Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts

CONTENTS

Book Reviews

Editorial

The contested relationship between text and performance has long underscored developments in British theatre. Frequently, text and its use in theatre-making processes has functioned as a way of distinguishing between different artists, establishing simplistic and misleading categories such as 'text-based' and 'non-text-based'. At the same time, the work of practitioners themselves defies such labels, often mixing approaches that are simultaneously interested in the possibilities of text and in the richness of theatre's many non-textual elements, including physicality, design, music and multimedia.

More recently, publications such as Duška Radosavljević's *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21ˢᵗ Century* have offered a refreshingly different take on contemporary theatre practice, moving beyond reductive divisions between dramatic theatre and devised performance. There are also indications that theatre as a sector is beginning to break down such divides, with the National Theatre's recent merging of its Studio and Literary Department serving as the most prominent example of this shift.

This latest issue of *Platform* responds to the one-day symposium of the same title, organised by Catherine Love and Caitlin Gowans and hosted by the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London in September 2015. The event brought together scholars, practitioners and commentators, offering a number of different perspectives on the intersection of text and performance in British theatre contexts. Speakers included Tim Crouch, Duška Radosavljević, Andy Field, Jacqueline Bolton, Andrew Haydon and Vicky Angelaki. Among other issues, the symposium discussed the continuing schism between supposedly 'text-based' and 'non-text-

based' theatre, the contrast between approaches to text in Britain and continental Europe, the role of institutions in perpetuating or challenging binaries between different theatrical forms and the slippery concept of the 'open text'.

The contributions in this issue suggest a range of approaches to the ideas addressed at the symposium. In the first article, "Tim Crouch's Transferable Skills: Textual Revision as Distributed Determination in *My Arm* and *The Author*", Jack Belloli presents an innovative contribution to the burgeoning scholarship on the work of theatre-maker Tim Crouch. Drawing on Richard Sennett and Tim Ingold's notions of "skill", Belloli explores the nature of indeterminacy in the performances of two of Crouch's best-known productions. Foregrounding the textual revisions made to the scripts and stage directions, the paper demonstrates the liminality of Crouch's playtexts and how the staging of these two plays provoke the audience to consider the boundaries between the acts of writing and performing.

Next, exploring the intersection of text and performance in the work of Scottish experimental theatre company Suspect Culture, Verónica Rodríguez analyses the company's 1995 production *One Way Street: Ten Walks in the Former East*. Her paper interrogates the feature of fragmentation in this work in particular and Suspect Culture's devising methodologies more broadly, arguing that text and performance in the company's work "appear as undone and interpenetrated".

In an issue that examines the relationship between text and performance it seems appropriate to conclude this edition of *Platform* with two pieces of new theatre writing. Filippo Romanell's "Dramaturgies of Spontaneity" includes two disparate extracts from his plays *Attempts on Friendship* (2014) and *Vice Device* (2015). In a self-reflective passage before the extracts, Romanell muses on his own writing practices and methods, dis-

cussing theatre scholar Małgorzata Sugiera's theory of imma-
nence as a method to achieve spontaneity in dramatic perfor-
mance.

This issue also marks the 10th anniversary of *Platform*,
which was founded at Royal Holloway in 2006 by a team of
postgraduate research students including Vicky Angelaki, Ma-
rissia Fragou and Kene Igweonu. To celebrate this milestone in
the life of the journal, within these pages a selection of previous
editors share their memories, experiences and hopes for the fu-
ture of *Platform*.

The editorial board of *Platform* would like to express
our sincere gratitude to the department of Drama and Theatre
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Finally, we give special thanks to all our contributors who have
shared their research and practice.

James Rowson and Catherine Love, Editors

Notes on Contributors

Richard Ashby
Richard Ashby is a PhD student at Royal Holloway, University of London. His thesis sets out to analyse appropriations of King Lear in post-War British playwriting, with a particular focus on the appropriations undertaken by David Rudkin, Howard Barker and Sarah Kane. Richard has also published on the intersection between Shakespearean drama and Lacanian and post-Lacanian theory and he is currently preparing an article on the Shakespeare films of Soviet director Grigori Kozintsev

Cath Badham
Cath Badham is a PhD student at The University of Sheffield and a professional Stage Manager. Her PhD examines the work of the playwright Philip Ridley. Cath's work as a Stage Manager includes Sheffield Theatres, Nottingham Playhouse, The Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester and the RSC. Cath is an Associate Lecturer at University of Derby and a Teaching Assistant at University of Sheffield.

Jack Belloli is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge, where he co-convenes the CRASSH Interdisciplinary Performance Network. His research, funded by the AHRC, investigates constructions of skill in experimental theatre since Beckett. He has wider research and teaching interests in Shakespeare in performance and contemporary literature. His writing is published or forthcoming in *The Beckett Circle*, *3:am magazine* and *The Cambridge Humanities Review*.

Marina Ni Dhubhain
Marina Ni Dhubhain is a graduate of the National University of Ireland, Galway where she undertook her BA degree in History and Gaeilge. She has worked extensively as a writer/researcher for television in the areas of drama and documentary. In 2012 she completed her MA in Writing at NUI Galway. She is currently in her second year of PhD studies at this university, in the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies. She was awarded an Irish Research Council scholarship in 2014. Her

research interests include theatre of testimony, oral history, performance-as-research and contemporary playwriting.

Verónica Rodríguez is a PhD candidate at the University of Barcelona currently based in London. She will deposit her thesis on David Greig and globalisation, supervised by Dr. Mireia Aragay, in 2016. She has recently published an interview with Greig in a special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* dedicated to the playwright and has a chapter on Greig and Suspect Culture's work forthcoming in *Representations of the Precarious in Contemporary British Theatre* (De Gruyter) edited by Mireia Aragay and Martin Middeke. She is member of the research group "Contemporary British Theatre Barcelona". www. ub.edu/cbtbarcelona

Filippo Romanello trained at Goldsmiths University where he completed the MA Writing for Performance and Dramaturgy in 2015. His current practice research explores the concepts of immanent theatricality and open dramaturgy in performance composition. Recent credits include: *Vice Device* (extracts at Soho Theatre and More Storm Festival 2015), *Embarrassing Circumstances* (Cockpit Theatre 2015, Lyric Hammersmith studio 2014), *Preludes of Orchestral Theatre* (Tatwerk Berlin 2015).

Lucy Tyler
Lucy Tyler is Lecturer in Performance Practices and Industries at The University of Reading. Previously she was MA Course Leader for Creative and Critical Writing at the University of Gloucestershire. Her research interests are playwriting pedagogy and developmental dramaturgy in practice. She is completing a PhD at Central School of Speech and Drama on the practice of developmental dramaturgy in universities and theatres.

Tim Crouch's transferable skills: textual revision as distributed determination in *My Arm* and *The Author*

By Jack Belloli

Abstract

This paper offers a counterpoint to readings of Tim Crouch's plays which emphasise their indeterminacy, by paying closer attention to the controlled conditions that are needed in order to make such indeterminacy detectable in performance. Managing this balance – between shaping participating objects or people to the requirements of the performance, and letting participants be themselves – is shown to be the driving concern behind key alterations made to the opening of *My Arm* (2003) and the end of *The Author* (2009) during production, which I trace across differing versions of the published texts. I propose that the concept of skill, as recently elaborated by Richard Sennett and Tim Ingold, provides a useful conceptual framework for thinking through both sides of the balance at once: within and between each of these plays, Crouch attempts to move from Sennett's model, of locating skill within the sustained practice of individual subjects, to Ingold's, of seeing skill as the unfolding expression of an entire ecology. By making an association between skill and care, I argue that this shift is essential to Crouch's ethical and political commitment to distributing a sense of agency and collective responsibility among all those involved in a performance.

A theatre of determination

Early in the script for *My Arm*, Crouch's first play for adults, the performer is instructed to write "*laboriously on a placard*:

10

'Art is anything you can get away with'" (*Plays* 36). Within *My Arm*'s diegesis, these words of Marshall McLuhan form the personal "rubric" of Simon Martin, a young artist "distinguished by a ruthless disregard for protocol" (ibid). Simon continues to get away with exploiting the protagonist, who has decided since childhood to keep his arm raised above his head, as the centrepiece of a series of increasingly lucrative exhibitions. Introducing the rubric through this performance gesture allows Crouch to express his own conflicted response to Simon's aesthetics, with the adverb in the stage direction generating much of the conflict. To get away with something suggests not only to operate (just) outside the established codes of behaviour that constitute "protocol", but also to do as little as possible altogether. Both of these qualities deny the potential association of art with *labour*, insofar as it requires effort and the execution of particular recognised techniques. The invitation for the audience to reconcile these two sets of conflicting values should already have been made implicitly by the performer, through the "measured [but] haphazard" way in which they are expected to manipulate the handheld objects, largely donated by the audience, that serve as the play's props (*Plays* 24). Critics writing on Crouch's plays have also needed to attend to this balance. Emilie Morin, who has investigated the debt that Crouch and some of his contemporaries owe to John Cage and Fluxus, argues that he "avowedly abides" by the quote from McLuhan, in his desire to introduce radical techniques from conceptual art into dramatic theatre (72-73). However, despite calling Fluxist interventions in galleries "pranks", she is careful to acknowledge the serious, and (in Cage's case) explicitly disciplined commitments which these artists held and the playwrights inherit: distinctions must be made between the unexpectedness and contingency of the artistic product suggested by 'chance', and the heightened con-

sciousness that indeterminacy requires from the artist, as they choose which approach to take in the moment (77-78). "Indeterminacy" is also a key term in Dan Rebellato's argument for understanding all scripted drama as metaphorical, reliant upon "visually under-determined text" to generate "metaphors for an indeterminate fictional world" – but he too stresses that such worlds can be made well or badly, through generative or clichéd metaphors (25-26).

Both Morin and Rebellato place greater emphasis on the indeterminacy ultimately perceived by audiences and the progressive political consequences that it generates by opening space to imagine the world differently (Morin 75, Rebellato 27). Without negating their arguments, this paper offers a counterpoint by focusing instead on the controlled conditions out of which indeterminacy emerges within Crouch's plays and which can themselves be perceived by audiences as well as the performers executing them. Crouch's theatre might be understood as characterised by an ongoing and no less progressive process of *determination*. He has expressed admiration for Marcel Duchamp's short piece "The Creative Act" (Morin 82), which defines art as "a series of efforts, pains, satisfaction, refusals, decisions" (118). By conspicuously staging the efforts and pains of writing in *My Arm*, Crouch acknowledges that art cannot be achieved without some engagement of technical proficiency: one cannot write that "art is anything you can get away with" without having learned to hold a pen, however much one attempts to disavow skill altogether. Elsewhere in the play, Crouch implies that acknowledging one's reliance on skills is not merely an existential prerequisite for artists, but an ethical one. Simon and his associates' rejection of manual dexterity is set in contrast with the art made by two characters: a portrait painter for whom

the protagonist sits, and, ultimately, the protagonist's brother Anthony, who abandons Simon to develop community art projects and then paint "small canvasses about his memories" (47). Both of these characters' acts of painting are associated with potential for moral transformation that the avant-garde artists lack: sitting for the portrait painter lets the protagonist feel "meaningful" (44); Anthony's return to painting seems to emerge from his activism, and secures his final reconciliation with his brother. Given that *My Arm* inherits the staging "vocabulary" of live art practices (Bottoms, "Authorising" 74), the challenge for the performer is to associate themselves with the painters' ethics, rather than the avant-garde artists' opportunism, by emphasising the skill and discipline with which this vocabulary is maipulated.

Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* is useful for developing a conception of technique that is expansive and ethically committed enough to meet *My Arm*'s demands. Sennett, who relates his approach to John Dewey's socialist principles (287), places emphasis on "material consciousness", his term for the growing awareness of the limitations and free opportunities granted to practitioners as they work (119). Practising a craft requires two corresponding judgements which must remain open for a practice not to become mechanical: working out the minimum force necessary to alter material, but also how much one need apply, when necessary, to alter it (167). (Sennett focuses on engagements with physical material, but his approach can be extrapolated to describe theatrical skills: worked-on material can include performers' bodies, the delivered text and the space in which they are performing.) Such openness is challenging, hazardous as well as "haphazard". Practitioners must ponder "ethical questions during the work process itself", and these can generate "bitterness and regret" (295-96).

How to maintain this balance – between determining the shape of material and allowing it to remain indeterminate – is the key question that Crouch asks of, and with, his collaborators. The most continuous of these have been Karl James and, since *An Oak Tree*, Andy Smith (known professionally and henceforth in this paper as 'a smith'), who are credited as co-directors on the plays collected in *Plays: One*, but they include many others who have varied from play to play and performance to performance. In a characteristic list by smith, these include "performers, technicians, front-of-house staff, audience" (411). In writing about contemporary British plays, the task of reining in and allowing for indeterminacies is often associated primarily with the writer: for example, Morin notes Sarah Kane's preference for leaving certain aspects of *Crave*'s performance 'unscripted' or 'partially indeterminate' to allow for 'directorial choices', which is then extended in *4.48 Psychosis* (74). While Crouch's plays emerge at least partly from periods of writing and thinking alone before rehearsal (smith 413; Radosavljević 217; Ilter 402), his sustained commitment to collaboration and his preference for describing himself as a theatre-maker rather than a playwright means that this association is too neat in his case. This paper seeks to resist it by attending to the revisions made to scripts before and during production. According to "The Creative Act", art succeeds insofar as the artist's pains and efforts fail to achieve desired results (118-19). Acts of writing are not the basic prophylactic against failure to stabilise the boundary between determinacy and indeterminacy, but part and parcel of a system in which all creative acts continue to fail again and fail better.

