



Key Words

A JOURNAL OF CULTURAL MATERIALISM

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edited by
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Prologue

Raymond Williams and Performance

Claire Warden

Like William Shakespeare I begin this edition of *Key Words* with a prologue to 'lay our scene'. Here I give a brief rationale for the edition and some of the choices I, as editor, have made regarding focus and terminology. It aims to provide a short frame for Janelle Reinelt's opening provocative Introduction in which she uses a variety of Raymond Williams's theories to analyse contemporary performance studies and, from this, introduces and contextualises the articles in this edition.

Williams's interest in drama is well documented. As well as writing two books specifically on this subject – *Drama in Performance* (1954)¹ and *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (1968, a revised version of his 1952 *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*)² – drama frequently acted as an example for his broader theses: in *The Politics of Modernism* (1989),³ for example, he discusses Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty as a disturbance of bourgeois sensibilities,⁴ and in *Modern Tragedy* (1966) he cites plays by Eugene O'Neill, August Strindberg and Tennessee Williams as examples of 'modern tragedy'. He initially included his own play *Koba* in this book. His appointment to Professor of Drama at the University of Cambridge in 1974 seemingly cemented his position in drama studies. Williams understood drama's power to clarify and analyse 'real' events. In fact, according to Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, Williams's interest in drama compelled him to move from pure literary studies into cultural studies; drama (as a liminal mode between, for want of better words, "text" and "action") was key to this change in his philosophical perspective.⁵ Towards the end of his career drama still retained a powerful presence in his writings. In 1983, acknowledging the ubiquity of television in particular, he wrote 'what we now have is drama as habitual experience: more in a week, in many cases, than most human beings could previously have seen in a lifetime'.⁶

As with many disciplines, "drama" has undergone profound, field-altering revisions in recent years. Partly this is due to the 'theory explosion' Janelle Reinelt and Joseph Roach highlight in the introduction to their seminal *Critical Theory and Performance*.⁷ Partly, and inextricably connected with the rise of theory, this is due to the various new terms applied to this highly complex, multi-faceted field. "Drama" no longer acts as a monolithic catch-all; scholars and practitioners in this area now have to grapple with the tricky, canonizing impulse of "theatre history/studies" and the fluid indistinctness of "performance" which, as described by leading scholar/practitioner Richard

Schechner, could apply to eight different, but potentially overlapping, situations from arts to business, sex to ‘everyday life’.⁸ With the welcome expansion of performance studies, a subject Reinelt discusses in her Introduction to this volume, scholars in the field have also become anthropologists, economists, historians, philosophers and sociologists. In choosing “performance” rather than “theatre” or “drama” as the title for this edition of *Key Words* I have made a distinct choice to embrace, in Diana Taylor’s words, its ‘complex, and at times contradictory, mix...[its] history of untranslatability’.⁹

The authors included in this collection perceive that, in this semantically and theoretically complex field, Williams might still have something important to say. Williams’s writings on theatre, drama and performance bring something vital, dynamic and insightful to contemporary discussions, even if the field has changed so dramatically in recent years. The usefulness of his ideas is hardly hidden. Take, for example, the introduction to *Drama in Performance* in which Williams poses the question ‘what, historically, is the relation between a dramatic text and a dramatic performance?’¹⁰ This tricky question remains a driving force for many working in the field, whether for semioticians such as Keir Elam, who suggests the relationship between these facets of the performance event constitute a ‘powerful *intertextuality*’,¹¹ or, more recently, Rebecca Schneider, whose idea of the ‘jumpiness of liveness’ engenders a rethinking of the ‘texts, objects and material remains’ of performance alongside spectator responses and embodied experiences.¹² This is one example amongst many, but nods to the potential import or usefulness of Williams’s work as scholars continue to ask difficult questions. In fact Duška Radosavljević recognizes Williams’s contribution to performance studies in her recent *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century*. She claims Williams, along with linguist J.L. Austin, made ‘significant contributions to the development of Performance Studies’; she grounds this conclusion in her reading of *Drama in Performance*, pointing out Williams’s cogent understanding of the categories of dramatic action, the ‘visual enactment’ of the text, and the changing methods of writing and playing.¹³ The fact that this contemporary-focused book uses Williams’s work in such a foundational way illustrates the importance and value of his ideas. But such far-reaching and discipline-breaking enquiries inevitably engender a crisis in how to engage with this far broader understanding of performance and, particularly, how to create *political* performance work. Reinelt concludes her 2010 article ‘Generational Shifts’ with a pertinent concern about the definition of political theatre, a genre that seems to have suffered a particular crisis as ‘non-didactic postdramatic theatre’, as Reinelt describes it, becomes a dominant trope:¹⁴

The concern for how performance can and does affect the society that spawns it is important to many of us across the generational divide, and I hope we will seriously debate these issues with attention to the international voices which make up the current global conjuncture.¹⁵

As she illustrates in the Introduction to the current volume (and as all the contributors acknowledge in different ways throughout), Williams's work might enable performers, dramatists and academics to create/study political theatre in the modern age. While scholars and practitioners battle with these issues – terminological and aesthetic trickiness, the relationship between activism and performance, growing mediatization, the dramatization of the world out with the theatre walls – Williams's work seems to bring a fresh voice as a committedly political figure who, nevertheless, understood the aesthetics and impact of live performance. In their own way, all the articles in this volume address this issue.

