

Playing for Affect in Counterpublics: An interdisciplinary Investigation into the Transformative Potential of Spoken Word Hybridity.

Abstract.

This chapter operationalises interdisciplinary discourses, namely theories and concepts familiar to contemporary media and cultural studies and, creative reflective practice to interrogate the experimental hybridity of spoken word performance. It explores how the form utilises playful performance techniques and performativity to represent the personal as political and to engage the audience in critical, formative interactivities that undermine dominant hegemonies. This chapter is interested in these nuanced and complex creative practices when executed in both live and virtual discursive spaces, or counterpublics. It argues that this playful hybridity has the potential to unite the performer and audience in creative problem solving, including reciprocal participations that make the 'performing' of pluralistic identities visible and intelligible. These embodied collaborations, particularly those which are digital and therefore multimodal, challenge the social and cultural orders of 'reality', 'representation' and 'subjectivity' suggesting that the playful hybridity of spoken word performance has transformative potential, discernible as interminable affective assemblage.

Introduction.

Spoken word performance has a history of existing in opposition to dominant hegemony: the 1940s and 50s Beat poets; the Black Arts Movement and second wave feminism in the 60s and 70s; the slam performers in the 80s; and, the anti-globalisation movement of the 90s. This relationship with interrogating social issues distinct to commercial, popular culture has positioned spoken word performance outside of the literary canon. Therefore, when working to establish a critical and meaningful discourse for analysis and interrogation, interdisciplinary approaches which blur traditional boundaries and structures may better serve this form. For this reason, this chapter combines conceptual frameworks from the fields of media and cultural studies and reflective creative practice.

Spoken word performance hybridises forms to unite audiences around liberal ideologies, therefore operating as political communication (Hoffman 49). With this in mind, this chapter will demonstrate the potential of spoken word performances to create affective socio-political counterpublics. Somers-Willett defines counterpublics as openly countercultural discursive spaces that enable marginalised groups to articulate and interpret the identities, interests and needs of their members in opposition to the dominant 'public' or hegemony (6). Using examples from my own practice, this chapter will demonstrate how spoken word performance interrogates the personal as political whilst accumulating political allies.

This chapter is keen to understand digital multimodal forms of spoken word performance and associated digital creative practice, specifically videos posted to social media platforms such as

YouTube. Like spoken word performance user generated content operates outside of the canon and is often perceived as having little or no cultural value; at least not 'literary' or 'art'. This chapter positions multimodal spoken word performances which includes digital participatory practice, such as reciprocal online 'conversations' with other social media users in the form of likes, comments, shares, as a hybrid form of direct, affective communication that operates within digital socio-political spaces or, 'viral counterpublics' (Somers-Willett 21).

Using examples posted to my own YouTube channel this chapter argues that on-screen performances are a form of digital practice that inform my playful creativity with the form, whilst also draw attention to 'performance' as evidence of active and playful identity construction. To better understand the potential of spoken word as a playful multimodal hybrid of creativity and 'performance', this chapter will use a critical toolkit previously adopted by academics to decode autobiographical vlogs (video blogs) produced by subaltern groups to challenge dominant, normative perceptionsⁱ. This chapter will evidence how multimodal hybridity, including the social media tools made possible by web 2.0 functionality, creates a discursive space not only for the articulation and interpretation of the spoken word performer's identity, but also affects the on-going process of reciprocal identity construction within the networked community.

Playing in Counterpublics.

On 25 July 2019 I was invited by my small independent, Bristol-based publisher Hesterglock Press to perform poetry from my experimental pamphlet, *Cutting the Green Ribbon*. The press is run by Paul Hawkins and Sarer Scotthorne who operate an alternative publishing model, printing on-demand for no profit. The work they publish often links poetry to performance and their website states they are 'future facing' (Hesterglock Press 'Information'). Being published by this press defines my creative outputs as aligning with these alternative, countercultural principals. The event took place at the May Day Rooms in London, which has an long established identity as a safe space for 'social movements, experimental and marginal cultures and their histories' (May Day Rooms *About Us*), operating an 'open door policy' where, as is customary at spoken word events, anyone could sit in the audience openly invited to participate, including critique, rather than simply consumeⁱⁱ.

