



*Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts*

Vol.7, No.2

Autumn 2013

**'Staging Play, Playing Stages'**

ISSN: 1751- 0171

## ***Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts***

### **Editors**

Adam Alston and Will Shüler

### **Editorial Board**

Paola Crespi; Karen da Silva; Diana Damian; Charlotte Hammond; Nicky Hatton; Liam Jarvis; Louise LePage; Alexi Marchel; Arifani Moyo; Sara Reimers; Gavin Thatcher; Robert Vesty

### **Book Review Editors**

Paola Crespi and Diana Damian

### **Advisory Board**

Mojisola Adebayo (Goldsmiths); Elaine Aston (Lancaster University); Peter Boenisch (University of Kent); Matthew Cohen (Royal Holloway, University of London); Helen Gilbert (RHUL); Janelle Reinelt (University of Warwick); Joseph Roach (Yale University); Dan Rebellato (RHUL); Helen Nicholson (RHUL); Brian Singleton (Trinity College Dublin); Patrick Lonergan (National University of Ireland, Galway); John Bull (University of Reading); Helena Hammond (University of Roehampton); Sophie Nield (RHUL)

*Platform* is based at, and generously supported by, the Department of Drama & Theatre, Royal Holloway, University of London.

Copyright © 2013 *Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts*. All rights reserved. No part of this journal may be reproduced or utilised in any form without permission in writing from the publisher.

### **Submission Information**

*Platform: Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts* is published biannually. Contributions are particularly welcome from postgraduate researchers, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career academics in theatre and performing arts. We welcome the submission of academic papers, performance responses, photo essays, book reviews, interviews, and new dramatic writing. *Platform* also welcomes practice-based research papers.

Papers should not exceed 4500 words (including notes and references). Practice-based papers should normally include images in JPEG format (300ppi). Reviews should be around 1000 words. Photo essays should not exceed 2000 words and 10 pictures. All contributions should be formatted according to the MLA style guidelines (see Gibaldi's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*) and should include a 200-word abstract of the article submitted as well as the article itself. Authors should also send a 50 word bio with their submission.

Submissions should be sent electronically as email attachments to [platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk).

### **Peer Review Policy**

All articles are subject to peer review. All articles are anonymously refereed by two or more independent peer reviewers, in addition to review by the editorial board.

Books for review should be sent to Diana Damian, Department of Drama and Theatre, Royal Holloway University of London, Sutherland House, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0EX. Book review enquiries should be addressed to Diana Damian and Paola Crespi, by emailing: [platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk).

For all enquiries, please contact the editors at [platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:platform-submissions@rhul.ac.uk).

For free access to archived issues, go to <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/dramaandtheatre/platform/home.aspx>.

Issue design: Sylwia Dobkowska and Adam Alston. With the assistance of Clive Morgan.

Cover image: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Image by Mario Cavalli.

# CONTENTS

Editorial	5	
Notes on Contributors	10	
Child's Play: A Postdramatic Theatre of <i>Paidia</i> for the Very Young	14	Ben Fletcher- Watson (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)
Post-Relational Paranoid Play in Reactor's <i>Big Lizard's Big Idea</i> Project	32	Daniel Oliver (Queen Mary, University of London)
Towards an Anarchist Theatre	52	Matt Cawson (Royal Holloway, University of London)
<b>Play Area: Performance Perspectives</b>		
Heuristic Word-Play and the Multiple Meanings of 'Coffee'	69	Shaun May (University of Kent)
On the Injunction 'Enjoy'	71	Adam Alston (RHUL)
On Play: Public Engagement	73	Charlotte Bell (QMUL)
Play Walking	75	Kris Darby (University of Exeter)

- Metaphor, Mud and Melancholy: Ostermeier's *Hamlet* in Translation 77 Geraldine Brodie (University College London)
- A 'Thickly' Smoked Moment in Time 79 Karen da Silva (University of Surrey)
- 'VALERIO! VALERIO! VALERIO... ' 84 Liam Jarvis (RHUL)
- The Aristocracy at Play in the Nineteenth Century 86 David Coates (University of Warwick)
- Playing with Words 88 Deborah Leveroy

### Book Reviews

- The Methuen Drama Book of Post-Black Plays* by Harry J. Elam Jr. and Douglas A. Jones, Jr. Eds. 90 Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong (Humboldt University)
- West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London* by Adrian Wright Woodbridge 92 Adam Rush (QMUL)
- The Plays of Samuel Beckett* by Katherine Weiss 95 Macarena Andrews Barraza (University of Bristol)
- Movement Training for Actors* by Jackie Snow 98 Bryan Brown (University of Leeds)
- Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* by Laura Cull 101 Nik Wakefield (RHUL)

## Editorial

For Friedrich Schiller, a human is only completely so while playing. This is a proposition, he promises, that supports ‘the whole fabric of aesthetic art, and the still more difficult art of living’ (80). An important basis for this fabric can be found in Immanuel Kant’s third critique, *Critique of Judgment*, where the author influentially couples the imagination and understanding as dancing partners, choreographed in an improvisatory mode dubbed ‘free play’. This, for Kant, forms the heart of an aesthetic theory – a heart that still beats, even today, having passed through a number of hosts throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who thought out and fought with the beautiful and the sublime as they appear, or irrupt, in aesthetic art and, after Schiller, in the still more difficult art of living.

Play, then, as a theme, can be seen to vitalise the philosophy of art: that is, how we might think about art, both in its composition and in its reception. But it can also be seen to vitalise a philosophy of life, particularly an artful philosophy of life. And play, it should not be forgotten, also constitutes the lifeblood for two particular forms of these (potentially) interwoven branches: theatre and performance, representation and behaviour, twice behaved. A play, to play, to play out, to play with, to be played with, to play on, to play a role, to role-play... Play is pervasive, but particularly so in theatre and performance. So might studies of theatre and performance be a good place to start unpacking, further, what play is, or what it might be? What play means, or what it might mean? How play functions, or how it might function? For the ‘might’ in these questions is surely one of the most enlivening aspects of enquiring into play, whether in normative promises and utopian ambitions, attempts at radical subversion, or in the hopeful crafting of something better on stages and streets, or in thought, print, image, tableaux, gesture, invitation, revelation, or even failure.

It is with this, fairly broad framing of play in mind – considering how notions and practices of play might feed into aesthetic art and artful life, theatre and performance – that we invited our authors to contribute to this edition. Play as a performance practice, understood in the broadest sense of that term, provides this edition with a point of departure. Theatre performances, certainly, but also performance practices that might also take place outside of the theatre: through performance as a

capitalist imperative, for instance, as an imperative that might just as well come into appearance in a theatrical mode.

This point of departure took root in an event that, for *Platform*, marks an especially exciting venture. For the first time, this edition stems from a postgraduate symposium organised by the Theatre and Performance Research Association's (TaPRA) Postgraduate Committee on 19 January 2013, titled 'Play in Performance Practices'. Many, but not quite all of the submissions in this edition are developed from papers presented on the day, or from delegates who contributed towards the roundtable discussion which concluded the event. The editors were particularly struck by the vibrancy and ambition of these papers, loosely pooled into two main groups: those that approached play as a pre-ideological phenomenon, with potentially subversive attributes, particularly politically radical attributes, as a virtue of that pre-ideological status; and those that advocated for technique and disciplined structures to help foster the emergence of play, in as fruitful a form as possible. In other words, in starkly contrasting ways, strategies for pursuing play and thinking about play were put forward, which set out to put play to work and/or to examine how play works: through practice, through intervention, through critical reflection and even through kinetic architecture from an architect in residence, Alike Kylika. This edition looks to celebrate the vibrancy and ambition of those papers, while opening out the theme of the TaPRA symposium towards a wide-ranging survey of work by postgraduate and early-career researchers who directly, or indirectly, even tangentially, engage with the theme of 'play'. The papers grouped in this edition explore aesthetic art and artful life, occasionally in their permeability, from two, potentially complementary perspectives: from staging play to playing stages, encompassing both iterations of play in theatre and performance, as well as the uses to which play can be put, or worked towards and the ways in which play might be historicised.

In 'Child's Play: A Postdramatic Theatre of *Paidia* for the Very Young', Ben Fletcher-Watson addresses the increasing prominence of Theatre for Early Years: i.e. theatre for audiences from birth to three years old. He grounds this address in Roger Caillois' theorisation of *paidia* and Hans-Thies Lehmann's identification and examination of 'postdramatic theatre'. Theatre for Early Years is framed as being intrinsically postdramatic, particularly given its onus on eventfulness and a move away from logocentrism. At the same time, this framing underscores how the *paidic* functioning of play among very young children secures, for the author, a de-centring of

creative authority from the enablers of performance (such as performers) to the audiences with whom they share aesthetic space.

Daniel Oliver, in 'Post-Relational Paranoid Play in Reactor's *Big Lizard's Big Idea Project*', addresses the staging of play as an invitation to play, but to play within an event that resists a clear identification of purpose, or meaning. The invitation, then, is to play for the sake of playing, but without that invitation being touted as such and with a suspicious undertone of submitting to something unclear, balanced against the presence of a totemic figure that seems to undermine that submission in its weirdness and ridiculousness: a big, green, manically smiling lizard. Drawing on work by Donald Winnicott and Slavoj Žižek, this invitation to play with a big green Other, alongside what seems to be a disturbing injunction to 'Enjoy!', is unpacked and critiqued in the light of three models of paranoia, derived, but departing from, Douglas Kellner: critical paranoia, clinical paranoia and constructive paranoia. These models of paranoia are used to theorise the invitation to participate in play as an audience member, working towards an understanding of playful audience participation that does not seek closure in what the author sees as a fantasy of knowing, but rather revels in the participant's lack of comprehension of what it is that they share, or fail to share, in negotiating participation.

Matt Cawson, in 'Towards an Anarchist Theatre', proposes a manifesto on play in its *paidic* form, which the author frames as an expression of anarchist principles. Drawing on his experiences in laboratories at the Grotowski Institute, play is figured as a point of departure for the celebration of free expression in a commoditised world, treating *paidia* as a strategy of subversive resistance that can be nurtured. Reminiscent of Peter Brook, the author condemns what he sees as the stranglehold of a 'Vampiric Theatre' on Broadway and in the West End. Inspired by the Living Theatre, but critical of its positioning as part of the so-called 'sexual revolution', Cawson approaches engagement with *paidia* as an incessantly creative answer to commoditisation. His lyrical manifesto is as much playful in theme as it is playful in style, treating the page as a playing stage that points towards a means for staging play.

This edition concludes with a selection of short submissions that were solicited from postgraduate and early-career researchers. The editors were interested in letting the theme of this edition feed into and inform our own editing practice. We wanted to include work in this edition not just from those whose research is informed by, or focused on 'play' in theatre and performance; we also wanted to invite theatre and

performance studies researchers to consider how the notion of 'play' might, perhaps tangentially, tie into their own scholarly research, activity, or practice. In many ways, we were interested in *challenging* these authors to think about play, even though this may not have been a theme that explicitly feeds into their current research, in an acknowledged mode. In other words, we wanted to see how play might arise as a latent theme in a broad spectrum of postgraduate and early-career research in theatre and performance studies today, asking: how might that potential latency be brought to light?

These solicited texts are amalgamated into one polymorphous, multi-vocal document, titled 'Play Area: Performance Perspectives': Shaun May examines how humour and play have a hand in the social induction of human beings; Adam Alston responds to Daniel Oliver's article in this edition, unpacking the implications of enjoyment being commanded; Charlotte Bell uses play as 'a tool for critical inquiry' for analysing public engagement events; Kris Darby proposes various modes of play based on walking tasks; Geraldine Brodie addresses translation and supplements to the linguistic text in Thomas Ostermeier's staging of *Hamlet* at the Barbican, London, in 2011; David Coates frames amateur theatricals in the nineteenth century as an opportunity for the upper classes in adult life in Victorian and Edwardian society to express and explore identity and personal and social relationships; and Deborah Leveroy explores conceptual slippage, (un)neatly emblematised in the malapropism, as a potentially enabling, playful and deeply creative process for actors with dyslexia. Acknowledging this edition's link with the TaPRA Postgraduate Committee, Alston, Bell, Brodie and Leveroy all represent either winners, or runners-up of the TaPRA postgraduate essay competition in 2011 and 2013.

*Platform* is based in the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. The journal owes a great debt to the department, not just for continued financial support of the journal – which enables us to produce this edition not just online, but in print as well – but for collegiality and advice that continues to enrich how the journal operates and evolves. We would also like to thank our peer reviewers: the time and effort that they take is enormously appreciated and is of great value not just to our authors, but to the editorial board. Thank you to The Boydell Press, Methuen Drama and Palgrave Macmillan, for book review copies. Finally, thank you to our authors and book reviewers for making this a particularly exciting edition for us.



This edition marks Adam Alston's last as an editor of *Platform*. He wishes to express a deep note of admiration and thanks to the editorial board, past and present and wishes Will Shüler all the very best in his continued editorship of the journal.

Adam Alston and Will Shüler, Editors

**Works Cited**

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. Mineola: Dover, 2005.

Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Trans. Reginald Snell. Mineola: Dover, 2004.

## Notes on Contributors

**Adam Alston**, currently based at Royal Holloway, has recently submitted his AHRC funded PhD thesis, titled 'Productive Participants: Aesthetics and Politics in Immersive Theatre'. He is Creative Associate with the theatre company Curious Directive and sits on the executive committee for the Theatre and Performance Research Association as a Postgraduate Representative. This edition of *Platform* will mark his last as a co-editor of the journal.

**Macarena Andrews Barraza** is a Chilean actress, dramaturg and playwright trained and based between Chile and Scotland. Currently, she works as dramaturg and assistant director on *Colibrí*, Aracataca Creaciones's new production discussing equality and diversity in Chile. She is soon to start a PhD at the University of Bristol researching 'mediaturgy' in theatre.

**Charlotte Bell** is a PhD researcher and teaching assistant with the Department of Drama at Queen Mary, University of London and is a postgraduate representative for TaPRA. She has disseminated her work in *Wasafiri*, *Contemporary Theatre Review* (forthcoming 2014) and at TaPRA, PSI, FIRT/IFTR, Sacred Festival at the Chelsea Theatre and Gateshead International Festival of Theatre (GIFT). Her essay 'Cultural Practices, Market Disorganization and Urban Regeneration' was awarded the TaPRA PG Essay Prize 2013.

**Dr Geraldine Brodie** teaches Translation Studies and supervises the SELCS Writing Lab at University College London. Her research centres on the role of the theatre translator in performance. In addition to speaking and writing on this topic, she has devised the UCL Theatre Translation Forum, bringing together academics and theatre practitioners in a series of interdisciplinary examinations of dramatic genres.

**Bryan Brown** is a theatre artist and researcher. Together with Olya Petrakova, he created ARTEL (American Russian Theatre Ensemble Laboratory) and Art Via Corpora in Los Angeles. He has recently completed his PhD studies at the University of Leeds,

where his thesis refined conceptions of the theatre laboratory. [www.arteltheatre.com](http://www.arteltheatre.com) // [www.artviacorpora.com](http://www.artviacorpora.com).

**Dr. Matt Cawson** is a teacher and lecturer in drama and theatre. His current research interests include performance philosophy, the theatrical mask – particularly Greek tragedy, commedia dell'arte and the neutral mask – and the relationship between performance and political protest. Underlying and informing Matt's research interests is a particular fascination with the nature of creativity, the development of the philosophy of and approaches to selfhood and the relationship between the two as expressed and explored through theatre, both in historical and contemporary experimental forms.

**Dr. Peptual Mforbe Chiangong** holds a PhD in drama and theatre studies from the University of Bayreuth, Germany. She currently teaches postcolonial African Literatures, theatre, and drama in the Department of African Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. Her research interests are in postcolonial literatures, intervention theatre, representations of old age in African literature and critical theory. For her MA seminar on intervention theatre, she was awarded the 'Fakultätspreis für gute Lehre 2013' (Faculty's prize for best teacher 2013) by the Faculty of Philosophy III at Humboldt University.

**David Coates** is a PhD researcher and part-time teacher at the University of Warwick. His area of expertise is nineteenth century British theatre with a specific focus on private and amateur theatricals. David is a Postgraduate Representative for the Theatre and Performance Research Association and sits on the Executive Committee for the Society for Theatre Research. In this role he has recently founded the New Researchers' Network, which will launch in September 2013. David is also on the organising committee for the International Federation of Theatre Research's 2014 conference.

**Karen da Silva** completed her dance training at Laban Trinity and went on to perform in dance, theatre, television and film. She is currently a lecturer in dance at the University of Surrey, as well as a PhD candidate. Karen's research explores ways of 'truthfully' choreographing character, incorporating acting approaches set out by Stanislavski alongside Heideggerian phenomenology. She specialises in creating site-

specific solo dance performances that take a wry look at British female experience, both past and present.

**Dr. Kris Darby** is an artist and researcher who has just completed a doctoral thesis at the University of Exeter concerning the relationship between walking and performance. He is currently researching the presence of walking in performer training.

**Ben Fletcher-Watson** is researching a PhD entitled 'Audiences Born or Made?: Best Practice in Creating Performing Arts Experiences for Under-Threes' at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, funded by an ESRC CASE Studentship and sponsored by Starcatchers and Imagineate. He trained as a director and dramaturg, and spent eight years working in the arts, including running a theatre for children in North-East England.

**Liam Jarvis** is Co-Director of Analogue, with whom he has been creating award-winning devised work since 2007. The company's work has toured both the UK and internationally. Parallel to his practice, Liam is a PhD candidate at Royal Holloway, University of London, researching interactive modes of live performance drawing on neuroscience. Liam has taught contemporary theatre practice since 2004 and was appointed as a Teaching Fellow in Performance at Royal Holloway in the 2012-13 academic year.

**Deborah Leveroy** is an assistant lecturer and PhD drama candidate at the University of Kent. Her PhD research explores the lived experience of dyslexic learners in the acting profession. She runs regular dyslexia workshops for actors at the Actors Centre and Actors' Guild and has presented her research at the Moscow Art Theatre School, Young Vic Dyslexia Directors Network and the British Dyslexia Association's International Conference, among others.

**Dr. Shaun May** was recently appointed as Lecturer in Drama and Theatre at the University of Kent and he previously worked as a postdoctoral research associate in the Philosophy Department of the University of Liverpool. His doctoral thesis, a Heideggerian phenomenology of humour, was written at the Royal Central School of

Speech & Drama and he is currently working on developing it into a monograph. For more information about his research and practice, visit [www.sh aunmay.co.uk](http://www.sh aunmay.co.uk).

**Daniel Oliver** is a Queen Mary studentship funded PhD candidate in the Department of Drama at Queen Mary, University of London. His research is focused on the socio-political efficacy of awkwardness and uneasiness in contemporary participatory performance, specifically in relation to the ‘Social Turn’. He pays particular attention to the performance work of David Hoyle and the art collective Reactor. He has also worked as a solo performance artist and a collaborator across the UK and overseas since 2003. His performance practice experiments with site specificity, incapability and the uneasy modes of interactivity.

**Adam Rush** is currently a postgraduate research student at Queen Mary, University of London. His MA research interests include musical theatre, fan culture and popular culture in performance. His current research explores the value of theme parks as populist constructions of fantasy.

**Nik Wakefield** is currently developing a notion of time-specificity in a practice-based PhD at Royal Holloway, University of London, for which he has been awarded the Reid Scholarship. He received an MA with Distinction in Practising Theatre and Performance from Aberystwyth University and a BFA Cum Laude from Boston University in Theatre Arts. He works professionally as Head of Performance in Heritage Arts Company, performs and devises with Every House Has a Door and was assistant director with Punchdrunk.

## Child's Play: A Postdramatic Theatre of *Paidia* for the Very Young

By Ben Fletcher-Watson

### Abstract

This article argues that a turbulent and anarchic playfulness, termed *paidia* by Roger Caillois, lies at the heart of theatre for babies and toddlers. The genre of 'Theatre for Early Years' has blossomed since its beginnings three decades ago. Today, over 100 productions are staged each year around the world for audiences from birth to three years old. Performing arts experiences for the very young often permit spontaneous play as a discrete element of performance. This can be at specific participatory moments or, more commonly, in a post-performance exploratory play session. Some productions are wholly rooted in spontaneous play, whether solo, in collaboration with other children, or playing with adults as 'co-actors'. This article explores what I regard as an inherently postdramatic process that transforms the natural expression of *paidia* into a theatrical event. Here, infant play interweaves with artistic practice to create unpredictable and unrepeatable hedonic experiences. Often wordless and without explicit narrative, they seem to challenge normative modes of performance for children, but the privileging of *paidia*, I argue, simultaneously ushers the audience into a postdramatic world and returns theatre to its primæval form as co-created play.

'Theatre without drama does exist'. (Lehmann 30)

Playing lies at the heart of the new genre of theatre for babies and toddlers, also known as 'Theatre for Early Years' (TEY). Performing arts experiences for the very young often permit spontaneous play at specific participatory moments or, more commonly, in a post-performance exploratory play session. However, some productions are rooted in spontaneous play, whether solo, in collaboration with other children, or playing with adults as 'co-actors'.