My Arm: introducing a model

This is the opening display of objects as recorded in the most

recently published script of *My Arm*:

> This is the house we lived in.
>
> *The performer presents to the camera one of the objects from the audience.*
>
> This is my dad's car.
>
> *The performer presents a photo or an object.*
>
> This is my mum's car.
>
> *The performer presents a photo or an object.*
>
> This is our dog.
>
> *The performer presents a photo or an object.*
> (*Plays* 25-26)

Stephen Bottoms's summary of Crouch's theatre as a "provocative juxtaposition of real-world materials with language that facilitates alternative perceptions in spectators' minds" is useful here ("Authorising" 75). It allows the moment to be figured as a pair of skilled practices, each with a distinct set of agents, tools and materials. The performer uses pre-prepared language to manipulate unexpected real-world materials and, by proxy, the mental perceptions of the audience; the audience apply their habits of mental engagement to the "provocative juxtaposition" before them. Although Crouch insists that the audience "will make the transformation in me, not me" (qtd in Bottoms, "Authorising" 73), the practices are mutually dependent, each compensating for what the other cannot determine: a performer makes a repeatable gesture before an audience, who share an established set of terms on which to respond.

    My Arm's initial script, printed before its first public

previews at Battersea Arts Centre in London, does not establish the fixed pattern of this final version. Instead of objects which are "in no way representational" (*My Arm* 13), the dog is represented by "*a photo of a dog*" and "the house we lived in" by "*a rough picture of a house* [*drawn*] *on a notepad*" (15). The closer that one examines the relationship between narration and props, the more it becomes apparent that this original opening is more characteristic of *My Arm*'s texture as a whole than the revised one. Contrary to the opening stage direction, and even allowing the "doll that represents the performer" to stand as an exception that proves the rule (*Plays* 24), there are several moments in which objects' capacity to become "representational" does not lie merely with the audience, because support is provided by the object's visual and material properties. Rebellato notes that Crouch's conception of stage-worlds as metaphors is "relaxed enough" to incorporate metonym and simile, with some of metaphor's functions being executed through appeals to what an onstage object resembles or actually is (26-27). The performer's revelation of a lit sparkler here, for example, can function as a metonym for a firework display (*Plays* 29). Introducing a real peanut and bird's nest to illustrate the protagonist's description of "the thickest pubic hair and smallest penis [he had] ever seen on a boy of 14" is, on one level, a joke which ruptures the audience's now-established assumptions (35). But, after the surprise passes, one recognises that what is being shown is *itself* the referent of a simile. The overriding task of creating new perceptions without full visual stimulus continues, but through a wider variety of means. Words carry their own self-contained potential for startling transformation, as is also demonstrated by the subsequent unillustrated simile about "crying like a newborn lamb looking for its mother in the rain" (41). Rebellato

proposes that theatrical naturalism has become "a kind of dead metaphor", over-reliant on conventions of what looks 'literal' or 'realistic', but neither he nor Crouch proposes rejecting the prosthetics of metonym and simile as much as maintaining "fuzzy distinctions" between them (26-27).

Instead of seeing the performance as composed of distinct categories like 'real-world materials' and 'language', operated on by distinct agents like 'audiences' and 'the performer', these elements might form a single, 'fuzzy' performance process in which forms of determination can nevertheless still be traced. A more integrated model of being absorbed in material is needed than Sennett's, placing less privilege on the crafts-*man* as governing agent. The anthropologist Tim Ingold notably defines "skill" not in terms of "an agent with certain purposes or designs" employing "an instrument with certain functions", but as "the primary condition of involvement of the craftsman […] in an environment" or "taskscape" (352). On such terms, the performance would be a matter neither of Crouch transferring control of the transformative trick to the audience, nor of them co-ordinating their separate forms of engagement, but of each becoming "part and parcel of the system's transformation of itself" (Ingold 345).

This is a demanding understanding of agency to become accustomed to and the script for *My Arm* was altered to better manage the demand. In his recent conversation with Catherine Love, Crouch claimed that he "lost his nerve" over the original opening during the Battersea Arts Centre previews, having been advised by his co-director Hettie Macdonald that images like the dog would "break the rules" before their establishment. One of Rebellato's most suggestive observations about metaphors is that good ones "reward sustained attention", making us "stretch

out" through a kind of mental gymnastics (26): flipping Sennett's assertion that (sometimes wildly imaginative) metaphors can provide convenient ways of describing skilled practices (190-92), metaphors themselves both require and nurture skill. To appreciate all the interpretive possibilities that *My Arm* generates, audience members have to "stretch out" and relinquish their habit of looking for visual cues familiar from naturalism, but they relinquish it gradually. As ultimately performed, the play's opening provides a transitional state in which the cues that audience members are expected to pick up on can still be traced to a single, albeit non-visual source: the words of the story being told. Watching the tentative "rules" being established is comparable to Sennett's description of learning the violin through the Suzuki method: a delimited version of a complex technique only takes the initiate so far in becoming responsive, but it gives them immediate and "social confidence" from which to develop (155-56). Describing *My Arm* as the deliberately crafted work of certain artists using certain tools and skills to a certain purpose makes for an imperfect paraphrase, but still an adequate one. It gives the essential conditions that everyone in an audience should have come to recognise, in order to go on to describe their individual responses to others. If Crouch's intuitive understanding of skilled practice is closer to Ingold's, reframing it as a more determinable subject-centred and task-oriented one lets his audience acquire, and him refine, that intuition.

The Author: removing a model

Audiences at *My Arm* are reassured, before the storytelling begins, that any donated objects will "be treated with care" (*Plays* 24); despite Crouch's appeals to the play's transformative qualities, they are returned intact. Yet, in the 2003 edition's introduction, he describes how "some audience members have felt

mildly affronted that [he] hadn't taken greater care of them" (*My Arm* 10). Paying attention to ideas of care can help to clarify the ethical claims that Sennett makes of skilled practice. Such practice is careful insofar as agency is transferred onto what is understood to be the object of a practice, through an intervention by its understood subject, with the trace of that intervention ultimately being erased. Good healthcare, for example, is a matter of providing appropriate support so that a patient can become self-sufficient again. The change made to *My Arm*'s script is an attempt to make the cared-for objects better proxies for a cared-for audience: the minimal force required to replace a condition in which the audience feel they cannot participate with one in which they can, from being its baffled objects to fully engaged subjects, was greater than Crouch had initially expected.

Ensuring that everyone involved in a performance feels cared for has remained important throughout Crouch's subsequent collaborations, but he has continued to be accused of not doing so. Despite insisting that the audience should be "beautifully lit and cared for" during *The Author* (2009) (164), the walk-outs and antagonistic responses for which it gained notoriety at the 2010 Edinburgh Festival is perhaps traceable to the lack of a clear minimal model, through which audiences could learn to respond to its hermeneutic challenge. Crouch sat among the audience along with three fellow performers: Vic Llewellyn, Esther Smith and initially Adrian Howells, later Chris Goode. They played characters with their own names, and recounted, with almost no visual illustration, experiences of performing or watching a graphically violent play written and directed by 'Tim Crouch'. This culminated with Crouch delivering an account, in fading-to-dim light, of watching child pornography in an infant's presence, and of killing himself upon being discov-

ered. The audience's constant sense of being wrong-footed by the play, summarised by Gareth White as being caught between either "allow[ing them]selves to imagine what is described, or actively attempt[ing] not to" (190), is made more uncomfortable because the play itself is so obviously crafted, and because the audience themselves are the objects of the crafting process. Helen Iball expresses her ongoing ethical uncertainty about the play by figuring performers or audience members as hosts for a parasite (438-39) and sacrificial victims (444), passive material worked on with destructive rather than minimum force. Indeed, in a reversal of *My Arm*'s compositional history, Crouch ended the first draft of *The Author*'s script with a model for the fixed structure of attention that the audience should have developed, only to remove it before public performance. After the death of 'Tim Crouch', and his departure from the auditorium, another planted actor would have been revealed: an elderly woman, compelled to "say something", "[n]ow that we're on our own". "say something, [n]ow that we're on our own". She would describe an article "about stories", read during her husband's diagnosis with a terminal disease.

> It talked about the early days when the story-teller would stand behind the audience. The audience would face a wall or an empty space, and the story teller [sic] would stand behind them and tell the story without anyone looking at them. The audience would then see their own pictures, project their own vision of the story into thin air. This struck me. This gave me hope. ("Original ending" 244)

Had this ending survived into performance, it would have reassured audiences that *The Author* had been fostering within them the self-determination which is the goal of care: the parable de-

scribes what they would have been doing throughout the perfor-
mance, projecting "pictures" as they listened with limited visual
stimulus, acquiring a "hope"-ful capacity to reimagine the world,
a capacity for which there is no clear model within the 'realisti-
cally' violent performance that *The Author* describes.

 Cutting this ending is not an abdication of care, but tes-
tament to a rigorously ethical development in Crouch's and his
collaborators' understanding of how to redistribute the capacity
for skilled practice, not only between performers and audience,
but also within the wider world on which *The Author* is so trou-
blingly parasitic. The original parable of active spectatorship at
the play's end was an inadequate paraphrase in two crucial re-
spects. Firstly, the audience have put their imagination to work
on neither "an empty space", nor the non-sentient objects of *My
Arm*, but on each other, the performers and the shared space.
Secondly, they are invited to demonstrate their attention by mak-
ing public contributions, not merely listening and privately re-
flecting. By electing, with varying degrees of consciousness and
spontaneity, to answer questions or pointedly refuse to do so, to
react non-verbally or even to walk out, the audience are not only
reshaping the material of the play but providing the material that
others will reshape. By making fellow human beings the perfor-
mance's material, Crouch goes beyond *My Arm* in transferring
not only his capacity to reshape material to the audience, but also
a concomitant responsibility to treat that material well. Some
will underestimate their agency and fail to apply necessary force
to what they are witnessing: these are audience members who,
for whatever reason, find descriptions of violence and abuse as
upsetting as their graphic representation. Others will overesti-
mate it and assert themselves too forcefully, such as those who
become frustrated at the actors' perceived failure to improvise in

response to their contributions (Bottoms, "A Conversation" 426-28). These deviations generate undeniable feelings of bitterness and regret, in both the audience and the performers, which justify Iball's continued doubts about the play. But, by gradually developing a response to the play between these two extremes, audiences can come to recognise that they are not being passively "cared for", but developing active structures of self-care and mutual care. Duška Radosavljević notes that plays like *The Author* guarantee safety for neither performers nor audiences, but with the important caveat (inherited from Bojana Cvejić) that what is unguaranteed is "safety [according] to a prior self-regulation" (189): safety must, like the wider structures of ethical and aesthetic judgement within which it belongs, be continually discovered within a process of skill.

Thus, until the moment that 'Tim Crouch' leaves the auditorium, the whole play should be seen as performing a comparable function to *My Arm*'s modified opening: its crafted structure distributes agency to the audience in a manner to which they can meaningfully respond. For as long as a character named Tim Crouch remains in the space, delivering lines known to be written by Crouch, he conspicuously initiates the distribution. This privilege must eventually be renounced: until he does so, Crouch the author is still comparable to the exploitative 'Tim Crouch' character, who allegedly passes "things for other people to solve" "over" to actors and audiences, but still expects credit for passing them (190). The conclusion to the first published version of the script marks this scaffolding's removal, encouraging the audience now to shape their common experience in a manner unshaped by Crouch. "*There is no scripted ending*": following initial prompts by the only remaining actor, the audience "*will deal with what's left – in whichever way is felt*

appropriate", ideally by continuing conversations here or else-where, and "*certainly* […] *creating an imperfect act of love and hope*" (*The Author* 61). Given these detailed suggestions, and the continued reliance on the actor for support, this ending in effect remained "*scripted*": ultimately the company found that these conditions constituted a "forced gesture of being 'all in this together'" (Bottoms, "Materialising" 462), not an opportu-nity for self-determination. The 2011 edition abandons all text following Crouch's exit except "*The houselights are on. The doors to the theatre are open.*" (203) The continued presence of the last actor and "the persistent absence of applause" (Bottoms, "Materialising" 463) offer an invitation to stay within the space, the lights and opening of the doors as clear an invitation to leave. Either action is acceptable and can constitute an "*appropriate*" response to the performance. As in certain Fluxist pieces, the most apparently passive theatrical gestures acquire "a quality of activity" (Morin 79).

Each of these three endings feels more "*imperfect*", or less determined, than its predecessor, but only *feels* less deter-mined because the opportunities to determine the experience have been more widely distributed, beyond the sphere of the individual subject. Audience members can only recognise this subtlety while the structures that generate shared experience and "social confidence" remain in force. As *The Author* finishes and the audience breaks up, this confidence will dissipate more and more, until the indeterminate quality of the remembered theat-rical experience resembles the indeterminacy of the world out-side. As long as a trace of such confidence survives, the network of self-determining but mutually dependent human agents that *The Author* has assembled can serve as a yet-to-be-perfected model for their social environment: *this* is the more complex

taskscape for which *The Author* trains its audience. Reconceiving Crouch's theatre of indeterminacy as one of fully distributed agency helps to explain what Morin sees as its "quasi-utopian" politics (80). Utopia will not be reached by skilful interventions in the political field from one individual or group, but at the moment at which all participants in that field have the opportunity to operate autonomously at once. This is the closest that Crouch can come to fulfilling Jacques Rancière's appeal for always-already emancipated spectators, who do not need "intricate dramaturgy" to be made more conspicuously active (Rancière 7).

This is a simultaneously dispiriting and comforting political affect: spontaneous unity of purpose and participation seems impossible, but also somehow embedded within existing practices, if they could only be spelt out more precisely. The doubleness is nicely captured by the two ways in which the same phrase is punctuated and contextualised in the co-written script of Crouch's and smith's subsequent collaboration, *what happens to hope at the end of the evening* (2013). Having spent much of the piece celebrating the theatre as "a space where we can really be together" (2), smith's persona, named in the script as Andy, announces that he "want[s] to start a revolution here". However, his model of revolution is figured, twice over, as reliant upon continuation in non-theatrical spaces by non-theatrical means: he describes a conversation in a bookshop about how the Living Theatre encouraged audiences to demand "Paradise Now!" in the streets (46). As the piece closes, Andy's friend, who is played by Crouch and takes over reading from Andy's script, concludes a final reflection on theatrical space by repeating "Paradise now." (63) Now punctuated to suggest a factual claim instead of a demand, the phrase gives the impression that change has already happened – and that any further change

cannot happen *without* this anticipatory sense of change being entirely prepared and determined.

