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Christoph Houswitschka, Anja Müller (eds.)

Staging Displacement, Exile and Diaspora
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Exile and Diaspora

Papers given on the occasion
of the thirteenth annual conference
of the
German Society for
Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English

Edited for the society
by Christoph Houswitschka and Anja Müller

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Christoph Houswitschka
Anja Müller
CHRISTOPH HOUSWITSCHKA

Introduction

From 3–6 June 2004, the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English held its 13th conference at Vierzehnheiligen a baroque place of pilgrimage near Bamberg. Following the traditional pattern of the annual conferences playwrights, academics, theatre practitioners and students debated views on “Staging Displacement, Exile and Diaspora” in a variety of forms, e.g. a panel discussion, academic paper presentations, workshops, playwrights’ and staged readings, as well as theatre performances.

During the preparation of the conference, its topic raised doubts on whether its sad and bleak aspects would become an obstacle to the lively exchange of opinions and academic research known from previous years. In the end, however, this fear proved unfounded and both the sufferings caused by displacement and the opportunities of displacement were discussed. In numerous contributions and discussions the key terms of the conference were used as metaphors for theoretical approaches to modernity, but also as sociological, political and historical expressions for various incidents of lived experience. Addressing this topic not only in the form of academic papers but also in theatre performances brought these crucial differences to light as one began to recognize the alterity of displacement from the point of view of most academic contributors as opposed to its life-changing effect on those who have experienced and written about it.

Transport, transformation and translation separate the unspeakable experiences of the displaced individual from the collective narratives of memory and identity. The representation of experiences of changing
geographical locations, of losing physical belongings, one’s language and culture, displaces the experience itself. The separation from the language that was used before the displacement causes a loss of memory. Memory cannot find its way into the consciousness without the help of cultural formations and literary fabrications. Therefore, memory must be regained in the new language and culture. By creating individual stories and biographies, a sense of identity may be formed and embedded in social constructions of exile or diaspora.

Eva Hoffmann describes the displacement of exile as being *Lost in Translation*. Her analysis eventually reflects on Jacques Derrida’s concept of the displacement of the signifier from the signified. Signifiers are in constant transformation, a movement that never arrives at a fixed location of meaning. In the terminology of Homi Bhabha, this incessant transformation creates “differential communality” and in Felix Guattari’s words it evokes a “process of heterogenesis.” The concept of displacement encompasses both constructing representations of experiences of exile and re-essentialising languages of power.

As the binary oppositions of Western discourse are dissolved into “historically grounded multiple subject positions” (Lavie 5) — radically reflected in the post-structuralist questioning the hierarchy of the differences between signified and signifier or between centre and margin, this paradigm shift has also changed the modes of conceptualizing exile and diaspora. Whereas the traditional distinction of here and there, home and abroad, centre and margin merges into various deterritorialized discourses of time and space, the term ‘displacement’ is used as a referent that signifies any location in the absence of origin or final destination. The place of belonging is understood as a flexible zone, i.e. as a site of constructing disparate meanings of emplacement and embodiment.

The emergence of the peripheral and marginal at the centre redefines not only the body in terms of race, class and gender, but also displacement as a category of the constitution of identity defined in terms of hybridity or origin. In the discourse of post-colonialism, displacement is not just the product of the postmodern condition or the arrival of the margin in the centre, but the appearance of the outlandish after its colonial construction at the periphery. In this discourse, exile and diaspora
Introduction

are violent, politically or economically motivated forms of displacement that blur the binary differences of centre and margin. Language is mainly understood as an instrument of power, constructing essentialist borderlines that define experiences of inclusion and exclusion in spite of the fact that hybridisations and dislocations are not entirely new or recent conditions. This is reflected in the problems voiced by Edward Said when he tries to explain why he does not like calling the Palestinian issue ‘diaspora,’ although he admits that he cannot not wholly identify with the term ‘exile’ either: “In any case the idea that there is a redemptive homeland doesn’t answer to my view of things” (Rushdie 173ff).

There are also various historical aspects that should be taken into consideration. For some time, post-colonial literature has encompassed Western experiences of migration and exile. In *The Satanic Verses* (1988), for example, Rushdie re-inscribes Western classics from a post-colonial perspective in order to show that immigration has always been an essential part of Western experience. Such references to Western classics testify to the process of literary creation as cultural translation. In *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) Rushdie explores the contemporary experience of migration and the encounter between the East and the West. He remarks: “America is not so unlike India, after all” (262).

No matter how enthusiastically Euro-American inter-culturalism may praise the openness of the world and migration as part of the post-modern condition, one should be aware of the fact that this is not a genuine two-way exchange but a “dead-end” caused by political and economic domination, as Rustom Bharucha (2) argues. Displacement, exile and diaspora are not only colonial and post-colonial issues, but also genuinely European experiences, the representations of which are different from those of the post-colonial tradition. In order to liberate the discourse of displacement from the hierarchy suggested by the binary dichotomy of signified (colonial centre) and signifier (colonized margin), theory either speaks of shifting, mutually defining signifiers, or it operates with the concept of representation “which simultaneously speaks for and stands in for something else” (Chambers 22) and is ex-

1 Intertextual relations have been suggested, for instance, between *The Satanic Verses* and Defoe (see Dutheil de la Rochère’s chapter II on literary origins).
experienced as a “double consciousness” or “second sight” (Lavie 9) of both centre and margin.²

This view changes radically when displacement, exile and diaspora are narrated from a Eurocentric perspective of survivors. In Holocaust literature the displacement of the signified does not induce a process of heterogenesis but rather emphasizes “the attempt to overcome the inadequacy of language in representing moral enormity” (Lang 18). In the critical discourse on the Holocaust the unspeakable and unwritable re-essentialises the suffering of the Jewish people. This has caused writers of peoples with similar collective experiences to claim the same language of representing the unspeakable for the killing of millions of Africans during the middle-passage and slavery,³ of Native Americans and of Aborigines. This controversy questions the propriety of the post-colonial concept of shifting constructions of identity rather than the uniqueness of the Holocaust or any other genocide.

In Holocaust criticism, Derrida is read as a theorist of the failure of language that cannot fix the moment of killing. James E. Young’s Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust (1988) was the first study using Hayden White, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida to theorize the representation of the Holocaust in both documentary and fictional texts.⁴ Writing after the Holocaust is regarded as diasporic, because in the “Diaspora of Ashes” it is impossible “to track down the roots of identity” (Sicher 64). In post-colonial literature the signified is interpreted as the essentialist language of Eurocentric power, whereas in Holocaust literature the signified is the unspeakable. Derrida does not suggest this distinction. For him it is the same “exile from the kingdom of Being” that is reconstructed in arbitrary relations of signifiers:

Being must always already be conceptualised in order to say these things – the encounter and the separation of what and of whom – and especially in order to say that encounter is separation. Certainly, but ‘must always already’ precisely

² For the growing divide between postcolonial criticism and theory, see Hornung 1-6, or Moore-Gilbert, respectively.
³ Wole Soyinka makes this comparison: “I have railed against the thesis that it was the Jewish Holocaust that placed the first question mark on all claims of European humanism” (38).
⁴ For more literature on this issue, see Bernstein 18-37, particularly n. 5.
signifies the original exile from the kingdom of Being, signifies exile as the con­ceptualisation of Being, and signifies that Being never is, never shows itself, is never present, is never now, outside difference (74).

It was the aim of the conference to bring together the different academic traditions of reading dramatic representations of displacement, exile and diaspora together. The inclusion of displacement and exile during the Nazi period into the conference programme was important for yet another reason: while post-colonial discourse deals with both the essences and conjunctures that “have created counterinstitutions to challenge the institutions of the Eurocentre” (Lavie 17), critical literature on the Holocaust is concerned with an unprecedented historical event that originates in Central Europe itself. Organizing a conference on displacement, exile and diaspora in contemporary drama and theatre in Germany needed to take into account this radically different view and should not limit the focus on locations of post-colonial cultures. Central European Anglistik ought to contemplate its own specific position, too.

Another specific Continental focus is concerned with dramatic representations of displacement in present-day Europe, which is experienced not only by migrants and exiles from the former colonies of other European nations but also from fellow Europeans. Young Irish and British authors like Dermot Bolger and David Greig focus on topics concerning historical or contemporary Continental Europe. In recent years, this new insular perspective has brought about a certain Europeanization of Irish and British literature. Bolger published In High Germany, a play about Irish workers in Germany who do not regard their absence from the Irish homeland as a loss. David Greig has written several plays about the politics of European identity.

The differentiation between a Central/Eastern European and a British or Western European post-colonial perspective therefore should be further redefined. Gabriele Griffin has convincingly shown that those “who migrated to Britain or who are the children of such migrants, now living in Britain” do not regard themselves as part of the post-colonial

5 The latter unfortunately had to cancel his visit to Bamberg.
debate any more; or, in Andrea Levy's words: "If Englishness doesn't define me, then redefine Englishness" (Reichl 2002: 9). Arguably, this also applies to Central/Eastern European literature about migration and identity politics as the topics of Turkish-German authors show. This "Fifth Literature" (Kemal Kurt) resists "territorially defined notions of belonging, or ghettoising concepts such as 'minority literature'" (Cheeseman 1999).7

Geographical and cultural displacements are seen as "a struggle to assert identity out of place" (Israel ix). Exile and diaspora represent not only different forms of displacement but also different politics of identity. Negotiating these politics of identity is either an individual or a collective effort and related to a variety of frames such as nationalism, colonialism, and post-colonialism. The circumstances of leaving are as important as those of arrival and settlement. The "diaspora space" is not only inhabited "by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" or locals, as Avtar Brah points out (209; also quoted in Griffin 6). Diaspora is located in multi-cultural spaces, which shape people from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. The scattered fragments of exiled cultures are brought together once again in the hybrid forms of regional, ethnic and religious identities. An umbrella term like 'diaspora' may help to establish a perspective different from that of 'exile.'

This complex assessment shows that the whole variety of historical and contemporary experiences of displacement, exile and diaspora can only be encompassed with definitions which are as comprehensive as

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6 For studies about post-colonial theatre like Gilbert's (Post)Colonial Stages (1999), see Griffin's introduction to the differences between "postcolonial, intercultural, and world theatres" (2-7).

7 Robert Wistrich points out that "Jews themselves have ceased to be the silent, almost invisible minority that they once were in the two post-war Germanies." They have become less visible targets of xenophobia than Turks. He refers to Sander Gilman's book on Jews in Today's German Culture (1995) who points out "that Jews today, more than any other minority, can 'pass' as Germans. Gilman nicely sums up the historic change that has occurred and its ambiguities. 'Jews no longer define difference in Germany, while difference is still defined by the image of the Jew.'"
possible but do not claim to be of universal validity either. For the diasporic condition, Cohen suggests the following definition:

The word 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb speiro ('to sow') and the preposition Am ('over'). When applied to humans, the ancient Greeks thought of diaspora as migration and colonization. By contrast, for Jews, Africans, Palestinians and Armenians the expression acquired a more sinister and brutal meaning. Diaspora signified a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of home but lived in exile. Other peoples abroad who have also maintained strong collective identities have in recent years, defined themselves as diasporas, though they were neither active agents of colonization nor passive victims of persecution (Cohen ix).

Consequently, Cohen questions notions of diaspora that "remain confined to the victim tradition" (x).

In spite of manifold similarities, plays of exile and diaspora should not be treated as one coherent genre. Exile and diaspora are represented in stories of singularity representing quite divergent experiences and constructions of identity. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that "the sociocultural formation of global apartheid" has common historical origins:

[O]ne can see that the migration of peoples around the world, the displacement of refugees or the forced expulsion and exile of individuals and whole groups (the Palestinian diaspora is the most flagrant), have occurred not by choice or accident but by the complex interaction of political, economic, and social forces from the period of mercantile capitalism to colonialism from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and imperialism in the twentieth century (San Juan 42). 8

The terminology used in the title of the conference is organized within this history, but also around the trope of nomadic space. While in Western post-colonial rhetoric spatial metaphors such as 'travelling,' 'displacement,' 'diaspora,' 'migrancy,' 'in-betweenness,' 'crossing,' 'exile' and 'deterritorialization' seem to have displaced history itself, the metaphorical aspects of these terms did not prevail in a conference on drama and

8 In the Western hemisphere it is this economic aspect which has determined the acceptance of individual exiles and diasporas in their new home countries for centuries; for an early example see Defoe's A Brief History of the Poor Palatine Refugees (1709) (Start 310).
theatre. However, this dichotomy is also problematic, as Caren Kaplan points out:

Just as all forms of representation can only allude to materiality in partial and invested ways, the discourses of displacement that circulate in theory and criticism cannot serve as more than ‘signs’ of cultural and political concerns. Thus the argument that ‘real’ refugees and exiles are harmed or erased by the generalized appropriations of their experiences by cultural theorists of diaspora and exile seems to me to be not exactly to the point. Creating a moralizing opposition between ‘real’ and figurative exiles (or between politics and aesthetics) simply bolsters rather than deconstructs the elite foundations of Euro-American modernisms (102).

Kaplan calls for a discussion of questions like “How does the metaphor of exile work in particular kinds of cultural criticism, and to what (or whose) ends” or “how can the distinctions between exile, expatriation, diaspora, and immigration be made meaningful in historically and culturally specific ways?” (103).

Such questions may be addressed best in a world language such as English. Taking advantage of this fact, the conference organizers invited contributions about drama and theatre in Europe (e.g. Black or Asian theatre in Great Britain; exile in contemporary Irish drama), Africa (e.g. South Africa), the Caribbean (diasporas inside and outside the Caribbean) and the United States (e.g. Chicano and Latino). Since exile and displacement are caused either by violence and war or by economical and social changes and differences, the crossing of borders and the loss of a sense of belonging create social and psychological problems that are represented, analysed and articulated on the stage in very different ways. Staging and acting (in) exile and (in the) diaspora help to explore new perspectives and artistic forms of understanding processes of exclusion and inclusion, displacement and emplacement. Drama and theatre are complex forms of shaping the practices and languages of collective memory and identity. In this way theatre is conceived as intervention-

9 Obviously, exile was a powerful metaphor in theatre before, as Jane Kingsley-Smith shows. She uses the “semiotics of exile” to explore the theatrical and linguistic possibilities of this trope.

10 The role of theatre in building ethnic communities has been thoroughly explored in studies such as Seller’s Ethnic Theatre in the United States (1983).
ist and counter-hegemonial, fighting ideologies of nationalism, racism, and colonialism. The conference wanted to ask when and where staging exile and diaspora helps to produce new identities, and where it can (at best) contribute to a post-traumatic process of healing. The organizers were interested in exploring the perceptions and representations of displacement, exile, and diaspora in the contexts of globalisation and the growth of multicultural Europe. Displacement, exile and diaspora may also be experienced as a chance for cultural creativity and economic opportunity, thus shifting the view from exile and diaspora to migration and cultural hybridity.

This re-assessment of displacement, exile and diaspora was brought to the conference’s attention in the panel discussion when Jorge Huerta defined various types of exile contrasting his privileged situation as endowed professor with South-African Fatima Dike’s experiences: “there are exiles of class, there is economic exile, there is political exile and the majority of the exiles [...] were also hoping that things would get better in the United States. And they are better. This is why I feel ridiculous sitting here next to Fatima.” Jorge Huerta also draws attention to the many differences among Chicanas and Chicanos. On the one hand, he defines his displacement as very different from Mexican immigrants (“we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us”). On the other hand, he emphasizes the tensions among groups of exiles like the working class Chicanos who feel very different from Cuban bourgeois exiles. The grandfather of Carlos Morton arrived in Chicago in 1917 and changed his name from Perez to Morton to get a job. The playwright Carlos Morton was baptized Charles and changed his name back to Carlos at the age of 21 in an attempt to rediscover his roots: “Which is really what my plays are about. It’s the discovery of identity.” Fatima Dike from South Africa re-essentialises and authenticates the moment of liberation when she narrates the story of her mother who was overwhelmed by the experience of casting her vote for the first time in her life in 1994.

The discussion between Julia Pascal and Micheline Wandor shows how controversial it may be to define Jewish identity from a British

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11 For globalization in the context of the multiculturalism of the European nation-states see Achilles.
perspective. While Julia Pascal embraces her European identity and does not want to be seen as a British isolationist, Micheline Wendor dislikess being regarded as "a diasporic person" and feels marginalized in terms of gender, religion and class. In her view, British Jews are not a diaspora because if they were, they "would, by definition, be exiled from somewhere." In their concluding remarks Christiane Schlote and Kathleen Starck, who moderated the panel, emphasized the need to use the key terms of the conference "critically and with a pronounced awareness of their limits. Any kind of universal experience of displacement/ exile/diaspora does not exist." Although the topic harboured everything from threats to life or bodily integrity to the metaphorical use of displacement representing experiences that never originated in exile and diaspora, the contributions to this volume suggest a sense of displacement which gives form and definition to individual histories of deracination.

In his keynote lecture, "Comedy in Chicano Theatre: Dealing with Displacement," JORGE HUERTA (San Diego) gave an introduction to the history of Chicano and Latino theatres which goes back to Spanish religious folk traditions and draws from proletarian variety shows. In 1971, Huerta founded one of the first Chicano theatres in the United States, Teatro de la Esperanza. The third stage of Chicano theatre began in 1978 when Luis Valdez wrote and directed Zoot Suit. In 1980, women changed the male-dominated Chicano Theatre Movement once again. Later solo performers re-shaped Chicano theatre and the sixth stage began in 1988, when "Culture Clash," a comedy trio, entered the stage for the first time. In 2004, the theatre of Chicanos is "still laughing and still virtually invisible in the American imaginary. They laugh at the gringo as well as at themselves."

RICARDA KLÜSSFENDORF (Heidelberg) talked about "Negotiating Difference, Identity, and Community: Tony Kushner's Jews in 'the land behind the Statue of Liberty'" showing that Kushner is not just concerned with the gay minority, but acknowledges that "the struggle of one oppressed group or minority is always connected with that of another." Klüssendorf shows how Kushner stages American society's reinvention of itself "in the interplay and friction between minorities and
the majority as well as among different minorities.” In this struggle Jewish-Americans take a leading role at the centre.

HENNING SCHÄFER (Erlangen) shed light on Canadian First Nations theatre in “Counteracting Displacement: Native Theatre as a Tool for Healing the Wounds of the Residential School System.” A number of Native Canadian plays bear witness to a history of displacement and contribute to a gradual process of healing. Native people use theatre as a major tool of education and to reclaim their lost cultural heritage. Native theatre companies like De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig (Debaj) on the Wikwemikong Reserve have become a powerful symbol of healing and a stronghold of Native culture.

MARKUS WESSENDORF (Manoa, Hawai‘i) discussed recent plays written and set in Hawai‘i, which focus upon issues of diaspora and displacement. What connects Edward Sakamoto’s Obake and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s Ola Na Iwi in particular is their dramaturgical engagement with the same narrative genre: the ghost story. The ghosts that appear in Obake and Ola Na Iwi are not only visual manifestations of the otherness that pervades the figure of home in both plays, they also point to incidents of social as well as psychological repression that have caused this othering of place. While Obake approaches the theme of displacement from the point of view of Japanese immigrants, Ola Na Iwi deals with it from the perspective of Hawaiian ancestors. Wessendorf’s paper demonstrated how both plays relate not only to Freud’s notion of the uncanny but also to Una Chaudhuri’s discussion of “geopathology” — i.e., the double-edged problem of place and place as problem — in modern drama.

FRANZ MEIER (München) presented an unusual approach to displacement in “‘Stop being Indian!’ — Identity, Hybridity and the Dis/Misplacement of (Post)Colonial Images in Tom Stoppard’s Indian Ink.” Meier reads the play’s “leitmotif of displaced and misplaced images” as “a sort of meta-pun,” which brings the stereotypical (post-) colonial ‘images’ of ‘Britishness’ and ‘Indianness’ into “dynamic interaction.” His essay presents a stimulating example of how theorizing post-colonial semiotics, the replacement of the binary opposition of signifier and signified with processes of signification, enters the dramatic imagery of Stoppard’s work. Meier interprets this as a “chance of communica-
tion, even communion between poet and painter, woman and man, colonizer and colonized.”

DEIRDRE OSBORNE (London) illustrated in her paper on “The State of the Nation: Taking Drama Further — Contemporary Black British Theatre and the Staging of the UK” the growing relevance of plays by Black British dramatists, suggesting a shift towards commercially successful mainstream theatre. White directors, however, “continue to remain at the helm despite the forays into cross-cultural programming with ‘new’ writing.” Although Osborne convincingly presented the authenticity and originality of Black theatre, she noted that a stable and permanent place in the British mainstream has always been problematic and a legacy of which these dramatists remain keenly aware.

ANJA MÜLLER (Bamberg) analysed the concept of a ‘New Europe’ in terms of emplacement and constructing identity, both being complex interactions of language, history and environment. Discussing various forms of displacement in plays by David Greig, most notably Europe, she argued that the alleged ‘Eurocentre’ is itself disrupted: “In the play, Europe can be all sorts of things: a harbour of civilization, morals, decency and humanity, an enormous virtual gaming table, the site of atrocities and traumas, and an imaginary dreamland that opens itself up to the imaginative traveller.” While unity was the project of Old Europe, New Europe is defined by diversity. Müller asked whether the expansion of the European Union had created “an internal East-West-rift” after the end of the Cold War, or whether the Eurocentre functioned as a hegemonic force. Maybe, she concluded, “displacement itself lies at the heart of Europe.”

The historical dimension of this aspect was addressed by all those contributors who talked about the growing number of plays addressing displacement and exile in the context of Nazism. GUY STERN (Detroit), who had to leave Nazi Germany, talked about “The Theme of Exile in Sybille Pearson’s Drama Unfinished Stories,” which is at the centre of Pearson’s socio-psychological drama. The play tells the story of Walter Wertheim, a refugee from Nazi Germany and the two generations that follow him and who are “his hope.” It is Daniel, his grandson, “who takes up the challenge.” In a moving report about his biographical research on Sybille Pearson, née Weiss, Stern talked about the playwright’s
exilic background. Stern seems to suggest that Sybille is Daniel, taking up her ancestors' idealism when she joins an anti-Iraq war demonstration. Pearson is currently working on a play about Salka Viertel, another Jewish émigré from "that dolorous and inspiring period."

RUDOLF WEISS (Vienna) explored the troubled relationship of exiled German authors with the entertainment industry of Hollywood. In "‘Me Johnny Weissmuller, you Thomas Mann’ — German Writers Exiled in Dreamland: Christopher Hampton’s Tales from Hollywood," Weiss analysed the post-Brechtian, epic and the postmodern elements juxtaposed in the play. Among the latter, intertextuality and intermediality were foregrounded. The play focuses on the clash of European and American cultural peculiarities, and in particular on the disenchantment of European intellectuals like Brecht, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Horváth and others with aesthetic, social and political ideas governing American society.

ULRIKE BEHLAU (Mainz) analysed in her article "Remembering the Holocaust in British-Jewish Drama of the 1990s: Diane Samuels, Julia Pascal and Harold Pinter" the interrelation of individual and cultural memory and various forms of cultural mnemonics. "Memory theatre" helps shaping "a collective memory-scape, which stretches beyond the generation of eye-witnesses." All three playwrights are aware of the complex interrelation between the memory and identity politics of "the worst and most defining catastrophe of the last century." Pinter shies away from suggesting "the possibility of reconstructing an ‘authentic’ version of the past" and challenges theatre-goers' "preconceptions about the memory of the Holocaust."

In "The Presentness of the Past: The Prosecution and Staging of Displaced War Criminals in Britain," ANNETTE KERN-STÄHLER (Düsseldorf) addressed another aspect of the British-Jewish memory theatre of the 1990s. Peter Flannery’s five-act play Singer (1989) tells the story of former Auschwitz prisoners Peter Singer and his nephew Stefan who recognize a Ukrainian camp guard in post-war Britain. Ronald Harwood’s The Handyman (1996) is a re-enactment of the heated public debate about the 1991 War Crimes Act and the interrelations between the private and the public. Both plays refute the "assumption that the Nazi past is a closed chapter in history."
For didactic reasons JAN HOLLM (Ludwigsburg) had to take a more selective perspective in his teaching drama workshop on “Pity and Fear for the average Student? How to teach Plays of Displacement, Exile, and Diaspora.” After presenting traditional and non-traditional methods of teaching drama he chose Wole Soyinka’s play Death and the King’s Horseman as a case study for an analysis of how to approach plays that deal with displacement, exile, and diaspora. Various ways of teaching Soyinka’s play which were developed together with the participants of the workshop are discussed in this volume. A teaching method is recommended which aims at an empathetic understanding of people who have been traumatized by experiences of displacement, exile, and diaspora.

Displacement and migration have become key experiences in our contemporary world shaping our languages and cultures. The lives and achievements of many eminent actors, playwrights, directors and theatre managers bear witness to this fact. Thus theatre (as other arts) preserves these individual experiences in our collective memory and helps theorizing their contributions to inventing images and words, which will stay with us in the open and civil societies, we live in.

The Jewish champion of European and American theatre, George Tabori, who turned 90 during the preparation of our conference, was born in Hungary and lived in many countries after he had escaped from Nazism in 1935. In an interview given on the occasion of his birthday, Tabori replied to Iris Radisch’s question of what language he had used in recent years: “I have forgotten English, I use Hungarian only with my dog, and German is gradually fading away.” In the same interview, Tabori called theatre the only home he had. He always felt like a stranger, not like a Hungarian, not like an Englishman, and not like an American. In 1969 he came to Germany, but “Don’t ask me why,” he said, “presumably because of theatre” (Radisch).
Introduction

Works Cited


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CHRISTIANE SCHLOTE AND KATHLEEN STARCK

From Displacement to Arrival: Reflections on Exile and Diaspora in the Theatre

I. Introduction

The title of this panel might be read as an attempt to provide a counter-vision to the rather bleak outlook indicated by the conference title. Our aim was to question and possibly re-evaluate the usage of such prominent terms as 'displacement,' 'exile' and 'diaspora' and to examine further the specific experiences behind individual travel and migration trajectories. At a conference where these terms provided a recurring terminology throughout, we hoped to create an awareness of and a space for a much-needed critical evaluation, which might eventually lead us to a more nuanced understanding of the rhetoric and aesthetics behind these terms.

As Nico Israel, drawing on Edward Said, has emphasised, conditions of exile are "irremediably secular and unbearably historical [...] produced by human beings for other human beings" and experiences of refugees differ vastly from an "aesthetic view of the heroic exilic artist's

1 We would like to thank sincerely Fatima Dike, Jorge Huerta, Carlos Morton, Julia Pascal and Michelene Wandor for their great cooperation and their spirited contributions. Many thanks are also due to our co-chairs Heiner Bus and Christoph Houswitschka.
plight” (6). Analyses of literary and dramatic representations of these material conditions should thus clearly differentiate between forms of transnational mobility which might encompass “the situation of refugees forced from their homes by genocidal armies, earthquakes or flood waters” as well as “well-qualified, affluent migrants whose stock of human and cultural capital insures their unfettered global mobility” (Westwood/Phizacklea 119). In his pioneering comparison of diasporas, Global Diasporas (1997), Robin Cohen has shown the significant differences between traumatic dispersals and victim, labour, trade and cultural diasporas. Consequently, we have to ask, whether terms such as displacement, diaspora and exile are actually capable of capturing these very heterogeneous experiences.

We were therefore particularly happy and fortunate to have a panel of theatre practitioners whose lives and work represent an international cross-section of negotiations and discourses engendered by experiences of colonialism, migration, apartheid, exile, diaspora and recent identity politics: Fatima Dike, distinguished South African playwright, poet, political activist and veteran theatre director and teacher, who has been called ‘the mother of South African theatre;’ Jorge Huerta, Professor of Theatre at the University of California, San Diego, leading authority on contemporary Chicano/a and Latino/a theatre and director, who founded El Teatro de la Esperanza (Santa Barbara) and co-founded Teatro Máscara Mágica (San Diego); Carlos Morton, one of the most prolific and widely produced veterano Chicano playwrights who has won numerous awards and who is also Professor of Dramatic Art at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Julia Pascal, playwright, actress, director and founder of the Pascal Theatre Company which is particularly active in London’s communities and Michelene Wandor, poet, playwright, short story writer, editor, reviewer, theatre historian and musician with her early music group The Siena Ensemble, who has written extensively for stage, radio and television since 1970 and who also teaches creative writing.

As general guidelines for the discussion the following questions were sent to the participants in advance and were also provided to the audience:
1. What is your understanding of such complex and very different terms as displacement, exile, diaspora and ethnicity? Are these terms indeed still useful or rather misnomers when referring to second or third generation members of a diaspora/displacement? Should we perhaps rather talk of 'transnational citizens,' 'post-modern ethnics' or dispense with categorisations altogether?

2. How, if at all, are experiences of displacement, exile, diaspora or the classification as a member of an 'ethnic minority' reflected in your work and would you argue that plays dealing with these experiences share a common thematic or aesthetic vocabulary (despite the different historical and socio-political contexts they are situated in)?

3. Would you argue that so-called 'diasporic' or 'ethnic' theatre/drama requires specific teaching/rehearsal/performance strategies and would you consider it necessary to provide audiences/readers with extra-textual information?

The following documentation is an edited transcript of the playwrights' opening statements and the ensuing panel discussion including the question and answer session with the audience.

II. Statements

F. Dike: When I think about displacement, I think about displacement in two senses. There is the physical or forced removal of people from their ancestral homes in the land of their ancestors into areas of South Africa that are bleak, unyielding and completely unfriendly. And then, for those of us who have been fortunate enough not to have experienced displacement in the physical form, there is a mental displacement of a young black woman, intelligent, who is forced to abide by the rules of the ruling party in South Africa, because her entire nation is being programmed to become maids and to become gardeners. And then, of course, when we talk about exile, I think of South Africa as a country that has had what I call 'the black brain drain' in people going to exile. I also think of being in exile myself or being a refugee in a country [USA] and to find that, when you arrive in America, you have all these visions and expectations of coming into the land of the free and democracy and
to find that America actually does not take kindly to refugees, and then, again, you become displaced. It is watching other black people in exile commemorating 21 March and you see people after the speeches getting drunk.\(^2\)

Ethnicity. I know ethnicity very, very well because I carried a book which my mother in 1956 marched to Pretoria for to renounce this other bit of slavery that was being pushed on them by the South African government. And, of course, the end of that was that we all ended up carrying passbooks. So I was classified not as a black person. I was classified as a ‘Native’ and then I was re-classified as a ‘Bantu’ and the word *bantu* comes from the Kaffer [Xhosa] word, which is my language, for *abantu*, meaning people, but then the word is used in a derogatory manner to describe me. And then I was re-classified again because in South Africa, which is our land, we outnumbered white people at that time. For every white person there were six black people. So these are my understandings of this word ethnicity. But then we fought. Things changed in South Africa. And now we say we have arrived.

What does the word ‘arrive’ mean to me? 1994, on 26 April, the government said everybody who is a pensioner and everybody who is physically disabled will vote first on 26 April. My mother was fitting both categories. She was a pensioner and she was also disabled. At six o’clock in the morning in April it is just the end of summer, the beginning of autumn, it is dark, I hear this voice [shouts], “Fatima, who is going to go and vote for me?” And, of course, tomorrow it is our turn to vote, 27 April. But then our parents get to vote first and the whole house went [shouting], “Me!” So my daughter Tembi gets to go to stand in line for my mother, so that later on in the day, when she wakes up and she goes to vote, she will not have to be at the end of the line because my daughter is standing in her place. My daughter comes back at ten past six and she is complaining, “I’m not crazy.” I asked, “What’s the matter?” and she said, “Mum, did you see the queue?” I said, “What queue?” She answered, “At the community centre. It’s so long, it goes into the next

\(^2\) 21 March is commemorated in South Africa as Human Rights Day in memory of a group of black South Africans in Sharpeville who, on 21 March, 1960, peacefully demonstrated against being forced to carry passbooks. The reaction of the police to the demonstration killed sixty-nine people and left more than three hundred injured. Six years later the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the date as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
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suburb. So I'm not going to stand there. I might as well come home, do
my house chores and then go and stand in line for granny later.” So
grandma accepts, we all get up, do our chores and then the next thing, it
is nine o'clock and my mother cannot wait to be free. Because today, the
26 of April 1994, she is going to vote and that vote means freedom.

So we put my mother in a wheelchair, we push her to the community
centre. Honestly, when we arrive there, the line looks as if it has never
moved. But people are nice today. People say, “Old people in wheel-
chairs vote first.” So we pushed my mother straight through into this
hall, we come to the voting table and we wait for my mother to take the
piece of paper, to put her X against the party that she favours and my
mother begins to tremble. Every bit of my mother's body, starting from
her cheeks, she began to tremble. Now standing behind my mother,
who has always been my role model, a very strong woman who has
brought up nine kids and I do not know how many grandchildren on
her own because my father died when I was seven year old and today my
mother is a lump of shit. She cannot vote. She is trembling and I am
embarrassed. I cannot understand why my mother is doing this. So I
bend down and whisper in her ear, “Take the paper and make an x.” She
goes, “No. I can't. You know who I want to vote for, you can vote for
me.” And I say, “Mum, it's illegal. We can't vote for you, you have to
vote for yourself.” My mother is trembling, “No, I can't do it. You
know which party I want to vote for, you can vote for me.” At this point
I am completely embarrassed. And I look at the lady behind the table
and she says to me, “Ok, you can take the ballot paper and you can vote
for her.” And I know that my mother favours Mandela, so I put the X
next to Mandela’s face, and I drop it into the ballot box, and I go to the
provincial box, and I put an X, and I put it in and I push my mother
back home.

When we get home, we put my mother on the sofa, where she nor-
mally sits. The television is on. The voting poll keeps coming. Mandela’s
photograph keeps coming. My mother sits like a stone. I am looking at
her face. I am looking at the face of freedom. But I am not seeing the
joy of a free person inside this face. A few minutes afterwards I hear a
noise, my mother’s friend. She is also a pensioner who suffers from bad
knees. She uses a walking stick, that is her walking stick coming up my
stoop. I quickly run to the door, open the door and let her in. I take a hard chair, put it facing my mother and I help her to sit. And these two women face each other in silence. Complete silence. And then they begin to rock, back and forth. And then my mother whispers to her, "Finally, the day has arrived." And the other one says, "Yes, finally, this day has arrived. We've spent all our lives in white people's kitchens. Washing our lives down their drains. But this day has finally arrived." Then silence. They rock back and forth. Then, suddenly, my mother goes, "I never thought I would live to see this day." And the other one says, "Me too." And then they rock back and forth, back and forth. And then Mandela's face comes up on television and my mother looks at him and says to her friend, "That is a man amongst men. He has kept his promise for twenty-five years. And now he has come out and we are free." And we were sitting in the living room, me, my three children and one grandchild and we are looking at faces of freedom and we are listening to people who are still talking politics on the day when they have cast their first vote in whispers. What we used to do before? We used to talk about politics in whispers in case someone was listening. And then my mother suddenly looks up and sees us all sitting there watching and she goes [screaming], "Go and make tea!" [Laughter] Because according to African culture you cannot sit there and listen in on your elders' conversations. So I scuttle off to the kitchen with my children, we make tea, we come back, we give them the tea. And this was the first day, 26 April 1994.

27 April 1994, we get up. It is our turn now. I phone my sister excitedly, "Have you gone to vote?" She says, "No." I say, "Well, you have the car. Bring the car. We've all got to go and vote." My sister says, "Fatima, there is no hurry. We've waited fifty years. Another couple of hours is nothing." But I tell her [screaming], "You can't do that. Don't you understand what this day means?" My sister replies, "Fatima, I'm still counting my money. I've got to go to the bank." My sister runs a service station. She sells petrol. I cannot believe this woman. We are free and she is still thinking about her money. What does money matter today? So we go through the townships. Every place is blocked, full. So we go to the white areas, my goodness! Black, white, coloured, young, old, male, female, cats, dogs, children — the whole lot. White people, black
people and coloured people all standing in line together. And I think, “Am I in the right country? I think I’m in the wrong country. Maybe if I went to the northern suburbs where all the rednecks live, maybe, just maybe I might be able to vote.” So I go — same story. South Africa is in complete harmony. It even rains that day. Just to show us that we can live in harmony. White people, black people, they take off their jackets, everybody’s under this canopy. I must be in the wrong country. But my problem is, it is ok for the whites, they have been free, but for me, this is my first day of freedom. What do I know about freedom. When we were in the struggle we were taught to fight. Now that we are free, who is there to teach us to be free. I have arrived. Thank you.

J. Huerta: I never dreamt I would follow a woman from South Africa with a story that makes our story sound real meaningless. Well, I am going to try. I mean, I am caught in a conundrum in that you may have looked at the programme and seen a name that you do not know. Jorge, who is that? Well, 9 a.m. tomorrow I do the keynote on this very issue, so I do not want to give away, you know, my wonderful presentation tomorrow morning and I have been told that there is a curfew. Everybody must be in bed by 11 p.m. tonight, so they can be here 9 o’clock sharp. I thought Germans were on time. Nothing has started on time. I will be here all by myself. Me and my transparencies. Anyway, these are the thoughts that came to my mind.

You know, I had not thought about it because I assumed that diaspora meant the Jews. And I looked in the dictionary and it was all about the Jews and then I looked at other sources and found that, in fact, it is anybody who is displaced, who is moved to another place. The curious thing about the Chicana and the Chicano, the man and the woman, the Mexicans in the United States, is that we were there first. I will quote from my presentation tomorrow quoting from somebody else who said, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” And that is what a lot of Chicano theatre is all about. We have been marginalised, we have been invisibilised. It was very interesting when Fatima said that the black have been either gardeners or maids. When you watch television in the United States of America, if you watch the movies that are made in my country, Mexicans are the gardeners and the maids as well as the black. But we have taken over the gardening, honey, I am sorry. Two
years ago, the only Latina on the Oscars was Lupe Ontiveros who played the maid in a movie called *As Good As It Gets*. That was the only Latina that appeared on the Oscars in that particular year. She was not even there, she was on the screen. So we have been marginalised in many, many ways. And, in fact, it is interesting that you would find that I did act as a child in the 1950s because I was born and raised in L.A. and what else do you do when you are born in L.A. but act and I did play that cute little Mexican. And I was a cute little Mexican. But I acted once every six months and I learnt at a very early age that if I was going to be a Mexican, I was not going to necessarily work in that field. And I had always been a melodramatic Mexican. I always wanted to do theatre. But I learnt the practicality that you are not going to get much work. And so we find ourselves in the same situation. In the 1950s three percent of the people on TV were Latinos, not just Mexicans but Latinos in general. And we have a much wider distribution now. When I was a kid we had three channels. Now we have cable, and on and on and on. And people go, “There’s more of you, there’s more of you.” But no. In comparison to the other groups we are still way down there. We are not represented. Where have you seen a Mexican or Puerto Rican or any Latino in a World War II movie? We were there. We were the most highly decorated group in WW II, in the Korean War and in Vietnam. So we have felt invisibilised by the hegemony.

But the thing that came to my mind in planning for this is that as a marginalised group we have always been looked at more critically. And I know we have to be critical of ourselves as artists. I have directed how many plays by Carlos Morton where I had to say, “Work harder, work harder. Make this better, make this better because we’re the Mexicans in the department.” Heiner [Bus], I think, facetiously said, “Do you feel marginalised?” You know, here I am, a Full Professor at the University of California. I hold an endowed chair and I am marginalised in my own theatre department. They are not producing Chicano plays and they are not bringing in Latino graduate actors that I could thus direct. So, we think of the people, the community being marginalised. I am thinking as an artist. I am thinking of the marginalisation of the minority artist in the United States. Not just the Latina, Latino but that is what I am asked to focus on. So that we are marginalised, by the same token, we
are also very critical of ourselves. And I have to be. I have to say to a professional colleague, “This play of yours is not really there yet.” Am I marginalising him or her or am I trying to help us get along in listening to the various kinds of theatres that we do? The theatre we have in the marginalised communities, for better or for worse, sometimes it is called social work. And we get great praises for putting on plays with marginalised kids. But nobody expects them to walk onto a Broadway stage. Nor do we want them to. What for? You know, to play another minority, another stereotype? But there is a thin line between art and politics that we are constantly having to manoeuvre as displaced people in the industry. Whether that industry is Hollywood, whether that industry is the regional theatre movement. We are constantly told you are not universal. Our plays are about identity. Everybody in this room has suffered because of his or her identity at one point or other or is still suffering it. You know, we did anti-Vietnam actos. The war, a war is not universal? Machismo is not universal? Just because it is a Spanish name, does not mean that some of you men out there have not been [laughter] — aha. I rest my case.

So those are the kind of things that we have to look at. Why are we not where we should be? We do not have a single Latino theatre company. And this is all Latinos. You must understand that the Chicana/Chicano is one part, the largest percentage of Latinos in the U.S. Seventy-five percent are of Mexican descent. But you also have the Puerto Ricans and you have the Cubans and on and on and on. But the groups that are doing theatre, are those three groups. And we are constantly being asked, “Where are your theatres?” We have one theatre company that is ironically Spanish only, Repertorio Español in New York City, that has a budget over four million dollars which is not nothing when you think of the [Joseph Papp] Public Theatre [New York] with an eleven million dollar budget or the Mark Taper [Forum, Los Angeles] with another eleven. What happened to us? Where were we? What have we done wrong? So right now we are at a point of trying being introspective among ourselves as educators because there is not a

3 For a brief history of Hispanic American theatre see Kanellos. For a survey of Latino American theatre companies in the 1990s see Schloette. For a survey of Chicano theatre see Jorge Huerta’s Chicano Theatre and Chicano Drama.
single theatre artist that is not also an educator from the Latino communities. It seems that many, many people are now teaching at universities, community colleges, high schools, etc. So that is what I am thinking of at this particular moment in terms of marginalisation.

C. Morton: My experience is a little bit different than Jorge’s. I was just thinking about our backgrounds. I was born in Chicago. My grandparents immigrated to the Midwest from Mexico and Cuba. My Mexican grandfather immigrated in 1917 and my Cuban grandfather in the mid-1920s, so my experience was a little bit different. Both of my parents were born in the United States, so I am third-generation Latino. But then, when I think about my father, I think of how he was in the military in World War II. He fought not in the European theatre but in the Japanese theatre and also in Japan. And so I realised the other day that that was one of the few jobs that a Mexican American man could have during the 1950s and 1960s. Traditionally, black and Mexican males would go into the military or the post office. We lived in the Midwest but we also lived in Panama. I mean, we lived as Americans in the canal zone. But we also lived in Quito, Ecuador, and we would move back and forth. So we were constantly being displaced. My displacement was extreme when I started thinking about it. Not only that but my grandfather’s real name was Perez, Carlos Perez, and he came to Chicago in 1917 and he could not get a job. But yet he saw that they were hiring because that was the steel mill industries, so he had to change his name to Morton to get a job. Which says a little bit about the United States. And, apparently, he picked it out of a salt advertisement at the time: Morton Salt — “When it rains, it pours.”

So talk about identity and being displaced. I was born with the name Charles Morton on my birth certificate. That is how unaffiliated I had become and it was not until I was twenty-one that I changed my name to Carlos because that was my grandfather’s name, Carlos Morton. So fifty years later I changed my name back to Carlos, rediscovering my roots. Which is really what my plays are about. It is really the discovery of identity.

You know, we are now ten percent of the population of the United States. I am talking about U.S. Latinos. We have surpassed the African American population just recently, so that now Latinos are the largest
minority in the United States. Not to mention that salsa has surpassed ketchup as the most popular condiment. Now we have Mexicans moving into places like Arkansas because of the Tyson chickens and Wal-Mart and the Carolinas because of the textiles, Georgia, all over the United States. Just like my grandfather came almost a hundred years ago to Chicago, now we have Latinos that are going to Alaska, to Canada. We have a large population in Canada, also from other diasporas, like Chile. I feel at home just like my name, Carlos Morton, which is an amalgam of Latino and Anglo, on the border.

We have the largest border apparently that is between a ‘first’ world and a ‘third’ world country which is over 2,000 miles or 3,000 kilometres. And on that border are all of the conflicts that a dramatist can hope to ever have. Because you have not only the ‘first’ and the ‘third’ world but you have the Protestant ethic and the Catholic ethic. You have Spanish and English which creates Spanglish or MexTex, it is a dialect, a patois. So we have all of these different things that come together in the border region where I live and that is where I make my home. I have lived there for the past thirty years and that is where I feel a balance because you can speak English, you can speak Spanish, you can order tacos, hamburgers, whatever you want, worship the Virgen de Guadalupe and listen to punk rock or to the new kind of music that is coming out of the border, too. Just like in the nineteenth century, you had the música ranchera which was a blend of the polka music that comes from Europe, the accordion with the bajo sexto that creates a syncretic sound. In terms of the questions, I think some of these terms are still useful, because, like Jorge said, we did not go to the U.S., the U.S. came to us. But I think we are also all transnational citizens in a way because of the businesses that cross boundaries now. Now we are experiencing outsourcing of jobs to India, to China and they make underwear in Honduras. This shirt was made in Bangladesh. So it is like, where are we? We are all citizens of the world.

Interestingly enough, some of my plays now are being done in Spanish in Central America. And I started writing in Spanish again because I had forgotten it. I had kind of put it aside. But in the last couple of years I have been writing more in Spanish and my work is being produced in Central America. So I am going back and trying to find those roots and
doing more work in Spanish-language countries. And I will read a little bit of different kind of plays later this evening, maybe with a light kind of tone just to keep you entertained and hopefully awake.

Finally, I just want to say that I do not think it is necessary to provide audiences with extra information about our work, you know, like in the Cliff Notes or the programmes or have the playwright come out at the end and say, “Wow, did you know that was an enchilada?” Because I do not think you do that for Chekhov, you do not do that for Molière or Brecht, so why should you do it for Chicano authors. Thank you.

*F. Pascal:* Well, I feel humble after Fatima’s talk because questions of displacement within the country you are born are very potent, I realised by what she said and I physically felt it as she spoke. And in a way I am terribly privileged because I was born in the north of England to a lower-middle class Jewish family. So materially we never suffered at all. But there was a tremendous feeling of displacement.

