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Contemporary Drama in English

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Thomas Rommel, Mark Schreiber (eds.)

Mapping Uncertain Territories:
Space and Place in Contemporary Theatre and Drama

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**Mapping Uncertain Territories:
Space and Place
in Contemporary Theatre and Drama**

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

Edited for the society
by Thomas Rommel and Mark Schreiber

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Thomas Rommel
Mark Schreiber

MARK SCHREIBER

Introduction

From 2–5 June 2005, the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English (CDE) held its 14th conference on the campus of International University Bremen (IUB). The topic of the conference, which was organised by Thomas Rommel and Mark Schreiber of the Department of Arts and Literature, was “Mapping Uncertain Territories: Space and Place in Contemporary Theatre and Drama.” In the tradition of CDE, the conference brought together theatre practitioners and academics from a variety of countries and cultures to engage in the discussion of scholarly papers, workshops and performances.

In many ways, however, this conference was also a first of its kind in the history of CDE. For the first time, participants gathered in the North of Germany. The campus of one of the few private universities in Germany is situated on the premises of a former military base. Built in the 1930s, it was first used by the German army, later occupied by the Allied Forces and subsequently provided the space for the Bundeswehr. Since 2001, it is the home of International University Bremen, a private and independent research university in the heart of northern Europe, where students, researchers and instructors from more than 70 nations study and live together in residential colleges.

The history of the conference location, therefore, provides a striking example of how an existing space and/or place can be reappropriated and put to use differently and more fruitfully as past conflicts and political and ideological demarcations give way to a more open and flexible, multicultural and global social arrangement. The location of the university’s

campus on the borders of Bremen-Grohn, one of the economically less fortunate parts of Bremen, however, also highlights the continuing contestations of the spaces and places we inhabit as human beings.

The venue of the festive opening of the conference, the *Kulturbahnhof Vegesack*, also had a special significance relating to the formulation of the conference theme. Formerly the storage hall of the local train station, it has been transformed into a centre for cultural exchange and artistic production in order to facilitate communication *between* and provide a space *for* the multi-ethnic and multicultural community of Bremen-North.

In our ever faster moving, highly technologised and increasingly globalised world, categories such as space and place are possibly the most important reference points for people in their attempts to make sense of their economic, social, political and cultural surroundings. However, the places and spaces we inhabit are constantly exposed to a variety of forces and are thus far from being stable markers of our identities. Moreover, we are not merely passive bystanders who watch these constant processes of transformation taking place around us. As people we actively take part in the shaping and reshaping of our social, cultural, political and economic world. We turn military bases into places of learning and research, or reappropriate train stations as theatre spaces, for example. However, such positive examples of active engagement in the reshaping of our societal world are, as most people will agree, the exception.

Many of the places and spaces we live in are the subject of dispute and are exposed to a plethora of opposing forces. National borders become the subject of heated political, ideological or religious debates; specific states or regions within those states regain attention and stir up public sentiments as processes such as the enlargement of the European Union influence our political, economic and cultural landscape. Some speak of the 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington), a fight between Islam and the Western World, epitomised by the horrific events of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001 or the terrorist bombs exploding in Madrid and London. The subsequent 'War against Terrorism' inspired by the supposed superiority of the Christian faith and the Western de-

mocratic model over the uncivilised members of the 'axis of evil' in the East is another matter.

In a much less violent, but nevertheless irritating fashion, multinational companies freely move about national economic markets and cultural (or sometimes rather 'uncultural') products such as fast-food chains infiltrate national cuisines. The recent concerns and public debates about growing health risks due to increasing obesity in France (Rosenthal) are a case in point.

Thus, the spaces and places we inhabit as human beings are far from safe and fixed entities. They are constantly contested, fought and debated over.

In many ways, the theatre (both as the physical space where dramatic texts are acted out as well as the cultural, political and above all economic functions it holds) is an equally contested space. Theatre, after all, is not merely an artistic endeavor where the creative spirits and minds can live out their talents and potentials. Theatre happens in spaces (sometimes even derelict train stations), theatre is exposed to and happens in relation to wider economic, social and cultural discourses and power struggles. It often is one of the first entities that falls victim to governments' attempts to 'consolidate' budgets, or it might find itself entangled in wider debates about national or cultural identities (the role of the Abbey Theatre in Ireland might serve as an illustrative example here).

Furthermore, and in addition to the complexities mentioned above, however, the artistic potential of the theatre as a physical space is enhanced by its ability to 'produce space' (Lefebvre). Of course, all artistic genres, from painting, photography, film, sculpturing, music, dance, to the writing of novels and poetry, share the quality to open up imaginative spaces before the 'eye of the mind' (Yeats) of the viewer, listener or reader.

Theatre and drama, however, takes a particularly challenging role in this respect. As a performative genre, it continuously oscillates between the imagined spaces and places of the dramatic text and the real, social, cultural and political spaces and places of its production and reception. It is only through the experience of the enactment on the stage, with actors and actresses, costume and stage designers, lighting and sound

technicians, and the careful hand of the director, that a dramatic text reaches its full expressive potential. Without the audience, not only as passive receiver but as an active participant, however, the creation that is the theatrical experience is equally meaningless.

Thus, theatre becomes more than an artistic expression, it becomes a communal event. The audience will identify with a certain character or join characters on the stage in their particular feeling towards each other. The audience will actively engage in the actors' process of interpreting the dramatic text and, ideally, continue to explore their experiences in conversation with each other after the show.

What is more important, though, is the fact that the theatrical experience allows real world potentialities of conflict, friendship, love, hatred, violence and so on to be enacted or 'played out.' The theatre allows a 'what if...?' perspective both on larger societal, political or cultural discourses as well as on individual, private experiences on the physical, psychological or the emotional level. It allows us to take a subject position outside of ourselves, to look and evaluate our actions from another perspective and thereby, it may contribute to a better understanding of ourselves and our actions within the spaces and places we inhabit in the real world.

The great variety of academic papers, panel discussions and performances from a wide cultural spectrum (our participants arrived from as far as Australia and the United States and were joined by members of the international university community, from Eastern and Western Europe, Africa and Latin America) allowed for wonderful and intellectually and culturally stimulating debate throughout the duration of the event. Many of the agreements and disagreements, insights and newly opened-up territories that the conference brought to the fore are reflected in the collection of essays in this volume:

Aleks Sierz (London) in his keynote lecture on "Alternative or Mainstream? London Fringe Theatre in Image and Reality" illustrated the dissolving of the tripartite structure of commercial, subsidised and fringe theatres in London in the 1980s and 90s. Starting with the provocative statement that "there is no fringe theatre in London! Any questions?", his paper could have been the shortest contribution ever presented in the history of CDE conferences. Freeing himself of that po-

tential fame, however, he went on to map the 'uncertain territory' that is the contemporary fringe theatre scene in London. He convincingly argues that while fringe theatre in London today still has an image of being 'radical' or 'alternative,' its revolutionary and shocking characteristics have long since given way to a softening over and taming by the mainstream and the commercialising pressures of Thatcherism. Theatre companies that are famous for producing 'new writing' by young, and sometimes quite rebellious or provocative playwrights today might even reject the label of 'fringe' and prefer to be seen as part of the mainstream, highlighting the economic realities of British theatre practice in the new millennium. Thus, as Sierz shows in his paper, the London fringe remains a highly contested territory.

Michael Raab (Leipzig) took a different angle on the topic in his paper "The West End — an Increasingly Marginal Place?" Focussing on the oeuvre of some of Britain's 'old masters' such as Peter Nichols, Simon Gray, Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Frayn, Alan Bennett, David Hare, and Tom Stoppard, Raab shows that while these writers may have enjoyed high critical acclaim and popular appreciation by audiences in the past, at least the latter seems to be in decline. Their 'well made plays' no longer guarantee box office success in the West End and are threatened to become marginal phenomena in a changing theatre landscape. A professional theatre man and translator of a large number of British plays into German, Raab also makes the point that there should be room for theatre apart from provocative and revolutionary plays which would, according to Sierz' earlier observations, now be wholeheartedly welcomed on the main stages in London, not least because translating such plays will most certainly generate higher royalties for the translator.

Moving from London to the contemporary American scene, Una Chaudhuri (New York) in her keynote address "Hell in the Heartland," mapped the nature-culture borderlands in contemporary plays by Sam Shepard (*The God of Hell*, 2004), Caryl Churchill (*A Number*, 2002; *Far Away*, 2000), and Tony Kushner (*Home Body/Kabul*, 1999) and found the mythical American heartland deconstructed according to post-human cartographies. Chaudhuri began her discussion by showing graphic illustrations of the results of the last presidential elections in the US and discussing their symbolic significance in trying to manifest a

political landscape that most Americans, especially those who oppose the current leadership, would find hard to subscribe to. Following these graphic manifestations of political ideologies, her discussion of Shepard's, Churchill's and Kushner's plays proves cogently the theatre's potential to engage in political and ideological discussions and its quality to contribute to the processes of mapping and imagining the political and socio-cultural landscapes of the contemporary United States.

Similarly, territories as metaphors for social orders or power constellations and the conflicts between public and private spaces formed the centre of Kathleen Starck's (Bremen) analysis of "Current Global Conflict and the Invasion of the Private in *The Pull of Negative Gravity* and *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*." Problematising the interconnectedness of individual private lives with large scale political developments, the blurring of national, political or religious boundaries and definitions, Jonathan Lichtenstein's and David Greig's play, according to Starck, respectively illustrate the inseparability of public and private spaces. When territorial demarcations of nationhood give way to political power struggles, as in Greig's play which focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the mapping and navigating of individual national, cultural, political or religious identity become sites of contestation.

Graham D. White (London), speaking on "Compelled to Appear: The Manifestation of Physical Space before the Tribunal," demonstrated in how far theatre space, court room and reality/history intersect and blur in an uncanny convergence in the Tricycle Theatre's dramatisation of the Bloody Sunday inquiry, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry*. White's paper illustrates the complex and complicated position theatre as an artistic form and as a means of cultural expression holds within larger societal debates and the mapping of the uncertain territory that is national history.

Place as a symbol for political debate was also crucial for Ursula Canton (Sheffield), who, in "*Guantanamo: Documenting a Real Space?*", explored the borderline between factual and fictional texts in another Tricycle production: *Guantanamo — 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom,'* by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo (2004). Contrasting the inhumane conditions and cruel realities of the prison camp where the United States detain apparent 'terrorists' and other 'enemies of the state,' often

with unclear proof of their crimes, with the comfortable space of a mainstream London theatre, Canton provides challenging insights into how the mediating potential between the 'real' and the 'imagined' spaces conjured up in the theatrical experience may be altered, when plays engage with spaces and places that are omnipresent in political and media debates.

The most private of spaces — the individual's mind — figured in Susan Blattès' and Bertrand Koszul's (Grenoble) paper "From Page to Stage: Construction of Space in Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*." Sarah Kane's last two plays before her untimely death in 1999 — *Crave* (1998) and *4.48 Psychosis* (2000, produced posthumously) — are much less defined by spatial indicators and references to specific locations as her previous work. Focussing on the latter, what some critics have called a 'dramatic poem' rather than a 'play,' Blattès and Koszul argue that rather than condemning it to a staged reading, *4.48 Psychosis* can indeed be successfully staged. The strategy they propose is to extract spatial markers from a seemingly 'un-spatial' theatrical text by considering the different 'situations of utterance' the text contains. By concentrating on piecing together the fragmentations and disruptions of time and space in the text, then, a successful attempt to put this 'dramatic poem' on the stage, as the authors suggest, might be much more feasible than one would believe at first read.

Christina Wald's (Cologne) "What discoveries do we bring back from that alien terrain?' The Spatialisation of Trauma and the Exploration of the Paedophile's Mind in Bryony Lavery's *Frozen*" navigated similar territory. In her discussion of Lavery's play, Wald introduces 'psycho-topographics' as a method for exploring traumatisation in spatial terms on stage. While in the 1980s, most plays dealing with child abuse focussed on the (predominantly female) victims, more recent plays, according to Wald, not only shift the attention in the direction of the (predominantly male) perpetrator, but also seem to take a new and more differentiating look. Drawing on research from Neuroscience, Wald shows in her analysis, that Lavery's play focuses on the symptoms of the crime rather than the crime itself as something sinful and condemnable. The play does so by employing clashing and distorting spatial metaphors for the representation of external reality and the alien terrain

that is the human mind respectively, and thereby not only unsettles the audience in its theatrical experience, but also provokes a second look before we are able to cast our verdict on the criminal on stage.

With Alyce von Rothkirch's (Newport) paper the conference entered the discussion and careful mapping of one of our most valued, and most volatile territories in the age of globalisation, that of national identity. In her paper "Art can save culture: Welsh Stagings of Place in Selected Works by Eddie Ladd and Ed Thomas," von Rothkirch discusses plays and productions by Eddie Ladd (*Scarface*, 2000) and Ed Thomas (*Flowers of the Dead Red Sea*, 1991; *Gas Station Angel*, 1998) and provides a striking example of how theatre problematising notions of space and place in the British Isles, especially when staged and performed outside the capital, may take on a strong geopolitical significance. In Wales, as would possibly be true for the 'Celtic Fringe' in its entirety, theatre, according to von Rothkirch, plays an invaluable role in the formation and articulation of notions of cultural spaces and places (that are not London). Von Rothkirch's analysis of Ladd's and Thomas' plays in particular underscores that for Wales, national identity and space are not congruent in the present — Ladd and Thomas are looking for a new mythology for Wales in the future and their plays invite the audience to, again, actively take part in the shaping and defining of this mythology.

Donald Pulford (Perth) concentrated on another attempt at creating congruence between past and present for a better future. In his paper "Staging Past and Present Simultaneously: Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*," he analysed Andrew Bovell's play, which concentrates on continuing aboriginal displacement in Australia. Fuelled by dichotomies such as humanity and nature, object and space, sound and silence, barbarity and civilisation, the play enters a very current and still far from solved debate about how Australia can move on into the future while its colonial past and the cruelties committed towards the country's indigenous population remain largely ignored. By having the historical past come into confrontation with the present, the play constructively contributes to the solution of a cultural battle in contemporary Australia.

With Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe's (Aberystwyth) paper "The Spaces of Consciousness: New Possibilities for Contemporary Theatre," the focus of the conference once again shifted to another territory that is central

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to the notion of theatre as performance or communal experience. Meyer-Dinkgräfe discussed the relationships between space, brain and consciousness on the one hand and scenography on the other. Integrating perspectives from Neuroscience and Consciousness Studies (with a particular focus on the Indic tradition) with a discussion of stage design, acting, and directing of a variety of plays by Harold Pinter, Michael Frayn, Alan Ayckbourn, and David Freeman, Meyer-Dinkgräfe shows that the art of theatre making has a lot to profit from knowledge gained in the Natural Sciences.

Terry L. Price (Seguin, TX), in his presentation “Shifting Place,” stressed the possibilities of new interactive video technologies that enable audiences to place-shift inside virtual worlds. Price argues that although the theatre has a long history of embracing new technologies, the recent explosion of technological possibilities (from the early days of the VCR to integrated web-based solutions) allows a manipulation of both time and space beyond the confines of the physical theatre space. As these technologies more and more often find their way into the scenography and stage design, they may significantly alter our theatrical experience.

The possibilities and potentials of interactive and computer-based technology for the theatre were further elaborated on by Neal Harvey (Brisbane) who, in his workshop on “Virtual Reality and Negotiating Problems of Real Theatre Space,” emphasised the physical and architectural aspects of the stage with the help of computer software. Focussing on the produced nature of theatrical space and the technological developments which make it easier to study and negotiate this production, Harvey who, together with his colleague Joanne Tompkins (Brisbane) has developed a network of 3D, virtual reality replicas of known theatre environments, called the Online Theatre Project (OTP), introduced participants at the workshop to this technological tool and allowed them to explore its potentials for theatre production and stage design. The project allows helpful real-time interaction and will assist theatre companies to interact with their space as well as give researchers a better opportunity to study the ‘production of space’ in the theatre.

Reade W. Dornan (East Lansing, MI) was slightly more critical towards the potential of modern technology in the theatre. In her paper

“Screen to Stage: Positioning the Subject in Murakami’s *The Elephant Vanishes*,” she described the skilful manipulation of theatre space by means of television technology in a production of Haruki Murakami’s play. Dornan relates her interpretation of the performance to the illusionary authenticity of the cinema. However, she also points to the pitfalls of such projects, including the danger of the disappearance of the character due to technological overload.

In the second workshop which took place during the conference, Michlene Wandor (London) extended the space to active writerly spheres in her “Dramatic Writing Workshop: Mapping the Territories from Imagination to Page to Stage and Back Again.” Similarly to the Online Theatre Workshop, participants were invited, under Wandor’s careful and gentle guidance, to try their hands at the art of playwriting and thereby exploring the complicated process of how ideas in the mind transform in writing and, in performance, transform again. In this collection, Wandor enriches her reflections on conducting the workshop in Bremen with more theoretical ideas on the art of playwriting, that is writing for performance on the stage space.

In addition to the many insightful and challenging scholarly papers and reports on the intellectually stimulating workshops which this volume contains, one should of course not forget that a theatre conference is nothing without a dose of the real thing, that is to say the live experience of performed theatre. The opening performance of Eve Ensler’s *Vagina Monologues* by IUB’s talented student drama group mapped yet another intriguing territory, namely that of the societal frontiers of female sexuality. The theatrical tour-de-force of Marcos Martinez’ (San Diego) solo performance *Holy Dirt* provided an incredible performative mapping of the American South-West. David Greig’s (Edinburgh) powerful staging of his 2003 radio play *Being Norwegian* with the assistance of Barbie and Ken on a coffee house table will remain an unforgettable experience for all those who attended the conference. The unusual, but nevertheless, challenging rendering of William Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* by the Bremen Shakespeare Company completed a truly large dose of theatrical experience and contributed fruitfully to the project of the conference, helping to partially answer existing questions, but

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more often than not throwing open cans of more complex ‘worms’ on the way.

The conference contributions mapped a variety of different places, spaces, and territories of, in, and about contemporary drama and theatre, some of which turned out even more uncertain than the conference organisers originally had anticipated. In summary, however, we hope that this collection will provide a valuable memory for those who navigated their ways to Bremen from near and far, a helpful tool for further research and thought and an incentive to get involved with this uniquely friendly and convivial crowd that is CDE for all those who have missed out so far.

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ALEKS SIERZ

Alternative or Mainstream? London Fringe Theatre in Image and Reality

You have awarded yourself the professional esteem you think you deserve. 'Alternative' is so often just 'inadequate' in disguise. (Lee 72)

Few territories are as difficult to map as the radical theatres of the past; and there are few landscapes as hard to see clearly as the fringe theatres of the present. Yes, the relationship between the past and the present of the London fringe is an uncertain territory *par excellence*. In April 2004, Reading University hosted the 'Political Futures: Alternative Theatre in Britain Today' conference. Having been invited to participate on a platform, with director Max Stafford-Clark, I prepared for that session by digging out my copy of Peter Ansorge's *Disrupting the Spectacle*, his indispensable book on the early years of experimental and fringe theatre. Chapter Two opens by describing the sleepy summer of 1967, the year that was hailed as the Summer of Love (the first of many). At the time, there was a Royal Court play which aimed to wake up Londoners to the ills of American society; there was a play by a director who later directed a musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber; and finally Cafe La Mama was doing a play about a farm hand who falls in love with a pig. Then I had a look at what was on in the West End in April 2004, and I found a Royal Court play aimed at waking up Londoners to the ills of American artists; a new play by a writer who had written the book for a new musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber; and finally the Almeida theatre was doing a play about an architect who falls in love with a goat. Spooky coincidence

eh? Or perhaps, because it is an architect who replaces a farm hand, it is just one more case of upward social mobility, with history repeating itself, the first time often as farce, the second as commerce.¹

London fringe theatre is both a real geographic space and an imaginary space, both a distinctive theatrical practice and something that no longer exists, both a reality and a complete fantasy. Because of this, it is clearly an ‘uncertain territory’ worthy of investigation. My argument is that, gradually over the past 35–40 years, the image and the reality of the London fringe have drifted apart, so that now when people talk about the fringe, they are often voicing their aspirations rather than describing a real place. Most mental maps of the London fringe are no longer safe guides to its exploration.

For example, in June 2004, during a Theatre Voice debate on the subject of “Does the fringe matter?”, Lyn Gardner, the *Guardian* theatre critic who goes most frequently to fringe venues, suggested that London was witnessing a renaissance, “a great revival,” of fringe theatre. It is “buzzy, exciting, raw and full of young audiences,” and she added: “I detect a feeling that what is going on matters more — there’s a new generation of people who enjoy working there and that it’s their natural home” (Cavendish). Well, that is optimism for you. More recently, when Vicky Featherstone, the new head of the National Theatre of Scotland, addressed the Raising the Bar conference in London in May this year, she argued “that a thriving poverty line of small fringe and community theatres would ultimately push through to public recognition and the glory of appreciative reviews in the national press.” As critic Michael Coveney, who reported on this, says, it was an “unconvincing” argument (Coveney 39).

¹ See Freshwater. The 1967 references are Joseph Chaikin’s *America Hurray!*, Tom O’Hagen, and Cafe La Mama’s *Futz* (Mercury Theatre) and their 2004 equivalents are Rebecca Gilman’s *The Sweetest Swing in Baseball*, Charlotte Jones, and Edward Albee’s *The Goat, Or Who Is Sylvia?* What this shows is that while the 1967 plays were genuinely alternative, experimental and dangerous, their 2004 incarnations are much more mainstream.

Rebel images

The London fringe has its origins in dreams and experiments. Following such pioneers as CAST (Cartoon Archetypal Slogan Theatre) and the People Show, both formed in 1965, the London fringe grew out of the twin impetus of the late-1960s student and countercultural revolts and the abolition of censorship in 1968. In the same year, *Time Out* listings magazine mapped this rapidly proliferating phenomenon and named it “underground theatre” (quoted in Kershaw, *Politics* 54). This gave new theatre groups a rather glamorous image, playing on a romantic affinity with the Resistance movements of the Second World War. The image was thus of a guerrilla theatre, militant, oppositional and antagonistic. Many theatre groups were also called experimental, usually because they were too idiosyncratic or iconoclastic to fit into any other category.

Within a couple of years, however, the new venues — many of which had occupied rooms above pubs — were called Fringe theatre, by analogy with the Fringe of the official Edinburgh Festival. From this time on, fringe and alternative were often synonymous, although each name had a different connotation. Fringe suggested a marginal position both geographically and aesthetically, and the fringe was visualised as on the edges, both metaphorically and literally, of the mainstream West End. The second label (alternative) implied an oppositional stance, a political and social antagonism to the middle-class mainstream culture, not only an extreme leftist attack on the central tenants of capitalist society, but the practical demonstration of an alternative lifestyle. In other words, alternative theatre was an assertion of difference: it was all about putting on different shows about different subjects by different people in different venues. Most crucially, this difference carried over into all aspects of everyday life: alternative theatre was just one aspect of an alternative society. In the inspiring words of the *Marat/Sade*: “We want our revolution NOW” (20, and passim).

This image of the fringe alternative is immensely powerful. When people say fringe, the idea that springs to mind is theatre as a bear pit, a laboratory, a playpen. For example, commenting on the early days of the Bush theatre (1972–74), its current artistic director, Mike Bradwell (1–2) says:

In those days the theatre was like a full-time Edinburgh fringe venue with morning shows, lunchtime shows, evening shows, late-night shows, cabarets, kids' shows, mime shows, nudity, fire eating, puppetry and performing rats. So it was that, in the anything-goes spirit of the times, John Arden's political and allegedly libellous *Ballygombeen Bequest* happily rubbed shoulders with Lindsay Kemp's *Pantomime Turquoise* and the undergraduate Tina Brown metaphorically went to bed with Mike Leigh.

Or, as Jim Haynes says of the Arts Lab in the late 1960s:

You went there and you didn't know what was going to happen to you or what you were going to do. You might meet someone, have dinner, have a cup of tea, go and see a film, a project. You could go to a concert, or see dancers. In the evening the theatre would go on from 5 or 6 o'clock to 1 or 2 in the morning... .
(quoted in Kershaw, *Politics* 100)

This image of a rebellious alternative has proved to be amazingly tenacious.

Geographic mapping

But although the image and reality had quite a close relationship in the early days of the fringe, there was plenty of room for misunderstanding. If you map the hard geography of the original fringe, the image of a mainstream West End theatre encircled by a fringe of radical alternative venues in the suburbs quickly evaporates. For example, the first People Show event — called *Show No 1* (1966) — was not staged on the geographical fringes of London, in Richmond or in Shepherd's Bush, but in the centre of the West End, in the basement of Better Books in Charing Cross Road, which was — and still is — less than five minutes walk from Shaftesbury Avenue. However antagonistic in terms of aesthetics and ideology, early London fringe theatre was as central geographically as the mainstream theatres. Another venue that was as central geographically was the Arts Lab, which was in Drury Lane. Here, radicals such as Steven Berkoff in his London Theatre Group phase or David Hare and Howard Brenton's Portable Theatre or the Pip Simmons Theatre Company could do their stuff a stone's throw away from one of the bastions of commercial theatre. Equally central were the Open Space in Tottenham Court Road, while the ICA in the Mall was but a short walk away.

Not only were these not a fringe in a geographical sense, they were also not so much an alternative as a stylistic avant-garde in aesthetic terms. Early alternative theatre covered a bewildering variety of phenomena, from the avant-garde theatre of Charles Marowitz at the Open Space to the People Show — who staged one of their most famous events outside the Royal Court, in 1968, enticing passers-by into a telephone kiosk and then offering them coloured sugar cubes or a bra stuffed with baked beans (Ansorge 38). A few groups, like Ken Campbell Roadshow, used circus, cabaret and pantomime; others, like Paines Plough, concentrated on new writing; the physical theatre groups, like The London Mime Theatre, explored the use of the actor's body; the performance art groups, like Welfare State, pioneered multi-media dramaturgies. In addition, there were feminist, gay and black groups. There was community theatre and agit-prop (Kershaw, "Alternative Theatres" 362–3). Commenting on the new audiences of the fringe, Sandy Craig called them a "mutually contradictory movement" split between being a "cultural ghetto" and engaging in "community action" (17–18). As these contradictions intensified, so the gradual separation of the fringe as an image and the fringe in reality began, and this process accelerated rapidly in the 1980s.

Any map of 1970s theatre will show mutating boundaries. In 1974, the King's Head pub theatre, where Dan Crawford did much to introduce the fringe practices "to an 'establishment' audience," transferred its show, *Kennedy's Children* by Robert Patrick, to the West End (Itzin 89). In that era, commercially successful playwrights were accused of selling out: David Hare staged *Slag* at the fringe Hampstead theatre in 1970, but was already working at the National a year later and his *Knuckle* was in the West End in 1974. In 1973, barely five years after May '68, mainstream venues such as the National Theatre could stage *The Party* by Marxist playwright Trevor Griffiths, while the Royal Court hosted the 'Come Together' festival of alternative theatre as early as 1970. From the beginning, the mainstream mutated rapidly to accommodate, perhaps recuperate, the emerging radical theatre movement.

Dissolving boundaries

This process developed apace during the Thatcher years, and her politics did much to dissolve the boundaries established in postwar theatre. The effect of Margaret Thatcher on British theatre is summed up by playwright David Edgar: writing in 1988 (*Second Time* 21), he said that her cultural policies “are essentially, inherently and inescapably reactionary, restrictive and indeed censorious. Far from opening up options and choices, she is seeking to close them down. Having seen off the nanny state in the economy, she is now emerging as the Platonic Guardian of the culture.” As Baz Kershaw points out, the 1980s saw an enormous growth in new theatre groups, but, despite this, Thatcher successfully transformed the theatre landscape, changing the whole map of mainstream and fringe theatre (“Alternative Theatres” 365).

In the early 1970s, the British theatre system had a reasonably clear tripartite structure. By this I mean that about 35 years ago, the whole British theatre system seemed to be organised into three pyramids: there was commercial theatre (which valued money making); and subsidised theatre (which valued high culture); and finally there was a lively fringe scene (which espoused alternative and oppositional values). During the 1980s, the pressure of Thatcherism on funding and in terms of a new populist mindset, that valued ‘bums on seats’ even in subsidised venues, had the effect of dissolving these boundaries.

Today, if you look at the division of theatres in *Time Out*, this blurring of previous boundaries is evident. Under the category “West End,” you have both commercial theatres such as Her Majesty’s Theatre (showing *The Phantom of the Opera*) and state subsidised theatres such as The National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. The much briefer “Off-West End” section has the smaller subsidised producing theatres such as the Almeida, the Soho and the Bush. And the “Fringe” section lists mainly the unsubsidised or poorly funded theatres, often far from the centre of town, such as the Finborough, the New End, the Hen and Chickens or the Etcetera Theatre. The balance between these sections is eloquently revealed by the fact that the West End section is six pages long, while both the Off-West End section and the fringe section occupy only two pages each. The West End and Off-West End

sections have roughly twice as many theatres listed as fringe venues (about 63 to 35 in June 2005). The three pyramids of the early 1970s have been dissolved by the pressures of the Thatcher revolution in the 1980s into one gigantic pyramid. But that pyramid has suffered so much erosion that now it has a large middle spread and a shrinking base.²

The values of the alternative society — and if alternative theatre does not espouse alternative values it is surely nothing — have been gradually subsumed into commercial values. It is not that the alternative no longer exists: there will always be people who start up their own theatres or who put on shows in unusual places, but these alternative theatres are no longer oppositional, no longer have alternative values that the mainstream cannot accommodate. In fact, the histories of alternative theatre — from Anson to Craig to Kershaw — all show how the system of state subsidy gradually incorporated, to a greater or lesser degree, all independent theatre practices. The irreversible achievement of Thatcherism in the arts has been to create a commercial ethos which now permeates all of the subsidised sector in Britain. You could say that subsidised equals mainstream, and commercial equals mainstream. Which leaves little space on the map for any real alternative.

Commercial fringe

In terms of self-identity, this process of commercialisation is reflected in the recent history of the more successful fringe venues, which have now joined the mainstream. For example, after establishing a good critical reputation under artistic director Stephen Daldry in the mid-1990s, the Gate Theatre, a room above a pub in Notting Hill Gate, has been transformed into a Lottery-refurbished venue which specialises in European drama. It still struggles to pay its staff the Equity minimum wage, and it still depends on the unpaid labour of volunteers, but this is not done ideologically, but because of its small grant. Despite its poverty, it has good production values, and it never feels like a poor theatre.

In West London, the Richmond Fringe Theatre was set up in 1971, and put on lunchtime shows. By 1974, it had changed its name to The Orange Tree Theatre, after the pub in which it was located, and then it

² I owe this point to Mark Berninger.

moved across the road in 1991, and changed from being an upstairs room to being a refurbished Victoria school and London's first purpose-built theatre-in-the-round, now occasionally collaborating with Alan Ayckbourn in Scarborough. It still has its original artistic director, Sam Walters, but you could not say that it feels like a fringe theatre.

Finally, the Bush Theatre, above a pub in Shepherd's Bush, started as a fringe venue in 1972. Its artistic director Mike Bradwell now completely rejects the labels 'fringe' or 'alternative.' Indeed, the history of new writing in Britain in the past two decades shows that the Bush has played a role as central as the Royal Court and Traverse, and in the 1990s was much more important than the National Theatre or RSC. Okay, it is still a small studio theatre above a pub, but it has been substantially refurbished and Bradwell would like to transfer the theatre to a bigger building. In 2005, in order to get bigger audiences, the Bush joined with the Edinburgh Lyceum Theatre to co-produce Sharman Macdonald's new play, *The Girl with the Red Hair*. When this came down to London, it was not put on the tiny stage of the Bush, but on the much larger stage of the Hampstead Theatre (which used to be a grotty fringe venue in a temporary, leaking hut but is now a brand new sparkling theatre building seating about 300 people). These examples show how former fringe experiments can become state-subsidised, and commercially successful, Off-West End mainstream venues.

Impoverished fringe

Today, the economic realities of the theatres in *Time Out's* fringe section can be quite grim, with most venues having no or minimal subsidy, and with the result that most of them have poor production values, few amenities, and are located in areas that are hard to access by public transport. They also have an image problem. As Mike Bradwell points out, the public still perceive pub theatres as "sort of amateur" (quoted in Edwardes 148). On the other hand, there are also examples of newcomers to the London fringe scene that are success stories, although never in defiance of the iron logic of commercialism.

The Arcola fringe theatre, in Stoke Newington, is an old factory building far from the centre of London, and far from any tube station. Its artistic director Mehmet Ergen says that the Arts Council funds his

theatre for just one play a year and that an average box office of 30–40 people a night is enough to pay for the rent and electricity. It has no marketing budget. Under these conditions, he still manages to produce and host shows. In fact, the Arcola has achieved an outstanding reputation with some original plays, such as David Farr's *Crime and Punishment in Dalston* (2002) and the verbatim piece *Come Out Eli* (2003), and for hosting Max Stafford-Clark's Out of Joint promenade production of *Macbeth* (2004).

Another beacon is Theatre 503, run by Paul Higgins in a pub theatre formerly known as The Latchmere in south London. Since he took over in 2002, the theatre has staged more than 30 new plays, some by complete unknowns, with no subsidy. Discoveries include Dennis Kelly, Jennifer Farmer and Trevor Williams. In 2004, Theatre 503 won the Peter Brook Empty Space award. But it must also be admitted that lack of funding often means that, in terms of new writing, these are rarely first-rate plays by the best writers. For example, in September 2004, Theatre 503 staged *Cancer Time*, a play by Gary Owen. A coup surely? Well, actually this was Owen's translation of his own short Welsh-language play which had previously been put on in Wales. The reason that Theatre 503 got this play is that the major new writing theatres thought it was too slight to be of interest. Often fringe theatres put on plays by hopefuls who cannot get any other venues to stage their work, or plays by people who are runners up in a new writing prize, or bottom-drawer plays by moderately successful writers.

Being on the fringe can also mean that critics do not review your show, which means that publicity for it remains local and audiences small. So some venues, for example the Etcetera Theatre, the Old Red Lion and the Baron's Court theatre, only get rarely reviewed outside the pages of *Time Out* or *What's On in London*. On the other hand, critics — being a contrary bunch — also desperately want outsiders to succeed, so people who struggle on small budgets and in adversity, such as Mehmet Ergen and Paul Higgins, do get considerable critical encouragement. And quite right too. Although it should also be noted that even the cheerleaders occasionally stress economic reality. A *Guardian* article that praised Higgins as a bright new force, also stated that “he has

a big future in new writing at larger, more established venues” (Gardner and Mackrell 14).

Off the map

Despite the good efforts of the people involved, we have to face the fact that the London fringe — in the sense of an alternative — no longer exists. In 1981, Howard Brenton memorably wrote its obituary:

I think the fringe has failed. Its failure was that of the whole dream of the ‘alternative culture’ – the notion that within society as it exists you can grow another way of life [...]. What happens is that the ‘alternative society’ becomes hermetically sealed, and surrounded. A ghetto-like mentality develops. It is surrounded, and, in the end, strangled to death. (91–92)

More than a decade later, in 1994, the annual directory that listed theatre groups — *McGillivray’s Theatre Guide* — dropped the word ‘alternative’ from its title and explained that:

Farewell then ‘Alternative Theatre.’ If we’re to believe what we’re told, this book, up until last year, was the only publication in the country still using this antiquated term. Not only this, but also ‘Fringe’ has become passé. How then to describe our contents? Last year we asked for suggestions, but regretfully passed on the likes of ‘Unlimited Theatre’ and ‘Eclectic Theatre,’ which were not designed to shift many copies. (Quoted in Kershaw, “A ‘Politicology’”)

Commercialisation evidently also affects publishing.

The decline of the London fringe has been even more visible in recent years. Whereas ten years ago, Max Stafford-Clark could pop into the Finborough pub theatre, a classic fringe venue, and see a ten-minute piece — provocatively called *Fist* — by an unknown young writer, Mark Ravenhill, nowadays even this is very rare. Perhaps it is only when a new theatre sensibility is being born, as in-yer-face theatre was in 1994–6, that the fringe can come into its own as a territory which stages works not yet recognised by the mainstream. Either way, those days, when an exciting garageland feeling permeated some fringe venues, are now over. However, one of the fringe’s few functions today is staging second productions of the canon of new plays, as happened with Matt Peavor’s

version of Sarah Kane's *Crave* (BAC, 2004) and numerous recent versions of Martin Crimp's *Dealing with Clair*.³

In terms of space, the use of upstairs rooms in pubs is nowadays problematic, mainly because most pub landlords want to sell beer rather than be theatre's R&D department. For example, the Tabard theatre's artistic director Hamish Gray says: "The days when you could put on a show and didn't care whether there were five people or 50 in the audience are long gone. If we have a production that does badly, the landlord is soon going to start asking questions" (quoted in Stratton 144). But other spaces still have potential. In 2003, two young impresarios — David Babani and Danielle Tarento — rented the former Menier Chocolate Factory in Southwark and now stage highly prestigious theatre shows, including Paines Plough's *This Other England* season in 2005. The unsubsidised venue includes a restaurant, and the theatre and restaurant fund each other. The eatery also serves themed food: for example, mountain food during the run of David Greig's *Pyrenees* in 2005. "Not being subsidised,' argues Babani, 'means we're free, we can do what we want'" (quoted in Costa 14). So some new things are possible, and commercial entrepreneurship is not always a bad thing.

