended the ideas raised by the pair in their blog post. That we open with Burton's article, "Solidarity, now! Care, Collegiality, and Comprehending the Power Relations of 'Academic Kindness' in the Neoliberal Academy," therefore reflects both how formative her writing was for us in conceiving the issue, and also the fact that it so clearly situates kindness in a political context. Moreover, that context — academia — is one that readers of this journal will be intimately familiar with. Drawing from long-term ethnographic fieldwork, Burton offers a forensic examination of the un-kindnesses that mark the academic context. Her article cogently argues that we need to understand the origin and function of such un-kindness in order to formulate practices of kindness truly capable of transforming lived experience. Importantly, Burton argues that we should take kindness seriously affirming its "potential roles in uncovering the creeping manoeuvres of neoliberal power, and in offering more radical forms of hope, optimism, and solidarity" (2021, 21). Burton suggests that such radical forms are marked by the qualities of generosity, vulnerability and co-operation. These characteristics provide a very useful starting point for the essays that follow, which each offer their own investigation of the affectivity and performativity of kindness.

Similar to Burton's interest in kindness in institutional contexts — and indeed the tension between kindness as policy and as personal practice — Miriam Haughton's "As Much Graft as There is Craft: Refusal, Value and the Affective Economy of the Irish Arts Sector" examines the political potential of kindness in response to government policies. Specifically, Haughton looks at kindness in the context of the "rejuvenation of community spirit and collective activity throughout the arts sector in Ireland as the sector challenged the initial support package put in place in April 2020" (2021, 42). Significantly, Haughton frames the *refusal* by artists to accept the support offered to them by the Irish government as itself an expression of collective self-

kindness. Such kindness, she argues, rejects Lauren Berlant's paradigm of cruel optimism "whereby the hope for better next year functions to cover the cracks of systemic devaluing of arts labour, experience and encounter" (40). In addition to contributing the growing body of research looking at the relationship between policy and practice in the arts, Haughton's identification of kindness as a practice of refusal is an important theme for the issue as a whole. Alys Longley similarly examines the potential of kindness as a practice of resistance, writing: "radical kindness might occur when our care begins to take the form of a "no" rather than a "yes". Such kindness refuses to tolerate and stabilise systems that ride on oppression and extraction from the many for the few" (2021, 201). The arguments of each of the authors helpfully shift the perception of kindness away from an ameliorative practice to one that involves refusal, resistance and solidarity.

Withness, Closeness, Presence

In their articles, "Withness in Kind" and "Still Small: Contemplation in Action," Lisa Samuels and Erik Ehn respectively consider the bearing of kindness on practices of artistic engagement. In her discussion of "withness" as an interpretive approach, Samuels writes, "Withness turns away from potential power and distance stances of exegetical criticality and towards a standing with the engaged object/event, an attention that does not turn away, that does not seek to be somewhere other than in relation" (2021, 60). Samuels' articulation of critical withness — a form of being "in-kind" that echoes Haraway's notion of being "odd-kin" — makes an important contribution to how we might think about kindness and being in-kind within our own scholarly practices. Such a paradigm, as Samuels outlines, demands a careful tending to our relationship with the objects of our critical appraisal. Such an approach, she writes, isn't about "becoming one with the art being considered," but rather "a reminder of the value of continually recognizing the otherness of oneself as interpreter, of the interpretive processes, and of the work being accorded attention" (63). Kindness in this context, as above, does not denote a lack of criticality as has sometimes been attributed to it (see for example Clegg and Rowland 2010). Rather, critical kindness is a movement — is on the move — working in a syncopated choreography of flows of meaning and interpretation with its artistic partner.

Core to the practices that both Samuels and Ehn outline is the notion of presence: to be present to the other, to be present to the work, to share in presence together. In his tracing of the movement in playwriting practices, via silence, from "from contemplation through creativity and into compassion" (2021, 74), Erik Ehn writes that: "The discovery of one's self-position in contemplation moves to operation as self for others through the recognition and rehearsal of kinship/kindness in metaphor, or art — the sphere in which the impossible and paradoxical cataclysm of shared experience is treated as-if real, as-if self and other were in union" (93). Such shared presence is indeed an important quality of kindness. In *The Kindness Cure,* psychologist Tara Cousineau describes kindness simply as crossing the relational space between ourselves and others (Cousineau 2018, 34). For Ehn, to enter into silence is to be open to what is present, "trusting what wasn't language, and what won't be language. And then the language that arises from a shared sense of mystery, directed through a covenant free of predetermined aim,

recommends a program of action that relies on care and aware interdependence" (2021, 74). Samuels' and Ehn's essays offer rich and considered theorizations of and reflections on kindness read as ethical practice that are rich in potential for other scholars — templates for working and dwelling in-kind with our subjects. Alys Longley's essay in this issue also does just that, taking the notion of withness to explore "how as artists we can be alongside each other, in an orientation of solidarity and support" (2021, 200).