The articles in this collection, from Janelle Reinelt whose formal Introduction frames the whole issue, Katharine Cockin, Patrick Duggan, John Connor and myself (alongside the Recoveries interventions from Amy Skinner and Naomi Paxton and the welcome performance analysis from Ruth Beale) draw on Williams's work in new ways. Reinelt makes a strong case for the relevance of Williams's theories for the field in her 2015 article "What I Came to Say": Raymond Williams, the Sociology of Culture and the Politics of (Performance) Scholarship'. In this article she acknowledges 'limits and gaps in his project' but, nevertheless, turns towards Williams to find political ways of constructing theatre that might counteract (or at least unearth alternative narratives to) the prevailing wisdom of metatheatrical postdramaticism, the sociological anarchism of Jacques Rancière and the rejection of political definites.¹⁶ This edition of *Key Words* begins here: with Janelle Reinelt setting out the field, uncovering the major issues and providing a foundation for the scholarship that comes after it.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Drama in Performance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968 [1954]).
- 2 Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1968); *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952).
- 3 Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: New York, 1989).
- 4 Williams, *The Politics of Modernism*, 87–8
- 5 Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 34.
- 6 Raymond Williams, *Writing is Society* (London: Verso, 1983), 12

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- 7 Janelle Reinelt and Joseph Roach, *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2010 [2007]), 4.
- 8 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 31.
- 9 Diana Taylor, 'Performance Studies: A Hemispheric Focus' in Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 13.
- 10 Williams, *Drama in Performance*, 2.
- 11 Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Routledge, 2002[1980]), 191.
- 12 Rebecca Schneider, *Theatre and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 44.
- 13 Duška Radosavljević, *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 16.
- 14 Janelle Reinelt, 'Generational Shifts', *Theatre Research International* 35:3 (2010): 3.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Janelle Reinelt, "'What I Came to Say': Raymond Williams, the Sociology of Culture and the Politics of (Performance) Scholarship", *Theatre Research International* 40:3 (October 2015): 235–49.

Introduction: Theatre, Performance and Politics

Janelle Reinelt

In a recent issue of *Lateral*, the journal of the Cultural Studies Association (USA), editors Stefanie Jones and Eero Laine introduced 'Performance: Circulations and Relations' with a sizeable quotation from *Marxism and Literature*.¹ Seeing Raymond Williams's comments about cultural production as central to their attempt to focus on performance as process, Jones and Laine wrote of their intention to examine 'the means by which performances happen at a variety of scales of cultural production and circulation, from the street to the living room to the border; from a cellphone to the theatrical stage to the art gallery; from public discourse in policy debates to the global circulation of performances of blackness, alterity, and power'.²

Appreciating how Williams's thinking became a linchpin for their scholarly efforts to anchor performance on 'the cusp of the politics of culture',³ I wanted to open this special issue of *Key Words* with the example of another special issue that finds Williams indispensable to parsing the relations between theatre, performance, and cultural production more generally. (It is no coincidence that the young editors of *Lateral* are/were themselves doctoral students of theatre,⁴ and thus embody the connection between Theatre Studies, Performance Studies, and Cultural Studies that I am concerned to delineate here.) Moreover, beginning with a quotation from one of Williams's books with a clear political theme, Jones and Laine signal what I believe to be true: it is the explicitly political commitment of Williams's oeuvre that will turn out to matter most to us as we re-examine 'Raymond Williams and Performance'.

In my view the field of Theatre and Performance Studies has recently strayed away from the strong political engagement and activism that marked the field in previous decades. We are told this is a post-identitarian, post-political time, and that traditional 'political theatre' is no longer possible or relevant. Obviously not everyone in the field believes this, but many influential scholars and students do.⁵ If theatre and performance has only a weakened political affect in our time, one that is so qualified or attenuated that it turns inward to contemplate only its own apparatus or the aesthetic perceptions of its audiences, then the vital and dynamic interconnectedness between performance and material relations of power is lost to study and analysis, and also to activism. It is in hopes of reaffirming these relations, strengthening our understanding of how performance inheres in all our political acts and how it provides a lens for understanding our current political alternatives, that I begin by linking some of Williams's key concepts to Performance Studies, that development that took shape in the US about the same time as Williams

was working through his ideas about tragedy, television, and Marxist cultural theory.⁶ He was appointed Professor of Drama at Cambridge and delivered his inaugural lecture, 'Drama in a dramatized society' on 29 October 1974, and it can be considered the fulcrum for my argument here.