Imagining writing

The kind of analysis that I have just conducted, of finding hermeneutic significance in a textual detail which may or may not be identifiable in performance, seems to justify Bottoms's proposal that "deft use of language […] is one of the most vital, and under-appreciated, weapons in Crouch's armoury" ("Introduction", emphasis altered). Throughout this paper, however, I have attempted to argue that imagining Crouch as a careful user of resources does not do justice to a production process in which isolating deftness within one figure or skill can quickly become inaccurate and ethically troubling. (Perhaps Bottoms's metaphorical reaching for weapons should give us pause.) The very existence of a co-written script like *what happens…* reinforces the sense that Crouch is not the only writer within the rehearsal room, and it becomes hard to identify the boundary between writing and acts like directing, improvisational acting, negotiating props and opening doors. If I see these plays as working towards a condition in which indeterminacy becomes indistinguishable from a radically distributed understanding of determination, could I further extend the list of practices to include reading, and any list of collaborators to include all readers? This is to move away from figuring performance texts such as these as partial instructions for, or partial documentation of, events that lie essentially beyond the texts themselves. Instead, the text is figured as the site on which such practices occur, and becomes itself a layered history of those practices, to which any reading, editing or performing adds.

It is on these terms that the importance of writing as an underlying principle within Crouch's dramaturgy, and of the

scene of writing from *My Arm* with which I began, can be understood. Given that the gerund 'writing' unusually describes *both* the fixed, objectifiable product of a skilled process *and* the endless, intangible process itself, it can serve as a symbol of the condition in which the virtues of determination and indeterminacy can be felt simultaneously, even though this condition's emergence is in practice dependent on a whole taskscape of interacting skills. Seeing a performer writing "*laboriously*" offers a curious counterpoint to the more familiar experience of reading a script and "imaginatively transform[ing] a purely literary text into a three-dimensional visual experience" (Rebellato 17): by staging the physical act of writing, the audience is implicitly invited to remember that this entire performance can itself be alternatively experienced as a text, and that this text's composition was always-already an embodied, "laborious" performance. At the moment that this blurring takes place, theatre-making can be figured as "weaving" rather than "making" in Ingold's terms: making the condition under which most products are understood to be made in Western modernity, ends by establishing a fixed "final form" such as a published script; in weaving, there is no break between process and product, with the process continuing "as long as life goes on – *punctuated* but not terminated by the appearance of the pieces that it successively brings into being" (347-48, emphasis unaltered). *My Arm*'s staged act of writing may appear to terminate, but "*this placard remains visible to the audience for the rest of the performance*" (*Plays* 36). The audience must bring themselves into the weaving process by continuing not only to read the words of the sign, but also to remember the labour with which it was produced. For Crouch and Ingold, this is an ethical injunction: "life" might just depend on it.

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"That Space": Across Text and Performance in Suspect Culture's *One Way Street*

By Verónica Rodríguez

Abstract

Scottish experimental theatre company Suspect Culture was co-founded by Graham Eatough, David Greig and Nick Powell in the early 1990s and produced work until the late 2000s, when their funding was discontinued. This paper aims at tackling the intersections of text and performance – notions that crucially appear as undone and interpenetrated – in Suspect Culture's work, and more particularly in *One Way Street: Ten Walks in the Former East* (1995).[1] After a brief introduction that situates the paper in the context of Suspect Culture scholarship, the first part of the paper includes some theoretical remarks, tackles Suspect Culture's positioning as regards the transgression of the text-based/non-text-based binary and argues for *One Way Street* as a piece that exemplifies an unloosening of boundaries between text and performance. Indeed, the specific argument of this paper is that Suspect Culture's work – with *One Way Street* as a paradigmatic example – is interested in that space across text and performance. The second part of the paper suggests the feature of fragmentation, the method of devising and my experiences of the walks as phenomena where this space across text and performance is illuminated.

"That Space": Across Text and Performance in Suspect Culture's *One Way Street*

In a *Platform* issue that seeks to explore the intersections between text and performance in contemporary British theatre cul-

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1 Hereafter referred to as *One Way Street*.

ture, it seems crucial to signpost the work of one of Britain's leading experimental theatre companies of the 1990s and 2000s, Suspect Culture. Indeed, one of Suspect Culture's trademarks was the transgression of the traditionally entrenched divide between text and performance. But before exploring that fruitful letting go of limits in Suspect Culture's work in general and in *One Way Street* in particular, this paper offers a brief overview of existing scholarship on Suspect Culture, which has paved the way for the present discussion to take place.

Dan Rebellato's 2003 article, which defended the company's political import through a convincing reading of the utopian in Suspect Culture, was the first to address Suspect Culture's work in earnest. This was followed by Peter Zenzinger's article on Greig, which discusses, among other works, *One Way Street* and its postmodern features – although narrowly considering the piece to be Greig's work. The body of scholarsgip on Suspect Culture is growing, particularly since the publication of Eatough and Dan Rebellato's *The Suspect Culture Book* in 2013, which contains a fair amount of material on *One Way Street*. Then came Clare Wallace's *The Theatre of David Greig*, which contains a chapter on the company, discussing *One Way Street*, and a chapter by Marilena Zaroulia which also includes a section on *One Way Street*. Finally, Wallace has a chapter in *British Theatre Companies (1995-2014)* (2015) entitled "Suspect Culture", which highlights *One Way Street*, among other pieces, as a key work by the company.

Although no publication has looked in detail at the feature the present paper focuses on, some commentators have pointed out Suspect Culture's "navigat[ing] between the poles of performance and playwriting", their mingling of "new writing with experimental dramaturgy" and/or "devising and text"

(Wallace, "Suspect" 179-180; see also Price). This paper's aim, therefore, is to look at this characteristic in particular and to do so with specific reference to *One Way Street.* Given that the interplay between text and performance in Suspect Culture's work is the interest of this paper, the place where this discussion should begin is with Wallace's pointing out of 'the post-dramatic tenor of [Suspect Culture's] work' (*The Theatre* 23), whereby 'Suspect Culture's work with repetition, fragmentation, sound, gesture and image is richly illustrative of some aspects of the tendencies Lehmann observes' (*The Theatre* 19).[2]

Theoretical Background
From the Postdramatic to the Interplay between Text and Performance

Despite the fact that Eatough and Greig could not possibly have been familiarised with the paradigm of postdramatic theatre in the mid-1990s when they were devising *One Way Street*, given that Lehmann's seminal *Postdramatic Theatre* was not even written, Suspect Culture were influenced by and exposed to work by practitioners whose work was later loosely labelled postdramatic by Lehmann, including "Pina Bausch, Robert Wilson, The Maly" (Wright 158), "Peter Brook […] Robert Lepage and the Wooster Group" (Wallace, "Suspect" 180). Postdramatic theatre is a useful theory to apply to *One Way Street* because it illuminates ways in which Suspect Culture transgressed the binary between text-led and performance-led work by porously incorporating both into their methods.

Although the difference between dramatic and postdramatic theatre is widely known, it is worth recounting it here. While dramatic theatre, the dominant paradigm of European

2 See Wallace's *The Theatre of David Greig*, pp. 19-30.

theatre in the first half of the twentieth century – and, commentators such as Duška Radosavljević reasonably argue, still quite rooted in contemporary playwriting – is "subordinated to the primacy of text" (Lehmann 21), text in postdramatic theatre – a paradigm emerging in the second half of the twentieth century and indebted to developments including the historical avant-gardes, the omnipresence of the media after the 1970s (Lehmann 22-3) and the absurdists – is considered as one element in the scenic creation or theatre situation, abolishing the hierarchy of text in relation to performance. While generally speaking the binary between text-based and non-text based theatre has been maintained in institutional, academic and funding environments, among others, in the British theatrical context, Suspect Culture's outward-looking ethos, hunger for innovation, collaborative spirit, European and international influences and artistic networks constituted an unexhausted number of phenomena that made them an early exception to the rule.

Radosavljević's *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (2013) cogently demonstrates that this reticent landscape in British theatre has been changing, especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century, towards a more embracing and appreciative understanding of theatrical practice. Among other factors, Radosavljević mentions the 'reinvent[ion of] the nineteenth and twentieth-century notion of a playtext' (140) and that British 'companies previously associated with devising as a method have increasingly found themselves collaborating with writers' (60). Theatre-maker Chris Goode, whose work is discussed by Radosavljević, has been for decades an advocate of the freeing undoing of boundaries between performance and theatre by precisely experimenting with the texture of text. Along with Radosavljević, he suggests

that today "the binary 'performance' vs. 'theatre' is surely un-tenable" (Goode 38).

Informed by this theoretical context and situating Sus-pect Culture's *One Way Street* as an embryonic instance of the developments that were to arrive more forcefully in subsequent years, this paper focuses on Suspect Culture's balancing of and profound interplay between text and performance.

Transcending Ludicrous Divisions: Collaboration and Po-rous Synthesis

The exhausted dichotomy between text-based and non-text-based theatre (Radosavljević 62) is one that Eatough remarks upon by highlighting "the slightly ludicrous division between the 'text-based theatre' people and the 'physical theatre' peo-ple that took place in the 1990s" (Rebellato "An Interview" 9). At the time, Eatough recalls, Suspect Culture would ask them-selves: "can we do a show that is physical in interesting ways and at the same time textually rich?" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 9). Despite all the connotations the term 'physical' might bring to mind in the context of theatre and performance,[3] Eatough means "the physical resources of performance" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 17). To give an example of those physical resources, Eatough is interested in "gestural motifs of reaching out, long-ing and so on" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 12).[4] The company's interest in both text and the physical is also suggested by the

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3 For instance, in the shape of physical theatre as "a badge to indicate distance from the typical naturalistic conventions of the 'well-made play' on the one hand, and to suggest a risky, visceral and sometimes virtuosic display of performing bodies on the other" (Murray 101).

4 In this respect, Eatough has noted the influence of Pina Bausch's *Café Müller* (Rebellato, "An Interview" 12), which is present in the piece under discussion in this paper, *One Way Street* (Rebellato, "An Interview" 12).

very "original impulse" of the company: "the literary intelligence of Howard Barker and the physical intelligence of DV8" (Rebellato, "And I Will Reach" 63).

This is where Suspect Culture's work spills over the page: in its insisting exploration of "that space between those areas" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 10). In other words, Suspect Culture's work oscillates "between maintaining a textual point of reference while exploring the physical resources of performance" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 17). In this dynamic in-between space, senses of co-working between text and the physical are upheld. Suspect Culture's texts are incomplete without manifold non-textual elements. A particular characteristic of text that leaves space for that co-working to take place, for the physical to have space to be articulated, is that "Suspect Culture texts are peculiarly disembodied works, uncontained" (Greig "Haunted" 39), and that "they aren't plays, they're something else" (Greig "Haunted" 41). This quality of Suspect Culture's texts as disembodied, as uncontained, throws light on the fruitful coexistence of Suspect Culture's "narrative theatre" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 12), "text-rich theatre" or "great writing" with the ideas of an aesthetically-rich theatre, an interest in bodies and a complex stage imagery (Rebellato, "An Interview" 9-10).

Although Greig "went away and took ownership of the text", in all of Suspect Culture's shows it was important to the company that the process was initiated jointly by all collaborators through workshops, brainstorming sessions and rehearsal processes (Rebellato, "An Interview" 25). Suspect Culture considered themselves "a deeply collaborative company" (Eatough and Rebellato, Preface 8) and Greig claims that he and Eatough co-authored *One Way Street* (Greig, *One Way* 229). While Suspect Culture's take on playwriting is that they "didn't want to

leave playwriting behind" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 9), albeit with a clear focus on collaboration, their views on the written text have been summarised as follows: "British theatre tendency to see the written text as the central component of the theatrical matrix is so ingrained," claim Eatough and Rebellato, "that we resisted publishing the scripts" (Preface 7). Or as Greig claims, "we were worried that the prevailing theatre culture of authorship would subsume our collectivity and misinterpret it" ("Haunted" 40-1).

Unlike most works by Suspect Culture (only a few texts have been published), *One Way Street* appeared in the anthology *Scottish Plays. New Scottish Drama* (1998). Although it appeared under the writer's name, Greig's first statement in *One Way Street*'s "A Note to the Text" is: "I'm not the author of *One Way Street*, I wrote the words" (229). Later on, he claims that "the writing existed to help realise the performance" ("A Note" 229). In the context of this paper's aims, it should be noted that, published or unpublished, Suspect Culture called their texts "performance texts" (Eatough and Rebellato, Preface 8), scholars such as Rebellato describe their work generally as "performance work" ("And I Will" 62) and Greig uses the phrase "performance style" ("Note on" 229) in reference to *One Way Street*.

Considering theatre then as "a practice where writing [is] just one of a number of elements that [are] created" (Goode 21), another relevant idea to mention when considering the noted "ludicrous division" (Rebellato, "An Interview" 9) is that Suspect Culture considered elements such as "music, gesture, text and design" as "equals" (Eatough and Rebellato, Preface 7). This is something Rebellato conveys with the word "integration" ("And I Will" 62) and Wallace with the term "amalgamation" (*The Theatre* 17). More descriptively, Eatough and

Rebellato phrase this phenomenon as the "horizontal creativity of the company" (Preface 7). Suspect Culture's work is not just interested in those elements as equals in isolated ways, but is attracted to an experimental blend of all of the elements in an undone manner. That is, these elements – music, gesture, video, text, design, "the physical presence of the actors" ("And I Will" 79) – can be seen as holed, with their fruitful interpenetration becoming the company's core aim. Indeed, in Eatough's and Rebellato's words, "Suspect Culture always wanted the various elements of theatrical production to bleed into one another" (Preface 7). Furthermore, Greig claims that "they consider[ed] the 'production' as art and not 'the play'" (Wright 158), which confirms the equal relevance of all aspects of performance.

The Background of *One Way Street*
Co-directed by Eatough and Greig, *One Way Street* was the first show by Suspect Culture that "develop[ed] the company's […] characteristic patterns of repeated gestures and stylized recursions of movement" (Rebellato, "And I Will" 62), which can be described as "postdramatic stylistic moments" (Lehmann 24). Set in East Berlin in the early 1990s, *One Way Street* explores the ramblings, experiences and memories of angry young intellectual John Flannery, including the story of his lost love Greta. Fragments of Flannery's life are contained in his ten walks in former East Berlin, which he addresses to tourists (the show's audience members) and which structurally articulate *One Way Street*. By being addressed as such, *One Way Street* potentially "inscrib[ed] the spectator into the work" (Radosavljević 150) and implicated audience members in the (implied) action (see Radosavljević 152), disclosing one of the ways in which the interplay between text and performance is foregrounded.