Academic illusions

Some mental maps, especially those created by academics, of fringe theatre are worth considering. Due to the power of its myth of origins, fringe theatre in London still has an image of being 'radical' or 'alternative,' in other words a place outside the mainstream, a social and architectural space for work which is too politically extreme, too theatrically innovative or too psychologically confrontational for mainstream audiences. My argument is that since the late-1980s, the London fringe has been completely absorbed by the mainstream. Not everyone agrees with this analysis, so the fringe remains a highly contested (and thus uncertain) territory.

As Thatcherism began to radically change the British theatre system, critics, commentators and academics had a choice of how to map the fringe. One solution was to throw away the label 'alternative fringe;'

³ I owe this point to Paul Lederer.

another solution was to redefine it. What has tended to happen, especially in the academy, is to keep the label but find more and more exotic uses for it. For example, as Baz Kershaw says, at one point recently, “live art [...] became the new ‘political theatre’ of the rising generation” (“Alternative Theatres” 372). Time after time, candidates for the accolade of alternative — from performance groups to physical theatre groups, from community plays to feminist drama, from ethnic groups to found spaces — have been paraded. All of them have been absorbed, sooner or later, into the mainstream.

The whole idea of an alternative, which implies not only different theatrical practices but also different political and social values, has suffered from a radical destabilisation over the past 30 years. At the Political Futures conference, for example, this was illustrated by the enormous variety of subjects discussed. There were papers about tribunal theatre, physical theatre companies such as Desperate Optimists and live art companies such as Forced Entertainment, traditional agitprop companies such as Banner Theatre, as well as community theatre, text-based theatre, improvised theatre, participatory theatre — even papers about such mainstream writers as Gregory Burke and David Greig, and about experiments at the National Theatre, hardly an alternative venue. If this mix is typical, it is clear that alternative can mean anything. And if everything can be alternative, then surely alternative is now mainstream.

In 2005, David Edgar (“Come Together” 15) described the Political Futures conference perfectly:

Last April I attended a theatre conference at the University of Reading; it was challenging, enjoyable and informative, but the work discussed bore little or no relationship to what is actually happening in the professional, subsidised theatre in which most playwrights work. Apart from papers on currently neglected writers like Edward Bond and David Rudkin, the conference concentrated almost entirely on non-text-based drama. I understand why live art and devising are popular in university drama departments (not least as so many university lecturers practise them) but it means that large sections of academia have ceased to address the overwhelming majority of works presented on the professional stage.

Edgar suggests one reason for the myopia of the academy, but there are others.

Being good liberals, many British academics like to flatter themselves that they have ‘radical’ or ‘alternative’ sympathies. One of the few ad-

vantages of working in the academy, surely, is that it offers a safe haven for radicals. After all, academics are paid to think and speculate. But the danger is that this privileged position requires illusions to sustain it. A superb example of such fantasy is Helen Freshwater's *NTQ* report on the Political Futures conference. Because Max Stafford-Clark and myself stated that alternative theatre no longer existed, we are accused of being "curiously downbeat" (289). But since anyone who really believes that radical or oppositional performance is being staged on the London fringe is simply fooling themselves, being "downbeat" seems a perfectly justified response. Freshwater then states that "Mojisola Adebayo's powerful repudiation of Sierz's analysis — in which she suggested that he was simply looking in the wrong place for radical, or oppositional, performance — was supported by a strong round of applause" (289). This argument would be more convincing if either Freshwater or Adebayo would actually specify where to look. Since neither of them do, this phrase, so popular with the academics, is a purely rhetoric flourish. It has no basis in reality. But, then, that is what is meant by having illusions.

Conclusions

It is always dangerous to draw maps of a changing landscape, but, today, it is safe to say that the London fringe is firmly part of mainstream theatre. And that, apart from being a description of unpaid theatre, the term fringe has no relevance, having lost its meaning of 'alternative' and 'radical.' Of course, every year, there are newcomers to British theatre who seek to set up alternative theatre groups or discover new spaces for their work. But unlike the alternative theatre movement of the early 1970s, they rarely offer any work that could not find a space in the mainstream, and the most successful of these groups soon find a niche either in established theatres, or in the live art scene. I cannot think of a single recent example that refuses the helping hand of subsidy.

Because the fringe was thoroughly commercialised during the Thatcher era, its main characteristic today is its poverty of resources. No longer a rebellious child, it has become a poor relation. The noisy teenager has grown into the slightly shabby old uncle, someone who is always looking for a loan. A bit embarrassing.

But my final point is that while I am not comfortable about predicting the future, I see no reason why we should not dream about what might happen next in the story of British theatre. One thing I am sure of is that when a new movement, or a new set of alternative practises, do emerge, they will always be experienced as a surprise or a shock by regular theatregoers such as myself. The genuinely new, by definition, is always a surprise. So I would just like to share a dream, the dream of Tom Morris, who started at the Battersea Arts Centre and ended up at the National (a career trajectory that goes from the margins to the mainstream). In an article three years ago, he pointed out that alternative theatre in the early 1970s discovered a map of empty spaces — in other words, rooms above pubs — in which to create new forms of performance. He suggests that nowadays there is an opportunity as obvious as pubs were in the 1970s. “Given the amount of property that is sitting empty,” he says, “it’s only a matter of time before artists start squatting, making theatre happen illegally and then moving on” (quoted in Stratton 144). It is an appealing idea — and one which would challenge both the increasing commercialisation of theatre and perhaps even the conformity of its naturalistic aesthetic. But Morris is not the only one to dream. Paul Higgins does as well. He says: “The future is finding new spaces — there’s a whole world outside theatre. Housing estates outside the current fringe offer a very exciting potential” (Cavendish). And so does Mike Bradwell: “Find a building, squat it, put on a show” (quoted in Stratton 144).

If this sounds a bit utopian, I figure that is okay. After all, if the fringe no longer exists, surely it must qualify as a ‘no place,’ a literal utopia. And, anyway, this is a conference about mapping and, as Oscar Wilde once said: “A map of the world which does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing [...]. Progress is the realization of Utopias” (34).

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MICHAEL RAAB

The West End — an Increasingly Marginal Place?

Since the late 1960s the differences between German state or municipal theatres and the National or the RSC weren't as big as those concerning the fringe and the private sector. The fringe was far more professional than its German counterpart and the West End had new writing of a quality that easily surpassed plays by the likes of Curth Flatow. A book on successful German "boulevard"-authors would have been a very thin volume compared to John Bull's *Stage Right: Crisis and Recovery in British Contemporary Mainstream Theatre* which in 1994 covered the work of Peter Nichols, Simon Gray, Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Frayn, Alan Bennett and Tom Stoppard. One of its chapters carried the headline "Enter the Smooth Men," taking up a famous equation by Kenneth Tynan who positioned "hairy men — heated, embattled, socially committed playwrights" against "the smooth men — cool, apolitical stylists" (296). Naturally this referred to Alan Bennett's sermon as an unctuous clergyman in *Beyond the Fringe*. Bennett himself was not yet named by Tynan, in contrast to Harold Pinter who not only isn't smooth any longer but has become the hairiest of them all, complete with appearing in *Private Eye* as a Dave Spart-like ranter and raver.

Whatever happened to Bull and Tynan's likely lads? Lads all of them were, as for women playwrights the West End was and is a tougher place than the rest of the theatre. One of the dramatists, Peter Nichols, completely stopped writing for the stage. Instead he cannibalised his earlier

career in acerbic journals and an autobiography as aptly as ingeniously called *Feeling you're behind*, thereby increasing his royalties from the odd revival of *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg*, *Privates on Parade* or *Passion Play*. This is a pity, as Nichols with *The National Health* and *Forget-Me-Not Lane* apart from Stoppard was the formally most adventurous of the mainstream authors. His close friend Michael Frayn claims what he learnt about the theatre he learnt from him. Frayn knows that his colleague was “a very hit-and-miss playwright: the hits are terrific and the misses are ghastly,” but he greatly admired that he risks embarrassment all the time. He sails so close to the wind of what is almost too painful to watch on the stage” (Canton 2).

Simon Gray unlike Nichols did not pack it in, despite the fact that he battled not only against alcoholism (four bottles of champagne per day were his usual diet) but also with a highly fluctuating reputation. Recently he turned to rewrites of earlier work. After the complete disaster of *The Holy Terror*, based on *Melon* from 1987, he was practically written off for good critically, but immediately bounced back with *The Old Masters*. This heavily cut adaptation of *The Pig Trade* gave us the unlikely spectacle of Edward Fox as a Lithuanian Jew, partnered by Peter Bowles, as usual in a production directed by Harold Pinter. About the play Charles Spencer wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*:

A few years ago, it would have been a sure-fire hit. These days, I'm not sure that such solid virtues are any longer box office in a West End reeling from the double whammy of declining audiences and a public taste that has been corrupted by so many shows offering instant, mindless gratification. Enjoy *The Old Masters* while you can – it could be one of the last of its kind. (880)

In contrast some of Spencer's colleagues gleefully proclaimed that there is no space left for such old-fashioned fare. Alastair Macaulay called Gray “Britain's most conservative playwright since William Douglas-Home” and jeered he “has given us his latest version of *That Play At The Haymarket* — though in fact it is around the corner at the Comedy Theatre instead” (879). The truth lies somewhere in the middle between Spencer and Macaulay: *The Old Masters'* exposition is rather plonkingly heavy-handed for such an experienced author, but once the Renaissance expert Bernard Berenson and the art dealer Joseph Duveen lock horns in Mussolini's pre-war Italy the play really gets going and Gray's instinct

to rescue something out of the verbose *Pig Trade* pays off. Carole Woddis therefore is right with her claim in the *Herald*: “It’s heavy-handed tosh of course, but [...] magnificent tosh. [...] *The Old Masters* emerges as an elegy for a dying breed. We may not see their like again.” (881) Gray is the only one on Bull’s list who writes more or less exclusively for the commercial sector and never attracted much interest in the subsidised theatre, whilst his colleague Alan Ayckbourn even for a while ran his own company at the National. Bull shrewdly hinted at a reason for that in *Stage Right*. Referring to Gray’s *Quartermaine’s Terms* (1981) which is set in a run-down language school in Cambridge, he commented that the hapless part-time lecturer Derek Meadle “spends most of the time being mocked by the others, increasingly desperate in his attempts to achieve the full-time status of his colleagues.” Bull points out “were this an Ayckbourn play, [Meadle] would end up running the place” (127) and neatly pins down the difference between Gray’s cosier and his fellow-dramatist’s tougher way of characterisation.

Ayckbourn for years was shrugged off as some kind of genial farceur by the academic and critical proponents of a political theatre which all too often merely preached to the converted, but meanwhile many of his former detractors realised that he uses comedy to confront his audience with uncomfortable truths. Despite his obvious dislike for the brash nouveaux-riches, the dramatist never denounces his characters and thereby makes it impossible for the spectators to feel morally superior to them. His sympathies are with the underdogs or the women, and he even has been called “an instinctive feminist” (Billington, “House & Garden” 838). Almost in passing he gives numerous sharply observed details of everyday behaviour. This may be politically more effective than all the dramatised reports on the state of the nation by the Brentons, Hares, Edgars and Griffiths with their petrol bombs thrown through the proscenium arch.

Normally Ayckbourn hardly ever had any trouble transferring productions from his own theatre in Scarborough to London. But with his *Damsels in Distress*-trilogy in 2002 Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Really Useful Theatres* scheduled the first part during the week and showed the complete work on Saturdays only. Even the mild-mannered Ayckbourn threatened to boycott the West End and go to the National or a fringe

venue instead. He called the commercial sector “ossified, lethargic and incapable of producing new work” (Beard par. 4). Referring to the current trend to book film stars, the playwright had an uncharacteristic outburst fuming at Madonna’s appearance in David Williamson’s *Up for Grabs*. He described her performance as “inaudible” and said she “was so bad she should have been regarded as a silent exhibit rather than an actor. [...] You might as well have put her on stage eating a plate of spaghetti and put a rope round her chair instead of putting her in a theatre where she wasn’t at home and was struggling” (Beard par. 3 and 4). No wonder the author’s pride was hurt, as in this case the appeal for the audience did not lie in the quality of the writing, the directing or even the star’s acting, but only in the simple fact that she was a megastar. At Wyndham’s one felt reminded of Billy Wilder’s remark about Marilyn Monroe who never arrived punctually in the studio and always forgot her lines. Wilder pointed out his aunt would have arrived bang on time as well as being word-perfect: “But you know what — nobody would pay a nickel to see my aunt.” (Morton par 25)

In contrast to Gray Ayckbourn over the years deepened his craft, *House & Garden* in 1999 being his biggest achievement so far. This process is even more marked with Michael Frayn. My fellow dramaturgs sometimes ask: “What, you’re seriously telling me the same man wrote *Noises Off* and *Copenhagen*?” With the latter he achieved the rare feat that a play’s form perfectly mirrors its content. And with *Democracy* surprisingly the intricacies of German politics in the 1970s and the affair involving the East German spy Günter Guillaume found as receptive a British audience as had the earlier play about Bohr, Heisenberg and quantum physics, both running well at the National and later in the West End. In *Democracy* Frayn’s inventions are far more interesting than the documentary parts. His Guillaume is a carbon copy of Chancellor Willy Brandt. Their relationship not only parallels the one between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, but also Don Juan and Leporello’s. The refugee from Nazi Germany and the Communist spy both necessarily have a number of identities and in many situations are not at all sure on which one they should rely. Frayn manages to recreate the most moving moments of Brandt’s career like the kneefall at the Warsaw monument and the excitement during the failed attempt to

dethrone him as Chancellor and instal the Conservative Rainer Barzel instead who had already sent a detailed timetable for his takeover of the Palais Schaumburg. And the play's second half with Brandt's painful slide from power is coloured by a touching sadness. But even then there are brilliant one-liners like the Chancellor's greatest fear to open "my eyes in some bleak hospital ward and finding Herbert Wehner praying over me" (60). No German author would be capable of a mixture like that.

Frayn is not as ubiquitous a media person as Alan Bennett who has achieved the status of national treasure, mainly because of his TV and radio work. Millions watch and listen as soon as the BBC is pointing a camera and a microphone at him even if he is only talking about the colour scheme of the furniture in his parents' sitting room in Leeds. In the West End Bennett effortlessly clocks up enormous advance sales even for the adaptation of his short story *The Lady in the Van*, albeit with the help of Maggie Smith in the title part. And the sales figures of his continuously updated miscellany *Writing Home* must make every colleague worldwide green with envy. His most recent work for the theatre, *The History Boys*, regularly sells out at the National where Nicholas Hytner up to now kept it. Dramaturgically it's a bit of a rag-bag, and the various incarnations of the hero Hector's right wing adversary Irwin are none too credible. Therefore Michael Billington's claim: "*The History Boys* defies categorisation — and for this reason, it is the most experimental play in London" ("Top of the Class") seems rather too high praise even from this most generous of critics. Billington states: "It owes little to past models. It subversively mixes up drama, comedy, poetry, popular song and ancient hymns, anecdote and aphorism, WH Auden and Gracie Fields in an eclectically English way" ("Top of the Class"). However, exactly this eclecticism is more a structural clumsiness than an achievement.

Last but by no means least on Bull's list was Tom Stoppard who in the 1970s cavalierly switched from the fringe to the West End and from there to the National if the cast for a play like *Jumpers* proved too big. Leaving aside outright comedies and farces, Stoppard with *Night and Day* and *The Real Thing* wrote two archetypal straight plays for the commercial sector. His masterpiece *Arcadia* managed to transfer, as was

the case with *The Invention of Love*. Particularly *Arcadia* demonstrated that the author contrary to previous claims levelled against him was capable of dramatising convincing emotions and is not only a purveyor of verbal pyrotechnics and technical ingenuity. Nevertheless a tendency already worryingly apparent in the Housman play came much more to the forefront in his *The Coast of Utopia*-trilogy: the danger of being swamped down by his own highly meticulous research. He describes his method:

I have a killer neurosis: the fear of not coming across one vital piece of information that might give me a new dimension. So I overload. That was true of *The Invention of Love* and *Arcadia*, too. I end up living for three years with 100 books and, as I get older, I find I have to read them two or three times for anything to stay in my head. Of course, at the end of the whole process, I realised that if I'd known what the essential six books were, these plays could have been on and off a couple of years ago. But I couldn't stop shuffling my pieces around and torturing myself. I ended up writing the third play more or less to a newspaper deadline. (Cavendish par. 12)

No wonder that during rehearsals he sat in the stalls of the Olivier and sighed: "It's an awful thing to say, a couple of weeks before we get an audience, but I now feel perfectly positioned to write a play about Herzen, Bakunin, Belinsky and Turgenev!" (Cavendish par. 13) Unlike most reviewers I did not care too much for the amorous goings-on in the Bakunin household in *Voyage* and think Stoppard only reached his customary high level in the scenes involving Alexander Herzen's increasing disillusionment, Herzen for obvious reasons being a man very near to Stoppard's own heart and mind. But not only the production's technical overkill would have made a transfer to the West End rather unlikely.

Successes in that area in 2004/5 were Gray's rehashed *The Old Masters* and Frayn's *Democracy* which also went to New York and there turned Willy into Bill. *The History Boys* could have been one if the National had decided to release it from its own repertory. Ayckbourn after the ambitious *House & Garden* scaled down his work a bit and delivered less demanding fare, but still without descending to the Ray Cooney-drop-your-trousers-level. For straight plays with commercial appeal this is not a lot. The newspapers are full of stories about inner city squalor, deplorable facilities, overpriced tickets, food and drink and even the not inconsiderable danger of being hit on the head by falling pieces of plas-

ter in the stalls of a West End theatre. A combination of all of these may certainly keep people away, but more worrying is the dearth of new plays that once were typical for this place and in better years even propped up an ailing Broadway. The new generation of smooth men do not write consistently well enough to step into their predecessors' shoes and like Christopher Hampton, Stephen Poliakoff or Terry Johnson often work more for TV and film. So the most blatant example of an old-fashioned West End-production in recent years bizarrely was another transfer from the National: David Hare's *Amy's View*. There was a time when this author with John Bull did not feature under the label *Stage Right* but as a protagonist of an earlier book on *New British Political Dramatists*. The writing and Richard Eyre's staging of *Amy's View* were aesthetically so outdated that one wanted to rush out of the Aldwych and immediately resurrect George Devine. Despite examples of grandpa's theatre like that I still believe there is a place for an intelligent kind of popular play, not least because finally I got to declare an interest myself as a translator: the royalties from hard-hitting in-yer-face studio pieces hardly cover the electricity bill, whilst a nice long tour of *Democracy* or *The Old Masters* very smoothly pays for the whole rent.

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UNA CHAUDHURI

Hell in the Heartland:
Mapping Post-Abu Ghraib America in Sam
Shepard's *The God of Hell*

On bestseller lists in America these days there is one title that considerably magnifies the challenge we have set ourselves in this conference by bringing the figure of cartography into relation with that pervasive feature of contemporary culture: uncertainty. Mapping is usually an attempt to clarify, stabilize, ascertain. When the essential mood of a period is precisely the opposite — doubt, ambiguity, confusion — the geographical metaphors that emerge tend to be rather extreme, rather more challenging to the cartographical impulse. So this book, by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, is called *The World is Flat*. It argues that new business practices and interactive technologies are rapidly sweeping aside such old global divisions as First World-Third World, West and non-west, replacing them with a level economic playing field that cries out for entirely new social, post-national mappings.

Over against Friedman's largely optimistic vision of a brave new globalized flat world lies the common perception shared by many people: that the world has never been more divided than it is today, with fault lines so profound and mysterious as to make some people — such as a character in one of the plays I'll be discussing here — positively nostalgic for the simpler dichotomies of the Cold War era.

In America, the idea of division has recently taken on a remarkably spatial — even cartographical — reference. The severe political division

reflected in the last presidential election-results was immediately represented as a geographical phenomenon, colorfully mapped as a division between the so-called “red” (or Republican) states and the “blue” (or Democratic) states. This map was widely seen on television, the internet and in newspapers, its vast expanse of red striking terror in the hearts of all those who oppose George Bush, because it appeared to confirm the Republican claim of a broad popular mandate.

Momentarily, the ideological uncertainty reflected in the election results was transformed into the false-certainty of a political map that exactly replicated a long-standing view of the American nation as a conservative heartland flanked by two liberal coasts.

The mythological stability thus achieved was, however, short-lived. Other maps were quickly drawn to contest the story told by the original one. One map, showing the election results not by states but rather by counties, began the process of questioning the tacit claims of the first one, namely that Bush had won by a landslide. Viewed county by county rather than state by state, the division between red and blue appeared more dispersed, more complicated: spots of blue, some quite large, appeared all over the continent, not just along its edges. Something, it seemed, was happening to the heartland.

The county-by-county map was followed by another, in which the results in each county were represented not by the color of whichever party had got the majority of votes (which resulted in a red-dominated map, even though many counties went for Bush only by a very small majority) but by a proportional mix of the two colors, giving many shades of purple in between the extremes of red and blue: this map, dubbed “Purple America,” soon became a sentimental favorite, and came to adorn computer desk tops and dormitory walls all over the country.

Taken together, these different maps constituted a kind of urgent performance of America, an attempt to write an ideological script arising out of the landscape itself. The maps seemed to want to answer a question that American writers have long essayed: if that mythic expanse of continent could speak, what would it say?

The work I want to discuss here comes from a playwright who has long been associated with that question, but has just as long been accused of conducting that inquiry in a political vacuum, of relying too

heavily on inherited cultural mythology and of ignoring the complex demographic realities that have shaped and reshaped America in the past century. I refer, of course, to Sam Shepard, and the work is his most recent play, *The God of Hell*, presented in New York last year under unusual and very clearly political circumstances: the play, which Shepard described as a “takeoff on Republican fascism,” was rushed into production in order to be seen by audiences before the presidential election. The situation was unprecedented: a new play by one of America’s most respected living playwrights is normally much heralded and prominently staged. Here it appeared suddenly, tucked away in a small university theatre space. More unusual still was the playwright’s willingness to break his notorious political silence and put his mythic stage-image of America at the service of an urgent political agenda: to denounce George W. Bush. If possible, to defeat him.

While these anomalies were intended, another was simply a coincidence: at the time that *The God of Hell* was playing in New York, Sam Shepard himself was starring — across town — in another important new work: Caryl Churchill’s most recent play, *A Number*, for which Shepard returned to stage acting after a thirty year absence. Stranger still, Churchill’s play was about, among other things, one of Shepard’s great dramatic subjects: masculinity and its discontents, especially as these are played out between fathers and sons (more on this later).

A few years before this pair of plays appeared together, another pair had followed each other in the same space, each one with a title that vividly evokes our conference’s concerns. The first of these was Tony Kushner’s *Homebody/Kabul*, a prescient work about the invisible ties that link vastly different parts of the world, in this case the Western metropolis, safe and humdrum, with the shrouded dangers of Afghanistan under the Taliban. The second play, following Kushner’s in the same theatre, was Caryl Churchill’s *Far Away*, as perfect a companion piece for *Homebody/Kabul* as could be imagined, deftly sketching in the larger apocalyptic background behind the complex history and deadly current politics that Kushner was exploring.

Both plays made a crucial contribution to any projected mappings of the post-9/11 world by politicizing of the idea of *distance*. The two parts of *Homebody/Kabul* convey as much through the *gap* between them as

they do through their content; it is a gap that spectators must actively fill as they watch the play, by evolving an attitude towards the unfamiliar, the little known, the distant, by developing, in a way, an *ideology* of distance. In Churchill's play, *Far Away*, the gaps are not *between* acts or between worlds but *within* them, and to watch the play is to experience the constitutive disparities of the social and natural worlds.

As I have argued elsewhere (Chaudhuri 2004), the final act of *Far Away* is perhaps the most provocative thing Churchill has ever written. It could be a dramatization of the provocative thesis of Michel Serres, that the breakdown of the social contract in the course of the past genocidal century leaves us confronting *a different order of violence* than ever before, that of the natural world that we have so long abused. According to Serres, "We so-called developed nations are no longer fighting against ourselves, together we are all turning against the world. Literally a world war, and doubly so, since the whole world, meaning all men, imposes losses on the whole world, meaning things" (32). Sam Shepard's new play engages the twin betrayals of the social and natural contract in the context of American ideology and the current state of the nation.

The God of Hell is set in classic Shepard territory — we could be back in the world of *Buried Child*, a farmhouse in the American heartland. This time it's a dairy farm in rural Wisconsin, and the first hint of the famous Shepardian dystopia comes in the information that this farm is the last of its kind — all the others in the area have closed down, overtaken by agribusinesses located elsewhere. The couple living on this farm is holding out, hanging on to a now-defunct way of life. Farmer Frank, a plain-spoken middle-aged man in denim overalls and work boots, and his down-to-earth wife Emma quickly identify themselves as anachronistic and doomed, relying on vestigial elements of nature for their sense of well-being: she, on the houseplants she has allowed to take over the house; he on the animals he raises, with whom he spends long stretches of time, and about whom he says: "When I'm feeding the heifers, time stands still for me. Nothing else exists." For Frank, his animals provide a rapture of participation in an agrarian world that is fast disappearing, taking with it the stability and certitudes once signified by the homestead, the ranch, the little house on the prairie.

The God of Hell provides two explanations for what has gone wrong — one apparently political, the other apparently environmental, both enigmatic and ultimately unsatisfying. The two explanations take the form of two characters, one who bursts upon the bucolic scene like an ideological bomb, the other who turns out to be living in the basement and is more literally bomb-like. The latter — the bomb in the basement — is Frank's friend Haynes who seems to be in hiding from a government-run scientific operation where he once worked, probably making bombs. It is his former employment that gives the play its title. The laboratory Haynes worked in was involved in the making of plutonium, a substance of such deadliness as to justify its being named after Pluto, the god of Hell: "It is the most carcinogenic substance known to man," Haynes tells Frank. "It causes mutation in the genes of the reproductive cells. . . . A kind of random compulsory genetic engineering that goes on and on and on" (41–42). When Frank wonders if such a thing could affect his beloved heifers, Haynes supplies a vision of a silent apocalypse: "it would affect every heifer within six hundred miles of here. It would penetrate the food-chain and bio-accumulate thousands of times over, lasting generation after generation. Tasteless, odorless, and invisible" (42). Later, we learn that Haynes is a carrier of this deadly substance, a silent, human bomb endangering the landscape and its inhabitants.

But this chilling idea is not left to fester unseen. This being a Sam Shepard play, the aesthetics of surreal literalization turn the creepy idea into a wildly improbable image, like the tiny unearthed corpse that appears, so shockingly, in Tilden's arms at the end of *Buried Child*. The literalization in *The God of Hell* is literally shocking: Haynes's exposure to the toxic substance he worked with has left him with a weird condition: like some sort of comic book super-hero, he gives off streaks of static electricity. Jagged streams of crackling blue light flash out of his body whenever he is touched.

This invention is one of the things that gives the play the look and feel of a fantastic cartoon, careening madly between hilarity and horror, and complicating any reading of the political allegory that was so explicitly invoked around the play's election season opening. The other element that also contributes to the effect of a surreal farce and also makes

the play's politics enigmatic is the second visitor, a government agent named Welch, ostensibly there to sell patriotic paraphernalia but really there on a much deadlier mission. As smarmy and smooth-talking as the couple are plain-spoken and guileless, Welch is, from the start, the play's big answer to its big question of what ails America. And therein lies the problem. For as a key to understanding what is going on in America today, a figure like Welch is ultimately a cliché and a copout.

Welch enters the play in a way that literalizes his connection to the project of remapping America: the doorbell rings, Emma opens the door, which "swings downstage, blocking the audience's view of who is standing there. A man's arm pops out, dangling a large cookie in the shape of an American flag, with red, white and blue frosting" (10).

His initial effect is that of an obnoxious but harmless salesman. He scolds Emma for the lack of symbols of loyalty in her home: "No miniature Mount Rushmore, no Statue of Liberty, no weeping bald eagle clutching arrows" (20). About the lack of a flag on the flagpole outside the house, he asks: "Well, Emma, this is Wisconsin, isn't it? I'm not in Bulgaria or Turkistan or somewhere lost in the Balkans, am I? I'm in Wisconsin! Taxidermy and cheese! In the good old U.S. of A." (19). Then, in one of the play's many references to contemporary political culture — including later (and most shocking) to the Abu Ghraib prison torture scandal — he whips out a staple gun and proceeds to cover the walls of the house with dozens of small American flags strung together like streamers, recalling the patriotic blizzard that covered American towns and suburbs with stars and stripes after 9/11.

As critics were quick to recognize, the multitude of flags that spread over the stage space are also versions of a classic Sheperdian theatrical device; the proliferation of objects — like the corn in *Buried Child*, the asparagus in *Curse of the Starving Class*, the toasters in *True West* — suggesting a surreal and nauseating autonomy of matter. Here, coupled as it is with the sinister and coercive energy of Welch, the swelling patriotism represented by the flags is thoroughly discredited, appearing to be as toxic a condition as that of the painfully electrified Haynes. Welch the government bully and Haynes the government's dupe are aligned here as equally threatening to the American heartland, in danger of permanently altering its DNA.

What, then, does this re-mapping of the mythical American heartland say? And what actual political effect did Shepard expect his play to have when he rushed it onto stage before the presidential election? What understanding of theatre and its political role was at play? Did Shepard want to make a difference, or merely to have a say, to go on record, to express his solidarity with the views of his likely audience? Or did he want to put his characteristic themes, images, spaces and characters under a new kind of pressure, expect his distinctive theatrical language to say something new to us in these desperate times?

The theatre has always been, in America, in competition with other, more grandiose models of performance. As Jeffrey Richards shows in his book *Theatre Enough: American Culture and the Metaphor of the World Stage, 1600–1789*, the pervasive use of the theatrical metaphor in American religious and political discourse did not reflect a high regard for actual theatre. In America, the age-old *Theatrum Mundi* metaphor combined with the doctrine of American exceptionalism to produce a performance ideal of a scale and scope that few theatres could supply. According to Richards, it is precisely because American ideology includes a strong performative component, because “Americans frame their actions . . . as upon a world stage” — that actual theatre — mere theatre — is felt to be inadequate and irrelevant. Perhaps this accounts for the much-discussed apoliticality of American theatre — its propensity to privatize or mythologize social and cultural issues rather than to submit them to explicit political analysis. As mentioned before, Shepard has long been an exemplar of this disappointing tendency: his Americas — as resonant as they may be — fail to frame a critique from any subject position other than the one around which the dominant ideology is organized: the subject position of the straight, white, middle-class male. In *The God of Hell*, that subject position hollers and bellows louder and with more anguish than ever before, but fails to find perspectives that might suggest alternatives to the abject conclusion, in which Frank, now dressed in a blue business-suit, stands on the couch, covering his genitals and whimpering “I miss the Cold War” (91). The heartland, however deconstructed and ironized it may be, proves inhospitable to developing an *ideology of distance*, a way of understanding the radically other, the deeply *unfamiliar*.

The long final scene, during which Welch tortures Frank and Haynes into submission by electrocuting their genitals, is a definitive image of masculine humiliation. It is also a revealing case of political slippage and ideological blindness. The transferal of the Abu Ghraib imagery to the American heartland, with American victims replacing the actual Iraqi ones, is no doubt intended to link that abuse of international power to the threat to civil liberties at home, to warn Americans, as Welch says, that they cannot “get a free ride on the back of democracy” (97) forever. But the speedy elision of the body of the political and national other, the effortless substitution of the naked Arab body by the business-suited white one, falls within the very politics of partial blindness and false security that the play is supposedly attacking. Shepard’s allegory of “republican fascism” depicts it as an alien import, a foreign invasion threatening the good people of America, whose only mistake has been a lack of vigilance. They have let their heartland be hijacked by a cynical government, whose mouthpiece in the play boasts: “We’re in absolute command now. We don’t have to answer to a soul, least of all a couple of Wisconsin dairy farmers” (93). His other victims, worlds away from Wisconsin, are entirely forgotten.

While the torture scene in *The God of Hell* is a disappointing appropriation of real political crimes for the purposes of a generalized political allegory, the play’s image of a human bomb, and its vision of an explosive American heartland does not easily map onto the play’s political allegory. However, it does bring to mind another extremely strange mapping of America, one that might say more about the ideological malaise Shepard is exploring than his anti-Republican focus allows him to recognize. Less than a year after the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, another attack, deep in the heart of the country, provided another context for understanding the cultural analysis offered in *The God of Hell*. In the spring of 2002, a 21-year old college student named Luke Helder, later dubbed The Pipe Bomber, detonated a series of bombs in the American heartland. The first sixteen bombs were arranged in two circles, one in Illinois and Iowa and the other in Nebraska. The final two that he managed to explode before he was caught, were located further apart, one in Colorado and the other in Texas. They seemed to be the beginning of an arc below the two circles. This

reading of the arrangement was confirmed when the young man told authorities that he was trying to use bombs to make a “smiley face” on the map of America.

The case of Luke Helder and his attempted cartographical message from and to America was largely lost in the world-historical explosive message delivered by the 9/11 hijackers. I cannot help thinking, though, and Shepard's play of an explosive American heartland confirmed this thought, that Luke Helder is probably just as relevant to America's self-understanding as Mohammed Atta. The gratuitous violence of his crime, along with his desire to have it writ large in the nation's self-image by doing it in a way that could only be understood cartographically (surely this was the first crime in human history that was directed at a satellite-aided viewership, an audience with a technologically-produced “god's-eye-view” of an entire continent?): is all this not symptomatic of an ideology of exceptionalism gone terribly sour? Some people have speculated that Helder may have been inspired in part by the cult movie *Fight Club*, which features a smiley face in a scene of destruction: in that case on a skyscraper, thus bringing Helder and Atta even closer together. The smiley face itself is a kind of map, a social coding of fake civility and enforced joviality. The version in *Fight Club*, as in Helder's crime, made it the face of an alienated subculture of young white males, skeptical of the American mainstream's ability to grant them continued privilege, frustrated to the point of mindless violence. Helder's mapping of America seems to be linked, as if by electrical wires, to the scene of masculine humiliation at the end of Shepard's play. Both performances are staged, it seems to me, from and for that subject position whose blind spots are precisely the source of the outrage.

The serendipitous presence of Sam Shepard himself on stage at the same time as *The God of Hell* gave me a glimpse of the difference a shift in subject position makes, and so I want to end with a few words about Caryl Churchill's play *A Number*.

The play stages a series of encounters between a father, played by Sam Shepard, and his sons, in a room furnished only with a single couch. The couch is as identified with the father as the ratty couch in *Buried Child* is identified with that play's wounded patriarch, Dodge. This couch, however, relocates the drama of patriarchy, and of masculine

reproduction-anxieties, from the post-agrarian heartland to the post-human scientific establishment. This couch seems to have migrated from the private living room to some sort of scientific laboratory, a bare space lit starkly by a single gigantic lighting instrument. The impression of an operating theatre was heightened by the seating that had been specially constructed for the production, a semi-circle of tiers of seats rising sharply around the small playing area. Suggesting both early-modern anatomy theatres as well as ageless arenas for animal blood sports like cockfighting or bear-baiting, the space hinted that the age-old theme of fathers and sons was about to get a new kind of scrutiny.

In each of the play's five scenes, the father, Salter, speaks with one of three young men, all played by the same actor. The script identifies the first two of these men as Bernard 1 and Bernard 2, the first Salter's biological son, the second that son's clone. The third young man is named Michael Black, and we learn that he is yet another clone — one of an unspecified number of such clones. Unlike the two Bernards, however, Michael has never met Salter before, and was raised by other parents.

This arrangement of characters leads one to expect a play about the genetic versus environmental debate, about which Stephen Jay Gould impatiently remarks: "This issue has been falsely dichotomized for so many centuries, that English even features a mellifluous linguistic contrast for the two alternatives: 'nature versus nurture.' As any thoughtful person understands, the framing of this question as an either-or dichotomy verges on the nonsensical" (42).

No playwright is less likely to be ensnared by false dichotomies than Caryl Churchill. Her characters do blunder in and out of the clichés and half-formed ideas floating around these days about cloning and its ethical and psychological implications of cloning. But the real interest of the play is clearly not in disentangling, much less solving, the questions this subject inevitably unleashes — questions of individuality, authenticity, unique selfhood. The real interest of the play seems to lie in clearing a space beyond clichés and anxieties and outrage, not something as grand as a new program or ideology, just an unexpected perspective that slips free from the inherited and tragic structures of such subjects as kinship, generation, and home.