The values of the publishing press, the legacy of spoken word performance and the history of the venue set the tone for the event and established a set of expectations from the audience, especially when compared to poetry 'readings' of formally recognised poetry which are often organised by academics or conventional publishers and, typically take place in theatres or libraries for example. The event included performances from other Hesterglock poets, but also those working with experimental forms and political themes who were not published, including creatives working with visual, installation and performance art. Being invited to perform at this event validated my place within a network of creatives committed to hybrid forms and alternative politics.

Whilst performing, the audience could read 'Resistance', 'equal' and 'stand up for your rights' on political banners and posters pinned to the walls behind me. These banners operated as visual signifiers which collided with the central themes of my poetry, namely the interrogation of patriarchally appropriated female bodies and sexualities. Whilst performing at The May Day Rooms, a 'space of dissent' (May Day Rooms *Archive*), I felt it appropriate and empowering to perform *From Naomi* which uses quotations from Donald Trump found in the mainstream media, taken from interviews and TV appearances to offer a candid critique of the President. This poem is also informed by the work of recognised political analyst and commentator, Naomi Klein who has publicly argued that Trump's language seems humorous, almost farcical, but is in fact incredibly dangerous and threateningⁱⁱⁱ. In theme and in performance, including voice inflection to create sardonic tone, and little or no change in emotional prosody, I was able to play with Trump's words in an ironic way. Through the performance, which utilised my physical, female body as well as language to re-purpose and reclaim Trump's blatant misogyny, I openly challenged the pervasive nature of sexual assault and the perceived assumption that powerful men can control women and their bodies.

In my performance of *From Naomi*, my identity articulated itself through playful language, revealing the patriarchal ideology that underpins that language; and, through the nuanced physical performance, confronted the audience with a set of visual signifiers that connoted a female body far more complex than a 'beautiful piece of ass' (Wareham Morris 23). These inversions intrinsically combined performance and the performative^{iv}: utilising and (re)producing discourses familiar to the audience in order to simultaneously subvert them. In this sense the performer and audience were united in playful engagement which had the potential to dismantle recognisable cultural hegemonies, and therefore retrieve the subaltern whilst making the pluralistic intelligible.

At the same event, I also performed my poem, *Birthday* which uses a first person, 'confessional' style to interrogate personal experiences, once again drawing attention to the female body through performance. The poem interrogates the paradoxes of the female creative energies - motherhood versus writing and performing - and of the body - desiring pleasure whilst being in pain. Performing this poem is an example of 'testifying' (Chepp 46), following a political tradition of activist storytelling in public to inform opinion by deploying one's own subjective experiences or point of view. Chepp draws attention to these spoken word devices as 'awareness-raising tool[s]' to activate politics, harking back to autobiographical slave narratives and, the personal stories of second wave feminists told in consciousness-raising groups (45). As a female poet performing in the voices of female personae, I claim these experiences as my own representing a woman who is able to challenge and resist the stereotypical narratives that seek to define and dominate womanhood. This form of 'counter-storytelling' (Chepp 45) is a strategic device utilised for achieving activist goals including advocating for subaltern identities and marginalised experiences and, in the public space in front of an audience, builds allies in order to amplify the political message.

Spoken word poets from the USA such as Sonya Renee Taylor have confirmed that spoken word performances can inspire audiences to dismantle oppression (cited in Chepp 44); this is both a playful and formative experience. This commitment to progressive politics and to creating an 'open and collaborative' space (May Day Rooms *Archive*) creates the potential for performers and audiences alike, regardless of background, to reimagine and reorganise their identities beyond dominant cultural paradigms. Somers-Willett uses 'counterpublic' to describe how marginalised groups are empowered to interpret their identities, interests and needs in spaces which recognise and validate their lived experiences, through the expression and attention paid to an alternate worldview (6). Spoken word counterpublics therefore have the transformative potential to challenge hegemony.