Indeed, the very premise of *One Way Street* – Flannery is researching and writing the walks that he is simultaneously leading spectators through – has at its core the interplay of text and performance. Including information ranging from Second World War debris to Rosa Luxemburg's mutilated body, the content of these ten walks is quite unusual, which is also conveyed through gestural vocabulary, music and visual material, including "film and video" (Greig, "A Note" 229). Joyce McMillan seems to suggest that *One Way Street* "transcends the notion of hierarchy between text and performance" (Radosavljević 190) when she claims that *One Way Street* is "a seamless synthesis of text, performance, music and visual imagery" (44). Although *One Way Street* transcends assumptions of text as the main component in a theatre situation, as shown below by discussing one main feature (fragmentation), one devising method (the *derivé*) and one instance where text is illuminated as open (through my own experience of the walks), the treatment of text in this piece is not subversive and remains an element within that "seamless synthesis" noted above.

One Way Street: Fragmentation, Devising, Walking
Fragmentation with a Cause in Text and Show

Formally, *One Way Street's* walks intersperse indications usually disclosing marginal locations to spectators/tourists with lengthy sequences of stream-of-consciousness, in which situations reveal some of Flannery's life and thoughts and walks-related information is deployed in an unusual manner – via Flannery's experiences, interactions and perceptions. Needless to say, form is highly fragmented in *One Way Street*. This is of course intensified by the performance elements delineated above such as gestural work and use of images, which demonstrate how senses

of fragmentation bleed across multiple aspects of the show.

Fragmentation is a result of *One Way Street*'s response to what is like to live in the 1990s in the context of "the failure of the left and the rise of the globalised, fragmented world" (Rodosthenous 4). Bearing a sense of *ostalgie* – a pun of the German words *Nostalgie* (nostalgia) and *Ost* (East) that designates nostalgia towards life in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, or Eastern German identity after the reunification – the impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall and life in the new reunified Germany, *One Way Street* is subtitled "Ten Short Walks in the Former East". By focusing on one of the sides (the East), there is an allusion to the fragmentation of Germany. Fragmentation is also contextually relevant since *One Way Street* was written in 1994, a time in which a dramatic redrawing of borders in Europe occurred as a result of the then raging Balkan Wars.

While the discourse of postmodernism announced the Lyotardian end of metanarratives and championed formal features such as repetition, pastiche, irony, self-reflexivity and notably fragmentation, fragmentation in relation to *One Way Street* and indeed other Suspect Culture shows veers towards a sense of fragmentation with a cause. Although not going as far as claiming that "postmodernism is […] fundamentally complicit with the new structures of exploitation" and suggesting postmodernism as "the ideological form of global capitalism" (Rebellato, "Because" 197), this paper adds *with a cause* to the idea of *fragmentation* because it considers fragmentation's *raison d'être* and impact beyond the also valuable effects of postmodernism's sense of playfulness.

This is something that can be extricated from Wallace's discussion of *Lament* (Tron, 2002) and *Futurology: A Global Review* (SECC [Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre],

2007), by her section being partly entitled "Postmodern Politics?" (*The Theatre* 27-30).[5] I further understand fragmentation as a way into destabilising textual conventions such as structure, plot, narrative and character. Through those senses of destabilisation, *One Way Street* does not only experiment with form in innovative ways, but also simultaneously echoes the period's anxieties towards a socially, politically, economically, culturally and psychologically fragmented Europe and the fragmented senses of self and space-time that ensued.

Flannery's travel piece on East Berlin results in *One Way Street* being divided in walks instead of scenes, defying conventional dramatic shape. In sum, that *ostalgic* love story is told throughout the walks to spectators. The choice here of *throughout* is central, since the love story is interspersed with many more stories, many more fragments of life that correspond to people other than Flannery, places other than East Berlin and times other than the present, unveiling a precarious and unstable – if not inexistent – sense of plot and a highly fragmented narrative, as a postdramatic "collage of fragments" (Lehmann 18). Again, although the rendering of stories, places and times is unstable, Flannery erects a narrative that is stitched together by the ten walks, defying fragmentation. The walks include information not usually attached to walking tours such as memories of Flannery's childhood, Flannery's recent experiences in Berlin and disturbing pieces of historical fact, all rendered in outbursts of stream-of-consciousness punctuated by interruptions in the shape of direct address (Greig, *One Way* 235-36). These numerous moments reveal "the proscenium arch" as removed and "the audience [as] drawn into the inner workings of a theatre experi-

5 This paper focuses on fragmentation, but a similar subjacent critique of postmodernism is suggested, for instance, by the fact that "*Lament* carefully avoids irony" (Rebellato, "And I Will" 78).

ence" (Radosavljević 4).

With regard to character, while *One Way Street* corresponds with "'traditional' and 'text-based' in its pursuit of a story structured around the resolution of a character's inner conflict" (Radosavljević 150), Flannery's complexities are far richer. Furthermore, Flannery's boundaries are unmarked. In the first place, he suggests a hybrid alter-ego of Eatough and Greig and a clear reference to Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur*,[6] resulting in Flannery becoming a destabilised set of fictional, real and conceptual fragments assembled together, rather like *One Way Street* itself. This is a way in which *One Way Street* spills over into real life, transgressing both text and performance. This is further complicated by the play's cultural and literary references, which do not just include Bertolt Brecht, Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, but also Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Franz Kafka and Anton Chekhov.

One Way Street works with monologue and a solo performer. Despite the fact *One Way Street* is "told by a variety of characters [unspecified as characters in the performance text, which include Brecht, Flannery's teacher, and a waiter]" (Howard xi), the "multiple encounters between Flannery and other characters […] manifest in the body of one actor only" (Zaroulia 192), the play also implies that Flannery voices moments of dialogue. Flannery is representative of "performance personae who address the audience 'as themselves'" (Tomlin *Acts* 14) and reminiscent of a "poststructuralist subjectivity that no longer recognises an 'authentic' or 'essential' self" (Tomlin *Acts* 14). In sum, Flannery is simultaneously many fragments of many elements and echoes fragments of his and others' lives in

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6 In one of its possible definitions, the *flâneur* is "that transient wanderer of the city" (Murphy 8) who throws himself into "the fugitive pleasure of circumstance" (Baudelaire 12).

himself, challenging fragmentation through his body's unifying capacities, while steering away from essentialism – taking note of some of postmodernism's positive outcomes.

The numerous shifts among and across stories, space-times and bodies – taking into account the destabilisation of Flannery as a performance persona – both mirror the period's fragmentation and simultaneously destabilise notions of particular memories, locations, times and bodies, engaging creatively with fragmentation and suggesting the trope of interconnectedness. However, the fact that this context of fragmentation establishes the fragmentary character of the piece – at least in terms of structure, plot, narrative, character and eventually treatment of space-time – does not eclipse the possibility that fragmentation itself might be challenged.

Derivé Imprinted in Text

The use of devising in *One Way Street* also discloses the interplay between text and performance. *One Way Street* is a piece "devised by collaborative company Suspect Culture" (Howard x). According to Radosavljević, "[t]here are two key ways in which 'devising' needs to be understood in terms of its genealogy: aesthetic-methodological, on the one hand, and political, on the other" (59). "On the methodological front," Radosavljević suggests, "the key factor is an absence of a finished play-text as a departure point, which is here replaced by a variety of other possible stimuli and the actors' own investment into the play-writing process" (59). "On a political level' she continues, "as usefully summarized by [Alex] Mermikides and [Jackie] Smart, devising is seen as a counter-cultural practice populated by iconoclastic practitioners acting in resistance to traditional forms and 'theatre conventions' (2010: 4)" (59). On the one hand, *One Way*

Street's process went from devising exercises between Eatough and Greig, including research, trips, trying different ideas and confronting problems on the way, to then eventually writing and subsequently rehearsing. The text was then shaped as a response to rehearsals "around the performance" (Wallace, "Suspect" 190). The former sense of 'devising' is also to be found in *One Way Street*'s central devising methodology, the *derivé* – considered by Mauricio Paroni de Castro as "Suspect Culture's hallmark" (57).

One Way Street sprang out of a number of influences that crucially included the Situationist *derivé*, technique, which "involves the participant going on a walk through the city following a route determined by some arbitrary set of rules" (Paroni de Castro 58).[7] The 'political' sense of devising has been noted earlier when Suspect Culture's undoing of dramatic realist theatre conventions was discussed. These two ways of devising – the aesthetic and the political – might be thought of as interconnected. In other words, the potential repercussions of methodology can indeed raise a political dimension through the *derivé*'s a/effects. (This latter point is actually one of my conclusions as a result of having undertaken the walks). Methodological/political or methodological-political questions aside, this section argues that the scripted/devised dichotomy is powerfully undone by *One Way Street*'s engagement with the *derivé* whereby the *derivé* imprints itself upon text, which has several repercussions. Indeed, *One Way Street* is an instance of theatre where "these methodologies [text-based theatre and devised performance] inform and transform each other" (Radosavljević 62). To come back to *derivé*'s definition, the Situationist *derivé*

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[7] There are many more influences in *One Way Street*, which I cannot analyse here due to scope.

involves the participant going on a walk through the city following a route determined by some arbitrary set of rules […]. It creates a kind of drifting that generates real situations, in public spaces […]. This leads to a flow of actions, defined by the route that has been taken. At the end of the exercise, considerations and reflections are made to understand and put this emotional path into context. (58-9)

While the *derivé* involves "some arbitrary set of rules", these seem to coexist with senses of logic and direction. In other words, it is a methodology that thrives in fragmentation and yet eclipses arbitrariness. This is stitched together in *One Way Street* by "Benjamin's insistence that the story of his life should be a street map – more a geography than a biography" (Howard x) and by the senses of integrity that the walks perhaps raise.

Performing the Scripted: Openness and Making Real
This section's title refers to my own experience of walking the walks in *One Way Street*, which offers another example of the interplay between text and performance.[8] Apart from research purposes, the fact that I undertook the walks is an example of how creativity can be transferred from stage to elsewhere as work that intermingles textual and performance aspects usually does or aims at doing. The first indication for the walks, and at times the most clear of all, is constituted by the very names of the walks, as for instance in '1 Prenzlauerberg'. The information that follows a given walk title can be straightforward, as in "[t]

8 The following analysis is based on my experience of going to Berlin for the walks in February-March 2013 (I would like to acknowledge my friend Tra Dang, who lovingly endured the walks with me at -20ºC). For reasons of scope, this paper generally omits a rich field in the study of walking – both theoretical and related to practice – in contemporary theatre and performance studies.

ake the U-Bahn to Oranienburger Tor" (Greig, *One Way* 242), or as disorientating as in "[u]nwanted Sexual Advice, Elderly Transvestites and my house" (Greig, *One Way* 238). Indeed, some arbitrary rules are interspersed in the text, perhaps intending to mirror the crucial technique used in the piece's devising, the Situationist *derivé*.

The demanding aspect of the piece is not just in the unusual walking experiences it presents, in my case, the walker with, but also in the blending of real and fictional elements. For instance, in my reading, there are at times fictional incursions in relation to place-naming – as in "Wertherstrasse" instead of "Wörtherstrasse", which could range from being a problem with spelling to a conscious naming after Goethe's famous work, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). At other times, fictionalisation manifests in the shape of 'inexistent' sites such as in the indication to Flannery's house, a minor landmark (Greig, *One Way* 241), via which *One Way Street* is being extremely ironic about tourism within a global consumerist framework. On other occasions, the present day walker might face outmoded street names – Dimitroffstrasse is nowadays called Danziger Strasse. Difficulty also arises from the fact that these walks take the spectator through figurative, imaginative and disparate scenarios such as flags of vomit, halls of tears and eclipses.

Despite the presence of an arbitrary set of rules and therefore the production of a sense of drifting and the blurring between fictional and real, there was a sense that there was something else beyond arbitrariness – perhaps a powerful sense of direction and integrity to it. While having followed a scripted text where the *derivé* is powerfully ingrained, the experience of walking the walks illuminated ways in which a text can be extremely open for us to walk and/or perform it.

The paper finally tackles the idea of methodology, of the *derivé* across text and performance, being able to raise a political dimension through the explanation of one of my experiences during the walks. Walk Five is the walk in which Flannery tells us about the brutality of Rosa Luxemburg's murder (1919): "[t]he Kaiser's militia had beaten her and mutilated her and blown out her brains" (Greig, *One Way* 246). *One Way Street* mentions a fictional trail – Rosa Luxemburg's trail – which I made real through my own experience of the walks by persistently following unwritten directions, which surprisingly unveiled "the significance of body-environment relations to meaning making" (Welton 2013: 164). Stubbornly walking the inexistent generated meaning, I made the fictional trail 'real', generating a sense of historically alternative memories of the city of Berlin's former East through the organic experience of walking.

This is how it happened. John, after telling *us* how they killed Luxemburg and how her body was found, urges: "You've seen a canal, haven't you" (Greig, *One Way* 247). The canal figured as the heritage trail's starting point to me, the canal where Luxemburg's body had been thrown, not far from Brecht's Berlin Ensemble, the bars of Oranienburg Strasse, the prostitutes, the Kunsthaus Tacheles and the New Synagogue. It felt as if from then on, I could continue generating the trail. The existence of fragments did not impede the insistence to link them or to make something out of them. Following a sort of unglued, *derivé* text, I continued the unexpected memory lane experience, *creating* what seemed *clearly* the Rosa Luxemburg Trail: from the canal in which the body was thrown to the square and street that have her name nowadays. The walking of the walks placed me in a position of potentially creating that previously inexistent path, of creating something by performing, which is why one

might highlight *One Way Street*'s openness.