I was brought up by my grandparents. In fact, my mother’s parents were Romanians, so from babyhood until about seven or eight I heard many languages. And I remember my Romanian grandmother’s sister Malvina coming out of Romania in the 1960s at the time when Kruschev was loosening up the country. Her daughter had been in prison for trying to get out and there was much suffering and deprivation under the Communists. Malvina came to Manchester to live with her sister. I found her an exotic redheaded old lady who was really very nervy. I was fourteen when she asked me, “How many languages do you speak?” As I was learning French and German at school I said, “Well, English, French and German.” And she looked at me as if I was a piece of scum and said, “Only three.” And I mention this because all the grandparent generation spoke nine or ten languages because they were born in places where frontiers changed almost overnight, and that was the culture and that was the norm. So this feeling of being displaced from that world and also from being displaced from the world I was growing up in was pretty strong.

I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in the north of England. My grandparents in Manchester and my parents in Blackpool, which, if you have never been is pretty hard to describe, but is the pinnacle of vulgarity and has a certain working class end-of-the-pier entertainment which I grew
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up with. And my grandparents went to the Hallé in Manchester so there was another sort of harking after European bourgeois culture. Between those two [the vulgarity of Blackpool and the north Manchester Jewish/European atmosphere] there was quite a lot of strange stuff going on which, of course, I did not understand then. It was not a multicultural north of England when I was growing up. I do not remember seeing Black or Asian people. The mix was white English, Irish and Jewish. I went to ordinary state schools not to Jewish schools. In my Blackpool Primary School everybody had straight blond hair and little noses, so I did stand out. And at five, when a little blonde girl pointed her finger at me screaming, "You killed Jesus," in the playground was pretty hard to take. So the ordinary British English anti-Semitism, which I am sure Michelene will also be able to talk about, was part of that climate.

My parents always talked about 'the English.' And I always thought, so who are we? We were not religious Jews, and there was a double displacement for me. Displacement from the host society which was ordinary Protestant schools where I went into prayers and was forbidden to sing that Jesus was the son of God, that was taboo. So I would mime the hymns. And I was also very much displaced from what I suppose a very conservative Jewish background, where a girl was to get married as soon as possible, not to be educated beyond high school. To go to university was a real struggle for me. My father was against it. Girls should get married and not do that. Which is not true of other British Jewish families I know, but was true of ours. So you can take the man out of the shtetl but you cannot take the shtetl out of the man. Added to which my father’s family were Lithuanians who went to Ireland, so they are Irish Jews. My grandmother and all that side are buried in Dublin, so there’s a whole Irish side. So James Joyce had a certain resonance for me in a peculiar way.

The displacement that interests me is an odd thing. It is as if you have another country inside you, but you do not know what that country is, if that makes any sense to you. It was not until I was in my late thirties that I began to really process all this displacement. After university in my mid-twenties I went back into acting but quickly shifted into directing, as I felt this was a logical move and also I had lost the desire to perform. During my thirties I did a lot of journalism to pay the rent and,
in fact, I still do some. I interviewed many survivors for features on Jewish refugees and this gave me some perspective of the whole movement of Jewish culture into British life and helped me examine my own family history.

I suppose I came out as a Jew with the first major play to challenge British war mythology. This was *Theresa* which exposed the British collaboration with the Nazis on the Channel Islands. It showed that the British were not all ‘good guys’ on the only British territory to be occupied. When I first tried to sell the play to theatres they did not believe me, as this secret British history was not then in the public domain. It is more so now but there are still files which have not been opened to the public. I went on to write several plays with Jewish themes which was quite new at the time. There had been an earlier wave of 1960s Jewish male drama in Britain but nothing from women. My second play, *A Dead Woman on Holiday*, was set in the Nuremberg Trials and it is about a French Jewish interpreter at the trials who has a love affair with an American gentile colleague. The play asks whether someone damaged by what happened in the Holocaust can trust enough to love. I was fascinated by my father’s generation of Jews. He had a quiet war as a British army doctor in India and when he learnt of the Holocaust he lost all religion and was traumatised. The third play, in what was to become known [and published] as *The Holocaust Trilogy*, is a take on [Solomon] Anski’s *The Dybbuk*. Again, this was an attempt to create a British Jewish European piece of theatre and I worked in close collaboration with the German choreographer and performer Thomas Kampe. Thomas’ father was in the Wehrmacht and it was important for me to work with him because it represented a reconciliation between German and Jew. I think the work was stronger because of where we were both coming from. Also present in this collaboration is Ruth Posner who was an escapee from the Warsaw Ghetto. I wrote the role of Theresa for her as I wanted to cast someone who had lived through the Holocaust and who would transmit something of her memories in her bodily presence. I have written about Yiddish theatre in *The Yiddish Queen Lear* and about the moon landing in *Woman in the Moon* which is an exposé of how Wernher von Braun’s past was hidden by the U.S. in order to rush to the moon before the Soviets. Most recently I have written about the
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*Intifada* with *Crossing Jerusalem*, which was somewhat of a leap as I was writing about Israelis and Arabs today. My feelings of early displacement make me feel I have now a responsibility to look not just at the Holocaust but at its effect on contemporary life. As an atheist Jew living in England it was a challenge to write about the hate of current Arab/Israeli life. My next play is an attempt not to write about Jews at all. This is a play for The Bush Theatre [title to be decided] which looks at a young Muslim boy growing up in Rochdale. I was interested in looking at the displacement of a boy from a Pakistani family, living in the heart of Lancashire, so that he too was carrying a Pakistan-image inside him; a country he has never been to and to which he never wants to go. My next commission for The Tricycle Theatre is a return to Jewish themes. This is about a group of Irgun terrorists in London who are planning the assassination of a British politician because they are trying to get the British out of Palestine. This, again, is about the double country, double identity dilemma. Should a Jew be loyal to a Jewish state or the host country? Of course, it has resonances for Muslims today. I am writing about history and, also, about the present political situation. Displacement was something I suffered as a child but now it fascinates me and feeds my creativity. Thank you.

*M. Wandor:* I want to start quite bluntly: I very much contest the use of terms and concepts such as displacement, exile, diaspora, as they are applied to British Jews today. I am talking about and from my own experience, but I also have a general point to make. Obviously everyone is free to take on any of these terms if they feel it summarises the core of their cultural/national identity, but as a theoretical or even cultural way of identifying and bonding British Jews, I no longer think the terms are relevant. Indeed, I think they are regressive and dangerous. However, at the same time, I take great pride in aspects of my own Jewishness, and would never claim that it was unimportant, and I would never pretend not to be Jewish.

Perhaps I should first contextualise myself a bit more clearly: my parents came from Russia and Poland, met in Palestine, and then lived for most of their lives in London. At home they spoke Yiddish, English, and sometimes Hebrew. At different points in my first two decades I spoke German and Hebrew fluently and later studied French. However,
my core language has always been English, even though at times I was somewhat dislocated from it. My education was odd. I was ill, and did not go to school properly until I was fourteen, but my schooling and university education were in English Literature, and in the usages of the English language. My upbringing in London was in the context of a whole series of displacements from the dominant culture: as a Jewish atheist, as a woman, and much later, as a socialist and a feminist. And yet even these critical takes from the margin have been formed and developed from within a particular kind of British radical tradition, and the language in which I think and write and imagine is English. Obviously there are times when there is a break between the form of my language [English] and the content of the experiences I process, transform and write about, but the bedrock is always English.

To answer the second question, where we were asked about how experiences of displacement are reflected in our work, perhaps this has something to do with the fact that I have always written in different genres and modes: so I do fiction and non-fiction. I write short stories, poetry and drama, I play music, and I write things which combine words and music. I play with the concept of voices in very many different ways. I love reading the expansive tradition of social realism in which the English novel has been historically written, but I cannot write that way myself. On the other hand, perhaps this explanation of the way I am drawn to different genres and forms is too glib and too easily described after the event. It makes me hard to categorise as a writer and British culture loves putting people into genre-based pigeonholes. There are, of course, all kinds of categories which have sprung up to cope with multiculturalism — transnational, marginal — and these go along with the trendy, and I think often irresponsible, ways in which it is announced that the concept of the centred self has been thrown out of the window, and we are all fragmented, we are all decentred. There is a dislocation between this theoretical take on the self, and on what we must each experience as some kind of focal centre for our lives, and that the dominant culture gives us that centre, with the language in which we speak and write — even though the actuality of our experience also consists of constant displacement, or reminders that we are not central. So in my case I am both fiction writer and critic, passionate about the different
traditions of English literature, passionate about the English language, and always aware of the ways in which I am different and do not belong: class, being a woman, being Jewish, still believing in socialism and feminism.

I cannot really answer the third question very clearly. I find that the non-realist nature of a lot of my writing demands an off-centre approach. I would, however, be absolutely sure that anything with 'Jewish' content is hard to place in the theatre, hard to get commissioned, and hard to find directors who might empathise with it.

III. Discussion

Audience: I would like to address a question to Professor Huerta. You were speaking, very rightly and very cautiously, that the border overtook you in a way. But is not there a dichotomy of people like yourself and those who are genuine exiles from Spanish-speaking countries, be they in South America or Central America? That these are really exiles in the sense that we understand it frequently. And you, by way of introduction, spoke about commonalities between the exile experience. I think that kind of exile expresses itself in terms of and literally very much across countries, across languages and across centuries. So I would like to ask you whether that dichotomy is real or whether you would amalgamate those two experiences.

J. Huerta: No, because you also have to take into consideration class. In the 1980s when the Mexican economy was in shambles, a lot of very, very wealthy Mexicans moved to La Jolla where my campus is located, where there are multimillion dollar homes. First the neighbours thought they were the gardeners and the maids but they were the owners of these big mansions. This Mexican bourgeoisie had nothing to do with the regular Mexican migrants. You know, the former exploit the working class. Their maids do not get paid anything. Historically, the first wave of Chicanos, among whom was my father and Carlos's grandfather fleeing the Mexican Revolution, the first wave were intellectuals, certainly, but the majority were working class Mexicans and so we were always considered as Chicanos. And even the word Chicano is pejorative. In Mexican circles they called us pochos because we were no longer
Mexican, because we were born there, in the United States and did not speak Spanish correctly, etc.

So there are exiles of class, there is economic exile, there is political exile and the majority of the exiles initially were really trying to escape the revolution but were also hoping that things would get better in the United States. And they are better. This is why I feel ridiculous sitting here next to Fatima. The Latin Americans called the Chicanos living in the belly of the monster back in the 1970s, when so much was happening in their countries by virtue of our CIA. But they said, “You’re living in the belly of the monster. That has got to be a very different experience.” So everybody’s exile is going to be very different. But we do not necessarily embrace the first wave of Cuban exiles. Because the first wave of Cuban exiles, when Castro took over, were the bourgeoisie who had nothing to do and still have nothing to do with us. To say you are a Chicano, is to say you are progressive. I do not know a single Chicano Republican. It would be an oxymoron. But there are plenty of Mexican American Republicans who voted for that man [George W. Bush]. So I think we are in agreement. It is a different kind of exile. But it was a part of Mexico.

The other difference is, it depends on what state we are talking about. In New Mexico they call themselves Spanish. They do not even call themselves Mexican, they are Spanish. I mean, one looks like Geronimo but he is saying he is Spanish. To them Mexican is a dirty word. When I was growing up, I spoke English well. I was fortunate enough to have a very bilingual mother. Both of my parents were born in Mexico but my mother was bilingual, so I went to grammar school. The kids would say, “You’re not Mmmm... You’re not Mmmm...!” They could not say Mexican, that was a dirty word. And why? Because you speak English and do not have a knife in your hand? Which were all the stereotypes we grew up with. So what has happened is that each state has a different kind of class structure and a different kind of relationship, not only to Mexico but perhaps to Spain. I mean, there are descendants of the first colonizers who got to New Mexico in 1598 and there are descendants of those families. But those families included African slaves, bolatos and creoles and all those people. L.A. was founded by a
bunch of coloured people and who knows that? They do not teach that in the history books.

C. Morton: It is even more complicated than that because in Mexico, traditionally, they do not like the coloniser, the Spaniard, even though a lot of Spaniards came like after Franco and settled in Mexico and they were progressive. For instance, I do not think there is one statue of Fernando Cortez in Mexico. Well, maybe there is one. So the Mexican has within him that contradiction of the native population versus the conquistadores. You can see the works of Diego Rivera brought that out. He portrayed Cortez as a syphilitic on the walls of the National Palace in Mexico City because they hate the Spaniards. So there is another level. You just cannot classify all Latinos as farmworkers. There are rich, like he [Jorge Huerta] said, Republican Cubans who are very conservative and who voted for Bush. There are all these different layers. It is very complex.

Audience: This is a question for Michelene Wandor. I was wondering where you would locate yourself in terms of being Jewish, being English, being European?

M. Wandor: Oh, I am English. My main political point is that I am not a diasporic person. British Jews, on the whole, are not a diaspora. If we were, we would, by definition, be exiled from somewhere. Where would that be? It might be Israel if you went that way. It certainly will not be a Russian shtetl for anybody any more because they do not exist. And then, of course, if you do see yourself as diasporic, then your relationship to your, shall I call it ‘host community,’ therefore, is one constantly under threat because you are constantly under attack. I think that partly because global politics have changed so much, many other communities have become diasporic, unfortunately, over the last forty, fifty years which is enforced exile, varied kinds of genocide. But I think, certainly the situation of the small population of Jews in England, 300,000, I think 600,000 in France, but certainly in terms of British Jewry we are not a diaspora. Even my family, who were very pro-Israel and I am very critical of the Israeli government, they go to synagogue, their children get brought up reasonably religiously, but even they are not diasporic. They would not dream of going to settle in Israel. Israel is not their homeland, and they do not see it as that.
J. Pascal: The way I feel is that to be a British Jew or English Jew is to renounce Europe because you become tainted with the British isolationism. What we lost is the whole Europe. I mean, I work with a German choreographer and a Polish actress. I actually seek out European artists to work with because that is what excites me. For me it is what is lost because I feel as if we have been torn out of Europe. I mean there is a gratefulness towards England because, as my father said, "At least, they didn’t put us in the gas oven, the English," so that is fine. But, hell, there is also a whole terrible loss. Before the Nazi regime Jews and others mixed and they had the most fruitful cultural life and that is what I feel divorced from and that is what I try and connect to. To find other European artists who know that history and are nourished by it and we can make something from that. Englishness to me is safe and comfortable, it is been a home but it is also rather dull.

M. Wandor: We have very different positions.

Audience: Julia, you mentioned the time before the war, perhaps there is also a time dimension in there?

J. Pascal: I think it is because my grandparents for me transplanted into this Manchester desert in a way a little microcosm of the world which was cultural, which was about to fade, which was about being open to other influences, music, visual arts. Not necessarily on an intellectual level but just a certain level of openness which in the English culture is hard to access. You have to go to very small pockets. So it is very difficult to flower in that.

M. Wandor: That makes it not comfortable. Being English is not comfortable.

J. Pascal: Well, I am not English. You are.

Audience: I have a question for Fatima as well as for Jorge and Carlos. Talking a little more about your work, I think in an interview, Fatima, you noted that after Mandela’s release, apart from a personal liberation, you also almost felt a literary liberation, that, finally, you could move away a little from so-called protest plays, which were very important during the apartheid regime, to more personal issues, especially women’s issues. And I was wondering whether the same might apply to Chicano theatre, where, after the very fervent early years you
could eventually move away a little from Louis Valdez's actos to different themes and styles?

F. Dike: When I first started to write in 1976, I wrote about the Ninth Frontier War [1877–1878] and how there were three African kings who were the last keepers of the land who were defeated by the British, and in a sense the play [The Sacrifice of Krel] had a very deep historical political message. But it was not the kind of message that resonated with what was happening in 1976. It needed a more intellectual audience to absorb and understand what the stance of the play was. But what happened in South Africa was that when the struggle started in 1976, we then were propelled into being part of the struggle without choice. Which means we were forced into protest theatre, whether we liked it or not. Everybody had to have the same mind and the same objective, which was to destroy this government. And at that point in time I felt like someone who had lost her innocence too quickly. Because I had just started writing in 1976 and then I was propelled into this war. So there was no time at all for me to write about subjects around women's issues, no time for anything but this political war. So ok, we went along with it. We became used to it and we fought. But by 1990 we knew that Mandela was coming out. And I remember standing outside the Market Theatre and we were going on the last tour of protest theatre, we were going to come to Germany for twelve days. And as we were standing there, there was this feeling of doom, you know, that protest theatre was going to end in South Africa. What were we going to do? And I remember saying to the other actors who were coming on this tour with us, “John, what are you going to do when you come back?” And John said, “Oh yes, I have a programme that I am going to start working on.” But the thing was that he was avoiding my question. The question was, we have been fighting for so long and then suddenly we are being told to put our arms down and we have not been debriefed. What are we going to do as writers? And what has happened to theatre in South Africa is that we were armed, we were taught how to fight; we fought the war valiantly. But then suddenly Mandela came out and we were told to put our arms down. The war is over and mentally we were not ready for that.
But at that point, somehow I knew that the end was coming and I had been preparing myself for the end. And I was very excited to do new things. A lot of people see the play [*So What's New?*] as a comedy. It is not really a comedy. It is a story of survival of three women. In South Africa, of course, everything that happens to us, we laugh. It is the only way to survive. You have to bring that laughter in. You laugh at your father being chased by a young white boy. So what I did then was to bring the stories of these women up front, watching American television soaps and then to put the struggle in the background. I think that is what helped me to cross over to the new South Africa as a writer.

*J. Huerta:* Well, we have not been liberated. The Chicano movement which came around in the 1960s was a response to the Black Civil Rights movement and the war in Vietnam and protest against that war had begun. And suddenly, in the late 1960s, Chicanas and Chicanos found themselves at universities which were not open to us before and the government had put money into federally funded scholarships. So all of a sudden there were these Chicanas and Chicanos on campus where they were so alone. That movement died out, it fizzled out in the 1980s for a variety of reasons. The conditions are worse today. The University of California, for example, where they abolished affirmative action and there are fewer black and brown students on my campus in San Diego, and I would wager the same in Santa Barbara and all the others, than there were in 1975, when I became an assistant professor. You cannot find these students, it is pitiful. So we cannot recruit them. So I say: where is the liberation for anybody?

*Audience:* So would you say that also in your plays there are still enough reasons to address the same issues?

*J. Huerta:* The issues are the same and other issues have been added over the years. [Luis Valdez's] *Zoot Suit* opened the doors to the professional theatres, because the regional theatres — read: white artistic male directors — saw the dollar, they wanted to tap into the Latino dollar. So there was a moment, when the regional theatres were looking for Latino plays. Carlos [Morton] was a part of that. That is why his plays were produced at the [Joseph Papp] Public Theatre [New York], where he won the Festival Award twice in a row but they never went beyond that. But the playwrights have continued and that is the second book
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(Chicano Drama: Performance, Society and Myth, 2000). The second book picks up in 1980 right after Zoot Suit and the plays that I talk about in the second book are all the plays that have been written since 1980. Plays that I could not have written about before 1980 because they were not written, some of the playwrights had not even been born. So I say: where is the liberation? We definitely still have political theatre.

C. Morton: Well, new themes have come up. I was talking to somebody in Lebanon last week and he said, “Oh, you have this General Ricardo Sanchez in Iraq. Is that progress?” And I said, “Yes. But you also have General Abu Said who’s of Lebanese origin.” So the empire continues to co-opt that.

J. Huerta: Well, there is a larger African American middle class, a larger Latino middle class. But when the statistics come out, the bottom line is that they are still far below the whites.

Audience: I have a question for Julia because you have been working with different communities in Britain and it seems that in comparison to the Irish community the African and Asian diaspora has taken a lot of the headlines. What are the overlaps that you have found in your work in regard to various forms of diasporic experiences?

J. Pascal: I started out as an actor and then I was a director and then a writer, so I am a director-writer but I directed a lot of Irish plays. And I also worked with South African actors in a play which was about maids and madams and I was the only person in the rehearsal who had never been. And it was an incredibly explosive process because the actresses were all South African representing different strata. Although the play was very successful, the relationships between the actresses became a reflection of really what was going on before apartheid finished. I have written a play about blacks and Jews. I am very interested in the cross-overs myself and Judaism coming from Africa, if you want to go down that road. So these are fascinating areas and realities to look at. I was living in France and so I fantasised a play [St. Joan] about a black Jewish woman called Joan Rabinowitch who dreams that she is Joan of Arc and tries to put history back and does not allow Charles to be crowned and imagines that that way slavery would never have happened and the Holocaust would never have occurred. It is complete nonsense, absolute meschugge. But that was my journey in a way of looking at different
areas. I do not just want to write about Jews. I am very interested in looking at connections. To me Jews are everybody. That is because Jews have lived here. Our cultures have completely crossed. So, of course, the way that those flows have touched other cultures really does interest me. And it is part of my own journey and I am very happy to meet people here who enlighten me and I hope to go away with more than I do now, so that I can see it in a larger vision.

J. Huerta: I must say that a lot of the non-Latinos who come to Chicano theatre that is about the immigrant experience, are Jews. The immigrant experience, regardless of what country, whether it is your country, this country, is pretty much the same. There is a book called *Ethnic Theatre in the United States* [edited by Maxine Schwartz Sellers, 1983] that goes from Armenian to Yiddish. It unfortunately excludes Asian American theatre. And not all the essays are great but nonetheless the one constant is that they all assimilate. Even the Latinos by third generation are mono-lingual English speakers. And the fourth generation is the one that goes, “Why didn’t you teach me Spanish?”

M. Wandor: But that is not because there is anything wrong with whatever ‘assimilate’ meant. I mean, if you live in a place, you live in the entire place. Some communities do keep themselves separate voluntarily. That is fine. But something else happens. Once there is a first and a second and a third and a fourth generation, something very profound happens to the people, who then emerge from a society and are acculturated in it, even when they are still part of a cultural group with other languages, other religions and whatever and come from somewhere else. That something else then cannot be ignored by, as it were, going back to its roots and taking those on as an ur-identity or a new version of the ur-identity. At the bottom of this is the question which you put on your questionnaire, whether we should dispense with categories altogether. It is kind of not quite that, and we are certainly not transnational citizens. But the kind of cultural mixes that we have in parts of Europe, are ones which America actually has had for very much longer in a much more complex and dramatic way. But that is America. That combination is America. It is not something else that has been invaded and conquered. It is really something else and I suppose that is why I am so insistent on
how I place myself in terms of being British, being Jewish, being a femi-
nist, being a socialist [sighs]. [Laughter] You know what I mean.

F. Dike: I get this feeling that Jews have been everywhere. When you
look at South Africa, there is a very big population of Jews. District Six,
which was the second-biggest forced removal in Cape Town, most of
the houses in that area were owned by Jewish people who used to get
rent. And through that forced removal a whole community that was
completely wholesome was destroyed. Because when you were talking
about America, that reminded me of that community that lived in Dis-
trict Six where the Jews and the Cape Malays and the coloured and the
black people were all living in that one community. And then, suddenly
in 1962, the government does away with this entire melting pot of a
community. And for years and years and years nobody bought land. It
was like a scar on the side of Table Mountain. As if people had mourned
the removal of that space where people just mixed as people.

J. Pascal: Just to get back to your question [regarding various forms
of diasporic experiences]. There is a suffering league which I am very
suspicious of. I mean, we all have to deal with questions of how we deal
with that, the victimisation and “I deserve more because I’ve suffered
more than you.” Which is something we all have to take on and think
about and really examine, where one is and why one is doing all that. In
terms of British minority culture, Asian and Black work is hip and it is
much easier to get funding for it. And I say this after having done work
in quite a lot of different genres. It is very hard to get money for work
dealing with Jewish issues, as there is the opinion that, “Oh, you Jews,
you’ve got money,” and it is really hard to break that sort of under-the-
carpet racism that is very prevalent in British life in different forms. And
I think that the funding of the Black work is often extremely patronis-
ing: “Oh, we fucked up in Africa and the Caribbean, we got this prob-
lem. Give them the money.” That is what is called cultural politics in
Britain. Similar with Irish work. The white blacks. There is all that going
on which is never said. I say it publicly as much as possible, because I
think it is very important that it is being discussed. Where does our tax-
payer’s money go? Who funds who? Who gets the jobs? What produc-
tions are considered politically correct to go on? There is a hit league of
ethnic minorities. And when you talk about that in public, there is a
Christiane Schlote and Kathleen Starck

silence. It is not correct to discuss. And I guess that is what I mean by the climate of Britain, we do not discuss. You are not controversial. You do not take on the big issues because if you do, you may be blacklisted, and then you may not actually get that little bit of the patronising full pot. That climate of fear works for the Arts Council in Britain.

IV. Conclusive Remarks

Almost inevitably and not surprisingly, the panel showed rather varied interpretations of this conference’s central terms, with each participant contributing his or her own experiences to extend and shape possible meanings of displacement, exile and diaspora. Although certain patterns are recurrent in the context of different national and social groups, at the same time, these groups cannot necessarily be seen as having experienced the same phenomenon. Avtar Brah’s observation that “the question is not simply who travels but when, how, and under what circumstances? What socio-economic, political and cultural conditions mark the trajectories of these journeys?” (Brah 182; Brah’s italics) remains important in the description of various experiences such as ‘physical/geographical’ versus ‘inner’ exile and ‘voluntary’ versus ‘forced’ displacement. Thus an individual’s perception of the diasporic experience depends very much on historical and geopolitical contexts. In this respect, there is the danger of the emergence of a certain typology of diaspora experiences including various grades of suffering. Furthermore, questions of language and identity formation were mentioned repeatedly, as it is important, for example, whether a name is chosen or forced upon one and how labels and classification impact on a group’s identity. Thus one important conclusion certainly is the recognition that the terms which are available to us, although useful, can by no means fully capture these polyphonic, diasporic voices. On the other hand, we might be forced to acknowledge that, at least for the present, no better terms exist. Consequently, keywords such as ‘displacement,’ ‘exile,’ and ‘diaspora’ should be used critically and with a pronounced awareness of their limits. Any kind of universal experience of displacement/exile/diaspora does not exist. Although recently it has been argued that we might have moved beyond the discussion of these issues,
this panel clearly showed that, on the contrary, they continue to arouse heated debates and thus definitely demand further scrutiny.

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Dealing With Displacement: Comedy in Chicano Theatre

As a colonized people living in what used to be Mexico, Chicanos have always found humor in their fractured, neo-colonial Southwestern existence. They have enjoyed making fun of themselves as well as ridiculing the invading Europeans’ customs, manners and ideas. The tensions created within and between these disparate communities have created anxieties that have fueled the comedy of the Chicanos for generations — indeed, before they were Chicanos. Which is to say, before what were the northern reaches of Mexico became the North American Southwest in 1848. For most observers, the Chicanos, otherwise known as Mexican-Americans, are people of Mexican descent born in the United States. “If they were born there,” one might ask, “where’s the ‘diaspora?’” For a working definition of the term I turn to Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg, in the introduction to their anthology, *Displacement, Diaspora and Geographies of Identity*: “‘Diaspora’ refers to the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places — their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with ‘back home’” (14). I will argue that regardless of the fact that they were born in the U.S., the majority of Chicano theatre artists still look back at Mexico for the origins of their culture and history. But they cannot avoid looking through a transcultural lens.

When the Chicanos began organizing in the late 1960’s, feeling marginalized and neglected by traditional notions of Western Civilization and what was called ‘American history,’ they looked for their roots in an
ancient, mythical Mexico, rather than Mount Olympus and a western European paradigm. They saw themselves as the descendants of Mexican revolutionaries, Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, not George Washington or Thomas Jefferson. Turning, instead, to Pre-Columbian history, the Chicanos learned that the Aztecs’ diaspora had taken them to what is now Mexico City in the mid-fourteenth century, where they built a tremendous empire. Further, the Aztecs had migrated from the north, a mythical place they called Aztlan. Seeing themselves as descendants of the Aztecs, the Chicanos adopted the term, Aztlan, to indicate the Southwest.

If we follow that logic, that the Chicanos’ roots are firmly planted in Aztlan, then we can understand when they say, “We did not come to the United States, the United States came to us.” Or perhaps more stridently, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us!” Despite the border, there is a constant flow of immigrants from Mexico into the U.S., which has kept the Spanish language and Mexican cultural identities alive as well. This persistent exchange of cultural capital and labor has fueled the theatre of the Chicanos as they express their ethnic identities and marginal positions in both the U.S. and Mexico.

I know some of you are still thinking, “But that’s not the definition of diaspora. Diaspora means you cannot go home.” Although Chicanos could conceivably go home to Mexico, I have yet to see a Chicano play about returning to Mexico. Chicanos see Aztlan as home. Yet, regardless of whether the Chicanos call the Southwest ‘Aztlan,’ it really is not home in the sense that they feel they belong there, either. How could they, when traditional history books elide their very existence? When the media eradicates their presence or, worse, casts them as stereotypical victims or victimizers?

Like any other ethnic group, Chicanos have responded to their marginalization with laughter to build community, uniting in a common cause. I believe that they have employed humor in their theatre as a means of protection, as a weapon and as an educational tool. Chicanos laugh at the weaknesses of their oppressors and in so doing, feel superior to them. Indeed, nothing could be funnier to the oppressed than to make fun of the oppressor, to bring him down to size. As we all know, laughter is a very powerful expression, allowing the subaltern subject to
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find her voice in ridiculing the ‘master’ and other adversaries, if only for
a moment.\(^1\) Adding to their sense of otherness, Chicanos have often
performed their comedies outside the mainstream, on the margins, ef-
fectively in private.

In like manner, laughter has also been used as a weapon by the op-
pressors. As Albert Memmi, in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, ob-
served, it is incumbent upon the colonizer to make the colonized feel
inferior. Besides destroying anything that gives the subaltern a sense of
culture, place and agency, the colonizer must do all that he can to erase
the colonial subject’s identity. However, the Chicanos, like their indige-
nous ancestors, recognized this post-colonial project early on and
turned the colonizer’s gaze back upon his own absurdities and failings.
In what follows, I will give a brief overview of Chicano theatre and
comedy in an effort to illuminate how the plays and performances of
these people have demonstrated an on-going awareness of their dual
displacement, their ethnicity, their unique diaspora.

The terms used to describe the foci of these conference proceedings,
diaspora,’ ‘exile,’ ‘displacement’ and ‘ethnicity’ have all been central to
the evolution of a Chicano consciousness. Indeed, I argue that no play
written by a Chicana or Chicano to date can be separated from one or all
of these conditions. Conditions. States of being. I call them *conditions*
because that is what they have always been to the Chicano, the results of
the complex relationship Chicanos have had and continue to negotiate
with the U.S., with Mexico and with themselves. Most Chicano plays
deal with the multiple crises of identity: Who are we? What is our rela-
tionship to Mexico? To the dominant, Euro-American society? But let
me start with some definitions. Who, exactly, are the Chicanos and why
do they call themselves that? Why not Mexican-Americans?

The Chicanas/os are generally considered to be descendants of early
African, Spanish and Indian peoples who have lived in a kind of unified
disunity since Cortez first landed on the shores of Veracruz, Mexico, in
1519. And even amidst the slaughter perpetrated by the colonizers in the
name of a Christian god, the people knew how to laugh. They had to.
The indigenous people made fun of the Spaniards’ customs, their pale

\(^1\) Also, according to Dana F. Sutton, comedy can produce a catharsis.
skin, hairy bodies and faces, their body odor and their hypocrisies. And although the native people's voices were generally silenced, there is no doubt that there must have been some rousing re-creations of their colonizers' human foibles and failings. Although we do not have accounts of any private performances, human nature tells us that the natives, like the African slaves that would soon follow, found ways to make fun of their masters — when the masters were not looking.

In my analysis of the Chicano condition, I chart a linear progression from 'Mexican' to 'Chicano' to 'Anglo-American,' each stage representing a move towards total acculturation into an Anglo-American identity. Ironically, only those Chicanos who do not 'look Mexican,' who can 'pass' for white, can enter the Anglo-American space. Neither culture nor ethnicity being stable, if we unpack these terms we are dealing with generalizations. However, the bottom line, as far as the Chicanos are concerned, is whether they recognize the oppressions. Rather than say, "I made it, why can't they?" a Chicano works towards equal opportunities for all oppressed peoples but focuses on Chicanos and Mexicans living in the U.S.

Although no one is certain where and when the term, 'Chicano,' came into being, I do know that the theatre artists who call themselves Chicana or Chicano recognize the political ramifications and history of such a designation. I use the term 'Mechicano' when discussing conditions that are common to both the Chicano and the Mexican in the U.S. Chicano playwrights recognize a history of multiple struggles that still need to be addressed: inadequate educational opportunities, police brutality, poor working conditions, injustice on the streets and in the courts, better treatment in the prisons. In other words: marginalization. The teatros and playwrights have also tackled the internecine problems of cultural rejection, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, spousal abuse and gang violence. More recently, playwrights and performers have exposed issues of machismo and homophobia in the Mexican/Chicano communities.

The Chicanos have a rich historical tradition of theatre — a tradition that few histories of 'American' theatre include, although it goes back centuries. When the Spaniards arrived to the so-called 'New World' they found cultures rich in ritual, song, poetry, narrative, dance and even drama. Thus the friars who accompanied the colonizers understood that
they could employ theatre as a didactic tool. They adapted the Spanish *autos sacramentales* in their efforts to demonstrate through narrative, pantomime, song and dance, the One True Religion. One of the first *autos* they produced was the Old Testament tale of Adam and Eve, first performed in 1538.

According to one of the early Spanish chroniclers, “[The play] represented the fall of our first parents” and the setting “really seemed an earthly paradise.” Not much comedy in these early representations but very serious business. We can laugh at these rustic performances today, conjuring images of frustrated priests attempting to ‘direct’ their humble flock of colonized ‘Indios,’ mis-named because Columbus thought he had landed on another continent.

The production of this play is important to the study of Chicano theatre because one of the first plays published by a Chicano four centuries later was Carlos Morton’s Chicano version of the Fall from Grace, titled *El jardín (The Garden)*, first published in 1974. Also of interest for our purposes here, we can call the Expulsion from The Garden the archetypal diaspora in Judeo-Christian thought; the first example of a people having to move out of their homeland. Adam and Eve, the Original Father and Mother, leave a Garden Paradise never to be reclaimed.

I hope you will forgive me as I jump through centuries here, recklessly pointing out the highlights of the Chicano’s odyssey from indigenous subject on his/her own lands, to invisible Mexican in the U.S. On April 30, 1598, the first group of Spanish colonizers arrived at what is now El Paso, Texas. There they put on the first play performed in what is now the continental United States. That script has not survived but a few days later they produced the classic play about the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, *Los Moros y los Cristianos*, a spectacle the Spaniards took with them wherever they went to demonstrate their imperial power and Divine Right. Records of the Southwestern United States tell us that the Spanish priests and their followers continued to perform autos and other plays with and for the natives.

In 1820 Mexico gained independence from Spain and a mere 28 years later, in 1848, the Mexicans lost the Mexican American War and the vast northern reaches of *Nueva España* were ‘sold’ to the United States. To
many scholars, this rupture created the first Chicanos: a people who suddenly found themselves 'foreigners in their own land.' In 1910 Mexico found itself in the Revolution that lasted until 1917. This major disruption forced tens of thousands of Mexicans to migrate to the United States seeking political and economic asylum. They were not welcomed with open arms but their arms were welcomed: the strong arms of the Mexican laborers built railroads, mined copper and silver and, yes, picked the crops.

Many of those émigrés had intentions of returning to their homeland after the Revolution but once they had children, that return became very problematic. Those children often felt a stronger link to the U.S. by virtue of their birth and acculturation into the Anglo-American way of life. Further, if they visited Mexico, they were referred to as pochos, a derogatory term for those Mexicans who had deserted their homeland and could not speak correct Spanish, because it was often forbidden in the schools. All the while, from the late eighteenth century onward, Spanish religious folk plays were being performed in Mexican churches, and professional theatre troupes from Mexico and Spain made regular tours of cities with major Spanish-speaking populations performing secular dramas and comedies.

For some observers, Chicano theatre has its more direct roots in Mexican tent shows, called carpas. From the 1920s into the middle of the twentieth century, carpas, traveling troupes so named for the tents in which they performed, toured all across Mexico and the Southwestern U.S. Aimed at the proletariat, the carpas were variety shows, like vaudeville, in which audiences were treated to songs, dances, and other acts as well as sketches that resonated with the Mexicans who found themselves in an alien environment. Popular figures such as the pelado and pelada made audiences laugh with their comic shtick and topical themes. The legendary Mexican comic actor, Mario Moreno, began his career in the carpas, where he created his famous pelado Cantinflas, the little guy who comes through against all odds resisting a variety of villains and obstacles. You might be more familiar with Charlie Chaplin, with whom Cantinflas was always favorably compared.

The pelado's sense of displacement was most obvious in the sketches that ridiculed the Mexicans who were trying to 'pass' for Euro-Amer-
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icans, speaking an unlikely mixture of Spanish and English. Few carpa texts have survived but the following exchange from a novel of the period will give you an idea of this linguistic humor. In this scene, the two pelados have entered the U.S. illegally and are looking for work. They see a man who, “by the color of his skin, must be a Mexican,” so they ask him if he knows where they can find work. The man, pretending not to be Mexican, responds, “Juárt du yu sei? Ai du no tok Spanish” (Venezgas 43). This exchange is one example of the culture-clash that existed and still exists between the immigrant Mexicans trying to fit into a North American ‘Gringo’ expectation and, in the act, denying their more recently-arrived brethren. The vendido, or sellout, remains one of the most popular targets for Chicano satirists.

In the evolution of contemporary Chicano theatre, I distinguish between pre–1965 and post–1965 periods. In the contemporary period I see six stages. The first stage begins in 1965, the year Luis Valdez gathered a group of striking farm workers and forms the now legendary Teatro Campesino, the Farm Worker’s Theatre. By 1968, other Chicano teatros begin to emerge, collectively creating actos modeled on the Teatro Campesino’s performances. By the early 1970s we enter the second stage, when individual playwrights begin to write and publish their plays, most notably the late Estella Portillo, Luis Valdez, and Carlos Morton.

The third stage begins in 1978, marking a crucial turning point for Chicano theatre in general and Luis Valdez in particular when he writes and directs Zoot Suit. This play with music runs in Los Angeles for eleven months, a record for the time, and also plays on Broadway, the first (and last) play written and directed by a Chicano to achieve such a distinction. The financial success of Zoot Suit in Los Angeles opens the doors to the regional theatres who initiate ‘Hispanic Projects,’ in an effort to tap the Latino dollars. During this period we also note a growing sense of professionalism in the teatros, some of which have dedicated theatre spaces, offices and a working budget. The fourth stage begins in 1980, when women’s voices begin reaching the boards, changing the nature of the male-dominated Chicano Theatre Movement. Solo performers appear in the mid-eighties, marking a fifth stage; and the sixth stage begins in 1988 when Culture Clash, a comedy trio, is born.
Because the *acto* is the seed of all the Chicano theatre that will follow, I believe it is important to go back to the first examples of this form. An *acto* is a short, improvised sketch created by the participant/actors in an effort to expose a problem and hopefully offer a solution. Like the *Commedia dell’Arte*, *actos* employ stock characters, stereotypes and masks. And like the Spanish *autos*, *actos* may use allegorical figures. The characters may be defined by a sign and/or a mask, especially the villain, who generally wears a pig-faced mask. *Actos* are simple but not simplistic; satire that deals with very serious business: people’s lives.

The initial farm worker *actos*, *Las dos caras del Patroncito* (*The Two Faces of the Boss*), and *La quinta temporada* (*The Fifth Season*) were employed to bolster the morale of the workers and to garner support for the Union. I believe *La quinta temporada*, is the quintessential *acto* and thus merits our attention here. As is usual in the typical *acto*, a character runs onto the stage to grab the audience’s attention. He is wearing a sign around his neck that reads ‘Campesino’ and speaks directly to the audience: “Oh, hello — *quihubole!* My name is José. What else? And I’m looking for a job. [...] You see, I just got in from Texas this morning and I need to send money back to my *familia*” (Valdez 29). In this opening action, we find out who the character is, where he is from, Mexico, by way of Texas, and that he needs a job in order to send money to his family, ostensibly in Mexico. José is a Mexican Everyman, the humble campesino who is willing to do back-breaking labor, regardless of the pay. Into this scene walks the farm labor contractor, called a ‘Coyote’ by farm workers because he is a trickster and a cheat. With a sign around his neck identifying who he is, the Coyote introduces himself and offers José a job. The Coyote is followed by the grower, El Patron, wearing a pig-face mask. The grower shouts, “Summer, get in here,” and on walks an actor with his sign that reads ‘Summer,’ his back covered with fake money.

As ‘Summer’ passes, the farm worker grabs as many bills as he can off of ‘Summer’s’ back, stuffing these into his back pockets. Following closely behind him, the Coyote takes the bills out of the farm worker’s pockets and stuffs *his* back pockets. Right behind the Coyote is the grower, taking the bills out of the Coyote’s pockets. When ‘Summer’
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has passed, the farm worker is left with no money, the Coyote is counting his take and the grower is counting his large wad of bills. This simple technique is repeated through the Fall, again leaving the farm worker without money, when in walks deadly 'Winter' demanding money for groceries, heating bills, etc. Since there are no crops to pick in the winter, the Grower and the Coyote leave for lush vacations while 'Winter' batters the hapless and helpless farm worker. But 'Spring' arrives and convinces the farm worker to go on strike until the grower signs a union contract. The farm worker refuses to pick the crops and as 'Summer' and 'Fall' pass, with no workers to pick the crops, they leave with their backs covered with money. The Grower has to give in, the Coyote is booted off-stage and the acto ends in victory for the farm worker and the Union.

As you can see from this example, the acto is most effective when it satirizes the opposition, bringing it down to size. Recalling Freud’s oft-quoted treatise on jokes, the good doctor believed that “[b]y making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a round-about way the enjoyment of overcoming him — to which the third person, [...] bears witness by his laughter” (103). This symbolic deflation may be just that: symbolic, a metaphor, but it clearly illustrates to the ‘third person,’ the audience, that there is power in numbers; if all of the workers strike the boss will have to sign a union contract. The use of allegorical figures is pure fun; audiences always delight in the ‘Seasons,’ covered with money. Farm workers remain among the lowest-paid workers in the U.S., a thoroughly marginalized and neglected segment of the society. Through these early actos, often performed at the edges of the fields, on flatbed trucks, farm workers were and still are strengthened in their resolve, united in the generative release of communal laughter.

When the Teatro Campesino left the Union in 1967, the troupe’s actos began to reflect issues outside of the fields. The most produced and published acto from this anthology is “Los vendidos,” (“The Sellouts”) a theme that, as we saw, goes back to the earliest carpas. Perhaps the sell-out has always been a popular figure in the Chicano communities because everyone knows someone who denies his or her Mexican heritage. This is a natural response to the dominant society’s cultural and ethnic
norms and all immigrant groups in the U.S. have laughed at their versions of the 'sell-out.'

Here is an example of the vendido mentality: In the Teatro Campesino’s *No saco nada de la escuela* [*I Don’t Get Anything Out of School*] we follow a group of students from grammar school through college. When a young Chicana named Esperanza (Hope) enters the high school classroom, the Teacher asks her if she’s Mexican-American, to which she responds, “No, my parents were, but I’m Hawaiian” (Valdez 78). And although this *acto* was first produced in 1969, it resonates with Chicano audiences today. Indeed, all of the early Teatro Campesino *actos* can be produced today including the Vietnam protest pieces. To some observers, the war in Iraq has some uncanny and most unfortunate similarities to the Vietnam War. All you have to do is substitute ‘Iraq’ for ‘Vietnam’ and the message remains clear. But that is another topic.

The Teatro Campesino began touring to college and university campuses in 1967, effectively dropping seeds of creativity wherever they performed. Chicana and Chicano students who witnessed the Teatro’s *actos* said to themselves, “We can do that.” And they did, collectively creating their own *actos* based on their struggles: as students in an alien environment, as activists committed to social change on campus and in their communities. By 1970 the Teatro Campesino hosted the first annual Chicano Theatre Festival and in 1971, a national coalition of Chicano, Mexican and even Puerto Rican *teatros* was formed, calling the umbrella organization TENAZ, Spanish for tenacity, and an acronym for El Teatro Nacional de Aztlan (The National Theatre of Aztlan). In 1974 TENAZ held the Fourth Chicano Theater Festival in San Jose, California and hosted *teatros* from across the continent as well as one Carlos Morton, a budding playwright.

As stated earlier, Carlos Morton became one of the first individuals to begin writing and publishing plays when *El jardín*, was published in 1974. Unlike his sixteenth century predecessors, however, Morton is

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2 The first version of *El jardín* is in *El Grito* 7 (June-August 1974): 7–37; a revised version is in Carlos Morton, *The Many Deaths of Danny Rosales and Other Plays* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1983) 105–128. All references are to the 1983 version.
not interested in devout or fearful tears. Instead, he takes an irreverent attitude in his comedy, using the Old Testament tale of the temptation and fall from Grace as a point of departure for a contemporary vision of the Chicanos' post-modern, post-colonial condition. Time is irrelevant in this quickly-paced, comedy. The following exchange between Adan and Eva contextualizes these two as Chicanos by having Eva anachronistically refer to God as "the big ranchero:"

EVA: Why can't I have an apple?
ADAN: Keep your voice down!
EVA: I'm tired of eating nothing! Why can't I have some carne asada and some hot salsa with frijoles and arroz! I'd even settle for a hamburger and French fries. Or a Tequila Sunrise!
ADAN: The Serpent promised you all those things!
EVA: He said I could start with dessert (108).