Embodied Vulnerability and Accountability — Kindness as Connective Tissue Through Space and Time

As Cousineau observes, kindness and vulnerability are inextricably intertwined. Not only is kindness, as Taylor and Phillips write, about "bearing the vulnerability of others," (2009, 8) we ourselves become vulnerable by way of "witnessing another's vulnerability" (Cousineau 2018, 32). The mutuality of this vulnerability is important and requires sensitivity to the nature of the kind connection. Mutual vulnerability is not necessarily equally shared; that is, the degrees of vulnerability are differentiated by the contexts in which kind acts are performed. In "Gathering Through the Image: A Performative Kind of Kinship," Astrid Korporaal takes up the relationship between kindness and performance art from the perspective of vulnerability, asking what role art may play in enhancing our experiential understanding of the value and function of vulnerability. Through her case studies, Korporaal is especially attentive to the differentials I've just indicated, writing: "There is a danger of equating what might also be called an 'aesthetic of vulnerability' with acts of radical kindness" (2021, 100). Nonetheless, instances of "embodied vulnerability," she argues, invite artistic practices that might move towards "spaces of kinship rather than an extractive (re-) distribution of risk" (101). Significantly, with a focus in her case studies on the issue of documentation, Korporaal asks how this type of non-extractive kind connection might occur belatedly, extending into other spaces and times. In this sense, Korporaal's article makes an important contribution to the issue, considering the reverberations — what Rebecca Schneider calls "reiterative ricochet" —of kindness through time (Schneider and Ruprecht 2017). She ultimately and movingly concludes (with reference to Donna Haraway) that: "In the kindness of this gathering, we can find the kin who are also extending, stretching, touching, breathing, and 'staying with the trouble" (2021, 113).

Like Korporaal, in her article, "Circus, in Crisis: Examining Care and Community in Circus Training," Laine Halpern Zisman emphasizes the role of vulnerability in practices of care and kindness, a perspective that is enhanced by the very nature of her example — circus practices — where the concepts of vulnerability and care are not simply emotional or affective coordinates, but inherent aspects of the physical practices of circus. In focussing on how community circus practitioners dealt with Covid-19 restrictions, Zisman asks how the practices of holding and being held that characterize circus might be sustained when physical contact is no longer possible; that is, just as Korporaal asks how kindness might happen through time, Zisman asks how it might occur through space. Importantly, as Zisman explains, vulnerability prompts accountability, which in turn demands action (2021, 117). As she writes: "Kindness and care practices are then not primarily static affective states or emotions nor are they an end goal.

Instead these are active and relational operatives, which develop through the personal, environmental, and interpersonal" (117). In demanding that kindness and care are tethered to accountability, Zisman is scrupulous in recognizing the un-kindnesses and discriminations that have marked the history of circus and asks not only "how kindness might breed support and care, but how it can be weaponized against other bodies" (125). In an insight that is significant for the issue as a whole, she further explains, "Thinking critically about whose bodies most easily 'practice kindness' means that we must recognize how kindness becomes a normalizing tool of white supremacy, class, and gender and how it can be weaponized to maintain and perpetuate the status quo" (125). Ultimately, Zisman examines how we might take the de-corporealizing "break" of the pandemic to re-corporealize the collective circus body in ways that are truly kind and caring.

Self, Other, Empathy, Objectification, Agency

Daniel Johnston's "Ibsen's Phenomenology of Kindness: Self and Other in *The Wild Duck*" and Elena García-Martín's "Radical Kindness, Disability Identity and Embodied Alterity on the Contemporary Spanish Stage," each examine the notion of kindness in relationship to dramatic texts. The articles draw from examples of dramatic scenarios marked by conflict between self-interest and kindness where kind ideals are tested by the complexity of human relationships. Drawing on a phenomenological framework, Daniel Johnston suggests that the concept of kindness provides a unique way of reading the nature of intersubjectivity — the relationship between self and other — in Ibsen's drama. In her focus on texts that represent disability, otherness is also core to García-Martín's analysis. At stake in both these analyses is the ability of selves to really listen to/hear and see the other as they are. Indeed, Johnston writes, "human kindness listens and attends to others there in the world and observes the specific circumstances of one's encounter with them" (2021, 136). Without this openness to the other, kindness, as García-Martín suggests, becomes just another form of control. She writes: "If we unmask disempowering acts of kindness as demeaning even when grounded in self-described altruistic aims, we see that true kindness demands societal changes in perspective and power structure" (2021, 160). Indeed, in the context of disability, kindness is a problematic concept, tethered as it is to objectifying ableist notions of normalcy.

