

Claiming their Right to the West: Big West Festival's Production of *Taxi*

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Performed as part of the 2011 Big West Festival, *Taxi* is two site-specific plays that take their captive audiences of three on a cab ride "across the beautiful, the miserable, the enchanting, the stinking West". This production and the festival as a whole, themed 'Uncontained' in 2011, appropriate the social space of Melbourne's Footscray, celebrating and performing the right of the people to their city and their diversity. Yet, this is not a descriptive, voyeuristic guided tour of the city. It is rather a communal, corporeal, interactive experience that creatively *occupies* the city in the sense that the 'Occupy' protest movements now lend to this word. This essay cites the thoughts of Henri Lefebvre to argue that *Taxi* and the Big West Festival, by seizing the means of producing social and cultural space, aim to create for a fortnight in Footscray the sense of an urban 'commons'. Furthermore, I argue that Lefebvre's insistence on the artistic and revolutionary potential of 'everydayness' amplified and magnified as it is, for example, during festivals, sheds light on the political valency of *Taxi's* hyper-real dramatic form and the impact of the production's distinctive use of theatrical space.

Keywords: *Taxi*, Big West Festival, social and cultural space

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The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.¹

In the final episode of one of the two taxi rides that constitute D & Associates/Big West Festival's production of *Taxi*,² Ashok, the Muslim taxi driver (Ananth Gopal), picks up a middle-aged Vietnamese woman with a box (Amanda Ma). He had twice previously declined to stop for her, as some observant audience members might have noticed from their vantage point in the back of the cab, once almost running her over as she desperately stepped onto the road to hail him. But now, as it is almost the end of his shift, he relents, stops and gets out. We can't quite hear what is being said from inside the car, but it is apparent that he wants her to put the box in the boot and she refuses. He acquiesces but a sparse dialogue begins as we drive, the driver repeatedly asking his passenger what is in the box. Eventually, angry and upset, the woman declares that what's in the box is her whole life. Then the taxi arrives at her destination in Buckley Street, Footscray, and she gets out. If you had had the chance to be in every cab ride of the run, you would have seen the woman always get out at the same place, but each time onto a radically different streetscape as over these ten days in November 2011 twenty-six houses were gradually demolished. At each performance, the two actors, three audience members and perhaps even a few passers-by, their attention caught by the charisma of performance, bear witness to the razing of the Victorian terraces and old workers' cottages of Buckley Street and the displacement of their

residents by compulsory purchase orders to build the new Regional Rail Link in the name of gentrifying the Western suburbs of Melbourne, “the world’s most liveable city.”³

Taxi is a site-specific play in two halves (which can be seen separately or together) that takes its captive audiences of three on a cab ride “across the beautiful, the miserable, the enchanting, the stinking West,” as writer Patricia Cornelius puts it in her preface to the playscript.⁴ The production and Big West Festival as a whole, themed ‘Uncontained’ in 2011, appropriate the social space of the city and its iconic landmarks as cultural space, celebrating and performing the right of the people to their city and to their diversity. One taxi ride takes its audience to the Whitten Oval, home of the perpetually under-Doggies AFL team, the Western Bulldogs, and to the Tender Touch brothel, renowned for its young Vietnamese prostitutes. (The formerly drab brick building has had its own gentrification and now sports enormous faux-Grecian columns, perhaps in deference to the areas mixed cultural heritage.) We drive by industrialised dystopias, piled high with shipping containers and pick up outside cute Edwardian cottages in suburban utopia, newly renovated and now worth real money. In the other cab, we stop at the Western Hospital, proudly flying the Aboriginal flag, drop off at the New Hope Refuge for the homeless and destitute and hang around the banks of the Maribyrnong river, home to drug addicts and last rest of suicides. Yet, the aims of this production are not descriptive; it is not a voyeuristic guided tour of a suburb once known as ‘Foot-scary’. This is political theatre in that it provides a phenomenological, socio-sensual experience that creatively *occupies* the city in the sense that the ‘Occupy’ protest movements now lend to that word. The use of the term ‘the right to the city’ in this essay cites the work of Henri Lefebvre⁵ and other social geographers such as David Harvey⁶ and Edward Soja⁷ who argue that urban space is not just a material universal, an outcome of social and political forces, but also a dynamic productive process capable of impacting on social reality. Thus, by taking creativity outside the places demarcated for ‘culture,’ by breaking through the formal barriers that separate art forms or divide performers from audiences from passers-by, by dismantling stereotypes about the West and challenging the attempts to contain and control the suburb through the forces of gentrification and marginalisation, by offering the opportunity and inspiration of ‘festival’ spaces and moments to break out of the confines of ordinary life and routine, *Taxi* and the Big West Festival seize the means of producing social and cultural space and aim to create for a fortnight in Footscray the sense of an urban ‘commons.’ Furthermore, I argue that Lefebvre’s insistence, contra Heidegger, on the artistic and revolutionary potential of ‘everydayness’ amplified and magnified as it is, for example, during festivals, sheds light on the political valency of *Taxi*’s hyper-real dramatic form and the impact of the production’s distinctive use of theatrical space.