One of the conclusions of the walks was then that "the body [and the noted body-environment relations] is [and are] a source not just of individual but of cultural memory" (Marks 2000: viii) and that walking creates the road, makes the path. My experience of the walks became then a practical example that for "[m]aking the map. Making it real" (Rodríguez, "Zāhir and Bā-tin" 93) it had to be fictionalised. The experience also suggested how the scripted – inextricably embedded with performance in *One Way Street* – shows traces of its previous life – devising processes – and its future life – for instance, in the shape of the impact on someone undertaking the walks. This is an important shade to the politics of *One Way Street*'s main methodology and a way in which the binary scripted/devised is transcended.

If performance exists somewhere in the unstable terri-tory between imagining and making that imagining into doing, into something real (see Field), performance is deeply present in Suspect Culture's work and in particular in *One Way Street*. More particularly, performance lies significantly somewhere across my own walking the walks in *One Way Street*, through the experience of making real something that did not exist, but that became real through the doing of walking.

Concluding Remarks: Bleeding Across[9]

After a theoretical background, this paper has analysed Suspect Culture's *One Way Street* as a piece that illuminates the fruitful interrelationships between text and performance and that chal-lenges the three-fold assumption of text as a main component, as a superior methodology and as an immobile element in a theat-rical situation. The first section has shown how *One Way Street*

9 I have developed this idea elsewhere (see Rodríguez, "Bridging").

contests the idea of text being at the top of a hierarchy where performance elements are relegated as inferior by discussing fragmentation – the defining characteristic of *One Way Street* – as a feature of both text and performance elements. The second section has demonstrated how the piece under discussion inter-rogates the idea of text as superior to devising practices by look-ing at how the main methodology used during the devising of the piece, the *derivé*, affects 'text', showing dynamic interpene-trations between the scripted and the devised. The third section has suggested that creative, manifold, rich texts might contain the possibility to be performed in myriad ways by drawing on my experience of walking the walks scripted in *One Way Street* and yet performed by my own walking, which further testifies to this piece's potential to blur the noted divides. One can conclude then that Suspect Culture's work has contributed to "a rebalanc-ing of the text and performance hierarchy" (Radosavljević 150), given their unbounded theatrical practice. Yet I think it is crucial to remember that in that rebalancing act, "it is more accurately dramatic realism that seems to have fallen out of favour, rather than text-based practice" (Tomlin, "Historical" 102). Suspect Culture is indeed a company that contributed to the opening up of the understanding of theatre-making methodologies and per-formance work in recent British theatre culture, where increas-ingly what should perhaps matter is less whether companies are more or less text-led or performance-led but whether they respect whole-heartedly their practice. It is this paper's conten-tion that Suspect Culture have achieved this by paying acute at-tention to senses of 'across'. By this somewhat abstract idea of 'across', I am trying to align this piece of work with a tradition that considers Suspect Culture's work as political. Although this paper has focused on "that space between those areas (text and

performance)" and has signalled its political potential, it is crucial to consider "that space" as being constituted by a sense of 'across', among *and* beyond text and performance.

This sense of 'across' not only transcends the relatively 'comfortable' spaces of text and performance, since that transgressing in Suspect Culture is also reminiscent of a yearning for connection to the world to others, to "connect ourselves to others in the dark" (Greig, "Haunted" 41), most visible in Suspect Culture's insistent trope of reaching out – which constitutes an 'across' movement. Bearing in mind Suspect Culture's overall project – "only to connect" (Greig "Haunted" 41) – one might say that although Suspect Culture does no longer exist as an active company, if there is one contribution they would perhaps like to be remembered by it is this incessant sense of bleeding across, not just between text and performance, but across everything and everyone, endlessly.

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Dramaturgies of Spontaneity

By Filippo Romanello

Abstract

I would like the reader to consider a performance text simply as a text *for* performance, as the textual element of a potential live performance rather than its literary mastercopy. Okay, all dramatic (or postdramatic) texts are texts for performance - the reader might think… and it is true… and you are reading my remark… but let's allow ourselves a shift in emphasis. Let us indulge in an experiment, let our attention drift for a moment from product to process, from narrative to form, from representation to presence… Well, what happens? What are we actually experimenting with? And why? Let me just say in this little premise that I don't feel at ease with representations: I don't feel I represent, and I don't want to be represented. Yet even my text re-presents me. Hence the struggle. Hence my literary labour, a little unaware… building a texture amidst which to hide from overrunning dictation, from "citations or recitations and orders" (Derrida 302) for actors, or directors, always ready for a context... in other words an open yet cohesive dramaturgy, able to stimulate the actors' spontaneous reactions to the text, and induce shifts in their relationship with the audience. I have provided two exemplifying extracts (from separate pieces) that you are welcome to imagine performed as you read.

As a theatre-maker wishing to entertain *and* engage the audience both creatively and kinesthetically, I am suggesting a writing practice that focuses on developing textual material with

"immanent" theatrical qualities[1], useful for improvisations based on psychophysical impulses and personal associations[2]. The intent is to let the dramaturgy of the performance *emerge* from the collective work of the performers in the studio, based on a phonetic score. Besides considering (quite conventionally) the spoken text as one of the triggering elements of a performance's dramaturgy, this practice relies on limiting the weight of (predetermined) meaning it carries *in itself*.

The score should create an ambiguous yet coherent sequence of events and use a mix of theatrical devices (e.g. narration, monologue, audience-address, unallocated lines) and language experimentation, in order to inspire, infuse potentiality, escape literality and/or fool semantic meaning, eventually providing the actors with different performing choices, and requiring them and the audience to fill in the gaps. It is in these gaps, in the undecided *mise-en-scène*, in the unclear meaning, that life may manifest and representation recede. Similarly, thanks to the expanded range of acting and staging possibilities available in performance, this approach is meant to bring authenticity to the encounter with the audience, which is necessarily framed into

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1 As in Małgorzata Sugiera's use of this adjective, which is to characterise a shift in contemporary performance writing: "Nowadays, the basic structural principle of texts written for theatre increasingly often turns out to be their immanent theatricality, which is […] a means of inducing the audience to watch themselves as subjects which perceive, acquire knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition" (qtd. in Turner and Behrndt 194).

2 By improvisation, I mean a creative process through which the actor originates new non-textual material using the text as their score, in other words, as a detailed yet open enough framework from which to base their actions: "Next I want to advise you never in performance to seek for spontaneity without a score. In the exercises it is a different thing altogether. During a performance no real spontaneity is possible without a score. It would only be an imitation since you would destroy your spontaneity by chaos" (Grotowski 192).

the work[3].

The first extract is from *Attempts on Friendship* (2014), a performance text developed for an ensemble of eight young actors from the Islington Community Theatre, both as an offer and personal response to meeting the group. Some of the devices I have embedded in the text are explained in the initial notations. In this case, "openness" is sought through the structure of the piece and the shifting subjectivity of the dramatis personae, yet it is still narrative that partly pre-threads meanings together.

> *Characters: A, B, C, D, E, F, PETE and LEA (with A, B, C and D representing various aspects of F and themselves).*
> *The lines of the Prologue are not allocated to any particular character, therefore all actors may want to learn all unallocated lines. Other lines may include both internal and external speech, but this is not clearly demarcated. In places punctuation is reduced to a minimum. The intention of this notation is to leave the text open to the creative interpretation of the performers, their impulses and personal associations. Stage directions are in italic within brackets.*
>
> Prologue: They Will Listen To Us
> *(The whole company of actors. The following lines should be read in the order they are written, but they are not assigned to any performer in particular: each performer delivers them on impulse. Overlaps are welcome. Be aware of the rhythm, tempo and pitch. Please shout the last line of this section all together)*

3 Audiences are framed in the moment they are acknowledged and they can take (or be given) a more or less specific role.

- I

- You

- He

- She

- It

- Us

-

- We

- You?

- You

- Them

- They

- We…

-

- I like us

- I like Ash

-

- She is white and British

- And green and Chinese

- And brown and English

- And black Caribbean

-

-    And… Mixed-race

-    And any other white background

-    Any other…

-    Any other white background

(Pause)

     What?

-    Any other *background*

-    Other than…?

-    So she is

-    She is

-    Everybody

-    She is everybody

-    That's it. She/

-    He

-    He?

-    He or she

-    Anybody

-    Everybody

-    And she believes

-    You can bet she does

- He does

- He/she does

- Everybody does

- What?

- What

- What what?

- What does he/she believe?

- She believes in… God!

- That's right. God. Good.

- What god?

- One that is nice, one that is funny, one that likes jokes.

- There isn't any like that!

- Well she will invent one!

- He!

- So she or he believes she or he can invent a god that is nice, funny and likes jokes.

- *She* does so does *he*

- That's right. They believe.

- He and she?

- She and he

- It

- That's a bit too far.

- Shehe

- That's better

- Sounds weird though

- So do you.

- What do you mean?

- Are you a boy or a girl?

- Err… I'm a girl, why?

- Oh you sound like a boy that's why.

- Oh well I don't care

- And shehe either.

- That's right - shehe doesn't care how shehe sounds as long as *they* hear.

- As long as they…

- As long as they listen to her - him

- That's right as long as they listen. But shehe needs a name.

- And the name is

- Kofi!

- Samia!

- Sairus!

- Lea!

- Pete!

- Sile!

- Jevan!

- Patrisha!

(...until all say their names or others to agree upon, then a few of them together)

- Ashley!

(Pause, then everybody together the next line)

- *Ash*

- I've told you *Ash/*

- /Ash wants them to listen.

- What does Ash want to say?

- We don't know that yet.

- Ash don't know that yet.

- Ash don't need to know that yet.

- Not yet. But *we* will

- *Ash* will

- Ash will need to know. And will know. But now?

- Now Ash have whatever background, name and faith. And will make them listen.

- That's right!

- You bet!

- They will listen to Ash!

(Only the performers playing A, B, C, D and F remain onstage.)

A   Err I am tall and strong

B   I make people laugh – like I'm funny not ridiculously funny just good fun

C   Nice to hang around with

D   Despite my accent

B   Which is funny

D   But sounds ridiculous

A   People like me because-

B   Because I'm different

C   Because I'm cool, because people from where I come from are cool

D   Despite the stereotypes

A   What stereotypes?

D   Well like I don't know like they nick anything from under your nose

C   That's cool

B   So they like me because even if I steal from under my nose ehm I mean their nose which is cool so they don't mind cause that's cool?

A   I am cool because even if I could nick any-

thing from under your nose I don't, and that's what's cool and that's why people like me

D But people don't know me and they're scared.

C So I play it cool and look confident

D But that doesn't work and I end up all alone all the time

B That's sad man!

A So I…

C So I meet this other boy

A Yes, this other boy who comes from the same place and we're like buddying up

C And he has these cool friends

D These cool friends who have been around long time, and they take me around show me here and there so I'm not sad at all anymore I'm having fun, and I start thinking wow it's cool to be around these new people, this new place, the colours, rhythms, slangs, sounds, smells whatever and I am popular like big time and girls like me and I like her and and – and it's all gone

A, B, C What?

D It's all gone cause she's like she - he likes her and she likes me and I like her so we have a fight but I cannot fight really I can only steal – steal from right under his nose so I – now I just

have a black eye and no friends anymore

B Maaaaaan

C That's no cool at all

A But I but I but I really didn't mean I mean I just I didn't even know she was who she was - who is she?

B She's the boy's girlfriend

D Lea

C And she doesn't like him anymore cause I'm around and she understands what's cool and what's not

D But now I have a black eye and maybe she won't like me anymore.

A Plus…

B Plus?

D Plus I cried…

C Ohhh man that is so uncool

A And she saw me. And she cried too. And I said –

D Nothing

B I said nothing cause I was just sobbing and couldn't open my mouth and everybody laughed and she cried so I also cried oh no I was already crying

C That is so not funny man - that's embarrassing!

A It's not embarrassing because… because

D Because I didn't want to fight and everybody knew he was older and bigger and he was jealous and so people started to talk

A Yeah they started to talk behind his back sayin, sayin things like she still fancies me - even with my black eye because I'm sweet

C That's gay talk man

B She still likes me cause I'm funny, cause with my black eye I look funny, just good fun you know, my black eye matching their black skin, and people make jokes about that and I feel better and I don't feel ridiculous anymore cause-

C Cause people respect me, do you know what I mean?

A Yes and people now come to me saying she wants to see me but she's afraid of-

D Of Pete! He's Pete.

C She's afraid of Pete cause she fears if he sees me and her together he will punch me down again

A But Pete's my friend too

B Pete saved my ass and what do I do?

D   Snatch his girlfriend. That's what I do. From under his nose.

A   Here's what I'll do I'll go say Pete look Pete I'm sorry

C   And that's so cool cause it's brave cause he might just knock me out again - on the other eye maybe

B   Which would make me even funnier but may-be-

C   Maybe he won't cause now he's the one people are making fun of

D   And he's sad cause he knows and also his girlfriend knows and he loved her but she's changed, something's changed

A   And that's no-one's fault. That's not my fault, that's what happens.

B   When people like each other

C   That's just what happens it's chemistry man

D   But - I'm not sure about that.

(Pause)

A   Not sure about…

(Pause)

C   About the chemistry about-

B   Chemistry? What chemistry man?

D   No the chemistry was there but I knew.

A   I knew she was his girlfriend

B   I knew she was his girlfriend all along cause I saw them

C   Getting hoooot

B   I saw them getting – I mean I saw them like that at the bus stop and I stopped and tried to hide but she saw that I saw and she laughed

A   She smiled actually

D   So I knew

A   And she knew

C   Only Pete didn't know

B   Poor Pete

('I Looked at You' by The Doors may be played; all go off singing and dancing)

(PETE, E onstage)

PETE   Look Pete I'm sorry. You go.

E   Look Pete, I'm so sorry…

PETE   I'm sorry. Just say I'm sorry.

E   I'm sorry.

PETE   Try with 'look Pete'.

E   Look Pete, I'm sorry.

PETE   Not convincing.

E   Pete listen, I'm sorry. Really.

PETE   Cry.

(E may try to cry in vain)

PETE   You think I care?

E   -

PETE   Say yes.

E   Yes.

PETE   Well you're wrong. I don't. I don't care. I don't give a shit actually.

         Say… say/

E   Do you still like her?

PETE   Who says that?

E   I mean… he, she, no… well you?