In contrast, in his analysis, Johnston offers the concept of "deep kindness":

> "deep kindness" has the potential to develop into a loving relationship as it demonstrates care, responsibility, respect, attentiveness towards the other, togetherness, and not simply a sense of ethical fairness. Deep kindness in this sense is a sustained availability of the caregiver rather than a fleeting act of care and models a reciprocal generosity. (2021, 138)

In Johnston's definition, we see once the again the significance of presence to kindness and it is worth drawing attention here to the resonance between "deep kindness" as he defines it and Helena Grehan's notion of "slow listening," which:

> demands that we focus in more detail and with more attention on the speaker and on what is being said before moving to a consideration of how it is this might be responded to by the spectator, who is listening to both what is said and what is covered-over. We need to pay more attention, to linger longer, to the things that are said and left unsaid as well as to the act of speaking itself. (2019, 54)

Kindness here is to be in the presence of the other in a sustained and committed way; such presence demands both commitment and, as noted above, accountability.

Kindness in Performance

Reciprocity, Responsibility, Possibility

The second section of the issue opens with essays by Katharine Low and Sue Mayo that examine the role of kindness in applied theatre settings with a particular emphasis on facilitation. In "The Potential of Radical Kindness as a Methodology in Applied Theatre in Arts and Health," Low argues for a stronger valuation of kindness within applied arts contexts and draws from her own experience of working with women diagnosed with HIV through the organization Positively UK. Using the notion of "apertures of possibility" (2021, 164), Low invites us to pay "closer attention to the fleeting moments, often overlooked in our practice," arguing that "a closer look offers greater insight into what is happening within the practice space" (168). Low persuasively argues that attending to kindness is a vital way of re-shaping the dynamics that usually govern how the women that she works with are perceived and treated; that is, she suggests that kindness makes a significant intervention in the quality of their everyday experiences. In her attention to "overlooked" moments, Low's work builds on scholarship such as James Thompson's arguments about the role of affect in applied theatre contexts (2009). By focusing on kindness specifically, she offers insight into the role of reciprocity in these contexts and identifies particular qualities essential to a methodology of kindness: it resists perceptions of "vulnerable" stigmatized bodies, it upholds the potential that lies in a consideration of the everyday and quiet advocacy, it foregrounds the role of the facilitator in supporting the workshop and the care that takes place within those spaces (2021, 171). While Low's discussion is focused on applied arts contexts, it has much to offer to other settings, from classrooms, to rehearsal rooms, to workplaces.

Mayo's "'We Know...': Collective Care in Participatory Arts," is similarly concerned with reciprocity and with the role of participants themselves as co-carers in applied context. As she writes, "I realised that the quality of relationships among participants had become a marker for me of the success of a project" (2021, 184-5). Mayo suggests that both trust and empathy are essential for creating contexts in which care for others is a shared project. To develop this insight, she examines the notion of "negative capability": "a state of acceptance of not knowing, of accepting to be in a place of uncertainty in order to let 'unimagined creative possibilities to emerge" (185). In a manner similar to Lisa Samuels' notion of "withness," Mayo also foregrounds

the idea of *caring with*, rather than caring for — that is, like Low, Mayo is interested in the transformative potential of kindness as grounded in reciprocity. With an applied theatre context, such reciprocity means allowing a "fluidity of the role of the host and therefore the guests," in order to disrupt the binary of the carer and cared for (195). Such collective care, Mayo argues, "offers an alternative to individualised, atomised ways of being" and "needs to be recognised and valued, in order to rebalance asymmetrical relationships" (195). Across both their articles, Low and Mayo offer a number of insights for creating kind spaces that in their own quiet ways are rich for their disruptive potential and for their affirmation of the autonomy and agency of participants.