So what then is this notion of the ‘West’ that the Big West Festival is imagining into being and how do these spatial coordinates reflect the identity constructs of the place? During the festival, *The Age* had a feature in its Thursday colour supplement entitled ‘Our Liveable City’ which included two articles on Footscray. Both noted “the west’s working-class sensibility, as defined by its battling football club”⁸ and the impact of waves of migrants, “from the Italians to the Vietnamese to the Africans and Indians”⁹ who have each layered their identity into neighbourhoods. They remark on the area’s ugly underbelly; this is “druggy Footscray” with its needle exchanges, blatant drug deals and “sniffer dogs patrol(ling) the station,”¹⁰ this is a place where the Tender Touch, “with its tantalizing red light”, is a “landmark.”¹¹ In fact, it is an identity defined by marginalization and social problems that would resonate with the western suburbs of many Australian cities. Despite this, and in common with the changing demographics of inner-western suburbs in other cities, it is also an area of rising social capital, where ‘Post Industrial’ design centres, fusion cuisine and the proliferation of musicians, artists and film makers signal an urban renaissance. And it is these indicators of culture, lifestyle and ‘taste’ which are attracting the areas newest wave of migrants—middle-class, English-speaking professionals and their families—whose influence on the environment results in gentrification. It a major paradox, notes Laura Naegler, that it is artists who precipitate gentrification,

by providing the creative spaces of inner city neighbourhoods, making them increasingly attractive for the 'new' middle class consumer preferences based on cultural disposition and a social valuation of the lifestyle of the creative class as signifier for authenticity, aesthetics and experimental urbanity.¹²

Yet, as their cultural spaces become commodified, the artists, workers and migrants whose 'authenticity' defined the area are not only economically displaced by the rising value of the real estate, but "their claims on the use and appropriation of space, and hence, their identity are threatened as well."²³

Obviously, the Big West Festival itself participates in this process. It "is no community fiesta but a sprawling multi-culti biennale that talks up the inner west as Melbourne's true artistic hub," says *The Age*.¹⁴ There is a transformative power, however, in reclaiming what Lefebvre refers to as 'lived' spaces through culture, celebrating both their everydayness and their uniqueness and thus reconnecting those spaces to notions of identity. Artistic Director of the festival, Kate Shearer, is "inspired by the way a city becomes Uncontained during a festival; the way people whose day-to-day limits may be confined in family or cultural circles can find themselves communicating to the wider community; the way a known environment can suddenly become a place of discovery."¹⁵ Thus, there are performances on the rooftop of the Little Saigon shopping centre, along the Maribyrnong riverside, in parks and car parks, under bridges and in empty retail premises, and extensive efforts over the two-year preparation time to ensure that maximum input and agency is afforded to its diverse communities. Shearer and the festival pursue a shift from an individualistic understanding of city space, as a place homogenised and yet also fragmented into countless private properties, to a notion of heterogeneous, collective 'lived' space, a 'space of representation.' The term, once more, is Lefebvre's. 'Lived' space is the world as it is actually experienced by human beings in the practice of their everyday lives, but mediated through symbols and images. It, thus, combines both real and imagined space and is, as a consequence, inexpressible, as any attempt at analysis always results in a surplus or remainder.¹⁶ 'Lived' space therefore, argues Lefebvre, offers the possibilities of resistance. This is particularly true of festivals, those "intense...moments," that "reunit[e], amplif[y], magnif[y]" everyday life, and which therefore have artistic and revolutionary impact on lived reality.¹⁷

