



# 'A Year in the Life' of the Ages and Stages Project

2009-2010

## RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Investigator	Miriam Bernard
Co-Investigators	David Amigoni; Lucy Munro; Michael Murray; Jill Rezzano
Research Associate	Michelle Rickett
PhD Student	Ruth Basten
Administrator	Tracey Harrison

Funded by: New Dynamics of Ageing Programme



## Background

This report is designed to give readers a flavour of the work we have been undertaking during the first year of the project (Oct 2009-Sept 2010). Of course, prior to the formal start of the project, we had various communications from the funding body and set in train a process for advertising and recruiting to the posts (a Research Associate; an Administrator and a linked PhD student). So, between March and the end of September 2009 key events included:

- March 13<sup>th</sup> – letter received recommending our project for an award under the national New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) Programme with the proviso that: ‘The budget and duration of the project should be re-examined and reduced’. Five sets of reviewers’ comments were enclosed. The Commissioning Panel had recommended funding for 12 of the 40 shortlisted full proposals.
- May – after various iterations and exchanges a final budget is agreed and accepted which includes reducing the Administrator post to 0.5 FTE; reducing the length of the project by two months; and reducing and phasing in some of the Co-Investigator time. To date, there has been no commensurate reduction in the project’s proposed activities/outputs.
- May sees us advertise for two posts and, in June, we appoint Dr Michelle Rickett as Research Associate and Tracey Harrison as Administrator. The PhD studentship is delayed until September.
- In May, we also submit an abstract for a poster about the project for September’s annual conference of the British Society of Gerontology (BSG) being held at the University of the West of England in Bristol. This is duly accepted.
- In July, Lucy and Mim attend their first (special) NDA Programme meeting in London for the new ‘arts’ projects: six in total.
- Ahead of the start of the project, Mim is contacted by colleagues at the University of Alberta (Profs Janet Fast and David Barnett, and Sherry Ann Chapman) and Trent University (Prof Sally Chivers) in Canada interested in making a linked application to the CIHR Canada-UK New Dynamics of Ageing Research Initiative. A proposal for a comparative study on *Health and Creative Aging: Theatre as a Pathway to Healthy Aging* is submitted in September, along with a supporting letter from Mim.
- Poster about the project is displayed at the BSG conference (see Appendix 1) and is used subsequently for advertising/making presentations.
- Ruth Basten is appointed to the studentship.

## October

- Project starts on October 1<sup>st</sup> and is housed at Keele in the Claus Moser Research Centre. Michelle and Tracey begin work; undergo induction; identify training needs and are provided with mentors.
- Work begins on putting together a detailed project timeline/milestones; a communication and dissemination plan/intended outputs; collating information for ethical review; fixing a cycle of monthly Team Meetings and research meetings; timetabling and contacting members of the Advisory Group; and beginning to develop a project website.
- First team visit to the archives at Staffordshire University for Strand 1 of the project.



- At the instigation of Keele's Vice Chancellor, and with the support of the University's Fundraising Officer, a first round application is submitted to the Rayne Foundation for an 'Outreach Co-ordinator' post. Ideally, we want someone to work with the team and the theatre to translate emerging findings into outputs for policy makers and practitioners; to help with the performance and exhibition elements of the project, and the dissemination out into local schools and centres for older people; to ensure that we can fulfil all the aims and outputs as detailed in the original NDA proposal.
- A press release is issued and is picked up by local newspapers and radio.

