

**Disabling ~~X~~ authors, disordering texts ~~X~~: deconstructing disability and identity in
changing ~~X~~ times¹**

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‘Throughout my journey, I have encountered people clinging to talismans of order, uniforms, flags, offices, titles. Icons of a time when things made sense.’ (Rawlence, B. *Radio Congo*. Oneworld Publications, 2012: 274)

‘a theory of justice is the oldest failure of thought’ (Douzinas 2010: 90)

‘Together, we make up a politburo of two [make that three] which decides who will be the first to shoot the other, after having wrung from him a deeply-felt self-criticism’ (Badiou on Zizek 2013: 563)

Our intention in this article is to write about the concept of Inclusion, drawing mainly on the work of Badiou, who has much to say about inclusion, belonging, justice, ethics and change – as well as their opposites. Yet he is a neglected ‘philosopher of difference’ in

¹ The title is in contention amongst the authors. We have disagreed about the use of the word ‘disabling’. From within the discourse, ‘disability’ is ‘a social state, rather than a biological difference’ (Barnes 1999: 37). From that perspective, a disability is quite a different construct from an impairment. ‘Out there’ is different from ‘in here’. On the other hand, the ‘disability’ in the title challenges ways of academic writing that surreptitiously ‘over-enable’ authors with rhetorical forms of certainty and identity; the god of ‘one’, or ‘we’, and so on. In the overall spirit of the paper, we want to keep these differences in the fore, rather than tucked away in hidden fudge. Hence the ‘X’ erasures. If the words overlap and the meanings don’t, we have a provocation to thinking that we offer to the reader. And, of course, to ourselves as a collective.

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the Academy of ‘inclusion’ (see, for example, Allan 2008). We express ourselves by way of a *performative agonistics*, surfacing disagreement and argument in order to keep the text as open and critical as we can, while also good-natured.² We want readers, of course, to read us, but also between us and behind us. And so beyond us. In Badiou’s terms we aspire to a ‘reflexive multiplicity’ (Badiou 2013: 369); one rehearsed elsewhere (Stronach et al 2013; Frankham et al. 2013). Making public such a ‘falling out’ is positive rather than negative. Drawing on Rancière, and earlier, Jacotot, we think it’s important *to think in front of each other*, and of any readers (Rancière 1991; Stronach et al, 2014). ‘Falling out’ is the motor of any possibility of rethinking. Such ‘multiple destabilisations’ (Frankham & Tracy 2012: 84) are positive. Indeed, as Bull has suggested, ‘falling’ isn’t a bad metaphor for thinking, provided we do it slowly (Bull 2011; Bull 2014)³. As illustrated above, that includes disagreement about a suitably ethical title [hence its marking as erasure/censure, but not censor] and so we start there, before going on to outline a more general critique of ‘inclusive’ discourses, and the ‘writing culture’ that expresses them.

.....

[Given that ‘disabling’ is quite a political term in relation to disability studies and the disabled people’s movement, I think we need to carefully explain why we have chosen this as a title. I’m all for us being provocative, but this does need justification.]

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Agon 1: politics of the pronoun

Authors of texts on disability rely variously on the ‘one’, the ‘we’ (often less than a plural and more of an implicitly consensual ‘everyone’), or more occasionally the ‘I’ to reference themselves into their personalized narratives [see for example the Special Issue of the *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, eds Blunt, Blyth, Chapman et al, 2012)]. Our first task is to disable ***[I don’t know how comfortable I am using this term here.]***

2 The Greek root ‘*agon*’ gives us English derivations like agony/agonizing/agonistics. We prefer ‘*agon*’ as a notion which expresses contradiction and difference without the dialectical implications of conflict (and its unwelcome ghosts of victory/defeat, or indeed of any possibility of right/wrong or even thesis/antithesis) in moral or philosophical reasoning. Thus we seek a distinction between agonistic and antagonistic. Perhaps we’re trying to be each other’s ‘agony aunt’ in this project?

3 Bull’s notion associates ‘falling’ with ‘reading like a loser’, see later.

those pronounced authors as a ‘lie which is the fiction of a truth’, one that we will shortly address (Badiou 2005: 196). They are alibis rather than identities. The illicit politics of the pronoun is neglected. An ‘I’ that stands for a ‘we’ amounts to theft, while a ‘we’ that expresses an ‘I’ is a fraud. And isn’t a ‘one’ a no-one posing as an everyone? A kind of covert universalism of right-minded selves?

‘Let us insist on what could be termed the syntactical induction of the subject. Its mark is certainly not to be found in pronouns – the ‘I’ or ‘we’ of first persons. Rather it is in the ‘aside from’, the ‘except that’, the ‘but for’ through which the fragile scintillation of what has no place to be makes its incision in the unbroken phrasing of a world’ (Badiou 2013: 45).