[T]hanks to potential energies of a variety of groups capable of diverting homogenized space to their own purposes, a theatricalized or dramatized space is liable to arise. Space is liable to be eroticized and restored to ambiguity, to common birthplace of needs and desire, by means of music, by means of differential systems and valorizations which overwhelm the strict localizations of needs and desires in spaces.¹⁸

While acknowledging that "life is not changed magically by a poetic act,"¹⁹ Lefebvre nevertheless argues that the only way to change the world, in a social justice sense, is through the creative transformation of everyday life.

It is this notion of the 'everyday' rendered both extraordinary and politically exigent which I would like to pursue in this analysis of *Taxi*. While certainly not a polemic, the play does contend with a complex matrix of social issues including race, gender, sex, religion, culture and class. Yet, there are no simple solutions offered to the tensions inherent in diversity. If the right to the city is understood as the right to difference and non-exclusion, then it follows that conflict over, and contention in, urban space is a necessary consequence. The scenes in which these competing value systems and mutual incomprehension come most clearly to the fore are those at the Tender Touch. We arrive outside the brothel with a passenger who has talked non-stop through the journey of his sexual exploits.²¹ His language and imagery are fairly graphic and some members of the audience may have been offended, but our driver is impassive despite our assumption that he, as a Muslim, would be socially conservative. However, when a scantily dressed girl (played by Hai Ha Le) who we assume to be a prostitute gets in, his discomfort is immediately apparent. She is conscious of his disapproval and feigning

cold puts on a shawl. "What's your problem?" she demands defensively. "I'm not the one with a problem," is his reply. A confrontation soon ensues and she puts the shawl over her head in the manner of a hijab, suggesting that his problem is his sexual desire for her: "Don't look!... You couldn't keep your eyes off." Then her mobile rings and she answers under her shawl in Vietnamese, but we understand from the sprinkling of English words that she is laughing at him and referring to him in racist slang. Offended now, he demands she "take that bloody thing off," but she is defiant.

Driver: If you don't take that off you can get out here.
They drive.

Driver: Take it off.
She stares ahead.
He pulls over. He leans over and opens her door.
She gets out and walks down the street with her shawl over her head and bare legs.²²

In these short vignettes, a number of issues have been raised including the ethics of the sex trade, sexual commodification and the double standards of gender difference. It also contends with racism and prejudice outside the usual constructs that homogenise this issue as 'White' against everyone else. What is more, this scene could be interpreted as a battle over space and the legitimacy it confers. On a macro level, while both characters are migrants who would be familiar with the inflammatory rhetoric of 'invasion' that would deny them the right to inhabit Australian national space, the Vietnamese girl has a greater sense of legitimacy and social acceptability than the more recently arrived and demonised Middle Eastern migrant, and thus is able to appropriate the vocabulary of racism. Nevertheless, he ultimately controls the 'public' micro space of the cab and can withdraw her right to occupy it.

As these scenes wrestle with the complexities of race/gender/culture/ religion, other episodes tie race to class in ways that alternately enable identification or alienation of our driver with the 'others' he shares his environment with. One of the first stops we make is to the Whitten Oval and on the way the driver and his passenger (Angus Cerini) bond over a competitive exchange of trivia about the Western Bulldogs' football team. When they arrive in the stadium carpark, he pulls up with a perfect view of the statue of Teddy Whitten. There they both perform a quasi-religious homage to "Mr Football," a "symbol for the western suburbs... a hero... a leader." The driver and his passenger, despite differences of culture or circumstance, are able to form a heightened, even somewhat homosocial, connection through singing the team song and glorying in past victories. It is apparent that the men's allegiance to this football team provides them with a common class identity and, like most religious practices, it also gives their lives a necessary coherence and meaning: "What would we do without the doggies?" asks the man. "We'd have nothing," replies the driver. "Nothing," agrees the man. "Nothing", says the driver.²³