To the first two young men, the idea of cloning is distressing, even horrifying, a demonstration of what some ethicists call “the argument from repugnance.” The third clone, Michael Black, confesses to a different outlook on the subject: “I think it’s funny,” he says. “I think it’s delightful” (60). In the performances I saw, the audience’s reaction of relief to this admission was palpable. After the anguished intensities between the father and sons of the first four scenes, the third, happy clone was more than a breath of fresh air: he was a whole new weather system. While Salter had referred to the clones as “things,” and the Bernards had experienced their shared genetic inheritance as a matter of anger or fear, Michael Black sees it as consonant with the order of things: “We’ve got ninety-nine percent the genes as every other person,” he says gently. “We’ve got ninety percent the same as a chimpanzee. We’ve got thirty percent the same as a lettuce. Doesn’t that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong” (62).

It is as if Frank, from the *God of Hell*, would suddenly think about things from the point of view of his heifers, or Emma of her houseplants, or Haynes of plutonium. That would be like Sam Shepard seeing the Bush administration from the point of view of its real and immediate victims, as well as from that of a bygone agrarian paradise. It would be like seeing that the good people of the heartland have sons like Luke Helder, and don’t know why. It would be like seeing Abu Ghraib as a fundamental breach of the global social contract, not only a threat to Americans’ civil liberties. It would be a mapping of the heartland by political ideology rather cultural mythology.

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KATHLEEN STARCK

Current Global Conflict and the Invasion of the Private in *The Pull of Negative Gravity* and *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*

The personal is political. This is a slogan that seems to reek of street barricades, burning bras, communes, and agit-prop theatre, in short a time long gone and benevolently and knowingly smiled at today. However, it has not lost its validity, and certainly not within the theatre. True, the means have changed. Thus, for example, banners with slogans such as “workers of all countries unite” would probably feel very much out of place on stage and rather amuse than incite the audience to take “revolutionary action.” Yet, the effects of national or international political decisions and actions of the public sphere on the private sphere of individual lives are very prominent in plays such as *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* and *The Pull of Negative Gravity*.

When the Bulbul Stopped Singing is David Greig’s stage adaptation of Palestinian lawyer, writer and activist Raja Shehadeh’s diary by the same title. It premiered at the 2004 Fringe Edinburgh Festival and describes Shehadeh’s experiences during the 2002 Israeli invasion and occupation of Ramallah. What sounds like an opportunity for the staging of a passionate attack on Israel and a pleading for the Palestinian cause, however, is an account of everyday life under occupation. As the Guardian critic Lyn Gardner puts it: “[T]his one-man show tells what happens when the world shrinks [...]” (par. 2), when the entire population of a city are confined to their houses for weeks. The play concentrates on

Shehadeh's struggle to live a normal life under unnormal circumstances. And it is this reluctance to take sides, which marks the quality of the play. Greig points this out when he writes in the Traverse Theatre programme:

[...] as a lawyer [...] Raja has contributed to the struggle in Palestine. And yet, as a writer, Raja seems a reluctant advocate. He describes the ambiguous, subtle, even seductive lines which power draws in the lives of the oppressed. He is drawn to the contradictions of power and victimhood. He writes about the fissures and cracks which damage Palestinian unity and he is fascinated by the way in which power and violence have shaped and distorted Israeli society. I think it's this underlying tension between participating in events and describing them which fuels Raja's writing. Reading his work, one senses that for him the truth is not captured in writing but rather moves through it, a fluid thing, hard to grasp. (Traverse Programme 8)

Lyn Gardner picks up on this notion when she writes about the play's honesty:

Bulbul feels much more honest because it grapples with the complexities of a situation where young Israeli soldiers terrorise in the name of freedom, Palestinian politicians fail their people and the Arab TV stations turn suffering into a daily soap opera, but where people just carry on living.

In a situation as complex as this and as defined by notions of territory, ownership, and confinement, boundaries of some imagined and real spaces become blurred, whereas others are over-determined.

The main conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is one of ownership of land and rights of settlement. Who was on the land first, who is allowed to live and move within which boundaries, and, most important, who defines those boundaries? The two homelands, Israel and Palestine, occupy the same geographical space. Social anthropologist Glenn Bowman writes:

Hence, in the Palestinian instance, territoriality [...] is qualified both historically (by using pre-1948 Palestine as the territorial locus of Palestinian identity) and semantically (by distinguishing in name between the two homelands – Israel and Palestine [...]) so that the identity Palestinians [...] derive from the land they claim is kept distinct from and antipathetic to that which the Israelis derive from the land they occupy. (Bowman 76)

According to Bowman, the Palestinians are exiled from their land while still on it (93). This notion of exile is likewise stressed and extended to include the “space of discourse” by Said when he

suggests in [...] *After the Last Sky*, [that] the idea of ‘Palestine’ is so loaded with significance for others that it is impossible for Palestine’s indigenous inhabitants to assert their claims to the land without self-consciously having to contend with a plague of counter-claims. The Palestinians, in engaging in the discourse in which those counter-claims are couched, are forced into territories where their actual existence, as well as any possible claims that existence might merit, is denied. (Bowman 73)

Thus, the two very distinct identities of Israelis and Palestinians are not only derived from the same geographical space, but this space is clearly interconnected with power. This is an idea, which Foucault has described as follows: “Space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (Bormann 299).

The sociologist Regina Bormann describes spatial phenomena as carrying symbolic meaning and thus functioning as a medium of communication. Through this medium, then, not only ideas of a shared identity, but also power structures are communicated. Since space can never be perceived “as such,” but is inseparable from its representation and thus always already inscribed with meaning (290), social configurations such as power and inequality are inscribed into space (295). Moreover, because space is an instrument which defines identity and determines the location of difference of self and other, territoriality is turned into a metaphor for social order (266–267).

This, in turn, ties in with the idea of the palimpsest, where power structures determine what remains visible of a particular culture.

Greig illustrates this in the Traverse Programme with the following example:

I once ate in a restaurant in Aida refugee camp [...]. On the ceiling of the restaurant was painted a map of pre-1948 Palestine. On the map were the names of Palestinian villages: villages that are now part of Israel. These villages were the places that the refugees of Aida camp came from. The waiters in the restaurant who told me which village they ‘came from’ were now in the third generation of exile. They had never been inside Israel, never seen their village. They had never even seen the Israeli suburb that had been built on top of their village but to

these young men the village was real. Perhaps even more real than the crowded refugee camp in which they spent their daily lives. (Traverse Programme 7)

This notion of palimpsest reverberates throughout *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*. Shehadeh again and again tells the audience of places which have changed, not geographically, but socially, politically, and morally, with their “original” meaning shimmering through the Israeli occupation, such as when he tells the audience: “Samer reports that there are tanks down in the valley overlooking his house (where I used to go for walks) and they are shelling anything that moves. I wonder what could be there. We used to see gazelles picking their graceful way up the terraced hills” (Shehadeh 81). The meaning “recreational area where one goes for walks” is now forced to the background, whereas the meaning “Israeli military territory” is the dominating one.

This is heightened by the stage design. The floor is covered with red sand and when Raja reports events and explains the location of streets, houses and places he draws a map in it, thus revealing yellow sand underneath. Not only does he draw in the sand, but as the play progresses and Raja gets more anxious and agitated, the smooth surface of the sand becomes more and more disturbed and stains Raja’s clothes. As a result, he is physically marked by the events taking place outside his house, although he stays inside it. The boundaries between inside and outside become blurred.

There is no question as to the nature of power structures and territorial decisions in *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*. In answer to the second Intifada, the Israeli army occupies Ramallah and thereby redefines the Palestinian experience of space. First of all, there is the political sense of invasion and occupation, with the Palestinian population being placed under Israeli administration. Second, Palestinian space is literally invaded as Israeli soldiers search, occupy and destroy Palestinian houses in Ramallah. By confining the inhabitants to their houses and only lifting the curfew every few days for some hours, Palestinian life is robbed of public space. It is taking place entirely within the private sphere of private houses. Further, even within these houses, space can be restricted to particular rooms or even merely one room, where inhabitants are locked up until the soldiers have searched the house. Consequently, Israeli authority is not merely invading the Palestinians’ life on a politi-

cal or administrative level, but rather invades their very private spaces. One particular striking example is the report of one of Raja's friends when she tells of her mother's experiences:

[...] my mother's house has been ransacked – all the clothes pulled out of her cupboard – the glass of her old table was smashed – rubbish is thrown everywhere – ketchup is smeared into all the upholstery – you can't imagine the state the toilet is in – the smell – and the worst of it was that they slept in her bed – mother's so fussy she wouldn't even let me sit on her bed and now an Israeli soldier has slept in it with his dirty boots. When she saw what they'd done she almost fainted. She tried to get back to my house but she lost her way in the fields, she never loses her way, but today she just lost her way. (Greig 13)

The invasion needs to be considered not only on a realist level. Even when the soldiers have left and people can reoccupy their private spaces, the aftermath of their experiences leaves them traumatised — a continuation of the invasion on a metaphorical level. Shehadeh hints at this when he describes his four-year-old niece's reaction to the invasion of her house:

Hanan had to ask a soldier's permission to take Tala to the toilet. But Tala wouldn't go. She just wanted to stay in the corner as far away from the guns as possible. Her world had crumbled. Her big brother, Aziz, was trembling and her father was being pushed around. Her heroes were humiliated. Nothing was solid anymore. (Greig 3)

Similarly, Raja longs to be outside his house, however, when the curfew is lifted, he cannot bear to be outside:

Curfew was lifted but the town seemed dark and grim. I didn't know if it was the dust in the air or just my mood. The shops were full of people pushing through the congested aisles, kissing and exchanging news, blocking my way. It felt as though all the subtleties of a culture had been reduced to the bare act of hoarding food to last for the next imprisonment. I couldn't bear to participate anymore. (Greig 14)

Although there is no direct physical threat on Raja's outing during the lifting of the curfew, he is unable to enjoy the few hours of "freedom." The experience of the space "outside" has been transformed by the occupation into something unpleasant.

This hints at the fact that the invasion does not stop at the space of the private home. Instead it works its way into the most private of

spaces, the mind. Shehadeh describes how the events of the occupation change his emotions and his thoughts:

I'm getting angry and I don't want to be angry. I also don't want to be the subject of pity. I don't want to be determined by the Israeli army or by Palestinian politicians. [...]. The Israeli army is interested not only in controlling my life but also in claiming my mind, emotions and attitudes: I am the person who wants Israeli women and children and babies to die. [...] And as an intellectual, I am a disappointment because I am blinded by hatred and intimidated by the extremists. (Shehadeh 96)

As I paced I realised how angry I felt at the forces hemming me in, labelling me, describing me. The Israelis refused to recognise my humanity while the Arab world saw us only as defenceless victims. Watching the Arab satellite stations I heard all the usual rhetoric and empty talk and even I got carried away. Look at us! We're Palestinians! We're heroes! We're on TV! (Greig 6)

Another aspect, which is stressed in the play is the conflation of spatial and temporal categories, such as when Raja says, "[a]n entire society has been prevented from carrying on with its life" (Shehadeh 68). At another point he states, "[w]e are alone with our private worries about our property, homes, offices, the places in which we invested years and years of our lives" (87). The same interconnectedness between time and space holds true for the transformation of "uninhabited public space" during the lifting of the curfew when the inhabitants of Ramallah meet inside and in front of shops, trying to stock up on the little food that is available as well as on information. As soon as the curfew is back in place, public life comes to a halt.

In addition, the confinement to their homes produces a transformation of the place "home." Although on the one hand it remains just that, the place where people live, eat, sleep, work, it is given new meanings, new purposes: "For exercise, I would put on some fast tempo music and together we [Raja and his wife] would march round and round the house" (Greig 13). "This is an entirely new use of the house" (Shehadeh 82).

What might easily be the most puzzling effect of the occupation, is Raja's double-status as a subject, who physically and mentally experiences the occupation, and at the same time as an object that can be watched on television. He can hear the very tanks outside his front door which he can see on television. Thus, although his house remains undis-

turbed, the tanks do invade it. Raja has become an involuntary member of the cast of the “Occupation Soap,” which is broadcast daily into the Arab world:

On the one hand I was a hero of this story, trapped in the heart of the danger zone. But on the other hand, stuck at home I was also the viewer consuming the drama on television. The more I reflected on my double role the more annoyed I became. Our suffering had been turned into a soap opera to keep the Arab world entertained. (Greig 6–7)

Consequently, the worlds inside and outside of Raja’s house can no longer be distinguished. Once more, this is highlighted by Raja’s increasing physical markedness on stage. He never leaves the theatrical space designated as his house, yet his clothes have become stained and he has also stripped down from business suit to open shirt and bare feet. He looks increasingly dishevelled — somebody who has been physically involved in combat.

This could also be interpreted as the overall metaphor of *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*: Raja Shehadeh had withdrawn from his public role of political advocate of the Palestinian cause, concentrating instead on his writing and legal practice. Yet, the public sphere of politics caught up with him and invaded his private home and his thoughts, making a separation between the private and the political sphere impossible.

In a similar way, Jonathan Lichtenstein’s *The Pull of Negative Gravity* illustrates the effects of the latest war in Iraq on a farming family in Wales. Yet, here the focus is not on the actual events of the war, but on its consequences on individual lives thousands of kilometres away from the zone of conflict. Critic Sarah Ream writes:

War is too large for human comprehension. It defies any sort of comprehensive narration. And so Jonathan Lichtenstein chooses to broaden our understanding of the recent Iraqi war by narrowing his exploration of its impact to the lives of a farming family in rural Wales. (Ream par. 1)

The play, which like *Bulbul* premiered at the Traverse Theatre in August 2004, was inspired by statistics about recent military casualties. In his writer’s note to the Traverse Production Lichtenstein writes:

[M]ore soldiers commit suicide during and after a conflict than are killed by enemy actions during the conflict itself. [...] Already 10% of coalition troop casu-

alties in Iraq are suicides. Why should this be? Partly because soldiers are returning to a society that finds it difficult to support their actions unequivocally. [...] But the main cause of violence toward the self is trauma. [...] The receiver of these traumatised young men is the family [...] and within the family it is women who bear the brunt of the emotional devastation.

In Lichtenstein's play these women are Vi, the widow of a Welsh farmer, who faced with bankruptcy due to foot and mouth disease has committed suicide, and Bethan, her prospective daughter-in-law. Trauma enters their lives in the shape of Dai, one of Vi's two sons, who is engaged to Bethan. His return from the war, hoped and longed for by the women and his brother Rhys, turns out not to be the happy event they have anticipated, but rather a shocking confrontation with the cruel reality of war. Dai is partly paralysed and thus cannot walk and is unable to speak intelligibly. He visibly carries the physical, tangible, war's results into the space, which should have been considered "safe" — his home. Yet, his body is not merely the site of the war's results, but also of warfare as it is happening. He keeps seeing and hearing things he has done and/or which were done to others and himself. Because he is forced to constantly relive these scenes, he brings the war in progress into his family's place. This place — the family's house, farm and surrounding landscape — is consequently transformed. Thus, space proves to be a culturally produced context, which corresponds with what many sociologists and social geographers take to be one of the basic truths about space: that spatial phenomena are the result of social action. According to Bormann, space is one of the basic dimensions of social experience since a person's spatial surroundings provide symbolic material for every day processes of the production of meaning. Places constitute a frame of reference for interaction and are contexts for the understanding of actions. As a result, they are inscribed with meaning only in connection with social action. For this reason, social space should not be considered a stable solid materiality, but instead a variable sphere, which is permanently renegotiated and redefined (269).

This is a statement which also works the other way around, as social geographers Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear point out: "Social practices are inherently spatial, at every scale and all sites of human behavior" (9).

In *The Pull of Negative Gravity*, there are a number of scenes which illustrate this transformation of space through social interaction. When, finally reunited, Vi and her two sons have a picknick on top of a hill close to their house, looking down onto their farm, Vi says: “This is what I dreamed of. The three of us up here. In the sun” (60).

Soon after, however, her idyllic vision is destroyed by a helicopter, which, in turn, triggers Dai’s memories:

The Chinook approaches. Dai trembles.

Vi. You’re trembling. Bad memories?

Dai. Yes.

The Chinook passes over.

Don’t like. Don’t like.

Vi. You’ll be alright. Let it out.

Dai. Hate. It.

[...]

Dai struggles to get up. He writhes, managing a strange dance.

Dai. You. You bastards.

[...]

You. Fucking. Fuck-pig bastards. You. Wanking. Fucking. Fuck-pig cunts. I fucking hate you! I fucking. Loathe you. You rat-arsed, vermin-shaped creeps. I fucking loathe you. Arse pigs. Motherfucking. Piss-taking dogs. You fucking tarts! You fucking twelve-headed trollops. You stinking fucking arse-licking wretches. I hate you. The things I have seen. You fuckers! The things I have seen! It doesn’t go away! The things I have seen! It doesn’t go away! (61)

Due to his speech impediment, it takes Dai tremendous effort to voice his anger, which makes the scene very powerful.

Finally Dai collapses and needs to be carried back to the house. As a result, one of the family’s favourite places, the hilltop, has been transformed into a site of trauma, for Dai as well as for his mother and brother.

After Dai has been taken back to the farm house, his mother tentatively tries to find out what has happened to him. Although Lichtenstein does not use any graphic descriptions of atrocities — on the contrary, all is left to the audience’s imagination — this conversation is yet another quality of the war’s invasion of the family’s home. It translates some of Dai’s mental and physical torture into words, thereby making it partly accessible to his mother. In addition to this verbal “contamination” of the family space, Dai invites a physical one. He pleads his mother to

smother him. Vi first refuses, then obliges, but after a short struggle gives up: “I can’t. I won’t. No. No. I’m sorry.” (66). At the end of the play, however, Dai is dead, and it is left open how he eventually died. In spite of this uncertainty, his death wish has turned the safe and warm family kitchen, filled with Vi’s love, into a place of pain, mourning, and possibly guilt.

In an earlier scene, another transformation of the family home occurs. Dai and Bethan have just been married. Vi deliberately gives the couple space to enjoy their married bliss. Yet, when Dai repeatedly asks Bethan to kiss him, it emerges that physical contact will be a major problem:

Dai. Hold me.
Bethan. Yes.
She does not move.
Dai. Tight.
Bethan. Yes.
She does not move.
Dai. Please.
Bethan. Yes.
She does not move.
Dai. You must.
Bethan. I’m going to.
Dai. I love you.
Bethan. I’m going to kill whoever did this to you.
Dai. Help me.
Bethan. Yes, I’ll help you.
Dai. I’ll get better.
Bethan. I’m going to kiss you now.
Dai. Thank you.
Bethan is sick. (45–46)

Here, as in the scenes described above, the place that should have been one of married bliss, is inscribed with the trauma of refusal.

In the end, Vi has to sell the farm and takes refuge in her grief, sitting motionless in her room, refusing to speak and clutching a stone from the river near the farm, the river in which her husband drowned himself. Bethan, on the other hand, seeks relief in the fulfilment of a long-nursed wish — to fly in the bubble of “negative gravity” in the tail wind of an army helicopter. Yet, from this secure place (anywhere else near the

helicopter this exercise would be impossible), she chooses to jump into the freedom of death. Thus, both women can bear the trauma of war only in the non-places of grief and death.

In the words of BBC critic Alison Woollard, the play “puts its audience in the same position as the characters: there is no escape” (Woollard par. 1).

This hopelessness is stressed by Lichtenstein when he writes in 2004:

Clearly the war we are engaged in is not only taking place abroad. Like all wars it also occurs at home. Here [...] it will be played out in a variety of sad, dispiriting ways. There is bound to be a major catastrophe, an attack, but other individual tragedies will happen. These will take place over the next few years, quietly, in small rooms, with bottles of pills, with guns and nooses and pipes that lead from the exhausts of cars. (Traverse Programme, Writer’s Note)

Thus, as in *Bulbul*, a temporal dimension is added to the spatial one. Not only does the war in Iraq invade and transform places far away from the actual site of combat, but it simultaneously alters individuals’ experience of time, since living with a traumatised person can be like living with a time bomb.

In conclusion, both plays illustrate the inseparability of the private and the public, which includes the spatial as well as the temporal dimension. In addition, particularly Lichtenstein points out the interconnect-edness of the global and the local and the effects of international decisions on individual local lives.

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GRAHAM D. WHITE

Compelled to Appear: The Manifestation of Physical Space Before the Tribunal¹

I. The Documentary Drama and the Tribunal

In his prefacing Remarks to the 1966 edition of his dramatisation of the Auschwitz war crimes hearings, *The Investigation*, Peter Weiss made the following statement:

In presenting this play, no attempt should be made to reconstruct the courtroom before which the deliberations over the camp actually took place. Such a representation seems just as impossible to the author as a representation of the camp on stage would be. (Weiss 10)

Weiss's approach to dramatisation seems to have been more concerned with the ethical implications of such representation — with the issues raised by the attempt to 'map' and capture a site of trauma as a represented material reality — than with its feasibility. The place of his work within a wider post-war movement in West German documentary theatre associated with the politicised exploration of historical events, often through the staging of verbatim material or the transcription of official proceedings, confirms such an impression². In this instance it seems

¹ This research is supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

² See Cohen for a discussion of the relationship of Weiss's text to the wider Documentary Theatre movement and its particular political and aesthetic concerns.

that, just as the horrific ‘reality’ of the camp is not reconstructable on-stage but is evoked through witness testimony, so the reality of the trial is not somehow to be comprehended as a fully summonable materiality. It is a web of experiences, discourses, emotions and attitudes, as well as a specific, located activity. As such, the drama aims to animate these things in complex relation to the physical locality in which they occurred, calling into existence a version of the horror of that place which is neither direct reportage nor reconstruction. The drama avoids reference to individual witnesses and defendants, uses Dante’s *Inferno* as a structural template through which to trace a path through the horrors revealed and employs a number of controversial edits of the transcript (which have subsequently drawn accusations that the text was ‘skewed’ for a socialist political purpose).³

Weiss’s consideration of the impossibility of the representation through mimetic mapping of physical spaces and locations has implications both for the form with which he was concerned — the documentary courtroom drama — and for the physical space which his drama was itself contemplating — the courtroom itself. In particular, this applies in proceedings where the administration of justice is concerned with instances of state and regime violence, with revealing a hidden and secret past of oppressive action, which involves the exploration of absent spaces and the construction of narrative to represent a necessarily non-existent past. If, as Wole Soyinka (8–9) notes in a discussion of the documentary drama as a vehicle in the search for ‘the desirable goal of Truth,’ “not even the use of the actual stark, unvarnished dialogue (such as court proceedings) of a crime such as *The Death of Steve Biko* (Fenton and Blair) totally rescues the dramatist from suspicions of ‘making a case,’” then it may also be pertinent to ask how fully the model of representation on which the public inquiry is based allows us to be confident of the nature of the Truth which emerges.

The case of the Saville Tribunal’s investigation into Bloody Sunday, the day in January 1972 when thirteen civilians were shot dead and fourteen wounded by British Army Paratroops during a banned Civil Rights protest in the Bogside area of the city of Londonderry/Derry in North-

³ Cohen provides a summary of subsequent attacks on Weiss’s ‘manipulation’ of the material for his drama.

ern Ireland, leads to consideration of just this question. Here, the pursuit of the objective Truth of what happened — not of, in the words of Counsel to the Inquiry, “the truth as people would like it to be, but the truth pure and simple, however complex, painful or unacceptable to whomsoever that truth may be” (“Ts001” 6) — means that the Tribunal itself is constantly engaged in the reconstruction of absent physical spaces as the ground of meaning, event and the truthful confirmation of memory recall on the part of witnesses and in reflection on the degree to which the mechanisms of reproduction employed in the Tribunal (for they are necessarily such when dealing with events which occurred over 30 years ago) satisfy this desire to establish Truth.

It may also be pertinent to consider what might happen when the same questions which Weiss faced with *The Investigation* are visited in the re-staging of such public inquiries as theatre events — such as the production of Richard Norton-Taylor’s edited version of the transcripts of the Saville inquiry, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Tribunal* at the Tricycle Theatre in London in 2005. Here, the production team have considered the same questions as Weiss, although they appear to have come to an opposed conclusion regarding method. In this case, in order to show the theatre audience not only what happened where on the day of Bloody Sunday, but also how those who testified to the Tribunal spoke about it, the production locates performers within a closely observed mimetic version of the environment in which they gave their testimony.

II. The Bloody Sunday Tribunal; Investigations and Materialisations

Hannah Arendt’s analysis of the structure and meaning of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1962 raises the theatrical metaphor which is commonly evoked in the discussion of the process of courtroom activity. In this case Arendt uses the metaphor both in discussion of the physical layout of the trial space as she discusses the desire of the presiding Judge to avoid the event becoming a ‘show trial,’ and in consideration of the ‘dramaturgy’ of the trial’s narrative. This is a commonplace interleaving, one in which the theatricality of the event (staging, audience, ritual) is entwined with its dramaturgical structure (protagonists, narratives, roles played).

Whilst a legal event is clearly not a piece of theatre per se, it does negotiate those areas of staging, performance and audience witness which are invoked in the critical modelling of relationships between theatrical and performance codes and the spaces of everyday social events and rituals. There is much to be considered in this set of relationships, from the modelling of staging and ritual in public events in performance studies to the use in legal studies of the model of law as a performance text akin to the classic drama being consistently re-staged and re-interpreted (Balkin and Levinson). Consideration of the manifestation of physical space in the Tribunal raises the question of what precisely the processes are by which the absent space of events and incidents and the now vanished physical actions which occurred in these spaces are brought into the environment of the courtroom, and what the consequences of such mediation are, as well as how the interaction which then takes place within the courtroom, with its aspects of the theatrical and performative, is played out.

In the first instance, the spectator to the Bloody Sunday Tribunal is struck by the vast range of materials employed by it in an attempt to evoke the past landscape in which the killings occurred. The appearance of any witness on the stand generally begins with a summary of locations, with the marking in coloured arrows on maps and photographs of the positions, movements and sightlines of that witness, and testimony is then characterised by a repetitive litany of the names of streets, car-parks and architectural features in an attempt to fix the impressions and recollections of the witness within the accepted but dematerialised landscape. To assist in this, a variety of electronic and visual aids are available to conjure up the presence of this absent, and in some cases now lost, space, including video and film footage of the events of the day, photos of the area from different historical moments, and computer generated 'hotspots' which give a 360 degree picture of the view from crucial locations as it would have appeared in 1972. These can then be mapped onto the contemporary landscape to help witnesses orientate themselves. This conjuring into presence of physically absent sites is employed as a prompt for the legal examination of memory, used to confirm, test or challenge the recalled version of events given on the stand. Some of those who have employed or experienced these devices have acknowl-

edged a traumatic sense of the immediate and vivid nature of the experiences called into presence by them. According to a *BBC News Science and Technology* piece on the use of digital reconstruction in the Tribunal:

One witness, American journalist David Tereshcuk, wrote [that] ‘I was inserting myself into a ‘virtual reality’ recreation of the killing field. Inevitably, my mind hurtled back to the outrage, terror and panic I felt that cold afternoon and I struggled to recall events calmly.’ (Casciani)

The Tribunal confirms the accuracy of its reconstruction through the mapping of memory onto fragmentary ‘documents’ such as these so that, though the places themselves are always finally resident in memory, and only indexically present in the courtroom, this memory is being called forth and tested ‘live’ for the confidence and coherence with which it is recalled and for its potential to be usefully mapped onto other accounts. The legal norm for admissible testimony is, as Philip Auslander asserts in relation to the US Justice system in a chapter titled ‘Legally Live’ in his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, that it should be a “live performance of memory recall” (161). In relation to this the technology available seems able to create a form of presence for the events which, as Tereschuk and others testify, is somehow powerfully *new* in its ability to materialise a past — this is not the intensity of a dramatisation per se, but of something additional — a visualisation and animation, a simulacrum which engages with the affective power of the past moment.

Clearly a key process at work in the space of the Courtroom is the impact of affect, both for those testifying and for those watching testimony. The Bloody Sunday Tribunal takes place before a public audience which contains the families of those who died and were wounded, as well as a more disinterested body of watchers and the wider mediating audience of newspaper and electronic media journalists and commentators. As such it engages with the experience and setting of audience roles which is familiar from the conventional theatrical environment, and points to the other key apparatus through which the summoning of past physicality is made manifest — the performer on the stand, asked to enact the process of memory recall as a live event. In this respect I do not mean to suggest that the witness is always necessarily a performer in

the sense that an actor is — embodying someone other than themselves and creating a fictional impression of that persona. Rather I wish to hold onto the analogy between actor and testifier which is based in the process of mimesis, for, where the witness is telling the truth as far as they know it they may also be unknowingly, or quite consciously, engaged in the playing of emphasis and the deliberate sculpting of the delivery of their experience. Where they are consciously and deliberately lying, they are necessarily involved in creating the effect of truth telling — replicating the manners and gestures of the authentic witness. In this setting, the witness is presented as the ground of meaning at the moment of their testimony — although the placing of that testimony within the frame of other evidence might disrupt its authenticity — and the chief establishing element in confirming this is the examination of the physical landscape as they recall it in language and in their use of the electronic and documentary mechanisms at their disposal.

However, given the time distance and the fragmentary nature of documentary records in the case of Bloody Sunday, the Tribunal often faces difficulties in achieving a materialisation of the past landscape which is definitive and which can point to the truthfulness or otherwise of testimony — the ‘fit’ of memory to actuality. For example, a number of witnesses who watched events from the now demolished Rossville flats (a key element of the physical landscape of the day) had difficulty recalling exactly which flat they were visiting when the shootings began or, in some cases, which flat they resided in at the time. Thus they were uncertain about the angle and distance from which they viewed events and about what they could be sure to have seen or heard. Elsewhere, when attempting to locate the movements of soldiers seen to fire shots on the day, witnesses were repeatedly quizzed over their precise location in relation to a particular wall, or parked vehicle. Others were questioned over their posture and orientation toward gunshots heard in the case of attempts to identify whether soldiers were firing, as has been alleged, from the city walls above the area in which the shootings occurred.

In these cases, the diagrammatic and temporal map of the space of the Bogside which was being created in the courtroom provided some consistent confirmation or contradiction of where witnesses viewed

events from, where shots came from, where an individual was seen or what physical posture soldiers and the dead and wounded were in at which precise moments, but ambiguities and uncertainties often remain. Indeed, where the desire to establish a confirmatory manifestation of the physical space truly runs into difficulty is when it is faced with the absence of a material object, or proven account of such a thing. The suspect's presence in the line-up may be attested to. The re-presented landscape manifested in the courtroom may not be present to such a useful, or appropriate degree — indeed it may only be present in contradictory forms, with evidential clashes in which the creation of a substantial agreed presence for material locations and objects is problematised to the point of almost total disagreement. This generally concerns the populated landscape, the moment when a physical geography coincides with human presence. A key example of a moment in which this happens in the Bloody Sunday inquiry surrounds the examination of the events which occurred in the car park of a block of low rise housing called Glenfada Park — an area in which a number of people died at the hands of a group of four soldiers, but where photographic or other documentary or material evidence of what happened is almost completely absent and where the two sides of the account given by groups of witnesses, civilian and military, are in direct contradiction.

The presence of a past physical landscape is also manifested in two contradictory versions in the controversy surrounding the photographing of nail bombs in the pockets of one of the dead, a young man called Gerard Donaghy — read by the Widgery Inquiry as damning evidence of his involvement in violence but the subject of intense dispute in the period before the Saville Tribunal was established. This matter is presented, in the concluding report of Counsel for the inquiry, as the subject of a complete divergence of evidence and witness testimony (cf. "CS6-689"). Detailed testimony is in fact given from a large number of witnesses for precisely contradictory versions of what happened in this case and in it, as in Glenfada Park, we are left with what might be best described as an imaginary physicality in at least one version, a fiction which is mapped onto precise places, times, spaces and, literally, bodies, but which is not fully available in either material evidence or witness testimony.

III. The Bloody Sunday Tribunal as Drama

Richard Norton-Taylor's dramatisation of the Tribunal, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes From The Saville Inquiry*, is faced with a similar set of issues over this materialisation of a past reality. However, in this case they are 'doubled' because the play is engaged not only in evoking the landscape of Bloody Sunday to bring it into some form of presence in the theatre, but also in representing the Saville Tribunal's own particularity — its place, space and processes of materialisation. In order to give a coherent account of the Tribunal's conduct, the production team have opted to represent its modes of information gathering and presentation through detailed mimetic reconstruction. Nicholas Kent and Charlotte Western's production addresses this challenge in a variety of ways. Firstly, it assembles a setting which physically represents the courtroom in furnishings, layout and ambience (down to a soundscape of Guildhall clock and 'fake' summoning bell). Secondly, it mimetically follows the routines and technologies of the courtroom — actors playing witnesses are taken through their statements by the actor playing Counsel for the inquiry and these statements are available for the audience on video screens, highlighted and edited just as in the Tribunal. Thirdly, mimetic accuracy is pursued at the level of the scripts' retaining of stumbles and technological hiatuses — for example, passages from the relevant documents are highlighted in real time and, while the transcripts of the Tribunal have been edited and abridged they are never paraphrased or summarised, meaning that complications and interruptions in the process of evidence presentation are 'played.' Fourthly, the particularity of the court process is evoked through observant placing of surrounding interactions. The informality of the opening and closing of the day's proceedings, the positioning onstage of individual performers who replicate the behaviour of participants in the actual Inquiry space, and the referencing of the theatre audience as if it were the public audience of the Inquiry⁴ all operate to mimic the particularity of the now closed

⁴ Which mimics actual events in the courtroom to such a degree that Susannah Clapp, writing in *The Observer*, suggests it conjures an uncanny convergence between the representation and the event: "At one moment Saville calls for a pause in the proceedings; the wife of one of the victims has heard, after 30 years, a soldier

Tribunal. Finally, the production then focuses on the performance of the actor, sharply defined characterisations creating a mosaic illustration of the experiences of, responses to and difficulties within the body of knowledge of what happened on the day. Here, as in the Tribunal, the physicality of the performer/witness is itself a space of manifestation, becoming the mimetic embodiment of the reality of experience, and an audience watches the actor's representation of trauma, remembering, certainty, doubt, shock and evasion, as the confirmation of the witnesses' veracity or otherwise.

Other Tricycle Tribunal plays⁵ have necessarily constructed similar representations — the materiality of legal process evoked onstage, often by reference to apparently peripheral details. This commitment to an evocation of process throws focus on the institutions of justice as well as the enormity and truth of experience, a crucial element in the particular project of the Tricycle's commitment to an interventionist political theatre — in part an amplification of ongoing procedures for the benefit of a wider public audience, although also in part a conscious fictionalising of proceedings.

IV. Landscapes and Truths

However, the reconstruction or manifestation of physical landscapes is not in the end the measure by which an authoritative Truth might be arrived at either for the Tribunal or for the dramatic reconstruction. If the Tribunal seeks to establish a truth between two alternatives, then it must necessarily banish one landscape, or one set of material particulars which has been evoked, which has been called into presence in testimony and perhaps mapped out in a witness's interaction with the virtual reconstruction or with the maps and pictures provided. In the case of

own up to killing her husband. In the strange co-opting of audience as witness, you look around to see where she's sitting.”

⁵ Richard Norton-Taylor and John McGrath, eds., *Half the Picture: The Scott Arms to Iraq Inquiry* (1994); Richard Norton-Taylor, ed., *Nuremberg* (1996), *The Colour of Justice: The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (1999), *Justifying the War: Scenes from the Hutton Inquiry*, (2003); Nicholas Kent, ed., *Srebrenica* (1996), Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo (from spoken evidence), *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom* (2004).

Gerard Donaghy, Counsel for the Inquiry has, as the Tribunal closed in late 2004, summarised the clashing narratives inscribed into versions of the landscape, of Donaghy and of his body, of the house to which he was taken for treatment, of the car in which he was driven, possibly still alive, to a barricade, Barrier Twenty, in Barrack Street, of the positions of soldiers and civilians as the car was stopped and searched, then driven by a single soldier, 150, to the Royal Anglian Company Headquarters in Henrietta Street and afterwards to a Regimental Aid Post, of the location of the now vanished RAP, of its layout, of the car's position when the body was investigated and, finally, of the nail bombs which did or did not exist on the body, and he has left them unresolved. At such a moment a variety of versions of events hold the status of myth, brought into life in the courtroom, replayed, discussed and refigured, neither one less or more true than the others, awaiting that legal judgement which may establish one as the fact, the other as lie, or which may in the end only confirm their mutual cancellation.