Adapting the original narrative to a Southwestern context, Morton has the Serpent tempt Eva with a cactus apple. Eva is at first reticent to bite, but the Serpent then shows her the future of her people, telling her: "You live in Paradise worshipping the Lord who will one day come with the conquistadores" (110). The Serpent warns Eva: "the Europeans will use God's name to conquer our people and there will be centuries of oppression" (112). The Serpent transforms into a variety of politically charged incarnations, such as Richard Nixon and 'Padre Ladrón,' a lecherous priest whose name means 'thief' in English. By purposefully having the Serpent portray other villainous types, Morton underscores his commentary on these (then) current politicians and (recurrent) wayward priests.

Milcha Sanchez-Scott was one of the first Latina playwrights to write about Chicanas and other Latinas in her play, *Latina*, first produced in 1980 in Los Angeles. Unlike the earlier actos and plays, this play requires a full-fledged theatre with a revolving stage, walls that dissolve and various lighting and sound effects. The opening scene is a pantomime of a young Peruvian woman, leaving her mountain village to seek a better life en el norte. There is no humor in this opening sequence, just the stark reality of human migration. The scene then shifts to the Felix Sanchez Domestic Agency on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. We
see a bus bench in front of a storefront window with two mannequins dressed as maids.

Sarita goes to the door of the agency, discovers that it is locked and says to herself, “Christ ... Ah no, he’s late!” referring to her boss, Felix Sanchez. Recalling the farm worker in La quinta temporada she then turns to the audience:

I don’t like it when he’s late. I just don’t like it. I have to hang around here. Which is embarrassing. I have to go sit on the bus bench, which is also embarrassing [...] everybody will think that I am waiting for the bus, which means (a) I can’t drive, (b) I don’t have a car, or (c) both of the above — in Los Angeles, this is embarrassing.

[...
I spent the better part of an hour deciding what to wear, because I don’t want to be mistaken for a maid. I’m not a maid. You thought I was a maid [...] I am not a maid or a housekeeper. Housekeeper is what polite people call their maids. (Pause.) I don’t want to look Latina (86).

With this opening monologue to the audience, Sarita establishes her situation and her character — vendida. In a way Sarita is a female version of the coyote in the early farm worker actos, securing cheap domestic labor for the women who come to the Felix Sanchez Domestic Agency. And Sanchez is the ‘Patroncito.’

While Chicanas and Chicanos will laugh at Sarita’s feeble attempts to hide or even deny her Mexican roots, Hollywood is also the object of the playwright’s satire. Sarita knows she looks Mexican because, as an aspiring actress, she has to face Hollywood’s categorizations and stereotypes. Sarita tells the audience:

I’ll give you my credits. I was a barrio girl who got raped by a gang in Police Story, a young barrio mother who got shot by a gang in Starsky and Hutch, a barrio wife who got beat up by her husband who was in a gang in The Rookies. [...] It’s been a regular barrio blitz on television lately. If this fad continues I can look forward to being a barrio grandmother done-in by a gang of old Hispanics called Los Viejitos Diablitos, the old devils (89).

Throughout the play we learn a great deal about what it is like to be a maid in the U.S.; the loneliness, the sexual harassment, the meager pay and invisibility the women suffer. The central character, Sarita, is the only U.S. born Latina in the play and it is her journey from vendida to Chicana that we critique and admire.
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It is common among marginalized groups to hold onto their culture as much as possible. And, for many, language is the most vital link to that culture. Thus, Chicanos perform code-switching in their daily discourse, nimbly switching from English-to-Spanish and back at will, knowing that the listener will understand. In a poem he wrote in 1971, Luis Valdez begins with the following example of code-switching:

TEATRO
ERES EL MUNDO
Y LAS PAREDES DE LOS BUILDINGS
MAS GRANDES SON
NOTHING BUT SCENERY ("Pensamiento Serpentino" 170).

In other words:

TEATRO
YOU ARE THE WORLD
AND WALLS OF THE TALLEST BUILDINGS ARE NOTHING BUT SCENERY.

Another way of saying "All the world's a stage" but with a Chicano perspective. Another example of Chicano code-switching is in Alicia Mena's play Las nuevas tamaleras [The New Tamale Makers] in which the ghosts of two grandmothers have the following exchange:

DOÑA JUANITA: Oh, no, Doña Mercedes, they won't let us make tamales here in heaven.
DOÑA MERCEDES: A'Dio, ¿y po' que no? [My goodness, why not?]
DOÑA JUANITA: Pos, porque when you make tamales siempre hay chisme [Well, because when you make tamales there is always gossip and] -- St. Peter, he don't like the gossip.³

I have observed, over the years, that only bilingual audience members can truly appreciate the quick exchange of code-switching. And because they are unique in this ability, they feel empowered. They laugh at the

³ From a typescript of Alicia Mena's play, Las nuevas tamaleras (1992).
Jorge Huerta

veracity of the dialogue and they revel in the fact that only they are in on the joke, much to the chagrin of non-Spanish speakers, Anglo and Mexican-American alike. There is even a third argot, caló, the language of the pachucos made famous by Valdez with his character of El Pachuco in Zoot Suit.

Prior to the early 1970s, Chicanos did not have access to the print media, and thus much of Chicano history and cultural production was originally in the oral tradition or self-published, like the Teatro Campesino's first acto anthology. Language became a signifier for being different and the teatros, playwrights, novelists and poets used this to their advantage, purposefully excluding the non-Spanish speakers.

Solo performers began to appear in the mid-1980s, expressing various perspectives on marginalization. In 1993 Rick Najera created his one-man show The Pain of the Macho, a series of monologues by various Latino 'types,' each one dealing in one way or another with his machismo. This piece begins with an announcer's voice telling the audience that Rick Najera will not play the role of the macho tonight. We immediately hear two other male voices on the speakers reacting negatively to this news. Sound effects of a riot ensue when suddenly Mr. Najera runs onto the stage and shouts:

Please remain calm. Puerto Ricans stop inciting the Mexicans. Mexicans stop inciting the Puerto Ricans. Cubans stop inciting everybody. In the name of Edward James Olmos (The rioting sounds stop immediately.)

Thank you. I'm Rick Najera. I'm sorry, but I can't play a macho tonight. My therapist has warned me not to play a macho. He feels it would be very dangerous because I have worked very hard to get rid of the macho and I don't want to regress. I hate the word macho. I prefer the more politically correct term: "Latino males with strong opinions." I have been in therapy to forget the macho inside of me. And it's working. I have learned to be less angry and not to blame shift.

"America stole my land!" - that's blame-shifting. I don't want to do that. I want to be a friendly minority that dances folkloric on Sundays (11).

By referring to the other most prominent Latino groups, the Puerto Ricans and the Cubans, Najera satirizes some of the discrepancies between the cultures. He also critiques the expectations of the dominant society, who do not want radicals challenging their hegemony, but rather, harmlessly performing their quaint folkloric dances at special
occasions. He also makes reference to an actor, Edward James Olmos, who has become an icon in the Chicano community, our only ‘movie star,’ as well as a community activist and humanitarian.

The most prominent Chicano comedy group is Culture Clash, composed of three men, Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas and Herbert Siquenza. Culture Clash emerged in 1988 and continues to perform throughout the United States creating satire and social commentary that entertains as it educates. The trio’s most recent effort, Chavez Ravine, premiered in 2003, in Los Angeles. This is a docu-drama that, like Zoot Suit, recounts an important episode in the history of the Mexicans and Chicanas/os in Los Angeles, this time in the 1950s. As in their other works, the three men take on a number of roles as they recount the events that led to the expulsion of the Mechicanas/os living in Chavez Ravine ostensibly to build the Dodger (baseball) Stadium. In a wonderfully telling moment, Herbert is narrating as the Anglo power brokers discuss their plans. He says to the audience, “Watch a Mexican become invisible.” He then grabs a broom and begins to sweep. The irony of this moment is never lost on a Mechicano audience nor anyone who is sensitive to the virtual invisibility of working class Latinas and Latinos in this society.

So here we are, in the year 2004, and Chicanas and Chicanos are still laughing and still virtually invisible in the American imaginary. They laugh at the gringo as well as at themselves. They laugh at ignorant politicians and they laugh at inept judges. And they just cannot seem to get enough of the sellout. Certainly, the players and the politics change; the situations evolve as the authors evolve. And the venues have developed from flat bed trucks to the stages of community-based Latino theatres and professional regional theatres across the country. But underlying each of the more recent comedies are the humble campesino and the arrogant grower, locked in struggle. No more signs around their necks and no more masks to hide behind, but scratch the surface of the villain and you will hear a pig-like grunt.
Works Cited

Primary Literature


Secondary Literature

Negotiating Difference, Identity, and Community: Tony Kushner’s Jews in “the land behind the Statue of Liberty”

I. Introduction

Much of Tony Kushner’s playwriting focuses on the construction of America in the interplay of the different communities that constitute it. Although in Angels in America he scrutinizes the experience of gay men in America, the particularities of this experience always transcend the specific. Intertwined with the particularities of other minorities, they speak to a larger, far more universal agenda. For Kushner, oppression is both specific and universal and the struggle of one oppressed group or minority is always connected with that of another. America is constantly re-invented in scenes representing the frictions occurring between minorities and majorities as well as among different minorities.

The combination of particular and universal agendas in Kushner’s work, Jewish characters play a prominent part, and at least quantitatively much more than gay characters. Only Angels in America has the situation of gays in America as one of its major themes; Jewish themes and characters permeate many of Kushner’s plays. The focus of this essay is the portrayal of Jewish characters, their relationship to America, and the construction and definition of Jewish identity and community in
Kushner’s plays. By analyzing Kushner’s work from this angle, I hope to demonstrate that Kushner, in many ways, portrays Jewish experience as central to American identity.

My examples will be taken from three plays: “It’s An Undoing World” Or Why Should It Be Easy When It Can Be Hard (1995), Angels in America (1993), and Caroline, or Change (2003). It’s An Undoing World is a one-act play about a character called Sarah, a young Jewish immigrant to America at the beginning of the twentieth century. Angels in America is Kushner’s most acclaimed play, reflecting on everything ranging from the AIDS epidemic, the Reagan era, and racism, to holes in the ozone layer and fin de siècle questions of apocalypse and salvation. Caroline, or Change is a musical about the relationship of a Jewish family and their African American maid in Louisiana at the beginning of the civil rights movement.1

II. Kushner’s Jews and America

2.1 Arriving in the “land behind the Statue of Liberty”

For more than two centuries, America has been a place of refuge and a new home for many Jews. Fleeing social exclusion, economic hardship, and persecution in Europe, they encountered relative equality and a range of liberties in America which were previously unknown to them. It is hardly surprising that Jews in particular had much appreciation for the new life America offered to them and for the opportunities to participate in the process of shaping and defining this new country. Many famous American texts that celebrate America’s integrative potential and attempt to define the relationship between America and her immigrant groups were written by Jewish-Americans. Emma Lazarus, who wrote the poem engraved into the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, “The New Colossus” (1883), was Jewish. So were Israel Zangwill, who wrote the famous play The Melting Pot (1908), and Horace M. Kallen,

1 Since Caroline, or Change has not been published to date, I quote from an unpublished draft of the play. I also quote from an unpublished version of Undoing World. My gratitude goes to Tony Kushner for giving me access to these drafts.
Negotiating Difference, Identity, and Community

who brought up the idea of cultural pluralism in his essay “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot” (1915) early in the twentieth century (cf. Shapiro 150f).

In this tradition, Tony Kushner is concerned with the ideal of an integrative America and with its role as a place of refuge for immigrants in general and Jews in particular. Very critical of Israel, he emphasizes that for American Jews “the dream of millennia was due to find its ultimate realization not in Jerusalem but in this country” (American Things 5). With its roots in colonial and revolutionary times, the notion of America as the promised land of liberty, equality, justice, and inclusion serves as the foundation of American identity. Kushner’s perception of America as the land of “[unique] radical possibility” (Szentgyorgyi 17) and what he himself calls his “dangerously romantic reading of American history” (16) are part of this fundamentally American tradition. So is his disappointment in the constant failure of America to live up to its promise.

Though utter dismay over the social and political situation in America permeates all his plays, essays, and interviews, Kushner nevertheless believes in a utopian prospect unique to his country. Shortly before the 2004 election, he writes:

I’m regularly called an America-hater by right-wing types, but that’s entirely untrue. I don’t much like the word patriot because the worst people use it as a lead pipe to silence dissent, but I’m a patriot – a progressive leftist patriot with big internationalist dreams […] I think America frequently fails to live up to its best ambitions, but its best ambitions are among the best ambitions a country can have: democracy, justice, freedom, peace.2

In his plays, Kushner juxtaposes his ideal of an integrative America with a rather bleak reality. When Sarah, the protagonist of It’s an Undoing World, is asked how she found America, she answers, “It was the land behind the Statue of Liberty” (17). This choice of words implies a separation of an ideal of America, symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, from the reality of America, represented by “the land behind” it.

The tension between the Statue of Liberty and "the land behind" is expressed in the lyrics of a song Sarah sings toward the end of *It's an Undoing World*. Echoing Lazarus' "The New Colossus," the song refers to the Statue of Liberty as the mother of exiles, symbolizing the American ideal of openness and inclusion. However, instead of being able to extend a "world-wide welcome" (Lazarus) to all exiles in need of safety and home, the Mother of Exiles is in despair, "watching for her dear departed, for her children cast upon the sea." (43)

Closing her doors to those in need, America betrays her own principles. In rejecting the "tired," the "poor," and the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (Lazarus), "the land behind" does not fulfill the promise the Statue of Liberty seems to offer. Sarah's song, also called "Undoing World" to stress its pivotal position in the play, deals with the situation of refugees in a highly personalized way: the audience is addressed as "you" and placed directly in the position of the refugee. The condition of the "wretched modern world" described as "dispossession by attrition" (43) is made vivid by picturing the loss of love, home, and the futility of all efforts to create something permanent:

Don't cry out or cling in terror darling that's a fatal error clinging to a somebody / You thought you knew was yours.

[...]You drift away, you're carried by a stream,
Refugee a wanderer you roam;
You lose your way, so it will come to seem:
No place in particular is home.
You glance away, your house has disappeared,
The sweater you've been knitting has unpurled.
You live adrift, and everything you feared
Comes to you in this undoing world. (43)

"Hollow-breasted broken-hearted" (43), however, the "Queen of Exiles" cannot soothe the refugee's pain and give him shelter; she is forced to turn her children away, even though she seems to be the only hope left for them. Rejected by her, the "you" addressed in the song will remain "[e]ternally a stranger out-of-doors, [d]esperate in this undoing world" (43). The last stanza of the song, then, is a last, desperate call for America to fulfill her promise:
Mother, for your derelicted children from your womb evicted
Grant us shelter harbor solace safety Let us in!
Let us tell you where we traveled how our hopes our lives unraveled
How unwelcome everywhere we've been. (44)

By addressing the Mother of Exiles directly, the refugees remind her that “shelter harbor solace safety” is what she stands for. In the context of Kushner’s work, both the invocation of the ideal and the dismantling of its shortcomings stress that the promise can and should be fulfilled rather than that the ideal itself may be flawed.

With its emphasis on loss and displacement, its position in a play about Jewish immigrants and its setting to klezmer music, Sarah’s song clearly focuses on the Jewish history of suffering. However, the hardship of Jewish immigrants depicted in It’s an Undoing World is not specific to Jewish experience. The situation of oppressing and suffering experienced by Kushner’s Jewish characters is associated with the oppression and suffering of other minority groups. Immediately after Sarah’s song, this is stressed by the reference to California State Proposition 187. In the connection between the suffering of the Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century and that of the mostly Mexican illegal aliens in the California of the 1990s, the pain of those rejected by “the land behind the Statue of Liberty” has universal relevance. At the center of attention is — in fact — America herself.

2.2 Kushner’s Plays and the Blending of Jewish and American Identities

While America has always been the land of promise — sometimes fulfilled, sometimes unfulfilled — her very integrative potential has also been regarded as a threat to Jewish identity. America has had an enormous impact on the definition and self-definition of her numerous im-

3 Undoing World was originally performed in collaboration with the New York klezmer band “The Klezmatics.”

4 Proposition 187 was a controversial 1994 California proposition which sought to deny public benefits, including schooling and health-care, to illegal immigrants. The proposition was passed by a two-third majority of the Californians. It did not come into effect, however, since it was almost immediately met with a federal restraining order. Almost all of its provisions were declared unconstitutional in 1998.
migrating groups, and there are those who fear that their distinct identity might eventually dissolve in the blend that makes up American culture. In his book, *The Americanization of the Jews*, Robert M. Seltzer stresses:

For Jews, America was a land of immense opportunities and, for Judaism, immense dangers. [...] America threatened personal disorientation and collective disintegration, corrosion of family ties and the demise of a distinctive Jewish culture, with a rapidity much greater than almost anywhere else in the world. (4–5)

While Jews found a home and the opportunity for social integration in America, the constitutive elements of Jewish identity have continually remained contested. As Jews have become more and more accepted into mainstream American culture, Jewish traditions have become watered down and community cohesion has loosened. Thus follows the question of many scholars: can Jews be part of American culture and still retain their distinct Jewish identity? And if so, how and within what sort of parameters can that identity be defined? There would rightly be a number of objections if one tried to classify Jews as a religious group, an ethnic group, a cultural community or a nation. As religion, culture, language, Zionism, and even support for the state of Israel have receded into the background as markers of identity, many Jews have focused their attention on a common history of oppression. The question of Jewish-American identity and the problem of defining Jewishness is frequently addressed in Kushner’s plays. Tony Kushner calls the Jewish community “the oddest phenomenon in modern history” (McLeod 83), especially because it so effectively defies definition.

In the beginning of *Angels in America*, the first generation Jewish American immigrants from Eastern Europe are symbolically buried. Both Sarah — who is being buried — and the Rabbi who buries her, subscribe to the idea of Jewish culture as an intact entity brought over from the old World. To them, the gap between this culture and the America of their descendants is unbridgeable. Instead of perceiving the lives of the next generation as an amalgam of different cultures and influences, the Rabbi sees them as forever traveling back and forth between two places. In fact, the separation of the two places and the focus on the place of origin is a concept held by first generation immigrants. The rabbi explains, “and how we struggled, and how we fought, for the
family, for the Jewish home, so that you would not grow up here, in this strange place, in this melting pot where nothing melted” (Millennium, 10).