Nevertheless, the play more frequently emphasises class differentials, repositioning the taxi driver in the social 'pecking .' Although he rates above a prostitute clearly, on most other occasions his social position is contingent on the inclination of his passengers to identify with him. A woman gets into the cab with Joe, the more southern European looking driver played by Rodney Afif, talking on her mobile and "brimming with exuberance."²⁴ Despite her good humour with the person on the phone, she never acknowledges the driver, even when he invites an exchange by asking, "Good news?" She rudely barks the minimum of instructions and then tosses the fare at him as she gets out. At other times we see the common ground of class shift under the driver's feet. Ashok responds to a call out to a suburban street where a domestic is in progress. The woman, Sandra (Nicci Wicks), leaps into the car and as her boyfriend (Angus Cerini) comes charging out, the driver puts on the central locking. It is quite frightening from the perspective of the audience inside the car as he pounds on the roof, cursing and threatening. When Sandra opens the window to abuse him and he reaches in, trying to drag her out as the driver frantically tries to get the window up again, our proximity to the actors and the

physicality of the experience create a very corporeal sense of danger, even within the context of a theatre piece to which we have bought a ticket. During this initial exchange, Sandra looks to Ashok for affirmation and support, even urging him to drive off with her boyfriend still on the bonnet. However, when they realise that he has the meter on, both of them redirect their anger to the driver, accusing him of being heartless and taking advantage. Although all the characters are working class, there are subtle shades of racial prejudice in their chastising of him which, when combined with the issue of money and payment, mark a class divide: "You can sit there and watch us fall apart and all the time your meter's ticking away and all you care about is how much money you'll make... You only care about who you know." And as they align over their difference from the driver, they are able to reunite as a couple.

Woman: How much do I owe you?

Driver: Ten dollars.

She gets out of the taxi and calls to her boyfriend on the other side.

Woman: Pay him would you?

The man shoves ten dollars at the driver.

He joins the woman at the curb. They watch him with utter contempt as he drives away.²⁵



FIGURE 1: Brett attacks Sandra in the car. Taxi 2011 Big West Festival. Photographer: Ester Ling.

The production creates verisimilitude both in the way it adheres to and utilises material reality and everyday life and in the way it intensifies and crystallises it, especially in respect to sensual-sensory space. From the confines of the cab, our senses are assaulted by Brett as he attacks Sandra. Outside the Tender Touch, the driver buys a kebab from the van outside and then gets back into the car to eat it. This particular van is famous locally for its kebabs, an insider's reference for the Footscray audience member, and the play performs at dinnertime. It is possible that the pungent smells and sounds of eating would cause some passengers' stomachs to rumble. Then the prostitute gets in and a powerful waft of Listerine breath displaces the smell of kebab and immediately provokes images of why she might have needed to gargle. On the other journey, we pull up for a girl dressed for the races, who we have seen throwing up in the gutter (also played by Hai Ha Le). When she gets in, we smell her perfume and something else, perhaps vomit, but it could just be the imaginative effects of what we have seen. Joe is very concerned that she doesn't throw up in his cab, and she winds down the window for air as we drive, chilling us all in the cool Melbourne weather. By the time we arrive at her destination, she has fallen asleep sprawled all over the seat and is impossible to wake. The driver is at a

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loss. He takes his fare out of her purse, carefully returning the change, and then comes round to her side to help her out. But she is absolutely comatose and, clearly against his better judgment, he realises he will have to physically lift her. We see all these thoughts cross his face and then, when he reaches across her to undo her seat belt, it is as if he embraces her. His face is hidden in her shoulder, but the moment it takes to unbuckle the clasp is elongated, a few beats too long for the task. We are close enough to sense the change in his breathing, we imagine we can feel his heart beat as he feels her body close and vulnerable beneath him and our bodies understand this moment as sexual desire.