In November 2004, Counsel for the Inquiry, Charles Clarke, summarized the contradictory possibilities as follows, at the end of a 195-page report into the evidence and submissions on the journey taken by Gerard Donaghy's body from the Bogside to the Regimental Aid Post at Craigavon Bridge:

Several witnesses saw, examined, attended to, and accompanied Gerard Donaghy prior to his arrival at Barrier 20. [...] It seems difficult to believe that all of them either failed to notice any of the bombs, or, having noticed them, were content to leave them on Mr Donaghy's body, despite the risks, both physical and penal, of doing so. It seems at least equally difficult to believe that the Army or the Police at Barrack Street (a) had four nail bombs with them there, (b) planted them on Donaghy during a short interval of time and then (c) sent [Soldier] 150 off with the body plus the nail bombs. Lastly, it seems difficult to believe that the four bombs were planted at the RAP [...] although the unsatisfactory nature of the testimony of the police and the Medical Officer do not assist any analysis. But if everything that is difficult to credit is rejected, the end result is that there were never any bombs on Gerard Donaghy at all – but there were. ("CS6-689" 194–195)

In doing so, Clarke has rested his analysis on the evidence available, but at each stage he has weighed conflicting evidence and the contradictory possibilities which emerge from it, often without being able to defini-

tively prove that a memory of the events — such as given in the evidence of Soldier 135 concerning the geography of Barrier Twenty and the chronology of events in that area once a crowd of people and, apparently, a group of cars approached it. “Even though Soldier 135 preferred this version of events, the Tribunal might feel that in general his contemporary evidence, the structure of which is supported by the accounts given by other soldiers and civilians, is more reliable” (“CS6-689” 91). During his testimony (cf. “TS379”), Soldier 135 insisted that his contemporary statement was a more truthful and accurate account of what happened than that given to the Royal Military Police in 1972, but it is clear that the physical landscape he has recalled is contradicted by other statements and witness testimony — and Clarke’s reliance on this cross-hatching of testimony to ‘structure’ a narrative foregrounds the necessity of placing knowledge into narrative frames which remain consistent.

When the dramatisation attempts to deal with similar material, with the entry of doubt into memory recall, it meets the crux of the issue examined in Weiss’s remark quoted earlier, but it does not subscribe to Weiss’s challenging refusal to seek to ‘recreate’ through verisimilitude. For it to offer its own authoritative reading of the mass of the proceedings, and both of the Truth of the Tribunal and the ‘stories’ which have been raised within it, it must lay out elements which point to, suggest and evoke the substance or weakness of one or both. In this dramatisation of the operation of doubt — in particular in the presentation of witnesses who are troubled by the slippages they experience between memory and current event and whose concern with such issues often jolts the Tribunal by showing the awkwardness of the attempt to establish truth through this network of testimony and objects, providing instances of the hesitant reconstruction of events, emphasising the materiality of the Tribunal’s narrative construction by revealing the awkward and contradictory building of a ‘picture’ of events. However, in doing so, the theatrical representation implicitly suggests that its own mimetic process is somehow ‘cleaner’ than the Tribunal’s — that it is not itself subject to the qualifications and processes of construction which the enormous labours of mapping conducted in the Tribunal foreground. The drama presents its own representation of the court proceedings as direct and documentary, having remained ‘true’ to the

transcript. It suggests that there is a pre-existing object, the nature of which we can be certain of and which we can capture through mimesis. However, while doing so it effaces the materiality of its own process of construction, substituting an artful and well-achieved capturing of the Tribunal's typicality.

Perhaps then it is the case that in the search for a Truth engaged in by both events it is the ability of techniques to represent the process of mimesis which asserts the authority of a Truth. In the case of the Tribunal, the materiality of truth construction is part of the process by which its investigation claims legitimacy. It is the process of manifestation, the reality of how a physical landscape is evoked and established live, in the space of the courtroom, that points to an authority for one version of this Truth over another. In the end it comes to the audience — Judicial or Public — to decide on the status of this production of a remembered past landscape, and it is the ability of the procedures of the courtroom to reveal the process of mimesis, so as to allow a judgement to be made on which, in the case of the apparent presence of the nail bombs is a definitive narrative, that establishes a distinctive form of authority.

For the dramatic representation to succeed in creating a picture of the Tribunal, it must confirm its mimetic accuracy and convince of the verisimilitude of its project (in part through its showing of the scene) and so offer a — however revealing, stringent and powerful — necessarily mythologising narrative distillation of the event. The production's rejection of Weiss's dictum becomes part of the process of claiming authoritative insight into the Truth of the Tribunal. For the Tribunal to convince it must go further in acknowledging the slipperiness of recall and the place of narrative in reconstruction than the drama — although this openness is a necessity which may well at times undermine its vital and laudable attempts to find and account for a definitive and exhaustive material truth of who killed who and how. In the end, the differences in the manner of performance in the Tricycle drama between its playing in its early stages and in the later part of the run — in which absurd circumlocutions and evasions from British officers were played for laughs — indicates something of the problematic nature of this commitment to stage realism. This righteous mockery seems to replace the even more chilling and complex truth of these figures as they gave evidence in the

forum of the Tribunal — not as absurd, but as bureaucratic, class-bound, scornful, ideological and somehow, in many cases, still convinced of their being right. This, however, is not intended to criticize the aims and achievements of the drama, but to indicate something of a paradox — that it is the materialised process of representation in the Tribunal's illustration of a past which asserts its commitment to a reality while it is the commitment to a 'realism' in the drama which may efface the materiality of its representational practice.

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Guantanamo:
Documenting a Real Space?

This article is based on two aspects of the production of *Guantanamo* related to space, the exploration of which led to a further investigation into their importance for the reception of the play. One of the two is the striking contrast between the space portrayed in the play and the space in which this portrayal takes place. Even though this contrast might have been less dramatic in the Tricycle Theatre for which the play was written, it was extraordinarily powerful in the New Ambassador where I saw it: sitting in the lush atmosphere of a West End theatre, few things could appear as alien as the wire cages modelled on those of Camp Delta in Guantanamo Bay. Whereas the audience reclined comfortably in their upholstered chairs and could admire the splendid decoration of the theatre, the stage was nearly bare with the exception of simple plank beds and the aforementioned wire structures. In itself, this visual incongruity made a strong impression, but this was heightened by the knowledge about the living conditions in Camp Delta which frankly seemed incompatible with the comfort of such a theatre.

This leads us to the second aspect: the use of a toponym as the title of the play. A quick browse through two issues of *Theatre Record* confirms that this is unusual: within two months, of the 36 other performances that were produced in London and reviewed in the publication only two, *Iphigenia on Aulis* and Barbara Cook's *Broadway* used toponyms in their title, and none of them consisted entirely of a toponym

(cf. *Theatre Record* 24.11 and 13). Although the striking contrast between the setting of the play and the theatre is not particularly remarkable in itself as many plays are set in remote and exotic locations, the use of the place name in the title gives this fact more prominence.

The title of *Guantanamo* is therefore a suitable starting point as it helps to illustrate how the use of a clear reference to a place in the world outside the theatre can change the mode of reception and even raise questions about the play's status as a piece of fiction. In a second step other aspects of the play which serve a similar function are presented.

Toponyms, and proper nouns in general, are interesting from a linguistic point of view. Leaving aside many discussions about the status of proper nouns, which deal with questions such as whether they have a meaning and so forth, most linguists agree on their function: they establish a direct reference. In order to do this, they "replace deictic, or pointing gestures such that direct reference to that object or state of affairs is made," according to a definition given in Routledge's *Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. (Bussmann 387) Another important aspect is their capacity to single out objects or a process described by the following words in the entry in the *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*: "A name is a word or a phrase that identifies a *specific* person, place or thing. We see the entity as an individual, and not as a member of a class." (Crystal 112, emphasis UC). The reference to an individual object might be complicated if various entities bear the same name, but in the case of *Guantanamo* it can be said that the average member of a British audience will not be familiar with any other places of the same name thus establishing a specific and direct reference. Had the play been written five years ago, an audience would have been entirely unfamiliar with the entity to which the title thus specifically refers, but due to the constant media coverage about the American military base, an audience in 2004 will read the title as a reference to the US American military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The continuous presence of Camp Delta in the newspapers, both in reports and in commentaries means that for most members of the audience a direct reference will evoke more than just a place name. Little information is released by the Americans, but images of men in orange boiler suits, sitting in wire cages, shackled at the wrists and sometimes at

the legs as well have been repeated many times, together with the American justifications for the imprisonment of these men whom they regard as the most dangerous trained killers on earth. At the same time information seeps out through letters of former inmates in which they describe degrading and inhumane treatment that does not correspond to international standards. All this is accompanied by a fierce debate about the status of the prisoners. Called “unlawful combatants” by the US government, this status does not grant them any rights as it is not defined by any international convention. Attacked on a regular basis by human rights activists, lawyers and many others, the Americans defend the camp as a desperate measure in desperate times. This short summary of the debate raging about the camp in Guantanamo shows how this place name has acquired nearly symbolic value for the struggle between those that defend civil liberties and argue against the unlimited power of politicians over individual people and those who defend any measure in their fight against international terrorism. In a broader sense it could perhaps be seen as symbolic of the ideological divide between the unilateralism of the current US government and those who advocate adherence to international conventions and treaties. Individual members of the audience will have differing opinions on the matter, although it is probably fair to say that the majority of the spectators will take a critical stance as fewer of those who approve of the camp will want to see a play that tries to provoke a critical discussion of it. Nevertheless it can be taken for granted that the associations conjured up by the name will be connected to this debate, which means that the simple reference to a place has taken over the function of a symbol for a recent political debate.

Having established the direct reference to an individual space which has become a symbol for a political debate, these results can be connected to theories of theatrical reception.

Keir Elam claims that dramatic worlds are always incomplete and “have to be ‘supplemented’ by the spectator on the basis of his knowledge and hypothesising before they are fully constituted” (Elam 92). This means that “the world of the drama is necessarily *based* on the spectator’s actual world” (93) and that spectators will always assume that dramatic worlds obey the same laws that apply to the world outside

the theatre unless they find clear indications to the contrary in the performance. *Guantanamo* goes further than merely taking it for granted that the audience will complement the information given in the performance text: By using a proper noun for an entity in the world outside the theatre, it gives the audience a clear indication that the world presented in the play depends on the world outside it to a higher degree than in many other plays. Elam states that an audience has to rely on the similarity of the categories in a play to those used in the world outside in order to understand a play. Whereas in most plays this is only true for categorical knowledge, such as for the idea of “woman” which, Elam explains, will be understood by an audience without further explanation (93), in *Guantanamo* concrete entities, such as the camp in Cuba, are incorporated without any additional comment. The play thus relies on the fact that they exist outside the theatre and will be known to the audience.

In addition, the symbolic value acquired by the toponym directs the attention of the audience to a fairly narrow and well-defined area of their knowledge. The effect of this can be demonstrated very well with Patrice Pavis’s model of theatrical reception (233–96). Pavis states that a piece of theatre is not complete before its reception, which leads to a concretisation.¹ A spectator perceives the material reality of the performance, which in Pavis’s model acts as the signifiant. S/he² then has to match this signifiant with a signifié in order to make sense of it. The choice of a suitable signifié is made with the help of the social context. The spectator matches the signifiant with a tentative signifié, using the social context as a means to derive this signifié. He then has to refer back to the signifiant, in order to check the appropriateness of the combination, a cycle which can be repeated various times. The outcome of this process is an individual concretisation for every member of the au-

¹ Pavis differentiates between various levels of concretisation: the performance, which is based on the concretisation of the text done by the author, and the concretisations made by each member of the audience who sees the play. Due to its restricted length, this article does not give a full introduction to Pavis’s theory but will merely describe in a simplified form the way in which members of the audience make their own concretisation.

² In the following the masculine form is used as the generic form.

dience; variations between them depend on the different perception of the signifiant, the different social contexts and different ways to combine those into a signifié.

If a direct reference taken from the world outside the text is used as the title of a play as in *Guantanamo*, it implicitly indicates to the audience which knowledge they will need in order to understand the play. Therefore they will make use of a narrower social context when searching for the signifié that seems most compatible with the signifiant of the performance and this social context. This effect is intensified by the relatively small range of topics in which context Guantanamo Bay is mentioned (as opposed to other places, such as London for example). Consequently the number of possible concretisations is considerably lower for *Guantanamo* than for many other plays that do not use a toponym or proper nouns in general in the title. Variation is still a factor to be considered, due to different levels of information and different ideological backgrounds of individual members of the audience, but it exists to a lesser extent and the outcome of the process of concretisation is more unified and foreseeable. On the one hand, makers of the play can thus exert a bigger influence on the way in which it is received by predetermining the social context used for its concretisation. On the other hand the use of direct references also means that the reality of the social context and the aspects of the performance to which it will be related share many elements that appear to be very similar such as the entities to which the play refers. The ensuing concretisation will thus establish a particularly close link to the world outside the play.

The description of the process in which direct references change the mode of perception has so far been made solely on the basis of the use of the name of a real space in the title of the play. There are, however, numerous other elements in the play that support this mode of reception; some of these also work with direct references, others can be found on different levels of the play. They all share the effect of linking the world in the play closely to that outside the theatre.

The technique of giving direct references is continued throughout the play with proper names of existing persons (known to the average

London theatre audience) for all the characters in the play³ and further references to other existing persons and groups of people that do not appear on stage, such as Abu Qatada and al-Qaeda (Brittain and Slovo 19, 34), as well as the continuing use of toponyms, e.g. Kandahar or Gambia (24, 9) and the mentioning of some well-known companies such as Argos (14). The culmination of the accuracy of these references is formed by the clear indication of their sources, resembling quotations in academic publications: with the exception of a speech given by the character Donald Rumsfield, all other speeches by characters based on public figures are accompanied by a short text on a dot matrix display (similar to those used for translations in operas in a foreign language) that indicates the precise moment and place for the original speech.⁴ In the speeches by other characters, giving dates that coincide with dates in real time also serves the same function as the use of proper nouns, which is to anchor the theatrical world in a reality located outside the performance.

The same effect is also supported by the use of proper nouns without providing any context for them. Similar to the title which consists of a single word with a quotation that is only understandable to those who are aware of the previous use of that phrase on a sign in Camp Delta, the performance text does not offer any clear explanation for any of the entities to which the text refers. The report of the accusations against Bisher Al-Rawi (19) is not understandable for a member of the audience who does not know that Abu Qatada is suspected of being a leading terrorist and that activities such as flying helicopters are suspicious because of the nature of the attack on the Twin Towers. Thus a spectator who has passed the time since the autumn of 2001 blissfully unaware of the news will probably see some parallels between *Guantanamo* and *The Trial* by Franz Kafka and interpret the play as a parable for arbitrary persecution by a despotic state rather than a comment on a particular

³ Cf. Brittain and Slovo 3 for the *dramatis personae*, all of which have their equivalents in the world outside the play.

⁴ Cf. Brittain and Slovo 5: "Written on the dot matrix: '27th F A Mann Lecture, given by Lord Justice Johan Steyn on 23 November 2003,'" as well as 47 for Jack Straw's speech.

political situation, whereas someone aware of recent events will tend towards a more concrete interpretation.⁵

The capacity of unexplained proper nouns to evoke existing entities in the world outside the theatre is extended to the text in general by the claim that *Guantanamo* is verbatim theatre, i.e. theatre that is entirely based on words originally spoken or written in a non-theatrical context. The degree of accuracy intended to be achieved by the use of verbatim quotation is shown by the use of another academic convention for quotations: on the first page a note explains that “[...] are used throughout to indicate words added to the transcripts for clarification, or to signify a cut.”⁶ Through this device, the complete text is granted the same status as the names of entities outside the text, in that the words originally used outside the situation of the play can refer to situations in the world outside the theatre.

So far these observations have been limited to the text of the play, ignoring the many visual and non-linguistic sound elements that establish a connection to a reality outside the text. For these it is more difficult to show that they establish a direct connection to the world outside the play, as, unlike in the case of proper names, it is hard to establish whether they refer to individual entities or a group of them. How do we know for certain, for example, that the orange boiler suits are based on the clothes worn by prisoners and not by the service team of B&Q? In the social context established by the text, however, their reference in this play can be safely established as unequivocal. The most obvious visual parallels can be found in the wire cages of the stage design and the aforementioned boiler suits, as well as the probably intentional physical similarity between some characters and prominent public figures such as

⁵ It is interesting to note here that the comparison to Kafka has been indirectly made by a journalist in *The Economist* who talked about “a series of Kafkaesque tales that prove doubly unsettling for being true” in his review (anon.). It may also be of interest here that the lack of a more universal level of *Guantanamo* prompted Fiona Maddocks to declare that, although important now, she could not see any future for plays such as *Guantanamo*.

⁶ Brittain and Slovo 5. The strict use of original quotations also raises some interesting questions about authorship, which are implied in a remark on the book cover “by Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo *taken from spoken evidence*.” However, this is a matter that has to be discussed in a longer article.

Donald Rumsfeld and Jack Straw. Although the play uses sound effects sparingly, the singing of the daily Muslim prayers does establish another reference to the conflict associated with Guantanamo.

Other elements that have an influence on the mode of reception are not found within the performance text, but more in the wider context of the performance. One small but significant detail is the fact that the actors do not take a curtain call thus flouting a theatrical convention and reducing the importance of the frame of a theatre performance in which it is presented.

Another important issue is the relationship between this text and others. *Guantanamo* is produced in a series of documentary drama at the Tricycle Theatre, which can have created expectations on the part of the audience and both authors have their backgrounds in other textual formats. This is more significant for Victoria Brittain who was a journalist and now works as a research associate at the LSE, than for novelist Gillian Slovo. Brittain's background as a writer of factual text rather than fiction thus brings *Guantanamo* in connection with a non-fictional genre⁷, a link that is strengthened by the current activities of the two writers: both publish articles and are quoted in articles in national newspapers in which they not only comment on the nature of their play but also on the debate of which Guantanamo Bay has become symbolic. Thus Gillian Slovo's comment in the *Guardian* on Charles Clarke's suggestion to introduce banning and house arrests as an alternative to the Guantanamo-style detention in Belmarsh after it had been ruled illegal by the European Court of Justice (Slovo "Banning, House Arrests...") is accompanied by a note that she is also the author of *Guantanamo*. Victoria Brittain also contributed a number of articles to the *Guardian* in which she gives her opinion on issues related to Camp Delta over the last months, again often with a reference to her authorship of the play (Brittain, "Britain is Complicit..." and Brittain, "Comment and Analysis"). These publications, in a medium that is committed to 'factual' information and comment on the basis of such factual in-

⁷ This has also been mentioned in some reviews, for example in Roger Foss's: "and if you strip away the Camp Delta cages [...] it feels as if journalist Victoria Brittain and novelist Gillian Slovo have created a *Guardian* feature article designed to be read out loud rather than a play" (Foss 829).

formation⁸, raise questions about the differences between these texts provided by the authors and *Guantanamo* which after all shows many similarities in its use of reference and even academic conventions. The boundaries between factual text forms and the play as a piece of fiction are then blurred even further when Victoria Brittain publishes some articles in which she retells the story of some of the detainees and their families, this time not in theatrical form but in a newspaper (Brittain “Questions and Lies” and Brittain “The Ones Left”). Similarly, Gillian Slovo affirms in an article about the play that this task was quite unlike her usual fictional writing: “With *Guantanamo* it’s the reverse. It had to be just their words, not the words I’d have liked them to say” (Rosenthal 18).

In addition to this closeness between the play as a piece of fiction and the factual format of newspapers, some additional details remove *Guantanamo* from the realm of fiction and create a further link to the world outside the play. The theme of the struggle for human rights in the play is visibly extended to the world outside it through the choice of a star guest, who is famous for his participation in the struggle against the apartheid, in the New York production, who gives a question and answer session after the play (Usborne). Similarly the father of one of the detainees is not only present at the first night in London, but is later specifically invited to attend the New York production in order to “campaign for the release of his son” (Slovo “Commentary”).

All these aspects serve to create clear, direct and unequivocal reference between the performance text and a reality outside the play. As demonstrated in the discussion of the title, this has an effect on the mode of reception: being showered by references to a particular historical situation, the spectators will resort mainly to information about this particular and well-defined area when applying a social context to the text in order to arrive at their individual concretisations. As a consequence of this, the range of possible concretisations is considerably

⁸ Cf. the famous quotation from C.P. Scott in the *Manchester Guardian*, 5 May 1921, quoted in Randall 22: “At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply [of news] is not tainted. Neither in what it gives, nor in what it does not give, nor in the mode of presentation, must the unclouded face of the truth suffer wrong. [...] Comment is free but facts are sacred.”

smaller than for a play with less direct references to the world outside the theatre. The question, however is, what consequences this has for the play's status as artistic expression and fiction, as well as for its function.

In his monograph on the semiotics of theatre, Keir Elam not only describes the incompleteness of the dramatic world and its dependence on the world outside the theatre, but also the difference in status that distinguishes them. In the theatre, everything happens in a mode which Elam calls "as if" and the audience is permanently conscious of the difference between the "real world" and that in the theatre (Elam 97–8). Adult members of an audience have long learned that whereas a character can die on stage, the actor portraying him or her will survive; they have understood the rules of make believe. In a certain sense it therefore sounds absurd to claim that this principle does not apply to *Guantanamo* as no one in the audience would suspect that the actors are literally imprisoned in cages on the stage for the entire run of the production. On the other hand, I would argue that the way in which the references to the world have been picked up in the reception of the play cannot be ignored either.

Instead of concentrating on the artistic merits of the play, many reviewers focused on the nature of the information given in the play. In this context it is often seen as a source of information that "shows exactly how innocent bystanders can disappear into the gulag that is Camp X-Ray" (Sierz 829) or that is "filling our heads, almost to bursting, with information of many kinds" (Macaulay 683) or as offering room for "a thorough debate about the issues surrounding Guantanamo" (Spencer 685). Other reviewers chose even more direct words and describe it as "no fictitious affair" (De Jongh 683). In addition, the idea that the standards for a play such as *Guantanamo* are closer to those for factual and informative texts is echoed in the many reviews that praise its objectivity or show concern about the lack of it⁹, apparently also a concern for the authors who include a note in the publication and the programme which explains the unwillingness of any member of the government to

⁹ "It is the cool, calm objectivity of this documentary drama that makes it so powerful and shocking" (Peter 684). "It is also undoubtedly one-sided" (Sierz 829).

be interviewed and the ensuing absence of their point of view (Brittain and Slovo 3).

The idea that the link between *Guantanamo* and the world outside the play is different is also visible in the repeated (though sometimes merely wishful) attempts to use the play in order to influence people in the world outside the theatre: from Mr. Begg's presence during the first night, both in the UK as well as in New York (cf. above), to the many recommendations given in reviews for specific people to see the play, apparently in the hope that this might change their stance on the issues debated¹⁰: these suggestions prove the power attributed to the play to influence events happening outside of the dramatic world created by it. Its close link to the reality outside the text is thus also seen as resulting in a different function of the play: instead of offering primarily an aesthetic experience, it is used as a political instrument. Rather than being understood as a work of art, *Guantanamo* is seen as a comment on life in the form of art.

In terms of the individual play, the conclusion of this discussion is that it is through this change in the mode of perception that the theatrical space of *Guantanamo* brings together the two extremely different spaces of the West End theatre and the military prison in Cuba: by tightening the link between the dramatic world and the actual, existing world of the detainees, the audiences' reactions to the play are not just aimed at the first but also at the latter. Their reaction becomes more similar to those of people watching the news, although their experience is heightened by the physical presence of the actors. Thus the play brings the audience in the theatre into indirect contact with the spaces inhabited by the detainees and their families.

In a broader context, the discussion has shown how the use of direct references can lead to a more narrow and unified reception that is also closely linked to the world outside the text. This is mirrored in the reactions to the play, reactions that give less importance to the aesthetic experience of the play than to the placing of the position presented in

¹⁰ "Even if you've read every word on the subject and especially if you haven't, I urge you to see this show" (Edwardes 684). Charles Spencer notes that the government did not do an interview: "Let's hope that a few, at least, will go and see it" (Spencer 685).

the play in the wide range of positions on the issues connected with Guantanamo Bay. Coming back to Elam's concept of theatre as a space devoted to the "as if," *Guantanamo* is disturbing, as the reactions show that audiences connect the consequences of the situation portrayed in the dramatic world to the world outside the text and want to use the play as a means to change this world. Although they know that it is merely a representation of something else, they are very concerned about whether this representation accurately reflects the original and thus can be seen as a justified intervention in it. This discussion of *Guantanamo* might therefore suggest that one could argue for different kinds of "as ifs." Perhaps fictionality should not be seen as a concept that is or is not valid for a work, but as a concept that should be seen in shades of grey rather than in black and white. One could try to establish a spectrum on which different kinds of fictionality find their place, constituted by a range of different relationships between the worlds inside and outside the play. Of course such a concept would have to be described in more detail, but it could help to explain how different kinds of plays, from verbatim theatre such as *Guantanamo* to biographical plays and political theatre, help to make the theatre one of the spaces where we negotiate different perspectives on our lives outside the theatre.

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SUSAN BLATTÈS AND BERTRAND KOSZUL

From Page to Stage:
Construction of Space in Sarah Kane's
4.48 Psychosis

For an academic in the English department of a French university, work in drama essentially focuses on the text. Although students are encouraged to perform and participate in, or even write plays, it is the dramatic text that we are primarily concerned with. We obviously insist on the fact that most, if not all, of the texts we study are written to be performed and try to underline the implications of this. The idea that texts written to be performed are different from other texts and need to be approached differently has led to a number of works we are all familiar with. Amongst the specific features they highlight in the dramatic text, as far as its theatrical potential is concerned, is the construction of space. As Keir Elam (56) remarks: "There is good reason for arguing that the theatrical text is defined and perceived above all in spatial terms." We are encouraged to read the text, looking out for "localizing techniques" to use Vimala Herman's expression (51) in both the dialogue and stage directions or secondary text. The latter have also been given long overdue attention in several works including *Theatre as Sign System* (Aston and Savona) which devotes two chapters to the subject and attempts to classify the type and function of stage directions throughout the history of the theatre.

However, if such analysis proves fruitful in many instances, it is not always so and Sarah Kane's play *4.48 Psychosis*, 2000,¹ is a case in point. As we will see, the construction of space in a play like this poses many problems, not least because of the virtual absence of any form of secondary text, the primary text itself providing few, if any, specific spatial references. Kane's earlier plays (*Blasted*, 1996 and *Cleansed*, 1998 notably) are, on the contrary, full of precise spatial indicators, often so precise as to push directors' imaginative powers to the limit. Let us remember two particularly striking visual images from *Cleansed*, 2000.² In scene 5, we can read: "A sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their heads" (14) or in scene 8: "The rat begins to eat Carl's right hand" (24). As Kane herself admitted: "I knew some of the stage directions were impossible, but I also genuinely believe you can do anything on stage. There's absolutely nothing you can't represent one way or another" (quoted in Sierz 115). *Crave* (1998) represents a transition in terms of the use of a minimalist secondary text and lack of specific spatial reference.

4.48 Psychosis has virtually done away with the textual indicators that not only help us to make sense of the text, but also help us to read the text as drama and envisage the transfer from page to stage. No speakers are named or identified even by a letter, function or gender. Most of the time we cannot be sure how (or even if), the text is to be allocated to specific speakers. Occasionally a dash is used at the beginning of a line, but Kane is not as systematic as Martin Crimp in *Attempts on her Life* where "a dash at the beginning of a line indicates a change of speaker. If there is no dash, after a pause, it means the same character is speaking" (Crimp, n. pag.). The text has no named or numbered sections (unlike Crimp's named and numbered scenarios). A broken line separates different sections on the page, a typographical indicator that works visually not verbally. There are no references to either time or space in the stage directions. The only stage directions as such, identifiable by the use of specifically coded typographical conventions (brackets and italics), are not particularly informative: silence of varying duration (long or very

¹ All quotations will be taken from this edition.

² This edition incorporates minor revisions of the 1998 edition made by Kane shortly before her death.

long). At first sight, the text does not in fact look much like a dramatic text. It does not make explicit who is speaking to whom, where and when, leading some critics to bypass these questions, either by treating it purely as a dramatic poem or by diverting interest to the links between the work and the dramatist. Sometimes the two approaches are combined. Michael Billington's review in the *Guardian* is typical in this respect. Entitled "How do you judge a 75-minute suicide note?", he writes: "It is not a play in the familiar sense of the word. It is more, in the manner of Kane's penultimate work *Crave*, a dramatised poem." We are not suggesting that critics should disregard the poetic elements of Kane's text, for it is obvious that she has gone to great lengths to foreground this element of her writing, notably through quotations of, or allusions to, other works. We wish to suggest that *4.48* can be analysed as a dramatic rather than a poetic text, that it contains a whole series of theatrical indicators, including spatial indicators, and especially that the theatricality of the text is not to be found by looking at explicit verbal references to the stage, set, props, actors, sound, lights etc. in the dialogue and/or stage directions, but elsewhere. Hence, we shall argue that reading *4.48* need not be a simple linear, single-channel experience in comparison with the complex multi-channel effects offered by a stage performance. To apply (rather boldly) Aston and Savona's definition of performance to a reading experience, the text of *4.48* "draws on a complex and simultaneously operating network unfolding in time and space" (99).

In an attempt to prove this point, we propose to look briefly at the opening sections of *4.48* (3–10), highlighting the ways in which Kane creates a text which is both a poetic and a theatrical experience.³ The opening section of *4.48* (3) consists of a series of remarks preceded by a single dash and separated from the next section by a broken line in the middle of the page.⁴ The remarks, or groups of remarks, — there are

³ When shown these extracts from the beginning of the play in a research seminar, colleagues, who were told nothing about the text or its author, concluded rather hastily that it was a dramatic monologue.

⁴ In the interests of clarity, we propose to number the opening sections, using the broken half-line across the middle of the page as a sign of division. Within each section we will number the lines when this seems useful.

four of them — are separated by stage directions indicating silences of varying durations. In this way, the reader has some perception of the rhythm of the sequence by looking at the page. The propositional content of the section is limited to two elements: the existence of “friends” and the nature of their relationship with the “you.” Although it is not always easy to vary pace on the page, the repetitive nature of the section and the recurrent silences, at regular intervals, give the impression of a slow pace. The reader can also deduce much from this apparently uninformative opening section. There seem to be two participants: one speaker and one listener whose behaviour is coherent throughout the section. The opening line suggests that the speaker is challenging a remark made by the other character, which not only indicates that the action begins *in medias res*, but also shows that the speaker and listener can change roles. This is dialogue not monologue. Information about the identity of the speaker/listener pair and their relationship can be deduced from the repetition of the question (ll. 5–6, 8–9, 11). The fact that the speaker does not reformulate the question suggests firstly, that the absence of response is not attributed to failure of understanding on the part of the listener and secondly, that the speaker feels entitled to insist. The speaker must be in some kind of situation of power or authority to be able to do this. The same question is asked twice, followed by a long silence. The speaker’s unusual patience seems to imply that he recognises that his apparently straightforward question is one that the listener will find deeply disturbing and difficult to answer. These features of the dialogue together with the subject matter hints at a doctor/patient consultation. This is confirmed later on (34–35). By not stating this explicitly, the dramatist invites the reader to look not only at what the words mean, but how they are placed and organised on the page. Our interpretation begins to involve more than simple linguistic skills, since it requires social and cultural knowledge.

Before we read one word of section 2 (3–4), the visual signs of difference stand out. The broken line running across part of the page evokes discontinuity of one sort or another. There are no dashes here, no punctuation in the first part and no personal pronouns. The use of the simple present and the indefinite article gives us the impression that

we are reading a description. This is not typical of drama, which usually concentrates on the “here” and the “now.”

This section is broken up into smaller parts by indentation and spaces first of all. There are further differences when we read the text. There are no pronouns or punctuation in the first part, no indication of the identity of the speaker or listener. Although some indirect echoes connect the different parts of section 2 to one another, the layout of the page emphasizes difference and discontinuity. Hence the second part of section 2 involves a shift in tense (l. 6), the introduction of the personal pronoun “I” and “me,” punctuation and a question addressed to someone (l. 7). Part 3 (ll. 8–10) reverts back to the linguistic and typographical style of part 1. Without trying to interpret the text, we can see how it mixes elements of continuity and discontinuity through a series of oppositions (light/dark, remember/forget, speaking/silence, I/they, etc.). Dramatic tension is hinted at through words and structures, the spacing of the lines on the page, all suggesting different levels of tension, culminating in a kind of temporary calm achieved through the reconciliation of “light” and “night” in rhyme at the end of the section (4). Rhyme presented in this way catches our eye, as sound might function on stage.

Section 3 (4–6) continues the practice of combining linguistic and visual indicators by adopting yet another style in the lay-out of the page. When we look at section 3 we experience an immediate sense of change and rupture, noticing the distribution of the lines on the page, before we actually read them. The act of reading itself is interrupted by the visual presentation of the text, which seems to invite interpretation. We notice at once the predominance of short lines beginning with the pronoun “I,” some without punctuation. These utterances are all lined up on the left of the page, making the longer lines stand out. The lay-out suggests how an actor might speak the lines, gives a rhythm to the text, slows it down and breaks it up. The short one-line utterances make the double or triple line ones more obvious. The end of the section contains more linguistic and typographical variety (see especially ll. 38–40). This would not be the case with a conventional lay-out. The point is that in *4.48* the page can transmit multiple types of meaning to the reader simultaneously, without being restricted to the reader’s linear processing of linguistic signs.

Again, continuity and discontinuity can be identified in relation to the previous sections. Continuity, which could be made visible on stage by the presence of the actor, can here be seen in the presence of the “I.” While sharing some of the preoccupations or obsessions with the “I” in section 2 (anguish and distress notably), the “I” in this section is presented differently, inhabiting a more precise spatio-temporal universe. We can notice the variety in the verbal forms — tense, mode and aspect vary — and the precise temporal reference to the time mentioned in the play’s title (l. 26). There is perhaps a hint at the gender of the speaker in the reference to “hips” (l. 24). A woman seems more likely to use this word than a man. The reference to others (“lover,” “brother,” “some”) indirectly connects with the others of section 1, the “friends” referred to repeatedly by the speaker. We are led to wonder if Kane is not using the different textual styles as ways of presenting the different features of the character at different moments, in different circumstances, sometimes highlighting the public and sometimes the private persona. However, it is difficult to determine whether section 3 is to be understood as occurring before, after, or at the same time as section 2. It should also be noted that it is impossible to decide where the speaker is located. At most, we can feel that there is a spatial and/or temporal break with the previous section.

Section 4 (6) is the most surprising of the opening sections: a series of numbers scattered across the page, reminiscent of a join-up-the-dots children’s puzzle. We may feel inclined first to look at the overall shape on the page in an effort to understand. We may then look at individual numbers to see if they have any particular symbolic significance. The first number 100 is easy enough to interpret as a sign of wholeness or integrity, but after that, if we choose the mathematical approach, there is a movement from right to left, which foregrounds the act of reading, from the highest to the lowest number, with two numbers (42, 21) out of sequence. Spatial movement here is not smooth or regular. We may imagine a game or a countdown. Whatever interpretation chosen, the reader cannot but notice that the eye strays across the page, left to right, up and down, searching for meaning. The page becomes a kind of stage. The reader is liberated from the steady, forward, left to right movement of the act of reading. Here a variety of movement and rhythm (forwards

and backwards, acceleration and deceleration), similar to what might be achieved through movement on the stage, is brought into play. A later series of numbers (30) gives a totally different impression: the numbers are lined up on the left hand side of the page, in decreasing order. We move down from 100 to 2, 7 by 7. Here the spatial image is one of verticality, suggesting an irrevocable, albeit regular, downward movement.

There is little to connect section 4 with section 3: no "I," no thematic or linguistic continuity. The only link we can note is the use of the page to suggest patterns, a sense of random or erratic movement, scattered points of call in a journey or quest, that of the reader echoing that of the character. Here again a simple linear reading is impossible, the numbers call out to be approached from different angles.

Section 5 (6–8) at first glance seems less obviously visual and combines elements from sections 2 and 3. We are nevertheless struck by the lay-out of the page: the use of blanks, the way short parts stand out against much longer ones, indentations. The text here is very dense, although not uniformly so. Whereas sections 2 and 3 essentially remain located in an uncertain and undefined present, section 5 contains precise temporal references to the past, "two years ago," and to a particular space, an experience in hospital, evoked through many references to doctors and their activities. Without explicitly saying so, the text moves back and forth in time, occasionally giving us the impression that we are witnessing events as they happen (some utterances could be part of a dialogue, ll. 25–26 for example), and occasionally suggesting a gap between the events and/or dialogue and the speaker's perception of it (see ll. 1–4). Reported speech and direct speech intermingle. More importantly, this section deliberately foregrounds the text as text. The experiences evoked are not referred to as physical or emotional experiences but as texts: "And my mind is the subject of these bewildered fragments" (8). Repetition and the use of tertiary rhythm likewise foreground the materiality of the text. We could note the repetition in l. 8: "Dr This and Dr That and Dr Whatsit," in l. 25: "Shame shame shame," or in l. 27: "Inscrutable doctors, sensible doctors, way-out doctors."