Agon 2: voice against theory

It is a common but largely unremarked characteristic that authors may get up to all sorts of epistemological tricks in relation to structure, poststructure, postpositivism, phenomenology, deconstruction and ontology while deploying a contradictory grammar of substantive self and subject-verb-object linearity to *underwrite* their manoeuvres with a convenient rhetorical positivism, or perhaps an easy realism, taking for granted an unproblematic subject-self-who-thinks-argues-writes. Such a ‘self’ substantiates itself as a self-important One, rather than a modestly singular ‘one’ (hence Badiou’s scepticism about the confessional ‘I’ and the ‘we’, and his determination to posit an unacknowledged ‘exceptional’ self). The unproblematised self then asserts, claims, notes, opines, concludes (etc) from that pulpit of the self, performing an unacknowledged transcendentalism. That grammatical determinism incites a ‘scientific’ view of research as a matter of ‘discovery’, yet we have long known that ‘findings’ are never found, nor ‘data’ ever given. Such a covert epistemology makes a geography of discovery out of a history of construction. As Feltham glosses it, an identity claim ‘*must* separate out its “entity” from a larger presupposed multiple’ and profess an ‘immanent heterogeneity’ (Feltham 2008: 94, his emphasis). Accordingly, we aspire to a ‘*haunting* presentation’ (Badiou 2005: 94, his emphasis). In contrast, the ‘ghost in the machine’ is by no means an unacknowledged transcendentalism: it attempts a radical immanence, a refraction of what Badiou has called the ‘void of being’, ‘the errancy of the void’, positing such a void

as ‘an ontological concept’ (Badiou 2005; Feltham 2008)⁴. If we think of subject-verb-object as a kind of tacit ontology of the ‘self’, then could we conclude that the left hand knows what the right hand is up to, but has forgotten to query itself? Such a forgetting disables the authors by privileging the place from where they speak. At the same time, it orders the text in unwarrantable ways. It reflects a deeply implicit Platonism of the self – as singular and substantive – which in turn engenders the ‘forgetting of being’ (Badiou 2005: 9). Instead, Badiou has in mind a ‘subtractive dimension of being’, ‘sutured in its void to the brutality of a deductive consistency without aura’ (ibid.: 10). The key ideas are ‘subtractive’ and ‘sutured’, of which more later, but the ruse of identity as an exception (‘but for’ etc) is noted: we are what we aren’t, and that includes the ‘we’⁵. And also the ‘you’, dear reader..

[Maybe Will Self’s argument about inclusiveness with regard to ‘Englishness’ reflects that kind of complex now-you-see-it, now-you-don’t ‘reality’. He posits such an identity claim in terms of the ‘very fictitiousness of its premises’ and yet such an emptiness is bolstered by claims for ‘the nation’s essential inclusiveness’⁶ (Self 2014, *Guardian*, 18 January).]

The contrast between the left hand of the ‘self’ and the right hand of the perceived ‘object’ can be illustrated via Julie Allan’s admirable attempt to complicate thinking about ‘difference’ and ‘identity’, drawing on some of the philosophers of difference

4 Badiou 2005, p 72 – ‘the void is in truth the name of being’; see also Feltham 2008. The later Badiou complicates being with ‘appearing’ and an intrication of both as in, for example: ‘the retroaction of appearing on being’ (Badiou 2013, p221). There is however something delphic about Badiou’s confidence and universal reach in modestly offering ‘an entirely original theory of the subject-body’ (Badiou 2013, p99). He talks the ‘local’ better than the ‘universal’, although he would certainly resist any separation: ‘We thus circulate between the (rather global) register of appearing and the (rather local) register of being there, keeping in mind that the profound unity of these two registers lies in their co-belonging to logic, that is to the transcendental’ (ibid., p223). It should be noted that we intend to draw on, rather than draw with, Badiou’s thinking.

5 Something of Badiou’s own ‘left-hand’ activity can be seen in his absolute ambition and confidence. His theorizing covers science, love, the arts, politics. Ironically, he’s at his least convincing in trying to theorize Mao’s early thinking.

6 Such ‘invented tradition’ is the normal abnormality for national identities (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). As in originary myths in religion, superstition and sometimes science, chance must give way to certainty, and certainty must have its causes on display.

(2008: 55 - 69). Her right hand does Deleuze (and Guattari) as ‘lines of flight’, ‘stuttering’, rhizomatic, dynamic, a ‘becoming’ rather than a ‘being’ and so on. Such a thinking is promoted as a future for an ‘inclusion’ that is apparently in need of revival, caught in an ‘impasse’ that reduces it to vacuous ‘order words’[a nice concept, p. 62]. She basically posits the ‘striated’ against the ‘smooth’, in Deleuze & Guattari’s terms. But what is the ‘left hand’ up to? It is an unproblematic ‘I’ smoothly setting out to ‘follow’ Deleuze and deploy his/their thinking as a ‘model for learning’. She is conscious of the contradiction, but then claims to have left out some of their concepts (eg nomad, Body-without-Organs) in the interests of – a revealing word – ‘containment’ and in order to ‘avoid creating a rhizomatic text’ (p69, our emphasis). Scintillating arpeggios with the right hand, single finger plonking with the left:

Julie! that’s no way to play the piano.