PETE   I wouldn't say that.

         -

         Shit. I probably would.

E   Then I'd say: 'hey man it's all yours I mean you know I, I/

PETE   That don't work. Say you're my best friend.

E   What? You mean…

PETE   Say it

E   You *are* my best friend.

PETE   Say my only friend. Say I'll do what you want. I give her back to you. She might not like me you know – in fact she doesn't she still likes you and I just want us to be friends. Best friends. You're my best friend. You're my only best friend.

E   You are my only best friend.

PETE   I'll have to think about that.

(Shift. Out PETE, in LEA)

LEA   So I look at them and there's blood. No not too much. A little. But there's blood. They are shedding blood for me. I walk away - I have my new fur-boots on you know. No I mean, not like that. My mum you know. Can't have her noticing it. I know. That's me. But I mean, Pete, he's nice he really is, but he's you know what's the word - impulsive. It's too much. No it's not. I know. Well I don't know what happened. I don't know. I don't know I'm telling you! It's just, it's just chemistry man. Ok. Ok. See you.

E   Really. Lot of blood? Ah right. What? That's posh talk man. Yeah right. I know. So always forward thinking and stuff. I can hear Pete sayin' how intelligent you are, and stuff. No it's not. So what happened? What you mean? What you mean you don't know tell me! Right. Well come and see me after class so we talk. I don't like that. But let's talk. K, see ya.

(Out LEA and E. In F first, then PETE)

F   I can hear my heart beating in my chest like like I don't know like hard. And I get to school and I look around and I get in from the main entrance past the gate. The gate. Corridor in front of me. Empty. Squares of light through the windows. No one seems to be around. Strange. Everything's so still – and no it's not a bloody dream. There's tutorials, everybody should be around. So I breathe, maybe I'll have a cigarette. Yes a cigarette. I roll one and go back out. I'm looking for the lighter. Do you have a lighter? Shit it's him.

PETE   I'm just bloody nervous like don't wanna see anybody just get this out of the way, could have stayed home, mum going what's wrong nothing mum just everything - doesn't matter. Gotta get this out of the way. I'm late actual-ly who cares. Gate's open, it's always open what's the point - shit what's he doing here? Too late did he see me shit someone might… walking past him I don't care, just breathe just look cool just don't get into it look cool move along, fuck off.

F   He doesn't stop. He hears me he doesn't stop. Pete!

PETE   Shit what da fuck. I turn around.

F   He stops.

(Beat)

Look Pete, I'm sorry.

PETE   And he goes Look Pete I'm sorry. Looks sorry, looks miserable. And I don't know what to say and I feel rage and my face's all red I'm sure and my fists… my fists went on him already.

He starts. Put my hands in my pockets. His eye's still black. Cannot laugh.

F   Mate. I say. Mate. What the fuck mate I've just fucked up man Man… what's he looking at me, he's looking angry at me.

PETE   You are sorry. Shit not that… shit I've said it. Fuck. I'm late.

F   Like…

PETE   Yeah.

F   I really… like - I'm really sorry man.

PETE   Do you really like her? Shit. Shit. Shit.

F   Who? - What da fuck who? That's Lea asshole now he's gonna punch me down again fuck... He's staring he's staring is he staring at me? Yes. Yes I do man. I do I'm sorry. Shit.

PETE   I'm silent. I'm not looking I cannot look look in his eyes anymore.

F   Look, I do what you want man I mean… I just - what? - you've been a buddy man you saved

my ass and I - it just happened man I don't
know, what you want me to do. I'll do it.

PETE   Say it just say it at least say it. For fuck sake.

F   He doesn't answer he looks he looks what does
he look like?

PETE   I look stupid I feel confused I need to go he
doesn't say he doesn't say I… man you just
stabbed me man you just stabbed me here right
here you see here? right here see? this hurts
man you know you know more than more
than… does it hurt? - Shit.

F   I'll be alright.

(Pause)

PETE. I'm late.

F   He's gone. My cigarette. I really need a ciga-
rette. Shit the lighter.

PETE   And I'm walking down the corridor. Shit. The
corridor. Squares of light… paving me away.
It's empty. It's just me. Shit. This is… shit,
it's all shit. But he'll be alright. Yeah, he'll be
alright. He'll be fucking alright.

(Looks at the audience)

Sorry mum

(Walks off)

The next extract is a monologue from a piece under development provisionally titled *Vice Device* (2015). Within the piece, the ambition is to go a bit further in testing the efficacy of a text stripped *almost* bare of (predetermined) narratives and meanings, to infuse into (or force onto) the speaking actor an authentic and creative reaction, one that allows also partners and audience to engage in the process as it unfolds.

This short monologue is an experiment within English language, a release of writing impulses struggling to transgress discourse, an attempt to write the equivalent of a spontaneous expressive gesture. Stage directions are in *Italic*.

> *MAN looks at the audience. WOMAN halts. Icons of sheets of paper, a folder, two Jpegs (of MAN and WOMAN) and a dustbin appear on the screen. The real sheets of paper, the folder and the dustbin are on the desk. A cursor drags the WOMAN's Jpeg off-screen, but it cannot actually go off-screen: WOMAN moves to one side of the stage where she stands motionless. As the other icons are dragged into the virtual recycle bin on screen, MAN throws their "double" into the real dustbin onstage (including the desk? he tries: capitalist deskilling!).*

> MAN   See I want to take this opportunity this is opportunity it is to be taken it is seriously to be taken I'm serious that is me and not me I mean to say that I don't know what is real what is real I know this is not real but at the same time it is. Time is same and space is same but maybe the thoughts come from somewhere where some ever been there. Or all have been there and here.

So there is a problem we say there is and carry on but if I say I say there is no going on until I say and then I do else I might just be written down forever. So I do what I do is this there is a problem a problem a technical problem I think is the brain because I think with the brain and I think of the brain. It is just between me and you and you are many and I am many too we all are many. It is just between all of us that we might think through this problem of truth. Imagine that imagine that machine a machine is a brain and I am the brain and the machine and I act like a machine. Like a machine why I act like a machine why is not why is when not why when it is when we forget and I have forgotten I have I mean I haven't but if I have to tell you I have to pretend and I don't want to pretend but what is theatre then.

The difference it is between it is and not forget or remember or knowing is was or is was to know. And will what will to know is will. Will you have will you have I hope soon so soon so soon so I can become and not forget but realise I have become. This is the story of my becoming and my forgetting where I am becoming from.

I believe that the strength of open performance texts will ultimately reside – among other things – in the capacity to trigger personal associations and unexpected potentialities. To this end, when writing, we could wish to provide the creative actor[4] (and

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4 Or "actor-dramaturg" as suggested by Patrice Pavis (74-80). Performance texts don't often go beyond rehearsal rooms anyway.

the willing reader) with something to work on that is *workable*. Dramaturgies of spontaneity aim at creating the conditions for a supplementing spontaneous action, or creative engagement, on the part of the audience as well; not only in response to each performance's *pre*sumed themes, but as that insight reflected in its mirrors, or seeping through the creases of its formation[5]; in other words the immanently human nature of creativity.

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5 Or *formaction* to literally adapt (i.e. adopt through literal translation) the Italian term for formation, which is 'formazione' (forma + azione = form + action).

Celebrating Ten Years of *Platform*

We are very proud to announce that this edition of Platform marks the 10th anniversary of the journal. The milestone demonstrates the commitment of Royal Holloway's Drama and Theatre department to supporting postgraduate research, for which we are sincerely grateful. To celebrate the occasion we decided to gather a collection of responses from past editors, asking them to share their memories, experiences and hopes for the future of Platform. Here's to another ten years!

Dr Vicky Angelaki

Why did you set up *Platform*?
We set up *Platform* because Matthew Cohen advised us that there was such an opportunity and it seemed like an excellent way of creating something that would be rooted in the Department but at the same time would benefit the broader postgraduate and early career researcher community. It would also give us the chance to experience, first-hand, how journals and editing work – from creative vision to logistics – and this was invaluable for scholars (very young then!) preparing to enter the professional field. More than anything, though, this was about enhancing the experience of our fellow postgraduates at Royal Holloway and well beyond by providing them with a quality forum for publishing.

What in your view makes *Platform* unique as a publication?
Platform is unique because it began by postgraduates, for postgraduates, and ten years later it represents the labour and love of many different generations of academics who at some point passed through Royal Holloway, bringing their commitment to

the project. So it's the continuity of this that I find particularly inspiring.

What did editing *Platform* teach you?
Platform taught me to work in a team towards publishing goals and it was an early foray into the world of digital publishing for me, which I have since become quite invested in.

Dr Marissia Fragkou

Why did you set up *Platform*?
In the beginning of 2006 Professor Matthew Cohen invited expressions of interest for setting up a postgraduate journal based at the Drama Department at Royal Holloway. This was a great opportunity for us to further consolidate the Department's existing community of students and scholars through collaboration and to learn more about what our peers across the globe were researching on.

What would you like to see *Platform* do in the next ten years?
It is truly rewarding to see that *Platform* carries on its excellent work (the fact that theatre scholars who now thrive in the field first published their work in the journal is a testament to that). I would like to see *Platform* continue its legacy of and commitment to publishing high-quality postgraduate and early-career work and to sustain a lineage of editors.

Do you have a favourite *Platform* memory?
Loads of hectic deadlines and editorial meetings which could take place anywhere! Philip Hager and I even had to take a web design seminar in order to create our first bespoke webpage.

This I where the current *Platform* logo originates from.

Dr Marilena Zaroulia

How did you get involved in *Platform*?

I was not one of the initiators of *Platform* as I was coming to the end of my PhD at the time, but I was involved in the conversations and I was one of the organizers of the first symposium, "How do we receive reception?", that took place in spring 2007. For that event, we did think collaboratively about interests that we had in common – that was the first experience I had of 'curating' an event, an invaluable experience. Apart from opening up a platform for postgraduates and early career researchers to publish their work, *Platform* was also a way of responding to the rapidly changing environment in higher education at the time. I don't think that we, as PhD students back then, were quite aware of how important it would be to launch a journal edited by PhD students for PhD students and early career researchers. But looking back at the range of work that the journal has presented, the networks that were set up thanks to editing or peer-reviewing or publishing for the journal, I think that it would not be an exaggeration to say that *Platform* – established around the same time with TaPRA – has really been influential in fostering a new generation of theatre/performance researchers in the UK.

What would you like to see *Platform* do in the next ten years?

I hope that *Platform* continues to publish exciting and excellent work by new researchers. I would like to see the journal opening up even more to possibilities of collaborative, experimental writing or new media /forms of publication that go beyond the 'traditional' academic journal article. I hope that *Platform* offers

a space for the emergence of other kinds of outputs – especially using the possibilities that the Internet and new technologies present.

Who would your dream editor of *Platform* be, and why?
The first person that crossed my mind, so I don't know if she is a dream editor *per se* but is certainly the one I would choose today, is Sara Ahmed – because I am reading a lot of her work at the moment and I find her writing extremely inspirational, diverse but also very clear. I think we would have learned a lot from her; about how to be sharp in our critique but also poetic in our imaginings of future worlds.

Dr Emer O'Toole

How did you get involved in *Platform*?
Rachel Clements and Jim Ellison, the previous editors, got me involved as a reviewer first, and then I joined the editorial board. I was incredibly impressed with the professionalism and ethos of the project. I enjoyed the work and Rachel and Jim seemed to think I had a talent for it. Rachel (an exceptional editor and really the powerhouse behind the journal at that point) needed to step down to concentrate on her thesis, and so I came on board to head edit with Jim and another PhD student from my cohort, Yasmine Van Wilt. Honestly, I was a little loath to do so - I was in the first year of my PhD and worried that it would detract from my academic work, my theatre practice, and my social life. And at first it did! Yup, due to a series of unforeseen events, *Platform* nearly killed me that first year. Jim moved to New Zealand, Yas left the programme, and - as I'm sure neither of them (both dear friends of mine) will mind me telling you - I

was left holding the scary baby that was edition 4.2 "(Mapping Performance") on my own. Rachel, like the angel she is, stepped in at the end to help me format and proofread. But there are many salty tears and late library nights in that edition.

For the next edition, "Transformations," Mara Lockowandt agreed to co-edit with me, but we knew we needed to attract more people to the team to keep the journal sustainable, workable and robust. We managed to grow the editorial board through recruiting from a brilliant new cohort of first years, as well as through reaching out to Royal Holloway students in parallel disciplines, like Dan O'Gorman from the English department, who ended up being our book review editor for the next two years. We hooked "Transformations" into a postgraduate conference at the University of Surrey, and asked Lise Uytterhoeven, who organised that conference, to come in as a guest editor. With an expanded network, support and fresh energy in place, we were able to achieve exciting things with zero salty tears. For "Transformations," alongside some great academic articles, we published a photo essay, some new dramatic writing and interviews with practitioners. Because of Mara's formatting and design skills, as well as the theatre department's kind gift of an annual grant, we were able to produce print copies of the journal for the first time. It was a wonderful feeling.

Mara and I head-edited another edition, "Communities and Performance", together, during which time we continued to foster an interdisciplinary and multi-format approach to the journal, as well as assembling a world-class advisory board of theatre scholars. Adam Alston was on the team at that stage, and it was clear that he'd be a great person to take over from Mara and I (we both needed to finish our theses). Adam and I edited the next edition, "Spectatorship and Participation", to-

gether. During that time, we engaged in talks with EBSCO to include *Platform* in their database, making the journal fully accessible through academic search engines for the first time but keeping it open source - something which raised our and our contributors' profiles. Knowing that *Platform* was in the most capable of hands, and sad there would be no more cake-fuelled Senate House editorial board meetings for me, I left – having made some of the very best friends of my life and with a range of skills and network of contacts that it would have been impossible to accrue any other way.

How did being involved in Platform help you develop as a scholar?