Any depiction of Jewish life in Angels in America and Tony Kushner’s other plays shows, however, that this struggle of the first generation was not successful. The American tendency to conflate elements of Jewish culture with those of the other cultures brought to America is present throughout Kushner’s work. Especially the Chanukah party in Caroline, or Change reflects the hybrid situation of the American Jews. The family sings:

```
Chanukah Oh Chanukah  
oh Dreydl and Menorah!  
We celebrate it even though  
it isn’t in the Torah!  
Talmud barely mentions it,  
the way they kept that candle lit;  
sages in their colloquies  
say bupkes bout the Maccabees  
[...].  
Who cares what all the sages say?  
We celebrate it anyway!  
[...]  
we’re celebrating Chanukah,  
especially in America! (56)
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The elaborate Chanukah festivities are in themselves an adaptation to the predominantly Christian American society. Celebrating the rededication of the Temple after the successful Maccabean revolt against King Antiochus, Chanukah is not traditionally one of the major Jewish holidays. As the song states: it “isn’t in the Torah” and only “barely mentioned” by the Talmud. Due to its proximity on the calendar to Christmas, however, it has become increasingly important in the context of Jewish-American culture. The blend of cultures is additionally emphasized by the interlacing of the Chanukah song with the melody and lyrics from “America the Beautiful,” such as “America America God shed His grace on thee” (56). The celebration in Caroline, or Change thus becomes as much a celebration of America as it is a celebration of Chanukah.
III. Jewish Identity, Difference, and Community in Kushner’s Plays

One trait typical of Kushner’s Jews is their strong affinity for America. Most of them identify themselves first as Americans and only secondly—or thirdly or fourthly—as Jews. Generally, they are neither religious nor traditional, and they certainly do not share the same political convictions. Nevertheless, their Jewishness plays an important role in Kushner’s plays. All of Kushner’s Jewish characters are explicitly identified as Jewish by the author, and they frequently refer to their own Jewishness throughout the plays. Since it is so difficult to define what exactly being Jewish in America means, I would like to take a closer look at how Kushner constructs his Jewish characters as Jews. What is particularly Jewish about them? Is there something like a Jewish community in his plays?

In an attempt to describe how Jewish identity is conceptualized in Kushner’s plays, three dimensions of identification become apparent. First, identity is achieved by the contrast to other groups, secondly by Kushner’s use of rituals in the construction of community, and thirdly, by a common history of oppression.

3.1 Identity and Difference

In many instances, Kushner’s characters seem to define themselves as Jews through the mere use of the category or label ‘Jewish’ rather than through a commonality of experience. Instead of expressing a common meaning, this category then seems to function primarily as a symbolic marker of difference in relation to others.

This tendency figures prominently in the figure of Roy Cohn in Angels in America. He almost exclusively identifies himself through difference, and defines his Jewishness in terms of power relations. In contrast to the WASP aristocracy of New England, he feels like “some filthy little Jewish troll” (Millennium 67). However, when he talks to Belize, his African-American male nurse, he makes sure to stress the comparatively higher status of Jews in American society. He defines the relationship as follows: “My people being the first to sell retail to your people, your people being the first people my people could afford to hire to sweep out the store Saturday mornings” (Perestroika 24). However, Roy, undoubtedly the most ruthless character in the play, is not the only
one who uses these devices of self-definition. Politically correct Louis
does the same. When, during a stay in London, he compares himself to
what he perceives as the “monolith” of a homogeneous British society,
he feels like “Sid the Yid” (Millennium 91). In turn, he feels himself to
be a part of American society and can hardly perceive the monolith that
others — especially African Americans — are facing. In contrast to Roy,
he does not express contempt for them, but he is very well aware that,
when defined against the situation of African-Americans, he holds
“some position of privilege” (Millennium 92).

These examples show that all self-definitions based on power rela-
tions operate with an inferior status of minority groups. All of a sudden,
Jews are juxtaposed with African Americans without further attention
to what these categories entail. Clearly functioning as a critique of un-
reflected identity politics, Kushner’s characters often retreat to identity
categories when they feel threatened or lack rational arguments. When
Louis in Angels in America realizes that he is entangled in his own con-
tradictions in his arguments with Belize, he invokes divisions not be-
tween himself and Belize, but between Jews and African Americans. Out
of the blue, he attacks Belize, “You hate me because I’m a Jew” (Millem-
nium 94), and claims that “most black people are anti-Semitic.” (Pere-
stroika 95). A similar situation occurs in Caroline, or Change when
Noah, the young Jewish boy, and Caroline have a fight. While being
African American or Jewish had never even been addressed in their in-
teraction, in the heat of the moment it becomes the major dividing line
between them. Noah blurts out:

    CAROLINE! [...] CAROLINE! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!
    There’s a bomb!
    President Johnson has built a bomb
    special made to kill all negroes!
    I hate you, hate you, kill all negroes! Really! For true!
    I hope he drops his bomb on you! (74)

And Caroline’s answer is in no way different from Noah’s attack:

    Noah, Hell is like this basement,
only hotter than this, hotter than August,
With the washer and the dryer and the boiler
full blast, Hell’s hotter than goose fat,
much hotter than that.
Hell's so hot it makes flesh fry.
(Little pause)
and Hell's where Jews go when they die. (74)

In scenes like this, categories of identity serve as a rationale for either attacking or retreating from others, and thus widen the gulf between individuals. This is best exemplified by the interaction between Roy and Belize. In a fierce battle of words, Roy calls Belize “nigger [...]. Mongrel. Dinge. Slave. Ape” (Perestroika 56f), degrading his opponent not only personally, but making use of the most ghastly epithets for African Americans. Only when Belize finally shoots back on the same level by invoking anti-Semitic vocabulary and calling Roy a “Kike” does Roy declare, “Now you’re talking” (57). When Belize adds another anti-Semitic stereotype and calls him “Greedy Kike” (57), Roy seems even more pleased. Roy’s “Now you’re talking” comments on the way the two men are trying to distinguish themselves from each other not only by their divergent opinions and their mutual dislike, but also by resorting to stereotypical insults. Roy seems satisfied to drag down somebody like Belize — whose comments are usually very differentiated and politically correct—to this degrading and politically unacceptable level of discourse.

3.2 Constructing Community

Kushner’s Jewish characters share neither a common culture nor a common belief system or religion. In fact, being Jewish means something different to each one of them. At times it seems as if the only thing they have in common is their subscription to the label ‘Jewish.’ This is especially true for the three main Jewish characters in Angels in America — Roy Cohn, the conservative power broker, Louis, an openly gay leftist, and Ethel Rosenberg, the ghost of a communist from the 1950s whose death on the electric chair was heavily pursued by Roy — who could not be more different from and even antagonistic to one another.

Nevertheless, Kushner binds these three characters together in one of the most powerful scenes in Angels in America. After Roy’s death, all three Jews are united when both Ethel and Louis say the Kaddish, the
Jewish mourner’s prayer, over Roy Cohn’s body towards the end of *Perestroika* (22f). In this scene, the Kaddish connects the dead (Ethel and Roy) and the living (Louis), stopping at no boundaries of personal strife or political conviction. For a moment, the connection between the Jewish characters is stronger than everything that keeps them apart. Even though they are so different from one another in their view of the world and in their actions, they are bound together in a strong and almost magical way in the course of this scene. In fact, the connection between them is not even a connection of choice. All three characters would clearly oppose any affiliation with one another. Louis protests, “I’m not saying any fucking Kaddish for him” (*Perestroika* 121), and it is more than likely that Roy, too, would have objected to Louis’ and Ethel’s blessing. Ethel joins Louis in saying the prayer, even though just a few pages earlier she tells Roy that she hates him and will forever be unable to forgive him. Nevertheless, the three Jews are united in the Kaddish, which, as Belize points, asks for “Forgiveness” and “Peace” For a short moment, they form a Jewish community and are embraced by it. The Kaddish scene is a strong affirmation of Jewish community and identity. Difference does not matter and — at least for a short moment — sins are forgiven. The power of the Kaddish is such that even the outrageous Roy Cohn becomes part of the community asserted by this ritual.

This scene is almost a foreshadowing of the epilogue of *Angels in America*. Symbolizing a pluralistic American society, the end of *Angels in America* features Prior, a WASP with AIDS in the midst of his friends, Hannah, a Mormon woman, Belize, an African American ex-drag queen, and Louis, who is Jewish. In his final speech, Prior speaks a blessing and proclaims the beginning of a “Great Work” (*Perestroika* 146) — the struggle against defeatism and for a fairer and better society. With his blessing, he embraces not only his diverse group of friends, but also the audience. Through this ritual, everyone involved — on stage and off — it seems, becomes part of a community. Differences of gender, religion, sexual orientation and race are not reasons for separation and isolation. The ‘interconnectedness’ between the different racial, cultural,

5 It is interesting to note that the whole ritual is facilitated by Belize, who is African American.
religious groups and the acceptance of different sexual identities is presented as the basis of a new and better American society, or, as Framji Minwalla calls it, a "pluralistic paradise" (116). Jonathan Freedman has criticized the assimilationist tendencies this ending seems to hold. He explains, "It is troubling that a play beginning with a rabbi's voice extolling 'the melting pot that does not melt' ends with the subordination of the Jew to Christian emplotment" (99). His criticism seems not altogether justified, though, especially given the fact that the epilogue celebrates diversity and connection, not merely connection or assimilation. In the epilogue of *Angels in America*, the Jew is by no means subordinated to a Christian context. On the contrary: the epilogue shows Jewishness as one of the diverse but important foundations of American identity.

The Kaddish scene seems to make a statement for the Jewish community similar to the one the epilogue makes for American society. Just like America itself, the Jewish community is plural and diverse. This point is even further emphasized in a recent book Kushner and Alisa Solomon jointly edited. "We believe," they state, "that when the Jewish community is presented an image of itself a monolith [...] it grows strange to itself, alienated from an essential source of its political, philosophical, ethical, spiritual richness" (*Wrestling with Zion* 9). Often it appears as if Kushner's characters have nothing in common except for their acceptance of the category 'Jewish.' However, the Kaddish scene makes it very clear that there is something like a Jewish community in Kushner's plays. This community, however, is as diverse as America itself.

**IV. Conclusion**

The connection between the different Jews in Kushner's plays is based on the one hand on the category of 'Jewishness,' which depends on other categories for its meaning, and on the other hand on a sense of connection and community that is created by Kushner, for instance through the Kaddish scene in *Angels in America*. A third connection is one that not only encompasses the other two, but may also be the one to which Kushner attributes the most importance: a sensibility that stems from a shared history of oppression and discrimination. He explains:
There’s an amazing thing that all oppressed people do, whether they’re victims of racism or misogyny or homophobia or anti-Semitism. I think that there is a way in which people take hatred and transform it into some kind of style […]. For Jews, it’s called menschlichkeit and for African Americans [it’s called] soul, and for gay people it’s fabulousness. It comes from suffering and having survived the worst that the world can throw at you. (Cunningham 75)

In this context Kushner emphasizes, however, that his focus on the history of oppression as an identifying moment for Jews does not entail an insistence on the singularity of Jewish experience. He clearly dissociates himself from those American Jews who, along with Elie Wiesel, define the Holocaust as a singular event to which no other atrocity must be compared. Kushner attributes a different meaning to the Jewish history of suffering. He even advocates “using the Holocaust model, promiscuously” (Pacheco 54). In Kushner’s view, the Jewish experience of suffering endows the Jewish community with a strong responsibility for tolerance and support of others. He argues,

I’m very critical of Jews because I am one and, for instance, Jewish homophobia makes me angrier than Goyische homophobia. I think, good God, after what we’ve gone through for the last six hundred years and before…surely suffering should teach us compassion. (Jones 24)

It appears that the failure to understand the suffering and economic struggle of Caroline, the African-American maid in Caroline, or Change, is especially unforgivable because her employers are Jewish and — in Kushner’s opinion — should really know better. Mr. Stopnick’s behavior is one example of the Jewish failure to recognize common cause with other minorities in general and African Americans in particular. He welcomes the civil rights movement while at the same time occupying the position of the oppressor. Dramaturgically, this is emphasized by the fact that he has an argument over the efficacy of Martin Luther King’s strategies with Caroline’s daughter Emmy, who serves food while he is sitting at the table. Nevertheless, he assumes the right to criticize the non-violent nature of the movement, deriving his “expert status” from his own Jewishness. He states, “Oh Jews can be nonviolent too. There’s nothing meeker than a Jew! Listen girlie, we have learned: nonviolence will get you burned” (63). With this allusion to the Holo-
caust, Mr. Stopnick uses the Jewish history of oppression and his position as a Jew to judge the behavior of other oppressed groups and to fashion himself as someone on their side, even though his actions clearly suggest otherwise.

The partially negative characterization of Jews and their failure to support those in need was a repeated point of criticism from the preview audiences of *Caroline, or Change* during its run at the Public Theater in New York. Rebecca Rugg, who was involved in the production as a dramaturge, states, “There were lots and lots of audience members who felt it was a really limited portrait of Jews and I think that that came from a concern that it’s kind of a negative portrait of the Jewish family” (Rugg). However, Kushner suggests that their relatively strong position as a minority in American society, coupled with their history of oppression, gives Jews a frontline position in the struggle for social change. The demand that Jews live up to this position permeates *Caroline, or Change* as well as his other plays. In the portrayal of Jewish characters and community, Kushner leaves no doubt that Jewish-Americans have the potential to be a leading force at the center of the struggle for a pluralistic, tolerant, and integrative American society.

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*Primary Literature*


**Secondary Literature**


Rugg, Rebecca. Personal interview. 20 February 2004.


Henning Schäfer

Counteracting Displacement: Native Theatre as a Tool for Healing the Wounds of the Residential School System

I. Introduction: A Colonisation of the Mind

The history of Native people in the Americas is a history of displacement. Native people were driven from their ancestral lands by the European colonisers and confined to reserves that grew smaller and smaller, mostly on land that was worthless for the settlers. In the United States, this amounted to many violent confrontations and ultimately culminated in genocide. In Canada, colonisation was mostly exercised on a more subtle level. Here, too, Native culture was nearly destroyed by the colonisation process, both through assimilationist government politics and overzealous missionaries. The final aim was to eliminate Native culture entirely and transform Native people into ‘good Christians’ and ‘proper’ Canadian citizens. The major tool of this assimilation project was education, mainly in residential schools far away from the children’s home reserve. The residential school system left many former students traumatised and alienated; not only physically displaced from their reserves but also displaced from their culture. Since the residential schools

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1 Exceptions are the Beothuk genocide in Newfoundland and the two Métis rebellions, which are often glossed over when Canada praises itself for its non-violent Native policy.
closed in the latter half of the twentieth century, Native people tried to reclaim this lost cultural heritage and again the major tool for that was education.

Education is also one of the main goals of the Native theatre scene. The artists see their work as a means to overcome colonial structures and to teach their own people (but also non-Natives) about their culture and traditions. Several playwrights have written about their own experiences in residential schools to lay bare the crimes committed against them and their fellow students and to pose an example for others.

In the following, I will give a brief summary of the history of residential schools in Canada and will then turn to dramaturgical strategies against this collective trauma, this colonisation of the minds of Native people.

II. History of the Residential School System

Since 1602, the churches experimented with boarding schools for Native children with varying success, but it was not until the nineteenth century that they were installed all over the country. In these schools Native children were to be raised by missionaries, far away from their families. At first, the Recollet, Jesuit and Ursuline orders established schools in New France, from 1620 to 1680. From 1820 onwards, the Protestant, Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches built their first schools. The Bagot Commission (1847) and the Gradual Civilization Act (1857) gave recommendations to turn these schools into government operations. After the seven treaties between 1871 and 1877, the first industrial schools were implemented in what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan. The mission schools already in existence were then also turned over to the government, although still operated by missionaries. In the 1920s, 80 schools were in operation all over Canada. For the church, the main aim of these schools was Christian conversion, whereas the government tended to stress that Native people require skills that help them survive in an industrial civilization. Thus the focus was mostly on vocational training for the boys and domestic skills for the girls.

Information in this section mostly derives from Dickason and Miller, who offers an exceptionally detailed account of the residential school system.
Life in the schools was hard. Attendance was compulsory, and often children were taken away from their parents by force. Many stayed hidden to escape the schools. The teachers were mostly untrained and either under- or unpaid. The food was of low quality; health care was almost non-existent. The children's chores were extensive; they were used as a cheap workforce for farming and gardening. Native languages were prohibited, likewise all Native traditions. The children were taught to be ashamed of their own cultural heritage. Punishment for transgressions was harsh. In addition to all that, many students were sexually abused by the staff. When the children returned to their communities, they were alienated from their own culture and heavily traumatized.

Things did not change for the better until after World War II, when the Indian Act, the legal framework behind the government's assimilation policy, was amended and many repressive regulations abandoned. In 1969, the partnership between the government and the churches ended and slowly the residential schools were abandoned. The last school closed in 1996. In the same year, the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was published, devoting considerable space to an assessment of the residential school system.

It has only been recently that charges are being pressed against former teachers, the churches and the government, who finally issue apologies and make reparations, albeit slowly. There are over 90,000 Native people alive today who went through residential schools, and over 5,000 cases representing 12,000 individuals have been raised against the government. In 90% of these cases, sexual and physical abuse are the main concerns.

### III. Plays About Residential Schools

The stories we hear today are just the success stories of those who survived and managed to make a living. Many children died during their time in the residential schools, others never recovered. The life stories of former residential school students are frequently characterized by alcoholism, violence, mental diseases, unemployment and crime. One of the most important tasks of the current generation is to heal the wounds of this repressive government policy and to try to recover what is left of Native culture. Autobiographies like Basil Johnston’s *Indian School*...
Henning Schäfer

Days and semi-autobiographical novels like Tomson Highway’s Kiss of the Fur Queen were written to expose the crimes committed against Native children, but also to give other former students hope and to show them a way out of their trauma.

The plays dealing with the history of the residential schools likewise mostly derive from (auto-)biographical information. Shirley Cheechoo’s Path with no Moccasins is an autobiographical one-woman show, Oskiniiko Larry Loyie’s Ora Pro Nobis and Larry Guno’s O’Keefe are also partly autobiographical, Vera Manuel’s Strength of Indian Women is based on the memories of her mother, and for Dale Lakevold and Darrel Racine’s Misty Lake, Racine used the life story of Elizabeth Samuel, former student of the Guy Hill Residential School in The Pas, Manitoba, the same school that the famous Cree playwright Tomson Highway attended and wrote about in his novel.

The style and point of view of these plays is quite different. All except Cheechoo tell their stories mostly in the realist mode, but only O’Keefe is set entirely in a residential school (judging from the short excerpt in CanPlay). In Loyie’s Ora Pro Nobis, the episodes in the school are framed by present-day scenes in a Native Centre where the former student George, now an Elder, is invited to speak on the subject of healing and residential schools. The scenes in between are staged as a flashback of George while he is waiting for the others. Significantly, the same actor played both Georges, the Elder and the child, in the premier production. The play ends with George addressing the audience in a soliloquy, telling them what has become of his fellow students.

Manuel and Lakevold/Racine set their plays entirely in the present. In Strength of Indian Women, four women meet for a feast of Sousette’s granddaughter. They reminisce on their time in the residential school and on its impact on their later lives. Sousette has found a picture of their time at school and shows it to the others, sparking memories. Only two short flashback scenes interrupt the present-day action, the other scenes are told by the characters, supported by sound effects like Gregorian chants and the sound of a hand-held bell, signifying the characters’ memories. Misty Lake is similar: the main action is an interview between the young Métis woman Patty and former residential school student Mary, with interruptions by Bird who went to the same school.
All three characters at times address the audience and recount their past, sometimes acting out short scenes. The play is opened and closed by a Drummer who also appears once in the course of the play and sings a healing song for Bird.

Shirley Cheechoo’s play *Path with no Moccasins* differs from the others in that it is composed as one long soliloquy, in which a character named Shirley relives certain stages of her life, the first being her time at the residential school. For this part, Shirley actually becomes the young schoolgirl again, talking in turn to the moon, the audience or herself, or reliving memories, which is sometimes underlined by sound effects, such as a train whistle.

The plays show various typical aspects of life at the residential schools. In *Path with no Moccasins*, *Ora Pro Nobis* and *Strength of Indian Women*, the children try to run away from school in vain. In *O’Keefe* and *Ora Pro Nobis*, the children complain about the bad food. In all these plays the severe corporeal punishment and excessive violence at school are addressed.

In *Ora Pro Nobis*, for instance, the boys recall a beating their friend Jackie took:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOHN</th>
<th>Did you hear his head banging on the floor?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE</td>
<td>She must have banged his head a hundred times at least.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN</td>
<td>Not that many times, she would have killed him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE</td>
<td>It sounded like it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOSEPH</td>
<td>Ola! I wonder if he was knocked out? All I heard was a moan the first time his head hit the cement floor. He sure was not walking straight when he went to sit down (29f).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In *Misty Lake*, Bird tells similar stories: “They used to beat us with broken hockey sticks. With our own sticks. Just like that one there. And they used to shave our heads for getting into mischief. You know why they used to do that? To humiliate us. To make us suffer” (17). Shirley, in *Path with no Moccasins*, had her head shaved so that she looked like Woody Woodpecker and then got the strap. Perhaps the most shocking episode, however, is told by Patty in *Misty Lake*, a story from the residential school her grandmother went to:

It must have haunted her, my Grandma. She told me about a six-year-old she knew at school. That girl was so lonely, so lonely she used to cry. [...] She used
to cry and cry and cry. [...] And finally one night- [...] One night one of the nuns went up to that girl's bed- [...] she was crying and sobbing, and she wanted her mom, and that nun, that nun took that girl's pillow- [...] She smothered that girl. To make her stop crying (22f).

None of these stories are fictional. For many survivors they are still very hard to recall, as Vera Manuel also admits in her introduction: "Stories about the abuse and helplessness of little children in residential schools are true stories. Because of this, they are the most difficult to write" (76). Manuel is the only one who includes a graphic scene of sexual abuse. In her play, Sousette recalls a time when she was sent to the infirmary and at night Father LeBlanc came into the room:

**SOUSETTE:** [...] I kept my eyes tightly closed, hoping he'd go away. I felt the weight of him lean against the bed as he knelt down. At first I thought he was going to pray over me, so I just lay still. Then I felt his hand under the cover, touching me, down there. I tried to push his hand away, really I did.

**MAN'S VOICE:** No, Sousette, you just lie still.

**SOUSETTE:** He kept feeling around, and I kept pushing his hand away. I started to cry because I didn't want him doing that and he told me to be quiet, but I couldn't stop crying. Finally he got mad, and he left.

**MAN'S VOICE:** I'll go over to Sarah, she's not scared. She's not a crybaby like you.

**SOUSETTE:** I shut my eyes and covered my ears. I tried not to listen. It made me sick to hear that, and Sarah, she didn't say a word. Didn't make a sound. Didn't even cry. He must have done that to her a lot. Do you remember how she was always sick, always in the infirmary. She finally died, too. That was probably a relief for her. She suffered so much (112f).

In *Path with no Moccasins*, Shirley hints at a similar episode but does not spell it out. Obviously the memory is too hard to bear: "Mr. ... made me stay after class again, to wipe... to wipe the blackboards. It made my hands real dirty. So dirty I wanted to chop them off with a meat cutter because they were his hands now. He loved them" (29). In Shirley's mind, the blackboard seems to have replaced the teacher's penis. She is repressing the memory of the traumatic experience.

Tomson Highway tells similar stories about himself and his brother, both in interviews and in his novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Although his
plays are not set in a residential school, his portrayal of Christianity is a response to his experiences in Guy Hill. The quote by Lyle Longclaws at the beginning of Highway's *Dry Lips* is true for all of these plays: “before the healing can take place the poison must first be exposed” (6).

The playwrights expose this poison by representing drastic episodes before ending on a more positive note. Besides, all of them follow the children's development after leaving the residential schools. George, in *Ora pro Nobis*, makes it clear that he is one of the few survivors from his school. His friends were not so lucky:

Little Walter walked out of a pub in Edmonton and dropped dead of TB, not looking after himself, it's a form of suicide because he didn't want to be cooped up again like in residential school. Raymond froze to death behind an alley way because of being drunk. John also froze to death while walking home and fell asleep on the side of the road. Johnny Johnny died from alcohol and his body was shipped back home to his parents in a cardboard box. Joseph was brutally murdered in Vancouver. He had his throat slashed from ear to ear (71).

These tragic life stories are typical of former residential school students. In Vera Manuel’s play, the women have undergone hardships, too. Agnes ended up as a prostitute on skid row; Lucy married a man who constantly abused her. Mary in *Misty Lake* had an abusive relationship and started to drink. Shirley in *Path with no Moccasins* also became an alcoholic and was raped. Still, these are stories of survival, of those who have overcome their problems and found a way to live with them. Thus, the plays end on a note of hope.

We can only speculate about the outcome of Larry Guno’s O’Keefe, because only a short excerpt has been published to date; all the other plays, however, close with a vision of healing. Shirley in *Path with no Moccasins* sits on Dreamer’s Rock, covered in a starblanket, and has a powerful vision of her past, present and future. In the end, she embraces her own culture and has found hope again: “I'm going to be able to move towards my healing without fear and into the new light, with no future, no past, just a beginning. Heaven is a choice, to choose my own path. Wha, it’s all up to me” (48). Loyie ends his play with a plea to the audience:
As for me, I fight my battles with words. My dream is that one day we will be the proud nations we once were, free of shame, back to the good life we once cherished, a self-supporting. Being good because being good is to love. And that, my friends, is what we as first Nations people must attain.

He puts on his residential school cap. As he exits, traditional hand drum music plays.

Misty Lake also ends with drumming, signifying the healing power of Native traditions. In Lakevold and Racine’s play, the healing experience is not so much that of the former residential school student but Patty’s. Like George and Shirley she also addresses the audience: “She was right. I needed to get out there to Misty Lake. To take stock. To remember. To heal those wounds of mine. The ones I didn’t even know I had.”

In both Misty Lake and Ora Pro Nobis, the former students function as teachers, helping others to overcome their problems.

At the end of Strength of Indian Women, the elder women accompany the young girl Suzie to her feast. Although not all the wounds are healed and not all the conflicts resolved, the play ends with a celebration and again with traditional music: “Eva and Agnes wrap Suzie in the blanket. Lucy carries her bundle. Mariah brings the medicine, and Eva trails behind with the pot of soup. As they leave, an honor song begins.” As in the other plays, healing is achieved by getting back to Native values, and again the Elders are teachers for the younger generations. As in most Native plays, the main message is that a positive future for Native people can only be achieved by a return to traditional values and by honouring the teachings of the Elders.

IV. Conclusion: Something Positive

As I mentioned before, these plays present success stories, told by the voices of those who survived. Horrible as these stories are, those of the people who did not survive are even worse. However, even these success stories are hard to bear, and many Canadians, Native and non-Native, still do not want to hear about them. In Misty Lake, Patty wants Mary to tell her something positive instead: “You must have a few good memories, don’t you? Didn’t you ever have any good times? Why can’t we talk about that?” Mary indeed did have good times and can talk about them. Likewise, in the other plays scenes of humour and good times are
shown, but these should not serve to gloss over the bad things. Until the crimes committed against Native people are disclosed to the public and the perpetrators have been brought to justice, Native writers will continue to tell depressing but true stories. Like the characters in the plays, they are teachers and can help others to overcome their problems as they did. They are role models for many former residential school students.

If there is anything positive to be said, it is that Native culture is still very much alive and thriving. The rich and expanding theatre scene is evidence enough that Native playwrights are reclaiming their own culture, educating both their own people and non-Natives all over Canada, telling them about past crimes and the bad living conditions of Native people today as well as about the richness and humour of Native life. The success of playwrights like Tomson Highway, who himself was subject to abuse by residential school teachers, signifies a victory over colonial structures and gives hope to those who still suffer from the abuse they received.

Perhaps the most striking example for this healing process is the theatre company De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig (Debaj) on the Wikwemikong Reserve on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Since 1984, Debaj stands on the forefront of Native theatre in Canada and continues to tackle current problems of Native people. Their performances are empowering events in themselves, but this is even intensified by the location of many of these performances: Debaj’s main stage is set in the ruins of the former residential school of Wikwemikong. The company has reclaimed this space of suffering and turned it into a powerful symbol of healing and a stronghold of Native culture. The problems of Native people are far from over, but playwrights like Highway, Cheechoo, Manuel and many others, as well as companies like De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig give reason enough to hope for a better future.
Works Cited

Primary Literature

Secondary Literature
Contemporary Drama in Hawai‘i: Representations of Displacement and Diaspora in Edward Sakamoto’s *Obake* and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s *Ola Na Iwi*

For those unfamiliar with Hawai‘i, the notion of contemporary drama or theatre in the island state will probably not carry any specific meaning. To some that notion may evoke images of hula performances, to others it may at best suggest Vegas-style tourist shows in the famous beach area of Honolulu, Waikiki. Asian theatre cognoscenti may even link the keywords ‘Hawai‘i’ and ‘theatre’ to the pioneering work of (now retired) James Brandon, whose many publications, translations, and stage productions, mostly of Japanese Kabuki plays, from the 1960s on firmly established the Asian Theatre Division at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa as the leading program of its kind in the Western World. It is less likely, though, that many would automatically associate the notion of theatre in Hawai‘i with Western-style drama. Yet contrary to the dominant — and that still means: tourist — stereotype of Hawai‘i as an inherently mellow and therefore ‘anti-dramatic’ place, the protagonistic genre of Western drama has indeed been a major form of artistic expression in the islands for several decades. Despite some earlier but isolated attempts of various writers in the 1940s and 1950s to create a drama that would deal specifically with life in Hawai‘i, it was the founding of the theatre company Kumu Kahua (‘Original Stage’) in 1971 by the Australian Dennis Carroll, a professor of Western Theatre at the
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, that finally provided an institutional base for such attempts. Not only has Carroll been a tireless promoter, producer, director, and editor of plays written in Hawai‘i, he has also been one of the first and foremost scholars to write on the topic. With its declared mission to produce “Plays about life in Hawai‘i, Plays by Hawai‘i’s playwrights, [and] Plays for Hawai‘i’s people,” Kumu Kahua Theatre over the last three decades has not only been the major institution in the state to commission, workshop, and stage dramatic texts by local writers, it has also been a training ground and platform for many playwrights that are now considered major proponents of contemporary drama in Hawai‘i: Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl, Edward Sakamoto, Gary Pak, Alani Apio, Lee Cataluna, Tammy Haili‘opua Baker, Darell Lum, Shawn O’Malley, et al. The founding of Kumu Kahua Theatre in the early 1970s coincided with the beginnings of the so-called ‘Hawaiian Renaissance,’ i.e. the reclaiming and revival not only of the Hawaiian language but also of the cultural heritage of native Hawaiians, such as hula (dance), mele (chanting), agriculture, seafaring, and crafts. Different from the revival of traditional Hawaiian culture, which was also widely recognized outside of Hawai‘i, the development of Western-style drama in Hawai‘i has not received the same attention. Only a few plays have been staged elsewhere, and even fewer productions of those plays have toured nationally or internationally. In those cases where editors and scholars from outside have demonstrated an interest in plays from Hawai‘i, there has been a tendency to ignore the very specific cultural and social circumstances that informed their creation in the first place.

1 Since 1994, Kumu Kahua Theatre has been in residence at a nineteenth-century post-office building at Merchant Street in downtown Honolulu.

2 See Carroll, “Introduction” and “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local Theatre.’” In Hawai‘i, Carroll is also known as a playwright in his own right: his plays Way of God and Spur both premiered at Kumu Kahua Theatre (in 1998 and 2000, respectively).

3 See the theatre company’s website at <www.kumukahua.com>.

4 The two authors that will be discussed in the following provide ample evidence for this tendency. One of Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s plays, The Story of Susanna (1998), was included in Mimi Gisolfi d’Aponte’s recent Seventh Generation: An Anthology of Native American Plays, even though the categorization of Kneubuhl’s work as Native American obliterates the major distinctions of ethnicity, culture, and place that separate Kneubuhl’s thematic focus on her Pacific-Island
Contemporary Drama in Hawai‘i

Carroll roughly distinguishes between two forms of contemporary drama in Hawai‘i: “local Asian American plays” and “local Hawaiian plays” ("Hawai‘i’s ‘Local Theatre’” 125). The first type of play deals with the immigrant experience of various Asian groups (mostly Japanese and Chinese, but also Filipino and Korean) in Hawai‘i. Plays of this kind often portray the hard life on pineapple, sugar or coffee plantations that many Asian immigrants to Hawai‘i endured during the first half of the twentieth century. They also often dramatize the conflict between first-generation immigrants still informed by the values of their home countries and the assimilation of the successive generations into host culture and society.

The second type of play, by contrast, is usually written by (part-) Hawaiian authors and approaches life in Hawai‘i from an indigenous point of view. It deals with the experience of a people increasingly ‘displaced’ in their own homeland and alienated from their own culture as the result of aggressive Western imperialism. Plays of this type often deal with the specific historical events that contributed to the gradual erosion of indigenous Hawaiian culture and identity: the first contact with James Cook and his crew in the 1780s, the conversion of Hawaiian Queen Ka‘ahumanu to Christianity and her abolition of the indigenous belief system (the kapu system) in the 1820s, the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy by American business interests in the 1890s, etc. Even those plays that are set in the present often feature protagonists of Hawaiian ancestry that find themselves torn between indigenous values and heritage from the concerns of Native American playwrights on the U.S. mainland. In Edward Sakamoto’s case, the mainland reception of his work is often equally marked by misconceptions. Even though Sakamoto’s plays clearly deal with Japanese-American issues, they do not represent them from a minority perspective: ‘Asian American’ as a minority label makes little sense in Hawai‘i, which is predominantly populated by people of Asian, not Euro-American descent.

In a Hawaiian context, the term ‘local’ “indicates someone of non-Caucasian descent and may refer to any combination of mixed genealogical inheritances” (Desmond 106, quoted in Carroll, “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local Theatre’” 123). The Native Hawaiian population “can claim both identities [‘local’ and ‘indigenous’] without contradiction” (Okamura 171, quoted in Carroll, “Hawai‘i’s ‘Local Theatre’” 124), whereas haoles (i.e., Caucasians), even those born on the islands, may be considered ‘local’ only if their families have already lived in Hawai‘i for several generations.
traditions and the demands and expectations of an alienating Western culture imposed upon them. Since ‘local Hawaiian plays’ often portray Hawai‘i as a place that for more than a century now has been suffering from — and resisting against — the economic, military, cultural and religious imperialism of the West, they can be legitimately characterized as postcolonial drama.6 Even though Hawai‘i has been a federal state of the United States since 1959, many native Hawaiians still experience their culture as internally colonized by the nation-state that they are officially citizens of.

While ‘local Asian American’ plays tend to be set in more recent times (mainly because major immigration from Asia to Hawai‘i did not occur before the late 1800s) ‘local Hawaiian plays’ often refer to events that happened in the nineteenth century (between first contact and the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy). ‘Local Asian American plays’ are predominantly written in pidgin and adhere to a more naturalistic style, whereas ‘local Hawaiian plays’ often include elements of mele and hula, make use of Hawaiian language, and employ anti-realistic techniques (such as dream sequences, the moving back and forth between different time periods and places, and Brechtian diegesis). The plays that will be analyzed in the following — Edward Sakamoto’s Obake (2003) and Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl’s Ola Na Iwi (i.e., ‘The Bones Live,’ 1994) — exemplify these two traditions of contemporary drama in Hawai‘i.

Sakamoto for two decades now has been the most popular writer of ‘local Asian American drama’ in the islands. Most of his plays chronicle, often nostalgically, the experience of Japanese immigrants and their offspring in Hawai‘i. His plays also tend to be centered around male protagonists and relationships: conflicts between father and son (Manoa Valley, 1979; The Life of the Land, 1980), friendships between old ‘buddies’ (Aloha Las Vegas, 1991), etc. Similar to August Wilson’s project to “capture a different decade of the African American experience in each of his plays, Sakamoto captures the ‘local’ Japanese experience in Hawai‘i” (Mattos 120) from the 1920s to the present. Even though Saka-

6 Kneubuhl’s The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu (1988), for example, is included in Helen Gilbert’s recent anthology Postcolonial Plays. The play deals with the shattering impact of Protestant missionary efforts on indigenous religion, politics, and gender roles in early nineteenth-century Hawai‘i.
moto has lived in California since the mid-1960s, most of his plays are still set in Hawai‘i. Obake is in many ways a departure from Sakamoto’s earlier work since it focuses on a male-female relationship and moves, despite its Chekhovian exposition, towards a symbolist conclusion. Several of Sakamoto’s earlier plays have been published. Obake, however, is not yet available in print.

Kneubuhl, who is of part-Hawaiian, Samoan and Caucasian ancestry, is mostly known for plays that deal with Hawaiian or Samoan topics, often from a feminist perspective. The Kumu Kahua production of Kneubuhl’s The Conversion of Ka‘ahumanu was invited to the Edinburgh Festival in 1989 (together with Ka‘iulani: A Cantata for Theatre, which Kneubuhl co-wrote with Ryan Page, Robert Nelson, and Dennis Carroll). In 1993, more than 10,000 people saw her fifteen-hour-long ‘living history pageant’ January 1893, which dealt with the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and was performed in the exact locations of the original events in Honolulu. Kneubuhl’s most recently produced play at Kumu Kahua Theatre was Fanny and Belle (in spring 2004), which portrays the unconventional life and travels of Fanny Osbourne (the wife of Robert Louis Stevenson) and her complicated relationship with her less free-spirited daughter. Ola Na Iwi, which combines ghost story elements with conventions of the mystery novel, was produced at Kumu Kahua Theatre in fall 1994 under John H. Y. Wat’s direction and is included in Kneubuhl’s Hawai‘i Nei: Island Plays.

Many ‘local’ plays written in Hawai‘i focus upon issues of diaspora and displacement. What connects Sakamoto’s Obake and Kneubuhl’s Ola Na Iwi, however, is the fact that both plays dramatize those issues by employing elements of the same genre: the ghost story. Diaspora and displacement as dramatic topics are closely related to what Una Chaud-

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huri refers to as the *geopathology* of modern drama, its concern with "the double-edged problem of place and place as problem" (53). Chaudhuri addresses this concern in her book, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, which deals with "the manifold ways in which, in the thematics of modern drama, the figure of home and ideal of belonging are shot through with otherness" (53). Even though Chaudhuri applies the notion of geopathology primarily to early realist drama, geopathic tendencies are not limited to that form only. Many plays featuring ghosts, for example — from *Hamlet* to gothic melodrama to Strindberg's and Maeterlinck's symbolist plays — render the figure of home as internally fractured, unstable, and unsettling. Ghost plays often dramatize the problem of place as an encounter with Sigmund Freud's *das Unheimliche* — a term that is usually translated as "the uncanny," but literally means the negation or undoing (*un-* either of something secret or clandestine, or of something homely or home-like (*heimlich* has both meanings): "the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix *'un'* ['un-'] is the token of repression" (Freud 245). According to art critic Hal Foster,

the uncanny for Freud involves the return of a familiar phenomenon (image or object, person or event) made strange by repression. This return of the repressed renders the subject anxious and the phenomenon ambiguous and this ambiguous anxiety produces the primary effects of the uncanny: (1) an indistinction between the real and the imagined [...]; (2) a confusion between the animate and inanimate, as exemplified in wax figures, dolls, mannequins and automatons [...]; and (3) a usurpation of the referent by the sign or of physical reality by psychic reality [...]. (7).

Modern plays often employ the uncanny as a mode to articulate their geopathic concerns, particularly those dramas in which notions of place, displacement, and the return of the repressed coalesce. The ghosts that appear in *Obake* and *Ola Na Iwi* are not only visual manifestations of the otherness that pervades "the figure of home and ideal of belonging" (Chaudhuri) in both plays, they also point to the acts of repression that have caused this 'othering' of place. While both plays are set in Hawai'i, *Obake* approaches displacement from the point of view of Japanese immigrants, *Ola Na Iwi* from the perspective of Hawaiian ancestors.

Sakamoto's *Obake* is set in Kamuela on the Big Island in 1925 and deals with the marriage between the ranch worker Tamotsu and his mail-
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order wife Kazue. Tamotsu, who is in his mid-40s, left Japan for Hawai‘i to escape from his abusive father and dysfunctional family. Kazue, twenty years younger than her husband, also comes from Japan, but from a family so impoverished that they had to sell her off as a picture bride. From the beginning of the play Kazue has to bear the brunt of her husband’s violent mood swings and depressions, particularly when he gets drunk. Unable to question the traditional ways in which she was brought up, however, Kazue blames herself for Tomatsu’s behavior. An unseen cat outside of the house she takes care of against her husband’s wish and the conversations with her older and more self-assured girlfriend Toshi provide the only consolations in Kazue’s life. Toshi’s relationship to her good-natured but malleable and childish husband Hitoshi is in many ways the reverse of Kazue and Tamotsu’s marriage. Toshi bosses Hitoshi around, as does Tamotsu, Hitoshi’s colleague at work and only friend. Both Tamotsu and Hitoshi are attracted to Shizue, an unscrupulous and lascivious 30-year old woman who has been left by her husband. Tamotsu and Shizue are having an affair, but when Tamotsu finally decides to give up Kazue for his new lover, Shizue tells him that he is not wealthy enough to afford her, and that she is planning to become the mistress of a local landowner instead. Tamotsu, who has lost his job on the ranch, succeeds in making Hitoshi his accomplice in crime. Their first attempt to rob a local store fails because they are interrupted by the sudden appearance of a black cat. A few nights later, after they have finally succeeded in robbing the store, Tamotsu shows up at Shizue’s place with the stolen money, trying to convince her that they can have a future together. Kazue, meanwhile, has come upon the rest of the loot in her house. When her husband suddenly returns, she has barely time to restore the money to its hiding place. Tamotsu, despite his drunkenness, immediately suspects that Kazue has touched the money and accuses her of stealing from him. He starts beating her up and gets so enraged that he finally kills her, but without realizing this in his stupor. Kazue’s killing is avenged by the ghostly cat who now appears to Tamotsu in Kazue’s shape. The ghost cat not only turns Tamotsu into her sex slave, she also murders Shizue. Increasingly exhausted, terrified, and driven to the brink of madness by the erotic de-
mands of the feline Kazue-lookalike, Tamotsu finally comes to a recognition of his actions and shoots himself.

The title of Sakamoto’s play, *Obake*, refers both to the word for ‘ghost’ used by the Japanese in Hawai‘i as well as to black-and-white Japanese ghost movies that were popular in Honolulu from the 1930s to the 1960s. James Nakamoto, the original director of *Obake* at Kumu Kahua Theatre, writes in the accompanying material to the production that most of these films were based on a cat transforming into a beautiful ghostly woman. [...] A lord would treat a woman in an abusive and demeaning manner, and finally have her killed when he couldn’t get his way. The woman was always kind to a cat (usually a black cat), who then licked the blood of the victim and transformed into a ghostly figure, pale with long hair covering part of her face, to exact revenge on those who wronged the slain woman and her loved ones.

All characters in *Obake* share, to varying degrees, a sense of displacement. The fact that all protagonists in the play are immigrants from Japan not only suggests their isolation from other ethnic groups on the Big Island but also their status as an exile community in the Hawaiian diaspora. The Japanese immigrants have brought their superstitious beliefs with them — beliefs that on one hand establish a commonality between the characters, on the other hand emphasize the differences and tensions within the group. Sakamoto’s play demonstrates that these superstitious beliefs (for example, in the existence of animistic ghosts) take on a different significance outside their country of origin. In the film tradition referred to by Nakamoto the Obake cat relates to the ‘eternal battle between the sexes’: The cat is uncanny because, in a Freudian sense, it represents the return of the repressed (i.e., the murdered woman) not in its familiar appearance but in a ‘displaced’ form (i.e., in the shape of the cat that the woman took care of) made strange by repression (for example, by a fear of women’s ‘feline’ sexual prowess, or a sense of guilt for having treated the woman ‘inhumanely’ and killed her

9 To establish a link to the black-and-white film genre on which *Obake* is based, the scenes of violence in the play were performed behind a scrim in the Kumu Kahua production. This not only evoked the atmosphere of early film screenings, it also ‘dehumanized’ those scenes even more by turning them into highly stylized shadow puppetry.
'like a cat,' etc.). In Sakamoto’s play, however, the Obake cat transcends the realm of the mythic-psychological gender struggle and becomes, more generally, a symbol of social and cultural displacement. This transition from the archetypal to the social is also indicated by the shift from the fairy-tale ‘lord’ of the traditional Obake narrative to the immigrant (and later unemployed) farm worker in Sakamoto’s play. The stage directions that conclude the first act of Obake reveal the full extent of Tamotsu’s anguish and sense of alienation:

Later that night. Tamotsu enters a barren spotlighted space. He paces, weary and dejected. He slumps to the ground. He is alone and tormented, a frightened man in a foreign land that belittles him. An immigrant downtrodden and often feeling emasculated by a majority culture that only sees an ignorant peasant to be exploited. He pounds his fists and the ground and lets out a bone-chilling scream. Blackout (28).

The ghost cat in Obake affects the life of all characters, whether they believe in it or not. The appearance of the cat in the play is an indication that the immigrants have not really had a new start — that their problems and anxieties did not disappear when they immigrated. The Obake cat not only symbolizes the sense of alienation that marks the characters’ relationship to Hawai‘i, it also serves as an uncanny reminder of the situation that they thought they had left behind — and which now seems to haunt them again in their strange, new diaspora: their ‘displacement,’ ‘homelessness,’ and disenfranchisement (as women, peasants, the working poor, etc.) within Japanese society itself. The Obake cat in Sakamoto’s play seems to suggest that, wherever you go, there is no escape from the specter of displacement.

The uncanny, in Obake, appears in two different guises: not only as the ghost cat of Japanese lore but also as the domestic spirit of Toshi’s mother-in-law who remains invisible but announces her presence by the smell of her son’s favorite food, natto (i.e., fermented soybeans). The invisible appearances of Toshi’s mother-in-law not only provide comic relief from the increasing brutality with which Tamotsu treats his wife, they also contrast to the gradual transformation of the initially harm­less-seeming cat into a scary and murderous ghost. Tamotsu’s alienation and the sinister appearance of the cat are directly related: the more Tamotsu’s behavior deteriorates, the more terrifying the cat appears to him.
(and the other characters, except Kazue) in return. Even though Kazue initially protects and takes care of the cat, it is the cat that eventually avenges Kazue’s death by turning Tamotsu’s aggressive and destructive impulses against himself. Throughout Obake, the cat remains an inhuman ghostly presence that does not invite empathy. When the ghostly cat makes its first visual appearance on stage in the last scene of the play, the play’s mostly naturalistic style finally gives in to the supernatural.

Different from Obake’s relative observance of the unities of time, place, and action, Kneubuhl’s Ola Na Iwi moves back and forth between a plot that unfolds in present-day Berlin and Honolulu and short interspersed scenes that provide glimpses of nineteenth-century anthropological discourse. The major characters in Kneubuhl’s play are a couple from Honolulu, the part-Hawaiian Kahewi and her Caucasian boyfriend Erik. Erik is the director of a Honolulu-based theatre company that has recently toured a production of Hamlet, “set in pre-contact Hawai’i” (148), to a theatre festival in Berlin. During her stay in Berlin with her boyfriend’s theatre troupe, Kawehi, a curator and researcher for a native Hawaiian cultural organization, has come across a set of ancestral Hawaiian bones on display at an archeological museum. Kawehi spontaneously decides to steal the human remains to return them to their place of origin. When, at her return to Honolulu, a customs inspector interrogates her about the bones, Kawehi convinces him that they are realistic imitations used as props in the Hamlet-production. Back in Berlin, museum officials have come to suspect a link between the theft of the remains and the theatre group from Hawai’i that was just visiting. They send one of their employees, Gustav, on a search trip to Honolulu where he is joined by a detective from Scotland Yard named Fatu and his assistant Mina. Kawehi, meanwhile, tries to decide what to do with the bones, which she has stored under her bed. Erik sees strange shadows outside of their house and believes that someone is watching them. When Nanea, a shivering woman with torn clothes, knocks at their door, Kawehi not only lets her in but invites her to stay, despite the odd appearance and behavior of the stranger. Nanea not only refuses to see a doctor, she also indicates to Kawehi that she knows what is hidden under the bed. Back at work, Kawehi has a major argument with her superior Pua about a recent archeological exhibition on a Hawaiian temple
that she organized, a site where human sacrifices were performed. Pua, who claims to be a leader in the Hawaiian movement, accuses Kawehi of racism for not representing an ideal image of traditional Hawaiian culture, but maintains at the same time that her own support for the developers that want to destroy the sacred site to create a tourist resort, is in the best interest of the Hawaiian people. At the end of the argument, Kawehi is fired by Pua. Nanea, meanwhile, has found a job as a Living History guide in downtown Honolulu. Dressed up in a costume from the nineteenth century, she tells stories about a woman that lived during that time period: Liliha, the wife of the Hawaiian chief Boki. Liliha shared the traditional Hawaiian belief that the spirits of the departed can only find peace once their bones have been properly taken care of. When Liliha was poisoned and killed by a relative, an old man who greatly loved her prepared her bones in the traditional way and hid them in a cave. The remains, however, were later discovered by foreigners who sold them off. Gradually, not only Mina and Fatu but also Pua and Gustav discover where the bones are hidden. Pua pretends to collaborate with Gustav but really wants to get the bones for her organization to enhance her own standing within the Hawaiian community. Fatu and Mina come across a photograph of Liliha and are struck by her similarity with Nanea. Nanea talks Erik into exchanging the real bones with the fake ones at the theatre. At a costume party that is given at the theatre, Fatu and Mina slip away with what they believe to be the fake bones to exchange them for the bones at Kawehi’s house. When they get there, they are joined by Fatu’s mother, Deidre, a former anthropologist. They exchange the bones, as planned, but leave in a panic when Nanea suddenly causes their flashlights to go out. Even though Mina and Fatu officially work for Gustav, they both want to see the bones returned to their proper place, which they can only achieve once Pua and Gustav are out of the way. Pretending that they plan to steal the bones from Kawehi’s house (the bones that they know to be the fake ones), Fatu and Mina convince Pua and Gustav to participate in their scheme. Gustav is supposed to steal the bones from under Kawehi’s bed, leave them in an old car in the backyard of the house, and take off in Pua’s car with a bag identical to the one containing the bones, to mislead possible pursuers. It is agreed that Mina and Fatu will take the bones from the car in the
yard the following day. When the time to execute the plot arrives, everything goes according to plan. Nanea, in the meantime, has finally disappeared after creating a traditional casket for the bones and receiving Kawehi’s assurance that she will complete what they have started together. Kawehi and Erik have just discovered the theft of the bones, when Mina makes a surprise visit, explaining the entire situation. She reveals that they switched the fake bones from the Hamlet-production with the real ones under the bed several days earlier, and announces that the car in the backyard, where Gustav left the fake bones after stealing them the night before, will be detonated in a minute, to leave Pua and Gustav under the impression that the real bones were destroyed. Erik, however, believes that the bones in the car are the authentic ones since he also swapped the bones at the theatre with those under Kawehi’s bed. He runs outside to stop Fatu from blowing up the car, but comes too late: the explosion occurs the very moment he steps out of the door. Kawehi and Erik both feel guilty for not having prevented the destruction of the bones, until Deidre informs them that the bones destroyed in the blast were indeed the fake ones. Mina and Fatu realize that the night they broke into Kawehi’s house Nanea used the confusion caused by the sudden darkness to swap the two sets of bones one more time so that they left with the same set of bones with which they had arrived. The play ends with Deidre, Mina, Fatu, and Erik burying Liliha’s bones in the proper traditional fashion.