Agon 3: authorial contradictions

We want to make it clear, though, that we come to this starting point through self-criticism rather than any assumption of superior virtue⁷. Beyond this grammatical pseudo-determinism that we noted above, there are also elements of ambivalence in our own authorial presences. As authors/subjects we present ourselves as ‘ally’, ‘co-participant’, instigator of ‘self-advocacy’, ‘emancipator’ – while noting that ‘intellectually disabled people were (and are) marginalised in the main disability movement’[authors’ discussions and memos; see also Docherty, Blyth, Townson & Chapman 2010)]. There’s an implicit but-not-by-us in that recognition. We confess here to a ‘fragile position’, whose ‘inclusivity’ invites a certain amount of suspicion, especially towards a contradiction whose thought *includes*, but whose writing just as surely *excludes*.

[..but my instinct is that it is a ‘fool’s errand’, as even the most emancipatory, inclusive research is a collection of complex power relations that result in something that is far from inclusive/equal etc. Yet it is a game that we have to play. Funding may

⁷ Such a sentence, in its ‘left-handedness’ falls victim to our own critique. We will hope to rescue it later in the argument but meanwhile plead that at least the dilemma has been raised.

depend on it, and we certainly have to depend on funding in this neoliberal world. In the make-believe of such a world, fiction is truth's necessity.]

Here it may be relevant to recall Mary Douglas' classic on the work of taboo in addressing 'purity' and 'danger'. Our language, with modest reservations, is a form of linguistic 'hygiene' (Douglas 1966: Martin 1994) in relation to giving voice to disabled people, and so we emerge heroically from these accounts as instruments of 'empowerment' or 'emancipation', who work (selflessly of course) in 'partnership' and 'advocacy' with our research subjects. This need not be a matter of personal shame or guilt, however, since it rehearses contemporary ontological dilemmas for the 'researcher self' in general. And it's a very familiar register in the disability literature (eg: Bjornsdottir & Svendsdottir 2008; Johnson 2009).

Agon 4: 'adikia' - 'the disorder of Being'

According to Douzinas, '...equality and liberty are ideological fictions', part of the 'bourgeois hall of mirrors' (Douzinas 2010: 83). He advocates a kind of 'rebellious subjectivity' called *adikia*. '*Adikia* is the disorder of Being, its concealment accompanying its unconcealment or lingering' (Douzinas 2010: 87). It's important to note here that an apparent contradiction is being proposed. There is, in Douzinas' rendering of Badiou, both a 'faultline beyond control' and simultaneously a 'kernel' (Douzinas 2010: 10). Such a figure of thinking allows both to conclude that 'rights depoliticize politics' (Douzinas 2010, p94; Badiou 2013). On a first attempt to link some of Badiou's thinking to matters of inclusion, one might conclude that rather than ask 'what are their rights?' Badiou would prefer to ask 'what is their world?': 'Neither matter (beneath) nor principle (above), a world absorbs all the multiplicities that can intelligibly be said to be internal to it.' (ibid., p 308). In so doing, it makes possible local truths that reject the conventional relation of individuals and communities: '*To the extent that it is a subject of a truth, a subject subtracts itself from every community and destroys every individuation*' (ibid., p9, his emphasis)⁸. His critique has something in common with Rancière: 'Democratic materialism only knows individuals and communities, that is to

⁸ In other words, it is perhaps useful to think like this: in order to 'include', a subject does not incorporate the Other so much as 'excorporate' the Same of the self. Too simply, you count people in by counting yourself out? And this account attempts an improvisation on such a theme.

say passive bodies, but it knows no subjects' (ibid., p50; Rancière 1991). Rancière anticipates 'a new scene of equality where heterogeneous performances are translated into one another' (Rancière 2011, p22).

[The Scottish referendum on independence (September 2014) perhaps illustrates this disconnect between rights (eg the right to vote) and politics (the ability to meaningfully decide). As soon as the latter reared its head as an ugly possibility of meaningful democracy, the English and Scottish establishments (politicians, dignitaries, celebrities, media, EU, Obama – the latter a very recent recruit to internal UK politics) united to denounce that option. The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) even promised to move its Edinburgh headquarters out of Scotland (and was mocked in the press as RBS, the 'Royal Bank of Somewhere Else'). The idea of democratic decision-making by the people and for the people was apparently horrifying. Although the 'No' vote won (55/45%), subsequently membership of the 'Yes' parties tripled in the month following the vote⁹. 'Rebellious subjectivity' has not had its final say.]

Agon 5: unspeakable subjects

To shift back from theory to practice, our 'standpoint' is clear: we want and intend to be on the side of learning disabled people. But both terms are necessarily under erasure. It is also clear that 'we' (agon 1) 'stand' (agon 3) in more than one position. Beyond that, it is telling that the taboo extends even to the process of naming and/or miscalling 'the disabled'¹⁰. There is no name, or label, that cannot be challenged, or trumped in the name of a greater 'purity' of address¹¹. Are 'people with learning difficulties' to be preferred to notions like 'learning disability', let alone the official educational discourse of 'Special

⁹ As we redraft, we need to update – quadrupled..