Due to the proximity of audience and actors, it is an intimate experience that would be hard to replicate in conventional theatre and yet it is also more corporeal than is possible in film, which is the other artform this production references. Of course, the whole premise of the production, life in the city as seen through the eyes of a cab driver, has its apotheosis in a number of iconic films, specifically Jim Jarmusch's *A Night on Earth* and, of course, Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. Stylistically, and in terms of the semiotic tools used, this play is very filmic. The dialogue is pared down and sparse, with the play often passing in silence except for driving noises and the evocative sound design coming from the radio. The focus and direction of our gaze is also specifically controlled in order to create meaning. While in conventional theatre the audience is generally able to watch the *mise-en-scène* as a whole, in *Taxi* our view is closed down to what can be viewed through the windows of the cab and, therefore, our understanding of what is going on is deliberately compromised. It is an effect that heightens the sense that we are eavesdropping on 'reality', leaving us with half-finished stories, "the rest... to be guessed at or left to haunt" as the publicity material states.²⁶ Susie Dee's direction cleverly uses 'long-shots,' as when we see the character in the distance on the street as we are driving towards them, allowing us to view the character archetypically and in relation to their surroundings. This can also blur the boundaries between the real and the fictional as when a character like the woman at the Western Hospital (Hai Ha Le) is picked up from a group of ordinary people who have their own reasons for being outside the hospital at that moment. At other times our gaze is directed towards 'close-ups.' The rear view mirror, for example, is angled to allow us to watch the face of the driver, creating an imagined affinity with his emotional state. It is not so straightforward, however, as this is not really film where the director has complete control over our gaze. We see the actor's face in the mirror, but also the back of his head and the side of his face. We see the actual world outside with real people going about their business and the fictional action inside. We see the environment of the cab, his taxi license picture on the dash, the detritus on the floor and whatever else captures our attention. It is similar to the disorientating effect in film of using a wide-angled lens for a close-up, and it allows an audience greater agency over how they interpret what they see.

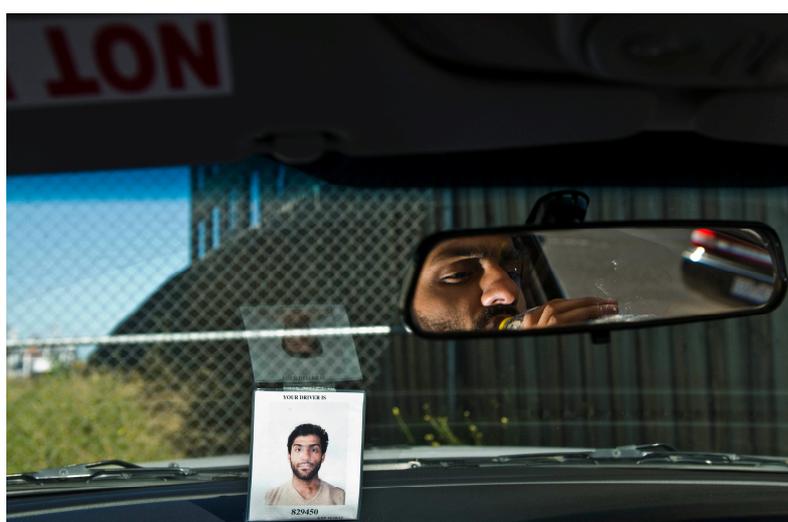


FIGURE 2: Ashok takes a drink. Taxi 2011 Big West Festival. Photographer: Ester Ling.

While trying to mimic the verisimilitude of the film experience and at the same time maximise the audience's sensual response, the play also constantly reminds you of its constructed, theatrical nature because distance is necessary if art is to have political meaning. As writer Patricia Cornelius notes, film and other 'realistic', 'authentic' dramatic forms (she cites verbatim theatre as an example) are often the "antithesis of potency and politics" in that they leaves the audience "duped... with no sense of collaboration."²⁷ Even the sensation of being physically squashed up against each other, which is how the three-person audience in the back of this compact taxi feel, ensures that they never forget that this is a communal, bodily, interactive experience. The intimate theatrical space, which we share with each other and in such close proximity with the actors, provides us with a type of mirror space in that it provides a means of constituting the self by repetition and differentiation. As Henri Lefebvre writes,

Space - my space - is not the context of which I constitute 'textuality': instead, it is first of all my body, and then it is my body's counterpart or 'other', its mirror-image or shadow; it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, penetrates, threatens or benefits my body on the one hand, and all other bodies on the other.²⁸

We see our doubles in the imaginary world of the theatre, but are also conscious of our particular bodies in their own space.