For contrast, we can conclude by looking at the sixth section (8–10). It is the one section that can easily be read as dialogue with two speakers taking turns in a logical way. Dashes are used to signal the change of

speaker.⁵ Just as on stage the spectator works out the identity of the speaker, by gradually amassing information, and interpreting signs of different sorts, Kane leaves the reader to work out the details of who is speaking, where and when. It is possible to link the first speaker here with the speaker of the opening section, not only through what s/he says, but also through the type of remark made, notably the predominance of questions. There are, however, a number of differences between the two sections. Firstly, speaker number one now manages to get speaker number two to communicate verbally. The silences here are not signs of speaker 2's refusal to answer questions. In fact, silences follow both remarks made by speaker 1 and remarks made by speaker 2 (see ll. 11, 14). Speaker 2 has much in common with the "I" of sections 2, 3 and 5 in terms of content and style. The "gallows humour," the "I" refers to in section 5 is apparent here in speaker 2's reaction to speaker 1's dismissal of the list of methods to commit suicide: "It couldn't possibly be misconstrued as a cry for help" (8). Once again, the referential or interactional functions of the text give way to a more self-reflexive element. The section ends with an animated discussion about the difference between metaphors and similes. Speaker 2 explains: "It's not a metaphor, it's a simile, but even if it were, the defining feature of a metaphor is that it's real" (ll. 26–7).

The extreme formal diversity of the opening sections continues throughout *4.48 Psychosis*. A further variation is introduced at a later stage: the page is divided into two, with words on both sides, presented either simultaneously (24) or in alternation (41). Otherwise we may consider the six opening sections as a kind of cycle taking us through diverse forms of spatial experimentation in the dramatic text. The image of the cycle again refutes the idea of linear progression. It would, however, be a mistake to see this purely as a formal game. Kane's decision to substitute different textual, typographical or other visual signs for the more conventional signs of spatialisation/localisation is not a rejection of theatricality or a denial of the text's performance potential. On the contrary, it could be argued that Kane seeks a different kind of spatial construction which requires new textual techniques. The space she sets

⁵ Throughout *4.48*, punctuation and typography are almost as important as words.

out to create in *4.48* is not the clearly identifiable, nameable space of conventional drama. She seems more interested in a space which is unstable, in constant flux. Her characters inhabit a world of uncertainty. The text therefore does not attempt to deny or conceal these uncertainties concerning the nature of identity or experience, the thin line between words and thoughts, past and present, the world of the mind and the world of the body.

The uncertainties of the spoken word that the stage has immense potential to challenge or confirm are here highlighted by other textual strategies: the use of the page and textual space. It is worth noting that the effects achieved by the variations of punctuation go some way to creating the changes in pace and tone that the actor can use during performance. However, punctuation changes of the kind used by Kane in this work are immediately noticeable on the page. This is not necessarily the case for changes in speed of delivery or other vocal variations on stage. The reader is thus invited to approach this text in a more active manner which is close to, or at least recalls a theatrical experience. Just as in performance we pay attention to much more than the dialogue, in this work, we read the page and not just the words.

So far we have systematically avoided referring to *4.48 Psychosis* as a "play" even though this reluctance would most probably disappear during a performance and does not seem appropriate in the case of Kane's other works. This is because we can argue that the text becomes a play through the type of reading we have been advocating: this multi-faceted, multi-layered reading which is sensitive to space, movement, rhythm, visual effects and which can never be simply linear.

The paradox of *4.48* is that it is an eminently theatrical text that makes no reference to the stage, set, performers, lighting, sound or music. It is a text which involves the reader at every step, intellectually, emotionally and aesthetically. We cannot simply read the lines; we become involved in the creative process. Reading *4.48* is like looking at a map without the key. By not providing the key, Kane leaves much of the construction of space up to the reader and hereby ensures that the act of reading is a disorienting, confusing or even disturbing experience close to that of the main "I" in *4.48*. Ultimately, the disruption of spatial and temporal continuity and the dissociation of signifiers and signified to-

gether give the reader a taste of the play's many performance possibilities.

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CHRISTINA WALD

“What discoveries do we bring back from that alien terrain?”¹

The Spatialisation of Trauma and the Exploration of the Paedophile’s Mind in Bryony Lavery’s *Frozen*

In Bryony Lavery’s award winning² play *Frozen*, the psychiatrist Dr Agnetha Gottmundsdottir considers herself to be on an expedition through “the Arctic sea of the criminal brain” (67). In her concluding lecture she asks: “What discoveries do we bring back from that alien terrain to help to make our inner and outer landscape warmer safer kinder better?” (67). This question puts in a nutshell central concerns and techniques of the play: *Frozen* understands and explores the psyche in terms of space and invests external spaces with psychic meaning. The play’s title announces the central metaphor of a frozen ocean, which synthesizes defining qualities of traumatised experience. If the ocean represents the overwhelming, violent quality of the traumatic experience, the *frozen* ocean indicates how much the characters remain captured in and paralysed by their past experiences. The psychiatric lectures of Agnetha suggest that the mind of the child abuser and serial killer Ralph is akin to

¹ *Frozen* 67. All other page references in brackets refer to *Frozen*.

² *Frozen* won a Theatrical Management Association Best New Play Award and the Eileen Anderson Central Television Award for Best Play in 1998.

the arctic because early childhood traumata had an arresting, “freezing” impact on Ralph’s neuronal structures. Nancy, the mother of one of his victims, for the greatest part of the play is suspended in “frozen mourning” for her lost daughter Rhona.³ The third on-stage character, Agnetha, is likewise in a state of traumatising, as she is unable to overcome the sudden death of her colleague and secret lover, David. In the play’s opening scene, the psychiatrist manages her break-down in an almost comically professional manner. Being split into therapist and traumatised patient, she tries to guide herself through her fits of crying and despair.

While the notion of a psychic topology has been a well-established figure of thought ever since Freud’s model of the layered self and his dictum that the ego is no longer the master in its own house⁴, the suggestion that the mind of the paedophile criminal is an “uncertain territory” that needs to be mapped means an innovation in terms of dramatic genre. *Frozen* can be situated in the context of a number of plays since the late 1980s which have tackled the issue of sexual child abuse. I will

³ Ever since Freud’s “Trauer und Melancholie” [“Mourning and Melancholia”], melancholy has been understood as a state of frozen mourning. Contemporary psychology labels melancholy “dysthymia” or “neurotic depression” and acknowledge that severe cases of frozen mourning, which are often triggered by the sudden loss of one’s own child, can involve post-traumatic stress disorders. Therefore, contemporary psychology and psychiatry differentiates between the neurotic aetiology of melancholy as described by Freud, and the psychotraumatic aetiology (cf. Fischer and Hammel 54), which I employ in the following.

⁴ Cf. Freud: “Die dritte und empfindlichste Kränkung aber soll die menschliche Größensucht durch die heutige psychologische Forschung erfahren, welche dem Ich nachweisen will, daß es nicht einmal Herr im eigenen Hause [ist]” (*Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* 295) [the third and most severe offence for human megalomania is exerted by the psychological research which argues that the Ego is no longer the master in its own house]. Cf. also: “Die einzig typische, d.h. regelmäßige Darstellung der menschlichen Person als Ganzes ist die als Haus, wie Scherner erkannt hat” (154) [The only typical, i.e. common depiction of the human being as a whole is the house, as Scherner has recognised]. Freud refers to the dream scholar Karl Albert Scherner, who published *Das Leben des Traums* (*The Life of the Dream*) in 1861.

label this body of texts "Trauma Drama,"⁵ a body to which playwrights such as Sarah Daniels, Marina Carr, Phyllis Nagy, Mark Ravenhill, and Arnold Wesker contributed. Early plays of Trauma Drama focus on (predominantly female) victims of domestic and often incestuous child abuse. The plays can be contextualised in the intense public debate which followed the Cleveland affair in 1987. In these plays, the abuser tends to be either an off-stage character or a flat, static villain character, who serves as antagonist.

In addition to Lavery's *Frozen*, the male perpetrator⁶ has become the centre of interest for playwrights in a number of plays since the late 1990s, such as Alan Bennett's *Playing Sandwiches* (1998) and his latest stage play *The History Boys* (2004), Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* (2003), David Hines's *Nymphs and Shepherds* (2004), Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's *Fresh Kills* (2004), and Kevin Elyot's *Forty Winks* (2004).⁷ These plays scrutinise a figure that, according to Ian Hacking, has become a touchstone of our moral standards: "our whole value system has been affected by the trajectory of child abuse in the past thirty years, with a compelling new constellation of absolute moral evil: child abuse" (259–60).⁸ Following Hacking's suggestion that the child abuser has

⁵ Anna Reading's *Kiss Punch Goodnight* (1988), Victoria Hardie's *Sleeping Nightie* (1989), David Spencer's *Killing the Cat* (1990), Sarah Daniels's *Beside Herself* (1990), *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992) and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994), Kay Trainor's *Bad Girl* (1992), Spin/Stir's show *Naming* (1994), Phyllis Nagy's *Butterfly Kiss* (1994), Dennis Lumborg's *One Fine Day* (1995), Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), Mike Cullen's *Anna Weiss* (1997), Claire Dowie's *Easy Access (for the Boys)* (1998), Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), Shelagh Stephenson's *Five Kinds of Silence* (2000), Judith Jones and Beatrix Campbell's *And All the Children Cried* (2002), Claire McIntyre's *The Maths Tutor* (2003), and Debbie Tucker-Green's *Born Bad* (2003) belong to Trauma Drama.

⁶ While plays such as Dowie's *Easy Access* have come to represent male victims of sexual child abuse, the figure of the perpetrator remains male in Trauma Drama, with very few exceptions such as Clare Pollard's *The Weather* (2004).

⁷ Like Lavery's play, Simon Stephens's *One Minute* (2004), Robert Evans's *A Girl in a Car with a Man* (2004), Shelagh Stephenson's *Enlightenment* (2005) deal with the disappearance of children.

⁸ Cf. also Alan Bennett's remark in *Talking Heads 2* that according to the moral standards set by the tabloid press, "murder and grievous bodily harm are thought of as respectable crimes and sexual offences are not [...] the press hysteria over paedo-

become a pivotal point of our moral standards, the play's metaphor of the abuser's mind as the Northern Pole, the pivot of the earth, gains yet another meaning. However, notwithstanding that *Frozen* presents a particularly "evil" version of the child abuser, namely a serial killer, the play affords a differentiated and almost sympathetic perspective on this usually demonised figure.

Given the heightened public interest in cases of child abuse and murder, one could of course suspect Lavery, and indeed all playwrights of Trauma Drama, of sensationalism and of the cynic attempt to profit from the "trauma industry."⁹ However, Lavery's portrayal of the serial killer avoids sensationalism. Neither does the play dwell on the gruesome details of Ralph's murders or on his fantasies, nor does it glamorise the serial killer, presenting him as yet another version of the intellectually brilliant and charismatic serial killer in the manner of Hannibal Lecter.¹⁰

If the play spatialises trauma by referring to the frozen arctic sea, does it also traumatise space? Do productions of *Frozen* create on-stage spaces that can be aligned with the spatial logics of trauma? In order to address this question, I will focus on the original British production at the Birmingham Rep directed by Bill Alexander and designed by Ruari Murchison in 1998, which was revised at the National Theatre in 2002. Occasionally, I will also refer to the first American production by MCC (Manhattan Class Company) Theater, which was directed by Doug Hughes and designed by Hugh Landwehr. This production opened in New York City in 2004 and had a successful run at the Broadway, which earned the play four Tony nominations.

philia, and in particular offences that occurred long in the past, has reached dangerous proportions [...]" (16–17).

⁹ For a critical examination of the trauma industry, see Kilby, esp. 218.

¹⁰ Agnetha at one point refers to this type when she calls Ralph "manipulative and intense and kinda mesmerising like a rattlesnake" (41). Nonetheless, the play text represents Ralph as a rather dull and banal character rather than as a fascinating and charismatic killer. The performances of *Frozen* have not supported Agnetha's characterisation of Ralph, either.

The Traumatisation of Space

Frozen's temporal and spatial structure and its dramatic mode reflect its central topic of traumatisation. *Frozen* enacts the spatial logic of trauma, which is closely connected with trauma's temporal structure of belatedness. As most other plays of Trauma Drama,¹¹ it offers pre-traumatic and post-traumatic perspectives but does not stage the actual moments of trauma, such as Rhona's abuse and murder and the abuse and neglect Ralph allegedly suffered from as a child. The absence of the traumatic scene on stage matches the principle of trauma theory that the traumatic experience as such eludes narrative memory. An event has traumatic consequences if it is so intense and happens so sudden and unexpectedly that the subject is unable to grasp it psychically at the moment of occurrence but merely can register it physically. Only belatedly does the traumatic impact of the event become palpable through somatic symptoms, anxiety dreams, or flashbacks which make the traumatised subject repeatedly re-enact the traumatic scene. The paradoxical time structure of traumatisation hence implies that for the traumatised individual, the trauma happened in a past that can never be fully present.

The second scene of *Frozen* is a flashback in terms of *dramatic* time structure. It is set 25 years earlier than Scene One, namely on the day of Rhona's disappearance; it might, however, also be a *belatedly traumatic* flashback in Nancy's memory, the return to the day of Rhona's murder. If the scene can be understood as a compulsive flashback, *Frozen* stages a traumatic time structure, which blurs the boundary between subjective reality, when Nancy did not know what happened to Rhona, and objective reality, in which Rhona was already tortured and killed. The conflation of external and internal reality, which is a common device in Trauma Drama, not only affects the play's chronological order, but also its settings, blurring the spatial boundaries and causing a sense of dislocation that is typical of trauma: "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its [...] refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time" (Caruth 9).

¹¹ Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill* is an exception to this pattern.

The stage designs of the British and the American production can be read both as the frozen *inner* landscape of the characters' minds and as external settings. While the American production uses a backdrop of dark blue ice to evoke the arctic wasteland, Bill Alexander's production is set on a white, empty, square platform, which subtly suggests an ice floe. The backside of the platform is limited by a curtain of light and smoke through which the characters enter and leave the stage. This curtain gives the production a surreal and dream-like quality, which is reinforced by suggestive piano and vibraphone live music as well as by recorded sound effects, such as girls' laughter.¹² The production does without detailed realistic scenery in its creation of the play's settings such as Nancy's house, Ralph's shed, the prison, and the lecture hall. The rooms and places are instead demarcated by means of light and are, in some scenes, specified through a characteristic prop or piece of furniture. The bare stage, the curtain of light and smoke, the live music, the sound effects as well as the evocative lighting reinforce the ambivalent setting between external space and psychic landscape.

For the first third of the play, the characters never meet in the arctic wasteland. The structure of interchanging monologues becomes predictable and makes the play appear almost as frozen in repetition compulsions as its protagonists. The production reinforces the structural repetitions through the actors' use of stage space. With very few exceptions, the actors enter the stage with a prop that defines their scene and utter their monologues facing the audience without further onstage movement. It is only after one third of the play, when Agnetha visits Ralph in prison, that two of the characters meet. Nancy does not enter the same space with another character until late in the play. However, the production suggests the interlocking of the characters' spaces from an earlier point onwards. Rather than reserving particular areas of the stage for each character, their onstage spaces overlap. For example, the large rectangle of light which creates Rhona's room transmutes into the smaller square room, which stands for the shed where Ralph files his videos of

¹² Although the original production did without the sounds of splintering ice described below, it realised those sound effects required by the text which evoke the characters' thoughts and memories; for example, the audience hears sounds of girls laughing as Ralph recalls the abductions (37).

child pornography. In the latter half of the show, the production reinforces the spatial association of the characters by staging scenes simultaneously, with having two or all characters on stage together. Thus, the dissociation of spaces in the first half of the play leads to a reassembling and integration in the second half. The use of stage space becomes a figure for the logics of the resolution of trauma.¹³

Psychotopographies I: Nancy

Moreover, *Frozen* establishes a close interaction between internal and external space through presenting specific rooms as “symptoms,” for example for Nancy’s psychic pain. During the twenty years that Nancy hopes that her missing daughter will return, she attempts to preserve Rhona’s room exactly as it was when she left. She forbids her husband Bob and her daughter Ingrid to change or even enter the room. Nancy’s desire to freeze her daughter’s realm reflects and fuels her fixation on Rhona’s return. However, the play introduces a catachresis on the level of metaphor, when Nancy begins to work for the organisation *Flame*, which is devoted to finding missing children. Nancy phrases the task of *Flame* in one of her public talks as follows: “FLAME is about / just that... / keeping that flame of hope alive / keep it burning / so that our missing children / can see its light / and feel its warmth / and come towards it” (24). In Nancy’s eyes, Rhona’s *frozen* room nourishes her *flame* of hope. Other than Nancy, Rhona’s elder sister Ingrid is preoccupied with imagery of frost and death. She has nightmares about a body she lost in the Arctic which gradually disappears under the ice, without Ingrid being able to save it.¹⁴ Ingrid’s anxiety dream presents a

¹³ Lavery emphasises that the eventual encounter of the three characters is more than a plot device but stands for a vision of social change: “The three characters are from separate worlds. At the opening of the play, they are frozen in their opinions and their isolation, but gradually they have to deal with one another [...]. If the victim and the perpetrator and science remain in separate worlds, it can never get better” (Wood).

¹⁴ Although she had decided on the play’s title beforehand, Lavery took this image over from Marian Partington, the sister of the murdered Lucy Partington. The Partington case was among the cases that influenced Lavery’s writing. Like the family depicted in *Frozen*, the Partingtons had not known what happened to Lucy for

displaced version of her experience of loss. Although Rhona is no longer present for the family, she stays as alive and fresh in their thoughts as the body preserved by ice. The image of the almost invisible body surrounded by impenetrable ice also appears as a metaphor for traumatisa-tion as such; like the original event that causes trauma, it is inaccessible for narrative memory, but at the same time it directs the lives of the family members, particularly of Nancy, in ways beyond their control.

Twenty years after Rhona's disappearance, Ralph is arrested and Rhona's family learns that she was abused, killed, and buried in a shed that is close to their home. While the sad certainty of loss makes the offstage characters Ingrid and Bob, Rhona's sister and father, slowly leave behind their frozen states of sustained hope and held-back grief, it does not have an equally mobilising impact on Nancy. It is only the quality of her paralysis that changes; rather than being fixated on the hope for Rhona's return, Nancy becomes absorbed in hatred of Ralph and fantasies of revenge:

I'd like to see him die
Watch him
Suffer

twenty years, until Fred West confessed her murder. In 1996, Marian Partington reflected on Lucy's loss in an article in *The Guardian* entitled "Salvaging the Sacred." Partington wrote:

It is very difficult to find the words or an image to describe the pain and disori-entation of one's sister simply disappearing without trace, for 20 years. It is a bit like trying to search for a body that is trapped somewhere beneath the frozen Arctic ocean, as the freeze continues and the ice thickens and there is no sign of a thaw, no sign of a seal hole. The features of that world become distorted as the seasons pass and the ice builds up, and you have to go inside to get warm if you want to survive and carry on. But you have to be ready for the thaw, for the res-cue. Somewhere inside I became disconnected from the past and disabled by the future. (Quoted in Gardner)

The play's scene in which Nancy caresses the skull of her dead daughter likewise draws on Partington's account of burying her sister's bones (cf. Gardner).

For her portrayal of Ralph, Lavery has conflated characteristics of several serial killers. She particularly mentions Frederick West and Robert Black (cf. Wood). Ralph's lines contain verbatim quotes from Black; like Black, Ralph describes the murders as a "rush of blood" (12) and claims that he just wants to "spend some time with" (12) the girls he abducts (for the phrases by Black see Gekowski).

He wouldn't suffer like she suffered
but it would be something
An eye for an eye (37)

Just as the preservation of Nancy's hope and her desperate holding on to the lost happy past was visualised in her freezing of Rhona's room, the play expresses Nancy's destructive and vengeful urge in her attitude towards the place of Rhona's death. In the original production, Nancy, played by Anita Dobson, re-enacts the shed's demolition as if she had taken it down herself with her fists, which shows her identification with the bulldozer's activity. Her feelings after the demolition demonstrate to which degree she had invested the place with psychic meaning: "within minutes / it was gone / it was like my heart torn out of my chest / and oh / there was nothing there any more / nothing at all / just nothingness" (43).

While the series of Nancy's monologues express increasing paralysis and numbness, the level of sound effects establishes a counter-narrative to Nancy's own experience of her inner states. After the scene in which Nancy learns that Rhona was killed, the audience hears "ice floes breaking up" (29). The sound effect retrospectively underlines that Nancy was frozen rather than alive in her hope for Rhona's return. After Nancy has articulated her feeling of emptiness and nothingness in the face of the demolished shed, the play inserts "a sound of splintering ice floes" (43) and later on "[f]ar away, something falls from a great height... fractures" (44), "[s]omewhere, some liquid starts dripping slowly" (51) and audiences hear the "sound of something breaking" (51).

While Nancy experiences herself as psychically dead — "I think I am as near to being not alive any more as I've ever been" (48) — the metaphorical level conveyed by sound suggests a process of melting, of recovery from "frozen mourning." Again, the metaphor of melting corresponds with concepts employed by trauma theory. The psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman describes the process of recovering from trauma as a form of melting: "Out of the fragmented components of frozen imaginary and sensation, patient and therapist slowly reassemble an organized, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" (Herman 177). Nancy's process of recovery is guided by her daughter Ingrid, who provides her mother with esoteric advice, which

once again spatialises Nancy's psychic development. She says, "Mum... / You're in a Very Bad Space [...] Let It [her anger] Go. / Make Space for Other Things To Enter Your Heart" (55). The play introduces Ingrid's recommendations as comical elements, which Nancy initially dismisses: "She's got this new way of talking... / It's like listening to a Diet and Exercise Book" (55). Nonetheless, Nancy eventually takes serious Ingrid's advice to leave behind her grief for Rhona as well as her hatred of Ralph. In a scene called "The secret art of Feng-Shui," the play shows that Nancy's psychic effort of "making space" is closely connected to changes in actual rooms. As the doctrine of Feng-Shui allows for the flow of energy, Nancy's redecoration once again makes the flow of psychic energy possible; Rhona's room is "unfrozen," it again becomes part of the house of Nancy's psyche. Nancy feels that the "the whole house is bigger now" (65) and that she has "no malice" in her "No nothing. / Just space / for / something fresh" (66).

Psychotopographies II: Ralph

The opening quote introduced the psychotopography of the criminal brain as the frozen arctic sea. In her lectures to the audience, Agnetha claims that past childhood traumata had a damaging, freezing impact on Ralph. Presenting the perpetrator as an erstwhile victim of abuse, the play follows a well established explanatory pattern not only for sexual child abuse, but also for serial killing. Mark Seltzer states in his study on criminological and fictional portraits of serial killers that "child abuse — wounded as a child, wounding as an adult — is one of the foundational scripts in accounting for the serial killer" (1998: 4). Seltzer calls attention to the fact that the notion of the victim-turned-perpetrator has almost become a *conditio sine qua non* in our attempts to understand serial killers: "Such an explanation has become virtually automatic in literature (factual and fictional) on serial killing assuming a peculiarly a priori status, even where evidence for it is conspicuously absent" (257).¹⁵

¹⁵ For an example of the pattern in German literature on serial killers, see Paul Moor's study on Jürgen Bartsch with the programmatic title *Opfer und Täter* [Victim and Perpetrator] (Rowohlt 1991).

While Seltzer points out how difficult it is to determine what counts as the “real” foundation of trauma, *Frozen* offers such a proof of Ralph’s psychic damage by resorting to the “cold facts” of neurobiology. Lavery weaves results of current neurobiological research into Agnetha’s lectures, which trace the damaging impact of childhood traumata on the brain structure. Once again resorting to the play’s central metaphor, Agnetha suggests that Ralph’s neuronal structure is “ice-bound” (37) in the immature state of a child. Her argument is based on the assumption that severe childhood abuses impair the development of the brain, more specifically the cortex and the frontal lobes, which are responsible for key human abilities, such as empathy, moral judgement and adaptation to new situations:¹⁶

The cortex and the frontal lobes
are there to provide judgment,
to organise behaviour
and decision-making
to learn and stick to
rules of everyday life.
Ladies and Gentlemen...
they are responsible for making us human.
I intend here to examine
what goes wrong with that humanity
which can make certain individuals appear inhuman (35)

¹⁶ Lavery took so little poetic licence in using research on the corporeality of trauma that she was accused of plagiarism. Seeing *Frozen* during its run on Broadway last year, the psychiatrist Dr. Dorothy Otnow Lewis, professor at the New York City University School of Medicine, believed not only to have recognised central theses as published in her book *Guilty by Reason of Insanity* but she also claimed that Lavery used her biographical details for the character of Agnetha, such as about Lewis’s collaboration with her colleague Jonathan Pincus. See Thorpe and Gladwell for reports on the accusation and Lavery’s reaction.

Agnetha presents Ralph as a body of evidence within her lectures.¹⁷ She makes him undergo a number of physical tests which prove her theory. Not only Ralph's body language, but also his verbal statements seem to endorse Agnetha's theory. Ralph claims not to have perceived the pain and fear of his victims and even believes that they collaborated with his plans. He says about Rhona: "I think she quite liked me / oh yes / she was interested / [...] she's persuaded it's time to get in the van" (13–14). Unable to sense the wrongness of the murders, Ralph bluntly states: "The only thing I am sorry about is that it's not legal [...] Killing girls" (62).

Agnetha's use of Ralph's body as an exhibit in her lectures repeats the criminological practice, which likewise scrutinised Ralph's body as a body of evidence. Just as Agnetha traces the traumata that are tattooed onto Ralph's neuronal structures, the police examines the tattoos on Ralph's skin, which he proudly presents to the audience in one of his earlier monologues. He describes in detail in which tattoo shops he had them made. When again explaining their genesis to the police after his arrest, his body becomes a map, which allows tracing his movement through the country and establishes his criminal history. I would suggest that the tattooing also serves as a displacement activity, which once again connects outside and inside: as Ralph got a tattoo after each of the seven murders, the imprints on the surface of his body can be interpreted as a compensation for the lack of imprint which the murders made in terms of internal, psychobiological change.

As the play initially underpins Agnetha's vision of the criminal brain as the frozen arctic sea, it forecloses the dramatic possibilities of character development; for the greatest part of the play, Ralph remains a static character. On a larger scale, and this brings in the issue of theatre as a space for social negotiation, Ralph's characterisation raises the question of how we understand character, not only on but also beyond the stage.

¹⁷ Characterising Agnetha as a "psychiatric explorer," Lavery presents a female figure in the traditionally male position of the explorer and the psychiatrist. As Ralph becomes an exhibit in her lectures for the audience, the play inverts the gendered positions of patient and doctor, of body of evidence and scientist, of terra incognita and explorer as displayed, for example in Anna Furse's *Augustine (Big Hysteria)*, Kim Morrissey's *Dora: A Case of Hysteria*, Christopher Hampton's *The Talking Cure* and Snoo Wilson's *Sabina*.

If we are, as Agnetha thinks, determined by heredity and early childhood experiences and henceforth directed by “frozen” brain structures, moral responsibility is an obsolete concept. Accordingly, Agnetha considers Ralph’s murders to be symptoms rather than sins (67). However, her research is not at all concerned with curing these symptoms. Assuming irreparable early childhood damage to the brain, she forecloses the possibility that Ralph’s ice-bound personality might change.

Nevertheless, the play’s plot ultimately transcends Agnetha’s deterministic theory and allows for Ralph’s, if lethal, transformation into “a more human being.” The eventual confrontation of the killer and the victim’s mother leads to the play’s turning point. At the beginning of their conversation, Ralph refuses to believe that Rhona was afraid when he abducted, abused, and killed her. However, Nancy increasingly guides him towards empathy with his victim. When she makes Ralph talk about his own childhood, he begins to re-enact the verbal and physical abuses he suffered from as a child, playing the roles of both the victim and the perpetrator. Ralph imitates his father’s voice and re-lives the child’s bodily reactions to the father’s blows (72). The scene depicts Ralph’s memory as a flashback and acting out in the psychoanalytical sense, in which the overwhelming traumatic event is again lived through physically rather than understood psychically. As in the case of Nancy’s physical re-enactment of the demolition of the shed, the moment is given particular emphasis because it breaks with the play’s generally diegetic mode of telling rather than showing.

Ralph re-enacts the abuses, as he has not yet managed to place the traumatic memories into a narrative context, which would give them meaning. The subsequent exchange with Nancy offers Ralph a narrativisation and interpretation of his experiences, and hence bears the characteristics of a “talking cure.” With the help of Nancy, Ralph learns to categorise his own erstwhile feelings as pain and fear. When Nancy subsequently makes Ralph compare his own fear as a child with Rhona’s terror, Ralph starts to cry (72–73) and begins to feel intense pain in his chest. Unaccustomed to his own emotions, he interprets the pain as lung cancer rather than remorse, as suggested by Agnetha and through a later scene in which Ralph attempts to apologise to Nancy in a letter (74).

Ralph's letter and the psychosomatic symptom of chest pain contradict Agnetha's theory of frozen structures of thinking and feeling. Locating Ralph's emotion of remorse in his heart rather than his head, the play distances itself from the "cold facts" of neurobiology and once more rewrites the map of Ralph's body. While beforehand his damaged brain was cast as the "centre of operations" (17) which foreclosed feelings such as pity, the ending suggests an alternative centre which allows for remorse "from the bottom of [his] heart" (74). Attaining the ability of reflection and moral judgement, the very characteristics that Agnetha defined as human, Ralph realises how inhumane his past crimes were. Unable to deal with this insight, Ralph commits suicide. The play's ending endorses the versatility of its central metaphor: The melting of ice suggests seasonal change and has a positive note for Nancy, as it allows for a second spring. In Ralph's case, the thawing has lethal consequences. As the Arctic Ocean melts, Ralph drowns in a flood of remorse.

Agnetha's lecture on the difference between a crime of evil and a crime of illness asks for a reconsideration of the "distinctions between right and wrong / between the speakable and the unspeakable / between the forgivable and the unforgivable" (68). Through Ralph's eventual insight into the cruelty of his deeds, it even offers the consoling idea that Ralph's illness might be curable and that the cycle of abuse breeding abuse can be broken. In this respect, *Frozen* resembles Steven Fechter's play *The Woodsman*, which was recently released as a movie starring Kevin Bacon. *The Woodsman* depicts the struggle of Walter to reintegrate himself into society after having served twelve years in prison for child abuse. As Ralph, he initially believes not to have hurt his victims but gradually realises that he inflicted pain onto them. However, while the ending of *The Woodsman* suggests that Walter is eventually able to master his paedophilia, *Frozen* does not offer a similar ending for the abuser.¹⁸ Instead, it suggests that Ralph kills himself because his illness has become chronic. Dying, Ralph once more re-enacts his notorious address before abducting his victims: "Hello Hello Hello Hello He-."

¹⁸ However, a "happy ending" for the abuser in *Frozen* would be much more provocative, as Ralph is not only a child molester, but also a serial killer.

The play's ending offers narrative closure by rewarding the good and punishing the evil and thus re-establishes the moral distinction of right and wrong, which Agnetha questioned throughout the play.¹⁹ The other plays of Trauma Drama which attempt to explore the abuser-character from a more complex point-of-view than absolute moral condemnation, such as Lucy Prebble's *The Sugar Syndrome* and Alan Bennett's *Playing Sandwiches*, likewise offer such closure. Providing containment for a disturbing social problem, the plays offer a de-traumatising ending for the audience. The plays test and possibly expand the audience's borders of emotional and moral tolerance, but they do not trespass them,²⁰ as, for example, the plays of Sarah Kane do. The declared exploration of the frozen arctic sea of trauma hence at the same time is an escape into a utopian fantasy world, in which trauma can fully melt.

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¹⁹ Lavery sees it as the duty of every playwright to offer an encouraging rather than disturbing ending: "I think in *Frozen* the audience go on a most dreadful journey, but they do emerge into light [...]. I think theatre should be cathartic. I don't think allowing people to leave the theatre without hope is viable. [...] I want them to feel that they can surmount everything that is going to happen to them in their long and busy lives [...] It's a play about the courage of ordinary people" (Wood).

²⁰ Cf. O'Mealy (119) on *Playing Sandwiches*: "the viewing audience is moved a few, perhaps grudging, steps closer to recognizing a flawed human – not a monster – behind the tabloid headlines."

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ALYCE VON ROTHKIRCH

“Art can save culture:”
Welsh Stagings of Place in Selected Works
by Eddie Ladd and Ed Thomas

In Welsh discourses of identity, place has always been of central importance. This is, perhaps, inevitable in a small nation, whose very existence is contested.¹ However, even in this small nation there is no great overarching ideology of place. There is a great difference, for example, between the two traditional ideologies of place, which carve up the nation according to language:² *Y Fro Gymraeg*, the Welsh-speaking part of the population, has traditionally been identified with the rural Welsh landscape and a sense of interconnectedness between landscape and language (see Llywelyn, *passim*). *Y Fro Gymraeg* has also been the focus of the early ‘back to the land’ campaigns of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru in the 1930s.³ Anglophone notions of Welshness are place-

¹ See G. A. Williams.

² This is a somewhat truncated version of the ‘three-Wales Model’ Denis Balsom drew up to account for the distinct voting patterns in Wales (with *Y Fro Gymraeg* tending to vote Plaid Cymru, South [East] Wales tending to vote Labour and the South West of Wales and Powys tending to vote either Liberal or Conservative). See Balsom.

³ Plaid Cymru’s ‘back to the land’ campaign must be read in a British context. B. I. Coleman locates the “‘back-to-the-land’ impulse, of which radical demands for the creation of a new peasantry were symptomatic” in a fin de siècle pessimism about life in the 19th century British city (12). He comments further: “[t]here was an

based, too, but instead of celebrating the language, Anglo-Welsh identity has tended to be class-based and international in outlook. Identity in South Wales, for example, was mainly defined according to an interrelationship between place and industry and, thus, there were variations between a cosmopolitan, trade-based identity in Cardiff and an identity based on coalmining in valleys like the Rhondda.

However, these traditional ideologies of place, nation and identity are blunt instruments and they are much out of date. *Y Fro Gymraeg* might still be a mostly rural population but it is the cities which register the largest growth in the Welsh language and *Plaid Cymru* has reinvented itself as a cosmopolitan party with a unique appeal to, for example, minority ethnic voters in south Cardiff. Anglophone working-class identities have lost much of their appeal with the disintegration of the heavy industries that supported them. Indeed, as Michael Cronin has recently argued, with regard to small nations like Wales, it may be necessary to adopt a ‘microcosmopolitan’ view, i.e. an approach “which in the general context of [...] cosmopolitan ideals [...] seeks to diversify or complexify the smaller unit” (Cronin 191).

Cronin’s term ‘microcosmopolitanism’ is based on what he elsewhere calls ‘fractal differentialism,’ i.e. “the notion of a cultural complexity which remains constant from the micro to the macro scale. That is to say, the same degree of diversity is to be found at the level of entities judged to be small or insignificant as at the level of large entities” (Cronin 192). The term originates with the French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot, who found that, when he zoomed in on the coast of Britain from a great distance to a great nearness, the coast’s level of complexity remained the same. In other words, the coast line a person in a helicopter observes when she looks down is as complex as that of the rambler who negotiates the same terrain on foot or the beetle who clambers along the same territory at a vastly reduced scale. Or, to give a Welsh example: the South Wales valleys are only a small part of Wales. There is consensus that there is a distinct ‘valleys identity.’ However, if one

added poignancy that an essential Englishness seemed to be in the process of being lost through the decline of the countryside and the triumph of the city, international as a phenomenon and cosmopolitan in character” (12). *Plaid Cymru*’s campaign responded to similar fears in Wales.

zooms in and looks at individual valleys — at the Swansea valley with its remaining pockets of Welsh-speakers, at the Rhondda valley, the Cynon valley, the Taff valley with their traditions of coalmining and, further along to the east, the great ex-coalmining and steelmaking conurbations of Merthyr Tydfil — once the largest city in South Wales — and Ebbw Vale and the valleys around Pontypool and Abertillery, which are close to the ‘border country’ Raymond Williams describes and where the railway was one of the main employers — one gets a sense of a level of complexity, which Ian Rowlands in his play *Marriage of Convenience* describes in the following way:

The valleys are tribal; streets are countries; districts, Empires. You’re not a Rhondda lad, a Porth boy or a Glynfach kid, you’re from Kimberley Way or Cymmer Road. Identity changes from street to street, like species in a rain forest. You live in a world as small as a Goldcrest’s egg, and you protect your own whatever the price [...]. (97)

Rowlands describes the valleys as an interconnected but highly diverse place in which difference is worn as a badge of pride. To speak of a ‘valleys identity’ makes sense in some contexts, but it is necessary to remember that this is a great simplification.

Microcosmopolitanism aims to describe the complexity inherent in place. Understood sociologically, microcosmopolitanism has much in common with Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande’s notion of ‘cosmopolitanism’ — a notion that is defined by an ‘appreciation of difference’ (Beck and Grande 27). The local is thus theorised as being as complex as the global.