What has come to be known as Performance Studies in the last three decades, beginning in the US but now spreading in various local iterations across the globe, shares a lot of ground with Williams's ideas about culture, structures of feeling, theatre, and performance. Most intriguingly, both Williams and Performance Studies privilege an orientation to social science research in combination with their arts and humanities base, although the paths of association are quite different. I am resolved to think a bit about the historical genealogies involved here, and to show that the links illuminate something about both past and present. This involves, first, a sketch of the controversial history of Performance Studies for the journal's multi-disciplinary readership, then an exploration of its connection to the history of Williams's own development of ideas, and finally, some comments on why highlighting these affinities might enhance the politics of our scholarship and, in some cases, our theatrical practice.

Richard Schechner, Dwight Conquergood, and Two Schools of Thought

The figure most often associated with the term 'Performance Studies', and indeed its main founder, is Richard Schechner. Of the many possible descriptions of him, probably the most important is that he was and has remained a theatre practitioner throughout his career, known at least as well for his performance-making, especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, as for his theorizing in academic publications. He has headed three important theatre companies, pioneering what came to be called 'environmental theatre'.⁷ Out of his company, The Performance Group, came the later troupe known as The Wooster Group, arguably the leading US avant-garde theatre company for over forty years. Schechner's academic career started at Tulane University in New Orleans in the early 1960s where he edited the *Tulane Drama Review* which became *The Drama Review* and then eventually *The Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies*, best known across time as simply *TDR*. In 1967 Schechner moved to the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, where he remains today as University Professor at age 80+ – still both directing productions and writing articles. When he changed the journal name for the last time in 1988, the editorial for the first issue commented:

Everyone knows that *TDR* is not a drama review. Yet what can we do with the ‘D’? We considered *That Damned Review*, or *Theatre Drama Review*, or *Theatre, Dance, Ritual* ... So what we’ve done is to become *TDR*, *The Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies*. Acknowledging our history, we proclaim our identity.⁸

In his editorials for *TDR* as well as in a series of influential essays and talks (e.g., to the Association for Theatre in Higher Education), Schechner developed a critique of theatre as only one of a number of human behaviours most accurately placed under the umbrella term, ‘performance’, and also a critique of theatre departments in the US – their intellectual programme, their artistic practice, their position within the academy. Looking back now, it is hard to remember how impassioned this debate proved to be, but some of its residual effects are still alive in US theatre departments today.

Meanwhile, at Northwestern University, outside of Chicago, a similar interest in broadening research on performance developed another genealogy for Performance Studies: at Northwestern, the context was a strong department of oral interpretation within a School of Speech that also housed radio, TV, film, and theatre as well as communication studies. Here, the historical provenance for performance was rhetoric rather than theatre and the Speech Communications Association was the key academic organization where eventually a Division of Oral Interpretation became the division of Performance Studies. Dwight Conquergood must be thought of as the key figure here. Although younger than Schechner he was similarly insightful and radical in his vision and pedagogy.⁹ While Schechner’s first degrees were in English, followed by a PhD in Theatre, Conquergood’s were in Speech and Communications, finishing his PhD in Performance Studies at Northwestern, in the department whose name he helped change from ‘Interpretation’ to ‘Performance Studies’ in 1984.¹⁰

Conquergood was a committed ethnographer who lived and worked among the populations he studied – in refugee camps in Thailand and Gaza, and in housing projects in Chicago. He made two important documentary films, curated exhibits, and performed himself from time to time as well as writing a series of important scholarly articles that articulated his version of Performance Studies, and most importantly, the ethico-political issues involved in working in Performance Studies.

To summarize briefly the development of the complex field of Performance Studies, I’ll rely initially on Schechner, who enjoyed the combativeness of the argument, returning to Conquergood when we directly approach the ideas of Raymond Williams. The three most important controlling ideas of

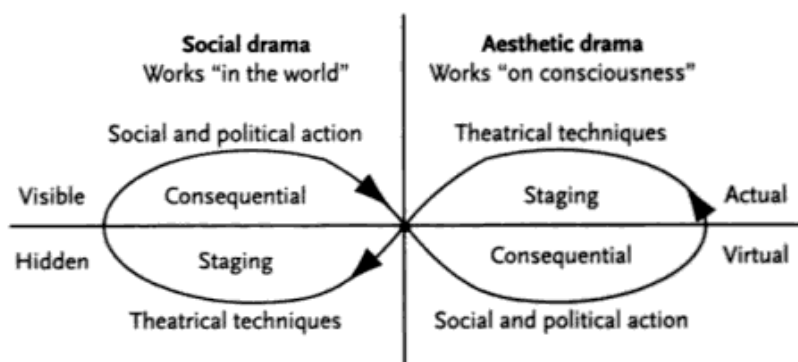
Performance Studies involve the concept of performance, its relationship to the social sciences, and its political orientation.

First, choosing ‘performance’ as the key term for the new discipline has its own hazards; as Shannon Jackson pointed out, writing, ‘[i]n a cross-disciplinary conversation, interested parties may engage in a conversation only to find that performance means different things to different people’.¹¹ For our purposes, I would just note the triad of terms, ‘drama’, ‘theatre’, ‘performance’, which circulate in Theatre and Performance Studies with a more concrete sense of definition than one finds outside the profession. ‘Drama’ is what Raymond Williams and Richard Schechner both called their early research subjects. They had both come from literature departments, and texts were what they originally studied and wrote about. ‘Theatre’ either meant the history of the theatre or the actual theatrical event of which there might be multiple productions or performances. When Schechner turned away from theatre to embrace performance, he turned away from drama as well, although the success of his journal, *The Drama Review*, made it difficult for him to completely disentangle from this term. Still, ‘performance’ needed to be the over-arching analytic category.