¹⁰ From inside a disability discourse, such analysis attempts clarification and definition, approximating to whatever underlying theory of rights and equalities. From one anthropological perspective, these rites can seem to be a kind of 'concept cleansing', reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's predicament: 'will these hands ne'er be clean..' (Shakespeare *MacBeth*, Act 5, Scene 1, 1993, p866). From another, the definite article in 'the disabled' sets up the figure of the stereotype of the 'Collective Individual' (as Geertz and other anthropologists have argued).

¹¹ Purity of address posits a definitional aspiration, a position to 'defend'. But perhaps the metaphor is wrong and the 'war' is over: we mistake triangulation (the definition, the fixed point robustly defended), for what is going on after the war – a messy and empirical triage.

Educational Needs’? Is it a question of what we ‘are’, or what we ‘have’, or what we ‘lack’? Or is the historical carousel whereby name, as in race designations, can never find a final resolution a symptom of a more profound ‘unspeakability’ (by no means an innocent designation itself)? Does every label instigate a kind of accumulative politics that eventually corrupts its good intentions? Such is Douzinas’ conclusion: ‘..the order initiated by revolution leads each time to the repudiation of its founding principle’ (ibid.: 93). Or: ‘Everytime, however, a theory of justice is put into practice, it soon degenerates into another instance of injustice’ (ibid.: 90). As we saw, his disdain for bourgeois ‘rights’ discourse is unbounded: ‘the theory of justice is the oldest failure of human thought’ (ibid.: 90). Badiou has long held a parallel scepticism: ‘[Justice].. is the subjective principle of the withering away of right’ (Badiou 2009/1982: 296).

[A similar degeneration can be seen in inclusion discourses. The right hand is collaborative, idealistic, seeking justice for the less disempowered/emancipated, to use the familiar language of the discourse. But take a look at the left-hand activity, as illustrated in Blyth 2009a: 194-5 (see also Blyth 2011). ‘Mike Oliver deploys a number of ‘textual attacks upon academics who have published work seeking to draw upon theoretical approaches that he feels are not appropriate to the field.. For example, referring to an article by Goodley who employs a Deleuzoguattarian approach to considering the accounts of parents of disabled children, Oliver states that “It reminded me of the hoax Alan Sokal played... when he submitted an article that made no sense at all... I keep hoping Goodley’s paper was another hoax, but I don’t think it was.” In a similar vein to this, in an earlier text (Oliver 2007: 232-3) he refers to the contents of Shakespeare’s (2006) publication as “meaningless platitudes” and goes on to add that the text can be summed up as “one big lie”. We are struck by the violence of this exchange (hoax/lie/meaninglessness), and its contrast with the right-hand discourse of avowed empathy, emancipation and empowerment .]

Agon 6: text as biased dialogue

[While we’re on the left-hand inconsistencies with the right, how about the exclusivity implicit in this writing? How come some of the text is in italics and, even more, encased in what could be seen to be subordinating brackets? Don’t asides also take sides?]

As a ‘multiple’ we come at this very differently. Craig Blyth tries to work in a ‘participatory spirit’ where individuals remain ‘participants’ or ‘subjects’. Rohss Chapman sees the disabled team members as ‘co-researchers’. Ian Stronach supplies the sokalistic moments.. but we’re trying to think in front of each other, and to do so without compromise. As we said, agonistic but not antagonistic.

Agon 7: inclusion versus belonging

For Badiou, these words are related in terms of ‘excess’(2005: 98). They are separated by ‘an excluded middle’ (ibid.:184), a ‘gap’ (ibid.: 84)¹². Thus he offers an ‘inclusion’ that has an exclusion at its heart rather than on the more conventional peripheries. He wants to upset the implicit geometry of our thinking. Such a ‘separation’ is not simple, nor is it complete or static. The concepts stand in what we have called elsewhere a ‘lean-to’ relation; their differences are generative in a non-dialectical way (Stronach 2010: 175). Like Geuss, Badiou would see it as ‘folly to try to isolate either one and set it up as an absolute ideal’ (Geuss 2014: 120). Indeed, he is generally keen on the idea that such concepts carry their oppositions on the inside: ‘the very being of the homeland is that of escaping’ (2005: 256). Elsewhere, in a somewhat discrepant way, he calls this ‘the introjection of alterity’ (2013:168), a kind of dynamic. Feltham puts it thus: such an ‘event’ is ‘not so much the emergence of a new entity as a tear opening up in the texture of a situation’ (Feltham 2008: 101). This is Inclusion as situated ‘event’ rather than universal principle or definition. Such a dynamic stands in some contrast to some of the frozen moralising of ‘Inclusion’, and has undermining consequences for a ‘rights’ discourse, as we will finally argue.