I now want to turn to discuss recent Welsh plays which take a microcosmopolitan stance. Eddie Ladd probably would not describe herself as a playwright. After leaving the now legendary Welsh-language physical theatre company *Brith Gof*, Eddie started to put physical theatre pieces together which reflect her increasing politicisation as well as a desire to place her cultural roots and Wales within popular culture. Thus, her pieces are often responses to and reworkings of popular films — one example is the Al Pacino film *Scarface* on which her own performance *Scarface** is based. *Scarface** is a one-woman show in which the performer plays Al Pacino’s role while transposing his tale of violence and oppression within the Cuban-American community to West Wales. This

is to be taken literally: Eddie Ladd acts out her part in front of a camera, which projects her picture into a pre-shot film of her parents' house and the landscape surrounding it. While she ducks into and out of the frame, the character is 'placed' into the film, which, in turn, transports the action into a West Walian environment. Thus, a disconcerting contrast between live performance and film is created, a simultaneous closeness and distance, a placing and displacing. Eddie Ladd employs various 'alienating' devices — first of all, she acts out her role in the black void of the stage, an act whose artificiality is underscored by the white lines on the stage, which mark out her position in front of the camera and by the way she interacts with the camera instead of the audience. In contrast, the 'realism' of the film suggests a false intimacy in which the character, whose face is often seen in extreme close-up, seems to look straight at the audience, talking to the audience, beckoning the audience to follow etc. Secondly, the male character Tony Montana is played here by a woman, a conscious comment on gender roles as well as an alienation device. And the way that a story about a Cuban-American gangster is transplanted to Wales makes an obvious political point: Eddie Ladd draws parallels between what she regards as two oppressed minorities in a larger, English-speaking cultural context. Connected to this political point are larger issues around postcolonialism, oppression and in/visibility within a larger, ostensibly homogeneous cultural whole. Thus, the conflict between the Spanish-American gangster Tony Montana and 1980s Miami is seen as analogous to the struggle of a Welsh-language Welsh identity in the UK.

The performance makes its location clear from the beginning. It opens with the words:

This is my gift to Al Pacino
This is where I come from
We're going to do it here.

Language is used strategically: to signal the power of English over Welsh as well as to give a non-Welsh-speaking audience a chance to follow the action, the plot of *Scarface* and, thus, of *Scarface**, too, is quickly narrated and summarised in English at the beginning of the performance in a clever mixture of fictional and non-fictional elements:

This is the plot of 'Scarface'
Jimmy Carter offers asylum to anybody
To anybody who can get out of Cuba in 1980
Fidel Castro goes along with the plan
And takes the opportunity to empty his jails at the same time
Tony Montana, a fictional character and a criminal
Gets out of Cuba, gets into the United States
And works his way up in the Miami underworld
He kills his boss, Frank Lopez
He marries Frank Lopez' girlfriend, Michelle Pfeiffer
He ends up face down in his own ornamental pool.

While English is thus used on the metatextual level, a mixture of Welsh and English is the language of the plot. Mixing languages like that illustrates the tensions between the minority and the majority language — as in this interchange between Tony and an US customs official:

OK so what do you call yourself?
– Antonio Montana
Where d'you learn to speak the English, Tony?
– Uh... yn yr ysgol, a 'nhad, wedd e'n dod o'r United States 'fyd, jyst fel chi, chi'n gwmod,
Wedd e'n Yankee... wedd e'n arfer mynd a fi lot i'r mwfis
O'n i'n dysgu oddiwrth bois fel Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney
Y nhw, y nhw ddysgodd i fi siarad
O'n i'n lico'r bois 'na
O'n i wastad yn gwbod 'se'n i'n dod 'ma rhyw ddornod, i'r United States.⁴

Eddie/Antonio here explains how s/he learned English in Welsh, a language which the customs official does not understand. It thus becomes an act of resistance against a dominant linguistic culture; after all, the character is taking a risk in this meeting of unequals. Using language in this way — weighing up the principle of expressing oneself in one's first language against almost certain unintelligibility in the wider world — is a challenge Welsh-speakers face every day. Deciding which language to

⁴ "Uh... in school, from dad, he came from the United States, just like you, you know. He was a Yankee... he took me to a lot of movies. I learnt from boys like Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney; from them, from them I learnt to speak. I liked those boys. I've always known that I'd come here one day, to the United States."
[translation AvR]

use in which context thus invariably becomes an act of locating oneself in a specific environment and a political act. The performance's double-vision is thus the essence of the Welsh microcosmopolitan sphere of complexity and difference — in Eddie Ladd's own view, a postcolonial predicament.

Ed Thomas emerged as a playwright at the end of the 1980s. Ed Thomas's writing from his first full-length play *House of America* in 1988 to *Gas Station Angel* in 1998 can broadly be described in terms of a search for a new mythology for Wales. I would argue that this is a consciously postcolonial endeavour: it is drama which resists the pull of the English metropolis and which seeks to create possibilities for new stories and new identities not in the seemingly unspecific non-location of much theatre, but in a very specific location — which, however, keeps changing as it is being re-imagined. He also seeks to resist the largely backward-looking nostalgia for a glorious Welsh past or in the nostalgia with which a number of writers construct past coalmining communities, in which community-spirit more than made up for externally imposed poverty.⁵ Instead he looks to the future and creates microcosmopolitan versions of Welshness which are located in a shifting and changing Wales. Thomas draws on Gwyn A. Williams's notion that "Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce" (304) and he seeks to create a 'theatre of invention,' which sketches out a 'new Welsh mythology:'

It is true that the only reality for me is the reality of myth. The only thing I see in Wales is defeat and I personally find defeat difficult to live with. I have therefore constructed my own Wales in order to convince myself that I and the culture and the city in which I live have any value, because I know only too well that outside Wales we don't feature on any map. (Thomas, "Wanted" 58)

In this paper I am going to concentrate on *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* (1991) and *Gas Station Angel* (1998). *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* is a radically anti-realist play without conventional plot structure or character development, in which the search for a submerged, nearly lost sense of self — which has to be reconstructed using dreams and art — is the

⁵ Such nostalgia occurs in plays as early as Naunton Davies's *The Human Factor* (1920) and as late as Laurence Allan's *The Best Year of our Lives* (1990), a play about the Miners' Strike in 1984/5 or Patrick Jones's deeply pessimistic valleys 'tragedy' *Everything Must Go* (2000).

main focus for the action. The action takes place in “a world of chains, knives, steel, blood and falling objects” (103) — a surreal abattoir,⁶ which serves as both workspace and living space for the characters Mock and Joe. Rusty household goods fall from the sky at random (103). Consciously fictional, the world of the characters is limited to the stage space, a fact that is underscored by sound effects, which indicate that the abattoir is surrounded by water (145 ff.). The characters are scared but their fear is directed not so much at the presence of water as at the fact that there might be an unknown world beyond the space they know (147). Like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, the characters know that their reality is unbearable but they cannot leave their (fictional) space because they are afraid of the unknown, of change. At the same time the water can be read as a metaphor for oppression: Mock frequently dreams of drowning (110 ff.) and his triumphant cry “I AM STILL HERE!” (112) after emerging from such a dream echoes Dafydd Iwan’s celebrated song “Ryn ni yma o hyd” (“We’re still here”), which has come to symbolise the by-the-skin-of-our-teeth survival of Welsh culture despite the odds. A second context in which Mock’s dream of drowning must be read is the flooding of the Tryweryn valley. In 1965 the village of Capel Celyn in the Tryweryn valley was purposely flooded — the inhabitants having been relocated — to ensure the water supply for the city of Liverpool. The drowning of the valley became a powerful symbol of English domination over Wales because it demonstrated the central government’s power over Welsh land and resources (cf. Jeni Williams “Fantastic Fictions” 418). This reading of a drowning of whole culture is underscored by Mock’s admission that he does not remember who he is:

MOCK: [...] Everything floats by past my ears, past my lips, a million words passing, a whole language, a way of life, a people drowning, a mother, a father, grandmother, grandfather, daughter, son, sister, brother passing by. Silent, sad, unmarked, peaceful, mad but sad, dead sad. I don’t know who I am. Where am I? (134–135)

⁶ The setting is almost certainly autobiographically inspired: Ed Thomas’s father is a butcher in Cwmgiedd in the Swansea Valley.

The sea that seems to surround the stage space can also be read as an indictment of ‘the Welsh condition:’ as the double-bind of a threat of annihilation of a distinct culture through the levelling forces of colonialism and global capitalism as well as the failure of the characters to imagine their own place for themselves. Neither of the characters can establish an identity. Mock suffers from loss of memory and is unable to create his present because he cannot remember his past (119 *et passim*). In the course of the play he is increasingly dominated by Joe, who seems to have resigned himself to not knowing, not remembering. He is the exponent of a mentality that has given up fighting for a distinct Welsh identity and has allowed itself to be submerged in a ‘Britishness’ that is, above all, controlled by Anglo-American consumerist values. Joe has fully internalised the colonised subject’s fatalist and defeatist attitude:

MOCK: I am not the only one asking questions, there must be others who lurk.

JOE: IN A BAG OF IGNORANCE.

MOCK: WE ARE NOT IN A BAG OF IGNORANCE.

JOE: OF COURSE WE ARE. WE FOLLOWED. WE DID THE FOLLOWING. THE PIPER PLAYED HIS TUNE AND WE COCK-A-DOOD-LE-DOOD. WE FOLLOWED THE BUGLE OF THE SWEET GENERAL GOOD.

MOCK: WE SHOULD NOT HAVE FOLLOWED.

JOE: We are the hungry chicks of defeat, Mock, the waiting dodos, the soon to be extinct. We are insignificant, ignored, afraid, silent and forgotten. WE ARE THE LAST PLACE. (159–160)

Joe’s argument is clever and seductive, his is a nihilism which glories in defeat. He argues that they themselves gave up their powers of decision-making to the ‘General Good’⁷ and have received their rewards: he quite happily furnishes their space with the rusty and broken goods that fall

⁷ Thomas puns on the phrase ‘the general good,’ which is transformed into the person ‘General Good,’ who is identified with colonial military power. Implied in the comparison is the seemingly rational argument for colonialism, namely the ‘white man’s [sic] burden’ of bringing ‘civilisation’ to the colonies in the name of the ‘general good.’ Like other Welsh writers, Thomas draws an explicit parallel between the plight of the North American Native Americans and the Welsh: Mock hates ‘General Good’ because “it was General Good who slaughtered red Indians, wiped them off the face of the earth and murdered the buffaloes, turning the prairies into blood,” implying that a similar fate might be lying in store for them (122).

from the sky (120). And the way their space fills up with more and more useless rubbish symbolises the gradual loss of a sense of place experienced by the characters and a 'drowning' in an essentially alien consumer culture.

Compared to Joe, Mock seems less attuned to 'reality' and almost childish in his refusal to accept the status quo. Yet, it is implied that Mock's obstinate refusal to give up trying to remember might save Wales from cultural annihilation. His name signifies that 'mockery' could be a tool to unsettle and question the status quo, much like Homi Bhabha's concept of 'mimicry' (cf. J. Williams 417).⁸ A further way of subverting Joe's nihilism is harnessing the power of dreams and art. Mock occasionally dreams of the past in which he might have known and loved an artist called Dotty. Recalling his dream, he says:

MOCK: [...] She is an artist. She paints with oil on canvas. Sea horses and a heavy sky, a moon or sun of red. She is naked, but she dances on the sea, her long hair flows, her arms reach up, perhaps she is laughing, perhaps she is free. She is sprinkling yellow flowers on a dead red sea.
[Pause]
She turns and looks at me, I feel I should know her [...]. I think that I used to love her [...]. She said that art can save culture. (135)

The frightening image of the dead red sea, which might be the same sea that surrounds the slaughterhouse, is changed through art: Dotty re-imagines it by filling it with sea horses and by sprinkling yellow flowers on it. "Art can save culture" because, through art, alternative versions of reality can be explored and a way out of the debilitating status quo might be found.

⁸ 'Mimicry' is a result of colonialism and also a tool against the influences of colonialism: as the colonisers impress their values, their moral system, etc. on the colonised subject, the colonised subject is forced to take them on board and to 'imitate' them, as they are not her/his own. At the same time, the coloniser can never be sure if the mask of obedience, i.e. the perfect imitation of the coloniser's values and ideas, does not hide a mutinous spirit beneath it. Furthermore, through an imperfect imitation (and imitation is always imperfect), the coloniser's values and ideas are 'played back' at her/him in a 'mongrelised' way, unsettling her/him in her/his own world-view. Thus, 'mimicry' can be used as a political tool, although its effects can obviously only be measured over a long time, if at all (cf. Bhabha, cf. also Moore-Gilbert 120 *et passim*).

This process is anything but straightforward, though. Fed up with Mock, Joe beats him up and hangs him up like a carcass. However, the end of the play suggests that Mock and the redemptive powers of art will live on as a nagging memory and keep the last vestiges of difference alive in the face of cultural homogenisation: the last image the audience sees is “a painting of a woman dancing on a red sea [...] as the lights fade” (166).

In *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* Ed Thomas speaks about the need to create an alternative, distinctive ‘story’ for Wales — an alternative mythology — that helps the nation survive as a distinct entity. In *Gas Station Angel*, he imagines what the act of imagining such an alternative future could look like. What is most striking about the play is the way in which fluidity is used as the central structuring principle: the play presents a collage of stories told by various characters. As in other recent plays which employ story-telling as a structural element (e.g. Conor McPherson’s *The Weir* or Michael Frayn’s *Copenhagen*) the story unfolds as it is told by the protagonists and the stage setting changes as the stories and points of view change. The stage directions describe the multi-dimensional and multi-functional setting as follows:

Set in an ever fluid landscape but based on the remaining half of a house whose other half has fallen into the sea. Dislocated, unreal, fantastic, functional, witty and full of possibility. Beds turn into cars, mountain becomes beach, airport becomes supermarket, this world the underworld, shapes and structures bent and shaped to become something else. Transformation is everything, magic and invention vital. Dreams, myth and reality exist on the same plane as long as the sky doesn’t fall down to earth. (2; stage direction omitted in the revised version of the play)

By giving the characters the power to change the setting of their story, the central point of the play, namely the ability to change one’s life by imagining it differently, is underscored in a powerful way. Furthermore, the overlapping of “dreams, myth and reality” on the same plane of existence indicates that the play can be read as magic-realism transferred to the stage (cf. J. Williams 438). I believe that Thomas’s use of magic realism can usefully be read within the postcolonial paradigm: in *Gas Station Angel* a true centring of the Welsh position takes place, and the voices imagining their own future turn out to be the true voices of Wales.

The play oscillates between two main settings to which a third world, namely an imagined Wales of the future, is added in the second part of the play. The first main setting is the house “whose other half has fallen into the sea” during a storm, in which Ace and his father Manny and his mother Marie Annie live (2). This ruin of a house can be read as a symbol for the defeat of a certain kind of Welsh nationalism. The tenacity of its survival against the odds — battling against the elements, against the *tylwyth teg* (the fairies of the underworld) and the council that wants to evict them — is encapsulated in Manny’s defiant cry “[w]e’ll still be here. (Pause.) I’ll still be here. (Pause.) I WILL STILL BE HERE!!!” (51). Manny here echoes Mock’s use of the same phrase in *Flowers of the Dead Red Sea* but here it refers to a nationalism, which has become entrenched in a purely oppositional stance. Manny’s response to the sea is to shake his fist and vow to stay alive despite the odds, but it doesn’t involve an effort to develop or re-imagine his position (6).

In the second part of the play, however, Manny allows himself to be persuaded by Marie Annie to leave the ruin and, together, to dream of a new house:

MARY ANNIE: We’ll mop up the carpets.

MANNY: Rebuild the house.

MARIE ANNIE: And start again.

MANNY: Cleaned.

MARIE ANNIE: De-lotteried.

MANNY: De-governed.

MARIE ANNIE: Ungoverned.

MANNY: Free. (72)

This is a vision of a radically altered independent Wales — independent from the Westminster government, the handouts of the National Lottery and even global capitalism.

The world of Ace’s family is juxtaposed with the “white-trash world” of the James family, which reflects their own self-definition as essentially worthless (16). This world is associated with the James’s house (16), the re-vamped ‘Ship and Pilot’ pub (18–19), the supermarket where Bron James works (20 *et passim*) and the park where anonymous teenagers argue about brand names, drink, take drugs and have sex (30–33). The scenery is primarily created through stories told about it and its central characteristic is that it is fake. Symbolic for this is the ‘Ship and

Pilot' pub where Gruff James goes to drink because "the Ship's the place I've always drunk, [...] and my father did, and his father before that (18)." The pub has changed beyond recognition since the owner, Mr. Entertainment, transformed it into a noisy money-making machine, complete with Saturday-night karaoke (19). The interior of the pub has been 'gentrified' to look like a 'Laura Ashley country kitchen,' but appearances do not make for reality:

GRUFF: [I]t's a pub not a bastard country kitchen pretending to be a country kitchen with flowers and curtains and fancy little alcoves with plasterboard and ply, it's all crap. And it's not even wood. It's fucking joke wood. WHO ARE THEY TRYING TO KID? (19)

The truth is that nobody is fooled — but the characters have nowhere else to go. Speaking about one of the teenagers in the park, Ace comments: "She's only seventeen but already the prison bars are crowding her head" (32). This might be a description of all inhabitants of the 'white-trash' world: desperately unhappy with the world they're given, they, nevertheless, lack the imagination and the courage to imagine a different world. Gruff does not keep going back to the 'Ship and Pilot' because he likes it but because he cannot imagine going anywhere else. The drinkers he joins there have lost all individuality and are, like the chorus of anonymous teenagers, only identified by their different voices. However, while teenagers like Patsy are still able to mourn the fact that they "ain't got no dreams" (32), the drinkers in the pub are reduced to rugby chants in lieu of conversation (39). Only Bron can escape the confines of this sick world. Acting on impulse, she takes her brother's car and invites Ace to go for a ride "into the heart of Saturday night" (16). They drive to the airport, spend a night at a motel and then return the next day. Thus their escape is not a literal one: theirs is a freedom of the mind and they create the landscape of the imagination themselves:

ACE: We were stoned and beautiful taking time out in the country, innocent and free. And as we drove further and further and higher and higher into the night I swear I saw most of Wales spread out in front of me. [...] I could see for miles. Into England, Devon, Cornwall and beyond Cornwall, France, then Spain and right at the bottom at the far end of the horizon, I swear I can see the lights of North Africa. All of Europe spread out in front of me, of us. . . . I felt in my bones

that the times are a-changing. Maybe I can soon call myself a European. A Welsh European, with my own language and the rudiments of another at the tip of my tongue [...]. (75)

Ace's stoned, rambling monologue transcends Wales with ease and connects it with Europe: his outward-looking microcosmopolitanism is the reverse of Manny's original inward-looking oppositional stance or the 'white-trash world's' failure to take notice of anything that is not consumable. The phrase "Welsh Europeans," which was used by Raymond Williams as early as 1978 and which gained currency in the pro-devolution camp in 1979 (cf. Osmond 144), conjures up a Welshness that describes Wales as a European rather than a British region. In the climate of renewed enthusiasm for Wales after the yes-vote for devolution in 1997, Ed Thomas uses the phrase again to underline his hopes for a new sense of Welsh self-confidence, which places Wales side by side with England, different but equal. In the play, Bron articulates the political message of the play: "[t]o be Welsh at the end of the twentieth century you got to have imagination" (63). *Gas Station Angel* is essentially a play for the future: Ed Thomas asks his audience to dispense with the unproductive stereotypes and fossilised identities of the past and to invent a Wales of the future — or, in Heike Roms's words, "[t]he 'theatre of invention' has [...] set itself a difficult task: rather than reproducing an actual Welsh identity, it seeks to represent a Wales that does not yet exist" (133).

The performance and the plays discussed make flexibility and fluidity the central structural elements not only of the performance but also of the way the stage-space is constructed. Thus, they can be read fruitfully within a microcosmopolitan paradigm, which opens up newly flexible ways of looking at constructions of place and identity in a small nation such as Wales.

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DONALD PULFORD

Staging Past and Present Simultaneously: Andrew Bovell's *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*

Andrew Bovell's play, *Holy Day (The Red Sea)*, takes part in Australia's 'history wars,' the ongoing argument concerning the proper relationship between the country's past and its present, particularly regarding the dispossession of the Aborigines and other injustices. While conservatives insist that history is past and we are better served by contemplating the future, others assert that properly moving forward involves a careful consideration of what needs to occur to remedy the injuries of our past. Part of the latter group's case is that the past is ever with us, that then cannot be conveniently annexed from now. *Holy Day (The Red Sea)* demonstrates this by weaving the present into its depiction of the past. How it does so is the business of this paper.

Holy Day has a gothic prologue: "Black clouds loom over a vast desert plain. Lightning cuts the sky on the horizon. Thunder rumbles in the distance" (1). Standing on a promontory, a bleeding woman intones a savage prayer:

Do my justice, Lord, and fight my fight against a faithless people. From the deceitful and impious, rescue me. From the impure, protect me. For You, Lord, are my strength. Why do You keep so far away? Send forth Your light and Your fidelity. They shall lead me on and bring me to the Holy Day. Then I will go to the altar of God. Then I shall eat of His body and drink of His blood, the blood of my gladness and joy ... (1)

"A single gunshot" (1) interrupts her cannibalistic frenzy.

Immediately after, we shift to the main setting of the play, an inn called the Traveller's Rest occupied by Nora, the innkeeper/prostitute, and Obedience, the Aboriginal girl Nora regards as her daughter. We learn that Nora stole Obedience after making her mother drunk. Three itinerants come upon the inn. One of them, Goundry, is an escaped convict who, when assigned to a farm, murdered the farmer and his wife and stole their son to be his sex slave/companion, after cutting out his tongue.

A woman arrives claiming that her child has been abducted and that her husband is missing. It is the woman from the prologue, Elizabeth, a missionary's wife. Eventually, suspicion that local Aborigines may have taken the child and a desire to rid the land of its original inhabitants precipitate the massacre of Aborigines near the end of the play. Obedience witnesses the massacre and before she returns to the inn her tongue is cut out as well.

The opening allusion of *Holy Day* demonstrates a way in which the past remains present. The play begins with an evocation of the madmen and visionaries who went into the desert to do battle with demons, both internal and external, and those who later followed their example as Christian zealots and missionaries for whom the bleakness of the desert may have suggested the aridity and formlessness of a godless life. There is something fundamentally martial and savage about both evocations and they reach their height in the cannibalism of the speech. Salvation and struggle in the speech connect with implications of the play's subtitle, *The Red Sea*, suggesting Moses leading the tribes of Israel across the desert and through the Red Sea to win the Promised Land. All of these aspects of the play recall the Western association of wilderness with martial struggle and triumph. That we may apply to the play's setting associations with mythical and ancient events demonstrates cultural continuity and the capacity of the past to shape our conception of the present.

The blackness of the opening is not much relieved by the following scene, set near 'a halfway house' at dusk. The setting suggests the tenuousness of humanity and civilization in this remote place, the colonial frontier peopled by desperate vagabonds and those attempting to tame the land to raise a living from it. In this case, the setting is populated by:

an innkeeper/prostitute, Nora; Obedience, an Aboriginal girl whom Nora regards as her daughter; a grazier, a missionary couple, a rootless Aboriginal woman and three interlopers, one of whom is a tongueless boy. Their intertwined stories present a pattern of murder, theft, assault, sexual abuse and lies suggesting the silenced and forgotten aspects of Australia's past that continue to unsettle its present.

This depiction of the colonial frontier is remarkable for what it is not. In common with other settler cultures, the European penetration of the Australian continent has been traditionally portrayed in a triumphalist narrative according to which the frontier of settlement was the site of a heroic and character-building struggle against nature and the natives. In Australia's case, the Aborigines have traditionally been depicted as easy targets, members of a primitive culture overtaken by modernity. While there are testimonies to Aboriginal resistance and white massacres of them in response, the continent has overwhelmingly been depicted as a 'terra nullius,' an empty land tamed by a resourceful and courageous European cohort: hence the Australian stereotype of the laconic, taciturn stockman riding through the 'sunlit plains' or taming wild horses in the mountains. *Holy Day* presents a starkly different frontier, then, from standard depictions and this would be immediately apparent to an Australian audience, as would the reason for it. While the setting seems to be the nineteenth century, the negativity of the treatment is insistently contemporary. The clashing notions of the frontier demonstrate the contestability of narratives and the way they form part of discourse.

The treatment of Aborigines in the script is also contemporary. Far from being absent from or insignificant in the white story of Australia, as is traditional, they are an unseen, sinister and resistant presence. We learn of their attempts to disrupt settlement/invasion through sabotage and guerrilla tactics. The audience may have a direct experience of the menace when, at the end of a scene, "lightning illuminates the bush. It's full of moving shadows" (11). One of the frontier vagabonds, Goundry, describes his experiences as a shepherd:

We never saw a single black man, but sure enough if we counted twenty sheep that night there would be nineteen the next morning. Every shadow seemed to us to be a man with his spear raised. And every sound in the bush a secret call [...] We might have the guns but what's the good of a gun if you can't see your enemy. (19)

At the end of the play, there is a massacre of Aborigines, an incident depicted as part of the struggle for land and partially as sheer cruelty. This, again, is contemporary.

While the play ostensibly deals with the past, it demonstrates a continuity of injustice and its aftermath in the present. The results of injustice are depicted in the characterisation of two Aboriginal women, Obedience and Linda. Both of them are displaced. Linda has been banished from her tribe because she took up with a white man, leaving her old, Aboriginal husband. Though they stayed together for some time, her partner eventually married a white woman, taking Linda to an Aboriginal camp and giving her two pounds. Not akin to the Aborigines she was left with and unable to rejoin her tribe, she has been wandering.

Linda's story echoes that of the eponymous character of Katherine Susannah Prichard's 1929 novel, *Coonardoo*. Like Linda, Coonardoo is dislocated and tragically broken due to an association with a white man. Coonardoo is married to an Aboriginal man when Hugh returns to take up the running of his station. He seduces her and they have a child. Despite his love for her, Hugh refuses to marry Coonardoo, who is eventually set adrift. She returns to the station, years after Hugh has sold it. Linda's distressing situation is a logical outcome of white settlement/invasion from its start and the similarity to a 1920s novel suggests the continuity of distress, perhaps into the present.

Obedience is adrift for other reasons. Though the audience hears conflicting stories about her origins, it seems most likely that Nora took Obedience from her mother when Obedience was a baby. Having removed her, Nora resists any possible contact between Obedience and other Aborigines. Obedience has a niggling memory of "an old woman's face, black as night [...]. I don't know who she was but I remember her face and I remember the sea" (23) and we feel that the memory will unsettle her until she can discover the truth and resolve it. She repeatedly asks Nora what colour the sea is and Nora always lies that it is red, demonstrating to the audience the vulnerability of the ignorant. At the end of the play, having witnessed a massacre of Aborigines, Obedience is returned to Nora with her tongue cut out.

As with Linda, Obedience's story mirrors another famous Australian narrative of Aboriginal tragedy, Charles Chauvel's 1955 film, *Jedda*, the

story of an Aboriginal girl adopted by a white family. Like Obedience, Jedda is refused permission from her adoptive family to associate with the station blacks. But, in defiance of the circumstance, Jedda falls in love with an Aboriginal man. As a result, both are alienated from white and black society and they end tragically. The character also suggests the one-in-ten to one-in-three Aboriginal children removed from their families under government policy up to 1972. The stories of these children went largely untold until a Federal inquiry resulted in the document, *Bringing Them Home* (1977). Linda and Obedience suggest the fate of many Aboriginal children from the start of white history in Australia. Obedience's similarities to Jedda and the more recent *Stolen Generations* powerfully depict the foundation of injustice, its continuity and present outcome.

There is another tongueless, stolen child as well, Cornelius, the white boy taken by the murderer of his parents to be his companion/sex slave. The effect of this character is to emphasise the position of the voiceless victims in Australia's past, victims being given voice by recuperative historians and playwrights such as Andrew Bovell.

The two stolen children connect with an Australian cultural trope from the earliest days of European settlement and allude to a more contemporary manifestation, the 'Stolen Generations' just mentioned. The connection with the disappearance of Aboriginal children from their families is obvious, but the play alludes to several cases of the disappearance of white children, especially the Chamberlain case in which a child was taken from a tent by a dingo near Eyre's Rock/Uluru and suspicion fell on the mother, Lindy Chamberlain. Many Australians believed her guilty due to her emotionless demeanor. Much the same occurs to Elizabeth, the missionary's wife who at one point asks angrily, "Am I to be condemned for my composure? If I wept into your arms and retired to my bed would you feel more at ease?" (39). By alluding to the Chamberlain case and other episodes involving missing children, Bovell believes himself to be evoking a continuing feature of Australian culture, treated at length by Peter Pierce in *Country of Lost Children*. In his "Playwright's Note," he asserts that

our national psyche is haunted by the figure of the lost child. From the first arrival of Europeans, stories of missing, lost and abducted children filled our night-

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mares and provoked a deep sense of vulnerability. It's as though we fear that the landscape itself will take our children and therefore our future away. (iii)

In the first instance, *Holy Day* blends past and present by demonstrating how history shapes present culture. Building on that, the script presents incidents emblematic of those aspects of Australian history causing present distress, especially Aboriginal dispossession. Perhaps most powerfully, the tongueless victims in *Holy Day* suggest the impulse to justice that inspired the play and probably should finally inform our reception of it.

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DANIEL MEYER-DINKGRÄFE

The Spaces of Consciousness: New Possibilities for Contemporary Theatre

As Pamela Howard (2002) points out in her article on *design* in the *Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*, design in the theatre has seen major changes in the course of the 20th century. While it used to be (regarded as) the surface decoration of the stage, it has become an independent and important component in the making of any theatrical event, and with it the designer has gained equal status with the actor and the director. Distinct areas of design are differentiated: set, costume, light and sound. Even among those there is a kind of hierarchy: thus the *Who's Who in Contemporary World Theatre* (Meyer-Dinkgräfe) lists numerous famous designers who specialise in set and costume, much fewer who specialise in lighting, and hardly anyone specialising in sound design. It is striking, though, that quite a number of designers now no longer specialise in one or two conventional forms of design, but combine them all, at times even with directing and devising the productions in question, such as Robert Wilson. The term to capture this combination of formerly distinct areas of design is *scenography*, and the artist becomes the *scenographer*.

Set designer John Gunter (2002), in the *Continuum Companion*, suggests five stages of the creative process: the idea, the drawing, the model, building the set in the workshop, and exploring the set on the stage. Predominantly, the study of scenography deals with the last four stages: developing the ability to critically assess the scenographic work

of other artists, which includes aspects of theatre history, and developing practical skills of creating scenography oneself. Thus, a reflection of what happens in the process of scenography from a cognitive perspective in the mind of the scenographer, (the idea and how it transforms to drawing and model and so on) would not (yet) be at the focus of studies. It is this gap I want to begin to address.

Space

Scenography, in most general terms, deals with space. Space is important for us in daily life, regarding, among others, the following issues:

- Where am I, and how are my body parts currently oriented?
- Where are important environmental objects in relation to me?
- Where are these objects in relation to each other?
- What do I need to know about these objects?
- How should I go about doing what should be done? (Marshall and Fink 2)

While moving in space, we always have to take the above points into consideration. This usually happens without us being aware of it at all times — in most cases we realise the level of success, though: if while walking we bump into an object without intending to, or if we lose our way while travelling to a new destination by car, we clearly got it wrong. Human abilities related to space are conceptualised and studied in the discipline of cognitive (neuro-) psychology as spatial awareness, or spatial cognition. Conventionally, the brain area considered in charge of spatial cognition is the right parietal lobe (although research published in *Nature* in 2001 suggests that the superior temporal lobe is in charge, and not the parietal lobe).

I propose that people who create scenography have more highly developed abilities of spatial cognition, and should perform better in tasks devised to test such spatial cognition abilities. Perhaps scenographers recognised as ‘great’ will perform better than ‘average’ scenographers. Possibly performance in spatial cognition is correlated with levels of success and recognition. Nader has argued that one specific activity will develop one specific region in the brain by developing numerous further connections of neurons. A different activity will develop a second specific area. By implication, the posterior parietal lobe (or the superior temporal lobe) should show more neuronal connections in scenogra-

phers than in members of professions that do not engage in activity requiring spatial awareness to the extent that scenographers do.

Spatial cognition is related to mental imagery, which Thomas defines as the 'experience that resembles perceptual experience, but which occurs in the absence of the appropriate stimuli for the relevant perception.' Such experiences may 'seem to anticipate possible, often desired or feared, future experiences.' It would be interesting to collect qualitative data about the creative processes of scenographers, and to compare this with existing research into mental imagery.

To further elucidate the relationship between space and consciousness, I want to refer to recent research into the meaning of Vedic Literature of India. Nader proposes that the 40 aspects of Vedic Literature correspond in structure and function to the human anatomy and physiology. The aspects of Vedic Literature that correspond to the parietal lobe are twofold: First, to the third house (*bhava*) in Vedic astrology (*jyotish*), and secondly to the third of four chapters of Patanjali's *yoga sutras*. Nader postulates that reading or listening to the reading, in Sanskrit, of a specific aspect of Vedic Literature would have beneficial effects on the part of anatomy and / or physiology related to that specific aspect. Reading and/or listening to passages in Sanskrit from *jyotish* and *yoga* should improve spatial cognition, and thus the ability for scenography.

In Indian philosophy, the discipline relating most closely to scenography is *Sthapatya Veda*, comprising a range of treatises on architecture and design. Design in the context of *Sthapatya Veda* refers to building on every conceivable scale and in every conceivable context, ranging from a room to a building, a village, a city, and even an entire country. *Sthapatya Veda* also comprises the creation of form in the arts. In each context, and at each point of the scale, the purpose of applying rules of *Sthapatya Veda* is to achieve form that is 'in full alignment with the structuring dynamics of the whole universe' (Bonshek 183). Those dynamics are the dynamics of pure consciousness. Thus, *Sthapatya Veda* provides practical knowledge how to create visible form that is in tune with the principles and procedures of invisible pure consciousness at the basis of form. Form created in line with *Sthapatya Veda* will express the

laws of nature responsible for that form to their full extent, undiminished and unobstructed.

Why should we wish to achieve such alignment? Because any form that complies with the rules of *Sthapatya Veda* will, in turn, have the impact of enlivening and structuring the laws of nature in the observer of that form that led to its creation in the first place. For example, research suggests that houses built in accordance with *Sthapatya Veda* make their inhabitants think more clearly and creatively, make better decisions, feel happier and healthier, feel more alert and refreshed throughout the day, enjoy more restful and refreshing sleep, enjoy more energy and less fatigue, and experience less stress and greater peace of mind.

What applies for architecture for domestic dwellings should also apply to scenography. Nader discovered that Vedic texts have their direct correspondence in the human physiology. Thus, *Sthapatya Veda* is related to the spinal chord and the nerves emanating from it. "The spinal chord, with its 35 segments or nerves on either side [...] present two symmetrical parts which total 70 divisions. These 70 divisions correspond to the 70 chapters of *Sthapatya Veda*" (Bonshek 180). The question is whether perceiving form created in line with the rules of *Sthapatya Veda* has the same effect as reading Vedic texts. Thus reading *Sthapatya Veda* should have a measurable impact on the spinal column and the nerves emanating from it. If my hypothesis is true, similar effects should be found when watching a scenography that follows the rules of *Sthapatya Veda*.

How could any impact of scenography on the spectator's consciousness work in neurophysiological terms? Gallese has published his research on mirror neurones, and hypothesises that when we see the movement of another person, specific neurones fire in such a way that we would copy the movement we see if other neurones would not stop this mirror action by firing more intensively at the same time. In some cases, such a yawning, the inhibitory effect seems ineffective or not present. So far, experiments with monkeys have provided some evidence in favour of the hypothesis. Applied to the theatre, when we see the actors' specific movement on the stage, neurones in our brains fire in such a way as to imitate the movement we see, while at the same time other

neurones fire in order to prevent the actual movement. However, some neuronal activity in the spectator has been induced by the performance, and it might be possible to theorise further that such neuronal activity may have broader effects, triggering secondary processes short of actual movement. It would also be interesting to establish whether mirror neurones are limited to the sense of sight.

Time

Closely related to space, all theatre has to take *time* into consideration. On a practical level, the question arises as to how long a performance should last? How many hours can a given audience be expected to pay attention to the theatre event? Originally, *Noh* performances in Japan consisted of several plays in a row, with the comedy form of *kyogen* in between. In India, performances lasting several days were known. In the West today, attention spans are bemoaned to become shorter and shorter, due to television soap operas, and thus plays wishing to be commercially viable have to be adapted and be no more than two to two-and-a-half hours including interval(s). Subsidised companies, such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, or the Royal National Theatre London may exceed this limit, as may occasional experimental productions by acknowledged stars of the theatre, such as Peter Brook's nine-hour *Mahabharata*, or Peter Stein's 21-hour production of Goethe's *Faust*.