Different from Obake, the ghost protagonist in Ola Na Iwi invites empathy from the other characters within the play as well as from the audience. While the supernatural lingers as a threat throughout Obake, but only really invades the predominantly naturalist setting of the play towards the end, Ola Na Iwi inverts the relationship between reality and super-reality from the start. Whereas the plot of Obake clearly unfolds from the immigrant characters’ point of view, Ola Na Iwi suggests that it is the spectral perspective of the title’s ‘living bones’ that organizes the structure of the play, allowing to encompass the different places and time periods between which the play moves back and forth. Even though Nanea, as the ghost of Liliha, is first introduced as a character in scene four, she is already present in the play from scene one, represented by her bones. The motif of the bones not only undergirds the major
plot-structure of the play but also establishes a link to the interspersed
nineteenth-century vignettes which all deal with stealing, trading, and
measuring human remains of ‘primitive people’ for archeological and
anthropological purposes. The vignettes include several nineteenth-
century university lectures, a dialogue between the historical Franz Boas
and a rival anthropologist, as well as a scene in which a collector for
Harvard University successfully impresses his love interest with the
exploits of his digging exposition in the Ohio Valley:

MOOREHEAD: Ah, yes, the Ohio Valley. I directed a force of men to open
groves and village sites along the river, sometimes three hun-
dred feet down. I secured at least thirty-five good crania from
that site.
CAMILLA: Thirty-five! Imagine!
MOOREHEAD: But at the next site, I really hit pay dirt, as they say. Seventy-
nine skeletons!
CAMILLA: Over one hundred all together!
MOOREHEAD: And one remarkably preserved child of six or eight years old!
CAMILLA: What a great contribution to the World Exposition! (193)

The bones in the play refer specifically to Liliha, but they also stand in
for all spirits not only of deceased Hawaiians but of indigenous people
anywhere that have not yet found peace due to the maltreatment of their
remains by Western anthropologists and explorers since the nineteenth
century. While the link between the bones, Nanea and Liliha becomes
apparent to the audience early on, the characters in the play come to that
realization only at the end. As a result of this dramatic irony, it is the
protagonists, not the audience, that experience the supernatural events
in the play as uncanny. Since the spectators accept the existence of
Nanea early on, they do not experience the “uncanny effect [that] is
often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and
reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as
imaginary appears before us in reality” (Freud 244). The theme of spec-
trality is, in addition, linked to another major leitmotif in the play,
namely the equation of reality with theatricality. Not unlike medieval
and Baroque theatre traditions, Ola Na Iwi approaches life from a tran-
scendental perspective, ‘beyond the grave.’ During the costume party at
the theatre, three players dressed as Elizabethan clowns discuss the
other party guests:
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PLAYER 1: They are actors, Humblebee!
PLAYER 2: Except when they're asses, witches, or fools. [...] 
PLAYER 1: 'Tis only an hour.
PLAYER 3: They seem to know it not.
PLAYER 1: They must not know it, else they would cease to be real!
PLAYER 3: But they are actors —
PLAYER 2: So we told thee, Humblebee!
PLAYER 3: So you did, so you did. But when their hour is done?
PLAYER 1: It's off to the bone yard —
PLAYER 2: Every one (200).

What makes this passage an allegorical summation of the play's underlying perspective is the antirealism of this specific scene. The dialogue is not presented as just another number during a costume party but is performed in front of a crowd that appears frozen into a tableau. The motif of life as imitation, as a second-order reality is also emphasized in the play by frequent scenes that blur the distinction between original and imitation (i.e., the two sets of bones), persona and mask (Pua and Nanea, but with different motives), and reality and make-belief (the many references to the theatre, but also the complicated plot to retrieve the bones from Kawehi's house). Truth, being, and authenticity only reside with Nanea/Liliha who, almost as a theatre director, intervenes in and manipulates the reality of the other characters. The play, however, does not condemn the theatricality and inauthenticity of life but rather celebrates the human dimension and playfulness of a world of appearances.

Both Obake and Ola Na Iwi use ghost stories to address issues of displacement and diaspora — Obake to dramatize the effects of Japanese immigration to Hawai'i, Ola Na Iwi to deal with the removal of ancestral bones/spirits from Hawai'i. Both plays, however, could not be further apart in their representation of the uncanny as well as their solutions to their respective 'geopathologies.' The demonic cat in Obake embodies the inhumanity as well as the dehumanizing effects of displacement and operates more as a catalyst for terrifying violence than a medium for conflict resolution. The cat remains uncanny throughout Obake since the fundamental repression of which it is a symptom (i.e., an almost ontological homelessness) cannot be overcome within the given circumstances of the diasporic community depicted in the play.
Different from *Obake*, where the cat appears as a violent intruder into human affairs, the ghost in *Ola Na Iwi* functions as a transcendental agent that not only harmoniously links and integrates the spheres of spiritual and human reality but also heals the other characters who ‘have lost their way’ in a Westernized Hawai‘i. Despite the other protagonists’ uncanny encounters with Nanea, her wisdom, humility, and benevolence prevent her from being perceived as terrifying, or even threatening. Once the main act of repression at the core of *Ola Na Iwi* (i.e., the characters’ displacement within their own culture, signified by the removal of Liliha’s bones) has been put right, Nanea — performing the role of ‘the return of the repressed’ — can leave the stage again. The retrieval and final burial of the bones in *Ola Na Iwi* provide a real sense of closure and homecoming. This is not to say that *Obake* and *Ola Na Iwi* represent the typical responses of ‘local Asian American’ and ‘local Hawaiian drama’ to issues of displacement and diaspora (other ‘local Asian American plays’ provide a far less fatalistic take on those issues; also, not all ‘local Hawaiian plays’ are quite as conciliatory with regard to the colonization of native Hawaiian culture). Both plays, however, demonstrate major differences in perception regarding the ‘problem of place,’ depending on whether the displacement primarily occurred within a culture and therefore allows for a process of healing and restitution, or whether the displacement meant a removal to an alien location, forever deferring any possible homecoming.

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**Secondary Literature**


FRANZ MEIER

“Stop being Indian!”
Identity, Hybridity and the
Dis/Misplacement of (Post-)Colonial
‘Images’ in Tom Stoppard’s Indian Ink

I. Stoppard, India and Displacement

When Tom Stoppard’s radio play In the Native State was going to be premiered on BBC Radio in 1991, interview after interview touched on his own Indian background and he had to answer the same questions over and over again. Yes, he had spent some years of his childhood in Calcutta and Darjeeling, where his mother and he had been evacuated to after the Japanese had invaded Singapore, the short term place of exile of the Czech family during the Nazi occupation of their home country. Yes, he had some vague memories of his school there and his mother working as the manager of a shoe shop. And, yes, he had gone to revisit the places of his childhood recently. But no, there was “almost nothing of [his] experience” in the play (TSIC 240).1 He lived in India “between

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1 In the same interview, Stoppard says that “the difficulty [...] to avoid writing [Indian] characters who appear to have already appeared in The Jewel and the Crown and Passage to India” was particularly great for him, “[b]ecause my own memory of living in India really hasn’t been that much help because my conscious knowledge of how Indians speak and behave has actually been derived from other people’s fictions” (TSIC 242f).
the age of four and eight" (TSIC 241) the shoe shop was Czech, the
boarding school run by American Methodists — and his ‘sentimental
journey’ back to India only took place after the play had been finished
(TSIC 241).

Despite his early history of exile and displacement Stoppard spent
almost all of his life in England, and to call him a ‘diasporic,’ exiled or
displaced writer would definitely be pressing a case too hard. Neverthe­
less, ‘displacement’ and exile do play an important role in many of his
writings — Rosencrantz’s and Guildenstern’s ontological displacement
within Shakespeare’s Hamlet, or Lenin’s, Joyce’s and Tzara’s exile in
Travesties being but the most obvious examples. In Night and Day
(1978), Stoppard’s first ‘post-colonial’ play, we see three ‘displaced’
journalists in contemporary Africa. And, of course, both In the Native
State (1991), and Indian Ink, the stage play into which Stoppard re­
worked this radio play in 1995, and on which I will concentrate in this
article, also deal with the theme of displacement and (post-)colonialism
on several levels.

2 All references, unless indicated otherwise, are to the 1995 version of the play.
3 Stoppard’s original plan, as he stated in several interviews (TSIC, 239, 240,
249f, cf. also 254) after the release of In the Native State, was to write a play about
“the ethics of empire;” but he was quick to add “I’m not saying that In the Native
State is that” (TSIC 240), “there’s still that to do” (TSIC 249f). Critics have won­
dered, therefore, whether Indian Ink, was an attempt to do just “that” four years
later (Kaplan 341). Although a thorough reworking of the earlier radio play, the
stage drama does not warrant the search for completely new thematic interests (for a
detailed comparison of radio play and stage play cf. Kaplan esp. 338–342; but cf. also
Achilles 12 and 13, n. 36). Like In the Native State, Indian Ink is more “character
driven” (Paul Allen in TSIC 239) than most of his plays, so that if we understand
“ethics of empire” as a category of moral and political generalization, it is indeed a
mismomer for both plays alike. But if we interpret “ethics of empire” as a subjective,
cultural or even psychological category, a category connected with the formation of
personal rather than national identity, or of national identity only as far as it is per­
sonal — if, in other words, we take ethics to be a discursive performance rather than a
fixed set of rules, norms and values —, then Indian Ink (like In the Native State) is
indeed highly imbued with the “ethics of empire.”
“Stop being Indian!”

II. Englishness, Indianness, and Identity

The play has two settings (India in 1930 and England in the 1980s), two plots and two pairs of main characters (to whom I will largely limit my investigations for reasons of space). This seemingly clear-cut binary structure is, however, continuously questioned by means of causal and family relationships, parallel situations and, last but not least, a simultaneity of scenes and settings on stage. It thus provides the basis for a discussion of ‘Indianness’ and ‘Englishness,’ their supposed limits and their intricate connections. These ideological concepts, however, do not manifest themselves in abstract or theoretical ways. Rather, they become recognizable as determining factors of personal identities, the workings of which deconstruct the simple binary logic of nationalism.

2.1 The ‘Colonial Plot’

The complexity of the matter can already be grasped in the first longer dialogue, early in Act I, between the two main characters of the colonial plot, the British poet Flora Crewe and her Indian portraitist, Nirad Das (see 11–13) during their first sitting (he is painting her while she is writing a poem). In this scene, the painter almost stereotypically fulfils the widespread cultural cliché of the mild, over-polite and apologetic Indian and thus (in paradoxical contrast to his ‘dominant’ position as painter) assumes the stereotypical role of colonial ‘subject’ (see 11). Flora, however, tries to break up this cliché situation first by using her position as model to provoke the painter erotically (see 11f), and then by addressing him “as between friends and artists” (12), thus referring to a discursive realm seemingly free of colonial associations. But interestingly enough, it is exactly in this discursive field, that the central topic of ‘In-

4 Jochen Achilles characterizes Indian Ink as “a metadramatic exploration of the potential of art, notably painting and poetry, for interethnic reconciliations” (10). Although this generalizing statement is true on an abstract level, it is nevertheless worth mentioning that it is mainly painting that initiates intercultural and/or inter-ethnic communication on a social level in the play, while Flora’s poetry, albeit merging different cultural discourses within her work as well (cf. Achilles 15–17), is hardly ever talked about – and verbal communication in general (with the one exception of the “Hobson-Jobson” game; see InIn 19) seems to cause confusion rather than reconciliation between characters.
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dianess' and thus questions of cultural, national and personal identity, get to be thematized explicitly for the first time in the play. When the reaction of Das to Flora's egalitarian gesture is as exaggerated, flowery and over-polite as expected, Flora, in chiasmic inversion of the initial situation of the dialogue, first of all threatens to withhold a previously announced "question" (see 11f) and then puzzles the painter with her confusing wish that he be "less Indian" — and her equally confusing concept of 'Indianness,' the phrasing of which, despite her contrary declaration, betrays her own confusion in the matter:

**DAS:** You wish me to be less Indian?

**FLORA:** I did say that but I think what I meant was for you to be more Indian, or at any rate Indian, not Englished-up and all over me like a labrador and knocking things off tables with your tail [...]. You only do it with us, I don't believe that left to yourself you can't have an ordinary conversation without jumping backwards through hoops of delight, with hoops of delight, I think I mean; actually I do know what I mean, I want you to be with me as you would be if I were Indian.

**DAS:** An Indian Miss Crewe! Oh dear, that is a mental construction which has no counterpart in the material world (12f).

What makes this whole dialogue so funny, so human — and so tragic, is the obvious impossibility of a conversation that would be free of colonial implications, of the (Hegelian) dialectics of master and slave, — and of continuous misreadings (intentional or not) between the individuals, caught in that (Foucauldian) net of power relations, which even the discourses of art and eroticism cannot easily escape.

Furthermore, this dialogue illustrates the performative nature of personal identities, and their intricate connection to concepts of culture and nation. Maybe the most tragic misunderstanding in the scene is Flora's conviction that she can distinguish between Nirad Das's colonial 'role' and his 'authentic' (Indian) identity. But in trying to dissever the two she only "lays [...] bare" (11) a line of contradictions in her own concept of Indianness. When first asking her painter to be "less Indian" (12), the implication is a 'British-Indianness' that is a result of the British Raj. So, when she realizes this, she asks Das instead to be "more Indian" (12) — this time implying some sort of 'authentic' or 'genuine' (national/cultural/ethnic) identity, supposedly hidden behind the mere
‘mask’ of assimilated colonial behaviour. What she does not realize is that her ‘image’ of the ‘typical,’ ‘authentic’ Indian is as much constructed by British culture as British India itself, and that the colonial discourse of mimicry, as Bhabha has convincingly explained, is permanently “stricken by [...] indeterminacy” and the “ambivalence” (86) of a “double vision” (88). Flora is desperately trying to avoid this “menace of mimicry” (88) and to disentangle the seemingly ‘true’ and ‘false’ identities of the colonial subject. But in doing so, she becomes herself infested with the confusing hybridity of colonial identity constructions instead. The very process of signification itself becomes slippery ground as she tries to explain her idea of her Indian friend’s Indianness; and in the attempt she ends up questioning her own (English) identity as well (“I want you to be with me as you would be if I were Indian”). Interestingly enough, this strange hybrid “An Indian Miss Crewe” is unicorn-like (see 13); as incomprehensible a thing for Nirad Das, as his hybridity is for Flora Crewe. And it is her attempt to sever character and role neatly, fact and fiction, original and image, signified and signifier, that finally hurts Nirad Das more than even he can bear and that threatens to forestall any further communication between the two. Stoppard’s stage direction “But she has misjudged” (13) indicates the climax of the scene and initiates a power shift in the relationship, which is as unexpected for Flora as it is decisive for their further relationship.

Flora’s voluntary displacement from the centre to the margins of the British Empire has put her in a situation where the neat colonial stereotypes, the common ‘images’ of ‘India’ and ‘the Indian,’ no longer hold. And it is therefore fitting that Nirad Das gives her a copy of Emily Eden’s *Up the Country* as “a kind of birthday present” (16) — although it is not her real birthday. It could be, and indeed partly will be, the birthday of a Flora, however, who learns to discard or ‘displace’ her stereotypical and binary ‘images’ in favour of a more humane, more hybrid concept of colonial identities. The first step in that direction is

5 For the concept of the ‘mask’ in colonial relationships cf. esp. Fanon’s seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks*.

probably the language game she and Das play during their next meeting, the objective of which is to put as many Indian words as possible into an English sentence (see 19; cf. also Kreis-Schinck 202). Interestingly enough it is Flora who wins as “the Hobson-Jobson champion” (19), whereas Das immediately afterwards reveals his enthusiasm for the English of Macaulay (of all people).7 However, when Flora reacts to this disclosure with a disappointed “Oh dear” (19), implying that Das is the typical colonial 'mimic man,'8 he gives her a short but effective lesson in the dialectics of discourses and counter-discourses of power, pointing out that it was Macaulay who, with his idea of English as a common language, inadvertently paved the way to Indian independence (see 19).9

Having to discard ('displace') her ‘image’ of Das as an assimilated 'mimic man’ after these remarks, she immediately tries to fix him in another position within her binary structure of thought and asks “Are you a nationalist, Mr Das?” — to which he only gives the ambiguous answer: “Ah, that is a very interesting question!” (19). The audience, of course, from the preceding scene in the second plot and time frame of the play, already knows about Nirad Das’s imprisonment for political activities immediately after his meeting with Flora. Flora, however, for the time being, remains as confused and puzzled with the hybrid mixture of Englishness and Indianness which Nirad Das represents, as he, paradoxically, is by her suggestion of an equally hybrid “Indian Miss Crewe.”

It is only towards the end of Act I, and after a series of further severe misunderstandings, that some sort of communion is possible between the two. The scene that leads to the climax of their relationship starts with another tactlessness of Flora which deeply hurts the Indian painter.

7 Macaulay, as Berninger (47) points out, was and is famous for his statement “that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (Macaulay 722).

8 For the concept of ‘mimic men’ cf. esp. Bhabha, and, of course, Naipaul’s famous novel The Minic Men (1967). One could also, once more, quote Macaulay, who demanded “a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (729).

9 He thereby gives a good example of Sartre’s dictum that “[c]olonialism creates the patriotism of the colonized” (xxviii).
After having had a look at the still unfinished painting, she begins writing a letter to her sister (instead of the poem she was occupied with during earlier sittings), but refrains from commenting on the piece of art. Das considers this a silent criticism of his work, but again tries to hide his hurt feelings behind a wall of politeness. When Flora asks “What have I done?” and Das answers “Done? What should you have done?” she explodes, “Stop it. Please. Stop being Indian” (37). This repetition of her seemingly absurd request from their first encounter — and Nirad Das’s angry rebuke (to be found only in the revised version of 1999, 419) “And you stop being English!” — become the starting point for a struggle about the painting (and metaphorically speaking: about the making and destroying of “images”), which even becomes physical but which finally clears the air for a close and erotic relationship between Flora and Das. After a physical breakdown she literally does what she alluded to in the first conversation, “lay[ing] [her]self bare before [him]” (11), and he first assists her in washing herself and later paints her in the nude. On a symbolical level Flora thus frees herself from layers of cultural prejudice; and Das pictures her as what he had considered to be impossible earlier on: “An Indian Miss Crewe” (12).

This is evident, more than in anything else, in the nature of the nude watercolour that stems from this encounter. Contrary to the oil painting he was working on before (and which, tellingly, remains unfinished), the new picture is not an artistic exercise in colonial mimicry but rather in what Christopher Innes somewhat paradoxically calls “artistic authenticity through integration” (194). Technique as well as style of the earlier portrait were heavily influenced by European and British tradition, particularly the Pre-Raphaelites (see 44f). The nude watercolour, however, is clearly painted in the manner of traditional Indian erotic art — albeit with a British subject at its centre, depicted in a western ‘realist’ style (see 67f) — “An Indian Miss Crewe” indeed! Das himself calls it “A good joke, is it not? A Rajput miniature, by Nirad Das! [...] A quite witty pastiche — ” (74); and when Flora this time admonishes him “Are

10 It must be conceded, though, that the painter, symptomatically for his complex artistic identity admires the Pre-Raphaelites especially for their narrative style, which for him is similar to the Indian tradition of Rajasthani painting (see InIn 45).
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you going to be Indian? Please don’t,” it has a much more pleasant ring. So when Das answers, “I … I am Indian,” she concedes

FLORA: An Indian Artist.
DAS: Yes.
FLORA: Yes. This one is for yourself (74).

2.2 The ‘Post-Colonial Plot’

Questions of identities and ‘images’ are posed not only in the colonial plot of Stoppard’s play, however, they also structure the post-colonial one, set in contemporary London and mainly consisting of the relationship between Mrs Swann, Flora’s older sister, and Anish Das, the son of Flora’s painter, who lives in England and, like his father, works as an artist.

Anish approaches Eleanor Swann when he sees his father’s portrait of Flora on the cover of an edition of her Collected Letters. He had not known of the existence of this painting, but is in possession of the nude watercolour, which Eldon Pike, the American editor of Flora’s letters (and a caricature of the ‘positivistic’ literary scholar) is hunting for. Their conversation about ‘displaced’ pictures soon becomes another struggle over ‘images’ of displacement, as Mrs Swann now tries to locate Anish’s Anglo-Indian identity in her nostalgic concept of colonial India.

The theme and tone are again set in their first conversation, which anachronistically melts into the first longer dialogue between Flora and Nirad Das within the ‘colonial plot.’ As in the ‘colonial’ scene the question of ‘Indianness’ is directly brought up after a few sentences. When Mrs Swann apologizes for having “forgotten the sugar” for tea, and Anish answers that he does not take sugar anyway, she immediately reacts with a cultural stereotype by saying, “Oh. I thought you’d be more Indian” (13), thereby inverting Flora’s preceding admonishment to Anish’s father to be “less Indian” (12; emphasis mine). Anish at first simply ignores this remark, but when Mrs Swann insists on the topic by addressing the relationship between Nirad’s and Anish’s painting, the confusing complexity of cultural identities becomes again vitally (and linguistically) clear:

ANISH: […] Yes, I am a painter like my father. Though not at all like my father, of course.
"Stop being Indian!"

MRS SWANN: Your father was an Indian painter, you mean?
ANISH: An Indian painter? Well, I'm as Indian as he was. But yes. I suppose I am not a particularly Indian painter ... not an Indian painter particularly, or rather ...
MRS SWANN: Not particularly an Indian painter.
ANISH: Yes. But then, nor was he. Apart from being Indian.
MRS SWANN: As you are.
ANISH: Yes.
MRS SWANN: Though you are not at all like him.
ANISH: No. Yes. [...] (14).

Similar to the conversation before, in which Flora tried to explain what exactly she meant by her admonishment to Nirad Das to be "less Indian," the floating signifiers here indicate the impossibility to pin down the concept of 'Indianness' (or, for that matter 'Englishness') to any fixed meaning. 'Images' of 'India,' 'Indian painting' or 'the Indian' are constantly displaced in their usage, seem immediately misplaced as soon as they are applied to particular entities and identities and thus lead to a series of conflicts and misunderstandings. Mrs Swann's insistence on Anish's 'Indianness' in particular leads to a quarrel about the political past which starts over differing signifiers. When Anish mentions the "first War of Independence," Mrs Swann, at first, pretends not to understand:

MRS SWANN: The ... ? What war was that?
ANISH: The rising of 1857.
MRS SWANN: Oh, you mean the Mutiny. What did you call it? (17). 11

And when, after thoroughly airing her imperialist sentiments, she wants to know whether he will be "going home," a series of further misunderstandings ensues from the term 'home' and its obviously differing and unstable meanings:

ANISH: [...] ... I am a guest here and I have been ...
MRS SWANN: (Calming down) No, only provocative. Will you be going home?
ANISH: (Bewildered) I ... Would you like me to go?

11 The struggle over signifiers concerning the happenings of 1857 is mirrored in a later conversation between Flora and the Rajah of Jummapur (see InIn 61; cf. Kreis-Schinck 201). On the significance of the 'Mutiny' for the British-Indian relationship see, for instance, Berninger 47, n. 14.

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Mrs Swann: (Equally bewildered) No. What do you mean?

Anish: (Understanding) Oh — home! I didn’t mean I was a guest in England. England is my home now. I have spent half my life here. I married here (18).

Putting an end to the confusion, Anish’s insistence that “England is [his] home now” (18) ironically inverts Mrs Swann’s later use of the word when nostalgically dreaming of her “fruit trees at home” (80) — ‘home’ meaning ‘India,’ or rather ‘British India’ here (cf. also Innes 189f and Lee 50).

Like Flora and Nirad Das, Anish and Mrs Swann come closest to a mutual understanding when they enter the realm of visual art: 12 He asks to draw a sketch of her, she finally gives in, and he remarks: “It will make us friends” (18). Finally, of course, it will not be this picture, but the two paintings by Anish’s father (the portrait in oils and the watercolour nude) that make them friends (cf. 40f). On the other hand, even painting consists of ‘floating signifiers,’ its meaning being highly charged with cultural implications. This becomes obvious when Mrs Swann and Anish Das look at his father’s nude watercolour of her younger sister, because not only is the painting itself an unsettling mixture of traditions and identities (an Indian watercolour of a British woman) — but also Mrs Swann’s and Anish’s ways of looking at the picture and their strategies of reading its details differ considerably according to their personal and cultural backgrounds. Anish recognizes the picture as “a composition in the old Rajasthani style” (67) and explains that “to us Hindus, everything is to be interpreted in the language of symbols” (68) — like falling leaves symbolizing death and vines around a tree indicating love. Mrs Swann, however, in common-sensical contrast, insists that the painting is “as particular as an English miniature” and that “sometimes a vine is only a vine” (68). She thereby tries to still the process of signification within the painting and maybe exclude its possible reading in terms of an inter-racial romance. What is more, like Flora Crewe sixty

12 In contrast to the colonial pair, however, who had established a playful linguistic meeting ground in the Anglo-Indian Hobson-Jobson game before entering the communicative space of visual art, Anish Das and Mrs Swann must leave the field of verbal signs largely behind, in order to make an understanding between them possible.

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years ago, she is also deeply puzzled by the hybrid identity of her Anglo-Indian partner — maybe because, like Flora’s, her own identity is more hybrid than she dares to admit. Having lived in India with her husband, a British officer, during the Raj, she is still full of colonial nostalgia — for the quality of Himalayan tea water (26), the already mentioned “fruit trees at home” (80) and other things Indian.13

III. Binarism, Hybridity and the Dis/Misplacement of ‘Images’

As should have become obvious by now, hybridity and the unstable character of meanings in general, as well as (post-)colonial identities in particular, are central concerns in Stoppard’s play. Stereotypical and binary concepts of personal or cultural identities are constantly challenged by displacement or misplacement, in other words, by putting signifiers in unusual contexts and/or giving them different (seemingly ‘wrong’) meanings. The result is a momentary de-familiarization and alienation that makes the spectator — if not always the character on stage — aware of the ideological nature of these concepts.14 This strategy works on several levels in the text, and most of them (e.g. the use of puns and linguistic ambiguity) I have already hinted at. Puns (the first one being the title of the radio play In the Native State; cf. Blüggel 192) and irony (whether intentional or not) are maybe the most obvious in-

13 “MRS SWANN: In India we had pictures of coaching inns and foxhunting, and now I've landed up in Shepperton I've got elephants and prayer wheels cluttering up the window ledges, and the tea-tray is Nepalese brass. One could make a comment about human nature” (25). One could make such a comment, indeed — and it would certainly involve the question of hybrid (post-)colonial identities, but Mrs Swann, tellingly, refuses to do so and asks her Anglo-Indian guest to “have a slice of Battenburg instead” (25). To add a ‘Pikean’ note: It may serve as an ironic comment on Mrs Swann’s attitude towards cultural hybridity that Battenburg or Battenberg cake, a chequered marzipan cake, is named after the German town Battenberg in the Edgerbergland, halfway between Gießen and Paderborn.

14 I tend to disagree in this respect with the otherwise very lucid interpretation of Lee, who stresses Stoppard’s entanglement in the strings of colonial stereotypes and sees in the play(s) “only a gesture towards hybridity” (50; italics mine). I rather see my own position in general accord with Jochen Achilles, who describes Stoppard’s drama as indicative of a recent “reconstruction” of “the notion of interethnic fusion” (2) — and its ideal as “a melting pot informed by cultural pluralism” (17).
stances in which stereotypical 'images' or meanings get subverted or deconstructed in the play(s) and signifiers are revealed as unstable or 'floating.' The signifier 'Indian' and the connected stereotypical 'image' of 'Indianness' are repeatedly exposed to (comical) word play and their opposition with 'English' or 'Englishness' subverted and confused. Examples have been quoted before and the irony often consisted in the fact that aspects of 'Indian' — or 'Englishness' were to be found in the most unlikely of places and persons. Again and again *Indian Ink* shows how identities and signifiers alike refuse to be reduced to clear and stable binaries, either Indian or British, but are always already infested with their cultural Other. I would, however, by way of conclusion, particularly like to point out the function of 'images' (a word which I shall continue to use as a sort of literal/metaphorical pun myself) in this context.

One of Stoppard’s initial ideas for the play, according to his own comments, was a woman being painted while writing a poem about being painted (see *TSIC* 249 and 254). In fact, the poem that Flora writes (and that Stoppard obviously spent a lot of time and energy on; cf. *TSIC* 249) is not so much about being painted, but about “heat” (*InIn* 11) or,

15 Cf. Kaplan: “Stoppard’s Indian characters sound more British than the British, a verbal trick that that he exploited fully in the radio play” (342); cf. also Blüggel 196.

16 Furthermore, the deconstruction of binaries is also reflected in several quasi-allegorical details of the play, sometimes to comic effect, as for example in the discussion between Flora and Nirad Das about the duck pâté that has supposedly been stolen by Nazrul the servant (see *InIn* 27–28), in the “two kinds of cake” (see *InIn* 29) that Flora and Das are served by Nazrul soon after this conversation, or in the two conflicting ‘rasa’ that prevent the success of Flora’s poem, as Das suggests immediately after that (see *InIn* 29f). Further motifs alluding to binarism and/or hybridity are the two brands of cola that Pike distinguishes (see *InIn* 31, 57), the love affair between the God Vishnu and Radha, “The most beautiful of the herdswomen” (*InIn* 28, 45, 83, cf. also 9) — and again the “two kinds of cake” (*InIn* 3) that Mrs Swann offers to Pike and Anish. Another ‘Pikean’ note: “Victoria Sponge” and “Battenberg” [*InIn* 15], the sorts of cake offered to Anish, are themselves quasi-binary in nature: the former striped, the latter chequered, while the “Madeira” for Pike — we are not told the second type of cake for him — is a simple pound cake of a rather unstructured appearance and undistinguishable ingredients. I leave it to the reader to decide whether this is a subtle comment on the difference between artist and critic.
less metaphorically, “Sex” (InIn 30). Nevertheless, in the poem she describes herself in the very same posture that she is in while being painted in Nirad Das’s oil portrait (see 26f), so that a common intermedial space between painter and poet is established. A similar thing happens when this very painting on the cover of a book (Flora’s Collected Letters; see InIn 14, 26 and passim) and another painting (an eighteenth-century erotic miniature given to Flora by the Rajah of Jummapur) hidden in a novel (Emily Eden’s Up the Country; see InIn 66, 83 and passim) provide the common ground for friendship between Mrs Swann and Anish Das 60 years later. Thus, situations of common and interdependent artistic production or reception repeatedly provide a space for communication between cultural binaries such as man and woman, British and (Anglo-)Indian, colonizer and (post-)colonized. Painting and poetry in particular (and that is perhaps their most prominent point of convergence) deal with images — and by producing images in art paradoxically try to subvert the ideological and stereotypical ‘images’ of common perception. Thus while denotative linguistic communication between Flora Crewe and Nirad Das or between Mrs Swann and Anish Das respectively, is rendered extremely difficult by the unreliability of the linguistic signifier, the realm of art — be it painting or poetry (or even the quasi-poetic Hobson-Jobson word play) — seems to offer a discursive realm beyond conventional binaries and ideological stereotypes, — despite the simultaneously acknowledged fact that even this approach to the Other’s ‘reality’ is nevertheless tinged by colonial ideology, because even artistic images transport cultural ‘images’ not always in command of artist and or spectator.

In Stoppard’s Indian Ink artistic images, paintings are disappearing and reappearing in different and unexpected contexts with remarkable frequency. Nirad Das’s portrait in oils of Flora Crewe is ‘displaced’ from India to Britain (by Mrs Swann) and rediscovered (by his son) as the cover illustration of Flora’s Collected Letters. In turn, Anish brings his father’s watercolour nude of Flora to Britain and to Mrs Swann, showing it to her while she shows him the erotic print that had been given to Flora by the Rajah of Jummapur and put away in her copy of Emily Eden’s Up the Country. If we read the pictures in the play as ‘images’ in the sense of ideological stereotypes, the ‘leitmotif’ of displaced and mis-
placed images can be seen as a sort of meta-pun, pervading Stoppard’s whole play and its central (post-)colonial theme. Images (in both the literal and metaphorical senses of the term) obviously must be misplaced (forgotten, purloined) and displaced (de-contextualized, de-familiarized) in order to be recognized as what they are — and in order to open up a discursive space in which (despite the floating of the signifiers) some sort of communication is possible.

The dialectics of cultural binaries, of Self and Other cannot be circumvented. The (post-)colonial discourse in particular is irretrievably imbued with stereotypical ‘images.’ Instead of fixing them in static opposition, however, they can be brought into dynamic interaction; and in this interaction — not in the signifiers but in the processes of signification — lies the chance of communication, even communion between poet and painter, woman and man, colonizer and colonized.

Postscript

I have hardly mentioned the gender aspect in my treatment of *Indian Ink*, partly because my main interest in this article was in colonial and post-colonial ‘images,’ and partly because Josephine Lee has already intelligently dealt with that aspect in her article (see 43–46). As she has shown, the (post-)colonial theme is intricately coupled with gender questions in this play. But while she foregrounds the gendering of India in the play as stereotypically feminine, I would suggest reading Stoppard’s gendering of colonial identities in a more complex way. Despite the usual identification of the colonizer as masculine and the colonized oriental as feminine that has already been disclosed by Said and others (cf. e.g. Said 207, 309, 311 and passim), Stoppard creates two inter-racial couples through which the traditional stereotypes are partly reversed as well. Thus it is *women*, Flora and Mrs Swann, who hold the powerful position in these colonial and post-colonial pairings. On the other hand, when it comes to painting, to ‘making images,’ it is the ‘colonized’ *men* who paint or draw the female ‘colonizers’ — in one case even in the nude. Maybe it is this approximate ‘balance of powers’ in the ‘war of the

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17 For still another reading of gender and colonialism in *Indian Ink* cf. Achilles 14f.
sexes’ that ultimately makes communion possible. The ‘medium of exchange’ (to misuse a term from systems theory) mostly is art in general and painting in particular. Paintings are given as presents, shown as a proof of confidence (or — in the case of critic Eldon Pike — withheld as a sign of distrust). They are sought for, found and hidden and exchanged. Communion then, to once more use the meta-pun of image/‘image,’ is made possible through ‘displacement’ of ‘images.’ These, in themselves, are necessarily infested with ideologies and binary stereotypes, but in the process of exchanging them they offer the possibility of producing a fluid, hybrid and thus maybe more humane communion between individuals.

The central metaphor for such a fluid and humane communion within *Indian Ink* is probably erotic love. Flora, who according to her sister “used [men] like batteries” (80), and was accused of obscenity in her first book of poems (see 54), from the very beginning deployed her rather uninhibited sexuality to break through what she considers the mask of her painter’s ‘Indianness.’ The poem that she writes during her portrait sittings, she declares, is about “heat” and “Sex,” but what develops between her and Nirad Das is a more than sexual relationship. It is a process of mutual ‘knowing’ through misplacement, displacement and exchange of images/‘images.’ That this should prove possible, against all odds, between a man and woman caught in colonial webs of meaning is remarkable. It turns the “ethics of empire” that Stoppard set out to write about into “erotics of empire,” a dynamic and open process of communion. However, that such “interethnic reconciliations are precariously unstable,” is hinted at on several levels towards the end of the play, as Achilles has convincingly shown (cf. 18f, the quote: 18). Flora’s last words are read (in slightly abridged version) from Emily Eden’s book *Up the Country,* the travelogue of a British woman in Victorian India: “I sometimes wonder they do not cut all our heads off and say nothing more about it” (83).
Works Cited

Primary Literature


Interviews


Secondary Literature


"Stop being Indian!"


The year 2003 saw a unique situation develop in mainstream London theatres (although not the West End) through the staging of a number of high profile plays by Black British dramatists, a phenomenon which has continued into 2004. This indicates a shift has occurred towards perceiving Black British drama as commercially viable, moving away from traditional assumptions of its genesis and production as residing...
primarily within community or non-mainstream theatre contexts. Yet of the eleven plays staged during this period, nine were directed by white directors, primarily male. Whilst the staging of plays by Black British dramatists in mainstream London theatres might reveal an increasingly contested sense of the ‘mainstream’ and revisions of what has been perceived as the traditional theatre market, traditional theatrical hegemonies remain evident. White men continue to remain at the helm despite the forays into cross-cultural programming with ‘new’ writing.

The importance of including and perpetuating indigenous Black British drama in the mainstream theatrescape can be neither under-estimated nor over-emphasised. It provides a key cultural site wherein ethnicities and experiences who may not otherwise meet are directly exposed to each other’s cultural practices. Its maintenance is a prerequisite for disabling white elitism in British theatre. Black drama exposes mainstream (predominantly white) theatre-goers to aspects of black British cultural input that is as indigenous to contemporary British cultural identity as that provided by white playwrights. It provides black audiences with authentically rendered cultural representations which have not as yet been able to develop a flourishing continuum in Britain’s cultural psyche.

This paper focuses on a range of contemporary plays by black British writers as main-stage theatrical works. The period marks the presence of

2 Roland Rees, founder of Foco Novo Theatre Company (1972–88 dissolved when the Arts Council withdrew its funding), noted how “[i]n the parlance of subsidy providers, community did not mean an area where there is a homogenous population. Quite the contrary. Community came to mean any place which lay outside the orbit of the community from which theatre drew its audiences” (Rees 128).

3 No keener example of this exists than the approach adopted by the latest Artistic Director at the Royal National Theatre, Nicholas Hytner. As Maddy Costa identifies, by 2004, “of the 16 associates Hytner last year invited to be part of his creative thinktank, only five are women and only one (the actor Adrian Lester) is black. Meanwhile, the people with whom he works most closely [...] are men of roughly the same generation as himself. ‘I wouldn’t want us to be cultural homogeneous, but I don’t want to be ticking boxes either,’ Hytner responds. ‘And it’s an evolving group’” (Costa 2). Although Kwei-Armah’s new play, Fix Up, premieres at the Royal National Theatre in December 2004, it is directed by the same white male director from Elmina’s Kitchen. Similarly the return of Williams’ Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads in April 2004 was directed by a white male director.
cutting edge work which both upholds and subverts traditionally marginalised positionings (socio-politically and theatrically) to make important cultural interventions that respond to our times. The plays of DeObia Oparei, Dona Daley, Debbie Tucker Green, Mark Norfolk, Courttia Newland, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Rhashan Stone and Roy Williams can be viewed as critiques of and interventions into ‘cultural citizenship’ and its uneasy accommodating of black British experience as constituent of British cultural output. I employ this term as means of indicating how the participation and acceptance of traditionally marginalised social groups in mainstream cultural contexts frequently, draws in issues of race and social identity in the content and reception of these recent plays. They exemplify the temerity, tenacity and tenuousness that can be seen to characterise the positioning of Black British artists within the censoring or censorious institution of the British theatre complex and its cacophony of critical voices.

In these plays issues of implicit marginality in theatre practice are addressed through conceptualising and working with notions of cultural citizenship and its representations via theatre and drama. Exploring cultural citizenship through its implicit and explicit representation in drama in performance enables an interrogation of those oppressions still endured by so many in actuality. Moreover it marks out a body of writing, a newly emerging genre which is correspondingly exposed to a white-dominated critical arena that has hitherto been sporadically responsive.

Thematically and generically I place the plays into three groups and closely read a selection of these. (1) ‘Incendiary plays,’ such as Roy Williams’ *Fallout* (2003), Kwame Kwei-Armah’s *Elmina’s Kitchen* (2003) and Mark Norfolk’s *Wrong Place* (2003), draw upon representations of urban working class black men and their intersections with violence and the criminal justice system and are notable for cross-generational male-male conflict and the absence of living, loving mothers. (2) ‘You have to laugh’ comedies like DeObia Oparei’s *crazyblackmuthaf**$**in’self* (2002) which parodies the idea of any stable sexual, national or racial identity, and Kofi Agyemang and Patricia Elcock’s *Urban Afro Saxons* (2003) which debates the question of what makes one British through

4 On the back cover, Oparei describes the play as “[a] journey to the soul of Africa from the heart of St. John’s Wood via the groin of Peckham.”
an array of incisive and wittily represented multi and cross cultural experiences arising from a community under a state of siege. (3) ‘Drama of family ties,’ their corrosion and fortification in the light of damaging forces (internal and external) in Debbie Tucker Green’s *Dirty Butterfly* and *Born Bad* (2003), Courtia Newland’s *B is 4 Black* (2003), Dona Daley’s *Blest be the Tie* (2004) and Rhashan Stone’s *Two Step* (2004).

My focus upon single works of Daley, Kwei-Armah and Williams results from the impetus to judiciously extract indicative texts from a larger cultural output, the systematic readings I offer creating a critical framework within which other texts may be read. As Rebecca Stott has quoted Karl Jaspers, “[w]hat is important in phenomenology is less the study of a large number of instances than the intuitive and deep understanding of a few individual cases” (Stott xiv). Such a methodology aims to knock off balance the delusive certainties of generalising and to act as a counterpoint to the lack of first-hand experience of many white Britons of their black counterparts as confirmed by the Commission for Racial Equality’s latest survey.⁵

I. The Plays

Black writers write for black actors. Unlike white writers who tend to assume the normative of whiteness without interrogating its correspondent privilege, black writers comment upon the dominant culture’s failure to acknowledge this by staging issues of race, ethnicity and colour as an explicit accompaniment to the thematic content of their work. This is further articulated in a variety of ways in performance. Not only are there culturally specific references in the form of names, behaviour, spirituality, humour, gesture, use of patois, food, staging of the domestic environment and shared understandings of social expectations but also inhabiting a space in a surrounding society in which both writers

⁵ An article in *The Guardian* of 19 July 2004 previewed the results of the 2004 poll which found that ninety percent of white people have few or no friends from amongst their fellow black, Asian or Muslim Britons whilst “[t]hree in 10 of ethnic minority people surveyed said all or most of their friends were Asian or black” (Dodd 1).
The State of the Nation

and their black characters are cast as a minority is registered, critiqued and displayed.

The legacy of immigration and diasporic cultural forms is a recognised and underpinning influence upon contemporary Black British writing, the diaspora now including the generations of indigenous Black Britons. As Gabriele Griffin has noted in her historicising of late twentieth century black British and Asian women’s drama,

Whereas during the 1980s plays were dominated by inter-generational conflicts as expressive of the difference between the adult subject who migrated and the child who, so to speak was migrated, and their different accommodations to that situation, by the 1990s plays tended to focus much more on how to live in Britain now, beyond the experience of the moment of migration, as part of a generation that had grown up in the UK (Griffin 25).

The engagement with and articulation of the many strands of indigenousness is the starting point for my readings of the selected texts. The experiences and imaginative worlds represented need acknowledging and revealing. Issues of citizenship, nationality, race identities and the concept of British-ness (to name a few) reveal how current discursive categories and critical languages are insufficient and fatigued in mapping relationships to such issues in theatre practice and polemic. It becomes clear that a voicing of the margins in the ‘staging of the UK’ emerges.

Devolution throughout the United Kingdom in the past decade has opened up micro communities to challenge the meaning of a unified sense of ‘British-ness’ and hence this requires a cultural platform, which voices such perspectives. It is clear that Black British identity is “a multiple identity, one which combines national and racial subjectivities and, in doing so, contests the dualistic world order which deems blackness and British-ness to be mutually exclusive” (Mama 114).

Digger in Elmina’s Kitchen is described as having come from Grenada and emigrated at fourteen with an accent that “swings from his native Grenadian to hard-core Jamaican to authentic black London” (Kwei-Armah 4). He refers to British-born Deli as “You British blacks” (14), yet Baygee, “the last of the West Indian door-to-door salesmen” (13), calls Digger “White boy.” Notably, only the characters who represent the older generation who emigrated from the Caribbean refer to the effects of colonisation. Clifton’s, “The most witchcraft is practise by the
white man. How do the arse you think he managed to take Africa from we," produces an explosive slapping down from his son, "Don’t bring none of your white this and dat in here, Clifton. I don’t want to hear that" (38). In this, Kwei-Armah unequivocally locates his British characters’ identities as not being derived in relation to the colonising enterprise but from their strategic survival in a specific urban context of Hackney, London.

Likewise, Daley’s protagonist Florence specifically resides in a high-rise council estate at Clapham Junction, London. The residue of Empire symbolised in cultural landmarks such as the Statue of Eros, derided by the visiting Jamaican sister Martha, evokes Sam Selvon’s Lonely Lon­doners’ revisions of London’s imperial symbols. Her disdain for and implicit deconstructing of imperial cultural ideology reveals an assertion of the ex-colonised over the coloniser at source: “Then we did go to Piccadilly Circus […] the hub of the Empire dem used to tell we in school […] one little statue […] and plenty dirt and muck round de place” (Daley 44). Those who stayed behind are shown to have material advantage over those who migrated to England, drawing attention to the fallacy of supposed economic gains to be had from emigrating in the first place.6 It is this interrogation of the concept of British-ness, the assertion of voices that exist and represent that beyond mainstream critical vision that frequently appears in Black British drama. In the cultural output characterised as ‘British’ there is a changing landscape transformed by political struggle in representing identity shaping institutions of family, law and education. In the selected plays, identity as derived from country of origin, cultural antecedents and its relationship to British-ness is apparent and forms a resistance to the implicit oppression and marginalisation.7

6 “MARTHA: People pee inna de lift, fighting to keep warm. Small balcony fe a garden. Yu don’t have to live like this” (Daley 30).

7 Lennie James, who played Joe in the premiere of Fallout, has noted, “A strange thing happened to me when I got off the plane in New Zealand. My mum has a favourite saying; that she never was a black woman until she got off the boat in England. In New Zealand I became an Englishman […] in New Zealand, all the history of England was my history. When people interviewing me spoke of the long history of British theatre, it was all mine. I was allowed to own it […] I can’t tell you how strange that sensation was” (12).
1.1 Incendiary Plays

In *The Price of the Ticket* James Baldwin elucidates the introspection, the journey to the source that precedes the attainment of self-authenticity needed in forging one’s identity: “Go back to where you started, or as far back as you can, examine all of it, travel your road again and tell the truth about it. Sing or shout or testify or keep it to yourself: but *know whence you came*” (xix). From the same collection he records the painful explorations of the relationship between African diasporic experience and culture at the conference of Negro-African Writers and Artists (*Le Congrès des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs*) in Paris 1956 — words that resonate with black male experience as dramatised in the plays of Williams and Kwei-Armah nearly fifty years later — and the reception of these works (arguably cultural products of the African diaspora) into the canon of contemporary British drama:

> Just what the specific relation of an artist to his culture says about that culture is a very pretty question [...]. Is it possible to describe as a culture what may simply be, after all, a history of oppression? [...] is this history enough to have made of the earth’s black populations anything that can be described as a culture? For what, beyond the fact that all black men at one time or another left Africa, or have remained there, do they really have in common? [...] What they held in common was the necessity to remake the world in their own image, to impose this image on the world, and no longer be controlled by the vision of the world, and of themselves, held by other people (49-50).

Although emerging from different circumstances, socio-cultural politics and a pre-Civil Rights context, this passage articulates the seeking of identity and the right to name oneself that resonates through African diasporic writing and is an identifiable motif connecting the incendiary plays.

Williams’ *Fallout* creates a nightmarish odyssey through a racially related homicide investigation, which finds angry black policeman Joe (mid-thirties) up against the liberal hypocrisy of white colleagues and the gang culture glorification now flourishing in the community where he grew up. Inter- and intra-cultural differences are brought to a head in an edgy exploration of losing connections to one’s cultural roots and the ever-diminishing chances of obtaining justice for a murdered African teenager.
The “fallout” suggested by the title refers not only to the stage world ramifications of the brutal homicide but also gestures to a wider sociological context of the trans-generational sense of displacement and social disenfranchisement that the black characters are shown to experience. Although the director Ian Rickson was keen to point out, in a personal interview, that Joe is a “prince,” an epic figure, a kind of prodigal son returning to his “kingdom,” Joe’s disenfranchisement from the estate community, the police force and inability to command a smidgen of respect from the young people he is desperate to bring to justice (and even save) becomes a portrait of a man who is anything but this. Expressed in contemporary idiom, Joe’s sense of distinguishing himself from whom he perceives as the debased black estate teenagers evokes white Restoration playwright Thomas Southerne’s African character Oroonoko who, living by heroic ideals, is a unique and solitary figure yet implicitly serves to endorse black people as generally inferior.

**OROONOKO:**
I own the Folly of my Enterprise,
The Rashness of this Action, and must blush
Quite thro’ this Vail of Night, a whitely Shame,
To think I cou’d design to make these free
Who were by Nature Slaves—
*(Oroonoko IV. ii. ll.57-61)*

**JOE:**
...You know what, it’s fuckers like you, like that pisshead, is why I had to leave. Now it’s fuckers like you that bring me back to where I started. You had to drag me down, ennit?

**SHANICE:**
Yu go. Carryin on like we should tek after yu, why should we be like yu?
*Exit Joe (Williams 109f&110).*

Buffeted on all sides, Joe is reduced to slapping the teenage suspect Emile to try and force him to confess as though physical violence is the only recourse of black people — policeman and criminal suspects alike. With the white characters in the play operating in soothing, logical and restrained counterpoint to Joe’s explosiveness, stereotyping seeps in. Like Oroonoko, Joe becomes a victim of white duplicity which, in twenty-first century guise is the “rule-book” of the institution. Williams clearly does not want to present either black or white characters as heroes and uses Joe as the voice of recognition and acknowledgement that,
while white society might stereotype black people, black people can also engage in behaviour that confirms it (conveniently) like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, in choosing to make the only character who does not demonstrate this as the murdered Kwame, Williams offers a limited and bleak representation of his black characters. The emotional thrust of the play oscillates between asking the audience to understand but also be repelled by the dehumanising quality of the disenfranchised lives. This was not aided by Rickson’s staging. The audience were positioned above the playing area on four sides, hence well situated to objectify the players like goldfish in a bowl. Whilst Joe is used to point out that there are choices apart from the assaults, thefts, continuous dishonesty and abusiveness, there is no sense of any alternative in the claustrophobic world of the estate. Recreation and survival are merged into a base need for gratification through sex, drugs, alcohol and random vengeful violence as a means of establishing an identity. For an audience which may be primarily white (the Royal Court are unable to confirm demographics of its theatre-goers) to be inserted into a familiar “viewing” position in relation to black experience of this dramatised kind, the dangers of perpetuating the findings of the CRE survey are obvious.

Kwame, four weeks away from starting university has been killed in the opening moments of the play and Joe’s lack of self-control and leading on of a witness destroys any chance of a conviction and his own prospects in the police force. Racism is implicitly the underlying impetus for the action of the plot and is cited as a justification for black people behaving badly yet, in presenting such a dichotomy between the slightly priggish but diffident Matt, a Met career man and the volatile resentful Joe, its post-Macpherson report ‘poster boy’ limited in his self-knowledge, Williams effectively adds to the marginalising and generalising of the very identities he seeks to display and celebrate.

Whilst he echoes the Damilola Taylor\(^8\) case, Williams avoids examining the fundamental tensions between African and Caribbean communi-

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\(^8\) Damilola Taylor was murdered in November 2002. Although the first trial collapsed when the credibility of the police witness was called into question, in January 2005, four youths have been charged with his murder and are due to stand trial.
ties which implicitly fuel the play’s action, stating that the main theme is “the political correctness that had been the response to the exposure and acknowledgement of institutional racism” (Williams, *Education Pack*). The difference between the murdered Kwame and the other teenagers is constantly highlighted but never explored. Shanice shows Kwame kindness but mendaciously tells her boyfriend Emile that he tried to kiss her when in fact he turned her down, and covers her tracks in racialising terms, “he tries to plant a kiss on me, comin out wid shit dat West Indian women are fast and loose, not as pure as African women like his mum [...] he loved to show how smart he was, like deh is two kinds of black, and he come from the better one [...] People weren’t gonna tek dat” (32). Here Williams indicates the racialising distinctions that occur within the same race based upon African and Caribbean derived ‘black’ identities.

Colonisation has produced deep seated trauma and dismantling of families across generations as the teaching, nurturing and protecting of children has been ruptured by children witnessing brutality and discrediting enacted upon their families, communities and via institutions. The ghettoisation Williams dramatises in *Fallout* reveals teenagers marooned in a context wherein any vestige of a gerontocracy is absent and they form compensatory urgent, desperate bonds bound by violence, desensitisation and lost hopes. Kwei-Armah’s *Elmina’s Kitchen* takes the particular experience of black Caribbean immigrants and their descendents as a basis for demonstrating the devastating effects of gun crime upon the black community. But similarly to Williams’ work, it is the contestations between masculinities (black men-black men and meta-textually, black men-white men) that are the fuel to these incendiary plays. They present flashpoints of male violence arising from male characters feeling trapped in cul-de-sacs of circumstances which they perceive as demeaning and emasculating.