Badiou claims ‘the *gap* between structure and meta-structure, between element and sub-set, between belonging and inclusion, is a *permanent question for thought*, an intellectual provocation of being’ (Badiou 2013, p84, our emphasis). He offers a number of accounts of such coming together/apart. The gap is posited in terms of ‘structure’/ ‘metastructure’ and ‘presentation’ (belonging)/ ‘representation’¹³ (inclusion): ‘Belonging refers to

¹² It will be noted that Badiou’s conceptualizing of the ‘void’ posits gaps, middles and excesses (amongst others). We regard this gestural spacing (over/between/under/absent/present) as a deliberate and generative discrepancy.

¹³ The use of the ‘slash’ (/) is preferred to any notion like ‘and’ since it seeks to mark an imbrication beyond language rather than a separation or addition. As we’ve seen, Badiou is much more a thinker of ‘subtraction’.

presentation, whilst inclusion refers to representation' (2005: 501). Badiou also takes us into interesting territory when he addresses the 'aporia' via his notion of the 'void of being'. The argument is that philosophies have tended to fill in that void (as Heidegger or Hegel variously might). Instead he gives it both an inevitable and a positive meaning, as a kind of generative 'lack' which *enables* both truth and knowledge as at the same time it *disables* them – 'a truth is always that which makes a hole in a knowledge' (2005: 327). In contrast 'Inclusion' discourses look more like a series of 'fillings-in', a chronology of serial settlements, all of whose resolutions and completions in turn disappoint.

And such a truth must also envisage a 'hole' in any notion of the self, denying its 'oneness', in what we joked as 'left-hand' finger plonking. We have been doing that empirically to our own past work, digging up discrepancies and smoothing-overs in a retrospective deconstruction of our own texts, as well as those of other disability researchers. But the problem is not mainly an empirical or historical one. According to a range of contemporary thinkers – from Foucault through Derrida and Deleuze to Badiou (no progression intended), we need to acknowledge the 'non-self-identical thing' that science seeks to deny. Badiou (as reported by Feltham) argues for a 'logic of incompleteness' (2008:17), drawing variously on Lacan's notion of the 'Real'. Such a 'real' relies on the 'void of its being' – in being as it were always more than it can say that it is, and hence irreducible to any 'situation'. Analogously, we would argue that no pure register of inclusion/exclusion can exist: instead justice is always local, temporary, and provisional. Such is the Being of Belonging¹⁴. In this way, we can interpret our doubts and ambivalences as a more necessary kind of indetermination, one never open to a hygienic resolution – whether of identity or position. Again, the dynamic between 'limit' and 'interval' (Badiou 2005: 206) denies Inclusion/Exclusion as a definition rather than an incitement to a situated diplomacy. As Calcagno glosses it, the version of the dilemma is 'the forceful interplay of the already having been that continually undoes itself, the impossibility of the future and the haunting present' (Calcagno 2007.: 5).

I like the idea that truth does not so much add to knowledge, as subtract from it . It's interesting how situated and occasioned these acts of inclusion/exclusion can be. Empirically, the experiences of disabled gay people offer a complicated set of exclusions. The first is an attempt by powerful others to insist on a 'heteronormative asexuality'" (Blyth 2009a: 117). Don't do it. Or hide it. Or stop

¹⁴ The later Badiou might prefer the 'appearing' of belonging.

being dirty. The second involves a rejection by the gay ‘club’: a failure to be ““normatively” gay’ (Blyth 2009b: 84), due to impairments or inability to physically conform with gay physical ideals. It’s interesting as well to note the ways in which the researcher allocates his own interest: ‘I started to recognise (in all honesty, most likely through a “gaze of desire”)..’ (Blyth 2010: 42). That acknowledgement of ‘belonging’ offers a double side-step; first the use of by-the-way brackets; the second by a distancing quotation that allows Foucault to express the personal at a discursive distance?

The ‘void of being’ posits a world that can’t be anticipated or predicted, which is possibly why accounts of equality like Rousseau, or – oppositely, Hobbes - tend to invent a mythic past that has the wholeness of the story and its causal consequences nicely sewn up (Schieffelin 1976: 30)¹⁵. But such closure is not available. It presumes a ‘procedure of fidelity which, for each and every determinant of the encyclopedia [all that’s known and available for thinking about ‘x’, for example] , contains at least one enquiry which avoids it’ (Badiou 2005: 338). In addition each succession of events and situations in itself redefines the earlier meaning – in much the same way as Gell demonstrates in relation to a picture’s shifting placement in the emerging ‘oeuvre’ of the artist (Gell, in Stronach 2010, p.153). Thus ‘being’ is always and already ‘ex-centred from the place of transparency in which it pronounces itself to be’ (Badiou, *ibid.*: 432). Turgot expresses this rather well:

‘Before we have learned to deal with things in a given state, they have already changed several times. Thus, we always find out too late what has happened. And therefore it can be said that politics is obliged to foresee the present’ (Turgot, cited by Clark 2014: 73).