## November

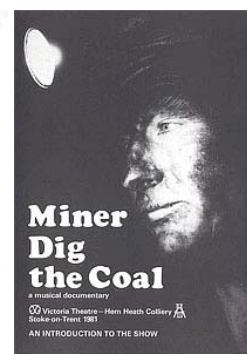
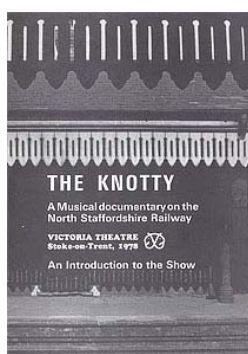
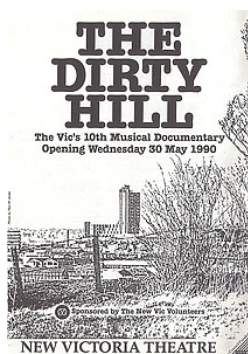
- Mim, Lucy and Michelle attend the NDA Programme Meeting in London on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> where Mim gives an overview of the project.
- On Saturday Nov 7<sup>th</sup> we officially launch the project with a one-day symposium entitled 'Humanities Discourse and the Passing Life' (see Appendix 2). Speakers include: Prof Alan Walker (Director, the NDA Programme), Dr Helen Small (Pembroke College, Oxford) and Professor Gordon McMullan (King's College, London), as well as presentations from three NDA 'arts' projects, including our own. The symposium generates enthusiasm for continued dialogue across the Humanities and Social

Sciences. As a result, we intend to apply to the AHRC's (Arts and Humanities Research Council) Research Networking Scheme, to enable us to develop a series of interdisciplinary seminars.

- We receive university ethics approval; Michelle begins to draft a background policy paper as part of the documentation for our first Advisory Group meeting in January; Mim submits abstracts for two conferences in Singapore (Apr 2010) and Melbourne (May 2010); and we hear that the Rayne application is through to Stage 2.
- Ruth's work on her PhD is shaping up and she identifies two social documentaries to focus on: *Nice Girls* and *Fight for Shelton Bar*.

## December

- Project logo is finally agreed; Mim is interviewed by Cross Rhythms, a local radio station (it airs on Dec 30<sup>th</sup>); David submits an abstract for the IABA (International Auto/Biography Association) conference (June 2010).
- Ruth, David, Lucy, Mim and Michelle conduct preliminary analyses at the archive where, amongst other things, we watch *The Dirty Hill*. We hold an 'archive workshop' on December 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss progress and disciplinary approaches, and to plan future work in the archive.



## January

- List of potential interviewees for Strand 2 of the project is drawn up; Michelle and Ruth interview Peter and Romy Cheeseman on January 14<sup>th</sup>.
- We start an 'impact file' to keep track of anything relating to our project: whether we speak about it; if we know of anyone who has or will be speaking about it; or if it is mentioned in the press, policy documents etc.

- The first Advisory Group meeting is held on Thursday January 21<sup>st</sup> at Keele. Peter and Romy (Cheeseman) come for lunch and to meet everyone. See: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/research/lcs/csg/agesandstages/advisorygroup.htm>

## February

- Mim and Michelle start to discuss content of Strand 2 interviews; present a draft interview schedule to the team (which includes core areas to be covered in all interviews and specific additional areas for each of the four groups); and begin pilot interviews with 'long standing audience members'.
- Michelle attends an ESRC Media Training event in Manchester (Feb 4<sup>th</sup>); Michelle and Mim complete two days of NVivo training and Michelle sets up an *Ages and Stages* NVivo project; Mim submits a paper abstract for the BSG conference (Brunel, July 2010); and speaks to Alan Blackwell (appointed by Alan Walker to liaise with, and support, the NDA arts projects).
- Our website goes live at the end of the month. Web address: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/research/lcs/csg/agesandstages/index.htm>
- We learn that four members of the NDA's Older People's Reference Group (OPRG) would like to be connected to our project. We send them an invitation letter and details/minutes of our first Advisory Group meeting.



OPRG Meeting in London, March 2010

- Tracey and Michelle produce a project information leaflet to distribute at the Centre for Social Gerontology's series of 'User Participation' workshops. We use this at subsequent events and to recruit participants to Strand 2.
- Mim responds to the questions being asked by the CEO of the Rayne Foundation about our Stage 2 application; we expect to know the outcome of our application in March.

## March

- Adam Bailey (Department for Work and Pensions) spends the first week of March at the Centre for Social Gerontology and takes time with our team to look at and discuss the work we are doing.
- Michelle applies for a bursary to attend the BSG conference in July; and sets up more pilot interviews – this time with volunteers.
- We receive news that the CIHR/NDA linked bid has been successful!