This play is not *ludus*, defined by Roger Caillois as rule-bound or formalised; rather, it privileges the inverse impulse, *paidia*: 'diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety [...] a kind of uncontrollable fantasy' (Caillois 13). It

fulfils many of the criteria synthesised by playworker Bob Hughes, being spontaneous, goalless, freely chosen, personally directed, intrinsically motivated, repetitious, neophilic and non-detrimental (Hughes 14). This is the natural hedonic state of being for babies, their 'rehearsal for life', where identities and experiences are continually demolished and rebuilt (English 182).

This article will explore what I regard as the inherently postdramatic process that transforms the natural expression of *paidia* into a theatrical event. It seeks to challenge adult conceptions of children as unskilled, undeserving of culture and requiring training as spectators. Positioning TEY within a postdramatic frame, in what follows I will be arguing that the rejection of traditional modes of performance may legitimise infant theatre artistically and developmentally.

### **Too Young for Theatre?**

TEY arguably emerged in 1978 with the work of Theatre Kit (Speyer 1) and, later, Oily Cart (Brown 3–4). More than 450 productions have now been created around the world for children under three, including operas, ballets, installations, comedy and Shakespeare. However, prevalence cannot be equated to legitimation; critics and theorists remain divided on two key issues, addressed below: firstly, at what age a child possesses the capacity to enjoy theatre and secondly, whether those performance experiences deriving from play and/or lacking key elements of the dramatic paradigm (such as actors, text and narrative) can be considered theatrical.

In 1950, American children's theatre pioneer Winifred Ward stated, '[a] series [of plays] for tiny children [under 6] is unnecessary, for they do not need a theatre' (Ward 120), while UK counterpart Peter Slade commanded, 'never put on a show for an audience at this age [5 to 7 years]' (Slade 139). Modern commentators describe performing arts for under threes as 'unthinkable' (Ball et al. 4) or even disturbing to natural development (Papoušek 108). The proposed age threshold has lowered over time, but the implication that children lack spectatorial capacities remains: 'we can assume that the earliest age children are able to enjoy theatre would be three years old' (Schonmann, *Theatre as a Medium* 23).

This rhetoric makes a number of assumptions drawn from adult conceptions of childhood, rather than a child-centred basis (Lorenz 107): firstly, that babies do not deserve to access theatre as adults do; secondly, that babies have an 'innocence' that can be 'tainted' by exposure to professional performance; thirdly, that babies lack skill

in meaning-making and comprehension of illusion; fourthly, that these three deficiencies render performance to babies valueless.

However, Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right 'to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts' (United Nations), which informs the foundation of much contemporary practice (see Schneider; Nerattini). This ethical riposte to the claim that babies are culturally inferior to adults signifies a shift in societal power relations. The adult no longer enjoys automatic hierarchical privilege, although it must be recognised that they are the consumer of theatre-as-business, being purchaser of tickets and chaperone (van de Water, *Theatre, Youth and Culture* 5). In addition, data from developmental psychology provide strong evidence for rich aesthetic, communicative and imaginative abilities from birth (Fletcher-Watson et al.). Indeed, some scholars argue that babies and toddlers are more skilled than adults in domains such as imaginative dexterity, improvisation and creative inter-play (Egan and Ling 95; Corsaro 90; Hendy and Toon 54). If young children possess both a right to participate in the arts and capacities for engaging with/in performance which may in some instances outstrip those of adults, then TEY's legitimacy can be posited. Yet critics still ask: is it theatre, or just play?



Fig. 1: *Multi-Coloured Blocks From Space* (2012), by Katy Wilson and Ewan Sinclair. Tramway, Glasgow. Image by Neil Thomas Douglas.



As with recent developments in contemporary performances for adults, some Early Years performances can appear more like play sessions than dramatic productions, lacking narrative, text and speech, occasionally without professional performers and sometimes highly participatory. For example, *Multicoloured Blocks from Space* (2012) places babies and their carers within a lo-fi pixelated world resembling a 1980s video game. An electronic soundtrack of beeps is the only marker of time. There is no script and no actor as intermediary between the child and various tactile, auditory or visual stimuli. Such productions may seem to hover at the fringes of performance, placing emphasis on the hedonic rather than the dramatic.

Theatre literacy, the process of training children to comprehend dramatic tropes, is often identified as the key purpose of theatre for children internationally (see Bolton 25; Schonmann, 'Fictional Worlds' 143-47; van de Water, 'Russian Drama' 163). It is claimed that 'viewing a play is different from the act of playing' (Schonmann, 'Fictional Worlds' 144) and therefore children must be made to control themselves, to sit quietly and to learn to 'read' the symbols and signs of theatre.

This goal appears to justify the argument that very young children should not visit the theatre, as their innate tendencies towards hedonism (in the form of active participation) and its converse, fear, as well as a lack of behavioural control, preclude them from separating 'viewing and doing' (144). The elimination of many traditional dramatic elements, such as narrative, illusion and even applause, seems to render TEY a form of playful 'non-theatre' which happens to take place in a theatre space.

Only by separating TEY from these assumptions can its more radical practices be truly understood. In fact, its heterogeneous forms – variously rejecting temporality, narrative, illusion, or even presence – resemble postdramatic theatre. As Hans-Thies Lehmann has noted, '[t]heatre is tacitly thought of as the *theatre of dramas*' (21, original emphasis), just as TEY is viewed as drama for babies and toddlers and thus productions that reject or subvert drama can be deemed 'untheatrical' by some theorists. However, if TEY is positioned within a postdramatic framework, in terms of intent and form, it can be argued that hedonic play-as-practice is further legitimised.

## TEY as Postdrama

Like performance art before it, TEY's radical practices can seem distant from conventional theatre. Lehmann's comparison of performance art and postdramatic theatre applies equally to modern forms of TEY; both are characterised by

a loss of meaning of the text and its literary coherence. Both work on the physical, affective and spatial relationship between actors and spectators and explore possibilities of participation and interaction, both highlight presence (the doing in the real) as opposed to re-presentation (the mimesis of the fictive), the act as opposed to the outcome. Thus theatre is defined as a process and not as a finished result, as the activity of production and action instead of as a product, as an active force (*energeia*) and not as a work (*ergon*). (Lehmann 104)

Caillois' *paidia* can similarly be classified as *energeia* rather than *ergon*: as process, not product. This paradigmatic cleaving from the dramatic as the root of performance may explain scholarly difficulties with TEY. Like early critics of Robert Wilson's work, they feel 'like a stranger attending the enigmatic cultic actions of a people unknown to them' (Lehmann 70). Babies, lacking experience and thus preconceptions of performances involving play, 'are often more at home with this kind of theatre than theatregoers who subscribe to literary narrative' (31). TEY privileges the neophyte.

Indeed, some scholars propose that the imbrication of *paidia* within performance transforms TEY into 'a more sophisticated kind of game' (Goldfinger 297), rendering it other than theatre. Schechner conversely notes that 'play is what organises performance, makes it comprehensible' (*Performance Theory* 98). These opposing viewpoints nonetheless reflect a hegemonic hierarchy within art-making: adults playing in rehearsal craft drama; children playing in a theatre negate drama.

In contrast, Max Herrmann states that audiences co-create theatre in an act of 'social play – played by all for all' (qtd in Fischer-Lichte 32) and Erika Fischer-Lichte places performance alongside game in a process of co-action, rather than one turning into the other. In both, rules are made up, adhered to and rejected as necessary – no single spectator or performer fully controls the outcome. Eventually, 'everyone experiences themselves as involved and responsible for a situation nobody singlehandedly created' (165). Indeed, Matthew Reason has claimed that 'every child must feel – both during and after the show – that: "if I hadn't been there, the show

would have been different” (41). Theatre-makers allow babies to participate equally, emancipating them as spectators composing their own meanings from aesthetic objects, as Jacques Rancière has described for adults who watch theatre (2). Thus, artists validate the presence of a child at play: ‘[Rancière] makes it easier to recognise the value of being a spectator without changing the theatre into something else, like ritual, process-drama, or playing’ (Elnan 174).

With this recognition of the roles that very young children can play in a theatre, participation becomes not an interruption of the theatrical moment but vital to its success. In consequence, the participative act itself takes priority over any putative outcome. In *Le jardin du possible* (2002), toddlers roam among spot-lit piles of leaves, stones, sand and sticks, creating and destroying shapes in a complex web of cooperation, where touch has precedence over sound and sight (Pinkert 65). *Oogly Boogly* (2003) permits total agency to its 12-month-old participants, with professional performers instructed simply to copy every movement and vocalisation – the newly mobile toddlers seize the opportunity gleefully (Dartnell 2). *How High The Sky* (2012) features a striking sequence where all adults withdraw to observe from a distance, leaving the stage solely to babies.

Lehmann describes one aspect of postdrama as ‘the execution of acts that are real in the here and now and find their fulfilment in the very moment they happen’ (104). Text, narrative and even memory itself – another flaw in TEY, according to some critics, being a baby’s inability to remember the experience – are ranked below action. As has been noted in Oily Cart’s work for young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, ‘the focus is on being in the moment, within a temporal framework in which the [autistic] individual foregrounds the present experience and relates to the immediacy of the encounters within the environment s/he inhabits’ (Shaughnessy 242). Thus, as Rike Reininger posits in positioning her practice as postdrama: ‘adults are not more capable of understanding the performance than small children. There is no need to decode any meaning. There is just the non-hierarchical sensuous theatre experience’ (Reiniger 3).

In performances for the very young, spectators are usually placed close to the playing area: *BabyO* (2010) creates a ring of babies around a floorcloth to allow them unfettered access to the opera singers who perform the work, while *In A Pickle* (2012) exploits both traverse and promenade layouts to ensure visibility. Lehmann proposes that such proximity, or even physical contact, ‘quietly radicalises the *responsibility* of

the spectators for the theatrical process, which they can co-create but also disturb or even destroy through their behaviour' (123, original emphasis).



Fig. 2: *BabyO* (2010), by Scottish Opera. Image by Mark Hamilton.

A young child's inability to adhere to normative modes of adult behaviour is another objection to their presence in the theatre, from artists (Wood and Grant 21) to theatre architects. Both the Egg in Bath and the Children's Theatre in Minneapolis contain soundproofed booths where children causing 'disturbances' (as defined by adults) can be taken to continue watching away from their peers (see Fletcher-Watson 28). Similarly, it can be claimed that the recent introduction of 'relaxed performances' reflects a potential marginalisation of their audiences, from the very young to spectators with autism. It is clear that responsibility – either to keep quiet or to participate when required – is problematised when working with those who lack inhibition.

However, again this presumes that the performer is superior to the spectator, which is by no means generally accepted within TEY. If the child is treated as an equal, then their relationship to the action is not provocative, as Lehmann claims (104), but intrinsic and vital. Theatre-makers routinely display works-in-progress to audiences of babies, in an effort to tailor productions to their developmental needs and abilities (van de Water, *Theatre, Youth and Culture* 52; Schneider; Nerattini); reaction of even the most extreme kind is explicitly sought.

To deny a child the opportunity to react to performance, expecting them to follow adult codes of behaviour, is to favour *ludus* over *paidia*. By privileging free improvisation and welcoming participation, contemporary TEY practitioners have inverted this hierarchy, helping the genre evolve into new, postdramatic forms.

### **Postdramatic Practices in TEY**

Tim Webb of Oily Cart describes an epiphany when creating their first work for very young children, *Jumpin' Beans* (2002): 'it was startlingly apparent that the babies and toddlers themselves were our primary audience – they had been gripped by this non-verbal, non-linear, and multi-sensory piece, in their own right' (Bennett et al. 204; see also Brown 9). Intending to create a theatricalised play session, he found that play ran alongside theatre, despite lacking many traditional dramatic tropes.

Perhaps the omission in TEY most challenging to adults, compared with traditional theatre for children, is text. Children's Theatre and Theatre in Education frequently centre on versions of well-known fairy tales (Harman 4) and commercial theatre for children is often derived from media properties such as *In The Night Garden...* or *The Snowman*, whereas TEY tends to be original and non-verbal, or highly restricted in vocabulary. It rejects dramatic formulae, recognising that its audience does

not require or benefit from narrative scaffolding. Instead, multi-sensory stimuli are used to engender engagement. For example, *ETS-BEEST* (2007) melds dance, visual art, sonic improvisation and tactile mark-making. The stage is a huge piece of white paper, on which a dancer writhes and twists, drawing around her body with charcoal and encouraging spectators, aged from two-years-old, to join her. The multiplicity of performative modes is inherently postdramatic: 'words themselves [...] become just another element in a theatrical mode that militates against hierarchies in performance' (Barnett 16), placed equally or replaced with music, movement and visuals. Indeed, TEY could not be postdramatic without this challenge to the primacy of linguistic text, as 'the step to postdramatic theatre is taken only when the theatrical means beyond language are positioned equally alongside the text and are systematically thinkable without it' (Lehmann 55).

The second omission, narrative/plot, proceeds directly from this decentring. *Frau Sonne und Herr Mond machen Wetter [Mrs Sun and Mr Moon Make Weather]* (2010) has 'a dramaturgic structure that was not telling a story [...] instead the dramaturgy was composed of a series of short actions or happenings' (Reiniger 2). Postdramatic theatre is 'a theatre of states and of scenically dynamic formations' (Lehmann 68), disrupting narrative in favour of movements, para-ritual and events which may lack any connection to one another. Thus, 'character and plot, the mainstays of dramatic theatre, are no longer categories that need enter the stage in an age in which the act of representation has become increasingly untenable' (Barnett 23).

The third omission, albeit rare, may seem to push TEY beyond even the bounds of postdramatic theatre: the removal of the actor. Productions such as *Multicoloured Blocks from Space* and *BabyChill* (2010) frame the baby-carer dyad as joint spect-actors, entirely lacking a performer's input. The carer takes on a role instead (Fletcher-Watson et al.). While the children can be said to 'be themselves' when playing, the behaviour of the parents/carers is 'twice-behaved' (Schechner, *The Future of Ritual* 1), both observed and observing. They perform the role of parents to their own children, flamboyantly displaying their attentiveness. Theatre-maker Agnes Desfosses describes this doubling of the spectator in TEY, noting that where an actor is present, baby and parent form a triangular relationship, each looking to the other for response (103). This can be thought of as a reformulation of Fischer-Lichte's autopoietic feedback loop where onstage action and spectatorial response impact constantly on one another to generate performances (Fischer-Lichte 39), here expanding the referents to encompass a

dyadic audience. In productions that lack actors, the feedback loop between baby and carer is heightened beyond the typical domestic level of action-response, which can be interrupted by a telephone call or visitor; when the distractions of home are removed, each reaction intensifies to form a rich proto-drama. Parents are freed to enjoy an accentuated *paidia* by virtue of their presence within a theatrical space: the lack of defined structure frees them to play publicly, meaningfully and demonstratively.

*BebéBabá* (2001) develops this meaningful *paidia* into a carnivalesque spectacle, inviting adult audiences to watch a part-ritualised, part-improvised music-theatre piece where babies play onstage with their parents. Overseen by professional musicians, but performed by children from birth to two-years-old and parents, *BebéBabá* creates a 'chain of shows', expanding the spectatorial triangle further to include a separate non-performing audience (Rodrigues, Rodrigues and Correia 586).

*This (Baby) Life* (2011) similarly enjoins the very young to participate with adults, in this case, professional dancers. Inspired by *Oogly Boogly*, it interweaves ludic choreographed sequences with moments of free improvisation and imitation. Here, the unpredictable paidic interjections of babies within choreographed action (they are permitted onstage, if not actively welcomed, during the dance sequences) creates a thrilling atmosphere which challenges notions of normative audience behaviour, moving towards a postdramatic 'experience of presence and ideally the equal co-presence of actors and spectators' (Lehmann 123).

Equality of form (rejecting hegemonies of text or meaning-making), equality of presence (placing children alongside actors as co-participants) and equality of action (granting agency to render all responses valid) defines an ideal of TEY, and affirms its postdramatic nature.

### ***Paidic and postdramatic dramaturgies***

The postdramatic character of TEY may arguably extend beyond productions derived wholly from improvised play, encompassing many additional performances that seem to retain the forms of traditional theatre; instead, their dramaturgies are postdramatic. Such dramaturgies have been described as 'open-ended', as in Sarah Kane's work, treating 'structure and content as dynamic and continually to be kept in process, rather than as elements to be fixed and resolved' (Turner and Behrndt 30). These could perhaps also be described as *paidic* dramaturgies, deconstructing and reconstructing drama in turbulent, at times anarchic ways, as *energeia* rather than *ergon*.

Often cited as a key postdramatic writer (Lehmann; Müller-Schöll), Kane crafted plays that may seem the antithesis of TEY in terms of content – suicide, cannibalism, incest – but in their dramaturgy and diverse stagings, these pieces bear close similarities to many contemporary productions for the very young. Suzanne Osten's *Babydrama* (2006), a seminal TEY production, retains text, narrative flow and performers, but employs a powerfully open-ended aesthetic, which positions the piece both as *paidia* and postdrama. Wanda Golonka's production of Kane's *4:48 Psychosis* (2002) constructs a similar merging of forms, 'an integral space of playing and watching' (Müller-Schöll 46). By comparing performances, it is possible to draw attention to their dramaturgies and expressions of postdrama in practice.

These productions share a distinct resemblance, like mirror images. Both place spectators inside the performance, erasing stage/auditorium distinctions. Both resemble 'a circus or a playground' (Müller-Schöll 46-7). Both subvert the text with masks, movement, dance and, most notably, kinaesthetic disruptions which alter the audience's relationship to the space and each other. Osten encourages her audience, aged between six and twelve months, to sit in baby bouncers suspended from the ceiling, while Golonka places her audience on similarly mounted swings. Both employ considerable amounts of text, derived at least in part from psychotherapeutic practices (Höjer; Müller-Schöll). Both explore being and non-being and the journey in-between, *Babydrama* examining conception and birth, *4:48 Psychosis* confronting death.

There are of course obvious dissimilarities, aside from the target audience: Osten uses multiple actors, while Golonka stages Kane's text as a monologue; Osten's use of music is calming, while Golonka's is discordant; babies have agency to come and go as they please throughout *Babydrama*, which is not permitted in *4:48 Psychosis*. However, both productions reject the traditional theatre of dramas to revel in the possibilities offered by playful postdramatic practices.

## Conclusion

This article has worked on the assumption that *paidia* is the natural state of being for babies, so productions that grant agency to the very young open up their carefully-crafted aesthetic to risk, volatility and potential destruction. However, they also recognise a child's right to push beyond adult limitations:





Fig. 3: *Babydrama* (2006), by Suzanne Osten, with text by Ann-Sofie Bårány. Perf. Malin Cederblad. Image by Lesley Leslie-Spinks.



Fig. 4: *4:48 Psychosis*, by Sarah Kane. Dir. Wanda Golonka. Perf. Marina Galic. Image by Yvonne Kranz.

adults can preserve stale and artistically alien conventions [... Better, perhaps,] would be an audience in which adults were prepared to let the children – within civilised limits – enjoy their spontaneous interplay with what is going on before them, unchivvied, unprompted and uncensored. (England 227)

This may mean no text, no plot, no characters, no beginning and no end. Here, children are writing their own theatrical texts with their bodies and actions, reflecting lived experience of perhaps only a few months through the language of play. Practice in TEY has evolved over three decades into markedly postdramatic forms, aesthetically and dramaturgically. It is to be hoped that by positioning TEY explicitly as postdramatic, the theoretical and critical segregation between theatre for children and theatre for adults may begin to be dissolved.

### Works Cited

- 4:48 *Psychosis*. By Sarah Kane. Trans. Durs Grünbein. Dir. Wanda Golonka. Schauspiel, Frankfurt. 8 May 2002.
- BabyChill*. By Sacha Kyle. Dir. Sacha Kyle. Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline. 5 Nov. 2009.
- Babydrama*. By Suzanne Osten and Ann-Sofie Bárány. Dir. Suzanne Osten. Unga Klara, Stockholm City Theatre, Stockholm. 2006.
- BabyO*. By Rachel Drury. Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. 16 Nov. 2010.
- Ball, Steve et al. *Charting Antarctica: Another Stepping-stone Across the Landscape of Early Years Theatre*. Birmingham: Birmingham Repertory Theatre, 2007.
- Barnett, David. 'When Is a Play Not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts'. *New Theatre Quarterly* 24.1 (2008): 14-23.
- BebéBabá*. By Helena Rodrigues and Paulo Maria Rodrigues. Viriato Theatre, Viseu. 29 Sept. 2001.
- Bennett, Stuart et al. *Theatre for Children and Young People in the UK: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK*. Ed. Stuart Bennett & Cheryl Robson. Twickenham: Aurora Metro Publications, 2005.
- Bolton, Gavin. *New Perspectives on Classroom Drama*. Hemel Hempstead: Simon & Schuster, 1992.
- Brown, Mark, ed. *Oily Cart: All Sorts of Theatre for All Sorts of Kids*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2012.

- Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play and Games*. Trans. Meyer Barash. Champaign, IL: U of Illinois P, 2001.
- Corsaro, William A. *We're Friends, Right? Inside Kids' Culture*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press, 2003.
- Dartnell, Guy. 'Let Me Take the Next Step: Go No Further Than Me'. *TDR* 53.2 (2009): 2-3.
- Desfosses, Agnès. 'Little Ones and Adults, Alive and Aware. Theatre Brings Together'. *Theatre for Early Years: Research in Performing Arts for Children from Birth to Three*. Ed. Wolfgang Schneider. Trans. Paul Harman. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009. 99-104.
- Egan, Kieran, and Michael Ling. 'We Begin As Poets: Conceptual Tools and the Arts in Early Childhood.' *The Arts in Children's Lives: Context, Culture, and Curriculum*. Ed. Liora Bresler & Christine Marmé Thompson. Dordrecht: Springer, 2002. 93-100.
- Elnan, Merete. 'The Notion of Children: How Can the Idea of Childhood, of Children as Spectators and of Understanding Influence Theatre for Young Audiences?' *TYA, Culture, Society: International Essays on Theatre for Young Audiences*. Ed. Manon van de Water. Frankfurt: Peter, 2012. 165-78.
- England, Alan William. *Theatre for the Young*. Ed. Bruce King & Adele King. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990.
- English, Carey. 'Early Years Theatre'. *Theatre for Children and Young People: 50 Years of Professional Theatre in the UK*. Ed. Stuart Bennett. Twickenham: Aurora Metro Publications, 2005. 182-93.
- ETS-BEEST*. By Katrina Brown. Gala Theatre, Durham. 15 Nov. 2012.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: a New Aesthetics*. Trans. Saskya Iris Jain. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.
- Fletcher-Watson, Ben. 'The Proscenium Press-Gang: Participation as Tyranny in Arts for the Very Young – a Provocation'. *An Idea of Art and Childhood*. Ed. Antonella Dalla Rosa & Anna Sacchetti. Bologna: Artistic International Association Small size, 2012: 28-9.
- Fletcher-Watson, Ben et al. 'From Cradle to Stage: How Early Years Performing Arts Experiences Are Tailored to the Developmental Capabilities of Babies and Toddlers.' *Youth Theatre Journal*. Unpublished article currently in peer review.

- Frau Sonne und Herr Mond machen Wetter*. By Rike Reiniger. Dir. Otmar Wagner. Burgtheater, Bautzen. 2 Apr. 2007.
- Goldfinger, Evelyn. 'Theatre for Babies: A New Kind of Theatre?' *Key Concepts in Theatre / Drama Education*. Ed. Shifra Schonmann. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011. 295-99.
- Harman, Paul, ed. *A Guide to UK Theatre for Young Audiences 2009/2011*. Twickenham: Aurora Metro Publications, 2009.
- Hendy, Lesley, and Lucy Toon. *Supporting Drama and Imaginative Play in the Early Years*. Maidenhead: Open UP, 2001.
- Höjer, Dan. 'Big Drama for Small Spectators: Unga Klara's Swedish Experiment'. *Theatre for Early Years: Research in Performing Arts for Children from Birth to Three*. Ed. Wolfgang Schneider. Trans. Claudia Meyer & Meike Fechner. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009. 89-93.
- How High The Sky*. Dir. Sue Giles and Jessica Wilson. Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne. 24 Oct. 2012.
- Hughes, Bob. *Evolutionary Playwork and Reflective Analytic Practice*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- In A Pickle*. By Tim Webb and William Shakespeare. Dir. Tim Webb. Northern Stage, Newcastle. 27 Jun. 2012.
- Jumpin' Beans*. By Tim Webb. Emlyn Williams Theatre, Mold. 3 Dec. 2002.
- Le jardin du possible*. By Benoît Sicat. Festival Marmaille, Rennes. 1 Oct. 2002.
- Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Trans. Karen Jürs-Munby. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Lorenz, Carol. 'The Rhetoric of Theatre for Young Audiences and its Construction of the Idea of the Child.' *Youth Theatre Journal* 16.1 (2002): 96-111.
- Müller-Schöll, Nikolas. 'Theatre of Potentiality. Communicability and the Political in Contemporary Performance Practice.' *Theatre Research International* 29.1 (2004): 42-56.
- Multicoloured Blocks from Space*. By Katy Wilson and Ewan Sinclair. Dir. Katy Wilson. Macrobert, Stirling. 21 Dec. 2012.
- Oogly Boogly*. By Guy Dartnell and Tom Morris. The Place, London. 2003.
- Nerattini, Francesca, ed. *Theatre and Early Years: Stories of Artistic Practice*. Bologna: Edizioni Pendragon, 2009.

- Papoušek, Mechthild. 'Intuitive Parenting: A Hidden Source of Musical Stimulation in Infancy'. *Musical Beginnings: Origins and Development of Musical Competence*. Ed. I. Deliège & J.A. Sloboda. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 88-112.
- Pinkert, Ute. 'Starting All over Again? Changing Ways of Perception Through Theatre – Not Only for Young Children'. *Theatre for Early Years: Research in Performing Arts for Children from Birth to Three*. Ed. Wolfgang Schneider. Trans. Lydia Baldwin. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009: 60-67.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. Gregory Elliot. London: Verso, 2009.
- Reason, Matthew. *The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experiences of Theatre*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2010.
- Reiniger, Rike. 'Clouds Are Made of White! Cross-over of Live-art and Puppetry as an Approach to Post-dramatic Children's Theatre'. University of Connecticut, 2011: 1-3.
- Rodrigues, Helena Maria, Paulo Maria Rodrigues and Jorge Salgado Correia. 'Communicative Musicality as Creative Participation: From Early Childhood to Advanced Performance'. *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*. Ed. Stephen Malloch & Colwyn Trevarthen. New York: Oxford UP, 2009: 585-610.
- Schechner, Richard. *Performance Theory*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- . *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Schneider, Wolfgang, ed. *Theatre for Early Years: Research in Performing Arts for Children from Birth to Three*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009.
- Schonmann, Shifra. 'Fictional Worlds and the Real World in Early Childhood Drama Education'. *The Arts in Children's Lives: Context, Culture, and Curriculum*. Ed. Liora Bresler & Christine Marmé Thompson. Dordrecht: Springer, 2002: 139-52.
- . *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2006.
- Shaughnessy, Nicola. *Applying Performance: Live Art, Socially Engaged Theatre and Affective Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Slade, Peter. *Child Drama*. London: U of London P, 1955.

- Speyer, Chris. 'Every Child Has a Story to Tell If We Just Listen'. *The Journal* 29 June 2004.
- This (Baby) Life*. By Sally Chance. Dir. Sally Chance. NEAC, Edinburgh. 11 May 2012.
- Turner, Cathy, and Synne Behrndt. *Dramaturgy and Performance*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- United Nations. 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'. 20 Nov. 1989.  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- van de Water, Manon. 'Russian Drama and Theatre in Education: Perestroika and Glasnost in Moscow Theatres for Children and Youth'. *Research in Drama Education* 9.2 (2004): 161-76.
- . *Theatre, Youth, and Culture: a Critical and Historical Exploration*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Ward, Winifred. *Theatre for Children*. Anchorage, KY: The Children's Theatre Press, 1950.
- Wood, David, and Janet Grant. *Theatre for Children: a Guide to Writing, Adapting, Directing and Acting*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.

## **Post-Relational Paranoid Play in Reactor's *Big Lizard's Big Idea* Project**

By Daniel Oliver

### **Abstract**

This article emerges from my work as a performer and guest collaborator in *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009-10), a participatory art project devised by the UK collective 'Reactor'. I examine the entwining of playfulness with paranoia in *BLBI*, employing a psychoanalytic understanding of 'play' developed by Donald Winnicott and the Lacanian dissection of contemporary modes of 'enjoyment' developed and supplemented by Slavoj Žižek (Winnicott 51-70; Žižek, *Lacan* 103-04). Reactor, through their unabashed Disney-esque character 'Big Lizard', simultaneously invites us to play and intervene in our playfulness, providing an uneasy relationship with our experience of the motivations, claims, stakes, characters, and purposes behind the invitation. I demonstrate that this paranoid experience intervenes in some recent discussions around participation and social engagement in theatre and performance. In conclusion, I argue that the multi-layered, complex and playful paranoia facilitated by Reactor might give us insights into our own complicity in the structures in which we are embedded.

During the ten years that I have worked with, for and alongside the UK art collective 'Reactor', I have had various conversations in which it has been suggested that they 'get people to do stuff'. This is a claim often made by those who avoid participating in Reactor projects. The point of origin for this article lies in a desire to critically engage with this claim's uneasy suspicion and implied accusation of manipulation and conspiracy. This has developed into an engagement both with the paranoid assumptions about agency and honesty in Reactor's on-going practice and with the paranoia that, I claim, Reactor encourages participants to playfully immerse themselves during individual projects. Through this critical approach to paranoia and playfulness in Reactor's practice, I put forward questions and provocations that contribute to current thinking about agency, control and authorship in contemporary collaborative and participatory performance.



The article emerges from a wider project of critically engaging with participatory performances that trouble recent discussions around audience participation and social engagement in theatre and performance. In line with this, my reading of Reactor's practice positions their work as 'post-relational'. This means that Nicolas Bourriaud's book *Relational Aesthetics*, which collects together art works that foreground 'interactive, user-friendly and relational concepts' (8), serves a backdrop to my engagement. In using Alex Farquharson's term 'post-relational' to describe Reactor's practice, I am suggesting that their projects extend, critique and complicate Bourriaud's work. Particularly important is the absence of explicit fantasy, fiction or theatricality in 'relational aesthetics' and the favouring of conviviality as a productive experience (32). Claire Bishop's response to Bourriaud's celebration of good feeling in 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' and her favouring of practices that she defines as 'Relational Antagonism' is, therefore, another key referent in my argument. Bishop's monograph, *Artificial Hells*, examines the development of participatory art from the hostile provocations of Italian Futurists in the 1910s through to the seemingly benevolent experiments in delegation and exploitation that occur at galleries and biennales in the twenty-first century. In her conclusion she summarises this development as follows:

From the audience's perspective, we can chart this as a shift from an audience that demands a role (expressed as hostility towards avant-garde artists who keep control of the proscenium), to an audience that enjoys its subordination to strange experiences devised for them by an artist, to an audience that is encouraged to be a co-producer of the work (and who, occasionally, can even get paid for this involvement). (277)

My own framing of the experience offered to participants by Reactor incorporates a complex and contradictory overlapping between the latter two perspectives. The mixture of enjoyment and subordination in Reactor projects is key to the experience of paranoia and play that I attribute to them. Reactor participants, I argue, are able to play at subordination, to critically reflect on where that subordination emerges from and to confront their potential co-production in that subordination. These experiences loosely follow the definitions of clinical, critical and constructive paranoia that I outline below.

However, I am particularly drawn to work that is not so easily categorised in terms of convivial or antagonistic approaches to participation and collaboration. Such

work, I claim, prompts us to re-evaluate how we read the conviviality or antagonism in participatory works that display a clear preference for one or the other. This is part of my reason for engaging with the playful experiments with paranoia and the potentially paranoid experience of playfulness that I observe in *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009-10), one of the participatory art projects devised by 'Reactor'. To clarify, my use of the term paranoia refers, firstly, to the unnerving sense that something more is going on than appears. In other words, that there is a discrepancy between what we are being told or shown is happening and what is *actually* happening. Secondly, it refers to the belief that there is a single agent, or group of agents, who control what is *actually* happening: who develop and perpetuate a hidden, but totalising concept and agenda.

My examination of the complex entwining of playfulness and paranoia in *Big Lizard's Big Idea (BLBI)* is read through my own navigation between the psychoanalytic understanding of 'play' developed by Donald Winnicott and the Lacanian dissection of contemporary modes of 'enjoyment' developed and supplemented by Slavoj Žižek (Winnicott 51-70; Žižek, *Lacan* 103-04). This admittedly awkward conflation is, I argue, appropriate, because Reactor offer their own awkward vacillation between Winnicott's figure of secure, maternal benevolence and the insistent, contradictory, demanding figure of the Lacanian big Other. Thus, on the one hand, when I describe something as 'playful' I am referring to its connection with frivolity, experimentation and fun; with not taking things too seriously and being open to pretence. However, on the other, as my argument develops through the theories of Winnicott and Žižek, my use of the term 'play' begins to flicker between two awkwardly conflicting definitions. The first of these is the productive developmental activity reliant on the presence of a benevolent other and a supportive, clearly defined system. The second is the meeting of a demand for non-seriousness and enjoyment from a tyrannical master in a fragmented structure of incompleteness and contradiction. Thus, there is an uneasy ambiguity around whether participants in Reactor projects are participating under the auspices of a Winnicottian Mother, or the injunctions of a Lacanian Other. Throughout, I address the various paranoid positions that might emerge in response to these Mother/Other figures.

The appropriateness of my application of psychoanalytic theory here is captured in Žižek's description of the desire by many in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to bury it 'in the lumber-room of pre-scientific obscurantist quests for hidden meanings' (*Lacan* 1). The

appeal of psychoanalysis here lies primarily in the fact that an ‘obscurantist quest for hidden meanings’ would, I suggest, make for a pithy description of the experience offered by the *Big Lizard* project and stands as a dominant definition of the types of paranoia that this article discusses. Thus, in employing psychoanalysis, I am rigorously and playfully performing a response to what I see as the project’s core invitation. The ultimate aim of this response is to demonstrate how a paranoid position is not only about investigating and revealing hidden structures and characters, but can also be unwittingly complicit in constructing and perpetuating them. Thus, overall, my psychoanalytic engagement with the various forms of paranoia present in *BLBI* argues that the project might, like Žižek’s psychoanalysis, provide a space for play in which we can dwell upon the contemporary, insistent and ‘strange ethical duty’ to ‘enjoy’ and, more importantly, confront our complicit role in its perpetuation (*Lacan* 104).

My experience of the project comes through my role as a performer and guest collaborator in *BLBI*. I describe this position as Collaborator/Performer-Participation-as-Research (C/PPaR), taking my cue from the term ‘Spectator-Participation-as-Research’ (SPaR) that Deidre Heddon, Helen Iball and Rachel Zerihan use to describe their work on One to One performance (122). My collaborative role allows me to immerse myself in the layered experiences and the complex and intensive production of the project and, in my position as academic researcher, I reflect critically on the work from within it. It is important to note that I had no role in the conception or initial development of *BLBI*, and was only brought in once it had been fully mapped out and the *BLBI* world was ready to populate. However, I am aware that the combination of my own critical engagement with paranoia and my relative ‘insider’ position allows for a playful performativity in which I am displayed as a partial, shadowy insider. In line with this, it should suffice to state that any performance of a fidelity to the illusive and frustrating impenetrability of this project merely serves to reconstruct some of the affective qualities and mysteries of *BLBI*. No ‘holding back’ of information is actually occurring.

### **Introducing Reactor**

I interviewed members of Reactor for the *Reactor 2006-2011* DVD and used the opportunity to discuss their playful experiments with participation.<sup>1</sup> Adopting the term

---

<sup>1</sup> This interview is available as an extra in the ‘Munkanon’ section of the *Reactor 2006-2011* DVD.

'fun' to refer to the play that Reactor facilitates (the term 'fun' occurs throughout the texts and scripts of *BLBI*), I asked core member Niki Russell how relevant he felt it was to their practice. In his answer he concluded that it was 'relevant', but compared the invitation to have 'fun' in *BLBI* to an invitation made in the *Munkanon* project, which also took place at the Donau Festival in Austria in 2009. In my interview with Russell, he describes how, in *Munkanon*, participants were invited to go on 'the ride of a lifetime'. He went on to assert that despite this invitation, there 'isn't really a ride is there. Well there is. You end up in a car for a bit, then you end up in a space where there's no real ride. You're kind of sat down, or you're doing this or that'. He concluded that this is similar to *BLBI*, which is 'presented as fun, and then the activities don't really equate to that'. This clearly demonstrates a deceptive relationship with promotion and a playful attitude towards participants' expectations. However, in the same interview, Dan Williamson interjected into Russell's reply, undermining the simple and reductive idea of a mere bait and switch attitude towards experience, by insisting that 'when you look back at the *Munkanon* documentation, clearly people *are* having a lot of fun with these kind[s] of activities'. Finally, ex-member (and only successful secret member – see below) Jonathan Waring contributed by critiquing the position of the 'casual observers' that Reactor have worked hard to exclude from their projects, but who inevitably peer in and make assumptions about the kind of play that people are engaging and the agency they have in doing so. He stated that he thinks this concern with other people's playfulness is 'very characteristic of a particular moment that we're in where people worry that other people look like they're having fun, but they might have been tricked into having fun'. Thus, we have at least two layers of paranoia in relation to Reactor and Reactor's projects. Firstly, there is the paranoia of participants who develop an understanding that there is a level of deception and, secondly, there is the paranoia that observers and non-participants have about the agency and understanding of those participating and the motivations of those in charge. In other words, those who remain outside the project might develop concerns that those on the inside are not being appropriately informed on what is *really* going on. To summarise, Reactor admit to having a deceptive relationship towards playfulness. They invite us to play their game, but are deceptive and slippery in their disclosures of what this game entails. However, they also insist that this deception does not mean that people are not actually playing, suggesting that outsiders should be wary of making

assumptions about the agency and understanding participants have or do not have as they play. Hence, whilst, in my understanding, they invite participants to play a complex and multi-layered game of paranoia and investigation, they are simultaneously dismissive of the potential paranoid, critical readings of participants' experiences that emerge from those who have not participated.

Reactor is a UK based art collective with two current 'core' members: Niki Russell and Dan Williamson, as well as one 'guest' member, Stuart Tait. Russell and Williamson have been part of the original collective since it was established in 2002. Tait joined in 2009 as a 'guest' member. It is possible that there is a secret fourth member, but they won't tell me.<sup>2</sup> The potential existence of a secret member is just one of the ways that Reactor construct a sinister, yet playful experience of deception, opaqueness, paranoia and conspiracy, both within individual projects and within the wider project of cloaking and mythologising the methodologies of their ongoing practice. For example, they also collaborate closely with a vast menagerie of guest artists, performers and curators, thus ensuring an on-going confusion as to who is and who is not a member of Reactor in any given project.

Reactor are, they claim, an 'art group that assembles new, collective realities in which audiences and Reactor members co-participate' (reactor.org.uk). They go on to describe the creation of projects that 'explore the ways in which cohesion of social groups is maintained through shared belief systems and collective action' (reactor.org.uk). In 2002 they emerged in Nottingham as a larger artist's studio group. At this point and until 2005 they curated events that brought together a range of Live and Installation artists who specialised in interactivity and participation. However, the group shifted their approach in 2005 with the *Total Ghaos* project (2005). *Total Ghaos* was a three-day participatory and immersive role-play, based on a fantastical totalitarian system that took place in a disused warehouse in Nottingham. The project saw the beginning of a practice in which Reactor worked collaboratively to construct densely detailed interactive art events that have claimed to 'leave no room for the passive observer' (Reactor, 'Microprojects').<sup>3</sup> The events absorb participants into a

---

<sup>2</sup> Each year, on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, Reactor attempt to recruit a 'secret member' through a covert initiation procedure called 'Martinmas Interviews'. Secret membership lasts for one year. Whilst it is unknown if there is a current secret member, or what the role of this member entails, they have declared that for the six years before 2013 no-one was capable of filling the gap (Reactor, *Martinmas*). There has only ever been one secret member that I know of.

<sup>3</sup> This claim currently appears online in a description of their work provided in reference to the workshop 'Reactor Microprojects' that they ran at Bluecoat, Liverpool.

series of experiments that are enacted with a serious tones whilst consisting of farcical activities. They are unsettling systems of ideology, politics, belief and frivolity. The result often feels something like an amateurishly improvised adult role-play game organised by a covert and suspiciously motivated collection of individuals.

The key questions that emerge from this practice pivot around agency, authorship and accountability. To what extent are participants given access to an understanding of the project they are in and what their role in it is? How much agency do participants really have in authoring and developing the project and how much of the project is tightly pre-authored by Reactor? Who is accountable for the ethics in a project when its authorship is fragmentary and unfixed? Instead of working towards providing clear answers to these questions, my response here is to examine the potential efficacy of provoking and encouraging the sense of paranoia that they imply. In reference to current discussions around agency and emancipation in participatory performance, the key point here is that Reactor not only cause us to worry about the agency of participants, but they also create immersive role-plays in which participants are encouraged to play at worrying about their own agency.

### ***Big Lizard's Big Idea***

Writing in the wake of Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*, Alex Farquharson's article 'Common People' describes an emerging 'post-relational aesthetics' that sidesteps 'the art institution altogether or simply uses it as part of the continuum of public spaces, albeit one increasingly penetrated by the logic of capital' (n.p). As I demonstrate below, *BLBI* fits this description, explicitly foregrounding the penetrating 'logic of capital' through its conceptual and aesthetic references to the commodification of experience. The public locations, contexts and concepts of *BLBI*, whose participants have sometimes remained uninformed and potentially oblivious of the event's existence as an 'art' project, adheres to the side-stepping of art-institutions. In applying the term 'post-relational' to *BLBI*, I would extend the definition to include the kind of fictional, fantastical and theatrical scenarios not often found in relational art, but, as demonstrated, crucial to the engagement with paranoia that Reactor offer. Thus, as stated above, my use of the term 'post-relational', developed from Farquharson, is used here in order to position Reactor's practice as a development of and intervention into the practices and concepts that Bourriaud documents and collates.