In the same vein, director Dee states that the intricate sound design by Ian Moorehead evolved from something more realistic into a pervading mix of music, radio and other less identifiable sounds, in order to signal to the audience that this is a theatre piece requiring not just consumption but interpretation.²⁹ While the soundscape very successfully creates mood, just as film music does, the snippets of music, talkback radio, and instructions from 'Sharon' the dispatcher also provide clues to the enigmatic characters and understated messages that might aid an audience to take political meaning from what we see. 'Sharon' the dispatcher serves a more obviously practical purpose as well, helping to orientate the driver through the extremely complex logistics of two separate taxi routes, operating simultaneously and sharing an ensemble of actors, criss-crossing real city streets at the mercy of the rhythms of traffic and theatrical circumstance. When the production concludes, the driver finishes his shift and drives into a garage where we watch a ten-minute documentary about actual taxi drivers from the area by filmmaker Tamsin Sharp. In one of the happy coincidences of festivals, Artistic Director Kate Shearer was able to bring Sharp and Dee together when she realised that they were embarking on projects with such common ground. As we watch the film we recognise that we have heard fragments of these real drivers' voices on the radio during the play and that their reflections provide a narrative voice for the experiences our fictional drivers have been through. The documentary medium also offers more overt political commentary on many of the issues raised, such as when one of the drivers expresses his irritation at always being asked "Where are you from?" —"I'm from planet Earth. Where are you from?" he replies.³⁰

It is this merging of the real and the fictional into the hyper-real which gives the production so much of its power. Just as the action often happens in silence, so too are we regularly obliged to wait, as real taxi drivers do, for someone to come or something to happen. Yet there is always the real world or real people to watch, the everyday made fascinating and significant by our heightened perspective. Waiting at the hospital while our driver goes to find his passenger, we watch the people outside, wondering if they are performers or what might have brought them to the hospital. Sometimes those real people return our gaze. When the drunk girl collapses on the asphalt outside her block of flats, Joe is forced to lift her into his arms and carry her into the building. He's gone a while and, having noted his attraction to her, we worry a little about what might be happening inside. The night I saw the production, there was an older man walking his dog who had seen the

unusual interaction between the uniformed taxi man and the incapacitated girl. He was clearly concerned for her well-being, maybe wondering if he should offer to assist, but totally confused about who we were in the back of the cab. Why didn't we get out and help our friend?



FIGURE 3: Joe and the drunk girl. Taxi 2011 Big West Festival. Photographer: Ester Ling.

In the other cab, we have a fascinating wait watching the goings on outside the Tender Touch while Ashok eats his kebab. It is not somewhere most middle-class theatre-goers have much excuse to be, but inviting this kind of reality into a fictional world is not without its dangers. Susie Dee, the director, refers to her own discomfort at witnessing a group of disturbingly young girls pile into the back of a white van to be taken who knows where to do who knows what. Her instinct was to call the police, but the complex ethics of her role forbade intervention.³¹

It is somewhat ironic that a production with such an ambitious and inclusive agenda should, in terms of its potential audience, actually be so boutique, even elitist. Accommodating an audience of only three at each performance, completely sold out *Taxi* was only seen by 238 people. But the aims of this piece were not simply 'bums on seats', although there were certainly many other mass events in the festival which attracted large and diverse crowds. *Taxi* took its small audience on a journey through the streets to reenergise public spaces and places by looking at them anew, to rediscover everyday life with all its differences and conflicts as a dynamic force capable of affecting the way we live. In his book, *Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre insists that the streets can speak, asking: "Isn't it a privileged place where speech is scripted? Where words can become 'wild'?"³² The streets are where we live, play and learn things.