## April

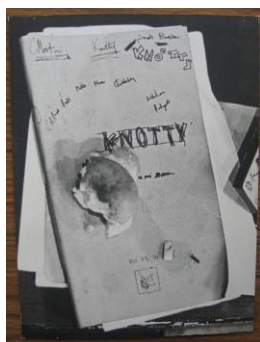
- Michelle meets with David Sunnuck (Front of House Manager, the New Vic) to talk about becoming a volunteer; takes part in her first 'Revolve' session and submits an abstract for the 'Vital Signs' conference in Manchester (Sept 2010).
- The New Vic puts a link to our website on theirs under the heading 'Calling all golden oldies!' and requests possible interviewees to contact us. See: [http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3\\_5w/ages\\_stages.html](http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3_5w/ages_stages.html)
- Mim, David and Michelle attend the NDA Programme meeting in Birmingham (12-13<sup>th</sup> April); Mike attends the British Psychological Society conference and presents our project in a symposium.
- Towards the end of the month, Mim goes to Singapore and Australia where she presents papers about the project at the 4<sup>th</sup> ICIP Conference in Singapore (Linking Generations: Family, Work, Community) and at the 10<sup>th</sup> global conference of the International Federation on Ageing in Melbourne (Climate for Change: Ageing into the Future). She also holds discussions with Dr Susan Feldman (a corresponding member of our Advisory Group) and colleagues at Monash University, and presents the project at their one-day seminar on 'Creating an environment for an ageing society' (May 11th).
- Peter Cheeseman dies on the evening of Tuesday April 27<sup>th</sup> after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Peter's internationally renowned documentary theatre productions, and his vision of a theatre that 'springs from our contact with this community', are the inspiration and foundation of the *Ages and Stages* project. We continue to draw on Peter's huge legacy, both through our work in the archive and our interviews with many local theatregoers, volunteers and former employees who have participated in, enjoyed, and been inspired by, Peter's work. Read more: [http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3\\_5w/peter\\_cheeseman.html](http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3_5w/peter_cheeseman.html)

## May

- Jill comes back after maternity leave; Michelle and Tracey complete their probation periods.
- Prof Rick Rylance, CEO of the AHRC, visits Keele on May 10<sup>th</sup>. He specifically asks to meet with members of the team and David, Lucy and Michelle have a very positive meeting with him. He feels that *Ages and Stages* is a particularly relevant case study in relation to his participation in cross-research council committees and asks to be kept informed about the project.
- A fifth member of the NDA's OPRG would like to be connected to our project and is invited to join the Advisory Group.
- We are immensely disappointed to learn that, after all the work that has gone into it, the Rayne bid has been unsuccessful.
- Mim returns from Australia and takes on the role of Director of Keele's Centre for Social Gerontology following the departure of Prof Tom Scharf to head up the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology at NUI-Galway.

## June

- On June 15<sup>th</sup>, the team meet with Prof Jennifer Mason and colleagues from Manchester University's *Inter-Gen* project to exchange information about what we are all doing and explore future linkages. See: <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/realities/research/generations/index.html>
- David attends IABA conference and presents a paper focussing on the archival work, using the documentary *The Knotty* as a case study.



- Michelle and Mim continue with main interviews for Strand 2.

## July

- On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, Prof Janet Fast and Jacquie Eales, from the linked CIHR/NDA project at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, visit Keele and the New Vic to discuss the links between our projects. The Canadian team are carrying out research with the 'GeriActors and Friends' intergenerational theatre company (<http://geriactors.com/>) exploring the participation of older adults in theatrical productions and how this may enhance health and well-being. Also present at the day-long meeting are three out of the five members of the NDA's OPRG who have opted to join our Advisory Group.



- Following the BSG's 39th annual conference at Brunel University (July 6-8<sup>th</sup>), Mim takes up the role of President. She will lead the Society's work for the next two years until the end of our project in July 2012.
- Ruth, Michelle, Mim, Lucy and Jill all attend the memorial event for Peter Cheeseman held on Sunday July 18<sup>th</sup> at the New Vic Theatre. In her speech, Romy makes mention of the project and how pleased Peter was to have seen it take shape. This event marks the start of a new fund to be used to continue work on the Victoria Theatre Cheeseman Archive, to help realise Peter's vision of making the archive accessible and useful to future generations. Read more at: [http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3\\_5w/fspeterc.html](http://www.newvictheatre.org.uk/v3_5w/fspeterc.html)
- Michelle attends the Gerontology Summer School at Keele in the third week of July and begins analysing interviews completed so far using NVivo.