Spoken word poets do not simply perform an emotive or entertaining narrative that 'touch' audiences and generate sentimental emotions or empathy, nor are these experiences 'settled' with a final signified. This would romanticise and fetishize the performance and associated experiences through assumed social and subjective connections. Spoken word performance engages the bodies of the performer and the audience in the performativity of emotions and feelings, without assuming to know themselves, each other or indeed the associated affects. The performance catalyses a space for these bodies to engage in continuous politically-charged affective play where 'social' and 'cultural' orders, including 'reality', 'representation' and 'subjectivity' are radically challenged. This defines spoken word as assemblage, as it makes 'connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders' (Deleuze and Guattari 22) and thus catalyses the dynamic creation of unpredictable, polymorphous potentialities.

Playing in Viral Counterpublics.

The on-going construction of pluralistic and contradictory selves and, the blurring of distinct boundaries or orders is perhaps more obvious in the virtual spaces created by social media platforms. These spaces are recognised by Somers-Willett as 'viral counterpublics' (21). In these spaces, the production of user generated content including the filming, editing and distribution of digital videos is a creative mode underpinned by the sharing of multi-layered, personal content publicly (Chepp 47). As a spoken word performer operating in this digital space I have to 'code-switch', utilising familiar tools and practice, whilst also experimenting with new digital codes and conventions, including the non-linear and interactive tools offered by web 2.0 functionality (Barnard 21). That is my videoed, on-screen performances, or multimodal performances are simultaneously comprised of the performative signs and political potential made evident in a live performance, and also the on-going manipulation of technological interactivities inherent to user generated content and, articulated and negotiated in response to the unknown 'audience' of other social media users participating in networked communities.

Playful creativities of this nature engage with various stimuli drawing attention to multimodal performance and playful performativity as fundamental to the continual construction of self. It is widely accepted in media studies that the behaviours and experiences associated with Erving

Goffman's^v theory of 'self-presentation' can be readily applied to the digital age^{vi}. Participating in social media involves the construction of networked identities, or 'profiles' which are commented upon and shared by others; whilst the content we continue to create for and disseminate on these platforms continues the process of constructing this image or persona in response to the interactions with networks (boyd 120). The production and distribution of multimodal examples of spoken word performance evidence this process of identity construction: intersecting bodies, data and technologies that feed-forward into future patterns of collective activities (Tucker 35-40), including therefore the potential for mutually affective transformations.

I make a bold identity statement on my social media profiles: 'Wife. Mother. Lecturer. Writer. Feminist'. This declaration about my personal roles is part of my playful experimentation with my identity as a poet and as a woman through language. The networked community may discover my YouTube channel through a Google search of one or a combination of these terms; they may be looking for definitions or evidence of these subjectivities. On accessing the content available on my YouTube channel, they are able to witness and interpret this declaration in relation to the other content. This content utilises playful forms to offer (re)definitions and therefore (re)claim space for these labels. These forms include: the themes and experimental style of the poetry; the elements of performance such as changes in emotional prosody; and the audio-visual elements of my on-screen performance.

These playful semiotic structures are complex and interact, informing each other continually. Indeed, once I began filming my performances, I would obviously watch the videos myself before posting them publicly to the channel. This made me more aware of my performance, including acknowledging where I could make improvements to my vocal inflections, for example adding more variation in volume and rhythm to create pace and emphasise prosodic elements such as internal and half rhymes as well as full rhymes which would better highlight word play. I also became more aware of my self-image including my posture, recognising that I needed to adopt a more confident stance and make better use of the microphone, whilst also being in better control of nervous paralanguage such as rocking or swaying slightly during performance. I also became more experimental with my costume, trying out different clothing trends, make-up and hair styles to emphasise different aspects of my personality depending on the venue and the assumptions or expectations I had of the audience.