Sure, the street is full of uncertainty. All the elements of urban life, elsewhere congealed in a fixed and redundant order, liberate themselves and gush onto the street and flow towards the centre, where they meet and interact, free from fixed moorings.³³

The streets are 'uncontained,' informing and surprising us with their everydayness. Every two years the Big West Festival acts as a lynchpin, uniting diverse and particular groups with their multiple, fluid and itinerant aims and needs, into larger more powerful movements in order to reclaim those streets and, while that is an impossible ideal, "we are compelled," argues Lefebvre, "to rehabilitate the dream, otherwise utopian, and put to the forefront its *poetry*, the renewed idea of a *creative praxis*."³⁴ In 2011, *Taxi* provided an exemplary festival

Compass Points: The Locations, Landscapes and Coordinates of Identities in Contemporary Performance Making, Australasian Association for Drama Theatre & Performance Studies (ADSA) 2012 Conference Proceedings, ed. Bree Hadley and Caroline Heim, Queensland University of Technology, 2012

experience by amplifying and magnifying that most everyday of human urban experiences, a cab ride through the city streets, creatively occupied and reimaged.

NOTES

¹ David Harvey, 'The Right to the City', *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 23.

² Taxi was produced by the Big West Festival and D & Associates. It was written by Patricia Cornelius from a concept by director Susie Dee, with the two different stories performed in taxis driving around the streets of Footscray, Melbourne. The taxis departed every alternate half hour from 6.30 to 9 pm nightly plus every half hour from 12.30 to 3pm on Saturdays from the 16th to the 26th of November 2011.

³ Melbourne was declared the world's most liveable city in the Economist Intelligence Units annual survey published in August 2011. See EUI.com, 'Global Liveability Report: Melbourne takes the crown of most liveable city from Vancouver'. Online: http://www.eiu.com/site_info.asp?info_name=The_Global_Liveability_Report&rf=0; viewed 11 March 2012.

⁴ Patricia Cornelius, Taxi, unpublished manuscript provided by author.

⁵ Henri Lefebvre originally developed the concept of 'the right to the city' in his *Le Droit à la ville* (Paris, Anthropos, 1968), which I read in translation as part of a collection of his writings: see Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas eds. and trans., *Writing on Cities* (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996). The notion is also central to many of his subsequent publications, particularly *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974/1991) and *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota, 1970/2003).

⁶ See David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012) and *Social Justice and the City* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

⁷ See Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota, 2010).

⁸ Michelle Griffin, 'The Rise of the West', *the(melbourne) magazine/The Age* (24 November 2011): 47.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gabriella Coslovich, 'Life in the West', *the(melbourne) magazine/The Age* (24 November 2011): 49.

¹² Laura Naegler, *Gentrification and Resistance: Cultural Criminology, Control and the Commodification of Urban Protest in Hamburg* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012) 39.

¹³ Ibid, 42.

¹⁴ Michelle Griffin, op.cit., 47.

¹⁵ Kate Shearer in 'Uncontained', the Artist Director's introduction to the Big West Festival's programme, launched 26 October 2011.

¹⁶ According to Lefebvre's thesis, the term is the third of three dialectically interconnected dimensions or processes which contribute to the production of space. 'Spatial praxis' or 'perceived' space is the material, *physical* dimension of spatial activity, the rhythms of work and life through which Footscray, for example, is produced. The 'represented space' or conceived space is those *imagined* places formed through knowledge, signs and code, spaces constructed by planners, architects and monument builders to convey message. Such a space in Footscray would be the Whitten Oval and its football club. The 'space of representation' or lived space, on the other hand, is in a sense a synthesis of those other realms as it is life as it is actually lived by human beings, but which is mostly understood as images and symbols. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, op.cit.

¹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life Volume 1: Introduction*, J. Moore trans. (London: Verso, 1991 [1947]) 207.

¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, op.cit., 391.

¹⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*, A. Ehrenfeld trans. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969/1968) 90.

²⁰ Patricia Cornelius, Taxi, 28.

²¹ Ibid., 44.

²² Patricia Cornelius, Taxi, 38.

²³ 'Brimming with exuberance' is the Cornelius' title for the scene, ibid, 15.

²⁴ Ibid, 35.

²⁵ Publicity material for Taxi, 2011 Big West Festival.

²⁶ Author's interview 24 November 2011.

²⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974/1991) 184 (emphasis in original).

²⁸ Author's interview 22 November 2011.

²⁹ Documentary directed by Tamsin Sharp, photography by John Sones, produced by Singing Bowl Media, 2011.

³⁰ Author's interview 22 November 2011.

³¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota, 1970/2003) 30.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. 40.