## August

- David Barnett, Director of 'GeriActors and Friends', visits us on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. We discuss the two projects and take David to meet colleagues at the theatre.
- Michelle and Tracey begin work on a new information leaflet about the project. See Appendix 3.



- Michelle and Mim conduct further interviews.

## September

- Michelle presents a conference paper on our project at the 'Vital Signs: Engaging Research Imaginations' conference at the University of Manchester.
- Ruth's research is progressing well and she passes her doctoral progression on Sept 16<sup>th</sup> with flying colours.
- Mim is invited to deliver the keynote address at the 'On Ageing' performance and symposium taking place at the Young Vic in London on Saturday October 2<sup>nd</sup>. She is asked to speak about the research conducted by members of the British Society of Gerontology; research undertaken by the Centre for Social Gerontology at Keele over the years; and about our *Ages and Stages* project.

## NEXT STEPS

- **Strand 1.** We will continue research at the Victoria Theatre Archive, focusing on close analysis of particular documentaries.
- **Strand 2.** The 80 individual interviews will be completed by the end of April 2011. The group interviews will be conducted in summer 2011. Michelle will continue NVivo analysis and we will meet monthly as a team to share research findings across Strands 1 and 2.
- **Strand 3.** We have arranged a full team research meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 to discuss and start planning Strand 3. The work on Strand 3 will begin in January 2011.
- **Conferences.** Team members are planning to present at the following conferences:
  - April 2011. Mim will present in a symposium at the IAGG (International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics) European Congress in Bologna.
  - July 2011. We will present at the BSG (British Society of Gerontology) annual conference at the University of Plymouth.
  - November 2011. We are considering presenting at the GSA (Gerontological Society of America) annual conference in Boston.
- **Networking.** We hope to visit our Canadian colleagues at the University of Alberta in Edmonton next year and will continue to collaborate with them over the coming months.

# Ages and Stages: The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing (2009-2012)

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**  
 Prof Miriam Bernard (PI); Professor of Social Gerontology  
 Prof David Amigoni (Co-I); Professor of Victorian Literature  
 Dr Lucy Munro (Co-I); Senior Lecturer in English  
 Prof Mike Murray (Co-I); Prof of Social and Health Psychology  
 Ms Jill Rezzano (Co-I); Head of Education at the New Vic Theatre  
 Dr Michelle Rickett (Research Associate)  
 Ms Ruth Bastien (linked PhD student)  
 Ms Tracey Harrison (Project Administrator)

**THE SCENE:** The Potteries, North Staffordshire – an area with a long industrial history.

**PROLOGUE**  
 A collaborative, interdisciplinary mixed method project which aims to explore: how age and ageing has been constructed, represented and understood in the New Victoria Theatre's social documentaries from the 1960s to the present day; what part the theatre has played in constructing individual and community identities and in creating and preserving community memory; what the relationship is between older people's involvement in the theatre and continuing social engagement in later life; and what the practical and policy implications are.

**ACT ONE: STRAND 1**  
 Historical Representations of Ageing  
 In which we undertake detailed literary and cultural analyses of the materials in the New Victoria Theatre Archive at Staffordshire University. These include a remarkable collection of interviews with local people on which some of the most famous 'social documentaries' such as: *The Knotty* (1968), *Fight for Shelton Bar!* (1974), *The Dirty Hill* (1980) and *Nice Girls* (1994) were based.

**ACT TWO: STRAND 3**  
 Performing and Re-presenting Ageing  
 In which material from Strands 1 and 2 is used to work with an intergenerational group of actors'. Together, we will create and chart the evolution of a 'new' social documentary performance, an exhibition and a range of associated materials before taking them out into local schools and centres for older people.