As Badiou insists, ‘..the only truth is a local one’ (Badiou 2013, p141), and always a question of ‘rupture together with the sedimentation of a new sensibility’ (*ibid.*, p46). He contrasts his thinking with Hegel’s:

‘Hegel: limit/state/’generative’ ontology/law-based

Badiou: frontier/dynamic/ ‘subtractive’ ontology/decision-based’ (Badiou 2013, p16)

15 Originary myths, like Adam and Eve, explain our endings by invoking our beginnings. They are not entirely a matter of religion and superstition. Science too likes to claim equivalent starting points, as in neuroscience’s relentlessly reductive promotion of the hippocampus and its hard-wiring destiny. We write that sentence as hard-wired hunter-gatherers of meaning.

In such a rendering (over-dichotomised and reductive though it may be) he makes a claim that might apply to practices and principles of inclusion/belonging; Badiou feels that he allows otherness in affirmative ways denied by Hegel or Heidegger. In *Logics of Worlds* (LoW), he variously deploys a language of the absent, missing and exceptional - 'hiatus'(p286), 'errancy' (p291), 'empty' (p 432), 'hole'(p 432), where truths reside not in the present, nor as a Hegelian One, but in the always on-going 'future anterior' (p404), 'where I am not, but where I must come to be..' (p431). (He cites Beckett in that respect).

But how do you 'illustrate' what's not there – the void, absence, as 'incertitudes', as we later posit. And show the thereness of not-there at the same time? What came to mind by way of analogy was Lewis-Williams' interpretation of the paleolithic cave paintings at Lascaux:

'The horse deepest in the tunnel is also remarkable. Its eye is formed by a small circular hole [...]. He cites Laming-Emperaire: "Perhaps this hole inspired the artist to place the animal's head at this point" (Lewis-Williams 2002: 251). It is the inanimate hole that animates the drawing. The walls of the cave are not so much solid and material as constituting a 'membrane' between people and the spirit world, a kind of two-way traffic: 'They were drawing (in two senses) spirit animals through the 'membrane' and fixing them on the surface; they were also sending fragments of animals [he indicates slivers of bone planted into the walls and ground] back through the 'membrane' into the spirit world' (ibid: 253).

Typically Badiou makes claims like: 'Truths exist as exceptions to what there is' (p4), and they inhabit 'worlds' that are 'ontologically marked by an inaccessible closure' (p313). Thus a 'world'¹⁶ is always open to further critique, and Derrida and Calcagno relate it to the 'promise' – a 'democracy' that is iterable, universal, open, and unrealisable as such (Calcagno 2007, p4).

A major strength of Badiou's LoW is his confidence in working through examples as diverse as the Paris Commune, Spartacus and its various historical recuperations. Even

16 Badiou's 'worlds' are contingent realities. For example, he explores the 'world' of a particular demonstration, in Paris, showing how its meanings stand both within it, and outside it, as well as in a particular temporal sequence. His opposition is to the Universal, resisting any 'monopoly of the universal', as Crouch puts it a broader context. (Crouch 2011, p160; see also Debray 2011, p 32).

art and opera get a look in. Maybe we can give a more grounded example of a ‘future anterior’ kind of exceptional truth that draws on subjectivity, politics and history. It comes from that other heart of darkness, the disabled Congo state (DRC)[NB: not ‘failed’ but actively ‘crippled’]:

‘One boy has a packet [cigarettes] tied round his waist like a belt, proudly displaying it by tucking his shredded T-shirt into his shredded shorts, even though inside is nothing but a few cigarette butts. I ask the boy why he carries an empty box like that, ‘To show people I have something,’ he says matter-of-factly.’ (Rawlence 2012, p256).

Such a quote could be taken as a marker of profound exclusion, that is nonetheless denied by the boy’s agency in asserting a kind of belonging. Does such an incident help untangle ‘the obscure knot between politics, democracy and philosophy..’ (Badiou 2012, p38)?

In an exchange of memos and discussion of the above quotation, one of us wrote as follows. Throughout the last 25 years of working with learning disabled people, I have known many many people who have clung to ‘talismans of order, uniforms, flags..’ (Rawlence 2012: 274) not just to demonstrate a form of belonging but to demonstrate that they ‘belong’ in certain ways. For example, I work with a man who brings a broken laptop to nearly every meeting we have. This man can neither read nor write (hence a broken laptop will do fine) but for him (or is it for me) it is a ‘uniform’ or ‘flag’ that signifies that he belongs to the ‘community’ he has entered (in more relaxed environments, he will arrive with a newspaper under his arm). Other examples include a woman who carried a handbag everywhere but had nothing to put in it (she had spent nearly all her life in a long-stay institution) but that handbag was the most important thing to her because that was what women ‘were’, ‘are’, ‘did’ – in a performative sense she was ‘being’ a woman in the same way as the previous guy was ‘being’ someone who attended meetings. It is fairly easy to see how these objects are similar to the ‘empty box’ but I also think that they are important in relation to ‘talismans of order’ as they provide a form of ‘order’ to people in relation to understanding the ‘performance’ requirements relating to them or alternatively as ‘talismans of normality’. (We could also add that they are acts of *belonging* and not of inclusion, bringing out an agentic being, whatever the circumstances and against the odds).