Here is Schechner in a key pronouncement on performance from *TDR* in the third issue of 1988, the year he changed the title of the journal: ‘Performance ... is a broad spectrum of activities, including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life.’¹² Over the years, this became elaborated as Schechner’s ‘broad spectrum approach to performance where performance must be construed as a “broad spectrum” or “continuum” of human actions ranging from ritual, play, sport, popular entertainments, the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), and everyday life performances to the enactment of social, professional, gender, race, and class roles, and on to healing (from shamanism to surgery), the media, and the internet’.¹³ (This is his most inclusive and up-to-date definition from 2013.) Along with other performance scholars searching for a processual definition, Schechner stressed doing over being, action over stasis. He defined performance as ‘showing doing’ and Performance Studies as explaining ‘showing doing’.¹⁴ One of his key ideas is that performances are ‘restored behaviours’ – that showing doing requires people to train for and rehearse their actions, and that this is true in everyday life every bit as much as it is art.¹⁵ Erving Goffman was influential on this part of Schechner’s thinking, especially his work on role play and social roles in books like *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).¹⁶

However, Goffman is not the most important social science influence on Schechner, for whom Anthropology became the interdisciplinary key to his new ideas. He read and was influenced by Victor Turner,¹⁷ and met him in

1977. What followed was a friendship and collaboration that resulted in mutual respect and citation, and grounded Performance Studies in an intercultural focus and on the methods of fieldwork. From Turner, Schechner took concepts such as the liminal and liminoid, and developed them to account for the in-between moments of performances where art and life or social and aesthetic experiences co-mingle. Turner had also developed a theory of 'social drama' to account for cultural conflicts with four stages, Breach, Crisis, Redressive Action, Re-integration or Schism. Schechner critiqued these ideas for their formulaic reductions but also employed them to further explain the relationship of aesthetic drama to social drama. Turner had a famous diagram, the 'infinity loop', discussed in two of his texts from the 1980s. It first appeared in Schechner's essay 'Selective Inattention', in *Performing Arts Journal* in 1976:¹⁸



For Schechner, this loop shows how the aesthetic structures can cross over into social structures and *vice-versa*. He writes about the loop:

The politician, activist, militant, terrorist uses techniques of the theatre (staging) to support his social action; the social action is consequential – that is, it is designed to effect change in the social order or to maintain stability in an order threatened by change. The theatre person uses the consequential actions of social life as the underlying themes or frames of his art. The theatre is designed to effect change in perception, viewpoint, attitude: in other words, to make the spectator react to the world of social drama in a new way.¹⁹

In another link to anthropology, Schechner's interest in non-Western and intercultural performances and rituals led him to embrace the participant-observer paradigm for his theatre work, leading to a commitment to self-reflexive performance analysis and commentary. In Performance Studies,

he holds that a Brechtian distance, irony, or commentary lead to a form of 'performing fieldwork'.²⁰ Dwight Conquergood considered himself a performance ethnographer, and spent his life living among and studying disenfranchised peoples, especially the Hmong community in Thailand and Chicago, working with refugees and urban street gangs. Conquergood's research enabled others to engage issues of ethics in ethnographic research, to understand performance as a meaningful paradigm for ethnography, and to transcend theory/practice binaries that had been endemic to theatre studies in the past. In this distinction between a 'cool' Schechner and rather more 'warm' Conquergood, Williams might be seen as temperamentally more akin to Schechner, but actually he was, like Conquergood, less flamboyant and more personally ascetic than Schechner from most accounts. (However, he was certainly not an ethnographer.)

And finally, there is a democratic notion of culture driving Performance Studies. Based on Schechner's own involvement in community theatre in the South during the Civil Rights era when he was at Tulane, it became his conviction that popular entertainments, sport, television, and other forms of popular culture were part of the broad spectrum of performance and should be studied seriously as equal to canonical texts. The anthropological interest in non-Western cultures, rituals, and popular festivals also helped to unsettle received hierarchies of literary and canonical values. Both Schechner and Conquergood stressed the resistant and transformative potentials of performance and its democratic inclusions; Conquergood was a consciously political activist whose last intervention was to work to abolish the death penalty in the US, and to write movingly about those efforts.²¹

Raymond Williams, 'Drama', and Cultural Studies

Turning now more directly to Raymond Williams, I have been struck by the historical legacy of all three of these figures, and seek to bring them into relation with one another, even if only in retrospect. As Williams died before there was significant circulation of knowledge about the American emergence of Performance Studies, and as I have found no places where Williams commented explicitly on it or on its key figures, I am not claiming a genealogical link but rather a glancing affinity between some of Williams's ideas and some of those attributed to Performance Studies. And I also clearly recognize the distance and differences that crop up when we look closely at these materials; for example, Williams was virtually uninvolved in performance practice apart from his work as a playwright – in this sense, Williams was a 'literary' figure while the other two were theorist/practitioners.