I was more conscious of the content posted not only on my channel but on my other social profiles such as Facebook and Twitter, trying to construct a consistent message or brand. I created a very short title sequence for some of my videos^{vii} using a background image of the centre petals of a deep blue, velvety rose in extreme close-up. The text 'Katy Wareham Morris' appears across the image in a handwritten-script-effect font, followed by 'Mother. Wife. Lecturer. Writer. Feminist' written in a sans serif font typically recognisable for professional communications. The writing is framed, almost held by the petals. I also included some music combining woody beats with moody electric chords. Although these titles only last a couple of

seconds, they connote mystery, ambiguity, female bodies and sexualities with the visual image playing homage to other female artists such as Georgia O'Keefe. This also makes a statement about my identity: my name being 'written' as if to claim writing as central to my 'performing' my body, whilst the other aspects of my identity listed as identifiable social roles might be perceived as 'duties' ascribed by culture, those I am bound to perform as my 'official' identities.

These titles are another playful semiotic structure for the audience to decode, informing the other audio-visual frames within the video and, thus effect how the audience might interpret the spoken word performance offered. This audio-visual 'branding' draws attention to identity as a construction, on-screen and in 'reality'. The video performances that follow continue to interrogate these constructions. In some instances, the themes of the 'live' performance may seem to may ignore them entirely; an irony which further undermines their status and definition. It is clear that through the multimodality of these 'branded' titles I am able to mediate people's impression of me across social media platforms.

Once these branded videos are visible on social platforms, they are open to feedback from networked communities which creates opportunities to gain insight on how my performance has been interpreted. If the interpretations are completely incongruous to my intentions, then this might lead to further creative play in future live performances and multimodal content. For example, I was approached by Worcestershire Libraries through my Twitter profile to make a short video performance^{viii}. This request served as validation and recognition that my poetry was 'good' and of interest to a wide and varied audience, including those who might not typically attend live performances and those that I was not 'friends' with. Rather than filming a performance as it happens on-stage, where you are able to spontaneously modify your performance style in response to the immediate reactions of the audience, for example laughter or poignant moments of silence, I was able to set up the 'staging' and record and re-record until I felt satisfied with the performance, feeling confident that it would be well-received by the public.

I used this an opportunity to experiment with another familiar convention of vlogging, that of the confessional 'talking torso' style which is then edited before posting. I had not thought previously to film myself performing directly to camera, having only filmed my live performances, often positioning the camera stage left so not to make direct eye contact with it. Instead this form of video is shot in close up, with the speaker and the camera in close proximity emphasising facial expressions including the movement of the mouth and eyes to create an intimate space. Being aware of these conventions, I became very conscious of how I could use subtle changes in my expression as well as voice to communicate the emotional tensions in the poem.

Talking directly to the camera and the unknown audience made me incredibly self-aware, not only trying on different outfits and hairstyles prior to filming, but also changing the location of the filming twice. I decided that because the chosen poem was called *Grass* that it would be appropriate to film in my garden due to the typical connotations of nature, growth, nurturing and life, but also because it meant that aspects of my personal internal home space, which might be

perceived as much more intimate would not be visible on screen. This was the reason for changing locations initially, moving to a position in my garden where there were no specifically unique or identifying features. I was aware that this video would be available on public platforms not just my own personal profiles and therefore I felt it important to represent myself as a professional and competent poet, whilst also not revealing too much of my private identity.

The poem uses first person to document, reflect and represent feelings and experiences related to the theme of family. As a public video this blurs the boundaries of what is considered private and public: the diary-like style is personal but directed towards an imagined audience and so the need to represent myself, my experience and my identity is mediated by the fact that this must be accessible, communicated in a way that forges connections (van Dijck 11). I chose not to include my branded titles at the beginning of this video as I was concerned that this could potentially reveal too many personal details for an open public broadcast across many unknown channels, especially when combined with the conventions of performance which creates space for the audience to witness a version of me in private. I was also concerned that these language choices may also alienate some people.