Anyone walking through Newcastle city centre in November 2009 would have passed by a mobile stage adorned with, and surrounded by, inflatable palm-trees, fold-down tables, green balloons, stickers, banners, bunting, childish crayon drawings, and a plethora of badges, banners and posters depicting a large cartoonish lizard and the words 'Big Lizard's Big Idea' (Fig. 1). Here they would have been approached by one of several individuals dressed in chinos, blue plimsolls and a Hawaiian shirt over a t-shirt with an image of the cartoon lizard on the front. This member of Big Lizard's 'entourage' would have invited, encouraged and coerced them into finding out more about the 'Big Lizard' character and to get involved with the 'Big Idea'. The tone of the conversation would have been reminiscent of uncomfortably over-familiar encounters with street-based charity fundraisers, passive aggressive sales-people, sinisterly benevolent spreaders of religion, or scientologist stress testers. The potential participant might have become awkwardly aware of the occasional use of clumsy and unsubtle physical and verbal persuasion techniques. Series of questions to which he or she could only answer 'Yes' would be followed by 'So do you want to come on board with the Big Idea? Yeh?' All sensible queries on what this Big Idea is are met with evasive, unconvincing analogies – 'The Big Idea is like a big bowl of soup. I once tried to drink a big bowl of soup all at once and I caused a terrible mess' – and the insistence that the only way to really grasp what the Big Idea is, is to come 'on board' and get involved. Importantly 'having fun' is a key lure in the collection of participants. This is evident in the cartoonish aesthetics of the work, the crass colourful costumes, the description of the mobile stage as a 'fun' bus and the frequent use of the word 'fun' as bait in the entourage's conversations with potential participants.

The first step for a participant wanting to 'get down' with Big Lizard and the Big Idea is to go up onto the mobile stage, sit at one of the tables and draw a picture of him or herself and Big Lizard 'doing something'. Hours later, having fully committed him or herself to pursuing Big Lizard's Big Idea and enthusiastically engaged in a series of jolly team-building games, childish micro-performances and esoteric one-to-one encounters, a participant could attend a 'champagne party' in a function room at Newcastle's Theatre Royal.<sup>4</sup> As a guest at this party, they might find themselves in

---

<sup>4</sup> The games and scenarios of play experience by participants include hula-hoop and speed-stack competitions, a secretive ritualistic encounter with an alien oracle called 'Raman-Caa', being a guest in a television studio for the hand-puppet-based 'Big Lizard's Fun-Time Message Show', getting one's tongue checked and measured, and donning a cardboard Big Lizard mask and joining other participants and Big Lizard for a celebratory parade through Newcastle city centre.

fancy dress, or playing blindfold-musical-chairs with nine other people they only know through their involvement in the project that day (Fig. 2). Alternatively, they may be re-



Fig. 1: 'The Fun Bus'. *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009), by Reactor. Wunderbar Festival, Newcastle. Image courtesy of Reactor.



Fig 2: 'Champagne Party'. *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009), by Reactor. Wunderbar Festival, Newcastle. Image courtesy of Reactor.



-cruited to host this party, organising games, decorating the room and keeping the champagne flowing. Either way, it is unlikely they would be any closer to gathering an objective and totalising understanding of who Big Lizard is, what he or she represents, or what his or her Big Idea might be. They might also be questioning why, and for whom, they have engaged in the activities and encounters that they experienced throughout the day.

The Wunderbar Festival in Newcastle, UK, hosted this second occurrence of *BLBI* in November 2009. The project had previously occurred at an alternative music and art festival in Austria and was subsequently redeveloped for Schirn Kunsthalle's *Playing the City 2* art festival in 2010. Reactor describes the project as being 'centred on a Disney-esque mascot, whose irrepressible "fun" persona examined the nature of such characters' (reactor.org.uk). Their website goes on to explain that 'members of the public were encouraged to get involved with the Big Idea through fun and games and a "wholesome" – but ultimately illusive and empty – message' (reactor.org.uk). Thus, an initial response to this claim might suggest that Reactor is a slightly smug facilitator of a frustratingly Sisyphean role-play game, amusing itself as enthusiastic participants struggle over and over to make connections in an insistently nonsensical micro-society. This in itself, I suggest, can be appropriately framed as a paranoid response, relying, as it does, on the presumption of the existence of a clandestine group of deceptive individuals with a clear agenda of trickery and self-amusement.

### **Paranoia**

I read *BLBI* as a playful microcosm of Frederic Jameson's postmodernism, in which attempts at 'cognitive mapping' are undermined by a non-representable totality and an experience of partial, fragmented and disparate cultural logics, occasionally resulting in paranoid conspiracy theories (Jameson; Lewis and Khan 13; Kellner 156). In my use of Farquharson's term 'post-relational', I position *BLBI* in a 'continuum of public spaces' that are 'increasingly penetrated by the logic of capital' (Farquharson n.p.). Jameson's definition of postmodernism suggests that this 'logic of capital' is partial and fragmented. Importantly, instead of trying to resolve this fragmentation, allowing us to cognitively map ourselves through the provision of an easily consumable message, concept or ideal, *BLBI* further immerses us in this experience of partialities and the ominous sense of a non-representable totality. References to our pursuit of the consumable and blameable conspiracy theories that Jameson refers to make up a key

part of the material of *BLBI*. The use of a costume that resembles a 'Grey' (the infamous perpetrators of alien abduction) at the champagne party, the pseudo-psychological tests disguised as games and the (clumsy) attempts at hypnosis-based manipulation techniques all work to immerse participants in a world of recognisable clandestine knowledge and secret agendas.<sup>5</sup> Participants are offered the opportunity to play at paranoia, potentially recognising and performing themselves as obsessive conspiracy theorists, wildly connecting dots in order to access the 'truth' of the 'Big Idea'. The most prominent of the conspiracy theories referenced in *BLBI* is what Tyson Lewis and Richard Khan describe as the Reptoid Hypothesis: the belief, most commonly associated with controversial ex-football commentator David Ike, that the world is secretly run by big lizards.

Thus, there is a sense of conspiratorial paranoia built into the fictional world of the role-play, where participants are asked to play at the paranoid pursuit of knowledge, 'discovering' the fantastical theories, back-stories and characters that lurk behind the *BLBI* micro-system. Of course, layered on top of this 'fun' paranoia, internal to the project itself, is the more realistic drive to understand the actual agenda of Reactor in relation to the agency and understanding of those who choose to participate. This exemplifies the layering of a playful 'clinical' paranoia with an unsettling 'critical' paranoia, definitions outlined by Douglass Kellner in his discussion of *The X-Files (Media Spectacle)*. Kellner's 'critical paranoia' is a means to 'map the forces behind political, social, and personal events' (140). Participants might employ this critical paranoia when thinking through what this participatory project is for and who the 'forces' that might be gaining from their participation are. 'Clinical paranoia' is less judicial and rational, instead disassociating itself 'from a reality principle' and retreating into a 'solipsistic world of persecutorial or occult fantasies' (140). The merging of *BLBI*'s references to far-fetched fantastical conspiracy theories with the very real questions about the desires and motivations of the collective Reactor (whomever they may be) facilitates a complex response to the work's play with critical and clinical paranoia. Thus, the project is ambiguous about whether participants should play at being concerned about the fantastical characters and fictional systems of power that run the *BLBI* system (to play at 'clinical paranoia'), or be genuinely concerned

---

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion and critical socio-political exploration of the prevalence of such conspiracies in recent decades, see Jodi Dean's *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace*.

about the motives of the covert collective of people facilitating, encouraging and defining that play (to harbour and employ a critical paranoia). In other words, participants are not sure if they are really being duped by an art group, or just being asked to play the role of participants being duped by a Big Lizard. Not only might those who are participating worry about their agency whilst playing, but they also have the opportunity to *play* at worrying about agency. Of course, as participants step in and out of the project, whether physically, or through the manner of their private thoughts and interactions, they play across the critical and clinical approaches to paranoid investigation.

For me, this productive paranoia offers a welcome departure from the one-dimensional, didactic facilitation of conviviality or antagonism found in much recent participatory and relational work. It is productive primarily because it encourages one to maintain a critical uneasiness in response to work that is insistently either feel-good or feel-bad. Paranoia opens us up to the possible agendas that are obscured through the warmth of everyone getting along or the titillation of an ethical conflict. One way of accounting for the uneasy and deceptive relationship with agency and play in *BLBI* is to view the work in relation to the ‘feel-good positions’ that Claire Bishop sees in the work of artists such as Rirkrit Tirivanija and Liam Gillick (79). These ‘perennial favourites’ of a few curators on the international art scene were, for Bishop, complicit in a ‘cozy situation’ in which ‘art does not feel the need to defend itself, and it collapses into compensatory (and self-congratulatory) entertainment’ (79). Bishop is critiquing Bourriaud’s ‘relational aesthetics’ here, which describes a ‘set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space’ (Bourriaud 113). Farquharson’s notion of the ‘post-relational’ implies that Bourriaud’s artists are still too caught up in the art institution, not yet side-stepping the context of the gallery; Bishop’s concern, however, articulated in *Artificial Hells*, is that relational work refuses the ‘secondary audience’ of art gallery attendees (9). For Bishop, participatory art needs the ‘mediating object, concept, image or story’ that links the processes of the project to a ‘meaningful product’ (9). After the participation has ended, Bishop, it seems, demands an aid in our ability to cognitively map its ideas, experiences and possibilities. Of course, this is exactly what Reactor refuse.

One of Bishop’s many concerns about the dominance of process over product is, as demonstrated in her response to the work of Tirivanija and Gillick, that ‘having fun’

is *all* that is occurring ('Antagonism'). When a secondary audience is not catered for, the risk is that people turn up, have a nice time and leave again. A swift glance at the *BLBI* project is more likely to inspire this kind of criticism than encourage ethical concerns about the agency and understanding that participants have whilst playing. This is exemplified in my experience of many potential participants who declined to get involved because they presumed, on seeing the Fun Bus, that the project was 'for kids'. It was often not until individuals began participating, whether through extended conversations with entourage, or full engagement with the activities on offer, that the experience of potential deception emerged. This creates a flipped version of the critique of worried observers that Jonathan Waring put forward in the interview described above (*Reactor 2006-2011*). Here, instead of being concerned for participants, outside viewers, similarly to Bishop, see mundane playfulness. At the same time, those playing worry about their agency in doing so. Paranoia shifts from the unknowing outsider who naively 'gets it' to the insider-participant whose developing proximity to the core of the project only increases its obscurity

This refusal of a secondary audience is essential to the potential socio-political efficacy of *BLBI* and the experience it offers participants. It provides a context in which participants can play whilst simultaneously developing pleasurable 'clinical' and productive 'critical' paranoia in response to that play. It does not require that play ends and then someone else looks at documentation and works out what was *really* going on (a situation that is, of course, near-impossible in postmodern culture where there is no end of play or outside expert). In the following section, I employ psychoanalytic theory in order to argue that *BLBI* offers a space in which a contradictory flickering between facilitator and commander and a clumsy pursuit of unattainable levels of playfulness and enjoyment allows for this simultaneity of play and productive paranoia.

### **Reactor's Play**

As stated above, my definition of the 'play' (referred to more often as 'fun' in the project's texts and scripts) on offer in *BLBI* emerges from select elements of the observations and analyses of child development developed by Donald Winnicott and the dissection of contemporary modes of Lacanian 'enjoyment' developed and supplemented by Slavoj Žižek (Winnicott 51-70; Žižek, *Lacan* 104). The personification of these vying psychoanalytic characters in the overseeing persona of

'Big Lizard' goes some way to explaining why the entourage were consistently non-committal when describing the reptile's gender (Fig. 3). In the following I describe how, on the one hand, 'Big Lizard' is the maternal facilitator essential to Winnicott's play and, on the other, how he or she is the dictatorial paternal figure, pushing us to fully enjoy ourselves and taking pleasure in our inability to do so (Fig. 3).



Fig 3: 'Big Lizard's Parade'. *Big Lizard's Big Idea* (2009), by Reactor. Donau Festival, Austria. Image courtesy of Reactor.

The element of Winnicott's observations and analyses that is important here is the crucial third stage of a child's development in relation to play (51-70). To summarise, after the first stage, in which baby and object are merged, and the second, in which the presence of a mother figure facilitates a repudiation and re-acceptance of the object as separate from the subject, comes the third stage, in which a child is 'alone in the presence of someone' (63-64). It is here that play emerges, reliant on a person who loves; a 'person who loves and who is therefore reliable is available and continues to be available when remembered after a period of being forgotten' (64). It is important to note that this does not need to be the female mother. Winnicott is describing an essential outsider, a maternal figure whose presence allows for us to play in a state of solitude, whether we grow up with a mother in that role or a different adult. I suggest that *Big Lizard's* 'entourage' sell themselves, the character of 'Big Lizard', and the elusive concept of the 'Big Idea' as an enmeshed collection of omnipresent, benevolent (M)Others that facilitates our play within the *BLBI* game. Thus, in *BLBI* the figure of the maternal Other appears not as a single adult agent, but as a mixture of characters,

concepts and structures which encourages productive play. Play relies on the participant's ability to recall and dwell upon the relationship of their actions to the maternal Otherness associated both with the character Big Lizard and with the enveloping nature of the project itself. Alongside this, whilst many of the activities on offer rely on an interaction and engagement with other participants, there is also the potential for the development of an internal, solipsistic investigation of the relationship of individuals' actions and encounters to an elusive character (Big Lizard) and concept (Big Idea). Thus both the character 'Big Lizard' and the elusive but omnipresent concept of the 'Big Idea' provide the Winnicottian notion of being 'alone in the presence of someone' (64).

However, the corporate sheen and ever-present sense of ulterior motives and undeclared desires simultaneously constructs a counterpoint to this benevolent, maternal Otherness. Big Lizard also emerges as a pantomimic version of the tyrannical superego that Žižek suggests bombards us, in contemporary times, 'from all sides with different versions of the injunction "Enjoy!"' (*Lacan* 104). In my reading of *BLBI*, a persistent, demanding figure who makes impenetrable demands exists alongside Winnicott's facilitator of play. It is, of course, not always clear which one of these figures participants are dealing with.

For Žižek, the contemporary liberal capitalist subject *must* be able to fully enjoy 'from direct enjoyment in sexual performance to enjoyment in their professional achievement or in spiritual awakening' (*Lacan* 104). For Freud, guilt was caught up in the violation of moral inhibitions; now we are made to feel bad when we are unable to enjoy (Žižek, *Lacan* 104). My observation of this demand in *BLBI* is essential to my argument. The injunction 'Enjoy', overwhelmingly enwrapped in guilt and duty, has the potential to stop us reflecting on what we are enjoying and the effects of our enjoyment. However, in the following I suggest that *BLBI* has the potential to allow us to experience this demand for enjoyment whilst simultaneously being critically paranoid about what it really wants from us.

In *BLBI* (as in the socio-political context it lampoons), 'Enjoy!' is not a directly spoken demand, and its consistently implicit nature make it difficult to pinpoint an example. The persisting encouragement of enjoyment, fun and untroubled pleasure is built into the structure and aesthetic of the project. In order for us to fully participate in *BLBI*, to get closer to the elusive 'Big Idea', we must give ourselves over to enjoyment.

And whilst we might receive looks of disapproval from fellow gallery- or theatre-goers if we're seen to be having too much fun, in *BLBI* the peer-pressure is geared towards getting carried away with it all. Aaron Juneau, in his review of a more recent Reactor project, *Green Man and Regular Fellows* (2011), captures this when he concludes that 'instead of stiffly sipping red wine and trying hopelessly to talk about Deleuze, I held hands with strangers, gave a grown man a piggyback and danced and howled with wonderful irregularity to the jingling of tambourines. Cheers!' (n.p)

Of course the superegoic injunction to enjoy is cruelly complicated through its emergence at a time when the objects offered for our enjoyment are 'more hampered than ever' (Žižek, *Lacan* 37). Products and experience are domesticated, rendered undamaging and safely virtualised, so that we are deprived of the truly enjoyable properties that might shift the experience from a mundane pleasure to a Lacanian *jouissance* (38). As Žižek demonstrates, we live in a system of 'coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol' (38). Reading the play on offer in *BLBI* through this Žižekian context suggests an awkwardly multi-layered experience. Firstly, the project insists that we overcome our inhibitions, fully and unabashedly participating in silly games with strangers, floppy hugs with Disney-esque mascots and sugar and champagne fuelled partying in fancy dress. However, this push to 'let yourself go' is undermined by the family-friendly aesthetic, as well as the occasional overwhelming collections of infants surrounding Big Lizard and the Fun Bus. These reminders of responsibility, decency, and apparent innocence might hinder an adult participant's ability to fully let go and enjoy playing. Thus, after all this, Reactor's play emerges as a split between the injunction to fully, uncontrollably enjoy and the limited, hampered, 'decaffeinated' fun that is actually on offer.

It is these 'splits' between what's offered and what's experienced that are essential in generating the productive paranoia in Reactor's projects. For example, the Winnicottian aims I observe in the project are unavoidably enmeshed in deception and failure. It is absurd to suggest that an art project and its characters can provide the safe and encouraging context for play that an adult caregiver can for their child. For all the gleeful infantilising elements of the project's aesthetic and tone, it is still an art piece aimed at adults. Of course, the important element of the Winnicottian theory of child-development that I am working with is the essential relationship between the ability to productively and confidently play and the non-intrusive presence of a facilitating, benevolent other. However, my potentially reductive application of this psychoanalytic

theory should foreground an important split that re-occurs in *BLBI* and throughout Reactor's projects. This is the unnerving disparity between an enunciated invitation (to indulge in safe, infantile, productive play) and the position of enunciation (the impossibility of authentically facilitating this experience for adults in an art piece). In his foreword to the second edition of *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, Žižek discusses this split between enunciated and enunciating subjects in relation to Joshua Piven's and David Borgenicht's bestselling handbook, *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*. The book, which gives tips on surviving such scenarios as alligator or lion attacks, is, Žižek claims, 'totally useless in our social reality' (xcii). Thus, whilst 'the situations it describes are in fact serious, and the solutions are correct – the only problem is: *Why are the authors telling us all this? Who needs advice like this?*' (xcii). Similarly, the peculiar discrepancy between the Winnicottian aims I observe (the benevolent facilitation of productive play) and the realities of setting up a 'fun' bus for adults on a public high-street reflects and leads to a questioning of authorial intentions and motivations: *Why are Reactor providing this? Who needs to play like this?* This split, also evidenced in Reactor's confessions in my interview and the uneasy questioning it encourages, plays an essential role in the nurturing of paranoia in relation to the collective. To summarise, this brief psychoanalytic approach to play in *BLBI* observes a lovingly facilitating, omnipresent, but un-intrusive 'mother-figure' alongside an unnerving 'father-figure' who insistently permits and implicitly prohibits our playing. Again, these two figures related to the structure and concepts of the project itself, as well as being personified in the character 'Big Lizard'.

### **Conclusion**

Eve Sedgwick discusses the problems of celebrating paranoiac pursuits of knowledge, quoting her HIV activist friend on the conspiracies around the epidemics history: 'Supposing we were ever so sure of all those things – what would we know then that we don't already know?' (123) In line with this dismissal, I admit that it might well be over determining the socio-political efficacy of the work to suggest that *BLBI* offers a space for practicing an essential paranoid investigative attitude towards invitations of frivolous play and enjoyment in the socio-political world outside the project. There is, however, a clear satirical edge to the project, which mocks the contemporary subject's



uneasy relationship to the manic injunction 'Enjoy!' and the impossibility of fully enjoying the banalised, decaffeinated experiences on offer. Ideally, participants might, after experiencing *BLBI*, develop their own critically paranoid relationship towards the motivations that lie behind the demand for enjoyment. Findings from these critically paranoid investigations might even lead to useful tools for resistance or change, even if that just means finding ways to refuse to participate when we feel unsure about the ethics of what we are participating in

However, I suggest a more productive and realistic outcome might be a confrontation with our own complicity in the perpetuation of this injunction. This relies on an understanding of a third type of paranoia, a constructive paranoia. If 'clinical paranoia' is a kind of affliction in which we obsess about the activities of malevolent others and 'critical paranoia' is the insistent pursuit of answers around who is really running things and what they are up to, then a 'constructive paranoia' enables us to escape the fact that there is no 'hidden subject who pulls the strings', by constructing the myth of a 'consistent, closed order' (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 18-19). It is this constructive paranoia that arises in respect to the contradictions, fragmentation, contingencies, and splits in the fictional world of *Big Lizard* and the real world of Reactor. Our paranoia constructs the Others for whom we attempt and fail to enjoy. When we ask 'Why are Reactor providing this?' in response to a contradiction between a position of enunciation and an enunciated position, we rely on a fantasy of a consistent, self-knowing subject as 'author'. By resisting this fantasy and allowing for inconsistencies, fragmentations and splits to emerge in their existence as the author 'Reactor' and in the temporary systems they construct, Reactor remind participants of the role of their own paranoid fantasies in holding things together, in keeping things going and in defining what and who these 'things' are.

### **Works Cited**

- Big Lizard's Big Idea*. By Reactor. Donau Festival, Krems, Austria. 30 April- 2 May. 2009.
- . Wunderbar Festival, Newcastle, UK. 12-15 November.
- . Playing the City 2, Frankfurt, Germany. 16-18 Sept. 2010.
- Bishop, Claire. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 51-79.