Then there is the absence of engagement with cultural anthropology of the sort practised by Goffman or Turner, let alone Schechner or Conquergood, in Williams's writing, nor is there an engagement with theories of ritual. *Keywords* does include 'anthropology', but no reference to anything resembling ethnography or ritual. Of course 'drama' and 'theatre' do not appear in *Keywords* either, but 'dramatic' does, and offers an intriguingly ambiguous entry: Williams writes that 'dramatic' indicates 'an action or situation having the qualities of spectacle or surprise comparable to those of written or acted drama' while '*Role*, a part or character in a play, has been extended to describe a social function, or a version of a social function, in one dominant *idealist* school of sociology, and thence generally, since eC20' (italics in original).²² (Whether he is thinking of Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Weber here or not is hard to tell.²³ Goffman might be seen also in this lineage although he is more influenced by Émile Durkheim.) In short, it is difficult to see Williams paying attention to any of the precursors of the American version of Performance Studies.

On the other hand, there are a number of instances in which Williams seems to be visionary about and indeed compatible with the emerging field of Performance Studies.

Williams argues in the first pages of *The Sociology of Culture* (1981) for a newly emerging convergence between idealist and materialist approaches to culture. He characterizes as 'idealist' those theories that look for the 'informing spirit' while materialists emphasize the whole social order and see culture as derived from it. Williams thinks culture can be recognized as not merely derived from the social order but in fact constituting it. Rather than an informing spirit, culture is a signifying system. He writes:

There is some practical convergence between (i) the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life', within which, now, a distinct 'signifying system' is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in *all* forms of social activity and (ii) the more specialized if more common sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities', though these, because of the emphasis on a general signifying system, are now much more broadly defined to include not only the arts and other forms of intellectual production but all the other 'signifying practices' – from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion, and advertising – which now constitute this complex and necessarily extended field. This book is written within the terms of this contemporary convergence.²⁴

It does not seem much of a stretch to link this passage to Schechner's definition of a broad spectrum approach to performance which I cited earlier.

True, Williams shows his attachment to texts somewhat in his list, compared to Schechner's emphasis on actions such as sport or surgery, but I think the important convergence between the two thinkers is their emphasis on the extension of activities of culture to include a wide variety. Indeed, in working towards a systematic sociology of culture that became formative of cultural studies, Williams moves between his two areas of passionate intellectual attachment – drama and other artistic practices *and* analytic analyses of the structures of feeling of the whole way of life of groups and social formations.

But perhaps the missing link *is* the Americans' focus on performance? Williams does not use 'performance' as an umbrella term in his work, it is true. However, if we turn to Williams's inaugural address at Cambridge in 1974, we find him stretching his ideas about drama in the direction of his *Keywords* entry for the dramatic. Shannon Jackson has analysed Williams's inaugural lecture to make the connection to Performance Studies, pointing out that Williams's development of his concept of 'structure of feeling' coincided with his major writings on drama from the late 1950s. She noted the publication of *The Long Revolution* in 1961 where structure of feeling gets its first full-blown iteration. Jackson had been reading John Higgins on Williams, who also argues that the dramatic criticism is central to his larger projects against the majority of his commentators, such as Terry Eagleton, for whom the connections between the two bodies of work were not apparent.²⁵ Jackson looks at how Williams understands Chekhov through his concept, quoting Williams,

It is a way of speaking and of listening to a specific rhythm of a particular consciousness; in the end a form of unfinished, transient, anxious relationship, which is there on the stage or in the text but which is also, pervasively, a structure of feeling of a precise and contemporary world ... I don't think I could have understood these dramatic procedures as methods – that is to say as significant general modes – if I had not been looking both ways.²⁷

Jackson, in short, urges Performance Studies scholars to pay attention to the connections between Williams's drama analyses and his cultural studies theories, and the way they informed each other.

This 'looking both ways', which has characterized Williams's integration of the dramatic and the social, is the striking theme of his Inaugural Lecture. Its purpose seems to be to explain what he thinks (in 1974) is a significant change in the nature of society coming from the rapid acceleration and extension of drama within society. 'We have never as a society acted so much or watched so many others acting', he begins. 'What is really new – so new I think it is difficult to see its significance – is that drama, in quite new ways, is built into the rhythms

of everyday life'.²⁷ This seems somewhat astonishing to Williams, and so he sets out to explain how it has come about, pointing out the difference between the limited occasional dramas of the past in a festival, or a season, or special trips to the theatre; and the high everyday-quantity of dramas in the present, mainly coming to us through television. He writes, '[w]hat we now have is drama as habitual experience: more in a week, in many cases, than most human beings would previously have seen in a lifetime'.²⁸ Thus far, Williams is still thinking very literally about staged dramas, in the media if not on live stages, and the proliferation of theatrical representations in modernity. But soon he is sliding from a chain of linkage between Ibsen's represented rooms on stage to the box set of the television to the constant dramatic representations of life in the present, which he sees as 'daily habit and need'. He makes the leap to seeing drama as part of a larger process of sociality:

Drama is a special kind of use of quite general processes of presentation, representation, signification ... Congruous and comparable practices exist in other parts of the society as in the drama, and these are often interactive: the more interactive as the world of fixed signs is less formal ... Actions of a kind and scale that attract dramatic comparisons are being played out in ways that leave us continually uncertain whether we are spectators or participants.²⁹

Slowly through the lecture, Williams moves from speaking about drama to speaking more and more about the dramatized society, which he thinks is an emerging formation in 1974. Not surprising, then, that his conclusion is: 'I learned something from analyzing drama which seemed to me effective not only as a way of seeing certain aspects of society but as a way of getting through to some of the fundamental conventions which we group as society itself'.³⁰

Moreover, a few years before this, Williams had already developed a new kind of dramatic criticism. After his 1954 version of *Drama in Performance*, he then published a substantial revision in 1968, while simultaneously publishing a revised version of *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot: Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. Those books, however, still largely focused on individual authors as the centre of productive meanings. But the 1968 version of *Drama in Performance* began to treat texts as performance texts; that is, as material for others, in rehearsal and performance, to produce as particular productions. That notion of a performance text as different from an author's original text may seem obvious today, but it certainly was not then.³¹ In his 1972 introduction to the Open University Press edition of *Drama in Performance*, Graham Holderness stresses the meaning of this shift for Williams's cultural materialism (two

years before the Cambridge Inaugural Address): 'There is virtually no focus on the dramatist, and no projected vision of a culture's ideological totality: the dramatic performance itself, conceived as the physical realization of an enacted relationship with social convention, belief, and ideology, mediates between them.'³²

The period of the late 1960s through the 1970s was critical for the development of the projects of both Performance Studies and cultural materialism. Perhaps if Williams had followed the emergence of the disciplinary debates in the US, he would either have made use of the broad spectrum definition of performance for his own sense of a dramatized society, or rejected it for his own explanation of how performance relates to social life. Schechner for his part might well have benefitted from Williams's writings about culture and society. While Schechner was attracted to ritual because it helped him argue that humans were essentially performative beings, Williams might have rejected this claim in favour of the processual, ever-changing features of cultural production. Yet both men might have agreed that 'culture is ordinary', and beyond that, that it is democratic. Both recognized the importance of technological change through media for cultural production in this period, and both resisted the elite literary codes and practices of their contemporary academies. Probably the most provocative statement Schechner ever made was his claim in 1992 that 'theatre as we have known and practiced it – as the staging of written dramas – will be the string quartet of the 21st century: a beloved but extremely limited genre, a subdivision of performance'.³³ It is worth noting that Schechner denigrates elitist culture here as well as drama – for him at that critical moment television was more important than classical music. In this, he shares with Williams the interest and promotion of television studies as an important source for understanding popular culture.

However, it is to Dwight Conquergood that I turn in closing, because Conquergood knew Williams's work and cited it, towards the end of his life in 2002. Published in *TDR*, Conquergood's essay, 'Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research', was an impassioned call for Performance Studies to define itself through six terms: artistry, analysis and activism; creativity, critique, and citizenship which for Conquergood meant civic struggles for social justice. He criticized the hierarchy of knowledges based on texts, especially prevalent within the academy, in order to champion other forms of knowledge: 'the whole realm of complex, finely nuanced meaning that is embodied, tacit, intoned, gestured, improvised, coexperienced, covert – and all the more deeply meaningful because of its refusal to be spelled out'.³⁴ Here, Conquergood turns to Williams, because Williams:

challenged the class-based arrogance of scriptocentrism, pointing to the ‘error’ and ‘delusion’ of ‘highly educated’ people who are ‘so driven in on their reading’ that ‘they fail to notice that there are other forms of skilled, intelligent, creative activity’ such as ‘theatre’ and ‘active politics.’ This error ‘resembles that of the narrow reformer who supposes that farm labourers and village craftsmen were once uneducated, merely because they could not read.’ He argued that ‘the contempt’ for performance and practical activity, ‘which is always latent in the highly literate, is a mark of the observer’s limits, not those of the activities themselves’.³⁵

You may recognize the intercalated quotations from Williams’s *Culture and Society*.³⁶ He also enlists Williams’s notion of structures of feeling to critique Clifford Geertz for the ethnocentrism of his textualism. In the later stages of Performance Studies theory then, one can begin to imagine the way Performance Studies and cultural materialism might have had a more joined-up beginning, if the Atlantic had not been quite so big a space between these thinkers during those early years.