These factors combined emphasise that the performance is a film to be shared, and therefore I felt the need to create a multimodal performance that would be understood and well-received. Indeed, I feel encouraged to make more of these types of videos because when this video was shared on other social networks the comments from known and unknown users were positive and encouraging. The sharing amongst unknown networks gave me a sense of achievement, providing some evidence that people recognised my work, which could potentially raise my profile as a poet and performer. This was important self-validation for me. Although I found this type of multimodal performance challenging because being able to see the camera drew attention to the fact I was being filmed and then 'watched' closely by others acting almost as a mirror to myself as well as others, it was an interesting experiment in the blurring of live and on-screen performance.

This makes it clear that the live performance and the on-screen, multimodal performance are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they can have a mutually beneficial relationship, creating multi-layered representations of poetry, performance and identity politics. The creation and distribution of multimodal videos not only evidences playful changes, developments or improvements in my spoken word performance, but also my playful experiments with fluid identity performances making these accessible and therefore recognisable to the public network. They are also mediated through my decisions to continue social media engagement and participation after initial posting, helping to maintain networked connections whilst also choosing how to maintain privacy.

As a form of digital diary or autobiography, my multimodal performances take advantage of audio-visual components as additional artistic elements helping to make private feelings or reflections even more accessible and arresting (Coldry 54). For example, the May Day Rooms performance discussed earlier is available as a videoed performance^{ix} on the same YouTube

channel which features the ‘talking-torso’ performance of *Grass*. In the *Grass* video I wear a bright floral dress, my hair styled in soft curls; this might stereotypically connote femininity, to some extent a ‘mumsy’ look, but also signifies nature which is a motif within in poem. At the May Day Rooms, I’m wearing tailored green shorts, a white vest and white trainers which might be perceived as more youthful or ‘trendy’ style. In another video available on the channel, I perform at Claptrap the Venue^x, an ‘independent alternative Midlands music venue’ (Claptrap the Venue *Home*) wearing a black leather jacket and a grey scarf decorated with skulls with straight hair pulled away from my face. There are also clear differences in my dialect, making use of my Black Country accent and regional dialect when performing at Claptrap in the Black Country, as compared to the softer intonation and inflections heard in the *Grass* video.

For multimodal performances, the audio-visual draws particular attention to juxtapositions in appearance, voice and demeanour which are important signifiers of self-image outside of narrative content. These apparent contradictions might confuse the audience about the image or identity I am trying to (re)present, causing them to question whether these performances and therefore my experiences are authentic or truthful. Yet personal storytelling of this kind involves communicating known cultural, collective stories or discourses about (gender) identity as a playful performative method, as acknowledged earlier. In addition to the thematic macro focus on gender and socio-cultural expectations consistent throughout my performances, the audio-visual elements are really important for visual self-presentation as micro level gender performativity, making it clear that these performances and therefore identities are all part of my lived experience.

The production and dissemination of my videos is informed by a desire to ‘problem-solve’ the issue of ‘gender’, to disrupt the normative presumptions that women can only be one ‘thing’. As a digital archive, the videos evidence the valuable, formative outcomes of play where pluralistic identity performance is made visible as recursive multilinear narratives: a literal mapping of on-going self-construction and self-reflection that (re)presents and (re)tells my (dis)continuous identity experiments (Frank 10). Playful on-screen performativity and social media participation hybridise allowing me to assess, synthesise and evaluate the constructions, contradictions and conflicts of my lived experiences as a woman, which do not comply with straightforward hegemonic dichotomies and cross social barriers. Therefore, my multimodal performances evidence a ‘personal media practice’ (Lundby 3-5) whereby I am able to construct active selves demonstrating that identity is something you ‘do’ rather than something you are (van Zoonen 45-47). Digital signifiers and networked functionality create plausible, compelling polyvocal stories which legitimise these realities through the playful blurring between the private and the public, through the exchanging and disclosing of personal information open to others in complex viral counterpublics.