Transitivity, Affect, Activism and "Tender Violence"

Taking Samuels' concept of "withness" as point of orientation, Alys Longley's "The Other Country that You Are: A Performative Essay and Video Work exploring Radical Kindness in the Chilean Peoples Uprising of 2019," draws from a period she spent in Chile when her planned artistic collaboration with Chilean artists was transformed by the country-wide protest movement against social inequality, *Estallido Social*. Longley was profoundly affected by what she describes as the "very tender violence of the Chilean protests, the intense care and generosity driving epic acts of anonymous performance, emerging in the haze of tear gas, water cannon laced with chemical agents and rubber bullets" (2021, 201). From this experience, Longley concludes that radical kindness is characterized by refusal and resistance to the extractive status quo. In her article Longley reflects not only on the "tender violence" of such kindness, but also on how the very form of writing itself might perform solidarity. Her article incorporates different writing styles and modes, including video, photography, poetry, performance and essay writing in order to articulate — to perform — such refusal: "each writing fragment is an experiment in "withness", exploring how as artists we can be alongside each other, in an orientation of solidarity and support" (200). This artistic methodology therefore is highly responsive to the specific context within which Longley is working and her contribution is vital to the issue in that it demonstrates the different forms that kindness needs to take in order to become radical in its given context. Moreover, her own practice demonstrates a model of withness and solidarity that offers kinship and support: a solidarity of "odd-kins" between a displaced New Zealander and Chileans fighting to reshape their own society.

Paula Guzzanti's, "Documentary Screendance-making as a Practice of Kindness," is also located in the Latin American context, focusing on her experience as dance facilitator working with displaced Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica to make a short film. Like Longley, Guzzanti is interested in kindness as an engine for social change: "kindness not as a quality of being or as a behaviour but […] an inter-relational moving force that energizes radical societal changes" (2021, 218). In the context of her project, *El Cuerpo Partido,* Guzzanti, like Low and Mayo, is interested in how her role as artist leading the project was characterized by reciprocity that involved both shared vulnerability and shared commitment. Core to Guzzanti's reflection on the role of kindness in this artistic partnership is her focus on the body and a quality of tender restorative attention to bodies that are recovering from trauma. Significantly, Guzzanti's film does not

feature the faces of the participants. The engagement called for from the audience does not therefore rely on a straightforward sense of empathic identification, but instead asks for an identification of what she calls "the common in all" (224). Indeed, Guzzanti sees the affectivity of kindness as central to resistance. She writes: "I define kindness as an open and compassionate affective intention towards others that opposes that of cruelty, and which operates outside of the motivation of capitalist-driven social dynamics" (220). Whilst working from different locations, there are many concordances between Longley and Guzzanti's works including both the broader Latin American context of violence and trauma, embodied practices — dance in particular — as a form of healing trauma, and an understanding of kindness as refusal of and resistance to cruelty and oppression. Moreover, both are scrupulous in their attention to their own subject position, allowing this to inform how each seeks ways of performing meaningful solidarity.

Participation, Touch, Tenderness, Gift, Exchange

The language of tenderness that arises in Longley and Guzzanti's work continues in the articles by Sarah Harper and Renée Newman, which offer case studies of participatory performances that encouraged kindness between strangers. Staged in public settings, the works discussed are striking for their desire to foster intimacy and connection as well as for their ability to reframe perceptions of public spaces. In "Tenderness Between Strangers: Intimate Exchanges on *Banlieue* Wastelands," Harper leads us through an account of a long-term project staged in a peripheral suburb of Paris. Taking a largely abandoned site in the midst of housing and education facilities, the artists involved aimed to restore a sense of value to the place through facilitating social exchange and engagement. Harper explains that the project aimed towards "moments of vulnerability, intimate feelings or memories in this most public of spaces" (2021, 236). Indeed, the title of the work, *Tendresse Radicale* ("Radical Tenderness") was responsive to Harper's own observation that "over twelve years working in the northern suburbs I have observed tenderness to be rarely visible, public, or demonstrated" (239). Kindness in this context therefore meant facilitating exchanges of tenderness and intimacy within a space formerly perceived as "hostile" (236). Particularly valuable in Harper's reflection on her work is her discussion of the negotiations of power implicit in these exchanges: where kindnesses were accepted or rejected, where awkwardness arose and how this was worked through, and on the positionality and responsibilities of facilitating artists. Her account illustrates kindness as a practice rather than simply a set of principles, and in this sense vividly illustrates the complexity of how kindness plays out as social action.

Newman's "Escape Velocity Walks the City: Kindness and Intimacy in Public Space in the Transgender and Gender Diverse Teen Experience," is also concerned with the relationship between kindness, intimacy and power. Whereas Harper's article provides the perspective of the artist-facilitator, here Newman offers a rich and detailed account of her experience as spectator. *Escape Velocity Walks the City* involved pairing spectators with an artist/"actor" from a group of transgender and gender diverse youth for a hand-in-hand walk around central Melbourne. Newman's account of the performance is both richly evocative and deeply

reflective; we see the power of touch — its kin-making ability — extend to the page itself. Newman's final thoughts reflect many of the themes identified elsewhere in the issue: vulnerability, solidarity and intimacy. Adding to this, Newman's contribution emphasizes the significance of physical touch to kindness, especially at a time when human touch is so precarious: "thinking of the empty streets of pandemic shutdown Melbourne, the grief of the loss of this kind of everyday touch is palpable. The need to touch has never been so important; never so radical" (2021, 232). Kindness is a practice that invites intimacy, touch, holding and being held. At its most powerful, it connects us in ways that de-centre the given, which is just the kind of experience that Newman's account offers, where touch gently but powerfully challenges visibility and acceptance