What else can we say about the meaning boundaries between inclusion and belonging? First, there is the issue of continuity over time. Badiou argues that the horse drawn on the wall of the prehistoric cave dwelling has something that we can recognise throughout the sequence up to – his example – Picasso’s depiction of horses. There is a ‘horseness’ throughout (Badiou 2013: 20), an ongoing ‘Idea’, like ‘Inclusion’. Horseness may change over time, and horses themselves evolve as we also do in our spectating over time, but there *is* something enduring on which we can agree. The concept forges the possibility of its truth, in one or other of the meanings of ‘forge’.

But ‘horseness’ never stops changing and its changes are ‘local’. Its truths are always ‘localizations’. So we have both ‘a local guarantee of its identity’ and a belief that it ‘co-belongs to different worlds’ (ibid.: 114).

One such ‘event’ is perhaps closer to home for us. Badiou analyses the historical phenomenon of ‘Spartacus’, taking us into the realm of oppression/resistance/revolution. Like ‘horseness’, Spartacus recurs as a theme, as a concept of a certain freedom – from Roman revolt to the Sparticans of the German Marxist Left after WW1 - Rosa Luxemburg etc. Such successions are never continuities, and for example seldom based on success. The ‘event’ of ‘Lenin’, he argues, comes more out of the failure of the Paris Commune than from its initial success¹⁷. This he vividly illustrates: ‘Every mirror (every concept) throws into a tendential abyss the object which is its fiction to reduplicate’ (ibid.: 95). Thus the Paris Commune represents the ‘*edge of the old*’, enabling Lenin to take it further (ibid.:47, his emphasis); and Mao does the same in his post-Leninist moves¹⁸. Interestingly, such moves are not at all forms of resistance; rather they are revolutionary moves aiming to ‘*repress the repression*’ (ibid.: 32, his). We aim here, then, to repress the repression of Inclusion. The analogy of the empty cigarette packet holds good.

Agon 8: rights versus justice

17 There is something overly unilateral about such sequencing. Spartacus recurs, as Hollywood demonstrates. But as black film director Steve McQueen notes, that slave rebellion is safely distant and safely ‘white’. Black revolts against slavery in the New World are a bit too close to US taboos – as various walk-outs at the initial screening of McQueen’s *12 years a Slave* might suggest. See ‘Shamed’, D. Aitkenhead, *Guardian Weekend*, 4 January, 2013.

18 As a Maoist, he sees the Cultural Revolution as a post-Leninist move, part of the revolutionary sequence from the Paris Commune forwards. We can’t follow him there, and he is oddly silent over subsequent Chinese history.

The remaining question is: does Badiou offer ways forward that avoid the utopian resolutions of a ‘rights’ discourse, founded on and founding such notions as liberty, democracy, equity, inclusion and participation? Badiou certainly argues that ‘rights’ are a form of anti-politics, a neutering abstraction. Instead, as Calcagno argues, ‘Politics is that thinking and acting that comes to appear as singular with the multiplicity of the situation through an intervention’ (Calcagno 2007: 89). Again iterability and error is written into these appropriations, along with the *decay* of truths: ‘..every rightness and every justice are, in principle, novelties; and that everything that repeats itself is invariably unjust and inexact’ (Badiou 2009: 39). Mason makes a similar argument against ‘rights’ – as ‘a form of enslavement’ (2012: 143).

The singular/multiple articulation is connection via the ‘trace’. What is that? Rather enigmatically, Badiou refers us to that which, ‘according to the transcendental laws of saying, is sayable’ (Badiou 2013.: 386)¹⁹. Notions like good/evil, ethical/unethical carry such an ‘excluded middle’ (Badiou 2013. 184). Elsewhere he illustrates the figure of that kind of thinking with an arresting reflexivity proposed by Kierkegaard: ‘In wanting to be itself, in being oriented to itself, the Self plunges through its own transparency into the power which posited it’ (ibid.: 425). The process is existential, a question of ‘passion’ not deduction. Badiou employs the same kind of thinking when he writes: ‘The strong singularity can thus be recognised by the fact that its consequence in the world is to make exist within it the proper inexistence of the object-site’ (ibid.: 377). To summarise: he insists on ‘an ontology in which evental excess summons lack’ (ibid.: 548).

In relation to ‘justice’ versus ‘rights’, where might that take us? In a remarkable argument, Badiou suggests – somewhat after Kierkegaard and Sartre - a ‘point’ of passion and decision where we must – locally as well as globally- choose between the ‘Two’, like good/evil, ethical/unethical, man/woman, and so on. Such a choosing – a ‘binary dramatization’ (ibid.: 437) - is not reductive but takes into account all of the relevant multiplicities that surround such ‘deciding’. As such, it is an act and (potentially) an inductive event that cannot be deduced from law or principle. In these sorts of way, we ‘wager our worlds’ (ibid.: 424).

19 Let’s shy away from Badiou’s appeals to the transcendental, and regard our deployment of his ideas as more of a ‘raid’ than a relay.