- . *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2002.
- Connor, Fred. 'Ivan's Dogs: Occasions'. *an*. 2 Feb. 2006.  
<<http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/365681>>.
- Dean, Jodi. *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outerspace to Cyberspace*. New York: Cornell UP, 1998.
- Farquharson, Alex. 'Common People'. *Frieze* 93 (2005).  
<[http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/common\\_people/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/common_people/)>.
- Heddon, Deirdre, Helen Iball and Rachel Zerihan. 'Come Closer: Confessions of Intimate Spectators in One to One Performance'. *Contemporary Theatre Review* 22.1 (2012): 120-33.
- Icke, David. *The Biggest Secret: The Book That Will Change the World*. 2nd ed. Ryde: David Icke Books, 1999.
- Ivan's Dogs*. By Reactor. Sideshow Festival, Nottingham. 4 June 2006.
- Jackson, Shannon. 'Social Practice'. *Performance Research* 11:3 (2006) 87-126.
- Jameson, Frederick. *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992.
- Juneau, Aaron. 'Review: Green Man and Regular Fellows'. *a-n*. 22 June 2013.  
<<http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/1650841>>.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Media Spectacle*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Reactor. 'Reactor Microprojects'. *bluecoat.org.uk*. Bluecoat. 23 April 2013.  
<<http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/events/view/events/1292>>.
- . 'The Martinmas Interviews'. *reactor.org.uk*. 23 April 2013.  
<<http://reactor.org.uk/projects/martinmas>>.
- Reactor.org.uk. 23 April 2013. <<http://reactor.org.uk/>>.
- Lewis, Tyson and Richard Kahn. 'The Reptoid Hypothesis: Utopian and Dystopian Representational Motifs in David Icke's Alien Conspiracy Theory'. *Utopian Studies* 16.1: 45-75.  
<<http://richardkahn.org/writings/culturalstudies/reptoidhypothesis.pdf>>.
- Reactor 2006-2011*. Reactor, 2012.

*Total Ghaos*, by Reactor. Crocus Street, Nottingham. 7-9 Oct. 2005.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003.

Tait, Stuart, Niki Russell and Dan Williamson. Interview with Bruce Asbestos. *thisisnotacircular*. Trade Gallery. 24 June 2010. 23 April. 2013. <<http://www.tradegallery.org/thisisnotacircular.html>>.

Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality*. Oxford: Routledge, 2005.

Žižek, Slavoj. *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Verso, 2008.

---. *How to Read Lacan*. London: Granta Books, 2006.

---. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992.

## Towards an Anarchist Theatre

By Matt Cawson

### Introduction

This manifesto is impressionistic in both its content and structure by necessity: the inherent paradox in writing and structuring an anarchist manifesto, or trying to pin down anything close to a *paidic* aesthetic, is the precession of failure. I attempt to give a sense of the underlying principles that frame my endeavour and to argue that *paidia* ought to lie behind any anarchist aesthetic. I suggest that the absolute 'presence' required by the *paidic* participant is central to igniting life to the point of radical awareness, which is a political as well as a human and aesthetic act. I frame *paidia* as an aesthetic principle rather than a particular aesthetic form, which must be the product of ongoing experimentation and hence protean.

As a theatrical, rather than a political manifesto, it does not delve into any in-depth explication of the anarcho-syndicalist polemic. It is also assumed that the reader will be familiar enough with anti-capitalist arguments to understand the polemical drive without need for in-depth political analysis. Stylistically, this piece drifts in and out of traditional structure, depending on the nature of the information I wish to convey: the content determines the form.

The spirit of the manifesto and the rehearsal techniques offered are intended as sketches; to be prescriptive would be anathematic. The techniques outlined are in response to, and developed from, a recent performance laboratory entitled *Vacuum* at the Grotowski Institute in collaboration with Norwegian writer/director Robin Riegels. It is a response to my own experience rather than an account of Riegel's specific intent. Moreover, my principal focus here is methodological, *viz*, the pursuit of an approach to performance, of a suitable acting style; the generation or selection of material is not addressed.

Finally, it should be read in the playful spirit it is intended, remembering of course that play can be both light and dark and as serious as it is frivolous.

---

I fail before I begin.

---

**Proposition**

I see a capitalist world that has succumbed to entropy, to perpetual wars against abstract concepts, to famines, economic failures and rising poverty. It is the chaos of a flawed system. Billions of individuals, seduced by individualism, impotently compete within a system designed to subdue, deny, suppress.

We have become infected by an ideology; we have become destructive.

We have forgotten what it means to share. Our theatre has become an expression of this malady.

We have become like flowers in a market stall

artificially arranged

aestheticised unnecessarily (are not flowers more beautiful in their natural setting?)

commodities

exchange values and use values

zombies

cut off from our life source

We must fight to remain firmly planted in the nourishing soil of our own existence, which is the moment, the glorious moment of the present. We must fight to remember the present. But instead we run on fear, which is an overinvestment in an unknowable future, and shame, which is the millstone of an imperfect past. I see a world seduced by artifice. The sheer intensity of the moment is where life exists; but we were seduced by artifice because you cannot sell the moment, only the promise of a better one, one that can never be realised because we are eternally divorced from the present.

Capitalism has plundered our lives, and sells it back to us in an impossible form as though behind a gauze: slightly hazy, slightly muffled, slightly unreal.

Theatre must tear down the gauze.

### Against a Vampiric Theatre

The theatre of Dionysus still lives, though seldom in theatres. There, its monstrous offspring beams from neon lights on Broadway strips, blinding us to its true nature. The sanguine parent, still bellowing through the centuries, looms at the fringes, in underground performances made in the shadows of commercialism. '*The blood is the life*' (Stoker 118, 372).

Commercial theatre is more insidious than Peter Brook diagnosed in *The Empty Space*. It is not deadly; it is *vampiric* (see Marx 182).

The West End presents us with a conveyor-belt of still-births: dead and dying banalities that extract money from zombies<sup>1</sup> who pay to see animated corpses. This is narcissism in the extreme, in which both spectator and performer are grotesque mirrors of each other's bloodless death throes:

an illusion within an illusion

*a danse macabre*

theatre must never be that

theatre must be an awakening

We must seek a theatre of adrenalin, a theatre that reunites us with the moment.

The struggle for existence is as urgent as ever. Our struggle is no longer physical, but spiritual; the comforts and distractions that lure us into inertia feed our death drive, our *Thanatos*. How obediently we sleepwalk down this adumbral path!

Our new tragedy lies not in suffering, but in numbing lack, in somnambulation, apathy

mass hypnosis

a commodity traded by commodities

a ruffled pool beneath which lies neglect and stagnation

a yearned for and premature inanimacy

a death-in-life in which Eros lies bleeding.

We must call upon the spirits of the greats, ancient and modern: on the choruses of Aeschylus and Sophocles, on the Dionysus of Euripides; on Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski and Julian Beck. We seek an encounter with the ancient gods of the human spirit. We give ourselves as freely to darkness as to light. The darkness we become will

---

<sup>1</sup> See Harman (esp. 142-60), for a detailed analysis of 'zombie capitalism' which I have freely adapted here to describe those *in* the system (us) rather than the system itself (which is vampiric).

become darker; the lightness we reflect will become brighter. We must eagerly embrace all that is real and freely give all that we are.

Theatre must remember the impetus that stirred it from the torpor of oblivion: the *élan vital*<sup>2</sup> whose roots are in the fundamental need to create and to share what we create.

To live.

It must reconnect with the primal and creative (not mimetic) impulse. It must remember how to play. In this respect, theatre is by definition a political act.

### **Towards Creativity**

I begin with a very simple premise: *the act of creation is the act of bringing something into existence that did not previously exist.* The implications of this are profound.

Creativity

is discovery

lies at the outer limits of human experience and knowledge

demands the breaking of boundaries and rules

demands the rejection of orthodox truths, conventions, and  
methodologies

rejects compromise and demands that we go beyond the known and  
beyond the *accepted*, which means we will at times go beyond  
the *acceptable*

comes from within ourselves, so must involve an encounter with  
unknown (perhaps repressed and/or denied) aspects of ourselves  
must reject the safety of the illusory and constructed ego: the ego is a  
prison. The ego is the palace of mediocrity.

True creativity is a dangerous game in which one risks annihilation.

*We fight then to discover, to experience the truth about ourselves; to tear away the masks behind which we hide daily. We see theatre – especially in its palpable, carnal aspect – as a place of provocation, a challenge the actor sets himself and also, indirectly, other people. Theatre only has a meaning if it*

---

<sup>2</sup> The *élan vital* can be described as the original common impulse, or 'vital impetus', from which all life grew. See Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (53-54; 174-85); cf. Copeau (197).

*allows us to transcend our stereotyped vision, our conventional feelings and customs, our standards of judgment – not just for the sake of doing so, but so that we may experience what is real and, having already given up all daily escapes and pretenses, in a state of complete defenselessness unveil, give, discover ourselves. In this way – through shock, through the shudder which causes us to drop our daily masks and mannerisms – we are able, without hiding anything, to entrust ourselves to something we cannot name but in which live Eros and Charitas. (Grotowski 256-67)*

The fruits of a successful leap into the unknown, a beautiful encounter with the potentially terrifying Other, cannot be prostituted for fame or glory, for this is the realm of the ego, not of true art (which are opposing principles) (262).

We must reject vampiric theatre.

Theatre is not a commodity, but a gift.

The pure actor is not a celebrity-hungry ego but a semi-divine being whose self-sacrifice is an act of pure love: an unconditional love of humanity and the belief in something better, a belief that humankind is capable of better.

Humankind *is* capable of better.

Imagination is sacred. In order to set it free, we must reject the present ideology, which belongs to a failing economic system whose rules and operations contradict its narrative. We must step outside the narrative of the Western economic success story, which we recognise as a lie. We must find a new narrative, new rules, a new and sacred turf of anarchic play whence to view the world afresh and to escape the nihilism of false discourse. We must find an altogether new reality.

### ***Paidia***

Roger Caillois, building on Johan Huizinga's theories (*Homo Ludens*), distinguishes between two forms of play: *paidia* and *ludus*:

*[Games] can also be placed on a continuum between two opposite poles. At one extreme an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety is dominant. It manifests a kind of uncontrollable fantasy that can be designated by the term paidia. At the opposite extreme, this frolicsome and impulsive exuberance is almost entirely absorbed*



*or disciplined by a complimentary, and in some respects inverse, tendency to its anarchic and capricious nature [...] I call this second component ludus. (13)*

Importantly, *paidia* is not a thing, a commodity, an ‘object outside of us’ with a ‘use value’ (Marx 1-2) in the way that, say, a computer game is. It is something within us, a reward in itself. It cannot be bought, sold, quantified, or qualified in the way that *ludic* play – the domain of commercial ‘games’ – can. We have managed to commoditise *ludus*, but not *paidia*. *Paidia* needs no commodities, nothing to deflect from the joy of social play, of togetherness, of shared being in which we can ‘lose ourselves’ in a world of mutually created fantasy, a world of active and open imagination instead of directed, passive reception, a world that rejects price tags and brand labels and speaks directly to the shared and the universal. It is impervious to extractive economics.<sup>3</sup> It is a world in which an Armani suit is equal to a Primark t-shirt in its meaninglessness.

*P a i d i a*  
is a concept that is not readily committed to the page: that very act is impossible  
is creative  
is not an aesthetic, but an underlying principle for the perpetual rediscovery of  
*necessary* form  
is not the Golden Fleece, but the quest  
is the elusive ‘pleasure-dome’<sup>4</sup> at the outer reaches of the imagination

*Paidia* drives the aesthetic counterpart to anarchism.

What they have in common is humanity.

This leads to another problem:

*a definition of human nature*

An adequate definition has eluded the finest minds of history, so mine will not solve the riddle. I offer anarchism, like Noam Chomsky (‘On Anarchism’), as an approach to this riddle based on a utopian faith in human nature as a social, compassionate and creative phenomenon. It stands or falls by that.

Humanity is capable of *better*.

This is not the best of all possible worlds.

<sup>3</sup> See Vanderburg (49) for an account of the myth of trickle-down economics that runs exactly counter to its extractive (bottom-up) reality.

<sup>4</sup> See S. T. Coleridge’s ‘Kubla Khan’ (which begins ‘In Xanadu did Kubla Khan / A stately pleasure dome decree’) in which (as I read it) the pleasure dome becomes a symbol of freedom, unrestrained creativity and ecstatic imagination. The poem, about a lost poetic vision, was written shortly after Coleridge and Southey’s unfulfilled *Pantisocracy* (rule of all) scheme, which was to set up a proto-anarchist, utopian commune by the Susquehanna River in America (the plan fell apart for various reasons, not least of which was Southey’s absurd wish to take servants).

Mikhail Bakunin said that the post-revolutionaries must create 'not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself' (266). In other words, there is little beyond principles to see the creation of a new world, a society dedicated to the liberty of the individual within the ethical framework of the common good.

Another paradox?

Anarchism is not entropic.

It is not chaos.

It is an ideal awaiting form.

Content precedes form; it must create its own form.

It does not reject order but hierarchy as an ordering principle.

It embodies a faith in ourselves that goes deeper than our faith in a volatile and exploitative economy. Yet we are so reliant on the financial system that the terror of its collapse outweighs the clear desirability of its destruction.

Just as anarchism cannot map out for certain the terrain of an anarcho-syndicalist society, so the exercise of *paidia* in the rehearsal room cannot be directed towards predetermined ends. It can, however, provide the intellectual and creative space and liberty to experiment, to dispel fears of the unknown and to embrace its possibilities, to open the heart to the possibility of alternative ways of experiencing ourselves.

We cannot, despite all temptation, impose a preconceived scheme on the outcomes without damaging the legitimacy of what may emerge, especially considering what we seek to discover is ourselves, and the experience of ourselves.

All we can do is play.

### **Beyond Fucking Theatre**

Julian Beck wrote that an anarchist theatre must be based on 'Spontaneous creation: Improvisation: Freedom' (Wills 118) and that 'theatre principally is the dancing place of the people / and therefore the dancing place of the gods who dance in ecstasy only amid the people' (120). Beck attempted to create an ecstatic theatre based on free love – 'fuck means peace'<sup>5</sup> – and the democratic principles of anarchism, the place of which is

---

<sup>5</sup> 'Fuck for peace' was one of the revolutionary slogans in *Paradise Now* (Innes 272). 'Fuck means peace' was another and one of the 'rites' performed was the 'Rite of Universal Intercourse' (Beck and Malina 138).

in the street: 'outside of the cultural and economic limitations of institutional theatre'. Its spirit is a 'theatre of awareness' (118-19).

A Theatre of Awareness? Awareness of *what*?

Politics?

No. Awareness is rife, yet still we slumber.

An anarchist theatre must be connected to the moment, to *life*. A *living* theatre. Not a *fucking* theatre.

The anarchist performer must be present. She must be connected to the glorious moment of her own life and she must help to reconnect us with our own: 'If one can experiment in theatre, one can experiment in life' (Beck, qtd in Downs, Ramsay and Wright 403).

'Life, revolution and theater are three words for the same thing: an unconditional NO to the present society' (qtd in Shank 9).

The distinction between performer and spectator must dissolve into the union of an event, a celebration of the mutually created moment with its mutually created aesthetic.

This is an aesthetic and a political principle

It is an escape from the banal

A tear in the map through which we glimpse the ghostly terrain

A taste of the real<sup>6</sup>

Freedom

But but but but but (did Beck forget? In his 1960s preoccupation with sex?)

the joy of play and laughter

the realisation of one's own absurdity (not genitals)

the realisation that you are ridiculous, and that *it doesn't matter*

is true liberation

We are each other's mirrors

We are each other's clowns

This is our most beautiful role

## **Laughter**

---

<sup>6</sup> This notion of the 'real', as well as the previous map analogy, is taken from the opening page of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*.

makes life bearable

allows us to peer into the abyss, and prevents the abyss from peering  
back into us<sup>7</sup>

prevents us from taking ourselves seriously

is the natural bedfellow of play, the sacred space of  
creativity

is our greatest weapon against pomposity

is, along with death, the great leveller

is an anarchic convulsion of the body

reminds us that the body is more than sex.

The realisation of ourselves is the explosion of our faces in laughter.

Brecht claimed: 'Humourless people are ridiculous' (Bradby and McCormick 112). The truth is we are all ridiculous. We are as ridiculous as we are beautiful, frivolous as we are serious, absurd as we are profound. He who does not find himself ridiculous is a deluded man indeed.

We are hopeless shadows of impossible ideals, parodies of our own grotesque egos. We must not fear bursting these bubbles; we must be as happy to roll in mud as to lay in fine satin. The scatology of the commedia dell'arte holds as much truth as the musings of our wisest priests and philosophers.

*We are as well to venerate a gilded turd as a crucified messiah.*

### **Ritual and Structure in *Paidic* Practice: Laboratory discoveries**

In a recent laboratory at the Grotowski Institute, we discovered that there is an inherent difficulty in achieving the desired level of openness, play and impulse. It was agreed amongst the performers that, perversely, what was needed was a structured, even ritualised approach. Like Arnold Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's writings on ritual, the anarchic, or *paidic* state needed containing if we were to safely enter into a 'liminal' state of 'betwixt and between' (Turner 95-96; cf. Deflem).

*Anarchy needed to be framed.*

Another paradox?

Perhaps, but only linguistic:

---

<sup>7</sup> See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster. And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee' (146).

Anarchism is based firmly on a simple but rigid ethical structure. *Paidia* is marked out by its own containing label, by the safe knowledge that it is *play*: it is self-contained; its self-containment is its precondition. Likewise, any exploration of a deeper self normally masked by rules and traditional rationality and/or morality must be protected from chaos, or loss of control. Thus the environment necessitated the safety of a ritualised demarcation in both time and space. These practices included a ritualised cleaning of the space and a period of communal meditation before the explorations began. ‘Structures’, or geometrical shapes, were marked on the floor inside of which experimentation could take place, the stepping in and out of which acquired a deep significance: a certain formalism began to emerge through necessity. The use of blindfolds (which acted on one level like masks) likewise acquired a ceremonial quality to signify the change in ‘rules’ and the entering into, and exiting from, a liminal space. In other words, *paidia* did not just ‘happen’ spontaneously, at least not within the limitations of a single laboratory. If we were to become fully open, we had a need to be protectively encased (a fundamental truth of anarchism).

*Paidia* began to suggest its own forms.

The next step is to transgress them.

To transgress is to transcend.

### **A Meditative Receptivity**

There is a place for normalcy  
if only to disprove its own authenticity  
to confirm its banality;  
We are sitting in an illusion.  
Life has brought us here to learn something  
    the lessons are sensed  
    but not yet fully grasped  
We have been slashing and burning for too long.  
It is time to take distance. Rest. Replenish.  
Let the rain come.  
Let life grow.  
Step out of the shadows and brave the sun

Let go.

Let the moment live, and live the moment.

Look for melting.

In the standing, look for melting.

Do not try harder. *Try less.*

Look for what is –

do not search for fire in the rain

seek water.

Be the river bed

eternally cleansed

by the flow of lived moments.

Be present. Play.

We are finding something here

as yet indistinct

but we sense it

presence takes effort

but effort destroys presence

look instead for melting

it will come

it hovers just beyond our reach

waiting

when we are ready it will know

it is the

anarchy

of

the

pre-

reflective

self

it is myself before I am thought

*cogito ergo non sum*

but

more than this

it is something  
more than this.

### **A Rehearsal Exercise**

I blindfold myself and chant the opening lines to *Kubla Khan*:

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea. (Coleridge n.p.)*

I chant this over and over until the words lose their meaning. I am left with sounds, textures, tastes, rhythms. I let the impulses spread through my body, form shapes, gestures, convulsions. Occasionally, certain words become stuck in my throat, swell, and need to be forced out as though clearing blockages. I play with the sound, which in turn plays with my body; I no longer speak but am spoken by the words. It is trance-like, but I am alive, and more conscious than ever before: each fraction of a moment is felt, intensely present. It is a state of heightened awareness and the experience of reality is transformed.

The shock-waves of the Big Bang articulate meaning	I am without
within my body; my <i>élan vital</i> flows thence beauty	but I am not without
it has its origins in the Origin	I am body
It is energy	I am light

I am almost fourteen billion years old.

I am present. I have become the words. Their meaning defies analysis, but are felt, known, understood. They change shape with each encounter; they articulate themselves differently, playing with me, playing me, simply playing.

I am not the word, but the energy that articulates it  
not the dance but the joy that fuels it  
not the music but the pulse that drives it.

My sinews become an Aeolian lute played by this tempest of sound.

I remove the blindfold. Another joins me. We are two, both being played, playing with each other, a symphonic negotiation of instincts. Impulse becomes *com*-pulse. We build and break rhythms to prevent automation. The text must be played with, yet resisted; it must not become autonomic. We do not become the mandarins of reason, the puppets of rhythm, nor the toys of thought; we remain active players of the game.



We open ourselves to Dionysos. We become maenads. Our bodies are the temenos of our psyches, the precinct of our souls where Apollo dances with Dionysos: an intricate dance of mutual resistance, delicate but wild. We remain aware. We must always remain aware.

We are alive. We create each other. We take Nishida over Sartre, Tetsurō over Heidegger. We discover not the *meaning* but the *life* of the text in this encounter.

We find not the meaning of life  
but the life of meaning.

The space between us sparkles, crackles, fizzes with possibilities. We are heliographs of mutual creativity; we ignite the *basho*<sup>8</sup> – a luminescent energy of perpetual affirmation and negation:

There I am created anew, moment by moment, in the gaze of another  
I cleanse myself of shame by becoming other  
and there I discover  
the negation of myself is myself.