The represented male characters inhabit worlds where verbal and physical aggression enables a foothold in a grim cycle of survival. Fathers shame sons or provide woefully inadequate role models. Estate life and the consequences of poverty and social marginalisation are not only dramatised in the teenagers but also peripheral characters in *Fallout* such as Manny, the gang leader Dwayne’s father who, listed as being in his
late thirties in the *dramatis personae* is a down and out addict. He only appears when he is begging from his son for paltry amounts of money and takes no responsibility for the consequences his actions have upon Dwayne. The exchanges between them expose Dwayne’s vulnerability in being associated with a self-gratifying, neglectful (now) vagrant father. The relationship also provides a sub-textual indication of the extreme emotional and probable socio-economic deprivation that has characterised Dwayne’s life up to the point of Kwame’s murder.

**MANNY:** Yu shame me.

**DWAYNE:** Yu want chat 'bout shame? Shame is seein yu, in the off-licence tryin to buy a can of beer wid only twenty pence in yer hand. Beggin dat Indian man to let yu have it.

**MANNY:** So wat, yu gonna mess up yer life? (87).

The fact that Manny’s decline into addiction means he confuses his children only exacerbates Dwayne’s hurt and subsequent hostility. Displaced to the criminal margins of society, even his own father does not confirm his identity.

**MANNY:** Yu my Bwoi. Good bwoi, Junior.

**DWAYNE:** Wat?

**MANNY:** Wat?

**DWAYNE:** Wat yu juss call me?

[...]

**DWAYNE:** Junior is yer son, who live up by Shepherd’s Bush, my half-brudda, dass who Junior is. Junior live wid his two little sistas, Tasha and Caroline, yer daughters...Remember dem? Nuh, it muss be Anton yu remember, yer son who live up by Dagenham way. Or is it Stuart, my little brudda, who live two minutes away...Nuh, nuh, it muss be the latest one, dat lickle baby wid the stupid name, Kenisha. Wass my name? (86)

Without the experience of receiving respect nor being able to respect his father, Dwayne is shown to transpose his edifice of heartlessness and aggression easily onto the surrounding world.

Likewise Ashley, the youngest in three generations of men in *Elmina’s Kitchen* can only seek self-respect through embracing the drugs world of the gangsta Digger who offers him the quick fix symbols of material success and hence status that Deli, his father cannot.
Deirdre Osborne

ASHLEY stares at DELI with hate in his eyes...

ASHLEY: He takes away your pride, then your livelihood, and all you can do is stand dere like a fish? You’ve lost it blood.

DELI (flash of temper): I’m not no blood wid you.

ASHLEY: Regrettably, that’s exactly what you are (25).

Ashley, the would be drug dealer once in Digger’s crew (in an almost Oedipal moment) even goes to shoot his own father in order to not be “the informer’s boy,” privileging his street credibility over blood ties he considers demeaning:

ASHLEY slowly takes out his gun. DELI just stares at him.

ASHLEY: You let me down Dad...

DIGGER: Alright, now point the gun at your punk-arsed dad...

... (screams at him) Is this the type of people we need in our midst?

ASHLEY: No.

DIGGER: OK then, raise the gun, point it.

ASHLEY does.

DIGGER: Good. Is your finger on the trigger?

ASHLEY: Yes.

DIGGER: Good.

DIGGER pulls out his gun and shoots ASHLEY dead.

[...] Yes. Ah so dis war run! (93–4)

Notably in both plays mothers are absent — either dead or offstage. There are two passing mentions of Ashley’s mother and Anastasia the sole on-stage woman in Elmina’s Kitchen has lost her child and tangible motherhood. Elmina is simply the dead woman, idealised by her son and complained about by his father, her ex-husband who had absconded from the marriage and child rearing responsibilities. Moreover, the sexual denigration of women takes on many forms. Kwei-Armah’s stage directions at Anastasia’s first entrance suppose a universal salaciousness: “we can see that she has the kind of body that most men of colour fantasise about. Big hips and butt, slim waist and full, full breasts” (15). Compare this to the descriptions of Deli and Digger who are “a happy spirit [...] a born struggler [...] slightly overweight” (3) or look “every bit the ‘bad man’ that he is. His hair is plaited in two neat sets of cane rows” (4) whilst Clifton is a “large-built [...] a boastful man” (32). Black women are the property of black men to kill over in Fallout. In a
context where boys murder other boys, gang rape of the most desirable girl on the estate as a right is a distinct possibility.

\[\text{SHANICE:} \quad \text{Don't touch me.}\]
\[\text{DWAYNE:} \quad \text{Yer lucky dass all I'm doin. Nuff brers round here want ride yu, yu nuh...How yu gonna fight dem all off?...The fact dat yer goin wid sum fool, mek dem want it even more. I keep telling dem nuff times, no one touches yu, but I can't hold dem off for ever, Shanice. (41)}\]

Williams creates a context of moral lawlessness and disrespect for bodily integrity that establishes a route of implied reasons for Kwame's murder. Although Shanice represents a point of intimacy for both Emile and Dwayne, she is not immune from the threat of violation because she is female.

I am not suggesting that theatre needs to demonstrate templates of acceptable morality but the replications of misogyny raises questions about women’s perceived status in these plays by male writers and the kind of society which produces such representations. The contestations between masculinities figure bleakly as the driving impetus behind both examples of Williams and Kwei-Armah's work. If as Baldwin's words about black writers seeking to make the world in their own image is to remove them from a powerlessness of representational subjection are true, then both writers appear to have trodden a fine line between perpetuating negative typing of black people and staging aspects of black British working class experience to spark debate. The patriarchal objectification of women is relentless from the harsh sexualising of the young women in \textit{Fallout} to black women as unfaithful or driving men away with nagging in \textit{Elmina's Kitchen}.

1.2 Drama of Family Ties

Constituting respite from the relentless damaged masculinity that haunts the work of the incendiary plays, Dona Daley provides an arena for voices not often heard in \textit{Blest Be the Tie}. Her \textit{dramatis personae} of three people creates an intimacy by which to explore a changing society through dramatising the shifts and adaptations her women characters make in order to survive the experience of being black in Britain. Jatinda Verma has referred to the implicit “sensibility of provocation” provided
by the impact of Black and Asian immigration since the 1950s in forming “the often ‘hidden texts’ of modern multi-cultural Britain” (195f). Like Winsome Pinnock’s plays, Dona’s texts are informed by her Caribbean heritage both culturally and politically using the British metropolitan context as a crucial reference point for her characters. The linguistic distinctiveness of writing in patois (Dona’s term) and the negotiations of race, nationality, community and family as indicators of belonging, exclusion and cultural adaptations form the backbone of her drama.

Blest Be the Tie continues the trajectory of post war Jamaican women’s experience of migration established in the earlier Weathering the Storm. Read in succession, they chart the aspirations fuelled by the socio-economic catalyst through to the cultural hybridity evident as a strategic response to struggle. Disillusion as blood ties are stretched to breaking point is counterbalanced by the vitality and sustenance of new connections forged in England. Daley draws us into evaluating the diasporic inheritance via dramatising the comparison between those who were left behind and those who emigrated through a female-centred perspective.

Some contemporary writers might be dismissive of writing about the migration experience saying that the new work to be created lies in the specific cultural and geographical spaces in which British born inheritors of the diaspora now reside. Daley attested that acknowledging “the shoes that had pinched” was part of her development and heritage. Her inspiration for Blest Be the Tie was derived from a couple, a black man and a white woman married for over fifty years who had appeared in a television documentary celebrating fifty years since the Windrush docked and whose photograph also features in the report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (2000). “Just think what they must have been through, what they must have survived” were Daley’s words in a personal conversation I held with her in 2001.

Blest Be the Tie has a cast of three women in their fifties, a generation rarely seen on the British stage in central roles. It charts a reunion of the sisters Martha (who stayed in Jamaica, now re-named Cherise) and Florence who emigrated and their very differing relationship to this and to Florence’s best friend, the white English woman, Eunice. Long
buried conflicts explode and reconciliation is finally produced through an implied critique of the compromising choices each woman has made.

Florence’s impoverished circumstances which the now affluent Martha assesses are shown to be negligible in the face of the contentment Florence nevertheless has carved out: “Some of us don’t need whole heap of tings to mek us happy. Me not lonely and me satisfy wid what me have. Me can’t start again in a strange place.” This affirms the dual cultural heritage she has attained and of which Martha reminds her: “Dat strange place is yu homeland!” (30). Here Daley reveals the acute complexities of the ‘ties’ that bind or are severed through the migration and settling process. Martha’s persuasion of the returner’s incentive, a better climate and good monetary exchange rate (“Yu pension would carry yu far” [34]) erupts into an argument between the three women. Racial and cultural divisions become apparent as Eunice feels “shut out” and in feeling so, resorts to familiar racialised defences: “You people can close ranks when you ready” (36). She then employs the racist language and thinking of her context when she refers to how she married a black man: “The ‘blousey girl’ from Chapeltown was having a darkie’s baby” (40). Ironically, as the indigenous British woman, she is isolated and fearful, a reversal of the immigrant as an outsider.

Yet Eunice’s actions and friendship with Florence redeem her from the limited and abhorrent way in which she responds to Martha’s outspokenness and criticism. The dynamics of neglect and nurture engender a debate regarding the claims to intimacy, the ties of friendship versus biological ties: “MARTHA: [...] Me and my sister is one blood Just because you live genst her and me live far don’t mean seh that there isn’t a tie between us!” (49). “EUNICE: [...] A Christmas card once a year! [...] I was just saying when you are with people day in and day out you kind of have a different view” (46 and 49). The difference between providing love and providing materially for someone as an act of love provokes a series of revelations puncturing the safety of any expectations the audience may build-up of the characters. We are wooed into a homecoming narrative in which the reference points of where ‘home’ is and who is ‘returning,’ are twisted and re-turned in a subtle undermining of certainties.
Significantly, the motherhood of the women characters whilst integral to their lives is peripheral to their stage identities — perhaps reflecting the separation through economic imperatives that characterised post-war Caribbean families in the immigration stream. “I have to suck salt out of a wooden spoon to get that settee. Leave the kids them sleeping early morning gawn fe clean” (59), recalls Florence. Children are registered through answering machine messages, letters, or are abroad and do not participate in the staged action. Thus Daley unhooks her women characters from traditional moorings to identities as girlfriends, wives and mothers — something director Paulette Randall described as her unique contribution to Black British drama in a personal interview in April 2004 — a dramatisation of the cross-race friendship of two women (rather than a woman and a man) as the primary relationship. The lesbian sub-text is registered but truncated:

**FLORENCE:** If yu was a man I could really love you.
**EUNICE:** I know, I know. I love you too. Very much.
**FLORENCE:** If tings had been different.
**EUNICE:** Another place. Another age maybe.
They look at each other and kiss and hold each other for a while (61).

Structured as a series of revelations wherein the balance of power in terms of socio-economic circumstances in past and present constantly serves to alter our perceptions, the play uniquely articulates a love triangle without men and without sex.

**II. The Critical Voices:** “to be or not to be...”

Drama produced by indigenous Black British writers slides out of the neatness of the postcolonial framework and its reliance upon definitions of hybridity to account for indigenous populations whose antecedents were immigrants two or more generations earlier. Responding critically to the cultural output of indigenous Black Britons reveals the partial vision of traditional discursive arenas. It demands the forging and acknowledging of new points of reference, a scope of critical reception which in turn reveals the limitations of mainstream theatrical and aca-
democratic conceptualising. The voices dramatised (whilst ostensibly housed within the European realist genre) speak out and back to traditional sites of cultural legitimation not only in the audiences they attract, but also in representing experiences not unilaterally shared by residents within academia or critical circles.

Considering the reception of these plays in reviews from the mainstream press tellingly reveals the limitations of the dialogic relationship created between staged play and its critical reception. It foregrounds the impulse to regard this work as a perpetual ‘pale imitation’ of the existing white dominant epistemologies — made palatable for white audiences through locating blackness within familiar contexts. Plays that stray from the favoured areas ascribed to representations of black experience appear to receive a critical reprimand — despite their obvious audience appeal. However, when the content of plays corresponds to the media ‘comfort zone’ in accounting for the Black British community: broken families, unemployment, drugs, violence, abuse, housing estates and ‘gangstas,’ then the entrance to the mainstream becomes an issue too, of cultural responsibility.

The writers I have profiled were commissioned by mainstream theatres which seek to promote new work, have thriving education sections producing study packs and foster the work of young people. This suggests that there is an investment in registering the voices dramatised as, constituents of contemporary writing. Winsome Pinnock, sometimes called the ‘godmother of black British playwrights,’ has identified the extreme importance of this: “Theatre is a sort of moral conscience of a society, an arena where a society can examine itself. If some voices are missing, I don’t think that it’s honestly fulfilling that role and is, in fact, practising a subtle form of censorship” (quoted in Kolawole).

In 1991 Yvonne Brewster, the co-founder of Talawa Theatre Company reveals her determination for matter-of-fact inclusion into the British theatrescape: “My ultimate aim is never to have to say ‘black

9 See Dave Gunning’s discussion of the lack of engagement with the specific locale of Britain as “a contained entity unto itself” with its own explanatory power concurrent to its global significances (31).

10 See bibliography for indicative reviews of Blest Be the Tie and Two Step which exemplify critical limitations and shortcomings.
theatre' again. It would mean that I had come full circle, as I never had occasion to use the term when I started out in Jamaica.” By 2002, the editor of *Wasafiri* Shusheila Nasta asks, “Should we still in 2002 be highlighting our focus on ‘black writing in Britain? [...] or should we be getting ahead and out of these tired old debates?” The naming of oneself, ‘to be or not to be’ Black British appears only to be possible from the safe embrace of the mainstream and the academy. Upon interviewing Courttia Newland and Roy Williams in February and March 2004 respectively, it was clear to me that they do want to claim being titled Black British Writers. Newland further supported this by referring to parity; once black writers are on an equal footing in publishing and performance opportunities with non-black writers who continue to dominate the mainstream, then it will be possible to accept the title British writing. For, as he pointed out, we still refer to ‘African American’ writing. The contentiousness of the separation of black theatre as a term to denote an autonomous staged identity and experience and the simultaneous segregating of black from “standard” theatre continues to be a double-edged sword. As Winsome Pinnock has argued, “it reflects and articulates the reality of a division within theatrical institutions in which black or ‘other’ performers are viewed solely in relation to their supposed difference” (Pinnock 29f).

Much of the neglectful reception of new black writing appears to stem from the lack of knowledge of the cultural networks and writing worlds in which these playwrights circulate and from whence they draw their inspiration. Their specificity and individuality is too easily generalised into transience and mediocrity as though the black presence in Britain will somehow go away or eventually become assimilated into a monolithic cultural greyness. Such a dynamic clearly has implications for the anchoring of contemporary black writing (in all its forms) within British cultural psyche. Black British writing may have been taken up by the mainstream at the moment, but there is no indication that it has a stable and permanent place in it.

Although in recent times strategies towards the black arts have evolved, inevitable negotiations are still made with the forces of compromise engendered by white male cultural hegemony in its collaborations with black British dramatists. Felix Cross of Nitro believes “it is
only when black theatre develops something that white theatre doesn’t have that it will have the power and influence to move forward” (14). To forge a permanent foothold it well might be that the experiential rather than experimental dimension brought to British culture by the plays of Black British dramatists creates the uniqueness and difference that is demanded for perpetual inclusion.

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ANJA MÜLLER

"We are also Europe:"
Staging Displacement in David Greig’s Plays

I. Introduction

Any discussion of displacement inevitably needs to consider the issue of place. The following paper does not define place as an essentialist topographical concept but rather regards place as a construction emerging from a complex interaction of language, history and environment.\(^1\) Whereas identity emerges from a congruent interplay of these factors, displacement results from a rupture, from “the condition of the individual subject or group banished or scattered from ‘nation,’ ‘culture’ or ‘home,’” as Israel puts it (11). Displacement, hence, needs an emplacement of sorts, i.e. it is built on a rhetoric which presupposes a sense of (an original) place that can be either real or imaginary. Post-colonial discourse has often opposed displacement vis-à-vis a cultural hegemony of Eurocentrism,\(^2\) thus presupposing a Eurocentric norm based on a stable European identity. A radical version of this binary opposition is expressed by the editors of the volume *Displacement, Diaspora, and Geographies of Identity*. According to Smadar Lavie and Ted Sweden-

\(^1\) Cf. Bill Ashcroft’s introduction to the section on “Place” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* 391.

\(^2\) So, for instance, Bill Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back*. 
burg the idea of “an immutable link between cultures, peoples, or identities and specific places” (1) is an invention of a powerful “Eurocenter” which conceives of and represents itself as a homogenous “pinnacle of disinterested, absolute, uncontaminated truth” (2) in order to sustain an order created by “spatially conceived hierarchical dualities” (1). Whereas Lavie and Swedenburg perceive the only challenge to the alleged “Eurocenter” in “[m]assive migrations by racialized non-white subjects into the heart of the Eurocenter” (2), I would argue that such a disruption already resides within the alleged “Eurocenter” itself. In this argument, I follow Kaplan who contends,

[centers are not impermeable, stable entities of purely defined characteristics that come simply to be contaminated or threatened by ‘others’ from elsewhere. [...] Just as all forms of representation can only allude to materiality in partial and invested ways, the discourses of displacement that circulate in theory and criticism cannot serve as more than ‘signs’ of cultural and political concerns. [...] Creating a moralizing opposition between ‘real’ and figurative exiles (or between politics and aesthetics) simply bolsters rather than deconstructs the elite foundations of Euro-American modernisms (102).

In fact, the status and function of ‘Eurocentrism’ in discourses of displacement neatly exemplifies how, in a world where political and technological changes make border(line)s fluctuate (as in present-day Europe), expand (even to outer space) or vanish altogether (e.g. globalization, or the world wide web), our perceptions and experiences of place and displacement differ from those of earlier times. The reshaping of the European Union, for example, has brought forth the term ‘New Europe.’ This ‘New Europe,’ that is in the process of emerging, “is [according to Reinelt] to date an unfilled signifier, an almost-empty term capable of endless mutations and transformations, an open and elusive term of great/little significance of power” (365). The discourse of an indeterminate ‘New Europe’ simultaneously constructs an ‘Old Europe’

3 Especially if the term is used as an abbreviation of “U.S.-Eurocenter,” as is the case with Lavie and Swedenburg who are very scrupulous about the heterogeneity of marginalized cultures, but apparently have no problems either forging cross-Atlantics bonds of identity or ignoring, in a publication of 1996, the impact of Europe’s opening towards the East on the cultural diversity of Europe. This impact is, for instance, assessed from a sociological point of view in the articles by Heisler, van de Kaa and Widgren, all reprinted in Cohen’s Theories of Migration.
that stands for a common political and cultural past, a stable and fixed place one can have (imaginary) recourse to in order to assert one’s identity. What is important in the context of this paper is that a ‘New Europe’ which largely exists in its possibilities and potentials projected into and onto the future proves a shaky ground for Eurocentric hegemony. Eurocentrism may, on the other hand, still reside in the concept of an ‘Old Europe’ preserving the accustomed ideas from which the ‘old’ residents of the ‘New Europe’ feel disconnected and therefore develop a sense of displacement. In what follows I will discuss some of the effects these developments can have on the representation of displacement in contemporary theatre in English.

II. David Greig’s Europe: Addressing Displacement in a Neo-European Context

The issue of displacement, especially within a neo-European context, surfaces in a number of David Greig’s plays. To name only a few examples, The Cosmonaut’s Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in the Former Soviet Union (1999) uses the breakdown of the Soviet Union as its backdrop and expands its setting even to outer space. Although The Architect (1996) is entirely set in a Scottish town, it presents various manifestations of displacement as the protagonist faces the breakdown of each and every pillar he has constructed his ‘home’ on: marriage, family, and work. The Speculator (1999), set in 1720 Paris, adds a historical dimension and links the expansion of Europe with the emergence of globalized capitalism. This play also raises the issue of creating a European identity in and through the relation to America — a relationship characterized by both antagonism and mutual dependence. San Diego (2003), finally, detaches its characters from a place they belong to, sending them on constant journeys. Place, in this play, is something to depart from or to aim for, but never something to arrive at; a sense of ‘home’ can only be found in (temporary) relationships with other people. The settings of Greig’s plays correspond to the overall sense of displacement: hotels and motels, airport lounges, roads and

4 This Old Europe can, of course, be thought of and defined without having to contrast it – least of all negatively – with the United States.
train stations are the most prominent locales. In *San Diego*, the aeroplane becomes a symbol for the human condition. Supplying an illusion of direction and stability while dashing people around the globe, it epitomises the idea of place that is still possible in the twenty-first century.\(^5\)

In the following essay, I shall restrict my discussion to what is probably the most prominent example among Greig’s plays in this respect: *Europe*, first staged at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, on 21 October 1994. This play not only raises the European issue in its title, it also presents its audience and readers with various possible constellations of the interrelation between place, language, history and self. After a short summary, I will first take a look at the staging of place in the play before discussing the characters’ experiences of displacement. Examining the ways how the characters relate to place and how they construe their own versions of ‘Europe,’ I shall argue that Greig’s play invites us to re-consider displacement by addressing this issue within the context of a changing Europe — a context that challenges notions defining displacement vis-à-vis Eurocentrism.

\(^5\) DAVID: A person needs to know where they are, where they’re going and what time it is. But when people fly they feel like they’ve lost these morrings. They feel anxious. And this anxiety acts as a disincentive to air travel. Nobody wants to feel anxious. We want to feel safe, on earth. But in reality – time and place no longer exist in the world [...] The safety on ground is an illusion. Co-ordinated universal time – aeroplane time – is the only time we experience which never changes. The cabin of the aircraft is the only space where we can be certain that we belong – we have a ticket with our name on it. On the seat in front of us there is a map which shows us clearly where we are going. And we are going forwards [...] The human mind evolved to cope with a community of two hundred and fifty-six people – which happens to be the number of passengers carried by the Boeing 777, two hundred series. [...] The aircraft is your village. ‘Welcome home’ (*San Diego* 78f).
2.1 Synopsis

"But where shall we go to today, my dear?
But where shall we go to today?" (W.H. Auden, "Refugee Blues")

"Something unique is afoot in Europe, in what is still called 'Europe' even if we no longer know very well what or who goes by this name" (J. Derrida, The Other Heading)

The two mottoes of Europe are indicative of the play’s major concerns in terms of character and place. The setting of the play is a small border town in central Europe. Katia and her father Sava, two refugees probably from the former Yugoslavia, take shelter in the town’s train station that has been closed down recently. Fret, the stationmaster, who is devastated at the closing, first wants to throw the refugees out but eventually finds in Sava someone of his own generation who sympathises with his nostalgia for trains and suffers like himself from the loss of a clearly structured world. Adele, Fret’s trainspotting daughter, is drawn towards Katia who fascinates her because her migration has compelled her to travel. Adele, on the other hand, has only been able to travel in her imagination. Her husband Berlin is far less sociable with the refugees. Having lost his job, like many others in town, he does not opt for leaving — like his friend Billy or his former friend Morocco who returns to his home as a successful entrepreneur — but he stays and, together with his friend Horse, joins a local group of skinheads.

Although Sava gets beaten up by Horse, he decides to stay with Fret. The two men start a sit-in trying to raise attention to the deserted train station — a vain attempt, of course. Katia, traumatized by having been raped in her home town, wants to escape. With papers organized by Morocco she leaves together with Adele. Fret and Sava remain to die in flames as Berlin and Horse set fire to the train station. In the final scene, Adele and Katia are kissing on a train toilet, muttering the names of European towns they may (or may not) visit, whereas Berlin tells the audience about the reports on the firebombing in the media. He concludes that "now, after all, people know that, in our own way, we’re also Europe" (90).

In the following discussion of the play, I will chiefly focus on the significance of the setting and on the characters’ experiences of place and displacement.
2.2 Representing Place

Set in a small border town in central Europe, Greig's play starts from a paradox spatial situation uniting centrality ("at the heart of Europe," *Europe* 5) and liminality. The major conflict of the play eventually springs from the tension between these two localizations. Whereas centrality suggests fixity and stable identities, thus lending itself to the development of nationalist sentiments (as with Horse or Billy), the border situation renders the town a potential site for inter-cultural contact and ensuing processes of hybridization, transcending national boundaries and their corresponding identities⁶ (as with Adele). The latter also occurs on a temporal level: due to this liminal position, the history of the town unites continuity or stability and perpetual change. Having been on each side of the borderline, having seen armies and trains move through it from either side, the town has accommodated itself in its particular position: "we've become used to the stillness, to the rhythm of the railway timetable and the rustle of currency" (6). Both central and marginal, both still and subject to constant change, the small town epitomizes a notion of place which can only be experienced as truly stable if it is regarded from an ahistorical perspective which reduces the chronotope (a place shot through by time and history) to a mere topos; i.e., a perspective that obliterates the inherent temporal instability of place. The town, at least so it seems, can hardly betray its hybrid character. The Calypso Bar pretends to the flavour of the wide world overseas. The architecture of the train station is a conglomerate of building styles reflecting monarchic or totalitarian forms of government: "Hapsburg, Nazi and Stalinist forms have created a hybrid which has neither the romantic dusting of history, nor the gloss of modernity" (7). Yet although "the predominant mood is of a forgotten place" (ibid.), the train station nevertheless records the memory of the town, as its historical past — which has apparently been dominated by various dictatorships is inscribed in its architecture. Even when it is burnt down at the end of

⁶ On this process, see also Lavie and Swedenburg 14ff; whereas the focus of these authors rests solely on the borderzones between First and Third World countries, especially with respect to a North-South divide, Greig's play illustrates that such borderzone experiences also cut through the very heart of the so-called "Euro-center."
the play, the ashes of the station become a kind of memorial, this time for the imminent dangers of the new situation: "the government minister came to see the ashes [...] The country has been sitting on a powderkeg for too long" (88f).

Notwithstanding its fate, the train station assumes a more positive significance in the play than its counterpart in the town centre, the Calypso Bar. Despite its mundane name, this pub is the haunt of the local xenophobes, a breeding place for ideas that envisage the town as a 'closed shop' where refugees have no entry. The train station, on the other hand, represents a certain openness, as it used to be — and to some extent still is — the site where the town made contact with the outside world.7

If history has "washed across" the place, time in the play cuts through the town in the shape, or rather the sound of the passing trains (or buses). Their noise concludes almost every scene, thus creating a regular rhythm into which the place is embedded and by which the place is connected to a larger continuum, i.e., Europe. The passing trains illustrate once more the paradoxical fluctuating stillness of the place by pointing at the function of perspective. For someone standing at the station, like the trainspotter Adele, the town is still and immobile, whereas a passenger on the train will experience her or his seat on the train as a firm place while towns and buildings are flying by the windows.

The setting of Europe thus incorporates an ambiguity of place which defies stability. The borderlines of the major places are open and fluctuating. Developing a closed, stable identity in such an environment therefore depends on further categories or operations than on a sense of belonging to a particular place.

2.3 Experiencing Displacement

This takes me to my next topic, namely the characters' interactions with notions of place and the strategies they employ to construe their identi-
ties in a situation that can be called displacement in all cases. The characters in *Europe* may, at first sight, be grouped into the two migrants — Katia and Sava — and the town residents. This characterization according to who belongs to the town and who does not, however, falls short of the development of the plot and the attitudes the individual characters take towards respective places. Coming from or belonging to a particular place apparently does not suffice for identification in Greig’s play. Nor do I think that Pester Nesteruk’s otherwise convincing juxtaposition of “two opposing poles of agonistic identity exchange” one collective, exclusive and destructive, the other one affirmative and cosmopolitan (32ff) — fully encompasses the subtle differentiations between Greig’s characters. Therefore, I propose a distinction between residual and migratory characters in *Europe*.

The former are characterized by their wish and decision to stay in town albeit for various reasons. Fret and Sava belong to this group. Both share a belief in place-as-home, something indestructible that endows their lives with meaning. To Fret, the system of the railway epitomizes a regulated, structured system that is based on destinations and directions. Although he is aware of the precarious stability of the system, which may all too easily lapse into chaos (cf. the allusions to chaos theory), he clings to it. His view of Europe is one of an industrial world of engineering: “Steel and tracks and trains like blood and muscle and arteries holding the continent together. Connecting this place with a hundred thousand other places like it from Rotterdam to Athens” (53). This corporeal view of Europe which equally regards man, nation and continent as part of an intricately engineered machine, harks for a past before digitalization and the computer age with its abstract, virtual and dematerialized connections between people and places. The nostalgia for an imaginary history aligns Fret with Sava who, in spite of being a homeless refugee, is still imagining himself a fixed home in a civilized Europe suffused in humanist ideals:

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8 This idea is further developed in Greig’s *San Diego*, where one of the protagonists finally finds his identity not in a place he belongs to but in people he belongs with, and abandons the wish for a constant abode for a migratory existence (107f).
Katia, we’re not in some savage country on the other side of the world. Look around you, look at the architecture. Listen to the sounds from the street. You can smell the forest. We’re a long way from home, but we’re still in Europe. We’ll be looked after. Our situation will be understood. [... T]he important thing is that we never give in to animalism, to barbarism (29f).

Later on, when Katia has decided to leave after the skinheads have beaten him up, Sava slightly transforms his European ideal by projecting it onto the individual. Describing himself as “by nature a person who stays” (82), he confesses his credo that “[b]y staying [...] we brought a sliver of dignity, a sliver of civilization to an otherwise damned place. We can’t leave the place to the wolves” (ibid.). When Berlin and Horse blow up the train station with Fret and Sava, they also blow up — and thus betray — these European ideals: humanity, citizenship, and technical progress. The death of the older generation seems to entail a bleak outlook for the ‘New Europe’ that emerges from xenophobic and anti-immigrant propaganda.9

Nevertheless, Greig’s play contains a curious twist insofar as Fret’s nostalgia and Sava’s idealism — even if audiences and readers may sympathize with them — are as much founded on a rigidly Eurocentric perspective which excludes everything foreign (animalic, barbaric) as is Horse’s and Berlin’s xenophobia.10 Oddly enough, Berlin and Horse form the second pair of residuary characters who remain firmly bound and pledged to a place they call home. For them, too, the past is constitutive whereas changes in the present deprive them of their meaning of life, so that they feel alienated in the very place they live at (11). Like Fret and Sava, their displacement is caused by their living in the past and by their incapability of connecting their history and their home with the present. Although they physically stay in the same place, their view of

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9 Janelle Reinelt points at the problem if a European identity is forged on a basis of a ‘Fortress Europe’ (366).
10 This is where I part company with Nesteruk who opposes the locals’ “nationalist, exclusive, communitarian identity” with a “minoritarian [identity] which represents everything that the former wishes to exclude” (35f). I would argue instead that the “warning as to the exclusionary effect of the borders of a new Europe, and the concomitant creation of new ‘others’” which Nesteruk perceives in Horse and Berlin (36) also applies to Fret and Sava who both share a view of Europe that is exclusive in its own way.
history turns them into migrant characters — at least if one follows Iain Chambers's description of "[t]he migrant's sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present" (27).

There are three moments in the play which stage this peculiar sense of displacement of the xenophobes. First, xenophobia in *Europe* results from a view of place as an object, a commodity that can be possessed or stolen. The Chorus\(^1\) to the second Act, for instance, closes with the following lines:

4 what's happened to this place?
5 I don't recognise it any more.
6 Maybe we lost it in a game of cards.
7 Maybe it disappeared into the forest.
8 Maybe it was stolen while our backs were turned.
**ALL** Only it isn't our place any more.
1 Our place was taken in the night.
8 Our place slipped away while we were asleep (48).

Here, displacement is experienced in terms of losing one's home to a foreigner who comes and steals it. The immigrant or refugee is therefore not only an economic threat who must be supported by the state or who, if allowed to work, may become a competitor on the labour market. S/he also trespasses the law and can therefore be prosecuted. The flaw in this argumentation is, of course, that place does not belong to people. Even more, in their very dialogues, Horse, Berlin, and their friend Billy betray how alienated they are, from the very beginning, from their European home town. Their conversation in the Calypso Bar is patched together with allusions to and catchphrases from *TV* shows, movies or advertisements which betray a considerable influence by U.S. American culture.\(^2\) Hence, their talk is far from being genuine or na-

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\(^1\) To Nesteruk, the "collective voice of the chorus [functions] as the performance of a collective identity and its problem" (33).

\(^2\) See Billy's, Horse's and Berlin's conversation about a violent splatter video about a maniac who runs amok on a train (22), or Billy's announcement of his imminent departure from the town:

**BILLY:** Leaving here. Leaving town. Vamoose. Skidaddle.
**HORSE:** But ... Billy ... Billy Bilbo ...
Displacement has already set in in this town which is also Europe, and this well before the arrival of the refugees, namely with the opening of borders which results from global media networking. Last but not least, and this is a decisive difference between the two couples of residuary characters, Europe does not feature significantly as a place in Berlin’s and Horse’s conversation. Their regressive nationalism — or localism rather (after all, their horizon only stretches as far as the borders of their town) — has no room for overarching concepts that may help to establish pan-national communities. In their ‘us’ and ‘them’ ideology the ‘us’ is a very limited, almost hermetic group. Timothy Brennan has emphasised the necessary distinction between two senses of nation or home. One of these meanings is rather vague, communal, and based on a sense of belonging to a certain community. The other one is connected to the idea of the nation state. Nationalists, Brennan argues (drawing on Raymond Williams), obscure the difference between these two senses and arbitrarily conflate ‘nation’ with the community (see Brennan 45). In Greig’s play, the difference between Fret and Sava, who share a sense of belonging to the train station (which epitomises their vision of a predigitalised, industrial Europe), and Horse and Berlin, who come to embrace nationalism, can be traced along similar lines.

If the outbreak of Horse’s and Berlin’s anti-immigrant violence is occasioned by economic problems, these problems do not inevitably procure residuary identities. On the contrary, economic pressure (or incentives) are chiefly responsible for the migratory identities developed by Morocco and Billy. But whereas Berlin and Horse insist on retrieving their home, thereby trying to retrieve the place from the alleged thieves, Billy and Morocco abandon it voluntarily for ephemeral insubstantial currencies. Billy, who has lost his work like Berlin and Horse, “face[s] economical realities” (23) and leaves a town which, to him, is only “a place to die” (26) — i.e. which has no future — and defies community (“Losers stick together,” 26). As he is going to become an immigrant

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BILLY: Saddle up and ride my pony ...
HORSE: Old Bill ...
BILLY: Get out while the getting’s good ... I say.
HORSE: My old mate Billington ... (25).
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like Sava and Katia, and will probably also be treated similarly, *Europe* reveals how easily the role of immigrant and resident can fluctuate in a world with permanently shifting borders.

To Morocco, the travelling entrepreneur who likes to present himself as a versatile cosmopolite, money has completely replaced any other foundation of identities, be they personal or national. He is the metropolitan migrant\(^{13}\) to whom home is precious only as a memory — and we can take this preciousness literally because Morocco describes his memory of home as yet another commodity (see 33). This means, however, that only through displacement he can value home; once home materializes — when he returns to his native town — he soon pities the locals and calls home a prison. The key to his attitude can be found in his view of Europe as a grand gaming table where crossing borders, exchanging currencies, buying and selling pave the way to wealth for the skilful and ruthless speculator. Against Berlin’s and Horse’s productive labour, Morocco posits the floating signifier of the banknote, a sign of a value which it does not contain in itself\(^{14}\) and of a nation that is united by its currency. The diversity of Europe is Morocco’s profit (he would have fared ill in the Euro zone, or he would have expanded his journeys). Defining place through economic borderlines, Morocco’s commodification of place is perhaps the most radical manifestation of displacement in the play.

\(^{13}\) See Chambers: “the modern metropolitan figure is the migrant” (23).

\(^{14}\) In *The Speculator* (1998), Greig takes up and fleshes out this motif by weaving a play around the rise and fall of John Law, a Scotsman residing in Paris in the 1720s, who makes and loses a fortune through speculations in the New World. His visionary scheme encapsulates in a nutshell the partly paradoxical principles of the capitalist system which is built on the workings of desire and therefore needs constant deferral and displacement to work properly:

Proof is our enemy.
The more real America becomes the less they [people, investors] will desire it.
The less they desire it the less they will speculate, the less the currency circulates. Money slows down. The veins and arteries of commerce become sluggish.
Without speculation, Catherine, We freeze,
We die (44).

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The second migratory couple consists of the two female characters, Katia and Adele. Traumatized by being raped in her home town, Katia can no longer attach to any place. With the well-suited words “She doesn’t look like she’d been local anywhere” (14), Adele adequately describes Katia’s state of mind as essentially displaced. Europe is to Katia not only a site of civil war, but of total disintegration of nations and values. Places have lost their essential quality to her, their substance is exchangeable, and they only exist through arbitrary place names. Once a town is renamed, it ceases to exist for Katia. Yet she does not only break with notions of place, she also tries to ward off any advances towards establishing social contact. Her strategy, by which she is trying to protect herself and her father, is a deliberate refusal of an identity, not getting attached to a place, not materializing in the eyes of others. The rupture of identity that is experienced through displacement is, to Katia, a chance to secure her survival.

Katia’s distrust in real locales is counterpointed by Adele’s idealistic and imaginary escapes. In contrast to Katia, place names are significant to Adele, because they do not signify a traumatic past but the imaginary possibility of a future. Whereas all the other characters suffer from displacement in one way or the other, because they try to reconnect to an irretrievably lost past (be it positive or negative, real or constructed), Adele’s displacement results from her projections into the future. Unlike her husband, she tries to find meaning in the changes she encounters. The direction, i.e. driving towards an idea is more important to her than its realization. Europe is largely a huge set of names to her, each of which will conjure up numerous associations and dreams. Europe is hence a place one can imagine but will never define. Moreover, this place must be experienced in a community. When Adele joins Katia and the two kiss on the train, Adele has already exchanged her ‘belong-

15 Her attitude comes close to what Chambers describes as migrancy: “Migrancy [...] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls of a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming – completing the story, domesticating the detour – becomes an impossibility” (5). With this disposition, Adele prefigures the characters in Greig’s later plays who prefer constant journeys to fixed abodes.

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ing to’ (a town, a husband, a father, a nation etc.) for ‘belonging with’ (another person). It is through such an individual relationship that the trauma of displacement can be healed and overcome, and may even become a chance for creating a new hybrid identity which transcends the borders of places. Katia’s and Adele’s eventual decision for a travelling existence comes close to a diasporic “multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries.”16

Maybe it is no coincidence that the play stages two women as the characters who experience the most radical form of displacement — and simultaneously handle it best, too. Katia and Adele are neither interested in a nation, nor in politics, nor in economical gain. Being women, they are detached, from the beginning, from important factors of cohesion. Without anything that belongs to them, they cut the bonds to which they belong, in order to belong with each other. The migratory women in Europe thus stage an issue that will also be thematized in other plays by David Greig, most notably in San Diego.

III. Conclusion

Let me summarise at this point: David Greig’s Europe is exemplary because it stages various differentiated options and manifestations of displacement. In view of this diversity and the various constellations in which displacement is experienced, displacement is represented as an essential part of the human condition.17 Nevertheless, Greig’s Europe — as well as his other plays which could not be discussed in detail within the scope of this essay — does not stage a levelling of the experience of displacement. Instead, the play explains the different forms of displacement and localizes them in individual and general history, tracing how

16 This phrase is used by Avtar Brah, in her Cartographies of Diaspora, to describe a characteristic of diaspora with respect to the creation of British identities at the turn of the millennium (quoted in Griffin 8).

17 Let me quote Chambers again: “The migrant’s sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present, is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post)modern condition” (27).
displacement is the consequence of many different factors (e.g. economy, politics, nation, individual, etc.).

Europe also illustrates various options for strategies to cope with displacement. Berlin’s and Horse’s racism ignores history and the possibility of multiple identities. It is the violent, but futile attempt to eradicate hybrid identities through negation and extermination. Fret’s and Sava’s idealism curiously resembles the racist strategy in its search for a stable identity and its rigid focus on the past. Guided by resignation rather than physical force, however, they are prone to become victims. Billy and Morocco take refuge in what may be called an economic nihilism, a world in which identity dissolves into symbolic monetary exchange.

Katia and Adele, finally eventually find solace in cosmopolitanism, assuming the role of migrants who wilfully give up the notion of a stable self for constant renegotiations of their position in ever new contexts. As Nesteruk puts it, theirs is “a literal geographic flight, an escape into the unknown of a self-chosen exile, the construction of new forms of strategic identity in alliance and allegiance” (33). Re-directing their focus from the past into the future, the two women hint at the inherent chances or creative potential of displacement.

The frame for all these options and strategies in the play is ‘Europe,’ or rather the Europes experienced and imagined by the individual characters. In the play, Europe can be all sorts of things: a harbour of civilization, morals, decency and humanity, an enormous virtual gaming table, the site of atrocities and traumas, and an imaginary dreamland that opens itself up to the imaginative traveller. Besides, the play insinuates that the experience of community is integral to Europe. Its cohesion therefore is not constituted by external boundaries — borderlines can shift or expand — but by internal, inter-personal relations. Against an

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18 Angelika Bammer has commented on the critical consequences of a universalized view of displacement, especially when “appropriated for the purposes of elaborating a new, postmodernistically hip version of the universal subject” (xii) in the introduction to her edited volume on Displacements.

19 Nesteruk thus aptly describes the firebombing as “a ritual which is performed for the collective assertion of a threatened identity, the ritual burning of a scapegoat” (35).
official discourse (cf. the reactions to the firebombing in the play), of “cohesion, community, unity, integration, security” (Morley and Robins 23), Greig’s play emphasises diversity, uncertainty, and a fear of the other — however he does all that without losing his historical grounding.

The play thus challenges a concept of Europe as a powerful centre which defines the other by terms and strategies of exclusion. Maybe such a discourse was adequate to an older generation, the ‘Old Europe’ envisaged by Fret and Sava, Berlin and Horse. But then, by referring to the constant flux of history, the opening chorus of Europe rather suggests that even the ‘Old Europe’ was far from being the powerful centre professed in the official discourse. And in ‘New Europe,’ with its fluctuating borderlines, it is even more complicated to define what or who is an ‘alien.’ If unity was the project of ‘Old Europe,’ ‘New Europe’ is marked by diversity. Thus, ‘New Europe’ poses the question after the status of the new Europeans, creating an internal East-West-rift — economically, culturally — after the political frontiers have been pulled down, at least in theory. This particular representation of Europe in Greig’s play challenges an unqualified notion of Euro-centrism and European hegemony. Instead, we are rather made to believe that maybe displacement itself lies at the heart of Europe.
"We are also Europe"

Works Cited

*Primary Literature*


*Secondary Literature*


The field of exile studies, focusing on the exiles from Germany and Nazi occupied countries, is — as in years past — once again undergoing a paradigmatic change (see Loewy). This volume offers a palpable demonstration of this change of direction. For one, exile is often interpreted today as a universal phenomenon, crossing nations and time periods (see the pioneering reference work by Tucker). For another and more relevant to this paper, the plight of exiles from Nazi Germany has thematically entered the literature of the countries of asylum from Argentina to India and from the Netherlands to Great Britain to New Zealand (see Stern). Also, coming full circle, present-day German authors have fictionalized the exilic experience of their former countrymen in their narratives, dramas and poetry. Equally telling — certainly for the drama here under discussion — is the fact that creative writers now draw on the findings of exile studies for their creative works.

The work here discussed is a text by an American author, one of literally dozens that thematize exile and which range from canonical works to entertainments and trivia (Stern 321). I selected it from among this

1 See for example W. G. Sebald *Die Ausgewanderten* and *Austerlitz*. Also see Günter Grass's novel *Im Krebsgang*, in which an exile, living in Switzerland, assassinates a Nazi official.

2 See Jay Parini's "Author's Note" in his *Benjamin's Crossing*: "I am also grateful for the critical work on Benjamin by Susan Sontag, Hannah Arendt [...] and Bernd Witte." Similarly, Elaine Feinstein credits John Fuegi in the paper-back edition of her novel *Loving Brecht.*
plethora because it encompasses many of their building blocks. What makes a discussion of Sybille Pearson’s drama *Unfinished Stories*, premiered in 1992 at the Mark Taber Forum in Los Angeles and repeated in 1994 off-Broadway at the New York Theater Workshop, so particularly appropriate is its congruity with several of the criteria laid down as guidelines for this conference. Its discourse centers around the “staging [of] displacement and exile caused by the Nazi Dictatorship,” “around collective cultural identities and/or isolation and marginalization, and the cultural memory of displacement, exile and diaspora.” In addition, it demonstrates, quite concretely, the generational gap among exiles, how multilingual skills vanish with the grandchildren. In short, language becomes a marker for the gap between generations and the degree of assimilation.

The theme of exile is writ large in Sybille Pearson’s aptly named socio-psychological drama. More poignant and thoroughly fleshed out than sociological studies — say the above mentioned ones of dissections of immigrant generations — it tells the story of a refugee from Nazi Germany, now living in New York, and the two generations that follow him. Walter Wertheim, when still a student, fled Berlin in 1933, implicated by Nazi standards for participating in sundry socialist causes. He leaves behind not only his family, subsequently murdered by the Nazis, but also his admired teacher and model, Erich Mühsam. His flight and survival have imprinted upon him a permanent sense of unworthiness and guilt, neither eradicated by a post-emigration career as a physician.

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3 While several versions of the drama exist, they tend to be identical. I have drawn on the final version *Unfinished Stories* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1993). Internal page numbers refer to the published version, except as noted. In two places, where there are significant differences, I have drawn on a typescript version kindly provided me by the author (and have so indicated in a footnote). For an earlier printed version see n. 10.

4 This formulation appears in the announcement of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English of its thirteen’s annual CDE conference, 2004, entitled “Staging Displacement, Exile, and Diaspora.”

5 For discussions of the generational differences among immigrants see the article by Hansen, and Greeley, particularly 148-152.

6 See the entries on “Hanna Del£ von Wolzogen” and “Mühsam, Erich; geb. 6.4.1878 in Berlin; gest. 10. 7. 1934 im KZ Oranienburg bei Berlin” in Kilchner 440f.
He lives in an Upper West Side apartment in New York with his daughter-in-law Gaby, a librarian, recently divorced from his son, Yves, an actor at various provincial theatres. His grandson Daniel, an actor manqué, drives a taxi cab, dreams of an alternate lifestyle and appears adrift. Just before the curtain descends, Daniel reenters and appropriates his grandfather’s Mühsam papers, a symbol for the survival of the legacy of the elder exile.

But beyond fixing upon the experience and the trauma of an exile and their aftereffects upon the exile’s descendants and entourage — his daughter-in-law has become an outsider by continuing as a sixties-type-protester — Pearson has sketched exilic experiences across time and space, even for long-dead or off-stage characters. In short, exile has become universal and timeless. Gaby, the unconstructed protester and outsider, recalls the fate of her ancestors.

My grandfather went from a depression in Ireland to another in New York City. He kept a framed cartoon from the thirties in our living room. It was a homeless man on a park bench and a squirrel’s in a tree above him. The squirrel says 'Why didn’t you save?’ The man says, 'I did' (15).

Even Karen, Yves’ new wife, who is only fleetingly mentioned in the play and becomes for a minute or two an off-stage partner in a telephone conversation, is given an expatriate past: “Karen’s father was with Mobile Oil and as a kid she lived in Lagos” (56). And Yves, Walter’s son, was born in France, his parent’s transit exile. Walter subconsciously never forgives him that he was not born in Germany. When Yves claims France as his birthplace, Walter admonishes him, “You are German of German immigrants” (18). With the not atypical tenacity of the exile clinging to his homeland Germany, he has always resented the fact that his son was not born in Germany. “I might even be forgiven for being born in Paris” (23), Yves concludes sarcastically.

The son Yves, continuously chivied by his father, has become the psychologically most problematic character of the play. Pearson has expended considerable care and subtlety in forging his personality. He has become a journeyman actor, his greatest success has been the depiction of Jaques in Shakespeare’s As you Like It. Let us follow Pearson’s subtle clue for a moment. In Shakespeare’s drama, an aristocratic, highly sophisticated group has fled or been banished to the Ardennes Forest.
When their fortunes are reversed and they can return to their homeland and former position, the whimsical and individual Jaques demurs: he joins the company of the repentant usurper, the Duke, and takes refuge in a cloister with him. Why? Because that is the more interesting life. And that is precisely the route taken by Yves. He and his new wife spend their honeymoon in France, the country of his birth; he submerges himself in the life of Paris. Upon his return he speaks to his father only in French until he is admonished by him to speak English. He is not at home on two continents. Typical of the middle generation he is caught in the middle. He succeeds in the role of Jaques because he has been typecast or, as a German would say, 'sie war ihm auf den Leib geschrieben' [i.e., the role was written on his body].

Literary allusions within the play conjure up exiles of centuries ago, or of Walter's own times. Walter often quotes Heine; Yves, the outsider Don Quixote (51 and 21 respectively). The exile atmosphere that hangs over the set is intensified by words, sights, and sounds. As we are told by Gaby, Walter moved into her and her then husband's upper-west-side apartment, probably to Washington Heights, a region once nicknamed "Frankfurt on the Hudson" (see Lowenstein), because of the concentration of German refugees within its walls, with his "coffee pot, his Persian rugs, his Turkey carpets, his bookcase and his books" (61). Among a bookshelf overflowing with German books by "Heine, Tucholsky, Toller, Stefan Zweig, Ernst Weiss, Carl Einstein" (51) — all of them exiles — stands a replica of Michelangelo's David, arguably the epitome of European culture. His thwarted quest for good coffee and his single pastime, a game of chess, punctuate the drama. By way of contrast his grandson's room reflects the tastes of the blue jean generation, his daughter-in-law's study that of a middle-aged sixties protester.

Music also divides the generations. Walter clings to Brahms (10) and puts his fingers in his ears when his daughter-in-law plays one of her records (13). Yves has played in dozens of performances of Man of La-Mancha, a musical Walter disparagingly refers to as an operetta (18). Gaby can spend the night listening to Otis Redding's records such as "A Change is going to come" (63), and Daniel identifies with The

7 Cf. As You Like It, Act V, Scene 4: "To him [i.e., Duke Frederick] will I: out of these convertites / There is much matter to be heard and learn'd."
Who’s “Goin’ Mobile” (18). On the other hand there are subtle indicators that generational gaps can ultimately be bridged via music when a sporadic appreciation of each others’ tastes occurs.

Against this spatial and auditory background of three generations, the “grandeur and misery” of life of an exile unfolds — to borrow a phrase from Lion Feuchtwanger (3–6). It emerges in fragments, after Walter’s interminable years of silence. His revelations are prompted by his premonition of death. As his son complains with a great deal of irony “I stopped wasting my time being upset about him telling me nothing a long time ago […]. But then, never say never. One day he’ll take me on his knee and say: ‘Son, let me tell you my life” (23). This opening-up after a lifetime of silence, as sociologists and psychiatrists have discovered, is shared by countless sons and daughters of Holocaust survivors and exiles (see Bar-On 32).