Time is of course not limited to the duration of a production and the commercial, socio-cultural and psychological issues associated with it. Time is an important feature of both drama (the literary text) and the performance in the theatre. Plots may progress in a linear fashion, starting at point in time (A) and moving on steadily via points (B) and (C) to the end of play at point in time (D). The time it takes spectators to watch the play is the time that is suggested to have passed in the fictional reality of the play. Other plays would still fit the category of linear, but some stages in the development are not shown on stage, but occur off-stage, and may be reported as past events on stage. Plays may reverse the sequence of events over time, beginning at a chosen point and moving back from it (as in Pinter's *Betrayal*). Some contemporary dramatists have explicitly experimented with time: in *Noises Off*, Mi-

chael Frayn juxtaposes events on stage with simultaneous events backstage, presenting us first with the on-stage scene (the play within the play), then the backstage events while the scene we had seen before on-stage takes place off-stage. The same span of time (the presentation of a scene from the play within the play on the fictional stage on the real stage) is shown twice, from different perspectives. In one of Alan Ayckbourn's more recent plays at the Royal National Theatre, London (RNT), *House and Garden* (2000), the same fictional time span is presented simultaneously in two of the three theatre spaces in the RNT (Olivier and Lyttleton) by the same cast, presenting indoors and outdoors perspectives.

In all those cases, attempts are made to convey the intricacies of time. However, hard as they try, Frayn or Ayckbourn have not managed to achieve the impression of complete simultaneity. Spectators intellectually *know* that this is a clever device. When they are watching the first part of Ayckbourn's *House and Garden* in the Olivier, they *know* that the situation they have seen is continued next door in the Lyttleton. Once they have seen the first part and now proceed to the Lyttleton, they can match what they see now with their memories of the performance in the Olivier. However, this matching activity is also intellectually mediated, not immediate. In Frayn's *Noises Off*, matching the events of the scene from the play within the play on stage with the events backstage is made easier by hearing at least some of the on-stage text while the same scene is repeated from the backstage perspective. However, true simultaneity is not achieved.

A look at Indian philosophy can elucidate the specific effect of simultaneity on the stage, and show its psychological significance for the actors and the audience alike. Vedanta philosophy is concerned predominantly with consciousness, which, as subjective monism, is located at the basis of all unmanifest and manifest creation. Time fits in with this approach. The Western mind-set, in its aims for scientific objectivity, associates time with a linear sequence of events, studied in the discipline of history. According to Vedanta, the emphasis of history is on the importance of events, not on chronology, because of the conceptualisation of time as eternal. The following passage provides a rather mind-boggling account of how time is conceptualised in Indian philosophy.

The eternity of the eternal life of absolute Being is conceived in terms of innumerable lives of the Divine Mother, a single one of whose lives encompasses a thousand life spans of Lord Shiva. One life of Lord Shiva covers the time of a thousand life spans of Lord Vishnu. One life of Lord Vishnu equals the duration of a thousand life spans of Brahma, the Creator. A single life span of Brahma is conceived in terms of one hundred years of Brahma; each year of Brahma comprises 12 months of Brahma, and each month comprises thirty days of Brahma. One day of Brahma is called a Kalpa. One Kalpa is equal to the time of fourteen Manus. The time of one Manu is called a Manvantara. One Manvantara equals seventy-one Chaturyugis. One Chaturyugi comprises the total span of four Yugas, i.e. Sat-yuga, Treta-yuga, Dvapara-yuga, and Kali-yuga. The span of the Yugas is conceived in terms of the duration of Sat-yuga. Thus the span of Treta-yuga is equal to three quarters of that of Sat-yuga; the span of Dvapara-yuga is half of that of Sat-yuga, and the span of Kali-yuga one quarter that of Sat-yuga. The span of Kali-yuga equals 432,000 years of man's life. (Mahesh Yogi 253–4)

Clearly, any attempt at chronology, given this conceptualisation of time, would be counter-productive, as would any attempt to grasp this concept of time intellectually. Vedic Science does not expect us to do this. Instead, it argues that human beings may experience the infinity of time (and space) in their own consciousness, in a specific state termed pure consciousness.

Usually plays are directed in such a way that there is always only one scene on the stage. Even Frayn's and Ayckbourn's attempts at simultaneity do not break this rule. The spectator's attention is allowed to focus fully on that scene. In that scene, there will be major characters carrying the scene, while other performers better be in the background physically and emotionally so as not to upstage those at the scene's centre. In contrast, for example, take the production of Mozart's opera *Marriage of Figaro* by David Freeman and the Opera Factory Zurich. Life of the house of Count Almaviva is shown throughout, breaking the boundaries of ordinary opera direction. The traditional rule is to have only the characters on the stage who have to sing something at that time. Not so in Freeman's *Figaro*. Life in the house goes on. The threads of the story come through the house. The focus of the scene is on the singers, but other characters go about their respective business at the same time. A few examples should illustrate this: already during the overture, Don Curzio enters, sits down at a table upstage right, and starts writing. Soon he is joined by Basilio. At the same time, Antonio

brings parts of a wooden bed into the small area designated as Figaro's and Susanna's chamber downstage left. After that, Antonio moves to an area centre stage right that represents the garden, indicated by flowers, and starts preparing a beautiful flowerbed. Barbarina, Susanna and two maids are busy in Figaro's and Susanna's chamber, cleaning the floor. Cherubino joins them: he enjoys female company. Before the end of the overture, Figaro arrives, makes all others except Susanna leave, so that they are now ready for their opening scene. Meanwhile, Bartolo and Marcelline have also appeared, downstage right, and during Figaro's and Susanna's scene, one of the maids brings hot water for a footbath and a camomile-steambath against Marcellina's cold. Basilio moves to 'his area,' indicated by a music stand, and starts composing. The maids start washing and wringing linen in the background, Basilio eavesdrops on Susanna's and Marcellina's quarrel.

Such a liveliness of parallel action is kept up throughout the production. At the same time, perception habits of the audience are provoked. Whereas the ordinary theatre experience means focusing on one central element on the stage, in Freeman's production of *Figaro*, a flood of visual input reaches the spectator. All elements of input are interesting and make much sense because they are logical elements of the interpretation that Freeman provides. The audience has to learn to focus on the main element, which is provided by the music: they have to focus on the singers, while at the same time allowing the other input not to distract but to enrich the insights gained from focusing.

Freeman carried his use of simultaneity even further in his adaptation of Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*. The production was presented in two parts. The first half of Part I, and the second half of Part II, were presented in the traditional space of the Lyric Hammersmith, London. For the second half of Part I and the first half of Part II, the audience assembled in nearby Hammersmith Church. The space was empty (the pews had been removed), and the action took place simultaneously around five mobile pageants. Spectators had the choice to follow one storyline, or to shift between the pageants, or to stay somewhere in the space and take in just what happened to make its way towards their perception.

Simultaneity of space and time is a characteristic of pure consciousness. On this level of creation, past, present, and future coexist. If a

form of theatre forces the human mind to engage in the experience of simultaneity, it trains it in functioning from that deep level. Repeated exposure to such theatre stimuli may serve in parallel to repeated exposure to pure consciousness in meditative techniques. Theatre, understood and practised in this way, may thus well serve as a means of developing higher states of consciousness.

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TERRY L. PRICE

Shifting Place

Given the reach of emerging technologies and how we use them, how do they affect the definitions of here and place?

As a designer, in fact, with most things I undertake, I tend to begin with an image. After reading a dramatic text and developing first impressions, I begin collecting images that resonate with those initial thoughts. So, it made sense to find an image that resonated with my perspective as I developed this paper. The image that kept coming back to me was an image, taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, of a twin nebula.¹ The twin nebula has three discrete parts: the two flares opposing each other and the region where they join. In my mind, and for the benefit of my argument, I labeled the three parts in spatial terms: 'here' — or our present space, 'the interface' and somewhere else or 'elsewhere.'

One of the classes I teach at Texas Lutheran University is Introduction to Theatre. Several times throughout the semester, I ask my class to answer the following question: "What is Theatre?" (In this instance, I mean live theatrical production.) I always get the typical responses one would expect but I also get answers that are rather insightful. Over time we have developed what I think is a rather sophisticated definition of theatre, which concludes that: "Theatre is the act of storytelling by manipulating and defining space in time."

¹ The image can be seen here: "Hubble Witnesses the Final Blaze of Glory of Sun-Like Stars," 1 March 2006 <<http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/newsdesk/archive/releases/1997/38/>>.

Another exercise we do in the Introduction to Theatre class is to examine emerging trends and new technologies that may affect how we interact in our new world. For example, the introduction of the Video Cassette Recorder in the late 1970s permanently changed television and the way we use television as an entertainment device. With the VCR came the concept of ‘the time shift.’ Time shifting freed television viewers from a predetermined schedule and allowed them to create their own viewing schedule. Viewers were no longer tethered to the broadcaster’s schedule. This loss of control, of course, gave rise to a great deal of fear among the broadcasters. While this was freeing, viewers still needed to be at their television to watch the programs they recorded — they needed to be in the same place as their television and their VCR.

Today, a new technology is emerging that will allow even greater freedom. This new technology allows ‘place shifting.’ I quote here from Corcoran:

[...] in San Mateo, California, Blake Krikorian performs an Internet magic trick. He fires up an iPAQ handheld and, with a few clicks on a menu, pulls up live television. ... Krikorian switches to his laptop, and moments later Clifford the Big Red Dog is nosing around at a birthday party [...].

The article continues with this quote from Krikorian: “...I’m already paying for my cable at home, why can’t I watch it somewhere else? [...] The VCR lets you ‘time-shift,’ taping now to watch later. I wanted to ‘place-shift.’” It is from here that I derived the title for my paper. As I read the article, it occurred to me that ‘place-shifting’ happens in other ways as well.

Computer technologies allow us to ‘place-shift.’ There is a sitcom on American TV called *2 ½ Men*. In a recent episode, Alan (who is separated from his wife and living with his brother) bought web cams for himself and his son so they could communicate with each other when his son was with his mother. His brother, Charlie, a typical womanizer, immediately thought of a different use — he says “well, this elevates phone sex to a whole new level” (*2 ½ Men*). In his own way Charlie understood the concept of ‘place-shifting.’

There was an example of ‘place shifting’ in the news recently (*Eye-witness News at 6:00*). In Texas, USA, hunting — or, as they say it: ‘huntin’ — is a very popular sport. (Drinking while ‘huntin’ is also

popular, a dangerous combination one would think, but probably more favorable for the animals being hunted.) In fact, hunting is so popular that there are ranches, complete with exotic animals specifically created for hunters. One ranch owner took the concept one step further and created an interesting service. He developed a control mechanism for a gun that could be remotely controlled using the Internet. The system included a gun with a camera that could be aimed remotely by a person located anywhere. The remote hunter, using his or her Internet connection, could see the target area, aim the gun and pull the trigger. The example cited in the news was of a paraplegic living in Ohio, roughly 1000 miles away, who went hunting on the ranch in Texas. The Ohio hunter was able to shift place.

New gaming technologies use storytelling extensively. The games invite the players to be totally immersed in an alternative world, leaving the here, passing through the interface and entering the elsewhere. Game developers work very hard at eliminating BIPs or Breaks-in-Presence. They do not want the here to interfere with the gaming experience. Online gaming extends and challenges the concept of space and place even more.

Computer technologies allow us to control basic functions related to our homes. From our offices — or anywhere for that matter — we can adjust the temperature, turn on lights and water the lawn. From the perspective of the casual observer walking their dog in front of our house, it appears we are home. We have extended the concept of place and extended our reach, maybe even our personal space.

Each of these technologies is challenging our definition of 'here' and 'place.' We can be any place at any time and, it appears, we can be in two places at the same time. There was a song in the 70s that stated: "If I could be in two places at one time I would be with you tomorrow and today" ("If", music and lyrics by David Ashworth Gates, March 1971). Brilliant lyrics, however, a closer examination reveals that what they are saying was indeed possible. In reality, they were not asking to be in two places at the same time, they were asking to be in one place in two times and we can do that now.

We can be transported anywhere with a web cam or with voice and video conferencing. Cell phones allow, and sometimes force, us to be in

contact with anyone anywhere on the globe. We can effect an action or perform tasks from remote locations. We can enter virtual worlds in play. These technologies have changed what we consider our 'close environment' or 'our extended personal space.' The new technologies allow us to be alone in public places and sometimes force us to be public in private places. And, they bring into question the essential meaning of now, here and place.

Other disciplines are exploring and examining the concept of space as well. Physicists are slicing our physical world into smaller and smaller pieces. This has led to new theories in physics that are challenging what we know about time and dimension.

Lee Smolin is one of the leading theorists regarding the origin of the universe. In his book *The Life of the Cosmos*, Smolin connects the concept of time with the forming of the cosmos, he says about time: "there is no longer a simple linear progression. Instead, time branches like a tree, so that each black hole is a bud that leads to a new universe of moments [...]." (n. pag.)

Brian Greene is a leading theorist regarding the structure of the smallest, indivisible elements that make up our physical world. He is a leader in the development of Superstring Theory. Now I would never presume to understand Superstring Theory in anything more than a superficial way. Nevertheless, if I understand correctly, Superstring Theory describes a world that is much different from what we have traditionally assumed to be true. In his book *The Elegant Universe*, Greene posits that there are "extra dimensions curled up inside the three dimensions we recognize" which are "capable of giving us an answer to the question of how the universe began and why there are such things as space and time [...]" (186f).

Physicists are also testing the speed limit of light. In just the past few years, scientists have apparently been able to alter the speed of light. The July 20, 2000 edition of *Nature Magazine* reports the following findings resulting from experimentations with the speed of light: "This means that a light pulse propagating through the atomic vapor cell appears at the exit side so much earlier than [when] in a vacuum that the peak of the pulse appears to leave the cell before entering it." (277) In other

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words, the light pulse arrived before it left — the scientists were able to increase the speed of the light pulse.

At the other extreme, scientists have reduced the speed of light to seventeen meters per second. In the February 18, 1999 issue of the journal *Nature*, they report:

One such example is electromagnetically induced transparency, a quantum effect that permits the propagation of light pulses through an otherwise opaque medium. Here we report an experimental demonstration of electromagnetically induced transparency in an ultracold gas of sodium atoms, in which the optical pulses propagate at twenty million times slower than the speed of light in a vacuum. (Hau et al. 594)

While I do not understand most of the language, I do understand “twenty million times slower.” They were able to reduce the speed of a pulse of light to 55.77 feet per second or 38 miles per hour. Bicyclist Lance Armstrong rode his bike faster than that in the recent Tour de France.

Ultimately, this means that the physical laws that were once considered fixed and unchangeable are now being challenged in very significant ways. For example, Einstein’s theories of relativity depend on the speed of light remaining a constant 186,000 miles per second and on time being a constant. What are the implications when the speed of light is not assumed to be fixed? These discoveries will inevitably change, or at the least have an effect on, our view of the physical world, our view of place.

We can find challenges to the concept of space in literature well. In his novel *House of Leaves*, Mark Danielewski explores as his subject a world in which the relative sizes of things seem to be inverted. The story involves a house that measures larger on the inside than on the outside. (This brings to mind a story attributed to Andy Warhol who observed that over time refrigerator designers have increased the interior space of refrigerators without increasing their overall size to such a degree that very soon they will be larger on the inside than they are on the outside.) Danielewski also used literary structure to reinforce his challenge to space. Also notable is the way the text is arranged on the page. The arrangement reinforces the distorted and confused space.

But, how does this relate to theatre and theatrical production?

Because one of the roles of the artist is to help us understand the world we live in and the world we are creating, it makes sense for artists, in this case theatre artists, to explore challenges to space and place as well. Theatre creators are exploring human existence using the same technologies that are altering our ways of life.

While space may typically be considered the place where designers work, everyone involved in presenting a production — actor, designers, director, etc. — in their own way changes and defines space. In the best cases, their manipulations reflect the playwright's intentions and effectively communicate those intentions to the audience. Here, I want to take a look at one particular style of production design in light of some recent technological and scientific developments.

Throughout history, theatre has both anticipated and reflected technological and social advances. It is not surprising then that contemporary production has begun extending the definition of space and place as well.

Several exciting new production forms are emerging showing apparent parallels between 'place-shifting' technology and contemporary theatre productions. For example, prerecorded video playback and live, interactive video show scenes and characters in locations beyond or outside the traditional confines of the theatre space.

Another new production form is Performance Conferencing or Multi-space performance. These productions are performed in more than one venue. The various locations are connected together using video link-up. Audience members in one location can see into the other performance venue, in other words into the other dimensions, the other space. They are able to 'place-shift' to a different, real location.

Virtual Reality Theatre creates virtual environments in which the performer and performance exist, blending the real with the virtual. Virtual Reality performances use virtual environments that the performers interact with, opening a window to other dimensions. In this case the audience member 'place-shifts' to an entirely fictive world.

These production forms open a window to additional dimensions and parallel times allowing us to observe them. Given some basic information, we could even calculate specific, detailed characteristics of the spaces. It appears we know everything there is to know about these

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virtual spaces, yet we cannot enter them. The edge of our three-dimensional world interferes with our interacting with the projected world. The interface does not yet allow us to move from 'here' to 'elsewhere.'

Mark Reaney at the University of Kansas, School of Theatre and Film was an early leader in the use of Virtual Reality. Professor Reaney used Virtual Environments extensively in production. He has mounted several productions that relied heavily on computer and video generated virtual environments. One production, *Wings* by Kopit incorporated a video technology called i-glasses!, which enabled the audience to see the virtual environment. i-glasses! feature two LCD displays, which create the illusion of a large projection screen in front of the observer. Mr. Reaney described the experience this way:

Using i-glasses!, audiences were still able to see live actors on stage and computer graphics projected onto rear projection screens. [...] The 'see-through' technology of i-glasses! made it possible for the user to see through and around the built-in video screens. [...] The audience still maintained a strong connection with the live actors. [...] The communal nature was not lessened. i-glasses! allowed us to present virtual-worlds, computer generated objects and video images directly before the eyes of an audience. Symbolic devices, realistic locals, expressionist images, or even close-ups of the actors were superimposed over the view of the actors.

In this case the audience 'place-shifted' to virtual worlds. They were moved closer to the actor or they were given clues regarding the emotional state of the characters — they were shifted to the emotional world of the character.

We also experiment with virtual reality in the Department of Dramatic Media at TLU. Several of our productions have incorporated projected video and still images that allow us to extend the limits of the theatre space. In our production of *The Laramie Project*, some characters were recorded onto video and the onstage characters interacted with the projected images. The barriers between the various places were challenged.

Of course, this is not new. Josef Svoboda, the Czech scenographer, incorporated still and motion images into performance as early as the 1960s. In the production *The Wonderful Circus*, the performers continually and beautifully break through the dimensional barrier and move

Terry L. Price

freely between the projected images and on-stage — blending ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere.’

In plays incorporating projected images, the audience observes the normal dimensions and other spaces simultaneously. In these applications, virtual environment implies, and indeed is, an extension of the space we recognize as here.

Referring back to the image of the nebula: if ‘here’ is the place where the audience and the play exists and the projected places are ‘elsewhere,’ then the screen itself serves as the ‘interface’ between the two spaces.

These productions allow us to ‘place-shift.’

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NEAL HARVEY AND JOANNE TOMPKINS

Virtual Reality and Negotiating Problems of Real Theatre Space

The uncertain territory explored in this paper is, paradoxically, the territory of the contemporary, working theatre building. This territory may seem to be the most easily mapped space in contemporary theatre: after all, it is definitely the most material, arguably the most accessible and superficially the most perennial. Yet it is quite easy to demonstrate that this is not the case. The contemporary theatre is a heterogeneous production of subtle creative, spatial, economic and cultural forces, each of which leaves its trace on the bricks and mortar of a building, in a different way. The mapping of contemporary theatre space is, then, as much treasure hunt as it is schematic expression. As Alan Read points out, the aura of theatre depends upon the unique time and place of its occurrence, a complex melding of spatial, platial and cultural practices (157) that are never easily mapped. Blueprints, sketches, program photos and critical reviews may all describe a particular aspect of the contemporary theatre building, but a full set of cartographic tools to unveil this ghostly and secret building are still yet to be articulated by either the academy or the theatre industry.

In an effort to provide access to such venues — a map of sorts — we have developed a virtual reality modelling package for theatres, called *Ortelia*, to provide a means of charting such uncertain territories. This package is already showing the potential to achieve several significant results: in addition to providing virtual access to theatres, it assists venue

managers and users in their regular work, from the relative proximity or distance of a computer. It also enables the archiving of past productions, creating a historical depth to a particular venue and the territories of certainty and uncertainty that it may have explored. Ortelia's Interactive Spaces suite of Java applications provides the tools to begin the cartography of this most uncertain of spaces.

Ortelia is a web-based application that can house VR models of working theatre environments. Active account holders can design their space in real-time, manipulate lighting conditions, and generate specification data detailing on-stage objects, with details that run from specific geometrical measurements to information about suppliers. Ortelia provides working theatre companies with a cost- and time-effective conceptual tool that, in turn, offers researchers with the mappable landmarks missing from previous theatrical spatial research. Ortelia facilitates a historicised record of a given theatre's occupation, detailing the spatial history of a working theatre environment. The transient nature of theatre production requires multiple and/or lengthy visits to a venue to document even the smallest fragment of performance or component of architecture. This is often impossible in a working theatre, which is by definition otherwise occupied, as well as being governed by strict occupational health and safety obligations regarding outsiders. Diagrams and photographs are only so helpful for communicating the depth and dimensions of a venue to a potential user, let alone for evaluating the spatial effects of a production in that venue. Whereas existing 3D building tools like AutoCAD, Vectorworks, or 3D Studio Max (standard industry tools that still rely on building and rendering scenes as static images) demand high end-user knowledge to take advantage of VR technology, Ortelia requires little, if any, prior computer experience. In an industry that is notoriously computer shy (in Australia at least), Ortelia answers some very simple user-trust questions more effectively than its competitors. In doing so Ortelia provides an industry tool that doubles as a healthy, investigative pictorial document.

This paper outlines the development of Ortelia's Stage Manager Application, detailing some of the research goals and priorities that reinforce the application's development.

What is Ortelia?

Ortelia is a web-based environment that houses password protected, real world venue models and production design data. On a Java-based platform, users can access their models and design within the environment, in real time, utilising a virtual toolbox that contains an inventory of stage properties, a colour and texture library, and lighting, editing and exporting tools (see figure 1). In lay terms, Ortelia provides users with the ability to access virtual reality models of real world theatres, navigate through their models with 360° freedom, insert and edit three-dimensional props and objects, and save their work for future access. The modelling process strips from the files any unnecessary ‘virtual weight,’ reducing the models considerably in size, allowing them to be accessed remotely from even lower-end computer hardware; in fact, one of the largest models, of Brisbane’s Powerhouse theatre, is only 303KB.

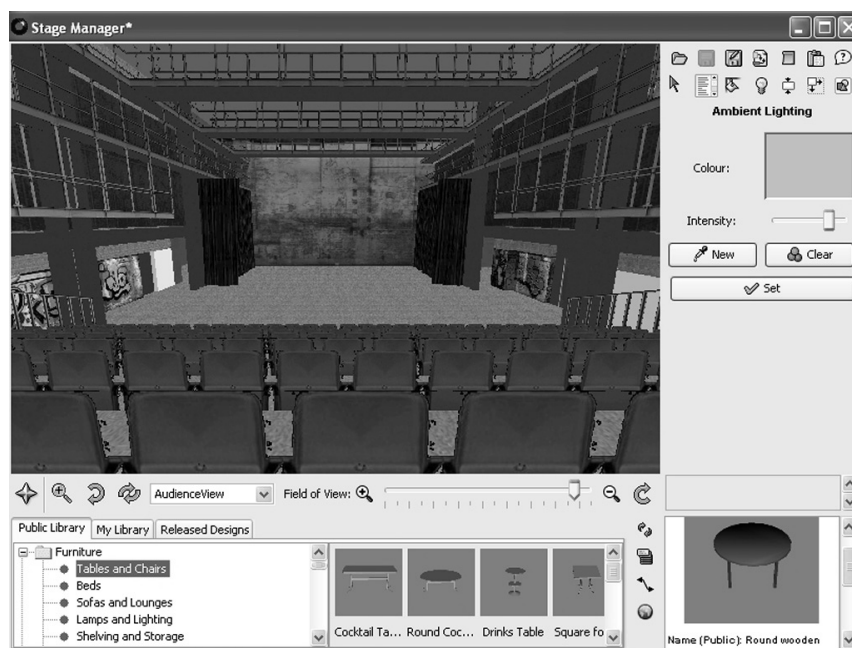


Figure 1. The Ortelia Interface with Powerhouse Theatre Loaded Onscreen

Venue models are built in wire frame environments and then carefully decorated with textures created from building surveys of digital photographs. The process can be time consuming, but the accuracy of a VR model built from a building survey far exceeds that of one built from a schematic drawing. In our experience, for whatever reasons, theatres seem to resemble their original blueprints only loosely. Whether it's a bricked-over doorway (such as in La Boite's only recently completed Roundhouse), a recently installed public art piece (the Brisbane Powerhouse Centre for Live Arts) or an annexing of the exit tunnel covers (La Boite's Roundhouse, again), decisions are made, on site, during the construction process that cannot be represented in the buildings' plans. A floor and section plan can convey some of this information to a production designer, but without an accompanying document detailing the lighting conditions, the extent of the theatre's black-out, the nature of the space available for side of stage quick changes, etc. it is only so useful in describing the spatial nature of a given theatre. Ortelia provides an accurate, visual reference where one did not exist previously.

Ortelia provides an inventory of props and objects that can be added and manipulated within venue models for conceptual and design work. Users can directly upload their own models and store them in password-protected folders, or they can make them accessible to other Ortelia users. This information can extend beyond design decisions to dimension, availability and pricing information of particular props and objects.

Ortelia differs from similar applications in several key ways. Unlike programs such as StudioMax 3D or Vectorworks, Ortelia is not a modelling package. It requires little previous computer knowledge and provides the user with the finished models rather than the tools to build models themselves. Ortelia is a web-based application, meaning that while users need the Java Virtual Machine installed on their PC or MAC, they do not need expensive software packages to view and share files (and Java VM is freely available for all platforms). Compared to theatre specific applications like Stage Struck, an Australian package that is designed for high school students, or Theatron's educational interactive models, Ortelia provides real-world venues as they appear in the real world.

At its core, Ortelia utilises virtual reality technology to convey information: a venue's dimensions, access, paint or stonework and design history can all be displayed in virtual reality. Where this information was once discernable by means of accessing a combination of plan and section drawings, phone and email conversations along with a substantial amount of local knowledge, virtual reality applications, like Ortelia, make this information much more transparent. Venue-specific data is crucial to a production's design and the depth and accuracy of information is often subject to the availability of local experts to discuss and convey it.

Why Develop Something Like Ortelia?

Theatrical space, like all other social spaces is a produced entity: it is a dynamic and fluid concept that merges material practices with mental conceptions. Whatever methodology one may choose to examine the uncertainty of theatrical space — Lefebvre's Marxist triad, Shields' socially spatialised blending of space and place myths, de Certeau's spatial/platial distinction (among many other possibilities) — space is undoubtedly a hybridised entity created from a hybridised production process. Present theoretical theatrical methodology makes little room for the examination of this process in its entirety, largely due to the fact that little record of this process exists. Theatre productions are often treated only as end-products, not as evolutionary of work; even then, little material evidence of a production exists five years after the event. Ortelia creates a theatrical, spatial text where one previously did not exist. It merges theory and practice to make the complex phenomenon of theatre space more accessible to theatre researchers and industry professionals.

In more detail, there are at least three practical outcomes for the production of theatre practice that are made possible by Ortelia, and we briefly discuss them here. In the first instance, Ortelia provides access. It creates an important visual and perceptual link with the theatre production and analysis process: if researchers or practitioners are unable to access the real theatre space, this model provides the next best thing. Its detailed depiction of what is all-but 'real' space enhances the access for researchers and practitioners.

Secondly, Ortelia facilitates archiving. Documentation and archiving facilities have improved dramatically in the last decade, but never has there been so great a leap in the way to practice this archive than that provided by virtual reality technology. The establishment of a web-based and therefore remotely accessible catalogue of past theatre productions preserves invaluable cultural material that is currently usually stored only in the corporate memories of the production staff themselves. An accurate tool that can log changes to the venue as well as the new sets for specific productions means that major and minor modifications through a season or through the life span of a venue can be charted. In archiving alone, Ortelia provides an application that can assist in the fuller study of theatre venues and design decisions.

Ortelia's third practical outcome regards touring. The tour of productions to other cities and regional areas is particularly significant in a country like Australia where touring is an economic essential for production houses, most of which cannot afford to mount an entire season on their own. Theatre productions regularly tour to buildings that may be substantially different in size, shape and even intended function from the production's original space. The absence of precise information concerning theatres' dimensions and the ability to transport a set that suits one venue to another venue is, in this day and age, staggering. The economic problems associated in touring a theatre production to both regional and capital locations are compounded by the physical challenges associated with the suitability, installation and removal of an untried set on a stage that will (one hopes) accommodate it, but not one for which it was specifically designed. Designers whose productions tour to different venues talk of the inadequate technical information concerning destination theatres and the experience of having their set cut in half to fit a specific theatre that is smaller than that for which it was designed. The cost and time implications of attending to each location's stage and configuration specifics mean that it is unrealistic for a travelling design to make specific accommodations to each venue that houses it. Such practical actions lead to unnecessary aesthetic compromises that could be avoided with the availability of the right tools. Ortelia initiates what can become an effective, interactive international database of theatre venues; a cost and time effective tool which allows designers the luxury

of detailed location-specific information; the ability to virtually test a set. A subsidiary benefit from the use of Ortelia in the context of touring is that it offers the chance to facilitate and enrich the cultural production of regional and remote areas of the country that may not otherwise be able to accommodate touring productions or access information for their own touring purposes.

In addition to the practical benefits for the performance of live theatre and the management of its venues, Ortelia also contributes to theoretical research. Ortelia provides a forum to better explore the effects of various or competing constructions of theatrical space and social space. By using the model to investigate the relevance of alternate spatial theories in the context of new technologies, taking, for instance, the theories of Chaudhuri, Read, McAuley, Harvey, and Soja, among others, Ortelia can be harnessed to assess the benefits of analysing space in a virtual environment (compared to live space). It can also test the relative merits of different theories against each other. One of the most important practical ways to test this is by checking the potential for the model to be used to document past productions in these theatres.

Finally, the use of virtual reality with regard to an artform such as theatre demonstrates to researchers in VR technology how they might enhance VR function. Spatial research in theatre studies represents an important forum for Virtual Reality research. Since each medium shares characteristically fluid boundaries between the ephemerally 'real' and 'unreal,' each provides a useful touchstone for the other. Theatre spaces are the most transformative environment the VR modellers have thus far found to present both the potential of VR and the (apparent) stability of a 'real' location. Their inherent real-but-not-real qualities make them an ideal forum to further develop VR technology.

Ortelia's Present Focus and Future Directions

While Ortelia began as The Online Theatre Project,¹ it has evolved in theoretical scope to address a growing number of research questions

¹ This was an Australia Research Council funded-project intended to investigate the practical and theoretical benefits of virtual reality for theatre practice and study in Australia.

proposed by the academy and our industry partners. Developed in conjunction with La Boite Theatre Company, the Sleeman Sports Centre, the Cairns Civic Theatre and Parallel Graphics, the Online Theatre Project slowly grew in scope from its proof-of-concept project into an in-depth study into the theatrical spatialisation process.² Since that time Ortelia has developed a suite of applications, still in their beta-testing phase, targeting VR use in an array of practical, academic and economic arenas.

Taking its name from Abraham Ortelius, author of *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (Theatre of the Countries of the World, the first atlas of the known world), Ortelia is currently focussed on the delivery of site-specific access to configurable spaces across educational, institutional and industry platforms. The focus for Ortelia's work has broadened beyond the Online Theatre Project's theatre-based proof of concept as it has recognised that cyberspaces are not 'atopian' (no space, a nullity). Rather, they may be "ectopian," or outside of ordinary space, and open to multiple contradictory appropriations by those who create and then traverse their spatial properties" (Luke 37). Future VR applications are planned to investigate the possibilities for exploring spatial uncertainties regarding seating and attendance patterns and motivations; remote client hire of venues on almost a sub-contractual basis; integrated educational and archive packages; and the spatial nature of an industry that is quickly coming to terms with the demands and possibilities of e-commerce.

Ortelia's 'virtual' aims do not, however, compromise its emphasis on the 'material' world of spatial inquiry. Ortelia firmly remains part of 'ordinary' or 'real' space as it interlocks with the non-virtual environment: the theatres and venues themselves. The virtual dimension of Ortelia only makes sense as part of the real world site: it is, after all, *the recognisable site* that gives the tool its purpose. If Ortelia's models weren't recognised as real world venues, their use and utility would likely be limited to the educational context, illustrating simple issues regarding sightlines, general characteristics of theatre types, and basic

² See Harvey and Tompkins for a more in-depth study of the potential theoretical outcomes of the Online Theatre Project.

design concerns.³ It is the relation to the ‘real’ that gives this virtual project its value. While VR supposedly transcends history and time, VR in *Ortelia* only exists because it has an associated context in the ‘real’ theatre. It is the real, we would argue, that gives life to the model and the model that can give life to the real.

Ortelia provides another way to explore essential relations between the virtualities of cyberspace and the virtualities provided by the theatre itself. *Ortelia* offers a medium — a location — through which to explore multiple issues of spatiality as they relate to theatre and the world beyond the theatre. These relations, rather than the VR forum itself, are the most important part of the project. Henri Lefebvre, whose *The Production of Space* is generally regarded as the foundation of contemporary spatial studies, maintains that “a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products)” (83). This is probably truer of theatre than of many other possible ‘spaces.’ As *Ortelia* helps challenge conventional thinking about VR, it also questions perceptions regarding space in both real environments and virtual venues. *Ortelia* directly investigates the uncertain territory that governs and produces theatre space, providing a certainty, a material, documental dimension for further inquiry.

Ortelia doesn’t eliminate the need for a ‘real’ theatre venue, nor does it attempt to substitute virtual performance for ‘real’ performance. Rather, *Ortelia* augments the function and potential of performance in the real world, in addition to facilitating its study. *Ortelia* creates an important visual and perceptual link with the theatre itself: for researchers and practitioners who are unable to access the real theatre space, this model provides the next best thing. We see VR as a valuable critical tool in both academic and practical worlds, particularly concerning spatiality and theatrical studies.

³ Existing teaching software programs like *Stage Struck* (developed by NIDA, the University of Wollongong, the Sydney Opera House, Opera Australia and the Australian Ballet) do just this: their non-specific site limits their use to high school students.

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READE W. DORNAN

Screen to Stage:
Positioning the Subject in Murakami's
The Elephant Vanishes

It's an old discussion, the comparison of film to theatre. When it comes up in discussion, someone is invariably defending the weightiness of theatre against the popularity of film. In this case, I am not pitting one medium against the other, but describing an amalgam of theatre and film in *The Elephant Vanishes*, a theatrical adaptation by Complicité of the Haruki Murakami short story by the same name. When it opened in Ann Arbor, Michigan (USA) on Wednesday, October 20, 2004, the university theatre had a number of empty seats. The audience was the usual middle-aged theatergoers. By Saturday, three days later, there was a line from the cashier's booth out the door of young people, mostly students anxious for tickets. What made the difference? Since I was present at the theatre on both occasions, I can guess that the word was out (presumably by e-mail) that this was a fast-paced, multimedia production. Ordinarily, a seemingly aesthete production of a little known Japanese short story would hold little interest for the Internet set, but this was a media moment. The addition of film and other technology to the production suddenly made the prospect of going to the theatre more appealing.

As early as 1934, Erwin Panofsky recognized that the theatergoer has an experience markedly different from someone in cinema. The difference, he notes, is in the spectator's experience. In neither case does the

spectator leave his seat, so the distance between the spectator and stage (or screen) remains fixed. And yet, the theatergoer experiences space and time differently. Panofsky observes that in the theatre

the setting of the stage cannot change during one act (except for such incidentals as rising moons or gathering clouds and such illegitimate reborrowings from the film as turning wings or gliding backdrops). But in return for this restriction, the theatre has the advantage that time, the medium of emotion and thought conveyable by speech, is free and independent of anything that may happen in visible space. (72)

In other words, the theatre-going spectator will see whatever there is for the naked eye to follow and will use his/her imagination and personal experience to push beyond the appearance of things to construct a more completed scene in the mind. What takes shape is conditioned largely by his ability to imagine and his emotional state. Panofsky noted that the situation is reversed for someone in the cinema:

Aesthetically he is in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with the lens of the camera, which permanently shifts in distance and direction... Not only bodies move in space, but space itself does, approaching receding, turning, dissolving, and recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots – not to mention such special effects as visions, transformations, disappearances, slow-motion and fast-motion shots, reversals, and trick films. (72)

Panofsky's description well captures the sensation of film's continuous flow in movement and motion from object to object, which imitates the eye's ability to focus on things near and far. Connecting image to image, the observer follows the lens' motion for close up shots, long shots, and into the middle range. Because film mimics the mechanics of the eye, it has a natural feeling and appeal to the spectator. Panofsky concedes this much to film and then rushed to defend the theatrical experience as aesthetically superior. He discounts the film's script, its photographic technique, and its ability to create a lasting effect. For him, the acting in films is their only aesthetic dimension (80). Of course, he is largely talking about silent films when he said, "the screenplay, in contrast to the theater play, has no aesthetic existence independent of its performance, and its characters have no aesthetic existence outside the actors" (80). With the mention of Greta Garbo, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Asta Nielsen, he makes an important point about the force of personal-

ity in film, but his defensiveness tells us that as early as 1934, the theatre looked as though it might be losing out to the film industry as the entertainment of choice.