---

Life is offered a brief permanence in the moment, like a shaft of light offered a fleeting solidity in a smoky wood.

A brief reality.

An encounter.

Like all moments of ecstasy, it too soon disperses.

There is a word for this ecstasy, this freedom, this deindividuated, spontaneous improvisation.

It is *thiasos*:  
a divine and ecstatic community

---

<sup>8</sup> See Kitarō Nishida's 'Basho'; cf. Robert Carter's 'Watsuji Tetsurō', which defines *basho* as the 'place' (or space) between things, that defines their interrelatedness: 'the dynamic and creative origination of all relationships and all networks of interactions' (Carter).

its condition is *paidia*.

It is an awakening.

The *paidic* space is a *khōra*: a womb in which everything gestates.

It is prior to the *ludic*.

It is Dionysiac mystery.

*Paidia* dances with the moon whilst *ludus* bows to the sun

It is the impulse, the *élan vital*, the primordial, universal, and creative.

arbitrary.

are exposed as

the rules

It is the precondition of creativity

It is the soul of anarchy

It is the spirit of play

and the lifeblood

of humanity

### Works Cited

- Bakunin, Mikhail. *Bakunin on Anarchism*. Ed. & trans. Sam Dolgoff. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2006.
- Beck, Julian, and Judith Malina. *Paradise now: Collective Creation of the Living Theatre*. New York: Random House, 1971.
- Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. London: MacMillan, 1922 [1907].
- Bradby, David, and John McCormick. *People's Theatre*. London: Croom Helm, 1978.
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. London: Penguin, 1968.
- Caillois, Robert. *Man, Play and Games*. Trans. Meyer Barash. Illinois: First Illinois Paperbacks, 2001 [1959].
- Carter, Robert, 'Watsuji Tetsurō'. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2013. 1 July 2013.  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/watsuji-tetsuro/>.
- Chomsky, Noam. 'On Anarchism: Noam Chomsky interviewed by Tom Lane, 23 December 1996'. *Chomsky.Info*. n.d. 23 April 2013.  
<http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/19961223.htm>.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. 'Kubla Khan'. *Online-Literature.com*. n.d. [1797]. 23 April 2013. <http://www.online-literature.com/coleridge/640/>
- Copeau, Jacques. *Texts on Theatre*. Ed. & trans. Norman H. Paul and John Rudlin. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Deflem, Mathieu. 'Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner's Processual Symbolic Analysis'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30.1 (1991): 1-25.
- Downs, William Missouri, Erik Ramsey and Lou Anne Wright. *The Art of Theatre: Then and Now*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2011.
- Grotowski, Jerzy. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 2002 [1968].
- Harman, Chris. *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949.

- Innes, C. D. *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels and Serge L. Levitsky. *Das Kapital*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2009 [1867].
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. 1886. Trans. Helen Zimmern. New York: Dover Publications, 1997.
- Nishida, Kitarō. 'Basho'. *Place & Dialectic: Two Essays by Nishida Kitarō*. Trans. John W. M. Krummel and Shigenori Nagatomo. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.
- Shank, Theodore. *Beyond the Boundaries: American Alternative Theatre*. U of Michigan P, 2002 [1982].
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 2000 [1897].
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York: Aldine Transaction Publishers, 1995 [1969].
- Vanderburg, Willem H. 'The Antieconomy Hypothesis (Part 1): From Wealth Creation to Wealth Extraction'. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 29.1 (2009): 46-56.
- Wills, J. Robert. Ed. *The Director in a Changing Theatre*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1976.

## **Play Area: Performance Perspectives**

This document brings together a diverse series of solicited perspectives on ‘staging play, playing stages’. Postgraduate and early-career researchers who might not otherwise consider play to be a central, or acknowledged aspect of their research, were invited – or *challenged* – to offer a short piece that considers how the notion and/or practice of play might feed into, touch on, or inform their own scholarly research, activity, or practice.

This document is designed to resist a univocal tone, mode of enquiry and theme, beyond the very broad theme of play. Taken together, these short pieces are meant to represent a survey of theatre and performance perspectives on play and how play might emerge as a latent phenomenon in theatre and performance studies research, or how it might be *teased out* of such research. To that extent, these responses are the product of a latency that might extend into many and varied corners of theatre and performance studies. The question then runs: how far might this latency stretch?

### **Heuristic Word-Play and the Multiple Meanings of ‘Coffee’**

By Shaun May

A lot of humour plays with ambiguity of language. This is an obvious truism that’s almost not worth stating. For most of us, this ambiguity goes unnoticed; it is hidden away and only trips up ‘outsiders’. Whilst some people have suggested that this ambiguity is lamentable, Pinker et al. suggest that it is not just a brute fact of our language, but actually a positive feature. They make this point by looking at the logic of ‘indirect speech’, such as euphemism and innuendo. Consider the example of a man who is caught speeding, but wants to get away without a ticket. According to Pinker et al., there are three possible actions that driver can do – overt bribe, implied bribe and no bribe. The consequence of each action is plotted as follows:

	Dishonest officer	Honest officer
Don't bribe	Traffic ticket	Traffic ticket
Bribe	Go free	Arrest for bribery
Implicate bribe	Go free	Traffic ticket

Fig. 1: Pinker et al. (834)

In terms of game theory, the implied bribe is an optimal strategy. If he doesn't bribe then he gets a ticket either way. If he bribes overtly then he goes free if the officer is dishonest, but he gets arrested if the officer is honest. The implied bribe has the same benefit as the overt bribe, but considerably less cost. In fact, as it is a cost he will incur anyway, he might as well try an implied bribe!

Now consider the following exchange from the sitcom *Seinfeld* (1989-98) between George Constanza and his date Carol:

Carol: So, uh, thanks for dinner. It was great.

George: Yeah. We should do this again.

Carol: Would you like to come upstairs for some coffee?

As Pinker suggests (22), it is clear to everyone but George that the offer of 'coffee' is a sexual come-on. As such, we laugh when George replies, 'Oh, no, thanks. I can't drink coffee late at night, it keeps me up'. George eventually realises his mistake whilst driving back and chastises himself, but by then it is too late.

Whilst it is possible that this sort of humour is just a harmless bit of fun, I suspect it is something more. Assuming that Pinker is right that the ambiguity of language is a positive feature, perhaps comedy that plays with this ambiguity has a positive social function?

A number of theorists have suggested that humour acts as a social corrective; we laugh at the person who falls short of social expectations as a way of making them toe the line. In the case of George, we might say we laugh at him because he does not understand the unspoken rules of dating. Whilst this is partly true, I think we should pick up on an important issue: namely, that precisely because they are unspoken, we seldom notice that these rules are there. It is really only when the tacit norms that structure social reality are transgressed, subverted or misunderstood that they become noticeable at all and it should be noted that often this causes laughter. I would suggest

that humour and play are an important component of the induction we all undertake in becoming socially proficient adults; they act as heuristics for social understanding. Because we enjoy laughing, we seek out ambiguity to play with, making us even more conscious of its social function. If I am right, then this means that there is much to be gained from exploring the importance of such play for social and interpersonal development.

### **Works Cited**

- Pinker, Steven. *The Stuff of Thought*. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Pinker, Steven et al. 'The Logic of Indirect Speech'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105.3 (2008): 833-38.

### **On the Injunction 'Enjoy'**

By Adam Alston

In this edition of *Platform*, Daniel Oliver, drawing on philosopher Slavoj Žižek, reflects on the liberal coca-capitalist injunction 'Enjoy', alongside the negativity that may well accompany failure if unable to fulfil the injunction. In the spirit of this edition – and specifically this 'playful' part of the edition – I want to unpack what meanings might reside in the injunction 'Enjoy' and what relevance these meanings might have for play and performance.

First off, in the above there is an anticipatory keyword to 'Enjoy' that does not just inflect, but bullies its meaning: namely, 'injunction'. The word 'injunction' connects, etymologically, with the Latin word *iungere*, meaning 'to join' ('Injunction'). In an act of seemingly selfless generosity, 'injunction' invites the word 'Enjoy' to share in its authority. The injunction contains within it an enjoining potential. It is promiscuous. And enjoyment slavishly submits to its domination.

Before 'Enjoy' has a chance to express itself, it is framed by the sovereignty of its predecessor, 'injunction'. This is a shame, as there is a latent generosity in the Old French *enjoier*, meaning to 'give joy to' ('Enjoy'). But 'injunction' absorbs this generosity, draining its value and limiting its expressive powers to a point: that is, to a

point premised on possession, on right and on ownership. In other words, expressiveness is inverted as an impress; gestures of outwardness and communion are twisted, now manifesting as privacy. What this coupling of 'injunction' and 'Enjoy' makes clear is a narrowing of meanings away from the intersubjective and towards the personal and the egoistic.

Underlying this very brief analysis is a performance concept, one that Jon McKenzie may well recognise as part of an organisational performance paradigm (19-20). In this instance, 'performance' refers to a measure of effective organisation, with that measure being hierarchically graded up to superlative status: performing to the best possible ability, as a goal, an aspiration, or, worryingly, as an expectation. Such a 'performance paradigm' – one that might be identified, for instance, with evolving strategies of management and workplace organisation (Taylorism, Fordism, post-Fordism, Toyotism) – orders the way in which the concept and practice signalled by a word might function. This notion of an organisational performance paradigm invites us to consider the operative value of 'Enjoy' as a concept that is to materialise in practiced experience, which *must* be maximised. But the maximised concept and realised experience are at odds with one another. They fail to correlate. And this failure condemns 'Enjoy' to fail once plucked from its transcendent, lofty and idealistic home in unreality. This transcendence is hit upon by Oliver/Žižek whenever they choose to capitalise the injunction 'Enjoy'. These authors open space to acknowledge a clownish contradiction; that which is limited in meaning to an impress, as opposed to an outwardly generous sharing in joy, is condemned to an impossible union between an idealised form of enjoyment and correlation with a private self – a self who may well experience imperfect forms of enjoyment while, in experiencing those forms, ending up feeling inadequate.

Is there a way out of this – this rule of a performance paradigm, as it applies to enjoyment as an injunction? From a manifesto to reflections on paranoia, this edition approaches play as a possible answer, particularly as play – specifically *playing* – might work to restore to 'Enjoy' meanings that are antithetical to privacy, ownership and egoism: meanings that open 'Enjoy' out to others and not just to the authority of an injunction. Perhaps the public forums of theatre and performance, so long as the public nature of those gatherings is maintained, might provide one of many playing fields for their audiences to enjoy, together.



### Works Cited

‘Enjoy’. *OED*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 576.

‘Injunction’. *Concise Dictionary of English Etymology*. Ware: Wordsworth Reference, 2007: 239.

McKenzie, Jon. *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. London: Routledge, 2001.

### On Play: Public Engagement

By Charlotte Bell

The role of play in cultural activities is complex. In this short piece, I advocate for play as a tool for critical inquiry in public engagement events. ‘Public engagement’ is a term that has emerged in recent years to describe an organisation’s methods of public participation and impact. It is often used to describe symposia, or conferences, that encourage dialogue and debate between, what might usefully be called, ‘expert’ and ‘non-expert’ audiences. In a 2011 report on engagement and participation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation suggested that ‘communities remain, or at least perceive themselves to be, fundamentally separated from processes within [...] organisations’ (Lynch 5). Public engagement events are one aspect of wider practices. I offer two examples of recent public engagement events in London. The first, ‘Public Engagement and Impact: Articulating Value in Art and Design’, a one-day symposium in May convened by the School of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Huddersfield and hosted by the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA) in central London; the second, ‘TRIBE: Critical Friends and Young Women’s Group Event’ at Peckham Space Gallery, a ‘picnic-style’ evening conversation event between the gallery’s critical friends group, the Young Women’s Group from Creative Arts & Music and Southwark Youth Service in partnership with Groundwork London, who worked with artist Sarah Cole in the lead up to the exhibition TRIBE (7 May – 23 July). Both public engagement events used play as a methodological tool to disseminate research to a non-expert audience while creating a supportive environment through which to critique cultural activities.

'Public Engagements and Impact' was a platform for discussing the relative value and position of cultural activity within the wider political economy. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, which effects the funding and production of research and its dissemination for those working within university settings and increasing cuts to public sector arts funding, was a key concern of this platform. The two plenary sessions were group activity workshops. In one, delegates collaborated to make placards and posters in response to funding cuts to the arts. In the other, delegates used post-it notes to create an interactive mind-map on the wall in which 'value' and 'impact' were critiqued. At Peckham Space, games and activities such as mask making, 'exquisite corpse', a word wall and music box making were used to invite participants to critique the themes of the exhibition and engage in aspects of the project's production process.

Though these public engagements were distinct, both employed and encouraged play as a method for making visible some of the infrastructures of cultural activity, which remain invisible or partial to a wider audience. For example, at 'Public Engagements and Impact' the interactive mind-map became a mode through which some of the bureaucratic subtleties of RAE (2008) and REF (2014) were discussed. The playful method of drawing on the wall seemed to encourage supportive knowledge and skills sharing as artists, students, administrators and curators shared their interpretations and views.

At TRIBE, playful activities provided a space for visitors to learn more about the process of socially engaged work. They were encouraged to participate in some of the activities deployed during the production process. Crucially, play provided a duty of care to the young women who participated in the project and those visitors who may identify as 'non-artists'. Play became a multi-faceted methodology: it was both a tool for rendering the production process of socially engaged work visible and a method for initiating reflection and evaluation of the project TRIBE. The event was also a lot of fun.

Play is simultaneously insignificant and powerful. At first glance, play appears integral to both the production and reception of cultural work. Play is often an assumed component of cultural practice and performance. In the current economic climate, 'play', or 'playfulness', can seem utopian. Its connotations of entertainment and escapism and the difficulties one might encounter attempting to quantify its presence often position play as an 'added bonus' to the apparent rigour of the wider social issues

any work might tackle. However, play is a useful method that, as the two events I have mentioned here demonstrate, advocates for a serious consideration of the effects and affects of play at the level of arts administration. Play is both labour and non-labour. Play can be a conceptual and theoretical bond between organisations, the artistic practices they support and participants.

### **Works Cited**

Lynch, Bernadette. *Whose Cake Is It Anyway? A Collaborative Investigation into Engagement and Participation in 12 Museums and Galleries in the UK: Executive Summary*. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2011.

### **Play Walking**

By Kris Darby

In *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*, play theorist and activist Bob Hughes has ascertained a variety of different types of play, providing a framework for how children imagine and realise space. As I continue to explore the relationship between walking and performance in both my research and practice, I have increasingly understood the prominence of play within it. Therefore, taking Hughes' taxonomy as my framework, what follows are some suggestions for different types of 'play walking' that can sculpt a variety of performances from this everyday action.

1. *Symbolic Play*: Make your walk a pilgrimage and your end destination a sacred site. Look for the instrumental symbols to guide you on your walk and the dominant symbols that signal you have arrived.
2. *Rough and Tumble Play*: Walk off the beaten track, sticking to narrow streets and desire lines. Pick the trickiest route and watch your gaze move to your feet as you struggle to navigate around obstacles in your path.
3. *Socio-Dramatic Play*: Create an auto-topographical journey by re-walking a walk from your past. Ignore the stubbornness of the present and the change in geography.
4. *Social Play*: Have a mobile meeting, using the surroundings to jog the conversation along.

5. *Creative Play*: Take a walk in a different pair of shoes. How does it change your perception of yourself and of the landscape?
6. *Communication Play*: Make your walk an ear-worm, echoing the Australian Aborigine tradition of creating a song line to musically map the land.
7. *Dramatic Play*: Devise an improvised promenade performance by conducting a read-through of a play with fellow walkers.
8. *Locomotor Play*: Follow in the steps of director-practitioners Tadashi Suzuki and Robert Wilson and walk as s l o w l y as possible. If done correctly it should look as if you are still and the rest of the world is moving around you.
9. *Deep Play*: Stay outside for twenty-four hours. Walk to survive, finding shelter elsewhere. Imagine you are in artist Joe Bateman's *Nomads Land* (2010) or Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*.
10. *Exploratory Play*: Convert your walk into a sensory guided tour, drawing the attention of your group to the significant sights, sounds, smells, textures and tastes.
11. *Fantasy Play*: Open your front door and enter the world's stage. Follow the hero's journey, making your walk a monomyth. Look for others to join you on your quest.
12. *Imaginative Play*: Take an imaginary dog for a walk. Let it off the lead and follow it.
13. *Mastery Play*: Make your walk a sculpture. Use natural objects such as stones and wood to create cairns for other walkers to encounter and alter. Document your sculpture through photography and text.
14. *Object Play*: Draw a straight line on a map and try to follow it as closely as possible whilst carrying a totem pole or snowball of collected objects (à la Lone Twin). Let others help you.
15. *Role Play*: Pick a walk and do it. Possible options: stroll, swerve, zig-zag, march, wander, charge, glide, stagger, scurry, strut, speed-walk and hike.
16. *Recapitulative Play*: Peel back the layers of the present by following an out-of-date map of your local area.

### Works Cited

Hughes, Barry. *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*. London: PLAYLINK, 2002.

## Metaphor, Mud and Melancholy: Ostermeier's *Hamlet* in Translation

By Geraldine Brodie

Are surtitles metaphorical interlinear translations? Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay '*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*' ('The Task of the Translator') plays with concepts of trust, language, revelation, literalness and freedom to the point where his own translators, working into English, differ markedly in their renditions. They are, however, close to agreement on Benjamin's insistence that 'all great writings contain their virtual translation between the lines', although his concluding statement that 'the interlinear version [...] is the Ur-image [*Urbild*] or ideal of all translation' (DELOS 99 – my translation) attracts further controversy. *Urbild* has been variously translated as 'archetype' (Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' [bilingual edition] 96) or 'prototype' (Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' 83; 'The Translator's Task' 83), but, for me, the visuality of this metaphor requires a closer, more concrete rendering. Scholars and translators struggle to understand and apply these sentences, but I was reminded of them while in the audience for Thomas Ostermeier's German-language version of *Hamlet* at the Barbican Theatre in 2011. Ostermeier embraces the necessary impossibility of surtitles, adopting an interlinear-like incorporation into the production design rather than banishing them to the wings. For an English-speaking audience, already familiar with the original text, as 'to be or not to be' rises over a full-screen projected backdrop of Hamlet's face in monochrome close-up ('*sein oder nicht sein*'), the revelation of the literalness of translation is in stark contrast to the freedom of the *mise en scène*. Even so, might these elements unite to convey an Ur-image of *Hamlet*: the mud and the melancholy?

Oh yes, there was mud. Act III, Scene 2 of *Hamlet* is, of course, a perfect example of 'staging play, playing stages', the play within a play manipulated by Hamlet to 'catch the conscience of the king', but which also, by uniting the auditorium with the on-stage audience, enables 'every spectator [...] to become a participant', as commended by Benjamin ('What is Epic Theatre?' 76). Until this point, I had focused more on the playfulness of the nuptial dinner guests in Mafiosi sunglasses and Gertrude's Carla Bruni-esque serenade to Claudius, the swapping of wigs and the half-naked antics. Now that mud, smeared by Hamlet onto the Players, began the process of accumulating on the stage, squelching around the cast and threatening to smatter the

audience. My initial amused/bemused response to this post-dramatic playing intensified as I became aware of the pervasive, orifice-clogging, deadening mud, the visible revelation of Hamlet's melancholia. Mud played in non-verbal counterpoint to the surtitles, supporting Shakespeare's amputated lines and supplementing the German play.

Has translation given Ostermeier the freedom to uncover an interlinear interpretation that might elude a more static English-language production? Michael Billington, in his essay 'Shakespeare in Europe', finds that 'something strange happens when you lose the English language and context: you release the play's metaphorical power' (357). While empathising with Billington's notion of release, I am discomfited by any perception of loss in translation. Benjamin saw the connection between a translation and its original in the geometrical terms of a tangent brushing a circle (DELOS 97). The contact may be fleeting, but it is the fact rather than the point of contact that governs the path to be followed by the tangent thereafter. The interlinearity of this translation, where mud meets metaphor in the *mise en scène*, enhanced my response to this production. Ostermeier plays down the line with *Hamlet*, but Shakespeare's 'little O' still governs the stage.

### **Acknowledgments**

The author would like to thank Professor Theo Hermans and the students of the Translation Studies MA core module at UCL for the forensic classroom discussions of Benjamin's essay that prompted this meditation.

### **Works Cited**

- Benjamin, Walter. 'The Task of the Translator' [bilingual edition]. Trans. James Hyde and E.M. Valk. *DELOS. A Journal on and of Translation* 2 (1968): 76-99.
- . 'What is Epic Theatre?' Trans. Harry Zohn. *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*. Ed. Michael Huxley and Noel Witts. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2002: 73-79.
- . 'The Task of the Translator'. Trans. Harry Zohn. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2004: 75-85.
- . 'The Translator's Task'. Trans. Steven Rendall. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012: 75-83.

Billington, Michael. 'Shakespeare in Europe'. *One Night Stands*. London: Nick Hern Books, 1993: 355-60.