Multimodal practice in viral counterpublics claims space for this incongruous dynamism whilst creating opportunities for complex audience engagement. Multimodal viewing strategies and social media participation not only effects audiences’ perceptions of on-screen performances,

but perceptions of their own performances and participations. A digital video of a spoken word performance is an open text with polysemic potential, simultaneously comprised of the open hybrid form of the multimodal performance itself, the unique multi-linear pathways that internet users must navigate in order to discover the video and also, the changeable nature of internet access conditions. The video diffuses amongst a myriad of haphazard, seemingly aimless and thus obfuscated digital exchanges where a single recognisable political agenda or movement is not always pronounced, evidenced, nor important in a variety of multimodal forms, touching a wide array of progressive issues (Chepp 47). This open nature demands that users must play and participate within a network of various alternative semiotic structures which come together and also separate^{xi}, thus accommodating disorientating, thematically unknown possibilities (even to the spoken word performer) and multivocal consciousness (Sloane 12). This has the potential to affect what other users perceive as possible or 'real' (Frank 3). In this sense viral counterpublics not only legitimate the identity of the multimodal performer but as a space where evolving, multidimensional assemblage emerges they have the potential to mobilise others to (re)claim their identities.

Users exchange and disclose their own information particularly if they are interested in creating further dialogues (Jenkins, Ford and Green 58-59): creating, posting, locating, commenting on and re-posting digital content draws attention to playful behaviours as an attempt to fulfil individual desires and needs whilst sometimes unintentionally and unexpectedly fulfilling the needs of a collective. These digital performances and cultural 'conversations' build social connections, provide validation for creative practice and of selfhood and can inspire action: affective bonds manifest and are mediated through these sharing features^{xii}. This creates an alternative participatory network of one-to-one and many-to-many relationships which centre on informal interactions that combine skills, knowledge and understanding and create common relationships with shared texts (Meikle and Young 68). The mutually valuable, reciprocal community operates as an alternative source of intelligence and power where the potential for cultural and political change can be found: a digital 'public sphere'^{xiii} connecting the self to society and the personal to the political (Papacharissi 164). This counters the argument that these types of playful participation are simply depoliticised acts of technological fetishism and instruments for communicative capitalism^{xiv}.

The potential for viral counterpublics to create space for marginalised, liminal identities who are not afforded space by mainstream culture, is interesting to me not just from the perspective of being a woman, but also a spoken word performer where there are not as many opportunities to publish widely, due to those previously acknowledged pre-conceived notions of 'literature' and the canon. The non-linear interactivity of these videos, created through the combination of text, music and moving images recorded on a smart phone creates a multimodal, multidimensional narrative form which challenges institutional barriers created by the Academy, and capitalist barriers created by the conventional publishing model (Barnard 14-16).

As a performer and creative, I am able to take advantage of the multimodal medium as an example of 'making and doing culture' (Gauntlett 11). These low-budget, on-screen performance 'productions' created by performers themselves and then 'published' to the internet connects the performer to heterogenous communities and networks not motivated by financial gain but the desire to engage in dialogue and share (Jenkins, Ford and Green 58-59). These shareable productions appeal to other storytellers of various forms and styles; and also, considering the relatively new paradigm of online social media protest, activism and hashtag politics^{xv}, to those socio-politically engaged who oppose social prejudices. Therefore, the performer is connected to an unpredictable, frenetic communication structure beyond the possibilities of mainstream page publishing, where the performance posted to YouTube operates within a rhizomatic network that accumulates political allies: the wider the video spreads, the more potential it has to change minds (Terranova and Donovan 297). Multimodal practice in this sense creates another challenge to cultural hegemonies whereby participatory practice fosters countercultural, grassroots atmospheres animating others as a non-hierarchical social network of potential creative collaborators (Jenkins 274-275). Although initially perceived as a constructed, edited commercial space, social media platforms are dynamic, affective spaces; viral counterpublics where communication, art, 'performance' is democratised and decentralised.

Spoken word performers as social media users, as multimodal creatives continuously experiment with combinations and the careful balancing of aesthetic and communicative codes including coded online paradigms to create, share and interact with creative artefacts. These practices invite the participation of other, potentially unknown social media users. Virtual communications as a method of collaborative multimodal practice liberates creatives of all description to engage in digital discursive events, conversations and informational exchanges which not only enable critical and creative responses, but also help to maintain the networks that create this potential.