In so many ways! It gave me a keen eye for an argument and, I think, a sharp ability to look at academic work and think "okay – this is good, but what can it do, realistically within a given time frame, to make itself even better." Never underestimate the power of academic pragmatism! PhD-land can be an isolated place sometimes, but with *Platform* I was constantly surrounded by energetic, dedicated fellow students, and this made things a lot easier when it came to my own submission time: I had many seasoned reviewers to ask to read chapters. Platform put me in contact with established academics around the globe, both reviewers and advisors, and that was excellent for my professional profile – it was probably a large part of the reason that I was nominated new scholars representative of the International Federation of Theatre Research, and probably a strong contributor to the fact that I found a tenure track position just three months after graduation. *Platform* is CV gold. Every academic knows how hard it is to edit a journal – it looks incredibly impressive if a doctoral student has managed to do so at the same

time as writing a thesis. And also, *Platform* kept me passionate about what I do - because scholarship is fun, you know. That is a large part of why we do it. Engaging with other people's arguments, learning about other people's case studies and theoretical frameworks, hashing out the pros and cons of those arguments and frameworks with colleagues, that's such intellectually satisfying and exciting work. I miss those editorial board meetings (not to mention the pints afterwards).

What in your view makes *Platform* a unique publication?

That graduate students have a forum to share their research and get impartial feedback from experts in their field and from their peers is immensely valuable. That graduate students get reviewing and editing experience is immensely valuable – our disciplines rely on these skills, after all. I've heard from so many scholars that they wished they'd had something like *Platform* in their departments or universities. In spite of the fact that the ethos of the journal privileges giving a platform and academic training to graduate students, the standard of research that it publishes is extraordinary: you can rely on finding cutting edge, boundary pushing stuff in every edition. Here's to another ten successful years of *Platform*: may it be filled with all the innovation, occasional tears, and intellectual excitement that a decade can bring.

Dr Adam Alston

What did editing *Platform* teach you?

Editing *Platform* taught me two things - one selfish and one not-so-selfish. Selfishly, it helped me to better my own academic writing style. Approaching academic writing from an editorial

perspective made me think much more about things like struc-
ture and methodology, but it also made me more aware of the
importance of writing creatively - of trying to capture the read-
er's attention (through poeticism, for instance). The medium
isn't necessarily the message, but working on written expression
as a carrier of meaning certainly helps with making a point stick
(though I can't yet claim any real expertise in this area). The
second thing that *Platform* taught me is that (most, but not all)
theatre and performance academics are wonderfully supportive
of one another and are often more than happy to give up their
time and energy to review work in time-poor circumstances that
really don't lend themselves to this kind of generosity. Generos-
ity perseveres. While there are somewhat dubious connotations
to a weirdly warped 'general will' within the academy to be ever
more productive - and the acceptance of peer reviews arguably
plays into this - I nonetheless think that this particular kind of
productivity, one grounded in social ends rather than individu-
alism, is to be celebrated. The exception to this rule is of course
when the ego of the reviewer takes precedence over the provi-
sion of useful feedback, but in my experience of editing with
Platform and in some more recent contexts, this kind of review
is in the minority.

Who would your dream editor of *Platform* be, and why?
I was tempted to note a senior academic whose work has for
some time inspired my own in response to this question, but
on second thoughts I don't think that's quite right... *Platform*
is a postgraduate journal, primarily publishing postgraduate re-
search, and it is edited and managed by the postgraduate com-
munity at Royal Holloway, for the most part (although there's
a historical link with the University of Surrey as well, where I

now work). My dream editor, then, would be a postgraduate - any postgraduate who is keen to explore the role of editor, and who is up for engaging with the rich array of work that gets submitted to the journal on its own terms, and who's willing to step down after a couple of years to give someone else a chance to experience the role of editor.

What do you think makes *Platform* such an important publication?

Platform is not the only postgraduate theatre and performance journal - nonetheless, it has accrued an impressive reputation over the years, thanks not least to the quality of the postgraduate research submitted to the journal. My hope is that this will encourage other departments to start up their own postgraduate journals, giving rise to a greater number of opportunities across the country (beyond big metropolitan centres) to participate in editorial processes - not just peer reviewing, which can be done remotely, but the nitty-gritty discussion that unfolds around a table during editorial meetings. It's somewhere in the middle of that table, between board members, that some of the most exciting aspects of editing take place - aspects that stem from listening, negotiation and compromise. Editorial board meetings, at their best, approach the discipline as a social activity, sharing ideas and points of view and working towards the publication of each issue as a collective endeavour.

Dr. Will Shüler

What was your favourite Platform moment?

Choosing a favourite moment is tough; there were so many great experiences. I would say the most joyful I felt was in completion

of the "Performance Legacies" cover for publication. It was my first issue as editor without Adam and we had no designer. As such, I decided to learn the InDesign software and do the layout myself. I got four proofs of the front cover from the printer, because none were turning out the way I wanted. After we finally got it right, Marika at *printondemand* sent me an extra large version of it to keep. I framed it.

What in your view makes Platform unique/standout as a publication?

For me, what made/makes *Platform* standout is the people behind it. Everyone involved is passionate about making it a high-quality publication and dedicated to integrity in scholarship and innovation in spirit.

What would you like to see Platform do in the next ten years?

I would like to see it not make the shift to online only, and continue to hold a prominent position on the Senate House Library shelves. But because it's the future it will be able to, like, hover and stuff.

Book Reviews

Howard Barker's Theatre: Wrestling with Catastrophe
edited by James Reynolds and Andy Smith
London: Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 288 (softback)
By Richard Ashby

Howard Barker's Theatre: Wrestling with Catastrophe, edited by James Reynolds and Andy W. Smith, sets out to provide "a timely and much-needed re-evaluation" (1) of Howard Barker and the theatre company founded to stage his work, The Wrestling School. The timeliness and necessity of the collection is, in part, due to the more "practice-orientated" (1) focus of its various contributions. Where previous studies and collections have tended to concentrate on the "literary qualities" (1) of the Barker text, *Wrestling with Catastrophe* treats the play-text as a "template for performance" (1) – reflecting on the unique practical challenges (and opportunities) posed by the Barker text.[1] Yet the "timeliness" and "necessity" of the intervention is, for Reynolds and Smith, also owing to the present state of UK theatre. The relative underrepresentation of Barker in the UK theatre landscape and the increasing marginalisation of The Wrestling School – culminating in the withdrawal of Arts Council funding in 2007 – is for Reynolds and Smith "a damning indictment of the residual cultural conservatism of the UK theatre industry" (15).

   Wrestling with Catastrophe sets out to challenge the "myths" (2) and "misperceptions" (17) which have led to that marginalization, challenging the routinized idea that Barker is

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1 Previous collections include *Theatre of Catastrophe: New Essays on Howard Barker* (2006) and *Howard Barker's Art of Theatre: Essays on his Plays, Poetry and Production Work* (2013).

"*difficult* to do" (2) and that his theatre has no discernible "relationship with contemporary trends" (3). Barker is, Reynolds and Smith aver, not "*difficult* to do" but "*different* to do", so that if the "possibly unique challenges" his work presents are properly identified and resolved, his plays "present no more difficulties than the staging of a classic text" (17). The idea that Barker does not address "contemporary trends" is also given short shrift: Reynolds and Smith make the case that his plays can be seen to be relevant to both "contemporary global processes" and "more localized, theatrical phenomenon, such as that of New Writing" (3).

Part One (entitled "Howard Barker and the Wrestling School") provides a range of interviews, testimonies and essays from key Wrestling School figures and practitioners. These pieces are engaging, insightful and (on occasion) very funny – particularly when actors recall the reactions of at once bewildered, angry and euphoric audiences. Barker has also traced the history of the Wrestling School and the development of its unique "house" style in *A Style and Its Origins* (2007); but *Wrestling with Catastrophe* provides the space for other, often unheard voices to offer alternative perspectives on that history and style. What emerges is a somewhat less 'autocratic' portrait of the company than Barker paints in *A Style and Its Origins*. Where in that work Barker, writing under the pseudonym Eduardo Houth, states that "the authority of Barker as interpreter of the work was beyond interrogation" with all aspects of "production under his direct control" (21), Part One of *Wrestling with Catastrophe* tends to underscore the openness of the Barker text, where the various practitioners involved with the company are afforded the opportunity to 'wrestle' with the creative and practical challenges posed by the text on their own terms. This would imply that

the theatre-practice of The Wrestling School is perhaps more democratic than Barker would have us believe, even while the company is driven by a strong, *auteur*-led vision.

Part Two (entitled "Readings/Inversions") also offers new perspectives on Barker, providing a platform for both recognised and emerging scholarly voices in the world of Barker Studies. This section broadly contests the idea that Barker and The Wrestling School are peripheral to the main concerns of UK theatre and culture, showing that Barker engages with and is relevant to both national and international cultural trends, from New Writing (James Hudson) to the shift toward "de-secularization" (Peter A. Groves). The 'stand-out' pieces of Part Two (and the whole volume) belong, however, to Reynolds and Smith, whom convincingly relate both playwright and company to vital aspects of contemporary aesthetics and culture (Smith by concentrating on the photographic practice of Barker, Reynolds by concentrating on the spatial aesthetics of recent Wrestling School productions).

Part Three (entitled "Other Barkers", though it may also have been called "Choices in Reaction") offers a fascinating insight into the ways in which various non-Wrestling School practitioners have approached staging Barker's plays. What the contributors all share is a common conviction that the Barker text calls for a non-naturalist style of performance – though the way in which that might be achieved naturally varies. If, as Hugh Hodgart states in his interview with Mark Brown, the Barker text is never immediately "accessible", it is nevertheless "open", presenting "a series of dramatic opportunities and possibilities" (218) which resist the finality of any singular stylistic approach. This section also shows that the international reputation of Barker is growing beyond France, Spain and

presenting "a series of dramatic opportunities and possibilities" (218) which resist the finality of any singular stylistic approach. This section also shows that the international reputation of Barker is growing beyond France, Spain and Scandinavia, where both Barker and The Wrestling School have drawn plaudits for quite some time.

　　Wrestling with Catastrophe is a very welcome contribution to Barker Studies, providing new insights into the unique relationship between Barker and The Wrestling School and the evolving theatre-practice of both playwright and company. The collection of emerging and recognized scholars, practioners and the national and international scope of the volume reflects the increasing diversification of Barker Studies – a field that, until fairly recently, tended to be dominated by a few critical voices and (it has to be said) by Barker himself. It may even be tempting to see Reynolds and Smith playing a role in the world of Barker Studies akin to that once played by Wrestling School founder Kenny Ireland in the world of theatre, if not quite "popularising" (6) Barker, then 'democratising' him, opening his work out to include "new perspectives" (1) while dispelling the myths that have hampered the reception of his plays. This, however, points to something of a contradiction at the heart of *Wrestling with Catastrophe*: if Reynolds and Smith set out to demystify Barker, it can hardly be ignored that many the myths surrounding Barker and The Wrestling School – obscure, marginal, 'difficult' – have been fostered by Barker himself, a playwright who has spent no small time crafting his own *mythos*. It is not simply that Barker is the victim of a culturally and ideologically conservative UK theatre industry (though he has most certainly been that): Barker has also embraced his marginality and insists on the ambiguity – indeed the painful *difficulty* – of plays that challenge the limits

of both practitioners and audiences. *Wrestling with Catastrophe* represents a truly innovative contribution to Barker Studies. Yet if the volume aims to fully interrogate the myths that surround Barker and The Wrestling School, opening both playwright and company up to new perspectives and voices into the bargain, that process might necessarily entail demystifying – even inter-rogating – Barker himself.

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A Good Night Out for the Girls: Popular Feminisms in Contemporary Theatre and Performance **by Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris**
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 218 pp. (softback)
By Cath Badham

Originally published in 2012 and now made available in a pa-perback version, *A Good Night Out for the Girls* offers a detailed examination of where feminisms and feminist theories might be currently be positioned in relation to what Aston and Harris identify as popular "unmistakably women-centred shows." (2) It offers very personal accounts from both Aston and Harris as to their own experiences both as feminist scholars and performance

spectators, making this a valuable addition to the fields of feminist studies and performance studies. The inclusive tone of the writing allowed me to easily engage with unfamiliar concepts. Each chapter is written by either Aston or Harris - they underline the personal nature of their writing by identifying themselves as either 'Elaine' or 'Gerry'. The introduction (Chapter One) and the final section (Chapters Eight and Nine) are co-authored.

The personal tone is evident immediately, when Aston and Harris describe not only their own travels to see theatre shows but their observations of "a larger 'movement' of women across the country" (1). However, this tenor does not detract from the academic nature of this book, as demonstrated by the introduction. A detailed discussion of the second and third wave (post-) feminisms, how they may be defined, and the problematic nature of the variety, differences and similarities of these generational perspectives are explored. Aston and Harris position themselves as intergenerational scholars, stating that as they "came of age in the late 1970s and early 1980s and so apparently fall 'in-between' the second and third waves, feminism and postfeminism, [they] often find [them]selves wavering between positions on these debates" (7).[1] This enables them to consider each case study from more than one theoretical perspective, constantly cross-referencing between chapters, allowing discussions to be neatly threaded throughout the book. The variety of theorists whose work is included in this book is evidenced in the twelve-page bibliography. These theorists are not only employed in terms of performance analysis but also in terms of spectatorship and it is this approach which consolidates Aston

1 Reflecting on my introduction to feminist theory as an undergraduate/MA Student (1988-1992) I found myself identifying with being caught between two waves of feminist thought as the books on my shelf indicate – no Butler, but Greer, Millett and Moi.

and Harris's consideration of boundaries between generations of theorists with their determination to site this study in the real world of women's experience today.

Each chapter focuses on a specific framework relating to the popular performances explored. Chapter Two concentrates on the stage version of Tim Firth's *Calendar Girls* (West End, 2009 & Tour, 2010) and is begins to illustrate "the idea of popular feminism as a 'flow of communication'" (Le Masurier qtd in Aston and Harris: 24.) It specifically focuses on the critical and gender bias often demonstrated against what Aston terms "the sentimentally conceived good-night-out-for-the-girls show" (24). Aston links this idea through to the fourth chapter and its concerns with ageing femininity. Opening this chapter with an assessment of the treatment of Susan Boyle on *X Factor*, Aston considers representations of older women and the ageing process as displayed in productions of *Grumpy Old Women Live* (Tour and West End, 2005-2006) and *The Virginia Monologues* (Edinburgh, 2009). In particular she suggests that these shows allow the female audience, through comedy, to escape from the despondency that Western women often feel as part of the ageing process and "raise[s] the question of age liberation as an important issue for feminism" (73). In between, Chapter Three concentrates on the audience in relation to shows performed by the male stripping troupe The Chippendales (2009) and Dave Simpson's *The Naked Truth* (2007), which centres around a village hall pole-dancing class for women. Here, Harris explores notions of the passive/active audience and how these may overlap with ideas about class in respect to art versus entertainment, ultimately applying these thoughts to how they may connect to class distinctions within gender.