**ACT ONE: STRAND 2**  
 Recollections and Contemporary Representations of Ageing  
 In which we conduct a series of individual and group interviews with four groups of people who are now old but were, (i) sources for the Vic's ground-breaking social documentaries; (ii) volunteers with the theatre; (iii) audience members throughout their lives; (iv) actors and others who made their lives in the area and continue to be part of the local community.

**EPILOGUE: Outputs**  
 A new social documentary performance and associated exhibition; materials and workshops for arts practitioners, teachers and other individuals and organisations; policy guidance/policy briefs and policy workshops; an international, interdisciplinary conference on '*Theatre, Ageing and Community Memory*'; contributions to knowledge, theory and methodology; the training of postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars in interdisciplinary and collaborative ageing research.

**nda**  
PROGRAMME

**Further information:**  
 Miriam Bernard, Centre for Social Gerontology, Keele University, Keele, Staffs, ST5 5BG. Tel: 01782 734067. Email: m.bernard@keele.ac.uk RES-366-25-0005

**KEELE**

## **APPENDIX 2 – SYMPOSIUM FLYER**

Keele University

### **Humanities Discourse and the Passing Life**

**A One-Day Symposium**

**7 November 2009**

We are pleased to invite you to an event organised by the Research Institutes for Humanities, and Life Course Studies. This one-day symposium marks the inauguration of Keele University's contribution to the final phase of the 'New Dynamics of Ageing' (NDA) Programme funded by the ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC. 'Ages and Stages: The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing', runs from October 2009 until the end of July 2012 and has been developed in close collaboration with the New Vic Theatre.

The symposium is an opportunity for specialists within a variety of Humanities disciplines (literary studies, history, theatre and performance studies, film studies, visual arts, music) to come together to consider the challenges and opportunities represented by the need to research 'ageing' in all its complex manifestations: from ideas of 'late style'; to the philosophical question of how the good life might be lived, recorded, and its benefits passed on to others; to the role of intergenerational dynamics in critical evaluation; and to the way in which artistic discourse, practice and senses of belonging might promote social well-being and community cohesion.

The focus of the day will primarily be the way in which humanities disciplines might re-invigorate themselves to address the challenges that old age and the ageing demographic pose to current thinking in humanities disciplines.

The day will be an important networking opportunity for those who possess either a developed, or emerging, interest in this field. It will provide a forum for thinking about the terms in which humanities discourse might participate in a conversation about ageing and the passing life with discourses from the social sciences.

#### **Keynote Speakers:**

Dr Helen Small (Pembroke College, Oxford)

Author of *The Long Life* (2007)

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Professor Alan Walker (University of Sheffield, Director, New Dynamics of Ageing Programme)

Editor, *Understanding Quality of Life in Old Age* (2006)

Professor Miriam Bernard (Keele University)

Editor (with T. Scharf), *Critical Perspectives on Ageing Societies* (2007)

**Round table discussion:**

Led by Professor Gordon McMullan (King's College, London)  
Author of *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing* (2007)

**Registration fee: £20 (this will also include lunch, tea, coffee)**

**For bookings, please contact Tracey Harrison, Institute of Life Course Studies**  
[t.l.harrison@ilcs.keele.ac.uk](mailto:t.l.harrison@ilcs.keele.ac.uk)

**The symposium will be held in the Claus Moser Research Centre, Keele University**

**Programme**

**9.30-10.00 Registration**

**10.00: Keynote: Helen Small** (Pembroke College, Oxford) 'The Double Standard? and other Questions'

**11.00-11.30: Coffee**

**11.30-1.15: Presentations from NDA projects**

**Introduced by Alan Walker** (University of Sheffield, and Programme Director, New Dynamics of Ageing)

- 'Contemporary Visual Art and Identity Construction: Wellbeing Among Older People'. Andrew Newman (Newcastle University)
- 'Ages and Stages: The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing'. Lucy Munro and David Amigoni, (Keele University)
- 'Fiction and the Cultural Mediation of Ageing'. Philip Tew (Brunel University)