Moving On

What does this musing on the past bring to our discussions in the present? This issue of *Key Words* demonstrates how thinking about Williams and theatre also converges on some of the themes I have been attributing to Performance Studies. Patrick Duggan’s essay on tragedy and anxiety brings us tangible examples of how a processual, ‘broad spectrum’ approach to contemporary tragedy can unlock the structure of feeling/tragedy in a particular culture in/ of the present. Thinking historically with Williams means seeing how emergent and residual cultural practices complicate accounts of any dominant hegemony. Claire Warden identifies the border as a spatial figure that holds the politically significant but many times unacknowledged traces of emergent democratic politics in the performances of the British Workers’ Theatre Movement. Her theoretical move posits the border as a liminal space of possibility and creativity which complicates received definitions of modernism in this case, and opens out to other artistic and political processes well beyond the 1930s. In Schechner’s explanation of the ‘infinity loop’ we can find the independent theatres (Katharine Cockin) drawing on ‘the consequential actions of social life’ to circumvent and challenge censorship by framing them through dramatic stagings that were designed to ‘effect change in perception, viewpoint, and attitude’. The contrast Cockin draws between Virginia Woolf’s ‘framing’ and that of the Pioneer Players highlights both the utility of Williams’ concepts of

the emergent and residual and calls for a political awareness of the exchanges between social and aesthetic politics.

Apart from these fairly obvious connections, readers will probably find many more links between Performance Studies and cultural materialism in the political struggles described in this issue. For like the loop, the flow between social life 'in the world' and aesthetic life on stages is inextricably infinite. And if there could be any 'knock-on' effect from the concentration of our attention here to these affinities, the best result would be, to gloss the editors of *Lateral*, to 'cut to the political quick'³⁷ of theatre and performance.

Notes

- 1 'In cultural production (and all consciousness is in this sense produced) the true range is from information and description, or naming and indication, to embodiment and performance ... Thus a sociology of drama, already concerned with institutions (theatre and their predecessors and successors), with formations (groups of dramatists, dramatic and theatrical movements), with formed relationships (audiences, including the formation of audiences within theatres and their wider social formation), would go on to include forms, not only in the sense of their relations to world-views or structures of feeling but also in the more active sense of their whole performance (social methods of speaking, moving, representing, and so on).' Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 139.
- 2 Stefanie A. Jones and Eero Laine, 'Editors' Introduction', *Lateral* 4 (2015), <http://csalateral.org/wp/issue/4/introduction/> (accessed 27 April 2016).
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Jones is a PhD candidate at City University of New York Graduate Center while Laine completed his degree at the same institution in theatre and film.
- 5 See, for example, Matthew Causey and Fintan Walsh (eds), *Performance, Identity, and the Neo-Political Subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), Jenny Edkins and Adrian Kear, *International Politics and Performance: Critical Aesthetics and Creative Practice* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), and Karen Jür-Munby, Jerome Carroll, and Steve Giles (eds), *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). These are three excellent books with highly nuanced positions, but together they illustrate the trend I am describing.
- 6 I am roughly delineating a period beginning in the late 1960s and lasting through the 1970s. Key publications include *Modern Tragedy* (rev. edn) (1979), *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), 'Base and Superstructure in Marx's Cultural Theory' (1973), and *Marxism and Literature* (1977).
- 7 Environmental theatre took its name from attempts to experiment with space in staging and in the relationship between the audience and actors. While today audiences attending a performance in a purpose-built venue or in a building that

- lends important design characteristics to the production is not ‘new news’, and tends to go by the name ‘site-specific’, in the 1960s these were radical theatrical experiments. Schechner’s Performance Group made and played its productions in the ‘Performing Garage’ (a re-purposed factory), where the space was rearranged and designed to fit each of the productions, most famously *Dionysis in 69* (1968) and *Macbeth* (1969). For an account of the concept and its history, see Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, rev. ed. (New York: Applause Books, 1994). This work was taking place in other countries as well: Jerzy Grotowski’s Polish Theatre Laboratory pioneered important productions in this mode such as *Akropolis* (1962) and his adaptation of Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* in 1963. See Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
- 8 Editorial, ‘TDR Changes Its Name (More or Less)’, *TDR* 32, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 7.
 - 9 Unfortunately, Conquergood died an early death in 2004, aged 58, a great loss to the field. For a resource for his fine work and a number of tributes to it, see Dwight Conquergood, *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013).
 - 10 In stressing the contrast between the backgrounds of these two figures, I omitted to mention that Conquergood’s first degree was double – in both speech communication and English, and his first job after graduating from Northwestern was actually in a Department of English at SUNY-Binghamton.
 - 11 Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.
 - 12 Richard Schechner, ‘Performance Studies: The Broad Spectrum Approach’, *TDR* 32, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 7.
 - 13 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies, An Introduction*, 3rd edn (New York and London: Routledge 2013), 2
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 28.
 - 15 Some of Schechner’s early performance theory formulations were very focused on the relationships between preparation, rehearsal, and ‘the dramatic event’ in both art and life, in ritual especially, and in other forms of social life. See for example, ‘Toward a Poetics of Performance’, in Richard Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory 1970–1976* (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977), 108–39.
 - 16 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1959).
 - 17 Turner (1920–83) was a social anthropologist who worked on ritual, symbol, and cultural performances, coining the term ‘social drama’ and working comparatively across Africa, Japan, Brazil, and other non-Western locations. With Turner, Schechner shared a deep interest in and commitment to intercultural research.
 - 18 The image is reprinted in Schechner, ‘Selective Inattention’, in *Essays on Performance Theory*, 140–56, here 144.
 - 19 *Ibid.*
 - 20 Schechner, *Performance Studies, An Introduction*, 2.