Chapter Five concerns itself with Joanna Mur-

ray-Smith's *The Female of the Species* (2006) and Nic Green's *Trilogy* (2010), both of which Harris argues need detailed consideration as they are, unusually, "directly concerned with exploring the 'legacy' of second-wave feminism." (93). In Chapter Seven, which Harris signposts in Chapter Five, the definition of popular entertainment is expanded by considering the transition of New Burlesque from a marginal genre in the early 2000s into a mainstream, accessible entertainment. Harris explores the political aspects of this genre, in particular questions of whether or not it is feminist and the reasons behind the constant "oscillation" (Derrida qtd in Aston and Harris: 136) between these positions.

Chapter Six concentrates on the "chick megamusical" (118) *Mamma Mia!* (1999). Aston proposes that writer Catherine Johnson[2] has, within a genre designed to entertain, provided a space where the difficulties of both second and third wave feminisms can be exposed and subverted by the narrative as well as the audience reaction to the show. Aston also suggests that although there is some political comment within the musical, it is the very act of presenting an entertaining female-centric narrative that is a political act (130). Recognising the sheer enjoyment of the "dancing queens" (128) in the audience, Aston suggests this real-life experience may invite "more inclusive, heterogeneous modalities of 'belonging'" (132). Throughout, Aston relates debates discussed here with those in other chapters, notably Five and Three.

The final chapters offer explorations of two distinct forms of popular entertainment: stand-up comedy and a fair-

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2 Aston, importantly, also notes that Johnson, producer Julie Craymer and director Phyllida Lloyd have been able to break through the glass ceiling of male-centric commercial production companies.

ground ride. In Chapter Eight Aston and Harris concentrate on the work of Shappi Khorsandi and Andi Osho, which ensures balance within a book that, up to this point, has engaged with analysing white audiences and practitioners (158). They base their analyses of these two performers around nuanced interpretations of intersectionality, which "attempts to recognise uneven and unequal power relations within the category of 'women', accounting for 'multiple' discriminations and oppressions but without necessarily placing these in a fixed 'hierarchy'." (161-162). In the final chapter, Aston and Harris use their experience of Marisa Carnesky's Ghost Train (2010) to consider issues that could be said to haunt the book such as the political difficulties and potentials of the shows and "their representations of, emotional investments in and engagements with women's experience" (184).

Coherent, intellectual, discursive and detailed, this book offers exactly what Aston and Harris intend: a piece of distinguished scholarship that reflects the idea of "feminism as a 'mixed form', a form replete with inconsistencies (Snitow, 1990:9) and based in an affective solidarity that allows for differences *and* similarities" (21, original emphasis). The personal, woman-centred tone deftly reflects the complex nature of the theoretical positions, performances and audiences being discussed.

The Illuminated Theatre: Studies on the Suffering of Images
by Joe Kelleher
Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, 181 pp. (softback)
By Marina Ní Dhubháin

In *The Illuminated Theatre: Studies on the Suffering of Images*

Joe Kelleher offers a timely publication in which he considers how the theatrical performance gives rise to new knowledge production both during and after the theatrical experience. The focus of Kelleher's analysis is the consequence of the ongoing negotiation between spectator and actor as they struggle together in the porous labyrinth of contemporary experimental art. This contribution arrives at a time when critical literature relating to twenty-first century audience engagement and spectatorship has been largely consumed with the dominant tropes of co-author-ship and embodied participation. Kelleher frames the aesthetics of relationality as one spectator's conscious sensibility of those performances, seen or perhaps only heard-tale-of, but neverthe-less, performances which have "stuck" (3) and which will here-after be borne or suffered.

In his analysis of the theatrical image, Kelleher draws on a wide range of literary, critical and philosophical theorists, from a variety of backgrounds and time periods. This includes the work of Marie-José Mondzain, Gillian Rose, Adi Ophir, W.J.T. Mitchell and T.J. Clark. The theatrical image is not the stage picture; rather in Kelleher's thinking, the image is under-stood as an ambivalent, diaphanous, and live entity (although possibly not for long). The image will be *of* the art work in which it was imagined, certainly, yet ultimately autonomous of it. It is also not necessarily of a visual domain, but the image which survives will be inscribed by a beholder (a spectator) with symbolic meaning. At once, or perhaps later, after some time has passed, there will be questions to be asked of the image and subsequently the possibility for the generation of other mean-ings. Patterns of knowledge production evolve as linkages and relationships begin to assemble. In time, a matrix of collabo-rative associations between images, between other sources of

knowledge, from various time frames and disciplines may co-here. The image is understood to function as a "sort of operator of relations, or a kind of pre-verbal or - post-verbal – currency circulating between the stage and the auditorium" (5) and also between the moment of production and reception, and the great many moments which follow.

The Illuminated Theatre is structured as an interrogation of a meticulous selection of imagistic bricolage of one person's intensive spectatorship at shows, dances, plays, actions, films, pictures, literature and performances. Kelleher presents this work as a part academic treatise, part structured meditation – it is one person's attempt to "make sense of particular performances that have stuck with me […] And not just stuck with me but bothered me" (3).

Kelleher's process of 'making sense' includes a meticulous account of his experience at each production, described with the joyous fascination of the committed theatre-goer, one who is consciously in the moment-to-moment sensibility of the theatrical encounter. His evocative descriptions convey a subjective intimacy with art, such as is rarely found in an academic publication. These beautifully written passages are as much a surprise as they are a representation of a central thesis – the significant afterlife of an image as it is subsumed into a general discourse through memory and re-telling, report, citation and critical analysis.

Performances are selected from the great many cultural events which the author has witnessed over the course of a decade or so of intensive theatre-going. Many are from companies in the United Kingdom, others from European based companies producing work in various venues, occasionally theatres, across the continent. Among the range of artists and theatre companies

who are discussed in this publication are Dickie Beau, Rosemary Lee, Wendy Houston, Field Day Theatre Company, Kinkaleri, Forced Entertainment, Romeo Castellucci and Desperate Optimists. Kelleher suggests that despite the diverse nature of the produced work, all the productions appear to be "niggling at certain shared concerns" (4). These concerns are also primary to the author, that is to say "'concerns about actors and spectators and what circulates between them. About the insidiousness, the seduction and the waste of images; about the spectators who generate images upon the bodies of the actors and then suffer the images to haunt them, to bother them; about the actors, the figures in the images, who bear up the images, who suffer the images to exist, but who might – you sometimes feel – disengage if they could" (5).

In an analysis of the work *LOST in TRANS (2013)* by the performer Dickie Beau, Kelleher quotes Maurice Blanchot who suggests that, on the subject of Greek myths, they do not say anything. Rather "they are seductive because of a concealed, oracular wisdom which elicits the infinite process of diving" (33). Kelleher observes that when dealing with Greek mythology, "whatever lessons we derive, we bring them ourselves, after the fact" (33). It may be suggested that each of the performances discussed in this book operate in this manner, to greater or lesser degrees. This is represented as a successful strategy towards framing a relationship between performer and spectator which assumes a reciprocal dedication, or an equality of commitment, as a basis for the co-creation of images.

Current critical literature on the issue of spectatorship in the new millennium remains influenced to a large extent by Nicholas Bourriaud (2002) whose seminal re-invigoration of conceptions around the performer/performed-to binary fore-

grounded an art and performance practice which was committed to the aesthetic education of the spectator-participant within a new relational framework. Such a pedagogical impulse is notably absent in the productions discussed in *The Illuminated Theatre,* as are considerations of participatory or embodied forms of spectatorship. In both his selection of particular performances, and in those attributes of subjective autonomy which he foregrounds therein, Kelleher may be read as offering a strategic opportunity for the re-appropriation of the traditional watchful, thoughtful spectator into the contemporary critical discourse. In this way he may be building on aspects of the work of Bruce McConachie (2008) and Jacques Rancière (2011). The relational arena, as advocated in *The Illuminated Theatre* is committed to the profound presumption that we recognise that 'we' are in this together. After all, Kelleher reminds us, in the theatre foyer the hired actor in a gorilla suit wears a sign inscribed with the words "if you don't laugh I don't get paid" (66).

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***Voice and New Writing 1997-2007: Articulating the Demos* by
Maggie Inchley**
London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 204 pp. (hardback)
By Lucy Tyler

Voice and New Writing 1997-2007 is a welcome addition to
scholarship examining the relationship between New Labour
and new writing. Although there is certainly no lack of theo-
retical engagement with British theatre during the Blair years[1],
Inchley's work shifts the focus. *Voice and New Writing* analyses
how voices were "scripted, trained, performed and perceived"
between 1997-2007, and, moreover, how these changing "voic-
escapes" were informed by ideological shifts occurring in par-
ty politics (135). Voice under New Labour was, according to
Inchley, becoming more central to both political performance
and to policy. This was most notable in Blair's attention to his
performance of a more "'sofa-style' vocal delivery – said to be
modelled on the informal and empathetic style of US President
Bill Clinton" and an endeavour to vocalise policy through new
'trusting and inspiring tones' (21). A version of the same phe-
nomenon was also evident in New Labour's attempts to inspire
open conversation and liberal diversity through the creation of a
Habermasian dialogic democracy in which a more tolerant and
accessible Britain might be socially engineered through an em-
phasis on vocal empowerment. Inchley describes how voice be-
came a mechanism in creating the Blairite "regime of empathy"
(3), but *Voice and New Writing* is most interested in applying

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1 For example, Rebellato, Dan (ed). *Modern British Playwriting:
2000-2009*. London: Methuen, 2013; D'Monté, Rebecca and Saun-
ders, Graham (eds). *Cool Britannia: British Political Drama in the
1990s*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; Sierz, Aleks. *Modern
British Playwriting: The 1990s*. London: Methuen, 2012.

this understanding of the politicised concept of voice to an examination of new writing.

The ubiquity of the phrase 'new voices' to describe new playwrights and new plays – then and now – is cultural evidence for how ideologies of voice work in theatrical as well as political contexts. If an emphasis on self-expression and vocal empowerment was being engineered by the New Labour government in order to effect social change and to gain votes, then the same might be said of theatres: new writing theatres created a rhetoric of inclusion, diversity and access through programming. Yet, while it is important to acknowledge the way voice was manipulated during this period and to explore when voice (particularly Blair's) faltered in its appeal to the public, an understanding of how strategies of vocal empowerment and the promotion of self-articulation were deployed does not necessarily imply that this rhetorical shift was negative. In fact, as *Voice and New Writing* shows, there were several positive evolutions in new writing culture because of the emphasis on showcasing voices and the proximal relationship of this agenda with a Blairite "regime of empathy" (3).

Over six chapters, Inchley demonstrates how the new writing culture during the 1997-2007 decade aligned itself to the same ideological principles of New Labour through a subtext of social compassion, accessibility and diversity, achieved through a persistent prioritisation of the work of new writers who represented certain social strata, demographics, or minorities. A side effect of this mission was the aesthetic shift towards a representational realism, but, as Inchley argues, new writing sought not only to appear unmediated in its portrayal of genuine British voices, but also in the heterogeneity of the voicescapes it sought to represent. Inchley focuses her work around sever-

al case studies from the time: the post-devolutionary Scottish voice in the plays of David Greig and Gregory Burke; the voice of BAME playwrights such as Kwame Kwei-Armah, Roy Williams and debbie tucker green; the representation of marginalised British youth in the plays of Tanika Gupta, Mark Ravenhill and Enda Walsh and, interestingly, the voices of women who kill children in plays by Deborah Warner, Fiona Shaw, Beatrix Campbell, Judith Jones and Dennis Kelly. Before moving into these territories, however, *Voice and New Writing* answers some key questions surrounding how the roles of the writer and actor in the playmaking process were reconfigured in view of the transitioning concept of voice.

The academic study of English Literature and associated fields have long deployed 'voice' as a method of interpretive discourse in order to discuss creative work. Inchley comments on how the analysis of playwriting through 'voice' is both problematic for the writer and the text and, perhaps, has resulted in the plethora of self-help writing guides and playwriting pedagogy, prolific from 1997, which focused on the idea of the emerging playwright 'finding their voice' – a "very commonly used rarely examined phrase" according to Inchley (37). But Inchley doesn't restrict her analysis to the methodological problems in the field of playwriting pedagogy; instead, the trajectory here extends to an examination of how new writing impacted on the actor's voice during this period.

Inchley argues that "the surge in new writing called upon actors to embody stigmatised groups of individuals, a development that de-emphasised the role of fine articulation and tone, and in particular disturbed the role of the RP as the industry norm" (49). This argument raises interesting questions about how new writing contributed not only to the polycentricity and

levelling of class distinction to which New Labour aspired, but how this was also working, in microcosm, in the theatre industry itself. As a result, Inchley presents the ways in which the actor's voice was forced to evolve over the decade in order to represent adequately the new voicescapes that new writing theatres were commissioning playwrights to provide.

These arguments are original, interesting and convincing. However, most pertinent to the book's thesis is Inchley's examination of the work of Kwame Kwei-Armah, Roy Williams and debbie tucker green and her interrogation of the way the 'cultural prestige' offered to these writers by theatres such as the National and RSC was given in exchange for these 'institutions' claims to cultural diversity' (98). In coming to this conclusion, Inchley articulates the way voice functioned ideologically during this period. In order to include and support the articulation and development of voices that have been historically marginalised, both new writing and New Labour set up an exchange value around these voices. Society and new writing theatres might have made space for 'new voices' to be heard during this period, but this was always in order to satisfy their own necessity for cultural diversity as much as it was to genuinely empathise, include and represent. In this sense, Inchley's work is an important one, not least because it reappraises these playwrights' voices outside the rhetoric of the new writing culture.