**1.15-2.00 Lunch**

**2.00 -3.40: Roundtable: 'Late style v old-age style: creativity at the end of a life'**

**Chair: Gordon McMullan** (King's College, London)

Alastair Williams (Music, Keele): Beethoven, Adorno, and the idea of 'late style'  
Sam Smiles (Art History, University of Plymouth) J.M.W. Turner: Artists and 'Late Work'

Olivia Murphy (Worcester College, Oxford) Jane Austen and late style

**3.40-4.00 Tea**

**4.00 4.45 Miriam Bernard** (Keele University, and President-Elect, the British Society of Gerontology)

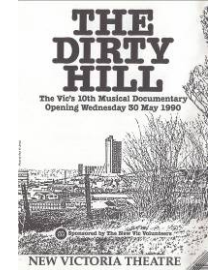
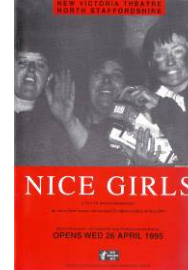
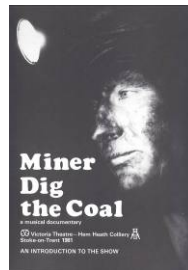
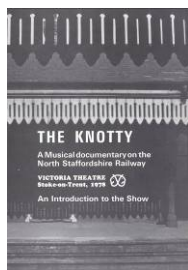
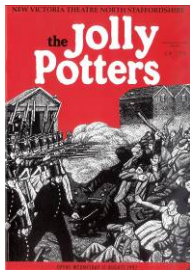
**Closing reflections, and the challenges for the future:** discussion from the floor

**4.45 End**



# The Place of Theatre in Representations and Recollections of Ageing

*Ages and Stages* is a collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, running from October 2009 to July 2012. We are exploring how age and ageing have been constructed, represented and understood in the Victoria/New Vic Theatre's social documentaries from the 1960s to the 1990s; what part the theatre has played in constructing individual and community identities and creating and preserving community memory; the relationship between older people's involvement in the theatre and continuing social engagement in later life; the practical and policy implications of our research findings. This project is funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) cross-council research programme.



## Research Programme and Methods

**Strand 1** explores **historical** representations of ageing through **literary and cultural analyses** of materials relating to the Victoria Theatre's social documentaries, held in the Victoria Theatre Archive.

**Strand 2** focuses on recollections and **contemporary** representations of ageing through 80 individual **qualitative interviews** and four group interviews with older people who were/are: (i) sources for the Vic's social documentaries; (ii) theatre volunteers; (iii) audience members throughout their lives; (iv) actors and theatre employees who continue to live in the Potteries. In addition, **participant observation** is being carried out at the theatre, with volunteers and older people participating in educational and social events and activities.

In **Strand 3**, materials drawn from Strands 1 and 2 are being used to work with the New Vic Youth Theatre and older people to create a new social documentary **performance**. The performance, together with an exhibition and a range of associated educational materials, will be taken out into, and evaluated in, a variety of community settings.

## Outputs and Outcomes

- A new social documentary performance and associated exhibition;
- Materials and workshops for practitioners, teachers, and others wanting to engage in similar work;
- Policy guidance, briefs and workshops;
- A conference on 'Theatre, Ageing and Community Memory';
- The training of postgraduate and postdoctoral scholars in interdisciplinary and collaborative ageing research.

**Research Team** - Miriam Bernard (PI), Jill Rezzano (New Vic Theatre), David Amigoni, Lucy Munro, Michael Murray, Michelle Rickett, Ruth Basten, Tracey Harrison. **Enquiries: 01782 733845 or e-mail t.l.harrison@ilcs.keele.ac.uk**

**Advisory Group**- Anne Basting, Joanna Bornat, Romy Cheeseman, Janet Fast, Susan Feldman, Alan Hatton-Yeo, Meli Hatzihrysidis, Nick Jones, James Knowles, Gordon Ramsay, Pam Schweitzer, Diane Andrewes, Mary Brown, Tony Carter, Teresa Lefort, Elizabeth Sclater

[www.keele.ac.uk/research/lcs/csg/agesandstages](http://www.keele.ac.uk/research/lcs/csg/agesandstages)