Conclusions²⁰

Let the ripples spread. Fraser promotes the notion of a ‘parity of participation’ within a ‘post-Westphalian democratic justice’ (2013, p193, 205)²¹. Interestingly in terms of this paper, she notes that ‘the grammar of argument has altered – from what to who, and which community (p192). Debray decries the West’s ‘monopoly of the universal’ (2013, p32). Crouch criticises the international NGO industry of redress and calls for an ‘anarchic space’ (2011, p161). Diagnoses tend to converge, prescriptions diverge. The call for anarchic spaces (most entertainingly by Scott, 2009) opposes the state and its ‘civilisation’ as ‘hermetic’ (p 27, sic), though his vision is historical and pessimistic concerning the future of ‘Zomiac’ free peoples and their increasing enclosure. Scott argues thus: ‘All empires, as cultural-political enterprises, are necessarily exercises in classification’ (p123). Our paper therefore resonates with a kind of spreading critical resistance to a world too full of definitions and certainties (discursively rather than actually). ‘Zomia’ is a retrospective and perhaps nostalgic anarchy, but the capitalist future has its own anarchic possibilities, as the ‘ruin’ of Detroit might indicate (Binelli 2013). Even some of the erstwhile quantifying and mathematizing economists are coming round to ‘incertitude’: ‘To put it bluntly, the discipline of economics has yet to get over its childish passion for mathematics..’ (Picketty 2014: 32)²². Even Greenspan, guru of a neoliberal and mathematized economics, has conceded that a ‘behavioral economics’ is needed to temper the ‘animal spirits’ of those quants (Greenspan 2013: 14).

Perhaps more significant than post-Westphalian political entities, or hegemonies of ‘empire’, are the new forms of political sociality that social media enable. Mason refers to new forms of ‘spontaneous horizontalism’ (2012: 44ff) and an associated ‘expanded power of the individual’ (p65). He envisages such novel ‘social space’ (p190), occupied by the ‘networked individual’ (p130) as enabling revolutionary possibilities in terms of communication and technology. He takes the ‘Arab Spring’s’ emergence and spread to exemplify this potential, while underestimating the power of the residual state structures

²⁰ At this late stage of the story, we confess that the various authorial voices and interjections were not introduced or explained. They were left to the reader to work out. Our aim was to ‘disconcert’, and a preamble would have undermined that very effect.

²¹ Her conclusion ends, though, in rhetoric, calling for ‘inclusion, social equality, and cross-class solidarity’ (p 38).

²² Picketty’s work is not without controversy, though it seems to us that the FT (UK *Financial Times*) is trying a little too hard to discount his thesis of growing capitalist inequality (Giles, C., Giuliano, F. 2014, 24/25 May).

and their reactionary capabilities. Perhaps then, we need different and novel theories of individual identity and social association in order to comprehend the imbrications and uncertainties of both the ‘real’ and the ‘virtual’. Such novel requirements are not just technological; they are also political, in terms especially of the socio-political transformations in postsoviet worlds, with the positing of ‘leaky selves’ in unpredictable transitions (Pedersen and Hojer 2008: 16).

So what this paper has tried to do is to work a multiple paradox: naming the un-nameable; speaking the unspeakable; writing the unwriteable; and thinking the unthinkable. Or, more pointedly, unthinking some of the thinkable. Keeping dissension in play, along with incertitude, has meant at least at times, ‘reading like a loser’, which Bull defines as ‘assimilating a text in such a way that it is incompatible with one’s self’ (Bull 2011: 36) – an ambition that we also hope to authorise for any readers.

In offering 8 agonistic yet intersecting trajectories, we have tried to problematize the voices, narratives, and discourses of ‘Inclusion’, our own and those of others. We tried to make their central concepts into something more like a distributed object, (Strathern 1988), and certainly more individual and situated in terms of ‘justice’. There is a further, more original claim. These ‘agonisms’ reconstitute the subject as also a ‘redistributed subject’ – perhaps that ‘fragile scintillation’ that we earlier cited from Badiou. Such an unravelling of the ‘writing self/selves’ creates a matrix of incertitudes, not uncertainties²³. There is something anarchic about that condition but nothing chaotic.

Finally, more needs to be said about the belonging/including dimension in particular. It suggests that ‘inclusion’ is a concept that starts from the outside and seeks to redress a deficit in engagement: to bring something ‘in’ that was previously ‘out’. ‘Belonging’, on the other hand, is more like an analogous ‘family’ relationship – you *have* to start on the inside. Maybe an anthropology of belonging can restrain a sociology of inclusion? But that sounds like another paper.

‘Thou robed man of justice, take thy placed;

²³ The uncertain self of qualitative inquiry is familiar enough, but there is a contingent, perhaps remedial relation with some kind of certainty. Incertitude, on the other hand, is ontological; it is a state of being, or better a state of becoming or appearing. In which case, hardly a ‘state’ at all.

And thou, his yoke fellow of equity

Bench by his side.’ (Shakespeare 1993. *King Lear*. Act 3, Scene 6, p928)

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