The late Susan Sontag took up Panofsky's concern for a dying theatre in 1966 in her landmark essay "Film and Theatre." In it, she finds fault in neither film nor theatre, but she sees advantages to both as art forms. She agrees with Panofsky's observation that theatre space is problematic because it is more static than film. It cannot create motion, she concedes, but she adds that Panofsky is picturing "a 'literary' conception of theatre," which is the rendering of the printed text that is the art form, mediated by performance. Like Panofsky, she describes film as little more than speeded up still shots of a performance, with no text other than itself. Sontag also agrees that films are carried largely by the talents of actors. But she admires film for its unity in its transitions between the images, its relations of one shot to another, and thus in the sequencing of screen shots. Just as important to this discussion, Sontag points out that filming a scene is not confined to one location. Unlike theatre a cinematographer can move out over a wide physical space and can, if necessary, have access to "an alogical or discontinuous use of space" (29). She describes film as "a continuous reinvention of space (as well as the option of temporal indeterminacy)" (30) that uses repetitions of images, overlaps, dissolves, and a variety of shots (through close ups, medium range and long range shots) to produce a feeling of continuous movement in and out. She believes that the camera with its use of space could create a sense of "realism" that the fixed scene in a theatre could not replicate. So it is not just the dynamics of film through movement and motion that lends the medium some excitement, but its ability to represent "what is experienced as the truth of life" and that naturalism seems to give it some advantage over theatre. As much as Panofsky and Sontag want to defend the theatre and its value in the arts, they have to concede that film as an art form is popular, presumably because the public has a more immediate and recognizable experience in the movie theatre and so they embrace its conventions as representative of "real life."

In those decades that Panofsky and, later, Sontag compared film to theatre in terms of its ability to be "lifelike," others were toying with aspects of "representation" in theatre. Perhaps in reaction to photo real-

ism which failed to question reality, the art world of the post-World War II period was desperately looking for alternative forms that would shake up the spectator's vision of the world and enable the arts to emphasize how we see something and experience it, rather than what we see. Artists began to explore the unstable relationship between viewer and object, questioning subjectivity and the bourgeois point of view (e.g. Picasso and Cubism). Complaining that naturalism on the stage gave the viewer only a partial view of the invisible world and its undercurrents, modernist playwrights such as Ionesco and Beckett developed the potential of fragmented form, discontinuous narrative, and random-seeming collage of disparate materials. They wanted to represent the abstract and a distillation of experience, forms that challenged the theatregoer to look at "real life" anew.

Theatre of the mid-twentieth century was well suited to the goals of modernism. Although still confined to a continuous use of one space, modernist theatre invaded the spectators' world with its ability to suggest fresh perspectives. With individuated scenes and discontinuity, drama of the mid-twentieth century was able to force skepticism about relationships and conditions of the everyday world. Because theatre audiences did not expect a faithful representation of reality, because they did not necessarily expect a convincing illusion, they allowed modernist playwrights to experiment with the artifice that is theatre, to present a reality that contradicted ordinary experience. Beckett, Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, and *The Living Theatre* were among a number of artists who opened up the creative process in search of a new take on the world and a better society. The energy and optimism of their new directions should have overshadowed the growing popularity of film, but it didn't.

Despite successes in revitalizing the theatre through new forms, the public continues to choose the cinema for its "authentic" representation of reality. There are many other reasons for film's ongoing popularity — the low cost of tickets, the informal atmosphere of a movie house, the ongoing availability of high quality films, worldwide distribution through videos and DVDs, as well as a handshake with the news media that support the film industry with daily infomercials and an insatiable fascination with the stars.

More to the point, however, film capitalizes on its ability to depict and eventually shape a version of reality that feeds the public's fantasies. In the movie theatre, audiences see a reality that they want to believe in, so the mutuality between audience and film's success becomes self-perpetuating. By contrast, serious theatre attempts to present an alternative world view and insists on a more demanding art experience. Much about these differing representations of reality is determined by the forms' positioning of the spectator. Experimental forms in contemporary theatre require spectators to construct their own narrative at a distance from the production. Disconnection, unexpected sequencing, and an ironic view of representation force spectators in theatre to do the work of finding links, reassembling the narrative, and trying to identify a contingent theme. While the spectator in the movie house may also be challenged to piece together seemingly disparate scenes, the mechanics of the transitions — overlaps, dissolves, zooms, fades, wipes — and the sequencing of montage function to connect images so seamlessly that the work of narrative construction is largely being done for the spectator. For those who grew up on the conventions of television and film, the problem of the fixed, static spatial positioning in theatre thus remains an issue. With the flow from one image to another and the shifting planes for perspective and proximity, the cinema appears to be a "natural" representation of the world. To counter audience preferences for the conventions of film, theatre has incorporated more media, especially taking advantage of film to enhance the stage experience, but most of the additions have drawn little notice.

The Elephant Vanishes with its skillful use of film and video cameras may be one of those plays that has reversed this trend. In its highly successful world tour and long run in London, it has proved both intellectually challenging to the spectator and engaging. Some of its popularity can be attributed to the themes embodied by three Murakami stories that recreate the intensity of living in a big city — the loneliness, unfulfilled desire, anonymity, and possibility that anything unexpected can happen. While Murakami is describing everyday Tokyo, he is also raising themes about living in big cities anywhere, places that we might not ever directly experience, but we can easily recognize. The title story wonders how an elephant can disappear from the zoo without a trace. The second

story is hilariously about a couple who decide to hold up a McDonald's restaurant for its sesame seed buns, because they are bread hungry (in this land of rice eaters), and the third tells about the dire loneliness of a woman who hasn't slept for seventeen days. Below the surface of each fantastic story is a parallel world with an invisible existence that we may have imagined all along, but have dared not describe. The stories are not restricted to the logic we give "real life." Using magic realism, Murakami continually confuses us with moments that turn the perfectly ordinary incident into something we have to scramble to explain.

The first-person narrator is a nameless kitchen appliance salaryman. He is the last person to see the elephant and keeper just before they disappear altogether. The elephant is the beloved possession of a private local zoo. Given the local attention to it, no one can understand how a zookeeper and an animal of that size could vanish without a trace. From a nearby hill, however, the narrator, who has had the habit of watching the elephant and its zoo keeper alone together, witnesses what has happened. Hidden from view, he has noticed that in private moments the two creatures display a special feeling for each other. As he is watching on the last day, he notices that their proportionate sizes have begun to change — either the zoo keeper has gotten bigger or the elephant has shrunk. They seem to be finding some new balance between them — both in size and in their mutual regard. Comparing this experience to the mismatched relationships in his own life, the narrator says:

I often get the feeling that things around me have lost their proper balance, though it could be that my perceptions are playing tricks on me. Some kind of balance inside me has broken down since the elephant affair, and maybe that causes external phenomena to strike my eye in a strange way. It's probably something in me. (Murakami 327)

The story is one of perception — we see what we are willing to see.¹ The narrator is able to witness the disappearance of an elephant because he has begun to ask about the relationship between human and the natural world. The story has some hint of Buddhist belief in the reason of unreason, the loss of self in the other, and invisible unity in the natural order. It also resonates with the story about elephants in the Tokyo zoo

¹ Thanks to Heiner Zimmermann for this idea.

after World War II that were allowed to starve to death because no one could afford to feed them. In defiance of practical considerations, one keeper sneaked into the war torn zoo with food in a futile attempt to keep the elephants alive. He was caught and executed for his soft-hearted attempt to save the animals. Murakami leaves the meaning of the story about the elephants and his keeper open and without comment. It is simple, yet mysteriously rich.

Simon McBurney's treatment of this material is full of unexpected turns. Multiple cameras break up the narrator's story permitting a variety of viewpoints and levels of reality. The play begins with an announcer's apology for the late start. This is strange because the play seems to have begun on time, and so it is the first hint that we, the audience, must begin questioning what is real and what is not. The announcer continues; she explains diffidently there is some problem with the technology. We are not sure whether her apology is authentic or merely a line from the play. As she exits, floating television monitors transverse the stage contradicting her disclaimer. Some are blank; some have lighted screens; one has an oversized elephant's eye. It is pushed by a person whose gait resembles the lumbering of an elephant. And this is just the beginning of the technical features in the play. Throughout the production, actors tumble through space, a refrigerator transforms from kitchen appliance into a bottomless sea, the narrator is sometimes himself and later is doubled by another actor. Walls move and then seem to dissolve. People appear and disappear. Ongoing transformations are wondrous, moving, funny, constantly bewildering and hypnotizing, largely because so much is happening at once and the events defy our expectations.

More important, McBurney uses technology to manipulate theatre space and the audience is hypnotized by it. During the narrator's account of this quiet story, a video screen fills the spaces at the back of the theatre and, with its oversized images, makes meta-comments on the story. The merging of film and theatre elements was tried as early as Piscator and Artaud, so a video film at the back of the stage attracts no real attention to itself (Innes 92). New images flash across multiple television monitors downstage and they are competing for our attention instead. The multimedia push us and pull us across the stage. McBurney

employs small cameras to help us zoom in on spaces that would ordinarily be out of range from the balcony. An onstage camera pulls the spectator's eye toward the words on a newspaper page and, later, a handheld camera puts us inches from the face of a character. We can almost smell her breath. This is a theatre that manipulates space so skillfully that people appear, like the elephant, to shrink or grow larger — we are not sure which. Spectators are variously pulled into intimate conversation between characters, pushed away from the action, and, without warning, situated below or above the stage's sightlines. A theatregoer experiences a mastery over space by moving vicariously about the stage and assuming new angles of vision. Characters drifting in and out of the stories similarly seem to be, as Panofsky described it, "approaching, receding, turning, dissolving, and recrystallizing." The audience comfortably adjusts to the unstable environment and delights in the surprising images that challenge the reader to ask if seeing is believing.

Stretching the audience's bird's eye view similarly expands the epistemological boundaries within the text, McBurney has reinterpreted Murakami's stories without an awkward attempt at naturalistic story telling. Just as Murakami uses mind and space to create a somewhat surreal world, McBurney exploits the spatial features of technology to reconstruct the experience of Tokyo in the world one would expect to find, as well as the absence of Tokyo in a world that is not readily visible. McBurney's play is neither an attempt to describe it naturalistically — as a film might have done — nor abstractly as a modernist play might have done. Combining the best features of contemporary film and theatre, *The Elephant Vanishes* has accomplished — spatially — what neither film nor traditional theatre could have achieved on its own. McBurney's use of technology challenges the viewer's sense of space and place. No longer is the viewer restricted by a fixed perspective. The audience soon realizes that the act of looking is, in fact, highly changeable and contextual and that space in theatre need not be bound by the natural laws of perception. Perspective no longer seems reduced to a single relationship between eye and object, to a single exchange in space. McBurney redefines the spatial world as flux rather than a stable line of sight between viewer and object. He achieves this sensation by using technology to shift the image from plane to plane, while the viewer sits in one place.

At the heart of this production, however, is the absence of a text than can never be recalled in its entirety. Panofsky and Sontag's point about the inability of film to represent the text is still valid. As it is with most film, the production of *The Elephant Vanishes* is more about dazzling visuals in the theatre than the story itself. Multiple points of view open up gaps in our grasp of the story. Some of these gaps are in keeping with Murakami use of magic realism and his disjunctive style of story telling. But I was left wondering what might have been captured by traditional theatre, what was veiled by McBurney's busy production. Most of the dialog and narration that McBurney uses comes directly from the original short story. Missing, however, is Murakami's gentle melancholy. The frantic pace of the McBurney production with its loud music, flashing videos, and banks of lights obscures the understated nostalgia that mark Murakami's stories and novels. In the fast-paced staging of "The Second Bakery Attack," for example, it is easy to miss the subtle point that Murakami makes about the loss of traditional customs for food in contemporary Japan and his understated nostalgia for traditional life. In the story called "Sleep," the insomniac suffers from alienation in her own household. Living in urban Japan, she has no significant spiritual life or community to turn to in case of need. The bonds that at one time linked household, ancestors, and temple have been disappearing little by little from Japanese city life, like the elephant who is too old to fill a viable role for the zoo. The obsession with what might be called a hegemonizing postmodernity is only one theme in Murakami's stories. He is describing Japan's adoption of Western trends as well, its alienating materialism, and subordination of self to a consuming financial and social system. He questions whether the Japanese have forgotten the beauty of individual existence.

The Japanese have a high level of religious activity with their festivals, rituals, and daily observance in wayside shrines, but most do not consider themselves adherents to one particular faith.² Their practice is largely communal, marking holidays and the birth, death, sickness milestones of life. Like two-thirds of today's Japanese, Murakami does not claim to be a religious man, and yet his stories and novels are saturated

² Most of this background on religious practice in Japan is taken from Reader's *Religion in Contemporary Japan* and Mullins' *Religion and Society in Modern Japan*.

with characters who long for a more meaningful spiritual existence. As a loner and detached from Japanese social life to the point that he “dis-trusts conversation” (68), Murakami is unlikely to find solace or fulfillment in most traditional religious practice, which is intensely social. His lonely characters similarly seem to yearn for connection to a world that has disappeared from westernized Japan. Perhaps it was a world that never existed, but nostalgia for connection to the cosmos is palpable in all his major characters.

The zoo keeper is particularly important as someone who stands out from the others. In conformist Japan, he is an ascetic who contributes to society and to his own integrity by withdrawing from the world with the elephant. Such a man, one who steps outside of the group because of his convictions, does so on behalf of himself and those who cannot do it for themselves. The narrator of that tale who voyeuristically watched the keeper with his elephant describes his admiration at the way the two begin to look alike:

It was a mysterious sight. Looking through the vent, I had the feeling that a different, chilling kind of time was flowing through the elephant house – but nowhere else. And it seemed to me, too, that the elephant and the keeper were gladly giving themselves over to this new order that was trying to envelop them – or that had already partially succeeded in enveloping them. (325–6)

The witness to these strange events expresses the longing that many of Murakami’s characters express. Some critics think of the story as an expression of longing for identity (Strecher) or for the old Japanese lifestyle (Buruma, Aoki). More precisely, Loughman argues that Murakami is not necessarily rejecting contemporary values, but embracing “the idealism which has disappeared [and] has not been replaced with anything else as a source of meaning and self-fulfillment” (4).

In his brilliant effort to keep his audience riveted by the shifting images on stage, McBurney succeeds in suggesting the emptiness of Japanese life and the search for a lost self. His representations also articulate Murakami’s questions about reality. Indeed, McBurney draws on Murakami’s own use of magic realism to construct another reality. The production deserves its acclaim for all that. But the technological flash of the production overrides an important dimension in Murakami’s stories, one that hints at a deeper mystery. The narrator in *The Elephant Van-*

ishes tries to explain the significance of his experience to a friend, but he gives up because he can't unravel the mystery:

I often get the feeling that things around me have lost their proper balance, thought it could be that my perceptions are playing tricks on me. Some kind of balance inside me has broken down since the elephant affair, and maybe that causes external phenomena to strike my eye in a strange way. It's probably something in me. (Murakami 327)

The narrator is looking for a unifying idea, a spiritual belief perhaps that ties together his strange feelings and experiences, some explanation that surely is there, but he can't put his finger on it. All he knows for sure is that he must continue to sell his refrigerators as a salary man. And yet he senses also that something is slipping away from him:

The papers print almost nothing about the elephant anymore. People seem to have forgotten that their town once owned an elephant. The grass that took over the elephant enclosure has withered now, and the area has the feel of winter. The elephant and keeper have vanished completely. They will never be coming back. (327)

This moment of wistful longing, this craving for something spiritual is absent from the McBurney production. It is a concept that can best be understood in a moment of quiet self-reflection, a moment which commonly occurs while reading a book or in traditional theatre. In a production that is more about the newness of the theatrical experience than overarching values that keep the whole together, about the narrator's desire for something in life that has slipped away unnoticed, it may not be coming back.

At the beginning of most productions, spectators assign labels to characters, events, etc., achieving a level of understanding that helps them situate characters, establish relationships, make predictions about plot. Those are the meanings that a spectator uses to reconstruct the play in the mind. The spectator's experience in *The Elephant Vanishes* is somewhat different because the experience of the production, in its attempt to surprise and engage the audience, requires that these labels be reassigned at a meta-level. The audience is kept busy interpreting and re-

interpreting as each surprise unfolds.³ Each time rational relations between cause and effect are challenged, each time the images on stage vie for new attention, each time the story is cut and resutured, the audience are forced to readjust their explanations. The potential of theatrical events to be labeled and re-labeled in this way resists the audience's ultimate connection to the total experience. Spectators often leave the theatre feeling stripped of the sensual and personal identification with the characters and their fate.

In 1913, Edward Bullough wrestled with the problem of establishing an effective distance in theatre. In his classic essay, he argues that distance is variable, according to the character of the art object and the response of the individual. When the ideal distance is achieved, the experience of art is pleasurable. Art must be personal and emotionally appealing and the spectator's response must be balanced, measured, and not overly affected. Crying in the movies is, for Bullough, under-distancing. Artificiality produces over-distancing. He writes, "...every kind of visibly intentional arrangement, or unification must, by the mere fact of its presence, enforce Distance..." (409). If the play allows too much personal identification with the action on stage, then it compromises the play's influence. Likewise, if the artificiality of theatre creates too much distance between spectator and characters on stage, then detachment sets in, producing "the impression of improbability, artificiality, emptiness or absurdity" (Bullough 400). McBurney uses technology to fascinate his audiences and question the reliability of our perceptions. But its high degree of artificiality also effects a highly distanced art and so what he accomplishes in using technology to draw in the spectators attention, he loses in the after-image. The sensual and the spiritual, which can be more penetrating and transformative, are absent. The audience is held at an arm's length from any real identification with Murakami's characters and their dilemmas.

Distance in McBurney's production is so well controlled that viewers tend to enjoy the multimedia experience without penetrating the surface meaning, but the subtext is not missed. A large portion of this experience thus becomes an object in itself. The spectator is so artfully posi-

³ This discussion is influenced by "Metatheory," a chapter by Branigan in *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*.

tioned at a distance from the truth telling of the play, that the world of harmony and balance that Murakami quietly suggests is there is lost from view. Audiences sense this world's uncertainty, the insecurity, and the tentativeness of contemporary Japan without being able to grasp fully what is absent from their lives. Like the people of Tokyo, audiences fail to observe the shrinking of the elephant (in this case, the dramatic form) because they are able to recognize only what they want to see. The audience may seek out the mysterious world that Murakami describes, but the formal conditions of the play resist that outcome when the camera becomes privileged as a level of reality in itself.

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MICHELENE WANDOR

A Dramatic Writing Workshop: Mapping the Territories from Imagination to Page to Stage and Back Again

First, let me extend my thanks to all those who came to my drama writing workshop at the CDE conference in Bremen. I am particularly grateful, not just because I had a full house, but because I know that it can be slightly unnerving to sit on the other side of the fence, as it were — to become a student, a learner, when one is used to being the one with the knowledge, the wisdom.

I decided I would conduct the workshop in the way I begin all my drama writing courses, and, because of my audience, I hoped to be able to raise theoretical issues about writing drama, questioning some of the received wisdom about what constitutes a dramatic text. Additionally, the relationship between practice and theory contributed another dimension to the notion of territories and mapping — the themes of the conference. Here I was, in a relatively short time, mapping the terrain to be crossed by the dramatist: between imagination and the page, between the page and the stage — and back again. Each participant had a taste of that experience — something which is very different from the processes of teaching, criticism and scholarly article-writing.

Before I outline the way the workshop worked, a few words about myself as creative writing teacher. I first taught an ongoing creative writing course at the Guildhall School of Drama in the early 1980s. I was a professional writer, earning my living from plays, poetry and journal-

ism; I never sought a career in academia, and had no interest in teaching literature, even though my two Literature degrees and subsequent work attested to my passion for language, fiction, research and cultural analysis. Teaching literature is a very special skill, as I know from my excellent teachers at school and university; but it was not a skill which interested me.

Developing ways of teaching creative writing, however, has surprised me by creating in me both enthusiasm for the practical process and for developing cultural and theoretical analyses of what it is, how it is taught and how I think it can be taught.

During the two decades in which I've taught playwriting, I have developed a methodology, enhanced and expanded by the fact that over the past decade I have also been teaching poetry and prose fiction writing. I write in all three genres myself, and teaching has enabled me to formulate a theoretical/aesthetic backdrop to my pedagogy, to be interested in what is significantly distinctive about the imaginative and practical processes of writing in different genres, and to sharpen my understanding of my own writing.

I found that I had to embed within the teaching process correctives to widespread assumptions of what a dramatic text is, and where the writer's focus and responsibility lie. I was articulating and explaining ideas which were colloquial versions of theoretical formulations, and having to challenge some unthinking clichés about writing drama.

This was not at all calculated; it just happened. In the moment-to-moment experience of the class, I was almost constantly negotiating between theory and praxis without the fact ever being articulated. In any case, referring to theory in conceptual language would have made no sense to students who were not required to read and study this kind of material.

The dominant convention of how-to creative writing books is the 'exercise.' Books and articles contain favourite exercises, teachers 'borrow' exercises from others. This is not how I work. During the course of a module, or across a whole year, my teaching is built round the experience of writing a 15–20 minute drama in class. This is not approached as either a 'perfect' or 'exemplary' piece of work. Each student accumulates a finite number of scenes, which, by the end of the course,

form a complete play. The experience of completing is vital to this, since all writing — it is often very useful to articulate the obvious — starts and ends, and the relationship between beginning and end (the simplest definition of the nature of structure) can only be worked if that is exactly what it is. During the course of this process, every aspect of writing drama is covered through discussion which emerges as a result of the writing.

At Bremen, I began with the first basic event; giving everyone five minutes, I asked those present to write a row, an argument, between two people. Two ‘rules:’ no monologues and no stage directions. This is crucial. I rule these out during the course of all my dramatic teaching, in order to focus the imagination and the writing on the core of the genre: in drama, dialogue is all, and all there is, is dialogue.

This was followed by getting the group to read out the written pieces, with no interruption, one after the other. This immediately demonstrates the *sine qua non* of creative writing: it has to be built round the writing of the students. It was interesting that, even though everyone in the room was absolutely steeped in the study of dramatic texts and performance, it was necessary at least once, to point out that in order to read out dialogue (between two people) two voices were necessary. Interestingly, this is often just as true for acting students, used to performance: it is one thing to know that in order to act in a play, each individual has their own part, and quite another to write a dramatic scene, and then experience the transition from page to stage, as it were.

In all my experience of creative writing teaching, there is never any necessary correlation between the skills demanded for teaching or performing and those needed for writing — from ‘within’ the literature, rather than from outside it. Perhaps for those taking the workshop this was one of the interesting realisations: not that they didn’t know how to write dialogue — everyone does, even those who have no experience of writing drama. We all talk, we all know that conversation/dialogue consists of alternating voices/speeches, so we can all write it. But the feeling/sense of writing is very different indeed from the feeling/sense of reading/criticism.

Inevitably, because time had to be given to each piece of writing, there were limits to the number of theoretical comments I could make — so this is an opportunity to formulate these more clearly.

The clichéd assumptions with which students, and a great many teachers of dramatic writing, approached the task are widespread. These assumed truths appear in practical books about acting and directing, they appear in performance theory, postmodern and semiological analyses of theatre. They need to be institutionally, practically and theoretically deconstructed.

The first, most major and misleading cliché is that the dramatic text on the page is no more than a 'blueprint' for performance. The rest of this chapter could be taken up with an extensive bibliography in which this cliché is taken for granted. By virtue of its constant assertion, the cliché is elevated to quasi-theoretical status, or to a 'universal truth.' It follows from the 'blueprint' idea that the text does not really 'exist,' either at all, or until it has been raised off the page and embodied in its performance/production — on stage, in film, TV or radio.

Because performance-based theory in part arose in reaction against the historical convention of studying plays-on-the-page, the degree of academic over-compensation has contributed to the definition of the writer's role as necessarily incomplete: "It is because the playtext is such a strange — incomplete — object — that it seems useful to have a guide as to how someone might get the most out of dealing with this object." (Shepherd and Wallis 1)

The dramatist is thus immediately corralled. S/he provides inherently incomplete work: the blueprint, which is always secondary, always lesser and offering only the starting point, a signpost for the 'real thing,' for which the director and the rest of the team are responsible. This is a profoundly ironic state of affairs, given that the history of the theatre is still often studied in terms of its playwrights, and in which (performance-based theatre apart), there can be no performance and therefore no theatre without a text.

The analytically useful distinction between 'dramatic text' and 'performance text' has also (accidentally, perhaps) contributed to confusion about what is involved in the writing, and the inevitably diminished value accorded to the working dramatist. If the writer produces the 'in-

complete' dramatic text rather than the 'completed' performance text, as characterised by Keir Elam and others, the relative value judgement is clear (see Elam). The writer is implicitly, but no less strongly for that, asserted as being of lesser importance. One might at this point legitimately wonder why any writer should ever bother to sit down and write something which is inherently incomplete? Because they're star struck, or just plain masochistic?

Paradoxically, then, while the published, performed and/or canonical (live or dead) dramatist is privileged, as a working writer s/he is theoretically diminished. The notion that the only good (because never troublesome) writer is a dead writer has a particularly resonant irony for the dramatist.

There is an institutional corollary to this — or perhaps it is the institutional cause which gives rise to the theory? Whichever it may be, the dramatist needs to be seen in relation to power and authority structures as they operate in the dramatic media. I am referring to 'power' and 'authority' as institutionally defined, not as attributes which are good or bad per se.

In all dramatic forms of production, there are clearly demarcated skills — a division of labour. Who does what, and what this implies for power and authority, and for the ways in which the skills are linked. The writer writes, the director directs. Sounds simple. The writer acquires skills to do one thing well, the director acquires skills to do another thing well. Each refines their expertise during the course of their cultural practice as part of the production of the dramatic event — whether it is theatre, film, TV, radio or video.

However, institutionally there are further important distinctions. Whereas the writer's job begins and ends with the act of producing the written text (writers may be consulted on casting, set etc, but even when consultation is enshrined in a contract, it doesn't guarantee full consultation, participation or agreement), the director's role extends over a wider field. S/he is responsible not only for putting together the final artefact in performance, but also for co-ordinating all the artistic and technical skills, and is ultimately accountable to the management/producer. This gives the director over-arching responsibility, and a concomitant degree of power.

When a dramatic text in any medium goes into production, however welcome the writer may be, however many changes might be made to the text during the process, the writer's job is essentially done. The writer becomes an informed (excited, proud) spectator, but nevertheless no more than that: a spectator and not a central participant. Production can as easily (some might say more easily) take place without the writer present.

Writing and directing are intrinsically different skills. To be able to do the one is rarely to be able to do the other. It takes a professional lifetime to do both well. Some writers do direct and some directors do write, but this doesn't affect the basic point. Directors (for institutional and skills-based reasons) are always going to be in a position to alter texts, while writers can have absolutely no significant impact on direction/performance. Nor should they, perhaps. The difference is one of power and skill.

The second cliché is that the director is only there to realise the 'vision' of the writer, to be a handmaid (sic) to the greater glory of the text. Even where this may be a sincerely held approach, the institutional imperatives mean that if directors want to go another way, they can; the dramatist does not have the structural power (ultimately) to influence seriously, insist or veto.

The third cliché is that the performance media are 'collaborative' arts. What this simply means is that lots of people work together on the same production, but it does not (in our conventional working structures) mean that all have the same decision-making power, or the same creative options. Teamwork, democratic or otherwise, only fully happens when it is structured in such a way that everyone contributes their own skill, while acknowledging the skills around them. As far as dramatists go, this is another shibboleth which is bandied around to keep writers in their 'incomplete' box. On the surface it suggests cosy and/or stimulating artistic interaction, but in fact it serves to mask the authority structure and keep the writer in their constrained place — outside the production process.

The fourth cliché, applied particularly to film, but applying to the other performance media as well, is that the dramatic form is a 'visual' medium. In film and TV (visually-technologically weighted as they are)

this virtually leads to the assumption that ‘stage directions’ are — effectively — more important than dialogue. The dramatist, goes the cliché, needs: to be able to visualise, i.e. think/write pictures, descriptions of place, setting, and/or matter about the emotions and motivations of the ‘characters.’ This elides and confuses the different implications between the dramatic text proper and the performance text on the page.

Cliché number five is related to the above: that a dramatic text is hard to read, and that training is needed to make sense of what is on the page. This is curious, and has an interesting explanation. Any idea that reading dramatic texts is harder than reading a novel, is less a comment on the nature of the dramatic text, than on the fact that in our culture the novel is still the pre-eminent fictional form.

With the novel seen and experienced as the dominant fictional norm, its over-arching fictional narrative voice sets the terms of reading. Without this, and the conventional elements of ‘description’ etc, the dramatic text appears to be lacking, to be relatively empty. Here we have an aesthetic rationalisation of the relative inferiority of the dramatic form itself: again, it is ‘incomplete,’ a piece of fiction with (pretty well) the important bits missing. After all, dialogue in the novel is usually only a minor element. So a dramatic text continues to carry an extended ‘minority’ status.

The argument goes that first of all, the dramatist must (as part of their craft) learn to visualise (i.e. to provide all those elements to which others in the production process contribute), and secondly, that stage directions help untrained people to read the text more easily (this may sometimes appear to be true). More easily, that is, because then it can feel more like a novel (albeit seriously ‘lacking’).

These five major clichés lead to the pivotal issue of stage directions. The phenomenon is significant for three reasons: aesthetic, institutional and writerly. The nature and function of stage directions is historically determined. If one compares the minimal stage directions in a play by Shakespeare with their fulsome presence in the plays of George Bernard Shaw, and then again more minimally in plays by Harold Pinter or Caryl Churchill, one can see how variable and disposable the phenomenon of the stage direction is.

British drama came back into literary prominence around the end of the 19th century, when the novel was the pre-eminent literary form. Until well into the twentieth century the drama carried a transitional legacy in the way stage directions appeared: with a single-voiced narrator dipping in and out of the dialogue. But even though, as in the case of Shaw, the written texts themselves sometimes appear to be hybrid novel/dramas, the dominance of the dialogue as determinant of narrative, relationships, themes, etc, defines his plays as dramas and not novels. Stage directions are aesthetically on the cusp between novel and drama, and from the writerly perspective involve crucially different ways of imagining and writing.

Dialogue has no built-in singular narrative voice. Or, to put it another way, *all* dialogue is, at the moment of its appearance on the page and on the stage, written in the directly articulating first person in the present moment of speaking, rather than in a first person narrative of events which have happened or are happening elsewhere. This is far more than the (sixth cliché) principle of ‘show, don’t tell,’ another cliché trotted out to ‘help’ the would-be dramatist avoid exposition (i.e. narration within dialogue).

When one reads dialogue in a novel, even though there may be surrounding narrative, description and context, in the moment of dialogue, there is nothing else. We read the exchange in its present-tenseness, the now-ness of the fictional people speaking. We are able to do this because we grasp the signs on the page which indicate an interactive exchange between people, through the convention/signs of dialogue-speech.

Reading a dramatic text is an expanded version of this — and more. As I say in my classes, again and again, sometimes in jest, always in total, emphatic seriousness, in drama there is nothing but dialogue, there is only dialogue, and the dialogue is all. If the dramatist — for whatever medium — cannot imagine and create the whole fictional shebang through dialogue, forget it. It is only the dialogue which is, in the end, performed. Any ‘stage directions’ are addressed/relevant to other people working on the production. The correlative to that is that the ability to read a dramatic text is no more or less than the ability to read dialogue in novels — the same skill, but writ large.

This can be tested with any play: take away the stage directions in a play by Shaw, and the text will still be complete and stageable. Take away the dialogue in the same play, leaving only the stage directions, and narrative, story, relationships have all gone. The dramatic, stageable, text has gone.

In any case, all dramatic texts, including film, the moment they become candidates for production, are immediately denuded of stage directions. Setting, design, subtleties of interpretation included by the dramatist are not only the first to go out of the window, they *must* go out of the window, since no dramatist can ever really anticipate what direction and performance will bring, and each of these other skills bring their own interpretive imaginations to bear on the dialogic text.

For example, the subtly placed pauses and silences in Harold Pinter's plays are often held up as examples of stage directions vital to the pacing of the text. And in the loosest sense, of course they are. But first of all, how long is a pause? How long is one pause compared to the next? And even when this is decided, any production of the play might reveal either other ways of pacing the delivery to reduce a pause to almost nothing, and/or to discover other places where the pacing of the dialogue also allows more pauses. Pinter may insist on his pauses being observed, but I suspect that he is far more likely (and rightly) to object to his lines being changed or cut, than to his pauses being mis-observed.

Stage directions can never represent a dramatist's realisable intentions for how the play is to be staged, even if written with total conviction and enthusiasm. This applies as much to bracketed instructions for verbal or physical expression, such as (*smiles*) or (*tragically*), which seem to instruct performers how to perform or inflect a line or a word. This is not simply because our post-Stanislawski age has created rehearsal norms where director and cast enjoy exploring all sorts of psychological, emotional and gestural ways of delivering lines, but because it is inherent in the signifying conventions of the text itself that all 'directions' are misnomers. Not only are these directions patently imprecise at best (what does 'smiling' mean? How many different kinds of smile are there?), but it is evident from the fact that each production of any play varies, that while the dialogue remains the same, the process of production — set, lighting and performances may be very different. The only real 'direc-

tions' in any dramatic text lie in the dialogue: directions to the performers about *what* they have to say, not how they have to say it. The 'how' is precisely what lies in performance.

So the dramatic text — the dialogue — is not an incomplete text, by any stretch of the imagination. It is always a complete text and a very distinctively completed text in its own right, not something which meekly awaits the magic wand of the director and the breath of the performer. So my first rule is always: No stage directions.

The second rule is related to this: No monologues. The monologue, whether it carries the connotations of the Shakespearian soliloquy, the Restoration comedy aside, the Brechtian 'alienation' device, the polemical monologue of 1970s political theatre, or the narrative monologue in plays of the 1990s, like stage directions, also belongs to the writerly convention of prose fiction, rather than drama. In performance, a monologue can be extraordinarily gripping and dramatic — because it becomes dramatised story-telling, and the better the story-teller (the performer), the more gripping the performance. Monologues are never drama in the writing. They are very popular among directors and performers, because they enable a single performer to control every aspect of the world of their narrative, and they're handy as audition speeches. For the dramatist, however, they are short stories, embedded within the dramatic text, and not drama. The same principle applies to the convention of the voice-over.

The enthusiasm for monologues, in both writing and performance also have an interesting relationship to concepts of the fourth wall, that invisible divider between performers and audience. While it is undoubtedly the case that the interaction between the two is what makes each performance unique, it must be remembered that a performance can perfectly well take place without an audience (it's called rehearsal), and that the fourth wall never disappears (it never disappeared in Brechtian theatre, or in audience participation pieces, or even in music hall). It is, in fact, the constant explicit or implicit movements around the fourth wall which lends these apparently disruptive modes their excitement. The word 'apparently' is crucial.

The monologue appears to be addressed directly to the audience, rather than to someone onstage, 'as if' the fourth wall were not there.

Of course, it always is. Even the (in his time) shocking devices Brecht incorporated, where ‘characters’ appeared to step out of ‘character’ and address the audience directly, with interpretations and messages, should be seen as a device within a device; compounding the levels of theatrical illusion, but never dismissing them. The appealing transparency of the first-person monologue is only another theatrical trick — since trickery and collusive illusion is what theatre is all about.

The emphasis in my teaching is thus on the constantly shifting and changing relationship between: 1. The imagination and the page. 2. The page and the performance space. 3. Ways in which (2) might impact on 1. And 4: the exciting and provocative ways in which writing drama is imaginatively and practically very different from writing a novel.

Finally, this means that the dramatist has complete control over their text — the dialogue, which is itself imaginatively and textually complete. The fact that it is then available for production/performance, points to its dual functions as a text — to be read AND performed. These are not mutually exclusive; rather they are excitingly symbiotic, each stimulating and provoking the other.

To conclude: hopefully this essay will complement the experiences of those who came to my workshop, and provide food for thought for everyone involved with drama, in whatever capacity.

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