## A 'Thickly' Smoked Moment in Time

By Karen da Silva

Performed in a laundromat as part of the Guildford International Music Festival 2013, *Launderette* is a short, witty dance eruption in which the character of Jenny Ballantyne comes up against and pushes back at the behavioural expectations of a married woman and mother in the 1960s. Against an era of discrimination and prejudice, Jenny's weekly visit to the local launderette becomes a space of personal protest. Her smoking cigarette dance describes insurgent gestures through a 'slo-mo' pile-up of past and future hopes, in collision with her present 'now'. She fumes her way into the launderette, playing out and playing up the two dimensionality of the cardboard like stances of sixties models contrasting with her own multifaceted 'real' and lived experience. Diving into a washing basket vortex of events that have triggered this moment, Jenny vents her dissent as she smokes, twists, hitchhikes and mashed potatoes her way around the tumble dryers to a sound design frenzy of wah-wah, bass and Hendrix fire.



Fig 1: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Mario Cavalli.

The performance of *Launderette* was created through a process that set out to explore the possibilities offered through a phenomenological approach to choreographing character and is the focus of this short written piece. This choreographic practice as research specifically focuses on a Heideggerian notion of historicity which refers to the way in which the past is an inevitable part of any now.

Play was key in the process of creating Jenny Ballantyne's character. I use the word play here to mean an easy, uncritical, but attentive presence with 'things', real or imagined, a space of open seeing, of moving towards, away and back again, of being-with and in-the-world-of phenomena. There are parallels between play in this context with a phenomenological attitude in relation to the centrality in phenomenology of open inquiry, in seeing things for what they are and not what we have come to suppose them to be.

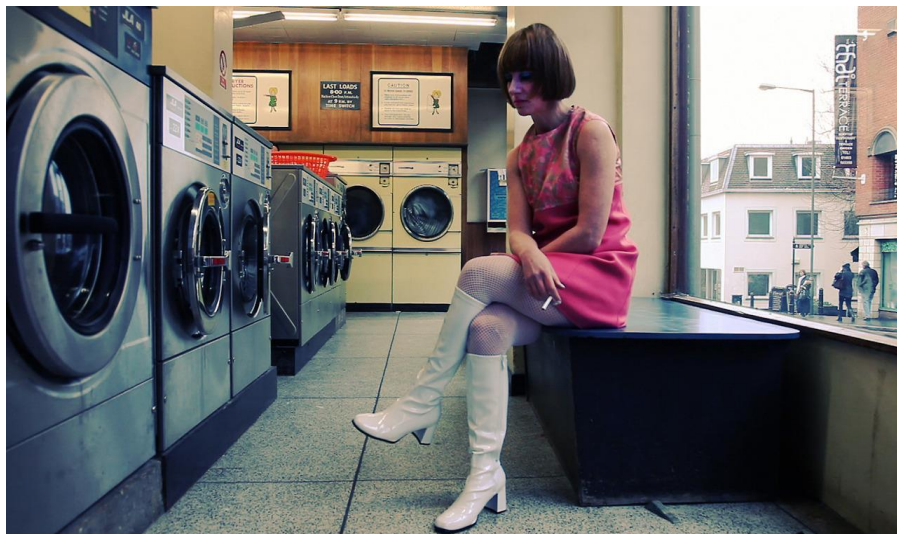


Fig 2: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Tino Tedaldi.





Fig 3: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Jean Johnson-Jones.



Fig 4: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Tino Tedaldi.



Fig 5: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Mario Cavalli.

Jenny Ballantyne's present is arrived at through a processual studio detour into a fictional past to discover her back story, her before time, her past 'nows', which become disclosed through the play of travelling in and through time in order to arrive back to a future of her own present. This time travel provides a way of being-in-the-world of the 'facts' (Mitchell 31) or the 'Given Circumstances' (Stanislavski 53) of her past. Being with the imaginary events of her life allow for an excavation of her embodied historicity in order to un-conceal the imprints of her lived experience: she tells of how events, in Elizabeth Grosz's terms, have inscribed themselves on the surface of her body (148).

Dancing in and moving through her imagined lived experience, layers of her past and imagined future start to become embodied, allowing Jenny Ballantyne's character to be choreographed into a multi-dimensional way of Being. She is not simply a series of passing 'nows', but her present; her being is 'thick' with the past and future (Wagner 12). The thickly smoked presence of Jenny Ballantyne is arrived at through playing stages of Being in time in order to stage the play of *Launderette*.



Fig 6: *Launderette* (2013), by Karen da Silva. Guildford International Music Festival. Image by Tino Tedadli.

### **Acknowledgments**

Natasha and Nick Lintott, for their kind and generous permission in allowing free use of their Laundromat in Guildford for the performance of *Launderette*.

### **Works Cited**

- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies Toward a Coporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. J. Maqarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962.
- Launderette* by Karen da Silva. Dir. Emma Bernard. Sound design Anellie Nederberg. Perf. Karen da Silva. Laundromat, Sydenham Road, Guildford International Music Festival, Guildford. 23rd Mar. 2013.
- Mitchell, Katie. *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for Theatre*. Oxford: Routledge, 2009.
- Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor's Work*. Trans. J. Benedetti. Oxford: Routledge, 2008.
- Wagner, Matthew D. *Shakespeare, Theatre, and Time*. Oxford: Routledge, 2012.

## **'VALERIO! VALERIO! VALERIO...'**

By Liam Jarvis

The contributions in this edition of *Platform* expound notions of 'play' and the diverse manifestations of 'playing', from how it is manifested in postdramatic 'child's play', to play within participatory art. The latter intersects with my own research into sculptural installations in gallery spaces designed to engender and produce different forms of interactivity, requiring certain kinds of input from the gallery visitor. Part of my PhD research task is to interrogate claims towards the efficacy of 'play' via the intervention of the semi-functional work of art. Whilst it is not possible to indicate the full scope of my research in this modest contribution to the journal, my aim here is rather to employ one case-study to open up a space to think about art that enables us as participants to act upon our own bodies, via the act of playing.

The work of artist and scholar in biology, Carsten Höller, is helpful to this discussion, in particular his 'Valerio' installations. This series of work is comprised of large spiralling metal slides, which allow the participant to descend from one floor of an exhibition to another. This 'relational' work, like much of Höller's work, deliberately seeks to problematise distinct binaries between object and spectator; the art, Höller suggests, exists not in the art object or the human subject, but in the synthesis and interrelations between the two; interrelations activated in the act of playing.

The 'Valerio' slide installations borrow their titles from a unique example of mass hysteria that the artist describes as 'the Valerio phenomenon'. In an extract of an interview with the artist published in the exhibition guide, *Carsten Höller: Test Site*, Höller elaborates on the origins of this term:

It's an interesting example of mass hysteria. A sound technician at a concert disappeared, and someone in the audience, pretending to know his name, shouted 'Valerio!' More and more people joined in. It was, apparently, infectious, and it spread from Brindisi to Rimini and other cities. There is something about the sound of this name that makes you want to shout it out loud. You feel a little better after you've done it, just like after having traveled [sic] down a slide'. ('Carsten Höller Talks About His Slides')

In Höller's lexicon, the title of the slides is analogous to a kind of contagious play; the slides are the apparatus of the playground, apprehended by the artist and installed in the

gallery context. This kind of 'play', framed as 'art', is a development that has been met with strong disapproval from some critical commentators; Jean Baudrillard suggested critically in his essay 'Art... Contemporary of Itself', that the relationship the spectator has to the contemporary work of art is 'on the level of contamination or contagion: you plug in, become, absorb, immerse yourself just like in flows or networks. Metonymical linkage, chain reactions' (92). Höller's work is in itself a circulatory network completed by the viewer's involvement. It would suggest that it is precisely the kind of immersive art that Baudrillard criticises, operating (as the 'Valerio' analogy implies) at the level of virulent phenomena. So what is to be gained by one's participation in 'playing' with an artwork?

I visited Carsten Höller's Test Site exhibition at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall on 25 November 2006. This installation, which expanded on the Valerio projects, was comprised of five large slides descending from the fifth, fourth, third and second floors of the building. I observed that it was not uncommon for participants (including myself) to descend on the slides shouting out for joy: joy found in the simple and playful act of losing control whilst sliding. In Höller's description of the 'Valerio phenomenon', the artist hints towards the positive physiological implications of sliding on the body of another participant, a belief that is further evidenced by Höller's claims on the BBC News website on 9 October 2006 that research studies qualify his belief 'that slides can help combat stress and depression' ('Tate Modern Unveils Giant Slides').

This leads me to conclude that the 'Valerio' installations exemplify a ubiquitous shift in the gallery space towards 'experience creation', which has shifted analysis surrounding what an artwork 'says' to what it 'does'. This shift necessitates an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to critical analysis in order to understand the physiological effects of any work that requires the participant to lend their body to a work of art.

### Works Cited

- Baudrillard, Jean. 'Art... Contemporary of Itself'. *The Conspiracy of Art*. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Ames Hodges. New York: Semiotext(e), 2005.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. Paris: Les presses du reel, 2002.

Hantelmann, Dorothea von. 'Dorothea von Hantelmann Essay'. *Carsten Höller: Test Site*. London: Tate Publishing, 2006.

'Tate Modern Unveils Giant Slides'. BBC News. 9 Oct. 2006. 13 Jul. 2013.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6034123.stm>>.

*Test Site*. Carsten Höller. Tate Modern, Turbine Hall. 10 Oct. 2006 – 15 April 2007.

Valerio I & Valerio II. *Kunst-Werke*, Berlin. 1998.

Valerio III. *Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art*, Helsinki. 2000.

## **The Aristocracy at Play in the Nineteenth Century**

By David Coates

As one of the three representatives organising the 2013 TaPRA Postgraduate Symposium, 'Play in Performance Practices', alongside Charlotte Bell and Adam Alston, I was prompted to think about the relationship between play and my own research. Though at first glance it seemed that this theme was a world away from anything that would excite a theatre historian like myself, I very quickly realised that the topic of play and the numerous issues which came out of the symposium reverberated through my own research in the field of private and amateur theatricals in the nineteenth century.

Private and amateur theatricals were at their most popular in dilettante circles during the Victorian period, at a time when high society was constrained by a multitude of codes and conventions. Everyday situations were controlled by the strictures of social etiquette and routines dominated many aspects of daily, weekly and annual activity. For the majority, childhood was short-lived and soon after leaving the nursery societal expectations were taught, learnt and accepted as norms.

In this era of rules and regulations, did one lose the ability to play after childhood? Perhaps so for many individuals. If this is not entirely the case, however, then where and when was it acceptable for one to practice play beyond the nursery?

Private and amateur theatricals arguably provided one of the few tolerable outlets for play for the upper classes in adult life in Victorian and Edwardian society. Private and amateur theatricals took place in town and country houses, hired public theatres, village halls, working mens' clubs, schools, universities, hospitals and mental

asylums, onboard ships and in army encampments in Britain and across the world. These amateur performances were very popular and fashionable society flocked to see their peers treading the boards.

Though tolerable to many, it comes as no surprise that some sections of society were far from comfortable with the craze for private theatricals or with other playful aspects of high society. The Prince of Wales, who went on to become Edward VII, spearheaded a lifestyle of play and pleasure in the mid-nineteenth century which later defined the Edwardian age – an era which has been written into history as a long garden party and a golden age. Despite this, he was repeatedly criticised for his playful antics. Regular complaints were made about the ill effects of play on the morality of young men and women and private theatricals were often firmly in the firing line. The arguments of these sections of society against theatricals were fuelled by numerous examples of elopements between young amateur actors and actresses – stories which the press rarely failed to expose.

Despite the criticisms, private theatricals continued to be popular and play continued to dominate the rehearsal process of amateurs. In rehearsal, sources suggest that individuals were freed from various customs and manners, which one would never have been able to put aside in the drawing room or at the dinner table. Behind the closed doors of the private theatre men and women felt at ease in rehearsals in a relatively open space and they could informally play together, or experiment alone.

It is surely of some interest that so many intimate relationships began during the informality of amateur rehearsals. It is also of interest to find the fifth Marquis of Anglesey expressing his effeminacy through costume and dance in his own private theatricals. Is it not also of significance that during private theatricals at Chatsworth in 1904, Cinderella went to a political meeting instead of the Prince Charming's ball?

Thus, private theatricals provided opportunities for the aristocracy and rising middle classes to play, in a society which otherwise imprisoned such an ability in early childhood. At play in private theatricals, sexuality was more freely expressed and explored and gender identities, gender expectations and gender boundaries became malleable. Political topics could be toyed with in the safety of the rehearsal room before being aired in performance on a quasi-private stage before a frequently large and influential audience, made up of household staff, the local gentry, nobility and aristocracy and often also including politicians and members of the royal family.

## Playing with Words

By Deborah Leveroy

'[...] promise to forget this fellow – to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory'  
[obliterate] (Sheridan I.ii: 19)

One of my lasting memories of A Level sociology is sticking my hand up and saying out-loud 'I think that Becker was *pacificaly* talking about deviance in reference to...'. My teacher interrupted: 'is that in the *pacific* ocean then?' Not realising that I had substituted the similar sounding word 'specifically' for the word 'pacific' at the time, I carried on talking, determined to make some point or another.

Only since starting my PhD research into dyslexia and acting have I become aware of the connection between word-play and dyslexia. For some dyslexic learners, 'each word or concept may be surrounded by such a rich network of associations that these associations can become overwhelming and give rise to unintended substitutions' (Eide and Eide 95). Some substitutions are structurally similar, involving similar sounding or looking words (such as my 'specific/pacific' example and Mrs Malaprop's 'illiterate/obliterate'). Other substitutions share a structural similarity and some relationship of meaning, such as Mrs Malaprop's 'O, he will *dissolve* my mystery!' [*resolve*] (Sheridan, V.iii: 99). Lastly there are conceptual substitutions: words which have no structural similarity, but are connected conceptually, such as 'I'm really hungry! What's on the *itinerary*?' [*menu*].

Eide and Eide (294-298) suggest that these substitutions reveal a dyslexic strength in perceiving distinct conceptual as well as structural relationships and empirical research has found that dyslexic groups have a greater ability to find similarities amongst verbal concepts or visual patterns than non-dyslexic groups (Everatt, Weeks & Brooks 16-41; Everatt, Steffert & Smythe 28-46). Eddie Izzard, the dyslexic comic and actor, has said that he believes 'that dyslexia tends to make you go off in a weird direction. And then you go – 'Oh, that's nice'. And that [word or image] could well lead to that' ('Eddie Izzard and the Girl'). Izzard's distinctive ability to play with words and images and 'go off in a weird direction' may be the key to his success as a stand-up comic and improviser. It may also be a rich source of creativity for other dyslexic performers and theatre-makers, enabling them to bring a playfulness and different aesthetic to their process.



With regard to my own research process, I relish playing with ideas and connecting various concepts from seemingly disparate perspectives and I continue to find myself mixing up various academic terms, such as calling Antonio Damasio's *somatic* marker hypothesis, the *tomato* marker hypothesis (I prefer my version). The dyslexic actors who have participated in my research were also more interested in subtext and word association, rather than the dictionary-definition level of words. For these actors, words and language were experienced as visceral and sensorial realities, enabling them to connect with and make their own unique meanings out of the words on the page. They have developed a different intentional relationship with language which falls outside of the standard rules of the English language, resulting in a degree of deep substitution and playfulness, which I believe should be encouraged in us all.

### **Works Cited**

- Eide, Brock, and Fernet Eide. *The Dyslexic Advantage*. London: Hay House, 2011.
- Everatt, John., Sally Weeks and Peter Brooks. 'Profiles of Strengths and Weaknesses in Dyslexia and Other Learning Difficulties'. *Dyslexia* 14.1 (2007): 16-41.
- Everatt, John., Beverley Steffert and Ian Smythe. 'An Eye for the Unusual: Creative Thinking in Dyslexics'. *Dyslexia* 5 (1999): 28-46.
- 'Eddie Izzard and The Girl Who Kicked The Hornet's Nest'. *Front Row*. BBC Radio 4. 24 Nov. 2010.
- Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. *The Rivals*. Ed. Susan Macklin. Harlow: Longman, 1985.

## **Book Reviews**

### ***The Methuen Drama Book of Post-Black Plays* by Harry J. Elam Jr. and Douglas A. Jones, Jr. Eds.**

London: Methuen Drama, 2012, 635 pp. (paperback)

By Pepetual Mforbe Chiangong

The plays compiled in *The Methuen Drama Book of Post-Black Plays* handle themes that have preoccupied authors in the field of Africa and African Diaspora studies. Themes such as the transatlantic slave trade, racism, family relations, gentrification, gender and sexuality recur prominently in the works of writers like James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Lorraine Hansberry, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ntozake Shange and Michelle Cliff, to name just a few, offering readers a way to reflect on contemporary societies. The dramatists in this collection have approached these themes in innovative ways by reinventing their dramatic foci and communicating them via sophisticated, uncanny, and fragmented techniques. The editors of the volume rightly remark in the introduction that the playwrights 'strive for the unfamiliar, the unsettling, and the uncanny as a means to offer progressive renderings of black identities structured by the unfamiliar, unsettling, and uncanny nature of our contemporary moment' (xii). Consequently, the reader is not only retold history, but s/he learns about it in a new language that is framed in complex figurative expressions. This is indeed what makes this collection of eight plays, grouped under four major topics, unique. These topics are: 'The New Black Family', '(Post-) Blackness by Non-Black Playwrights', 'The Distant Present: History, Mythology, and Sexuality', and 'Re-Imagining/Re-Engaging Africa'. Judging from the choice of topics, one develops a conscious desire to investigate intercultural communication and how it contextualizes contemporary black identities, making them understandable within African, American, Korean, German, Irish and Jewish contexts.

Eisa Davis' play, *Bulrusher*, raises questions of identity and filial love through the use of jargon Boontling spoken in Boonville, California. The play recounts the life of Bulrusher, whose mother abandoned her to float away on the Navarro River, but who grows with supernatural powers that enable her to 'read people's waters'. Investing her with supernatural strength, Davis succeeds to create a mélange of African indigenous belief, Christianity and the intricacies of Boontling in a bid to depict an American

community that does not wish to repurpose racism as a major discourse. Not that racial segregation is completely absent in the play, but it is mildly invoked through the presence of colored characters like Vera, Logger, and Bulrusher.

Christina Anderson also addresses filial love and spirituality in *Good Goods*, but from another perspective. She uses the filial relationship between Truth and Stacey to portray the relationship between the dead and the living and the multiple facets of reincarnation, by deploying an array of indexical signs and symbols. The uncanny sequences reveal Anderson's creative genius in a character-within-character frame as they battle to communicate multi-layered thoughts and meanings.

*Satellites*, for its part, presents a typical (hybrid) family scenario in which a working couple grapples with careers and parenthood. Although the characters engage in complex debates about race and ethnicity, Nina the Korean American defends the black heritage to which her husband Miles and her daughter Hannah are biologically connected. She makes tough decisions to prove that racism is a vicious cycle.

Marcus Gardley (*And Jesus Moonwalks the Mississippi*) and Robert O'Hara (*Antebellum*) set their plays in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their innovative dialogue style challenges readers to review past and present racial relationships in the history of America, which they portray using complex images of suffering and pain. Gardley uses metaphors in the title and dramatis personae to recreate scenes of survival in his nineteenth-century setting. For example, Gardley talks of 'Miss Ssippi' as a beautiful large black woman, yet this character is discussed as a body of water that carries Damascus in its hands (351). The characters engage in classical dialogue, yet become pseudo-third person narrators, displaying the playwright's technique of perhaps contemporising Christianity, oral tradition, mythology and non-Christian belief.

O'Hara engages with war in Nazi Germany. He locates his scenes in a Plantation House in a former American slave community. The characters, Sarah Roca and Oskar von Scheleicher, epitomise white supremacy and the genocide prior to World War II respectively. Although the play is set in Europe and America, the characters seem to invade each other's consciousness, lives and locations. As a result, readers could easily identify Gabriel Gift/Edna Black Rock and Oskar von Scheleicher/Ariel Roca as the same people. However the author's aim to compare Jewish and African-American history and to expose war crimes committed against vulnerable characters overrides other discourses in the play.

Danai Gurira and Nikkole Salter's technique in *In the Continuum* is in many ways similar to O'Hara's *Antebellum*. The playwrights metaphorically title their scenes in a bid to conveniently handle sensitive topics. O'Hara's scenic captions such as 'The Good Book', 'Küssen sie Meinen arsch', 'Wo/man', and Gurira and Salter's captions 'Back in the days' and 'In the beginning', seek to unmask the physical and internal strength that their protagonists must exude in order to survive in hostile environments. Gurira and Salter explore family relations, ancestral worship and family life through what appears to be a collection of monodrama.

Similar topics about war crimes and mass genocide pervade the plot of J. Nicole Brooks's *Black Diamond: The Years the Locusts Have Eaten*. In exploring military activities in a war torn West African nation, the playwright debunks Western media's unreliable news bulletin on African affairs. However, what sustains the readers' interest is the role that women play in a war of liberation in West Africa.

*The Methuen Drama Book of Post-Black Plays* could not have been published at a better time, especially as persistent questions are being posed about identities, conflict, war and the role of indigenous African religions in contemporary societies. The authors do not adopt rituals and mythology to sanction believers, but rather employ them as a strategy to resolve conflicts and to bridge differences. This book informs on every aspect of contemporary American life, whether it is read for individual interest, or for academic purposes.