Across the entire drama the life story of Walter Wertheim is dredged up from the recesses of his memory. He was born into a cultured home; his father was first violinist of the Berlin Philharmonic. But his father was at the same time a German pater familias, typical of the early part of the twentieth century. Walter revolts against his father, when his parents dismiss Erich Mühsam, with whose teachings Walter has become imbued, as someone who “attracts adolescents” (32f). In disgust with the materialistic life of his parents and in admiration of Mühsam and the other three Jewish intellectuals who started a revolution in Bavaria, Walter leaves his parental home at age seventeen and joins a commune.

Of course he cannot banish his father’s world entirely. Implicitly his love of classical music was nourished there explicitly his attitude towards Judaism. It consists of a reluctant admission that he, the agnostic, is still Jewish:

My father would say, if a policeman asks your religion, you say Jew. This was before Hitler. Do not say to the policeman you are agnostic. He will spit and say ‘You dirty Jew, you try to ingratiate yourself with us.’ We do not give him that satisfaction. But to a Jew also say Jew. If you say we are agnostics, he will spit and say ‘You dirty Jew-hater. Selbsthasser.’ I thought my father was a coward. I said to all what I was. Agnostic. There hadn’t been a God in the house for four generations.

My father stayed in Berlin. He was murdered as a Jew. So I say I am a Jew. Without a God and now with a Christmas tree (10).
The adolescent Walter, free from the discipline of his parental house, becomes an unrestrained participant in Berlin's Golden Twenties and experiments with drugs, nudism and free love. “The Sixties were the Twenties in Berlin,” he explains to his grandson. It also has motivated, on a human level, the strong bond between him and his daughter-in-law, both of them rebels against the perpetuation of social injustices. He calls her “Meine Seele, my soul” (46). In Berlin he also had become a habitué of the Romanische Café, affectionately named Café Größenwahn, the meeting place of the capitals intellectual and artistic avant-garde. There he meets his future wife, an artist. He allies himself, after finishing medical school, with a group of young, idealistic doctors. “We were called the younger doctors’ table. The five of us met at a worker’s clinic where we gave our time” (52). That such idealism indeed existed is demonstrated, of course, by the altruistic dedication of the author-physician Alfred Döblin.8

Walter flees Berlin shortly after the Nazi’s accession to power, an escape that haunts him to the end of his days, especially when he contrasts it with the horrible end of Erich Mühsam, his teacher, model and one-time employer at the editorial office of the journal Fanal (see Schlawe 76).

Come closer. Mühsam had a ticket. He could have left for Prague. A student, also wanted by the Gestapo, came. ‘Would you do it if you could,’ Mühsam asked, ‘would you leave?’ He gave him the ticket. ‘Have faith. Humanity will win,’ he said to the boy. The SS came the next morning. Beat Mühsam deaf, blind, broke his thumbs. They put a wild ape in his cell. The other prisoners were told to watch it bite the Jew. Mühsam put his arms around the ape and the creature kissed him. The animal was tortured in front of him, then killed. He said to the others, ‘Do not believe them, if they tell you I took my life.’ The next morning it was announced in the prison, then in the newspapers, that Mühsam had hung himself in his cell. Hung from a noose tied... said by those who saw... tied with intricate knots, by a blind man with broken thumbs (53).

Walter and his wife and their baby ultimately reached New York, where his sense of guilt, failure, and unworthiness, which so often branded the

8 A striking detail about Döblin’s social engagement is mentioned in Prange: “Er [...] setzte sich als Arzt bei Streiks und in Nachtaufnahmen an nicht mißzuverstehender Stelle der politischen Auseinandersetzung praktisch helfend ein” (36).
exiles (see Niederland), is exacerbated, because he becomes not a doctor for the sick and suffering but rather, “He sat behind a desk of a pharmaceutical company” (43 and 35).

In the course of the play his pain, arising from cancer of the gastrointestinal tract, grows steadily worse and death becomes clearly inevitable. He now carefully plans his suicide, recalling the fate of famous exiles who killed themselves — a long list, the gathering of which is a tribute to Pearson’s careful research. But he refuses to call himself their equal: “These are important men,” he tells his son though he follows their example, he is only an average exile. “Do not compare me. I merely quote them” (52). Gaby speaks a kind of epitaph to his “unfinished story:” “We were his hope, the next generation. We’re his generation” (61). But it is Daniel, his grandson, who takes up the challenge, just before the curtain descends. As the stage directions inform us: “Daniel reenters apartment. He crosses into Walter’s room and picks up the Mühsam papers [...] he stops to fold the papers carefully and places them in his pocket” (63). Mühsam’s torch has been passed.

This is the play’s ultimate message, clearly and unambiguously. But was it really understood? If one can take the reviews as a yardstick — most of them were mixed — they overwhelmingly missed the play’s message and even its central concern, the unfolding of an exile’s life story. Some reviews committed errors of fact, which disqualify them outright from serious consideration. One of them, referring to Walter’s conjuring up the famous Heine quote that the burning of books leads to the burning of people, attributes the sponsorship of the bibliocaust, the historic Nazi book burning of 10 May 1933 to Herman Göring instead to Joseph Goebbels (Stuart 79). Another has Walter leaving Berlin in 1932 instead of the crisis year of 1933 (Barnes 46). Several reviewers simply characterize the play as a family drama, a facile description of virtually any Naturalistic theater piece. Hence, we read that it is “a melancholic Jewish family drama” (Canby C17 and C20), or “families still kvetch and fight, generations still gap” (Barnes 46), or that Unfinished Stories simply involves three generations of a Jewish family living in Manhattan” (Greene 30).

A few papered-over their lack of critical depth with a display of cleverness, mostly at the expense of the play or its characters. Michael Fein-
gold pinions Walter down as “a 1930’s refugee [...] trailing clouds of European Culture in its prewar glory into the Upper West Side apartment where he lives” (Feingold 91). Another critic, commenting on Daniel’s stint as a taxi driver, quips: “Maybe everyone in New York who is pissed off at his family should drive a cab, then there would be enough cabs” (Franklin 89). Yet another reviewer uses a throw-away exchange in the play about Parisian gastronomy as his closing line. “As for Dan’s bristles, it’s only onion soup” (Stuart 86).

On a more serious note, the theater and entertainment weekly Variety captured some of the weighty themes surging through the drama, such as: survivors’ guilt. Later in the same review, the Jewish participation in the vibrancy of Weimar culture and the resultant self-deception of German Jewry is recalled:

Conjuring a memory of his own father, the first violinist of the Berlin Philharmonic, Walter evokes the intellectual and artistic vivacity of Weimar Berlin – where residents considered themselves German first and foremost. Assimilation, of course, proved to be a tragic self-deception even for agnostic Jews (Gerard 44).

Curiously enough, the most perceptive analysis of the drama as text appeared in the tabloid Daily News. Though decidedly critical of the drama’s perceived flaws — “Unfinished’ Play Needs More Work” reads the headline — the reviewer, Howard Kissel, captures the after-effects of flight and abandonment and the resultant guilt, “the burden of the past” that has soured his, Walter’s, human relationships. Kissel also captures the atmosphere of exile in New York.

Older readers may remember when the West Side had a different aura, much of which was created by the German Jews who arrived before World War II. Doctors, scholars, evangelists for Freud, they brought the culture of Central Europe with them. It resided in their learned, spirited conversation, the heavy but graceful furnishing of their living rooms and the genteel décor of the Tip Toe Inn (51).

Yet neither Kissel nor any of the reviewers mention how his encounters with Erich Mühlsam and the philosopher’s subsequent martyrdom become the fulcrum of the life of Walter Wertheim and hence of Unfinished Stories. Sybille Pearson, surely not overjoyed with the reviews in
the aggregate, must have felt a sense of justice restored when her play about an exile won the Drama-League award for 1992.9

Upon learning this fact about Sybille Pearson I decided to turn from the play to the playwright or, put differently, to abandon explication de texte and reception history for biography. Hence I briefly corresponded with her. She advised me to peruse the printed version rather than an earlier typescript, since, as she wrote, even a minor revision was important to her. Her advice encouraged a textual comparison of the two versions. Indeed one change focuses attention again on the theme of exile. In the earlier version it is Gaby’s great-grandfather who escapes starving Ireland, an ancestor whom Gaby of course, could not have known personally. But in the later version it is her grandfather. The heritage of exile has moved closer by a full generation and by direct contact (cf. the un-paginated typescript).

Our correspondence further stimulated my curiosity about a writer working with inordinately subdued shadings within her palette. The attention to her biography led me to yet another, totally surprising exilic aspect of the drama, at least for me. The short biographical sketch of Sybille Pearson, preceding the first publication of her drama, in the journal American Theater10 is totally a professional vita, detailing her career and achievements. The later book publication contains not a single line about the homeland of the author and her website, emphasizing in connection with her academic appointment at New York University, reverts once again to a professional thumbnail sketch (see Pearson, Faculty Directory). Yet a perfectly obvious source reveals inferentially that this exilic drama contains autobiographical elements. The standard reference work, Contemporary Authors, tells us that Sybille Pearson, born on 25 January 1937 in Prague, was the daughter of a Czech physician and of the writer Gertrude Loesener. Her maiden name was Sybille Weiss: Pearson is her married name. Presumably, the Weiss family fled Prague after Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia, when Sybille was two years old. She spent her college years at City College, New York, with its high percentage of Jewish students at that time (343–345). Finally

9 See Pearson, Unfinished Stories, 1993, back-cover.
Pearson imparted her own social idealism to her character Gaby, the indomitable fighter for social causes. A recent report of 23 March 2003 cites her as a participant in a large-scale protest demonstration against the war against Iraq:

Bob Anzelowitz, a PR man for a comedy club and Sybille Pearson, a playwright, marched through the cool shadows along West Fourth Street. They are veteran peace activists and residents of Manhattan's Upper West Side. They gave no thought to skipping today's protest. Anzelowitz drew comfort from comparisons to the Vietnam War era, when it took years of strife for so many to march in protest. Pearson is quoted 'I'm here out of necessity,' she said. 'This is a very different march from the one in February. This one is saying to Bush: Beware. There is a power in this country that will not be silenced' (see Yonip Team).

One last biographical note that takes us back to exile and exiles: it turns out that Sybille Pearson is not yet done with exile personalities. "She is currently at work," her new faculty website states, "on a play commissioned by the Mark Taper on the life of Salka Viertel." In choosing one of the most imposing Hollywood exile personalities as her subject — screenwriter, advisor to Greta Garbo, helpmate and rescuer of numerous fellow exiles and a woman activist (see Viertel) — Sybille Pearson could not have arrived at a more promising subject, culled from that dolorous and inspiring period to which this conference is, in part, dedicated.

Her dramatic preoccupation, in a dual sense, with the exiles from Nazi Germany may be just the beginning of an exploration that stretches from the thwarted exile Erich Mühsam to the Hollywood screenwriters and, who knows, much beyond.

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"Me Johnny Weissmuller, you Thomas Mann:"

German Writers Exiled in Dreamland: Christopher Hampton's *Tales from Hollywood*

The tragedy of exile,¹ a largely epic play which pokes fun at Bertolt Brecht and his concept of epic theatre, a drama which introduces a dead writer as commentator, demands a paradoxical approach. The play from which Hampton takes the title — Ödön von Horváth’s *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald*,² translated by the author as *Tales from the Vienna Woods*³ — in turn borrows its title from one of Johann Strauss’s best known waltzes.⁴ While Horváth uses this and other pieces of popular music to highlight the discrepancy between the soulfulness and joyfulness suggested by the music and the unfathomable hypocrisy, cruelty and stupidity of most of his characters, Hampton, on his part, alludes to

¹ Cf. Said 183: “[T]he exile’s predicament [...] is as close as we come in the modern era to tragedy.”

² First performed in Berlin in 1931. In the same year Horváth received the prestigious Kleist prize.

³ Hampton’s translation was first staged at the National Theatre in London in 1977 in a production directed by Maximilian Schell.

⁴ *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald*, op. 325, composed in 1868 and probably first performed in the same year.
an essentially serious drama by Horváth, the author who plays a predominantly comic part in *Tales from Hollywood*. On the other hand, from a play with such a title the uninitiated reader/spectator may expect gossip and scandal involving glamorous personalities of the film industry (Vaget 97). However, these expectations are thoroughly undermined; what the recipients are presented with has nothing to do with either glamour or scandal. On the contrary, the play focuses on the troubled relationship of exiled German authors with the entertainment industry of Hollywood, more generally it deals with a clash of cultures, more specifically with an antithetical view of art and forms of art. The audience is first faced with this tragicomic conflict in an emblematic, film-like sequence right at the beginning. An elderly man, who is reading and listening to the prelude to Richard Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* is rudely interrupted by an “ear-splitting cry” from Tarzan hanging from a rope, who introduces himself as well as the elderly man to us: “Me Johnny Weissmuller, you Thomas Mann” (Hampton 15). Richard Wagner’s sophisticated music is juxtaposed with Tarzan’s savage cry. The figure from the jungle, hardly capable of human speech, addresses the winner of the nobel prize for literature.\(^5\)

In line with these contradictory phenomena, I will adapt the attempts at categorization in two scholarly articles on the play; in one the Brechtian techniques are pointed out, the other one emphasizes its

\(^5\) There are also other reasons for Weissmuller’s presence in the play. On the one hand, there are some analogies to Ödön von Horváth’s origin. Both have a typical Austro-Hungarian background. Horváth was born in Fiume/Hungary (present-day Rijeka/Croatia) of a Hungarian father and a Transylvanian mother. His first language was German. János Weissmüller was born in Freidorf/Hungary (present-day Timișoara/Romania) to German speaking parents. On the other hand, the trick Weissmuller employs to further his swimming career ties in well with a major thematic concern of Hampton’s drama, that of losing and adopting identities: “Though he was foreign-born, Weissmuller gave his birthplace as Windber, Pennsylvania, and his birth date as that of his younger brother, Peter Weissmuller. This was to ensure his eligibility to compete as part of the United States Olympic team” (“Johnny Weissmuller”). I am grateful to Martin Middeke for alerting me to this interesting detail of Weissmuller’s biography.
postmodern character: Siegfried Mews locates the play “in the general tradition of the post-Brechtian epic theater” (Mews 102), while Hans Rudolf Vaget classifies the play as a postmodern collage of literary biographies, without, however, specifying the genuinely postmodern ingredients (Vaget 98). Undoubtedly, Tales from Hollywood answers to both labels.

In terms of the temporal and the scenic structure the play is certainly epic, considering that it covers a fictional time of roughly twelve years and that its scenes are episodically arranged. Moreover, some alienation effects are used, albeit for comic purposes; for example, in scene ten, Brecht’s entrance is accompanied by what may be called epic stage business, definitely meant to be amusing:

[Brecht] carries a square of green linen, which he arranges carefully on the fore­stage. When this is laid out to his satisfaction, he produces, as if by magic, from inside his jacket, a small sign, which he sets up behind the square. It says: brecht’s garden (Hampton 47).

Likewise, Horváth and Brecht repeatedly engage in arguments about the function of the theatre in which the former makes fun of Brecht’s aesthetics of the theatre, or rather of an oversimplified version of it.6 While Horváth intends to make his audience aware of themselves — “They want to be told what they are” (Hampton 80) — Brecht wants to instruct them, with the ultimate goal of changing the world, a didactic approach which Horváth strongly disapproves of:

HORVÁTH: I really think you underestimate people’s intelligence. They don’t want blueprints, they don’t want instructions. They’re being told what to do all day: they don’t want to come into a theatre and be told what to do all over again (Hampton 80).

The most significant postmodern features of the play are the mixture of styles as well as the pervasive intertextuality and intermediality. The just mentioned epic elements are mingled with various other styles, the documentary (e.g. Brecht’s interrogation by the House Committee for Un-American Activities), the surreal (Horváth narrating his own death

6 Cf. Horváth’s sarcastic comment: “Brecht always liked people to be aware that they were in a theatre. I said to him more than once, but Brecht, what makes you think they think they’re anywhere else?” (Hampton 40).
by drowning) as well as the grotesque, bizarre, and fantastic (Horváth’s first appearance on the stage and the ensuing scene involving Thomas Mann and Johnny Weissmuller, followed by a Marx brothers act), the shocking (Nelly Mann in the nude), the pathetic (Heinrich Mann burying his face in his dead wife’s blouse), the stereotypical (the representatives of the film industry Mr. Money and Art Nicely) and the epigrammatic-satirical (Horváth’s and particularly Brecht’s attempts at well-turned acerbic witticisms at the cost of Thomas Mann and the dream factory of Hollywood). This is what Brecht has to say about the usefulness of Thomas Mann’s voluminous literary output: “His books can be of no benefit to anyone. Except possibly weightlifters” (Hampton 60), while Horváth passes the following gibe at the self-important giant of German literature: “There’s nothing wrong with Thomas Mann. Except that he believes his reviews” (Hampton 78). At one point Horváth transforms the meaning of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s motto — Ars Gratia Artis — for an American who has no Latin into “abandon hope all ye who enter here” (Hampton 48).

The intertextual and intermedial relations in the play are both varied and complex. Biographical as well as fictional texts by some of the exiled authors are used as pretexts. For example, Vaget traces Brecht’s insistence on a clear distinction between émigré and exile in scene eight to his poem „Über die Bezeichnung Emigranten“ (102). Some of Brecht’s invectives against Thomas Mann can be found in a similar form in his Arbeitsjounal (Vaget 103). Heinrich Mann’s wistful remembrance of leaving Lisbon harbour for New York in scene five is a shortened and simplified version of his account in Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt. Erinnerungen.7

7 Cf. Mann 485: „Der Blick auf Lissabon zeigte mir den Hafen. Es wird der letzte gewesen sein, wenn Europa zurückbleibt. Er erschien mir unbegreiflich schön. Eine verlorene Geliebte ist nicht schöner. Alles was mir gegeben war, hatte ich an Europa erlebt. Lust und Schmerz eines seiner Zeitalter, das meines war aber mehreren anderen, die vor meinem Dasein liegen, bin ich auch verbunden. Überaus leidvoll war dieser Abschied“, and Hampton’s rendering: “Lisbon harbour, you know. I’m a continental European. I’ve never been across the Channel. And the harbour. I can’t tell you how beautiful it is. Like some long-lost love. To watch it vanish. Hard to bear” (30).
Furthermore, in addition to allusions to and quotations from pieces of music, pertinently, the most essential relations in this text about Hollywood are those to the film industry, to particular films, to directors as well as to actors and actresses. Tarzan's introduction to Thomas Mann — “Me Johnny Weissmuller, you Thomas Mann” (Hampton 15) is an allusion to Tarzan's first meeting with his mate in the first movie of the series, *Tarzan, the Ape Man*, of 1932. Although the actual dialogue concerning the distinction between you and me and between Tarzan and Jane was much more complex, legend has reduced it to “Me Tarzan, you Jane” (Dirks, *Tarzan*).

In terms of intermedial complexity the last scene of *Tales from Hollywood* is surely the most relevant one. Two major films are alluded to, two cult films, both released in 1950, the year the fictional Horváth dies: one is the Billy Wilder movie on the dream factory, *Sunset Boulevard*, the other one is Jean Cocteau's legendary *Orphée*. Hampton's finale presents Horváth drowning in the swimming pool of a Hollywood producer while simultaneously narrating his own demise. At the very beginning of Wilder's movie, Joe Gillis, the screenwriter-protagonist, shot dead and floating face down in the swimming pool of a luxurious mansion, retrospectively and, so to speak posthumously, gives an account of the events that have led to his death (Dirks, *Sunset Boulevard*; Francis 57-58). The reference to the “chauffeur [...] looking as if he'd escaped from that new Cocteau picture” (Hampton 95) is most illuminating for two reasons. First, in *Orphée*, Death, represented by a most attractive princess, is driven about in a Rolls Royce by her chauffeur (Travers). In

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8 Hampton was so fascinated with this film that he later turned it into a musical, together with Andrew Lloyd Webber; the musical version of *Sunset Boulevard* opened in London at the Adelphi Theatre on 12 July 1993.

9 Francis also mentions an alternative source of the ending: “This ending was inspired by a real encounter Hampton once had with a Hollywood swimming pool and the chauffeur of a studio limousine. In 1980 he had an appointment with the producer Roy Stark. [After their twenty-minute meeting Stark had to leave but told Hampton] to make himself at home and use the pool if he wished. Hampton cut his head quite badly while swimming and struggled out of the water, blood dripping everywhere. He asked the chauffeur who had been sent to fetch him to take him to his hotel on Sunset Boulevard (where else?) but was told that it was too far and so was dumped, blood-encrusted, at the nearest taxi-rank” (58).
other words, the arrival of the chauffeur, who is actually the young man of the first scene who died in Horváth’s place, symbolically announces the writer’s eventual departure from this world. Cocteau’s film has not only become famous for its highly suggestive aesthetics but also for its technical refinement. One highly praised effect is the characters’ convincingly manipulated moving between two worlds (Travers). One might regard Hampton’s resurrection of Horváth and his final death as a similar move, mirrored by the dead young man’s resurrection at the end of the play.

At the interface of the analysis of intermedial aspects and the final section of my paper, in which I will read the play from the perspective of absences, we meet the most (sym)pathetic, almost heroically conceived character of the play, Heinrich Mann. Although Thomas Mann’s elder brother lacks a literary reputation in the U.S., his name is, strangely enough, known in the film industry. He is invariably introduced as the man who wrote The Blue Angel. First he tries to explain that the film is loosely based on Professor Unrat (1905) an early novel of his, but later refrains from trying to enlighten unreceptive Americans on the intermedial connections. This convinces Heinrich Mann that his “entire American reputation stands on the legs of Marlene Dietrich” (Hampton 29). Essentially, it is this lack of a literary reputation that deprives Heinrich Mann of part of his identity. To a lesser degree this is also true of Brecht and, to a higher degree of Horváth. They have all fallen from relative fame into near or even virtual anonymity. The “spell your name” trauma is dramatized in the initial scene. Ödön von Horváth is, for obvious reasons, the best candidate for having his name misunderstood and misspelt. This circumstance receives a comical staging when Horváth repeatedly tries to teach the audience the correct pronunciation of his Hungarian first name: “Hello. My name is Ödön von Horváth. (Pause.) Ödön. (Pause.) No. Ödön. (Pause.) Oh, never mind, call me Ed” (Hampton 11).

Edward Said claims that exiles possess an “exaggerated sense of group solidarity and a passionate hostility to outsiders” (Said 178). This

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10 The authors of the screenplay were, Robert Liebmann, Karl Vollmöller and Carl Zuckmayer; the film was directed by Josef von Sternberg, with Marlene Dietrich and Emil Jannings playing the main roles; it was released in 1931.
is an element of the exiles’ existence which Hampton reverts. It is exactly the lack of solidarity among the German-speaking émigrés which is foregrounded. Primarily the two self-obsessed writers Brecht and Thomas Mann do not entertain a friendly relationship, on artistic and, predominantly, on political grounds, Brecht being a leftist radical and Thomas Mann the epitome of bourgeois moderation. Nor are Horváth and Brecht exactly fond of each other. They fall out over theatre aesthetics, ideological orientation, as well as the question of acculturation. The disharmony among the literary exiles surfaces most prominently over the intended declaration of solidarity in support of the manifesto issued by German prisoners of war and émigrés in the Soviet Union. After having been instrumental in the watering down of the pungency of the document Thomas Mann refuses to sign it, while Horváth simply forgets to do so, eventually finding it “meaningless and self-important” (Hampton 80). Moreover, as Vaget observes, the failure of the manifesto of 1 August 1943 can be regarded as a paradigm of the powerlessness and inefficiency of intellectuals and writers in general (Vaget 111). In other words, this short but crucial scene highlights two major absences, the lack of solidarity among the exiles as well as the entire lack of influence of the intelligentsia.

One of the major absences in a play about exiled writers is certainly literature. Although Siegfried Mews regards the play as “a recreation of an important chapter of literary history” (96) literary works by the most eminent German exiles are hardly ever mentioned. Thomas Mann’s administering of a sleeping potion — Horváth falls asleep while he reads to him from his most recent novel Lotte in Weimar — being a rare exception. Leaving aside the mostly absurd attempts at producing scenarios for films, the problematic writing process in an alien, especially linguistically and culturally alien environment is rarely made thematic,¹¹ one

¹¹ In his essay on „Exil als geistige Lebensform“ Helmut Koopmann discusses this problem at length, citing various exiled writers who suffered considerably from the dilemma between a certain necessity of acculturation and the vital need to hold on to one’s own language and culture. A particularly well phrased and highly moving lament is that of Alfred Döblin: „Aber wir, die sich mit Haut und Haaren der Sprache verschrieben hatten, was war mit uns? Mit denen, die ihre Sprache nicht loslassen wollten und konnten, weil sie wußten, daß Sprache nicht ‘Sprache‘ war, sondern
instance being Horváth’s mention of having taken up playwriting again after many years. Another issue in this context is Heinrich Mann’s apparent unproductiveness. From what we see of him we gain the impression that he does not write during the troubled years of his exile in the United States. However, apart from three novels — *Lidice* (1943), *Der Atem* (1949) and *Empfang bei der Welt* (1950) — he wrote his remarkable autobiography *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* (1946). Though Lion Feuchtwanger makes a silent appearance in *Tales from Hollywood*, none of his many works written during his exile is referred to nor is his comparative affluence ever mentioned. Another, perhaps even more prominent, exiled writer, Franz Werfel, is absent from the *The New Weimar* in Los Angeles as depicted in Hampton’s play. Werfel was also very productive and successful as a writer in the States and his and his wife’s home was one of the centres of the community of German writers (Taylor 153). Moreover, the famous or rather infamous Alma Mahler-Gropius-Werfel would have made a fascinating dramatic figure, with her well-known quarrels with Nelly Mann as promising source material for theatrically impressive as well as highly comic scenes (Taylor 150).12

A key absence lies at the heart of the presence of the German writers in Hollywood. The well-meaning and charitable people who founded the European Film Fund persuaded Warner Brothers and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to contract German *literati* as screenwriters to enable them to enter the United States and thus escape the Nazis.13 However, leaving

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12 In the autumn of 2004 Joshua Sobol’s play *Alma*, first produced by Paulus Manker in Vienna in 1996, which was later transferred to Venice and Lisbon, will arrive in Los Angeles. It will see the stage in the Los Angeles Theater under the title *Alma in Hollywood*. Sobol and Manker always adapt this dramatized biography and add new scenes to the original play which especially relate to or are inspired by the place where *Alma* is performed (Hirschmann 81).

13 The idea for this programme was initially conceived by the director Ernst Lubitsch, the agent Paul Kohner, and Salka Viertel, actress turned screenwriter, best known for her scripts for some films of Greta Garbo (Taylor 146). Salka Viertel,
aside the humanitarian aspect of the scheme, the programme was based on a fundamental cultural misconception. In Europe the renowned authors had produced aesthetically superior literature, in Hollywood they were expected to provide cheap entertainment catering for the vulgar taste of American audiences. While in the European cultural context men of letters were highly respected intellectuals, in the context of the film industry the position of the producer of scenarios in the hierarchy was equivalent to that of the hairdresser. Moreover, there was also a basic absence on the part of the German writers, that of professional experience; they simply did not have the qualification, the competence to write for what was to them a new medium. Heinrich Mann, much too old to adapt to this alien environment, feels completely lost and altogether ignorant of what the film people expect from him, which emerges in a dialogue with Horváth:

HEINRICH: [...] Tell me, what is it they expect us to do here?
HORVÁTH: Keep out of their way, I think, I don't know.
HEINRICH: But we're supposed to be writing scenarios, is that right?
HORVÁTH: Theoretically.
HEINRICH: What are scenarios? (Hampton 28)

On the other hand, Bertolt Brecht soon began to see through the mechanics of the distribution of work in Hollywood, as his pointed interpretation of the roles of the many people involved in the early stages of the production process illustrates:

They all have different jobs, you see. One has to check the consistency, another one the quantity, somebody else makes sure it's brown and someone else again tests it for smell. Finally, they get together, all these specialists, and compare notes. Only then do they let themselves get excited: It is! It really is! It's genuine, cover-to-cover shit! Let's shoot it (Hampton 58).

Horváth, adaptable yet cynical, always prone to be amused by the absurdities of human existence, is the only one among the exiles who gradually develops a certain fondness for Hollywood, albeit for, implicitly, remarkable absences and, explicitly, for conspicuous presences. His ironical eulogy on the dream factory links the two acts of the play. At Berthold Viertel's wife, hosts the celebration on the occasion of Heinrich Mann's seventieth birthday in Tales from Hollywood (Hampton scene six).
the end of the first act, we find his list of characteristics which attract him to the United States in general and to Hollywood in particular: “I loved gullibility, cheap religious mementoes, plastic, superstitions, pornography with spelling mistakes, girls dressed as mermaids, streets without end, the ethics of the fairground, the bright smiles of the no-hopers” (Hampton 54). The second act begins in a similar vein; accompanied by music from Sunset Boulevard, Horváth continues with his somewhat paradoxical and absurd tribute: “Ah, Hollywood! The kitsch! The désespairs! [...] The pagodas! The chateaux! The mauve haciendas! Donuts! Dentistry! Divorce!” (Hampton 55). Appropriately, Horváth later dies a movie-death, so to speak.

Finally, I will address an absence which in our context may be considered as the most painful for the exiles and the most disturbing for the audience, the absence of freedom. The exiles left their home country in order to escape fascist tyranny and find freedom in the new world. However, most of them are soon confronted with various encroachments on their individual liberty. For many, linguistic, cultural as well as economic difficulties limit their sphere of action in a country which put a man in charge of the refugee problem

who had been enormously impressed by the punctuality of Mussolini’s trains, and who thought anyone who mismanaged their life to the extent of becoming a refugee was deeply suspicious, probably undesirable and, as often as not, a Jew (Hampton 27).

With America’s entry into the war they qualify as enemy aliens, which “means [they] have to be indoors by eight o’clock. Curfew” (Hampton 61). After the end of the war the exiles are even more disoriented, hardly knowing where to turn. For those who chose to remain in the United States, history came full circle in terms of political oppression and persecution. The most prominent among the émigrés to come under the attack of the militant McCarthyites was Bertolt Brecht, who had to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee. After this experience Brecht, who had never felt at ease in the U.S., immediately returned to Europe; so did Thomas Mann, who did not take to the witch-hunt climate either. Heinrich Mann died shortly before he was to leave for East Germany. It appears appropriate to end with a quote from Tales from Hollywood in which Horváth reflects on the new situation,
personal and political, and, in more general terms, on the helplessness of artists in an anti-humanitarian and, essentially, anti-democratic environment: "For me, now Los Angeles had become a city of ghosts: and I was suddenly aware that, just as before, I was standing by and watching the poison spread" (Hampton 92).

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Primary Literature

Secondary Literature
Remembering the Holocaust in British-Jewish Drama of the 1990s: Diane Samuels, Julia Pascal and Harold Pinter

As Jan and Aleida Assmann have shown, during the 1980s and 1990s 'memory' has emerged as a powerful paradigm in a number of scientific discourses, and the interrelation of individual and cultural memory has become a major concern of cultural as well as literary studies (Jan Assmann 11). This coincides with a vivid interest in the memory of the Holocaust, as the generation of eyewitnesses who carry personal memories of the Holocaust is growing old and dying. Their memory is preserved in the various forms of cultural mnemonics, among them documentary and literary texts. The generations born after the Holocaust still grapple with these images, inquiring into the facts and meanings of the Holocaust and transforming them into their own texts and images as part of the narrative of who they are. Their conscious engagement with the memory of the Holocaust and the process of remembering is also reflected in the British-Jewish memory theatre of the 1990s. The term 'memory theatre' is not meant to indicate that there is a 'school' or unified movement of that name. Each of the playwrights studied here has his or her own agenda and very different strategies of dramatising mem-
ory and, more specifically, the memory of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{1} It is, however, striking that in the 1990s a number of plays written by British-Jewish playwrights emerged on the British stage that dealt directly with the memory of the Holocaust. Their shared concern with the way in which the Holocaust is remembered and with its enduring influence on the present sets them apart, not as a 'movement' but as a manifestation of an increased cultural interest in the mechanisms of memory as a means of dealing with the traumatic past.

Jewish and non-Jewish playwrights thematised the Holocaust already during the 1970s and the 1980s, among them Peter Barnes with his play *Laughter* (1978), which offers an unconventional exploration of the horrors of mass destruction introducing music-hall elements into the gas chambers themselves, and Christopher Hampton's 1982 adaptation of George Steiner's novella *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, which dramatises the imagined detection and capture of Adolf Hitler in the Amazon jungle. The 1990s, however, have not only seen a remarkable rise in public interest in the topic after Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* (1994) and the public commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1995 (Karpf 208) but also the emergence of younger Jewish women playwrights, who started to work on the topic of Holocaust memory.

This study focuses on a selection of plays by Julia Pascal, Diane Samuels, and Harold Pinter that explore the workings of individual as well as cultural memory in their contributions to and studies of Holocaust remembrance today. While Harold Pinter belongs to an older generation of British Jewish playwrights, who grew up in the East End of London before and during the Second World War and has been established as a successful writer since the 1960s, Pascal and Samuels are part of a wave of younger Jewish women writers, whose plays have emerged on the British stages during the 1990s. All three share a British-Jewish background, an interest in the memory of the Holocaust and the per-

\textsuperscript{1} A specific interest in memory has been visible within British drama since J.B. Priestley's experiments with time in plays such as *Time and the Conways* (1937) and *An Inspector Calls* (1945). Present developments have to be seen against the backdrop of Samuel Beckett's oeuvre, which is characterised by experiments with memory, and Pinter himself has concerned himself with the topic for over thirty years, most notoriously in *Old Times* (1971).
spective of those born later, or — in Pinter’s case, in safety. They thus have, in Omer Bartov’s words, to “imagine themselves into the Holocaust” (Bartov 226).2

Julia Pascal’s play Theresa, the first part of her Holocaust Trilogy (1995),3 which premiered in Newcastle in 1990, is a ‘memory play’ in the most direct sense of the word. It not only re-creates and thus remembers the past in dramatic form but directly thematises the processes of remembering, illustrating the interdependence of individual and cultural memory. The play is the result of Pascal’s investigation into the case of Theresa Steiner, a Jewish émigré who was handed over to the Nazis by collaborating Guernsey officials in 1942. With Theresa Pascal intends to “smash the silence” around the Holocaust (Pascal, “Introduction” 8). She rescues Theresa Steiner from oblivion by imaginatively recreating scenes from the last years of her life, her flight from Austria, her betrayal on Guernsey and her deportation to Auschwitz. Pascal’s use of different styles of representation reflects the problems of a natural-realistic representation of the Holocaust. She experimentally mixes direct narration and symbolic scenes. Especially Steiner’s victimisation and the betrayal and the brutality of the collaborators are depicted in ritualised, symbolic movements and songs. Reflecting the fact that today’s survivors can only have childhood memories of the Nazi terror, Pascal works with children’s songs and nursery rhymes to represent the traumatic memory of the Holocaust. In musical passages, multilingual collages and dance elements Pascal thus evokes the effects of the Nazi occupation of Europe as well as the cultural diversity represented and encountered by the émigrés as the context of Theresa’s flight and premature death.

2 Pinter — like Bernard Kops, Arnold Wesker — has personal memories of the Blitz and was repeatedly evacuated as a child (Esslin 15).

3 The Holocaust Trilogy was first staged as such at the New End Theatre, London, in 1995. The plays included in the trilogy were originally written independently from each other. Apart from Theresa, they are A Dead Woman on Holiday, which premiered in at the Holborn Centre for Performing Arts, London, on 14 October 1991 and The Dybbuk, which was first performed at the New End Theatre, London, on 25 June 1992. Each of the plays was directed by Pascal herself.
Authenticity is a central concern within Pascal’s memory theatre. Her interest in Theresa Steiner was roused by an article on Nazi collaboration in the Observer (Pascal, “Introduction” 5), and she travelled to Guernsey to look at the original documents and to research the exact circumstances of Theresa’s deportation to Auschwitz. This emphasis on authenticity is also reflected in her decision to ask Ruth Posner, an actress much older than Theresa was at the time depicted in the play, to take over the main role because of her childhood experiences of life in the Warsaw Ghetto and in various prison camps. Thus Theresa’s fate is seen through the eyes of the authentically remembering survivor, and the personal past of the actress becomes a subtext of the play. Pascal has woven Posner’s personal memories of the Holocaust into the dialogue as well as the action, so that Posner presents in the role of Theresa some of her own memories on stage.

The play is an ambitious tour de force through the memoryscapes of the Holocaust: Pascal incorporates the childhood memories of Posner’s and Theresa’s Polish and Viennese roots, the memory of the Anschluß, the Reichskristallnacht, the memory of the Jewish immigrant experience, the memory of the Kindertransport (as Theresa is handed a baby to take to London and moves among a crowd wearing Kindertransport signs around the neck; Theresa 24–25), the memory of the British internment policy and of the collaboration of Guernsey officials with the Nazis. Pascal seems intent on touching upon every aspect of the survivor’s immigrant experience and Holocaust traumatisation. With a reference to Penderecki’s To the Memory of the Victims of Hiroshima (Theresa 22), she opens up an even wider context by linking the victims of the Holocaust and those of Hiroshima as one community of suffering.

Pascal roots the victims within their European cultural background. Staging linguistic diversity and using postmodern techniques of intertextuality and collage, she portrays European Jewry as a multi-layered community which is broken up by the National-Socialist terror, leaving individuals adrift in a “fractured universe of exile” (Pascal, “Introduction” 5). She illustrates the dislocation felt by the victims (Theresa and Josef Steiner) as well as the survivors (Ruth Posner) and stages the Holocaust as “a crisis that casts doubt on the very definition of identity,
on what it means to know who you are, where you come from, what you are capable or incapable of doing, experiencing, imagining” (Bartov 246), and one might add: remembering.

Theresa is not only a tour de force through Holocaust memory but also through memory theory, illustrating different ways of individual as well as cultural recollection. The play’s emphasis on the physical presence of a real survivor is echoed in its inclusion of forms of physical rememberance. In the “Prologue,” for instance, Posner sums up her own recollections of maltreatment and life in prison camps as the context of the play in her expressionist dance to the tunes of Strauss’s The Blue Danube (Theresa 15). The memory of Holocaust atrocities is depicted as inscribed in Posner’s body and reconstructed by her movements. The tendency to see childhood memories in nostalgic tones clashes with the violence experienced. Pascal expresses the seemingly irreconcilable memories of past horrors and instances of humanity in a brutalised and inhumane environment by juxtaposing the “sweetness of Strauss” with the dancer’s ‘jagged’ movements (Theresa 15). As Susanne Greenhalgh notes, the dance elements evoke the cultural memory of exiled Austrian dancers, such as Hilde Holger, “from which have emerged contemporary international dance movements such as Tanztheater and Butoh” (33). Thus Pascal establishes not just the memory of Steiner’s fate, but also commemorates the rich cultural context of European Jewish life. Only against the backdrop of the contributions of pre-War and exiled European Jewish artists can the loss that has been wrought by the Holocaust be fathomed.

According to memory research and trauma studies, memories that are associated with strong sensory perceptions and emotional responses are more pronounced and more permanent than others (Schacter 201 and 212–217). Thus it is not surprising that Pascal’s experiment with memory engages all the senses. Her ‘memoriescape’ frequently turns into a “soundscape,” an important aspect of which is the multi-lingualism

4 This strategy of evoking and commenting on Jewish contributions to cultural memory is also used in the third play of the Trilogy, The Dybbuk, which is based on intertextual references to Ansky’s famous Yiddish play of the same name.

5 Pascal is a great fan of Holger, who managed to flee from the Nazis in the late 1930s (Pascal, “Introduction” 8).
displayed, for instance, in the first scene (Theresa 15–19). Here a memory of pre-War Vienna is related simultaneously in English and German, then in Polish and English, and then again in English and German by THERESA and anonymous VOICES. This contemporaneity of languages recalls, in Pascal’s words, “that pre-Holocaust European Jewish gift of seamlessly flowing from one language to another as my grandparents did” (“Introduction” 6), which makes European Jewry and Pascal’s memory theatre truly internationalist. Pascal thus illustrates the central role of language in the context of cultural self-identification and reintroduces an almost lost and forgotten aspect of British-Jewish culture into Jewish collective memory. Integrating the languages spoken by the historical Theresa, Ruth Posner as a child and by herself and her own ancestors, Pascal recreates the memory of cultural diversity of European Jewish life and integrates it as an important factor within British-Jewish collective memory.

Engaging the senses of the rememberer, Pascal reflects on the way memory works, echoing memory theories such as Freud’s concept of repression and Marcel Proust’s celebration of involuntary memory in his autobiography Remembrance of Things Past. In the first scene after the Prologue, Theresa describes the memory of a man standing outside a Viennese coffee house, looking at the cakes. In an exercise of dissociation, Theresa remembers herself watching the man, and, in a scene reminiscent of Proust’s madeleine experience (Proust 48–51), she recalls the taste of the chocolate gateau, without, however, being able to eat a piece herself: “He makes my mouth turn to water; I almost taste the sweetness of the chocolate, the rush of pleasure in my mouth, the gust of life and happiness of black chocolate” (Theresa 15). This scene triggers Posner’s memory of a cake shop in Warsaw, which she visited during her youth and which is marked by a shift into the Polish language (Theresa 16). Here Posner alias Theresa compares her situation as a child in Poland to the situation of the probably Jewish man spending his last money in a Vienna coffee house in 1938 (Theresa 18), who foreshadows the fate of Theresa’s son, Josef Steiner (Theresa 45–46).

Echoing psychological trauma studies, Pascal creates the moment when Theresa’s fate is decided by the police inspector Sculpher as a traumatic, repetitive nightmare. In six “Replays” the original dialogue
between Lydia, Sculpher and Theresa is repeated in a shortened form, with Lydia’s appeal for forgiveness being repeated three times in the last “Replay,” demonstrating the nightmare-like intrusion and repetition of traumatic memory:

Replay 6
LYDIA: I need tickets.
SCULPHER: This lady stays.
LYDIA: My responsibility.
SCULPHER: Vienna.
J.
Jew.
THERESA: Yes. I am a Jew. I am a Jew. I am a Jew.
SCULPHER: Belongs to Germans.
LYDIA: Haven’t invaded.
SCULPHER: She stays with me.
LYDIA: Forgive.
Forgive.
Forgive. (Theresa 37–38)

The use of sentence fragments and repetition within the individual replays again illustrates the experience of traumatic memory: meaningful structures are broken up, fragments remain unconnected and create an echo effect. Compressed in this moment of decision, which is replayed again and again, Pascal encapsulates the play’s dominant motifs of betrayal and guilt. They imitate the memories Theresa herself might have had of this moment of her life and present her inner turmoil to a British audience which is asked to relive and share in the victim’s suffering and at the same time acknowledge the guilt of the collaborators.

Apart from the mechanisms of remembering, Pascal also thematises the processes leading to forgetting, and more specifically, to the forgetting of those who died during the Holocaust. Cassandra’s prophecy that someone will one day find a shirt with the name “Josef Steiner” on it in a second-hand clothes shop in Heidelberg (Theresa 23) points to the few remains that have come down to us to tell of the lost names and memories. The fate of the forgotten victims is symbolised by a blank piece of paper representing Josef’s letter to his mother that is never written, and which he formulates on stage before he commits suicide, mourning the fact that he will not be remembered (Theresa 46).
Pascal’s ‘memory machine’ works against Holocaust amnesia and the forgetting of the people who died. Theresa illustrates the intertwining of individual and cultural memory, experimenting with notions of authenticity and integrating the memory of this instance of British collaboration and the European dimension of what has been destroyed by the Nazis into British Holocaust remembrance.

While Pascal’s Theresa evokes the memory of a woman who died, Diane Samuels’ Kindertransport, which was first performed in 1993 at the Cockpit Theatre in London, describes the fate of a woman who survived the Holocaust because her parents sent her on one of the Kindertransports that took unaccompanied Jewish children from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland to England in 1938. This project was organised by Jewish organisations, such as the ‘Movement for the Care of Children from Germany,’ and saved the lives of about 10,000 children until the outbreak of the Second World War put an end to the programme.

While Pascal uses the story of a historical person, Samuels focuses on the experiences of one fictive child, Eva/Evelyn, whose experiences are nevertheless based on authentic experiences reported by other Kinder, and concentrates on the relationship between mothers and daughters.

Both Pascal and Samuels use a broad definition of the term ‘Holocaust,’ which in Pascal’s case begins with the scenes of open and organised anti-Semitism in Vienna in 1938 and is echoed in a colleague’s anti-Semitic remark about Theresa’s “big Jewish nose” in the 1990s (Pascal, “Introduction” 5). In Samuels’ case the destructive effects of the Holocaust also encompass the lives and memories of those who were not killed or sent to a concentration camp themselves, but who still suffer from the Nazi terror’s disruptive impact on their lives — the loss of family members and their cultural roots.

As in Pascal’s Theresa, authenticity is important to Samuels, and Kindertransport is based on the playwright’s intensive research on the topic. Samuels spoke with Kinder about their experiences and has dedicated the play to these Kinder and to her own mother. Samuels observes in her “Author’s Note” that “most of what happens to her [Eva/Evelyn] did happen to someone somewhere” (Samuels vii). The play thus testifies to the suffering of the Kinder and the enduring influence of their past suffering on their present.
The play depicts the memory work of the second generation, as the process of remembering acted out on stage is triggered by the daughter of the Kind. As Evelyn tries to repress the memory of her suffering to protect her sanity, these repressed memories appear to be fossilized within the toys and letters, and not least in the fairy tale book with the Ratcatcher story, which Faith finds in the storage room. In order to make sense of these artefacts, and to unlock the memories attached to these items, Faith needs her mother’s compliance. Only Eva/Evelyn’s explanations and personal memories of the past can render these artefacts meaningful to Faith. Evelyn’s inability to pass on her memories and to talk to her daughter about her suffering results in a dysfunctional relationship between Faith and Evelyn, which illustrates how much the generation born in England is influenced by the trauma of the parent generation and raising the question of “what future grows out of a traumatised past” (Samuels, “Author’s Note” vii).

The presence of Eva/Evelyn’s suppressed memories on the stage, representing the intrusion of the past into the present, is structurally realised in the alternation of scenes from the 1930s/40s and the 1990s, which comment on each other. Breaking up chronology, and using film techniques such as flashbacks and fast-forwards, Samuels visualises the contemporaneity and interdependence of the past and the present in traumatic memory. By splitting her main protagonist into two characters, performed by two different actresses — the young German girl Eva and the adult British citizen Evelyn — Samuels emphasises the disruptive effect and the coexistence of the past and the present in (traumatic) memory. Both characters appear on stage at the same time, and their interdependence is shown in their interaction, for instance when they read from the same book or play with the same toys.

Staging the memory of the Holocaust as a traumatic memory, Samuels, like Pascal and Pinter, echoes Lyotard’s statement that traumatisation is the only adequate way of relating to the Holocaust (Lyotard 56f; see also Neumeier, „Identität“ 159). The trauma can never be assimilated into the identity of the character — as we have seen in Eva/Evelyn’s predicament — and needs to remain an alien element within and external to the personality, being at the same time present and absent (Caruth
4f). In *Kindertransport* this external presence has a shape: that of the Ratcatcher.

Samuels narrates Eva/Evelyn’s story against the backdrop of the Grimms’ tale of the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, with the gothic monster of the Ratcatcher, who is connected to the motif of the train taking children away from their mothers. The Ratcatcher represents Eva/Evelyn’s suppressed but omnipresent trauma of being separated from her family. Experimenting with light and shadow and introducing the hallmark “music of the Ratcatcher,” Samuels indicates his presence even if he is not fully visible, and uses the conventions of the gothic to express the psychological state of the Kind, a trauma which resides in the subconscious, which cannot be narrated with words and which does not go away.7

In her interpretation of the Ratcatcher story, Samuels changes the colourful character from the Grimms’ fairy tale and Browning’s popular poem8 into a type of bogeyman lurking in the dark, and introduces the central element of guilt, as the reason for the Ratcatcher’s abduction of the children is God’s anger at the one person who was not grateful for his work, the one who “did not count his blessings” (*Kindertransport* 15). Thus the Ratcatcher is associated with the constant expectation of the host families for the children to show gratefulness, which played a major role in the lives of the Kinder.

The motif of the feeling of guilt on the part of the victims is reinforced in a scene in which Eva/Evelyn rejects her German mother

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7 As Neumeier observes, Samuels’ “use of the uncanny in the play links the nightmarish Ratcatcher fairy tale about the threatening stranger to the ‘Hänsel and Gretel’ fairy tale about the frightening metamorphosis of the familiar (beloved parent) into the unknown stranger” ("Kindertransport“ 67).

8 The story of the Ratcatcher has been popularised in England by Robert Browning’s poem “The Pied Piper of Hamelin: A Child’s Story.” The version of the tale that Samuels uses in the *Kindertransport* appears to be much more threatening than the original motif in the fairy tale, even though Browning already introduced the motif of death in his sentence “It’s as my great-grand sire, / Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone, / Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!” (Browning 251). Also the “sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,” which Browning assigns to the Ratcatcher prefigure the development of the character in Samuels’ play, where he is described as being even more threatening and inhuman.
Remembering the Holocaust in British-Jewish Drama of the 1990s

Helga, who survived the Holocaust and has come to collect her daughter after the war (*Kindertransport* 75–78). Evelyn’s rejection of the mother is, as Neumeier observes, her “darkest secret” (Neumeier, „Kindertransport“ 66). In a seemingly unreal scene, Helga and Evelyn project their despair and hatred onto each other, thus illustrating a basic problem of the *Kinder* alienation from one’s roots and assimilation to the new culture. The rejected Helga compares her daughter to Hitler and to a snake shedding her skin, i.e. her identity, while Evelyn identifies her mother with the Ratcatcher and accuses her of sending her away from home in the first place (*Kindertransport* 86). Samuels’ play presents the Holocaust as a memory that cannot be left behind. The reverberations of the experience, which are more complex than conventional schemes of guilt and innocence allow for, foreshadowing some of the decisions Pinter made in writing his *Ashes to Ashes*.

In her play Samuels dramatises the cultural memory of the Kindertransport and illustrates the impact of the children’s traumatic experience on their self-identification in the present. In order to deal with the trauma, the memory of disruption and dislocation must be expressed in words and shared in order to make communication possible and open up a way of dealing with their own lives and the memory of the Holocaust as part of it for the next generation.

In a way very different from that of Pascal and Samuels, Pinter’s controversial play *Ashes to Ashes* also illustrates the interrelation of personal and collective memory, investigating the use of memory within battles for position and some of the ethical problems associated with the collective memory of the Holocaust. *Ashes to Ashes* premiered in a production of the Royal Court Theatre at the Ambassadors Theatre, London, in 1996, and — like many of Pinter’s plays — focuses on the basic mechanisms underlying human interaction, such as the construction of reality and identity through language and from memory.

In Pinter’s refusal to attach fixed identities to his characters and in the way these characters deal with memories,* Ashes to Ashes* echoes

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9 Pinter gives one early explanation of his concept of the representation of reality on the stage in his talk “Writing for the Theatre” (1962), stating that: “[w]e don’t carry labels on our chests, and even though they are continually fixed on us by others, they convince nobody. The desire for verification on the part of all of us, with
Old Times (1971), one of Pinter’s early “memory plays” (see, for instance, Stahl 201). As in Old Times, the characters are involved in battles for position and dominance which are fought with the help of ‘memories,’ or better: ‘memory fictions,’ constructions of the past that are set off against each other and are meant to define the other person’s place in relation to oneself (Reitz, „Nachwort“ 74-75).

In Ashes to Ashes, Pinter connects the motif of the memory game as part of the battle for position with a new motif: the collective memory of the Holocaust. This juxtaposition of fictitious individual memories in the form of images that echo the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, such as the tearing away of babies from the arms of their mothers (Ashes 27), poses serious ethical questions. The real suffering of historical people is ‘recalled’ by a woman in her forties, who is too young to have experienced the atrocities she describes. Pinter anticipates criticism of his refusal to clearly identify Rebecca as either victim or perpetrator in Devlin’s question about what right she has to discuss such atrocities, and describes the playwright’s own dilemma when writing about the Holocaust in Rebecca’s answer:

REBECCA: I have no such authority. Nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing has ever happened to any of my friends. I have never suffered. Nor have my friends. (Ashes 41)

The question of how the Holocaust can be dealt with by writers who have not experienced it directly remains unanswerable. Due to the cultural endurance and power of images relating to the memory of the Holocaust it is necessary, however, to deal with this memory. Ashes to Ashes is not so much a Holocaust play aimed at staging and thus keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust as Pascal’s Theresa clearly does, but a study of the collective memory of the Holocaust and its ambigu-
ties, of the way it is perceived and discussed today (cf. Neumeier, „Identität“ 167).

Like Pascal and Samuels, Pinter emphasises the traumatic quality of the memory of the Holocaust and the fact that the trauma cannot be integrated in the individual memory of a character, nor easily filed away in cultural memory. Rebecca’s memories of horrible atrocities remain ‘alien elements’ within the play that cannot be ‘explained’ in the context of the play (Neumeier, „Identität“ 166).