The video performance exists in the 'in-between' where it is neither a traditional 'live' performance, nor a single multimodal 'event' (Carpenter 103): the viral network ensures that the video is different each time it is accessed due to the endless, unpredictable combination of social, cultural and technological factors including the motivation for searching out this type of content, levels of digital literacy and access context. This practice releases creatives from the restrictions of physical bodies, being digitally connected or re-embodied through the computer and its interminable viral networks. These digitally embodied communities are simultaneously engaged in creativity, producing content, but also active consumption, where reciprocal participation is required to recognise and interpret the open polysemic potentialities of viral counterpublics. Multimodal spoken word performance as digital embodiment is a creative practice that reveals the 'performer', 'user' or 'creative' to be an ambiguous collection of complex and interactive selves collaborating on an artistic project beyond the spoken word performance itself and is a creative form of resistance. These transformative affects are best understood as play: creative thinking and problem solving without agenda which mobilises endless dynamic assemblages.

Conclusion.

Operating in counterpublics, spoken word performance is both personal and political. These connections are evidenced and blurred through forms of formative play which affects the audience and has the potential to mobilise continuous, unpredictable assemblage. The creation and dissemination of spoken word performance as multimodal videos in particular, clearly evidence how the performance 'performs' creative, active selves through digital apparatus, blurring the boundaries between the private and the public, as well as the political and the personal. This type of online participation, or multimodal creative practice simultaneously connects the 'performer' to other users, creatives or 'bodies' through playful interactive collaborations that build networks with transformative potential.

These forms of playful multimodal practice invade and rupture social spaces, not often recognised for their cultural validity, formative value, or transformative affects, whilst also creating them. This practice connects networked communities in collaborative practices, styles, ritual and roles outside of fixed cultural rules and expectations, not easily defined by the idiom of the literary world. In this sense, this form of play democratises 'art' and space where everything is available to everyone to use and nobody 'owns' or defines anything. This transformative counternarrative challenges regulatory hegemonies that structure art, social and personal life and thus cannot be 'seen' by traditional literary analysis alone. Thus it is necessary to operationalise multi-perspectival cultural studies lenses to articulate the nuances and value of this type of creative hybridity. These interdisciplinary discourses reveal the potential of these practices and their associated spaces to simultaneously occupy and catalyse: radical destruction, breaking down the experiences and representations of the mainstream; and, transformative creation, endless dynamic assemblage. This approach offers an important contribution to the Academy recognising the value of experimental hybrid forms, whilst providing a framework for continued interdisciplinary research.

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Katy Wareham Morris
University of Worcester

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Notes.

ⁱ For example, see van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity* or, in relation to the trans community, see Raun, *Video blogging as a vehicle for transformation*.

ⁱⁱ For more on this see Smith, *About Slam Poetry*.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, *The Observer* article by Adams where she claims, 'Trump is an idiot, but don't underestimate how good he is at that'.

^{iv} See Butler, *Gender Trouble* for a full discussion.

^v For more on 'self-presentation' see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

^{vi} For more on this see Baym, *Personal communication in the digital age*; boyd, *Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites*; Elwell, *The Transmediated self*.

vii These titles can be seen at the beginning of some of the videos available on my YouTube channel; for example, the video titled *Afterbirth Poetry Fest*.

viii This video can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXbffwTJiW0&list=PLlp5x2d0V95Cge-4M2Vxl6MjfkDjDjoqYA>.

ix This video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwby-ky498o&t=13s>.

x This video is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgJ_dgD2_g&t=3s.

xi For more on the form and structure of digital literatures see Bell, *The Possible Worlds of Hypertext Fiction*.

xii For more on this see Karppi, *Disconnect*.

xiii For a definition of 'public sphere' see Habermas, *The Structural transformation of the Public Sphere* and for more on the potential for a digital public sphere, see Fuchs, *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*.

xiv For more on this see Dean, *Communicative Capitalism*.

xv For more on this see Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody* and *The Political Power of Social Media*.