Self-kindness and Self-reflection, Sustainability, Collectivity and Collaboration

As an artist-academic who works within a tertiary institution, Rea Dennis' "Our Body Recognises Kindness: Moving, Nature and Labours Unacknowledged," brings us full circle back to Burton's opening article. Drawing from her own practice, Dennis considers how to find self-kindness within the neoliberal university structure, and her article foregrounds both the "necessity of nondiscursive meaning" and the significance of getting "outside" in order to do this (2021, 251). Outside here denotes both the literal outdoors, a significant feature of Dennis' artistic practice (and mirrored in a number of different performance works discussed in this issue), but also connotes a broader idea of being outside of the structures and forms that constrain kindness. The search for self-kindness in Dennis' work is therefore not simply a means of refusing academic and neoliberal unkindness, but also of formulating other ways of being — other ways of *sustaining* being. Significant to Dennis' framing of self-kindness is its potential for "affective ricochet," in the sense described by Schneider. That is, her interest extends to how such self-directed kindness might also "shift into a state of self-kindness for others" (251). Dennis's performances and subsequent exhibitions therefore attend to fostering in her spectators the elements of joy, sensing, noticing, openness, connectivity, coexistence and reciprocity that she experienced in her own performances. In this sense, there are many resonances between Dennis' essay and Korporaal's focus on documentation in that both authors ask how kindness might move through time and space to gather kinship. Such a methodology finally aims, as Dennis explains, "at collective performativity of kindness and a culture in which to embrace the exploration of vulnerability together" (268).

In the same way that Dennis's interest in self-kindness ultimately aims toward collectivity, Kate Hunter's article, "Compassionate Irritability: Interdisciplinary Collaboration as an Act of Kindness" looks at kindness "as a starting place for interdisciplinary collaboration," asking how collaborating artists might "challenge discipline-specific habits and open up a creative and generative space for change by attending to kindness in all things — people, objects, time, the work itself" (2021, 272). This focus on kindness *within* performance practices is a welcome addition to the issue, particularly given that performance training (pedagogy) has its roots in highly hierarchical disciplinary apparatuses. Hunter's particular insights relate to working across different disciplines. Describing how the collaborators on her projects formulated a

methodology for weaving together their different disciplinary knowledges, Hunter settles on the term "compassionate irritability" to describe this not-always-easy process. She writes: "This kind of interaction […] was made possible because the core team was able to readily let go of ownership within a practice of non-attachment which acknowledged the material and non-hierarchical nature of theatrical composition" (276). Working with key terms such as fluidity, non-linearity, responsivity and chaos, Hunter's work offers another perspective on kindness in action that, like other articles in the issue, foregrounds kindness as both motivation and practice with radical transformative potential. As she finally concludes:

> Kindness is antithetical to the neoliberal free market-oriented narrative which reduces artists and art practice to economic metrics, key performance indicators and product-driven outcomes. In a world which is increasingly unkind, ungenerous and without compassion, kindness in these small but potent endeavours is a radical act of creative possibility. (278)

Last words

I began this editorial by defining kindness and acknowledging the challenges of both performing kindness and using kindness as an analytical framework. As I suggested, kindness does not escape discrimination and much care is required in its application. Nonetheless, one of the core themes that emerges from the articles in this issue is the political potential of performances of kindness to resist dehumanization, carelessness, violence and atomization. The language and concepts that I've pointed to in the second half of this editorial — including reciprocity, responsibility and accountability, self-reflection, transitivity (temporal and spatial), affect, activism, participation, touch, tenderness, gifting, sustainability, collectivity and collaboration — indicates the richness of taking kindness seriously. Moreover, the fact that the very concept of kindness is now so politically freighted makes this work timely and important. It has been a great honour to work with the authors in this issue, and I am deeply grateful for their own kindness and care in engaging with the process. I also want to acknowledge here the generous work of my co-editors, Alys Longley and Victoria Wynne-Jones. I am also very grateful to Alys for her closing contribution to the issue, which serves as a companion to this introduction. We hope that the issue will resonate with scholars and artists interested in kindness and look forward to further conversation and exchange.

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