***West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London* by  
Adrian Wright Woodbridge**

London: The Boydell Press, 2012, 364 pp. (hardback)

By Adam Rush

The Broadway musical, the American musical, Broadway's 'Fabulous Invalid' (Adler 363). Throughout the history of musical theatre, the form has been clearly denoted as American. Despite the prominence of British musicals on Broadway, the art form remains one of America's most glamorous exports. It is this particular relationship between New York and London musicals that fuels Adrian Wright's glossy monograph, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London*. This book

does not document the British invasion of the 1980s with globalised megamusicals, such as *Cats*, or probe our contemporary culture of theatrical exchange – think *Matilda* and *The Book of Mormon*. Instead, it details when the American musical exploded in London in the post-war decades, with a flash of Technicolor pizzazz. Wright clearly denotes the classic performances of Mary Martin in *South Pacific*, Barbara Streisand in *Funny Girl* and Topol in *Fiddler on the Roof*. However, he discusses these not in their original Broadway incarnations, but their British transfers: when the Americans came marching in.

In the twenty-first century, we have succumbed to the dominance of productions and cast members travelling beyond their original locations. Just think of Idina Menzel opening *Wicked* in London, or the Broadway revival cast of *Hair* at the Gielgud. The origins of this ‘cross the pond’ epidemic, as Wright outlines, began in the aftermath of the Second World War. The book begins with an account of the opening night of British television channel BBC2 in April 1964. This gala opening included a performance from the American cast of the London production of *Kiss Me, Kate*. With this example, Wright awakens a lost era in which musicals infiltrated popular culture, one which is arguably set to return in the approaching decades. In the UK, musical theatre on television consists of footage of Andrew Lloyd Webber casting Dorothy or the occasional West End performance on the televised charity event, *Children in Need*. Both examples are perceived as sentimental and unnecessarily elaborate, unlike the joyfully received example Wright presents. What the book, therefore, distils, is a past in which the musical sat at the centre of popular culture in order to nostalgically ‘bring back some of those faded characters’ (viv). However, more importantly, Wright details how the American musical engulfed the British stage for decades. I only have to reflect on my grandparent’s recollections of theatregoing to envisage *Oklahoma!* and *The Pajama Game* – far from a British musical insight.

Wright constructs his argument chronologically, each chapter dedicated to a particular time period and its major musical opening, for instance, 1950 – *Carousel* (65). The book acts via a patchwork of methodologies. It is part historical survey, part anecdote, part production history – detailing, for example, cast lists – as well as part personal journey through an era of the author’s theatrical past. He comments, ‘I have not demurred from offering a personal opinion. I have tried to avoid some of the blandness that stalks through so much writing about musical theatre’ (x). When critiquing, for example, ‘My Favourite Things’ from *The Sound of Music*, Wright pays

particular attention to Maria's discussion with the Mother Abbess in which she presents her favourite items, only to have the list repeated back to her: 'would the Abbess have the *same* list [...] why didn't Hammerstein see that, to make it real, he needed to supply her with a whole new list?' (5). *The Sound of Music* is a beloved musical, yet six decades after its premiere, Wright engages with material that remains untarnished within our cultural consciousness, exposing it amidst a historical survey. The book is as much about the musicals themselves as their placement within an era of transatlantic transferral. Additionally, Wright utilises a smaller sample of case studies than other 'histories of the musical' – John Kenrick's *Musical Theatre: A History*, for example – to produce a work which combines history with criticism; a 'critical survey', if you will (viii). Wright completes each chapter by detailing musicals which opened on Broadway and London only within each defined time period. The book also includes an appendix titled 'American Musicals in London, 1939-1972' (288) which comprehensively depicts each musical's authors, principle cast, major musical numbers and production history. Although these segments may reduce the book to mere fact, Wright successfully complements his criticism by rounding his arguments in a historical, as well as critical, surveillance.

Much musical theatre scholarship tends to be problematic due to its interdisciplinary nature and position within discourses of capitalism and the entertainment industry. Many scholars have engaged with this notion by constructing a unique methodology which applies singularly to their work. Wright explores productions as a scholar and, perhaps more significantly, as a theatre goer. It is not clear whether Wright himself saw these musicals; however, this research combines a variety of audience responses with textual analysis in order to fully frame it. Without critiquing the nature of musical fandom, Wright engages with anecdotes that highlight the nature of musical theatre-going. Although Wright's research model is in no way conclusive, using responses from several undefined sources positions this research within a vortex of nostalgia. For instance, Wright details a woman occupying two seats during *My Fair Lady*: 'I would have brought a friend [...] but they are all at my husband's funeral' (137). Wright utilises the comic implications of this absurd anecdote to both entertain the reader but also to encapsulate the enthusiasm the public had for the American musical.

Wright does not pass judgment on whether the epidemic he details was good or bad, focusing instead on its palpable impact on the theatrical landscape. The author retracts a public scrutiny, or ‘bitchiness’ (Clive ix), which often fills musical scholarship, due to the stereotyped, non-intellectual nature of the form. He produces an original work that combines various existing methodologies with an original subject matter. Although much scholarship may exist on *Oklahoma!* or *Kiss Me, Kate*, Wright’s work is production-specific and moves beyond historical surveillance. Consequently, Wright produces an appropriate intervention into an era which both mirrors and defers from the current state of the musical whilst fashioning a text of originality and timeliness.

### Works Cited

- Adler, Steven. ‘Box Office’. *The Oxford Handbook to the American Musical*. Ed. Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris and Stacy Wolf. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011: 351-63.
- Clive, David. *Theatre Tales: Pre-Andrew Lloyd Webber*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2001.

### ***The Plays of Samuel Beckett* by Katherine Weiss**

London: Methuen Drama, 2012, 286 pp. (softback)

By Macarena Andrews Barraza

*The Plays of Samuel Beckett* is Katherine Weiss’s first book on the Irish playwright’s productions after editing, alongside Seán Kennedy, *Samuel Beckett: History, Memory, Archive*, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2009.

In this more personal journey approaching Beckett’s more characteristic and cutting-edge plays – for theatre, radio and television – Weiss goes one step forward towards her main research interests: archive and memory. She develops a compelling reading through the scrutiny of Beckett’s characters where she finds that mechanical and technological processes involved in the construction of intimate archives are a compulsive reaction to obtaining a sense of self, even when this repetitive action leaves both characters and audience without a definitive meaning.

In the introduction Weiss declares: ‘Taking Beckett’s lead, this book will not bring together his vast collection of plays under the umbrella of absurdism or

existentialism. Rather the unifying element that will be discussed is Beckett's uses of and references to technology' (9). This methodological statement serves to organize and reference Beckett's plays under the scope of technological gadgets and mechanisation in Modernist sensitivity. The author links her research findings with actual performance experiences of Maryland Stage Company's actors who have successfully toured *Not I*, *Ohio Impromptu*, *Play* and *That Time*, directed by Xerxes Mehta, as well as her own experiences directing some of Beckett's short plays performed by undergraduate students at East Tennessee University. Four additional critical essays inform her exploration alongside peer studies regarding ghosts, fidelity, love and memory in Beckett's creations.

As clear as the methodological frame is, it fails to articulate in a satisfactory way what the main focus is in this reading of Beckett's plays through the lens of technology. Navigating from one medium to another, the reader realises Weiss's aims gravitate towards key concepts: order, authority, authorship, memory, time, identity, past and trauma, timidly building up her argument just before the end of the third chapter. 'Beckett suggests that the production of politics is a narrative production that must be interrogated' (134). In Weiss's opinion, Beckett chooses to interrogate the production of politics and therefore the production of private narratives through the disarticulation of core aspects of media.

Props and the emotional relationships characters establish with them, stage directions and repetition, monotonous choreographic patterns, camera movements often focusing in zooms and close-ups, authoritarian lighting tendencies, or sharp transitions between sound and silence, interact in a particular time and space. This reveals what Vivian Carol Sobchack calls 'phenomenological inquiry': '[I]ocating the "subject," "consciousness," and "meaning" in actual and embodied existential praxis indicate[s] how the forms of specific existence are not an essential given' (147). As a result, the disarticulation of traditional aesthetics in media allows – in Beckett's playwriting and *mise en scène* – to acknowledge 'what is often forgotten in [...] abstract and "objective" theories of spectatorship [...] the particular human lived-body specifically lived as "my body" is an excess of the historical and analytic systems available to codify, contain, and even negate it' (147).

Precisely under this gaze Weiss's last premise embraces further meaning. For her, Beckett's characters, reduced to embodied ghosts and shadows, become his



resistance to a politics of inscription. As Maddy in *All That Fall* paradoxically declares: ‘Don’t mind me. Don’t take any notice of me. I do not exist. The fact is well known’ (72). Beckett’s characters refuse to expose themselves as a certain given to the audience; rather, they unveil the historical and analytic systems contained in their use of and relationship with technology as a coercive method to codify and contain memory, at the same time experiencing how it finally negates their identity.

Technological readings in Beckett’s extensive production have been increasingly emerging over recent years. Katherine Weiss’s book adds to this sensitivity using technology as a thriving excuse to discuss the political implications of questioning authority and, in consequence, the invention of particular systems holding what we tend to see as an undeniable truth within society.

Her research naturally dialogues with David Albright’s *Beckett and Aesthetics*, in which he argues that ‘[...] Beckett’s whole canon is intimately engaged with technological problems’, as he discloses: ‘Beckett in some sense wanted to be uneasy about technology’ (i). A connection can also be found with Ulrika Maude’s book *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. The focus of Maude’s study is in the physical and sensory experiences the body incorporates while performing Beckett’s plays. In her view ‘[...] Beckett explores wider themes of subjectivity and experience [...]’ (i), eventually showing a hyper-present (my)self.

*The Plays of Samuel Beckett* works better as an introductory journey for students and theatre practitioners approaching the playwright’s work for the first time. Its reinterpretation of previous scholarship often becomes predictable and does not engage with contemporary research in media, spectatorship, or dramaturgy. Nevertheless, what becomes more interesting in Weiss’s analysis is her profound and informed selection of Beckett’s writings in his journals and letters uncovering possible explanations for what might be considered an eccentric and ironically authoritarian approach towards the production of his texts.

Since the main issue under discussion – for Weiss – is the use, or the relationship, characters establish with technological gadgets, she devotes special attention to Beckett’s theatre and television practice where mechanical props such as Pozzo’s clock in *Waiting for Godot* and the tape recorder in *Krapp’s Last Tape*, or camera movements such as dolly and close-ups in *Eh Joe*, or the duplicity of screens in *Nacht und Träume*, permanently challenge the audience to see how they force the appearance of meaning. At the same time, the audience is pushed to realise how

accountable they are for this inscription. For Weiss, this process is articulated in the same way Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari explain how meaning is read through the white wall/black holes metaphor. It is because I recognize the black holes in the white wall; the white wall becomes something inextricably linked to me, the one perceiving it.

### **Works Cited**

- Albright, David. *Beckett and Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.
- Maude, Ulrika. *Beckett, Technology and the Body*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.
- Shoback, Vivian Carol. *The Address of the Eye: Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

### ***Movement Training for Actors* by Jackie Snow**

London: Methuen Drama, 2012, 192 pp. (softback with DVD)

By Bryan Brown

*Movement Training for Actors*, a compendium of methods and exercises adapted and created by renowned teacher Jackie Snow, is a workbook in the tradition of Litz Pisk's *The Actor and his Body*, Jean Newlove's *Laban for Actors and Dancers* and Lorna Marshall's *The Body Speaks*. Primarily geared towards early-career teachers of movement training for actors, the publication can also be used by performers as a training guide.

Thorough in its scope and accessible in style, *Movement Training for Actors* is, however, little more than detailed recipes for group and individual games, sensorial explorations, isolation techniques, dynamic sequences, mask work, dances and imaginative transformation. While there is much practical use to such a collection, *Movement Training for Actors* exemplifies the tension inherent in the discipline of movement training: namely, that between the written word and direct contact with an experienced teacher capable of guiding an actor's learning, and application of, movement training.

Organised around three headings (the universal state, observation and transformation) that are intended to overlap in practice, the majority of the book focuses on the first heading, or what Snow terms 'the universal state'. The universal state has

potential to be a noteworthy addition to the pedagogical terminology of movement training; however, Snow does not expand upon how her use shifts practitioners' perception away from the 'blank slate or *tabula rasa*' (Evans 176) association of neutral state.

Accompanying the text is an hour-long DVD as well as copious illustrative photographs, both of which aim to take the exercises off the page in order to allow young teachers, or student-actors, to more accurately execute them. Compared to earlier text-only publications, such an approach is extremely useful and takes the publication some way towards utilising modern technology. However, all of the actors appear in full-length, form-fitting blacks against a black background. This odd choice renders the bodies presented for scrutiny almost completely obscured.

The DVD is organised according to the book, a structure that makes it illustrative of the exercises described in the text. Such an organizing principle means that the DVD is not easily used as its own medium. Some of the essential stretching and warm-up exercises appear after more dynamic ones that require alert bodies. This is disappointing, as a more strategic video might have allowed for teachers or practitioners to benefit from a sequential experience of movement training guided by Snow. What the DVD does show is movement regimented and controlled by the voice of the instructor. Although elements of play and actor-oriented leading are evident, the majority of the video shows very isolated and highly structured movement that leaves little room for imaginative exploration. It may be argued that such work is inevitably personal and therefore its representation on a DVD misleads young actors towards emulation rather than experience. Yet, Cieslak's playful leading of two young Odin Teatret actors through the Polish Teatr Laboratorium's *plastiques* is a classic example of film's ability to assist depiction of how the relationship between structured and improvisational movement work is provoked by the individual actor's imagination (Wethal). Such an imaginatively engaged approach is clearly what Snow intends, so it is a pity that it is not captured more readily for the video.

Unfortunately, *Movement Training for Actors* does little to advance the current practice of movement training, besides offering a breadth of exercises and some teaching reminders. Unlike Evans's *Movement Training for the Modern Actor*, Snow's publication lacks a critical perspective. The book contains no citations and no Bibliography. Thus, claims about Copeau, Lecoq, or Meyerhold go unsupported. Moreover, the publication suffers from numerous spelling errors, with the name of

seminal practitioner Kurt Jooss misspelled throughout. Most importantly, the book does not interrogate its own practices. As mentioned, Snow, following common drama school practice, requires all participants to wear blacks. She states: 'It is very important that actors are dressed neutrally (in black) and learn to let go of any judgement or self-consciousness about body size and shape' (3). Yet, such a practice contains a whole set of issues about authority, gaze and self-consciousness. As Evans remarked: 'The 'uniform' of black leotard or black T-shirt and leggings [...] operates as a frame in which the students' bodies are 'presented' for scrutiny, submitted to the teacher's gaze, and to that of other students' (126). The process by which students 'learn to let go of any judgement or self-consciousness' is much more complex than Snow lets on and requires the young actor to navigate the act of being seen, preferably with the guidance of trained pedagogues. Similarly, the book does not interrogate the term 'habit', which is seen as something to be 'discarded' (26). A more complex view of movement training might represent itself as a set of habits being (re)inscribed in an actor in order to allow for more expressive choice.

Overall, through her consistent reinforcement of the integrated nature of the book, Snow gives an excellent understanding of how movement training operates in a British professional drama school: those institutions which, as Evans states, 'represent an important area in which movement training is sustained, intensive and systematic' (3). Thus, *Movement Training for Actors* acts as a window onto the accumulated knowledge of British movement training, as well as its application within twenty-first century industry-accredited programmes. And yet, the book would greatly benefit from a more sustained weaving of how specific exercises assist the comprehensive experience of acting. Given Snow's wealth of experience, *Movement Training for Actors* could be a more significant achievement, offering as much insight into the author's process and guidance for application as the exercises detailed within.

### **Works Cited**

- Evans, Mark. *Movement Training for the Modern Actor*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.
- Marshall, Lorna. *The Body Speaks*. London: Methuen, 2001.
- Newlove, Jean. *Laban for Actors and Dancers*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Pisk, Litz. *The Actor and his Body*. London: Harrap, 1975.

Wethal, Torgeir. *Training at Teatr-Laboratorium*. Hostelbro: Odin Teatret Archives, 1972.

***Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* by Laura Cull**

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 291 pp. (hardback)

By Nik Wakefield

An instrumental figure in the growing field of performance philosophy, Laura Cull has written a book that is both a timely intervention and a practical guide to exploring how performance thinks, through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. Cull aims broadly to ‘rethink performance *itself* as a kind of philosophy’ (3, original emphasis).

*Theatres of Immanence* sets out to ‘explore the implications of the concept of immanence for theatre and performance [...] to conceive what we might call a “theatre of immanence”’ (1). Cull provides an introduction to Deleuze’s thought by comparing immanence and transcendence and going on to explore how various practices emerge as more or less immanent and transcendent. To gloss the difference here, while transcendence involves an outside eye, immanence presumes thinking from the inside. In addition to Deleuze and his work with Guattari, Cull also draws on the philosophies of Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche and Baruch Spinoza. Bergson’s relevance appears in Cull’s chapter on duration, Nietzsche figures into her conclusion on ethics, while Spinoza (and the others to a lesser degree) are used to contextualise the school of thought out of which Deleuze emerges.

*Theatres of Immanence* applies a methodology consisting in exploring theatre practice between opposite poles that Cull identifies as intertwined – immanence and transcendence. The book makes no argument that one is more valuable than the other in order to both analyse the transformative nature of performance and the interdependency of the two terms. Indeed, Cull asserts that most performance practice will lean more towards one or the other at different times. This crucial non-binary is immanent thinking itself, which is to presume ‘Being as becoming’, or rather to affirm the multiplicity of theatre, which can be both immanent and transcendent in different ways (8). Because Cull is thinking immanence, she thinks immanently herself, which means to appreciate the difference and multiplicity affirmed by Deleuze’s philosophy. For

Cull, theatre is a multiplicity not only because it relies upon the labour of more than one discipline, but also because it changes over time.

The continuum approach is applied throughout *Theatres of Immanence* on smaller scales to support Cull's main argument, positing that performance itself thinks and does so in its own specific kind of thinking. Throughout the five chapters, each focusing respectively on authorship, language, imitation, participation and duration, Cull explores a diverse range of eleven practitioners. *Theatres of Immanence* carries its main argument with potency throughout the book, focusing in each chapter and subchapter on varying themes and identifying practices that feed knowledge back to philosophy.

What makes this approach work so well is that Cull has chosen specific practitioners whose work has clear relevance to each theme. She also utilises certain elements of practitioners' work that have received less analysis. For example, rather than focusing on the visuality of Robert Wilson's performance, Cull focuses on his use of language. Cull has also chosen to think through well-known and unfamiliar practitioners, which allows the reader to find new aspects of works they may know already and be introduced to theatres of immanence that may be new for some. Cull approaches this juxtaposition by moving between familiarity and novelty in order to reveal and open immanence rather than identify and limit it. In addition to the practitioners mentioned in the next paragraph, Cull also explores the work of Antonin Artaud, Carmelo Bene, Robert Wilson, Georges Lavaudant, Hijikata Tatsumi, Marcus Coates, Allan Kaprow and Lygia Clark.

Instead of rehearsing the secondary arguments Cull uses to think immanent performance, or performatic immanence, I would like to focus here on one particular example. In the first chapter on how John Cage, The Living Theatre and Goat Island compose performance, Cull identifies processes that navigate these two poles. Her underlying point is that a mix of 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' authoring work may be operating at different times in these creative processes (22). Just because The Living Theatre espoused a method of collective creation, or that John Cage imposed chance, does not guarantee immanence; at certain points in the process directors took over to shape the works. This is to say that their modes of devising followed different stages throughout the process. Indeed, that director Lin Hixson of Goat Island is always outside the performance does not secure transcendence. Instead of telling her actors

what to do, Hixson might ask questions and facilitate responses. Therefore Hixson's 'approach to directing' (43, original emphasis) is more reciprocal than pre-emptive, so 'because *theatres are processes*' (42, original emphasis), the outside, top-down transcendent mode of authorship is rarely seen in Goat Island's work without a balance of inside, bottom-up immanent creative modes.

To categorize a performance in one mode or the other 'would be a kind of transcendence in itself' and thus against the project to go beyond illustrating immanence by actually thinking immanently (55). Rather than a polemic, Cull offers a series of concepts and practices that are useful for performance practice and analysis as well as philosophy. One example of these concepts and practices is that Deleuzian thought indicates that crucial to immanence is the idea of becoming, where the passage of time is the process of continuous difference. If Cull were to think in terms of fixed ontologies, with binary dualisms and this-or-that logic, she would be thinking transcendence. Immanence acknowledges multiplicity. *Theatres of Immanence* is therefore interested in the interpenetrative nature of 'both/and' over 'either/or'.

*Theatres of Immanence* should appeal to a wide range of readers. It reveals new potentials for scholarly work in both performance and philosophy by offering new insights on practice and theory. Cull proves that theory and practice are different in degree, not different in kind. Practitioners might read this book in order to realise the philosophies immanent in their work. Students of theatre will gain an advanced understanding of how to conduct interdisciplinary research, as this book is a successful model of an exchange between two fields. Perhaps *Theatres of Immanence* could have appealed more to, and championed the methodology of, the growing number of practice-as-researchers by including some of Cull's own performance work, as well as thinking more creatively with how to display practice within the book. But *Theatres of Immanence* nonetheless opens the doors to the field of performance philosophy in an important piece of scholarship that will be a model for many researchers working to bring together complex practice and theory.