Devlin’s reaction to these ‘alien elements’ is to distance himself by switching topics and describing a disinterested, British perspective. The ‘memories’ Rebecca relates are in his opinion the problem of “foreigners” and do not affect him as a British citizen (Ashes 45). Devlin thus illustrates a type of self-chosen amnesia that echoes tendencies within British historiography which have traditionally seen the Holocaust as a part of German history but not as a problem involving British citizens. This echoes Pascal’s and Samuels’ feeling that the memory of the Holocaust was silenced for many years and the fact that in the symbolic order of British collective memory there seems to be no frame of reference in which the Holocaust can be meaningfully inserted from the perspective of the victim (Neumeier, „Identität“ 166).

As Rebecca eventually casts herself in the role of the woman whose baby is taken away by the Nazis (Ashes 73), her transformation from Nazi lover to victim raises a number of questions about Pinter’s mode of representing the Holocaust (Neumeier, „Identität“ 166). Refusing to fix identities, he does not distinguish clearly between victims and bystanders or perpetrators, which has been interpreted as showing the limits of his style of representation (Neumeier, „Identität“ 166). Similar questions are raised in Rebecca’s memory of the pen-episode and her definition of ‘mental elephantiasis.’ While her memories of a pen falling on the carpet raise questions of the uncertainty of guilt and innocence, and the moral authority to write about or artistically represent the Holocaust in the first place, the condition described as ‘mental elephantiasis’ evokes the phenomenon of survivors guilt and the feeling of not having done enough to help those who did not survive. Rebecca becomes a representative of the victims who, in a perverse confusion of
cause and effect, seem to have internalised the Nazi propaganda and believe that they “brought it upon [themselves]” (Ashes 51).

As Neumeier has observed, the reception and interpretation of the play in Germany has been rather different from that in Great Britain („Identität“ 167-169), and she explains this as an expression of the different cultural taboos, “blind spots” and preferences in the traditions of collective memory in the two countries („Identität“ 169). Michael Billington, Benedict Nightingale and Keith Peacock, for example, interpret Ashes to Ashes in the context of Pinter’s reading of Gitta Sereny’s biography Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth (1995) (Neumeier, „Identität“ 168), and as a consequence they see Rebecca as the lover of Albert Speer — a Nazi — not commenting on Devlin’s turning into the ‘lover’ in the pantomime or on any allusions to British anti-Semitism (Neumeier, „Identität“ 169).

A completely different interpretation is offered by Bernhard Reitz in Germany, who sees Rebecca identified as a Jewish victim, whose baby is taken away from her by her Nazi ‘lover’ (Reitz, “Forget things” 42). Rebecca’s feelings for her so-called lover are reduced to psychological mechanisms of self-preservation (Neumeier, „Identität“ 169), and the motif of collaboration or the guilt of bystanders is not discussed. From a German perspective, this interpretation is easier to deal with as it involves identification with the victims and thus enables the audience to distance themselves from the part of the perpetrators or bystanders, a tendency within the German cultural memory of the Holocaust noted by Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert in their study Geschichtsvergessenheit — Geschichtsversessenheit (158-172).

Pinter’s play thus presents not just the images of atrocities but also the ambiguities and uncertainties inherent in the discourse of Holocaust remembrance. By not clearly assigning labels to his characters he keeps his audience on their toes and upsets simple explanations and traditions of Holocaust remembrance. The resulting confusion is echoed in the divergent ways in which the play has been received in different memory communities, illustrating the fact that memory theatre always relies on and taps into the collective memory of the audience.

The perspectives Pascal, Samuels and Pinter present in their staging of the memory of the Holocaust, are specifically ‘Jewish’ in so far as the
memories they dramatise reflect their own cultural background and view of their identity as the heirs of Holocaust memory and trauma. Pascal's emphasis on the European dimension and the richness of the cultural contributions of European Jewish victims and exiles illustrates what has been lost to Europe with the death of the six million. It explains, on the one hand, the uprooted, 'exilic condition' of the generation who survived and still lives in Great Britain, and, on the other hand, their internationalism and the richness of their contribution to European and also to British culture. By opening up a memory space that extends from Poland, via Austria and France to Great Britain, Pascal's images span the whole range of Holocaust suffering and remembrance. By including the reality of the collaboration of the Guernsey officials and British anti-Semitism, she adds an exclusively Jewish perspective to British collective memory of the Holocaust, and goes beyond British suffering during the blitz and the heroism of D-Day, revealing that the perspective of the victims had been missing all along.

The motifs of trauma and disruption are also echoed in Samuels' play, which opens up the field of Holocaust remembrance to include the perspective of the survivors and their children, who still suffer from the memories of displacement and the disruptions of families caused by the Holocaust. Similar to Pascal's Theresa, Samuels' Kindertransport also illustrates that there are different perspectives on the Holocaust within British collective memory and that there is an intact British-Jewish memory group whose memory differs significantly in perspective and identification from those who do not share their memories of dislocation and victimisation.

Pinter's presentation of cultural memory in the form of images reminiscent of survivor testimonies that are not clearly assigned to the victims or the perpetrators reveals a great trust in his audience. Refusing to provide answers to the question who Rebecca is, Pinter challenges the audience to compare their own preconceptions about the memory of the Holocaust and to consider their own taboos and blind spots with the patterns presented on stage, without offering the possibility of reconstructing an 'authentic' version of the past. His open perspective is the most ambivalent one among the three. The success of these three plays illustrates that the memory of the worst and most defining catastrophe
of the last century is a topic that still determines our definitions of who we are. Aware of current research into the discourses of individual and cultural memory, Pascal, Samuels and Pinter strike a cord with Jewish as well as non-Jewish British theatre-goers, and thus carve out a space for the Jewish experience in British drama, challenging our perceptions of ourselves and the world we live in.

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The Presentness of the Past: 
The Prosecution and Staging of Displaced War Criminals in Britain

Post-war Europe was teeming with displaced persons who were victims of the Nazi régime. Of the 7 to 9 Mio people who had been uprooted by the war, 1.5 to 2 Mio would not or could not return to their pre-war homes. A large number of Displaced Persons were from Eastern Europe, many of them Jewish refugees, who refused to resume their lives where their families had been massacred. Thousands of Jewish survivors found refuge in Britain (Cesarani, *Britain and the Holocaust* 2). Yet Britain, as has become known more than 40 years after the end of the war, also gave shelter to those DPs who refused to be repatriated for fear of punishment for their collaboration with the Nazis.

On 24 October 1986 the *Times* wrote it was believed “that alleged Nazis have been traced to Britain.” The confirmation of this report by the British government in 1989 came as a shock to the British public: Among the vast number of volunteer workers from the Baltics and the Ukraine, whose immigration and naturalisation had been facilitated by the British government after World War II, were numerous Nazi collaborators, including members of the Waffen SS. As David Cesarani explains in his study *Justice Delayed*, the British recruited more than 90,000 Eastern Europeans from among the residents of DP camps as volunteer workers between 1946 and 1950 (82ff). George Isaacs, then minister of labour and national service, hoped to attract a great number
of workers for which Britain had dire need with his European Volunteer Workers Scheme ‘Westward Ho!’ (1946–50) (McDowell 866ff); in the interest of British intelligence others were allowed into the country in return for information concerning the Soviet military (Cesarani, Justice Delayed 134ff). Among the prisoners of war who were allowed into Britain from the POW camp Riccione near Rimini and who thus escaped repatriation to Russia, were 9,000 men of the SS 14th ‘Galizien’ Division, who soon after became British subjects. Although it was known that Ukrainian SS men numbered among the POWs, “security screening was subordinated to speed of movement” (109).

In the U.S. and the Commonwealth, judicial attention turned to suspect Nazi war criminals in the 1970s (Rosenbaum 17–22; Cesarani, Britain and the Holocaust 20). In Britain, the inquiry into the problem of resident war criminals was catalysed foremost by the information, received from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles in 1986, that seventeen alleged war criminals had their home in Great Britain (Cesarani, Justice Delayed 197).¹ This sparked off a lengthy campaign that has been described as “one of the longest, most emotional and fiercely contested campaigns in British post-war political history” (247) and that finally led to the passing of the War Crimes Act in 1991. The War Crimes Act authorized British courts to bring charges against war criminals “irrespective of [their] nationality at the time of the alleged offence” (Reydams 205). Contestants of the bill referred to prosecution as a “waste of time of Parliament, the police and the judiciary and a colossal waste of public money” and, increasingly, as a Jewish “search for vengeance,” which was juxtaposed to the Christian principle of mercy. Thus, a leading article in the Times of 4 March 1987 refers to the Christian tradition of mercy: “Britain is a Christian country. Its laws enshrine principles of justice tempered with mercy, not vengeance.” Many other expositions followed in the British press representing Judaism as a

¹ On the list was, for instance, the name of Paul Reinhardts, who was the Director of the Labour Department for Latvia under the Nazi occupiers. This was reported in October 1987 by Searchlight, a magazine which took part in the campaign for the prosecution of war criminals in Britain.
vengeful creed (204),\textsuperscript{2} and there were attempts to characterize the campaign as the work of a Jewish lobby (260). Others, such as the TV programme \textit{Britain — A Nazi Safe House}, accused Britain of being remiss in the pursuit of Nazi war criminals. Proponents of the change in law felt that to prosecute would be “a moral imperative,”\textsuperscript{3} a deterrent and a means of remembrance. Lord Fitt, a former Belfast MP, argued that not to have trials would indicate that the urge to forget unpleasant periods of history was stronger in the Parliament of the UK than the desire for justice (260).

The prosecution of war criminals in Britain and its media coverage certainly counteract the urge to forget the past — both the Nazi past of the collaborators and British post-war neglect of any judicial action against them. By repeatedly reading about the atrocities committed by the defendants and about Britain’s role in sheltering them, the public has been confronted with discomforting aspects of history. In fact, history extends into the present, embodied in the persons still alive (perpetrators, victims, witnesses), whose past is remembered in interrogations, trials and in the press. What is more, it becomes part of British life and provokes responses which acknowledge that the past is not dead and buried. Justice — even if delayed — can still be done.

Literature, too, takes a significant part in combating forgetfulness. Indeed, recent British fiction arguably shows a tendency towards a retrospective analysis of the British past (cf. Higdon 9). Since the 1980s and 90s it is increasingly concerned with the British role during the war (Birchall 59f) and, I would add, its aftermath. As Margaret Scanlan puts it, “[t]he idea that we ought to pay attention to the ‘unspeakable,’ to the repressed, [...] that matter so much to contemporary theoreticians [...] clearly corresponds to the practices of several recent British novelists” (15). Recent historical fiction collapses distinctions between the past

\textsuperscript{2} Among the critics of the prosecution of war criminals were also Jewish voices. Bernard Levin, for instance, asked in \textit{The Times} of 8 June 1989 whether the motif for the prosecution was deterrence or retribution.

\textsuperscript{3} Upon thus speaking in favour of the prosecution of war criminals in the \textit{Evening Standard} in October 1989, Nigella Lawson received antisemitic letters that referred to her columns as “just another arm of the world Jewry conspiracy” (Cesarani, \textit{Justice Delayed} 223f).
and the present. Readers are thus prevented from retreating into a "comfortable escape [...] into the past" (11). This is achieved, for instance, by multiple time shifts. Memories of the past, which had been successfully repressed, are frequently recalled by mnemonic devices or brought forth by the characters' urge to make sense of the past (11f). The past, then, is not treated as a removed era; as Avrom Fleishman argued as early as 1971, the historical novel has, since modernism, increasingly dealt with "the memories, impressions, and associations by which the past still lives in the minds of the living" (246).

In contemporary historical drama, too, the past and the present intersect. The definition of historical drama as plays which are set in the past no longer holds. Instead, historical drama comprises plays establishing a connection to history and discussing the significance of the past for the present. According to Ulrich Broich, contemporary historical drama is characterized by the presentness of the past in the consciousness of the characters (418).

By frequency of repetition, plays on stage take a significant role in counteracting forgetfulness. The dramatist becomes, to borrow a term from Peter Burke, a "remembrancer" (97) of events in the past, which can be presented to the audience in an unlimited number of performances. Interrogations and trials on stage are particularly suited to re-enact the past in that they call upon memories of witnesses, of perpetrators and of victims. The prosecution of war criminals links the past with the present: it is for their past actions, their role in the war, that persons are interrogated and put on trial in the present.

It is not surprising, then, that the events leading up to and following the War Crimes Act should be taken up by British dramatists. Peter Flannery's Singer (1989) and Ronald Harwood's Handyman (1996) both stage and engage in the confrontation with the past. They participate in a process of "remembering, repeating and working through," which, according to Freud (126-136), is necessary for overcoming the self-defensive forces of forgetting, denying and projecting, and thus for mastering the past (of both the war criminals and the British who gave them shelter). Theatrical 'present'-ation re-enacts the past and forces the audience to confront it. I will argue that theatre performance is particularly suited to engage in what Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich,
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in their socio-psychological study of the post-war German collective, referred to as ‘mourning’ the past.  

Peter Flannery’s five-act play Singer was first staged by the RSC in 1989, at a time when the prosecution of war criminals was of heightened topical interest to the British public, and the Oxford Stage Company revived it at London’s Tricycle Theatre in spring 2004. In Singer, the Britain of the sixties is presented as the home of both Jewish survivors and Nazi collaborators. The former Auschwitz inmates Peter Singer and his nephew Stefan re-encounter a particularly brutal Ukrainian camp-guard named Antanas Gailunas. Significantly, this character shares his first name with Antanas Gecas, one of the first alleged war criminals whose name had leaked to the British press in October 1986. In the play, Antanas Gailunas lives a comfortable life of a recluse in postwar Britain, where he owns a thriving business.

In the prologue to the play, set in Auschwitz, Singer and Stefan manage to survive through skilful trading in the camp market: “Make a deal today and live until tomorrow” (6). For Stefan, block chief for the children, one of the means to stay alive is to cater to Gailunas’ sexual predilections by supplying him with children (74f).

Upon their arrival as refugees in Southampton, in the first act of the play, an immigration officer advises the survivors to forget the past. However, as the play moves on and takes us through forty years of postwar Britain, the past lives on in various ways: in the persons of victims and criminals, in Stefan’s paintings of Auschwitz, through which he wants to ensure remembrance, and in Singer’s petrified camp morality as a successful slum landlord in 1960s Britain, modelled on the notorious

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5 On 26 October 1986, the Sunday Times reported on allegations against Antanas Gecas, who was named in a list of alleged war criminals compiled by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. Gecas, a retired mining engineer living near Edinburgh, was accused of being involved in the murder of partisans and Jews in Lithuania. Gecas had become a British citizen twelve years after arriving in Scotland (Cesarani, Justice Delayed 197).
west London private landlord Peter Rachman. The camp keeps haunting the former Auschwitz inmates in their British post-war existence. The word ‘camp’ appears at several instances in the play. Upon their arrival in England, they are first transferred “into a camp” (10), the announcement of which evokes the refugees’ shared response: “Das Lager” (11). Later, in the 1980s, a group of Thatcherite politicians attempt to persuade Singer to collaborate with them in their plan to construct camps, ruled by discipline, in order to house mental invalids and homeless people and thus to clean the public streets of “social misfits” and “troublemakers” (93–95). Since a large amount of the money for this project ironically comes from Gailunas, whose daughter is married to one of the Thatcherites (91), he becomes indirectly involved in camp discipline for a second time.

Most memorably, the Auschwitz past is re-enacted in the present in Act 4, when Singer confronts Gailunas with the past in the 1960s. Gailunas was able to immigrate to post-war Britain under the pretence that he had been interned in Auschwitz for his resistance against the Nazis — at least this is what Gailunas tells his daughter Ruby. It is through Ruby that Singer and Stefan manage to gain access to Gailunas, upon whom Singer is determined to take revenge. Singer intends to seduce and “take possession” of Ruby (67), who is “all that’s important to Gailunas” (62), and to confront him with his past. When Singer falls in love with Ruby, however, he almost follows Stefan’s advice to “wipe the slate clean and forget” (70). Yet at this moment, Ruby, who believes that her father had been an Auschwitz prisoner like Singer and that he is troubled by the “guilt of the survivor” (63), brings Gailunas to meet Singer and Stefan. She hopes that her father will finally talk about and thus master the past so as to be able to live in the present: “Father, you have to talk about it. Peter can talk about it. When you talk about the camp, you’ll finally leave it. Peter, please. Help him. Help him to face the past” (75). Ironically, Singer does confront Gailunas with the past,

6 Singerism is an allusion to “Rachmanism, the negative ideas associated with private landlordism in the 1960s” (Allen/McDowell 2).

7 Flannery has been severely criticized for comparing camp life in Auschwitz to the life of the homeless in Thatcherite England; see, for instance, Charles Spencer’s review of the play.
but with a past quite different from anything Ruby suspects. Not believing in evil, she takes her father away from the scene of confrontation. The matter remains in the private sphere.

The central issue of the play is whether Holocaust survivors should attempt to forget the past or remember it, and this preoccupation with memory binds the scenes together. Staging the past is part of the memory process. *Singer* is as much a play about the Nazi past as about Thatcherite Britain — the time when it first became known that alleged Nazis found shelter there. The Nazi past encroaches upon the British present. Ruby does not believe in the evil of those who became like her father. Singer counters: “You’re English, Ruby, English through and through — which is to say you have no idea of evil” (75). The presentness of the past brings the “evil” close to Ruby, in fact as close as her own father.

*Singer*, I have argued, does not engage with the past as removed in time, as ‘history,’ but rather with tendrils of the past reaching into the present. While in Flannery’s play the confrontation with the past remains confined to the private sphere, in Ronald Harwood’s *The Handyman*, inspired by the 1991 War Crimes Act and the ensuing public debate, the confrontation with the past is transferred into the public domain.

Harwood’s two-act play was first produced at the Minerva Theatre in Chichester in 1996. According to Harwood, it was written “at the suggestion of a friend [...] After seeing [*Taking Sides*] somebody said to me that I should write a play about one of these elderly men who were at the time, as a result of a change in British law, being tried for war crimes” (“Introduction” 4f).

As in the earlier *Taking Sides* (1995), Harwood deals with the Nazi past, the question of individual guilt and the judiciary procedure posed by the Nazi crimes. Staging the denazification proceedings of Wilhelm Furtwängler in 1946 Berlin, *Taking Sides* is historically and geographically removed from its late twentieth-century British viewing public. In *Handyman*, however, the Nazi past becomes a current concern reaching into the here and now and raising immediate questions.

The elderly Romka is introduced in the first scene of the play as a “soft-hearted” handyman in the service of Cressida and Julian Field, a
Anette Kern-Stähler

well-to-do middle-aged couple. Their idyllic country-house existence is suddenly shattered by the arrival of two inspectors of Scotland Yard accusing Romka of war crimes and thus letting Nazi atrocities eventually intrude into their lives. It turns out that Romka has escaped prosecution and punishment for collaborating with the Nazis by immigrating to Britain. Now, 50 years later, he stands accused of participating in a massacre of Jews. Harwood's play dramatizes the questions raised among the British public in the wake of the change in British law:

And if we have at any given time submitted to the crushing weight of social forces that have been brought to bear upon us, are we to be accused and punished decades later, even to our last breath? Can such monstrous crimes ever be forgiven? Can one man be held responsible for the crimes of so many? Are the motives that drive the hunters a longing for justice or for revenge? ("Introduction" 6)

In the play, the change in law is explained by Marian Stone, Romka's solicitor:

[U]ntil this new War Crimes Act, British courts had jurisdiction only over British citizens who had committed manslaughter or murder abroad, but didn’t have jurisdiction over people who may now be British citizens, or who may now live here and have done for some time, if the allegations relate to events before they became British citizens, or before they came to live here. The New Act changed all that (18).

We can now prosecute them as we would any other British citizen (25).

The play itself is a re-enactment of the heated public debate about whether or not old men should be prosecuted and punished for crimes committed fifty years earlier, and its characters represent the contesting positions on the change in law. Cressida and Julian Field are opposed to it: "Guilty or not, poor old men," Cressida feels, "should not be brought to trial for crimes they’re alleged to have committed more than fifty

8 In many ways the character of Romka resembles Szymon Serafinowicz, the first man to face prosecution in Britain for alleged Nazi war crimes. Aged 86, Serafinowicz was accused of the murder of Jews in Belarus, where he served as police chief; he later joined the allied forces and, after the war, immigrated to Britain. Soon after, the case was abandoned because the defendant was suffering from Alzheimer's disease - Serafinowicz died in hospital in 1997; see the press coverage e.g. in The Times of 18 January 1997 (see Frost).
years ago" (77). Like Romka, Cressida is a devout Catholic, and in the play it is Cressida who constructs the dichotomy established in the British press between Christian forgiveness and the alleged Jewish desire for revenge, which to her appears to be the sole motive for Romka’s prosecution:


I think we should forgive and forget. We’re Christians, aren’t we? (77)

Come on, admit it, this is revenge, revenge, that’s all it is, nothing short of revenge. That’s what they want. That’s what the Jews want, revenge. [...] Jesus taught forgiveness and Jehova taught vengeance. That’s the difference. That’s why Romka was in the dock today (78).

Julian does not perceive the question from a moral but from a pragmatic point of view. He asks about the aim and object of the trial: “What’s the point? [...] Is he to be rehabilitated so that he can return to the community and lead — what’s the phrase — a useful life? Or will they be locking him away so that he won’t be able to repeat the offence?” (26). Marian, on the other hand, argues that the object of a trial reaches beyond the punishment and rehabilitation of the offender: “This trial [...] may demonstrate our society’s revulsion to the crimes of which Mr Kozachenko and others may be accused” (26). Whereas Cressida wants to lay the past to rest (78), Marian emphasizes the danger of forgetting: “And how dare we forget this most terrible event in human history? We forget it at our own peril. Because if we forget it, it’ll happen again. And if we forget it, we allow those who now deny it to triumph” (77). Marian’s personal sense of justice dictates that murderers should be punished for their crimes, no matter how much time passed between the crime and its prosecution, for “[a]fter all, murder is murder” (25).

The two witnesses for the prosecution plead for Romka’s punishment for very different reasons. Nikita Fedorenko, who spent thirty years in a Siberian prison, thinks it is only just that Romka should be punished, too: “if I’ve done time, why shouldn’t he?” (55). The catholic nun Sophia sees in Romka’s punishment the only way of saving his soul; his “suffering will be the only path of his eternal soul to eternal, everlasting redemption” (71).
The major themes and motifs of the play are broached at its beginning. Yet, what has a private dimension at first, attains a political and public dimension during the course of the play. The interrelations between the private and the public sphere are heralded by the two police inspectors' intrusion into the Fields' garden without any warning. Amidst their country-house idyll, Julian and Cressida are forced to confront the atrocities of the Nazis, the details of which they have so far ignored: "In ordinary circumstances," Cressida says, "we lead quiet, orderly, predictable lives. Rather protected. Now, this. I've only ever thought about — these things in the most general terms, thought of them as a kind of pervasive horror of which the details are best left unknown" (29). Just as Cressida refuses to think about the Holocaust, so she represses the knowledge of her husband's extramarital affair. As Christoph Houswitschka has argued, repression and denial "can be observed in the domestic as well as in the public sphere" (203).

The title of the play refers to Romka's usefulness in the house of the Fields as well as to his service in the Ukrainian *miliz*. Romka has become invaluable to the Fields:

He does everything for us. Cooks, sews, builds, digs, mends fences, drives the car, grows the most wonderful vegetables, and just look at this garden, he's a life-saver, nothing's too much trouble for him (28).

To the Ukrainian *miliz*, Romka had also proved a most useful handyman, someone for whom nothing was too much trouble. Nikita Fedorenko recalls him as a "[u]seful man. Could do anything" (54) and as "[g]ood man. [...] Good worker" (57). Fedorenko remembers that he shot numerous Jews together with Romka, and they "didn't need orders. We were volunteers. We just knew what had to be done" (55).

The anonymous mass graves which the Ukrainian *miliz* forced the Jews of Starivka, Mikolja and Kovlici to dig before they were shot (56) stand in strong contrast to the individual grave which Romka prepares for the beloved family cat at the beginning of the play: "There is a memorial in Mikolja but there are no names of the victims" (58). The cat's

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9 This statement precludes any attempt at defending Romka with the excuse that he was merely following orders.
The presentness of the past

grave, however, is completed with a lovingly crafted wooden plate into which he carves the name and age of the deceased pet.

The theme of Romka's fading memory is introduced at the beginning of the play. What seems to be harmless and private at first acquires a public and political dimension when Romka presents the testimonies of old people as unreliable and thus tries to discredit their evidence:

And these witnesses, old men now, like me, all old men. They got such good memories? Fifty years more ago? They remember who, what, where? If they remember me, they remember wrong (37).

By contrast, one of the elderly witnesses, Sophia Demidenko, avers that it is impossible to forget the sight of the massacre of the Jews of Starivka: "the Jewish women were holding their frightened children. They were wailing. And the children were crying. I can hear it now. You don't forget things like that" (67). The sight of Romka shooting Jews in the pit is "branded in [her] memory" (69).

Romka's own memory turns out to be selective; his memory "comes, goes" (64). Separating acceptable from unacceptable memories, Romka displays an attitude towards the past that has been described by Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich in their socio-psychological study of the post-war German collective. As the Mitscherlichs argue, the Germans have taken pains to forget, and do not want to be reminded of, those events in their past in which they were, as Germans, "guiltily implicated" (26). Similarly, during the interrogation (Handyman 43–45) and in earlier conversations with Julian and Cressida, Romka reminisces on those aspects of pre-war times that make him appear as a victim of the Stalinist system. Julian remembers: "We heard him bang on about the Communists, haven't we? Stalin and all that. How the Ukraine suffered — [...] He lost his whole family, parents, brothers, sisters" (31). However, he has repressed those fragments of the past in which he is guiltily implicated. The Fields made this easy for him, because, as Cressida says, "[I]t's not a subject — we just don't — never have — it's not part of our — there are no Jews living in our village, for example" (31).

10 At the beginning of the play, Romka cannot recall who gave him his straw hat as a present eight years ago, upon which Cressida worries, "his memory is going" (5).
Romka’s alcoholism, too, is caused less by his present private problems — his loneliness after his wife’s death, as Julian guesses (6) — but rather seems to be connected to his past, which now catches up with him. With his immigration to Great Britain he had hoped to remove all traces of his past. He insists that he changed his identity with his immigration:

We are not in Ukraine. I am not that man. I am not that Ukrainian. [...] now, I am British subject. I am different man (36).

Yes, I say you, this is my country now. Here. Great Britain. Good, just, fair. British justice, top in the world. This I believe. This I trust. And in God I trust. I am loyal subject of Queen Elizabeth (38).

He starts drinking when, upon a visit in London, he hears that the police asked about him (14). When Romka’s past is finally about to reach him, he quenches it with alcohol.

Faith is another escape for him. After the police have searched his flat, Cressida soothes him with the promise to take him to mass the following Sunday (15). The confessional is Romka’s sanctuary after his participation in the massacre of the Jews. Here he can confess his guilt without having to fear public exposure. It is private penance, too, which Romka sought in his relationship with his late wife Maureen. Julian recalls:

I’ve always thought that when he and Maureen had a spat, and he’d appear the next morning with a black eye or a cut across his lip, he liked it, wanted it [...] I think he wanted to be punished (61f).

The effects of the new War Crimes Act now expose his private penance to the public.

Confession also plays an important role in the domestic sphere, as Julian confesses his affair to his wife against the backdrop of the political question of guilt. When Romka is forced to confront his past, Julian finally owns up to his affair. In the context of the question of forgiveness or revenge, it is of significance that Julian listens to Mozart’s Magic Flute before he confesses: “He is listening to ,Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen‘, which gives way to ,Zum Ziele führt dich diese Bahn‘” (58). As Cressida urges forgiveness for the crimes of “poor old men,” Julian longs for his wife’s forgiveness in his own confession (62) — for the Magic Flute’s „heiligen Hallen“, where revenge does not exist.
Victoria Stewart has argued that these "personal dilemmas" in *The Handyman* are a "distraction from the main actions" and "tend to reduce those events and arguments to the level of the personal" (10f). I would like to suggest that, on the contrary, they expose the presentness of the past in contemporary Britain. As much as the political encroaches upon the private sphere, the private concerns, in turn, all gain a political dimension in the course of the play. By intersecting the private and the political, Harwood highlights the relevance of the Nazi past for late twentieth-century Britain. Chocolate-box England, invoked by Julian at the beginning of the play (7), is crumbling.

Romka exhibits the very defence mechanisms the Mitscherlichs observed among post-war Germans — "forgetting, denying, projecting" to avoid a confrontation with the past and thus to reject feelings of grief, shame and guilt. As has been shown, Romka only admits those fragments of the past to his memory in which he appears as a victim. Moreover, he projects the deeds of which he is accused onto an imaginary Romka II, and insisting that he worked as a cook for the army he denies having had any part in war crimes. He attempts to establish his as a case of mistaken identity. Yet it is not only Romka who embraces those defence mechanisms; in Julian and Cressida Field, Harwood's play makes conspicuous the inability to shed past behaviours and patterns of behaviour, the psychic immobility described by the Mitscherlichs as a consequence of not having mastered the past. For in a return of the repressed, Freud argues, the forgotten and the denied breaks through in people's behaviour. Thus, stereotypes of 'the Jew' are still around. To Julian, Jewish people look different from others (18) and are not to be trusted. At first he assumes that the police are looking for his neighbour Milton, because "[n]obody knows what Milton does, nobody knows where he comes from or where he got his money" (3). From this he concludes that Milton must be Jewish (31). At the end of the play, Cressida, rather than accepting Romka's guilt, urges him to deny the Holocaust, a reaction which Marian Stone had feared might be one effect of the war crime trials.

11 Ironically, it is Julian who is “making money out of money” in the City (20).
The facile assumption that the Nazi past is a closed chapter in history is refuted in the play. Romka is compelled to confront a past he has until then successfully repressed, and his arrest and interrogation force Julian and Cressida to think about the Nazi atrocities they had so successfully avoided to consider before. Harwood’s play, then, is as much about the crimes committed by a single member of the Ukrainian miliz as it is about the careless screening of war criminals and their facilitated entry into Britain where they could live without any punishment for their atrocities until the law changed. Harwood’s play is also about the effects of the judicial aftermath upon ordinary British lives in the present. The British audience thus is not faced with crimes committed ‘in history’ in a far-away place but with repercussions of this past in the here and now. Romka, on the British stage, is a reminder of the Nazi past and of Britain’s help to those implicated in war crimes.

As David Cesarani complained in the *Guardian* of 25 April 2001, “after a decade of effort since the passage of the War Crimes Act and the millions expended on investigations and legal preparation, [there have] been only two prosecutions and just one conviction in England and none in Scotland.”¹² In the pursuit of Nazi war criminals, political insufficiency and unwillingness are revealed — in Britain and in all the countries where the Nazis found shelter, not least in Germany.¹³ I would like to suggest in conclusion that books like Cesarani’s *Justice Delayed*, press reports and TV documentaries such as the Yorkshire Television Documentary *The SS in Britain* shown on ITV in January 2001 and, indeed, the dramatist as “remembrancer” open up and keep alive questions about the Nazi crimes and about how thousands of Nazi criminals were allowed to go unpunished. Harwood’s *Handyman* and Flannery’s *Singer* are important contributions to this process.

¹² In the same article, David Cesarani states that in “a report on the prosecution of Nazi war criminals around the world, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre has accused England of ‘minimal success’ and classified Scotland as guilty of ‘insufficient and/or unsuccessful effort’. [...] Overall, Britain was ranked alongside Argentina and Croatia.”

¹³ Here, 20,000 Nazi criminals were able to live without persecution in the East and the West (Klee). For the prosecution of NS crimes in Germany see the contributions to Weber/Steinbach.
Works Cited

Primary Literature


Secondary Literature


<br>http://www.jewish-theatre.com/visitor/resource_main.aspx>


CDE Workshop 2004: Pity and Fear for the Average Student? How to Teach Plays of Displacement, Exile, and Diaspora

What are the pedagogical aims of teaching plays that address the traumatic human experience of displacement, exile, and diaspora? Do we need a special methodology when approaching students with these issues at the beginning of the 21st century? These were the core questions to be addressed at a workshop during the 13th annual conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English. But before discussing this central issue with the participants of the workshop, I found it useful to give an account of the present state of the art in drama didactics in order to have a common basis for further discussion. For the same reason, a brief summary of this introductory part of the workshop will be given in the following.

As a general tendency one can say that teaching drama at schools or institutions of higher education has undergone significant changes in recent years. Traditional methods of literary interpretation such as for instance a close reading of the dramatic text or a formal analysis of the play have not been replaced but have rather been complemented by new didactic approaches that focus on a more active involvement of the student reader. These methods of teaching drama are founded on the pedagogical paradigm of constructivism but they also seek justification in the
distinctive nature of dramatic texts that need to be performed either in reality or in the readers' imagination in order to make sense.

As an introduction to the task of developing idiosyncratic approaches to plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora it will suffice to name but a few of the current didactic approaches to teaching drama which aim at an active involvement of the students in order to make the learning process more effective. An introductory approach which is relatively traditional is reading plays aloud. A next step would then be staging the play. However, Peter Nissen has demonstrated how these well-known approaches can be transformed into a creative appropriation of the dramatic text by the students. By using the "method of scenic interpretation" a personalized reception of the play by the students is reinforced. In this approach pre-reading activities, as for instance developing a mind-map which gives an account of the expectations of students when confronted with the title of the play to be read, prepare the students for the play's thematic focus. After these activities various different methods can be used. It is one option to have different students read aloud the same text and thus try out their versions of dramatic representation. One could also read out the text while walking through the classroom. On top of that one could try out different gestures and mimes while reading out the text and discuss afterwards in the group what seemed best (see Nissen 36-39).

A further technique that can be used is transporting a play into the realm of puppets with the students acting as puppeteers who have made dramaturgical decisions as directors and actors. Such transference opens up the students' imagination and critical awareness of the dramatic potential of a play. Gerhard Kappe has shown how it is possible to use this method for motivating teenagers in an EFL-classroom to come up with a puppet version of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Another example of such an active transformation of a play by students can be seen in the wide field of intermediality. A variety of projects have been tried out. It is one option, for example, to use a play as a basis for writing a film script which itself can be taken as a stepping stone for a video project. A play and its author can also be used as a
starting point for developing a web-page as has been demonstrated by Cerstin Henning.

More open-ended ways of teaching drama are creative writing exercises, for instance, fictitious diary entries of main characters in a play, or the transformation of the play into other literary genres, for example into a short story. Turning prose into a play is another available choice and can be done at a very early stage in the EFL-classroom and with very simple means as proven by Mervyn Wittaker. Such an approach might help to awaken the students’ awareness of the intertextual permeability of genres at a very early age.

Finally, counterfactual creative writing exercises have become an efficient non-traditional method of combining the understanding of the play with text production by students. The students are asked to come up with alternative plots for a play and ponder such questions as, “What if Othello had not been jealous? What if Hamlet had survived the fight in Act V?”

After this brief description of current methodologies in the field of teaching drama, the workshop addressed the issue how plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora could and should get taught. The important questions that have to be asked at the beginning of such a preparation for teaching are the most basic ones of who the students are and what the aims of one’s teaching are. Different approaches are necessary if one teaches plays to native speakers or, in contrast, to students in the EFL-classroom. The methods of teaching drama at school level will differ significantly from the didactic process at an institution of higher learning. But rather than focussing on the differences that arise from the special situation of different groups of learners I will here try to concentrate on the similarities in any classroom where drama is taught, as a more detailed discussion would be inappropriate in the context of this exploration into the world of drama didactics.

Who are the learners that are going to be taught? To limit the scope and make the task at hand tangible, I will assume here that the plays in question will be taught to students in a democratic country, either in North America or Europe. I was encouraged to make this choice be-

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1 For further methods of teaching drama cf. Nünning.
cause all the participants of the workshop worked and taught in these educational environments. Nevertheless, it also seems quite possible to use many of the methodological approaches discussed in the following in other pedagogical contexts as for instance at schools in non-democratic countries.

But since a workshop has to take into account the background and the interests of the participants and the organizational circumstances, limitation in the way described above seems indispensable. Thus, when paying closer attention to the focus of this volume — plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora — a clear division in the student body becomes visible: a majority of prospective students in pluralistic societies will have had no traumatizing encounters with these fields of human experience. On the other hand a minority of students, who at some schools might make up a substantial proportion, will have encountered displacement, followed their families into exile, or experienced diaspora. Most of the students in industrialized democratic countries who have such a horizon of experience will have a migrant family background. Their parents might be seekers of political asylum or might belong to an ethnic or religious minority, their families or ancestors having immigrated from less developed countries. Because of their personal history some of these children might be traumatized, which makes it necessary for teachers to be extremely sensitive. But, if dealt with in a proper manner, the experience of this group of students could be very beneficial for the learning process of the whole class. Sharing their experience with their fellow students such students could open up an entirely new perspective for the majority in the group of learners. This in turn might lead to a better understanding of one another and could initiate a process of healing for the traumatized students. The aims of teaching plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora thereby become visible. Understanding the fate of other people who have had such experiences and identifying with them is likely to generate empathy and in the long run a feeling of solidarity with them. At the same time, the representation and expression of such experience in drama provides both freedom and security by creating a distancing effect which makes it easier to discuss one’s personal experience and feelings. The plays can be used as masks to pro-
tect one's emotional injuries so that old wounds are not opened up again.

This brings up the question of how the majority of students, who have had no personal experience with displacement, exile or life in the diaspora should be approached when teaching plays that address these issues. As a first answer to this question one might recall the classical Aristotelian categories of 'pity' and 'fear.' Teaching such plays would certainly have the aim of broadening the minds of average students by confronting them with the question of how they would feel if such traumata had been part of their lives. Through a process of identification by experiencing dramatic representations of such frightening ordeals it would be an aim to make the students pity fellow human beings under less fortunate circumstances and it might even make them aware what fate might have in store for them. The likely outcome of such a learning process would be humility and solidarity. It would also include preparation for likewise traumatizing experience because although such experience has been rare in democratic countries since the Second World War that does not mean that it has been banned forever. Finally, making students aware that countless people in the past and the present have experienced the traumatic reality of displacement, exile, and diaspora is a substantial pedagogical necessity in an open society so that young citizens become aware of what can be lost and grow to understand that personal involvement and political responsibility are necessary.

A parallel can be drawn to didactic approaches in teaching history where opening the students' minds for the fate of people in the past is supposed to make the students better able to tolerate personal frustration. Anyone who has learnt about the sometimes nightmarish conditions under which people lived and died in the Middle Ages or the horror that humanity experienced under totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, to name but two examples, should be able to put disappointment and failure in their lives in perspective and develop a better ability to bear hardship. This does not imply that plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora should only be seen as examples of littérature engagée. The scope is supposed to be wider. These plays can be employed to open up the eyes of sheltered youths so that they develop a feeling
for the nightmare side of human existence and thus become more mature beings.

This leads to the most important question to be tackled in this paper. How then should plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora be taught? Do they need a special methodology? Obviously, the student has to get personally involved in the reception of the play and should not stay aloof as a neutral observer. The teacher needs an approach that gives the students a chance to have a personal encounter with the issues addressed. Such a development of empathy is actually congruent with the constructivist principles exemplified above. However, this does not imply that only an emotional approach is possible, or, even advisable. Traditional ways of teaching drama, as mentioned above, which concentrate on the analysis of form and content of the play should supplement the teaching methodology which aims at creating ‘pity’ and ‘fear’ among the students.

One Case Study: Wole Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman

Preparing a workshop with the aim of discussing and developing methodologies for teaching plays of displacement, exile and diaspora is obviously a daring endeavour because the options seem almost limitless. Thus, in order to provide the basis for productive work, limitation is necessary. Choosing a particular play is the most important first decision to be taken if one wants to organize a workshop where different methods and approaches to teaching drama are to be discussed. This is particularly difficult if one takes into account that the participants in such a workshop come from very different backgrounds and have a variety of interests. I decided to concentrate on a contemporary postcolonial play, written in 1973/4 and first published in 1975, which has by now gained the status of a classic: Death and the King’s Horseman by Wole Soyinka, the first African to win the Nobel prize for literature. In this play the cultural differences and similarities between Africans and Europeans are addressed. One major issue of the play is the insight that life in the diaspora almost necessarily leads to a reevaluation of the ethics under which one was brought up. Through cultural and physical displacement the main characters in Death and the King’s Horseman are forced to undergo such a process in which they try to reconcile their
native cultures with the foreign traditions that they have been confronted with through intercultural contact. Wole Soyinka himself pointed out in an interview that *Death and the King’s Horseman* was the only one of all his plays where the clash of two cultures was the main dramatic concern (Jeyifo 107f).

Despite the position of Soyinka’s play in the canon of postcolonial drama, it seemed necessary to provide a short summary of the play for all participants of the workshop so that everyone had the same basis for the discussion of didactic approaches to *Death and the King’s Horseman*.

*Time and Place: during the Second World War in Nigeria.*

**I**

After the death of the King, his Horseman (Elesin) prepares for the traditional ritual in which he will die in order to accompany his king. Although Elesin is ready to die he wants to marry a young woman before his death so that he can father one last child. Although this desire breaks with tribal traditions and the woman is his own son’s bride his last wish is granted by his wife.

**II**

The English District Officer Pilkings and his wife Jane are preparing for a ball in the evening that will be attended by the Prince of Wales, who is on a good-will tour of the colonies. Pilkings hears about Elesin’s intended suicide and decides to prevent it because he considers it a savage custom. In the past Pilkings had quarrelled with Elesin because Pilkings had helped Elesin’s eldest son Olunde to go to England as a medical student against his father’s will. Elesin’s objections were based on tribal customs, which forbid the eldest son of the Horseman to leave his home country as he is supposed to succeed his father as Horseman to the new king.

**III**

Following Pilkings’ orders, Sergeant Amusa and two Constables try to go to Elesin to arrest him so that he cannot commit suicide. They are stopped at the market by women who prevent them from carrying out
their task. — Elesin sinks into a trance which is supposed to lead to his death.

IV

Pilkings finds out that the Sergeant was not able to carry out his orders and decides to go to Elesin himself. His wife Jane and Olunde, the eldest son of the Horseman, who has returned from England because of the king's death, meet and lead a heated discussion about the cultural differences and similarities between Europeans and Africans. Olunde is waiting for his father's death to fulfill his role in the ritual as the future Horseman. — At the end Olunde is full of shame when he finds out that his father has not died.

V

Pilkings had disturbed the ritual shortly before the end and had imprisoned Elesin so that he could not commit suicide. In a passionate dialogue between Elesin and Pilkings, Elesin describes his own shame and reproaches Pilkings for interfering with his people's traditions. They hear that Olunde, trying to make up for his father's shame, has taken his own life. Full of grief Elesin commits suicide.

Why is it feasible to choose this play as an example? As mentioned above a particular focus could be identified in the field of cultural diaspora because Wole Soyinka's play concentrates on the experience of a European couple in Africa and an African medical student in Europe. Both cultures are described in their idiosyncrasies but it also becomes clear that they share the same underlying fields of human experience. In the case given, different approaches to an individual's sacrificing himself for the good of society are depicted. Despite all differences, both cultures ultimately share a positive evaluation of such self-sacrifice.

Another reason for choosing Wole Soyinka’s Death and the King’s Horseman is of a didactic nature. The play is relatively easily accessible as far as the language is concerned — even for students in the EFL-classroom. Furthermore, the form of Death and the King’s Horseman is traditional in that its five parts have structural elements of a classic tragedy in the sense of Gustav Freytag's theory of drama, while at the same
time African idiosyncrasies can be identified. This formal hybridity, in a sense mirrors the hybrid biography of the author who as a native Nigerian raised in his home country has also spent large parts of his life in Europe.

Finally, if one follows Wolfgang Butzkamm's "principle of relevance" (51) when teaching a foreign language, the colonial clash of cultures that underlies the play has a prime importance in the postcolonial world of the early 21st century. Any student in a developed western country has to be made aware of other perspectives that demand their own validity in the struggle of multicultural discourses in a globalized, postcolonial world. Confrontation with different views represents the first step to a multicultural debate that will enable mutual understanding and respect for each other or will make clear where each culture has to draw the line in order to protect its identity.²

The Workshop

After a short general introduction to current methods of teaching drama and a brief recollection of the plot of Wole Soyinka's play the participants of the workshop were asked to read and analyze part IV of the play together and to find idiosyncratic ways of teaching it. Part IV of *Death and the King's Horseman* seemed particularly interesting for this group discussion because it is here that Olunde and Jane discuss in detail the cultural differences between Europeans and Africans. As far as the dramatic structure of the play is concerned, the debate between these two cultural representatives, who have lived in each other's culture in a situation of diaspora, can be seen as a last force of suspense, to follow Gustav Freytag's terminology, before the full 'catastrophe' of *Death and the King's Horseman* becomes visible in Part V. It is in Part IV of the play that the clash between the two cultures is put into words, particularly so by Olunde. But at the same time it is demonstrated to the audience that life in the diaspora has led to cultural hybridity. African Jane and English Olunde have both gone native and Olunde's return to the

² For an African view on such intercultural discourse cf. for instance Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African world.*
traditions of his home country by sacrificing himself is no longer fully convincing as an act that signifies his native culture.

This specific dramatic quality of Part IV made it most feasible to choose this part of Soyinka’s play for the work in the groups. Several tasks were given to each group. An obvious question that had to be addressed was the identification of the target group of students. Furthermore, the aims of teaching this particular part of the play were to be identified. Finally, each group was asked to exemplify the reasons for choosing particular methodologies in teaching Death and the King’s Horseman. In this context, a discussion was held of whether special methods are necessary for teaching plays which address the fields of displacement, exile, and diaspora. On completion of the group work the results were presented to the plenary.

**Outcome of the Workshop**

The first interesting outcome of the workshop was that one could notice general agreement on the state of the art of teaching a play. Despite the fact that the participants came from various backgrounds a consensus was noticeable over the elements that seemed essential in drama didactics. Identifying the setting of the play was seen as the first task at hand. This includes an analysis of the constellation of the characters in the play and a clarification of the play’s cultural background. Additionally, great importance was attached to linking the plot to traditional concepts of tragedy. Such an approach would have to include identifying the central problems in the play that keep the plot going. Explaining and discussing African idiosyncrasies in the play that could alienate and bewilder European or North American students would be another task to be fulfilled. In this context it should be one focus to discuss cultural hybridity as depicted in the play.

In order to make the students aware of the problem in intercultural communication portrayed in Soyinka’s play one group suggested taking the example of cats and dogs. Because of contrary patterns of expressing aggression and submission these animals constantly misinterpret each other’s body language and modes of behaviour. These animal ‘semiotics’ account for the generic conflict visible in the relationship of these two
groups of animals. Very often a comparable problem in (mis)understanding each other is noticeable in intercultural communication.

All of the central elements for analyzing the play which are mentioned above are relevant for teaching students of drama no matter whether they use English as a native or a foreign language. However, paying special attention to problems of vocabulary and idiomatic English is a basic requirement when preparing Wole Soyinka's play for the EFL-classroom. But, as one participant of the workshop pointed out, the author's decision to include Yoruba words in the English text calls for a lexical preparation even of English-speaking students if one wants to teach *Death and the King's Horseman*.

**Further Ideas for Teaching Such Plays**

Obviously, within the limited time given in the context of the workshop, it was not possible to develop more detailed plans for an appropriate way of teaching Wole Soyinka's play. This explains why I would like to conclude the outcome of the work done in groups and add a few suggestions as to which special approaches could be chosen so that plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora are taught in a congenial way. In line with constructivist principles the students should get activated so that personalized learning can take place. Such a personal approach could for instance include creative writing exercises. The students could be asked to make fictitious diary entries by the main characters in the play. Olunde's imagined reasons but also his personal feelings before his ritualized self-sacrifice through suicide could get represented through this procedure. By putting themselves into Olunde's position students will have to develop empathy up to a certain degree or, at least, they will have to try to imagine what it would be like to live by such alien moral codes.

Other creative exercises are conceivable. The students could be asked to write soliloquies in which Olunde or the Pilkings express their personal thoughts or feelings, or to draft dialogues between Olunde and his English patients. Finally, another option would be re-writing the play following the hypothetical question, "What if Pilkings had not succeeded in disturbing the ritual?" All of these exercises would lead students to having a personalized reading experience as a basis for text pro-
duction while at the same time ensuring that they are not forced to give a personal opinion unless they want to. In an open society any didactic approach has to create an open discursive environment in the classroom where personal opinions may be voiced but no one is forced to make statements of faith. Nevertheless, this, on the other hand, could not justify an attitude of 'anything goes' on the part of the teacher. It remains a necessity under all circumstances that, for instance, racist comments and opinions are denounced as intolerable in a pluralistic and democratic society.

Summing up the argument, it becomes clear that teaching plays of displacement, exile, and diaspora calls for a particularly intricate didactic preparation. Dealing with the dramatic representation of such traumatizing fields of human experience in a classroom demands tact and sensitivity. If the main aim of teaching such plays is seen as raising empathy for people who were victimized in such a way, any teaching method that is chosen has to ensure that the learning experience itself is not traumatizing, although it might be dramatic.

Works Cited

*Primary Literature*


*Secondary Literature*


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