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- 21 Dwight Conquergood, 'Lethal Theatre: Performance, Punishment and the Death Penalty', *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 3 (2002): 339–67.
- 22 Raymond Williams, 'Dramatic', *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fourth Estate, 2014), 106–7.
- 23 I am speculating here on what Williams meant by 'idealist school' in this quotation: perhaps that the interpretative sociology of Weber and the hermeneutics of Dilthey are positions that might bear relevance to a notion of role that emphasises the agency of the individual in determining social meaning through his/her function, and that this might have been, for Williams, a more idealistic than material position.
- 24 Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 13.
- 25 To see Jackson's linkage of Williams with performance studies through both literature and critical theory, follow her genealogy in Chapter 3, 'Culture and Performance: Structures of Dramatic Feeling', *Professing Performance*, 79–108.
- 26 Quoted in Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 99. (Originally from the conclusion to his Inaugural Lecture.)
- 27 Raymond Williams, 'Drama in a Dramatized Society', in *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*, ed. Jim McGuigan (London and Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 161–71; here 162.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., 166; 167.
- 30 Ibid., 170.
- 31 Claire Warden pointed out to me that *Drama in Performance* came out about the same time as Barthes's 'Death of the Author' (1967), the text that created such a strong ripple of repudiation for the primacy of author-based interpretation and meaning with the literary and artistic community.
- 32 Graham Holderness, 'Introduction' to *Drama in Performance* by Raymond Williams (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1972), 4.
- 33 Quoted in Stephen Bottoms, 'In Defense of the String Quartet: An Open Letter to Richard Schechner', *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, eds James Harding and Cindy Rosenthal (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 23–38; here 23.
- 34 Dwight Conquergood, 'Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research', in *Cultural Struggles*, 33–4.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Cf. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1988), 309
- 37 Cf. Jones and Laine, 'Editors' Introduction'. They write: 'The papers we received in response to our call surpassed our expectations not only for the ways that the authors embrace the idea of performance as process, but especially for the ways in which the authors intervene in cultural activities through performance and, in doing so, cut to the political quick of cultural studies.'

'Wide Margins': Finding Performance in the Border and Borders in Performance

Claire Warden

In his 1961 analysis of cultural changes, *The Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams concludes by suggesting that the 'public opinion of the day' is a 'broad empty margin'; 'I think we are all in this margin', he says, 'it is what we have learned and where we live'.¹ Throughout his writings (he does, after all, title his 1960 novel *Border Country*) the border or margin seems to be a recurring motif for Williams. By 1979 he had identified the failure of self-proclaimed political theatre to effectively and affectively deal with the intricacies of the late twentieth century through this image of the margin:

It is perfectly true that many people are now getting their experience in underground arenas, but the fact is that these are operating within an increasingly centralized capitalist culture, which has this margin that is partly tolerated and partly even supported in a rather distinct and eventually complicated way.²

Patently reading this marginalised theatrical culture through his tripartite system of the dominant, residual and emergent, Williams understands this political theatre as simultaneously challenging the capitalist hegemony from the border and as a distinct part of the dominant culture, not just 'tolerated' but actually 'supported'. His conclusion stemmed from his impressions of John McGrath and Elizabeth MacLennan's 7:84 theatre company, a collective he admired enormously and that yet, he conceded, was relegated to the margins of twentieth-century art. Williams's resigned acknowledgement of this caused him to turn towards television and its latent potential as a political force reaching, as it certainly does, many more people (and many more *working-class* people at that) than theatre. In *View from the Border Country* Loren Kruger breaks down Williams's opinion, suggesting that this argument 'misses not only the possibility that commonality might emerge out of a concrete sense of place and of critical difference from the center, but also the value of the border as a site for *staging* alternative centers'.³ Kruger implies, instead, that one could actually be situated simultaneously at the centre and the margin, a conflated space of potential and creativity, political vibrancy and aesthetic experimentation.

Interestingly for this current article on borders, 7:84 were actually two distinct collectives: 7:84 England and 7:84 Scotland. It seemed that McGrath and MacLennan were conscious of the need to erect a distinct national border

in order to address specific cultural, artistic and historical issues. However, productions from both companies clearly revealed the conceivable political resonances of the border or margin, terms I tend to use interchangeably in this chapter while acknowledging the (particularly spatial) difference. Both words have distinct socio-geographical connotations; 'border' delineates between nations, while 'margin' evokes an extra sense of voicelessness or lack of agency (marginalised groups of people, for instance). They are also both artistically inscribed; there are margins in books, for example, or 'marginalia' as the annotations of the text, and borders of paintings – that blank transition space between the picture and the frame. Despite syntactical differences, I suggest, both refer to definable though fluid spaces, and both innately point to another place: a centre, a middle. A play such as McGrath's *Border Warfare* reveals the interconnection of these terms. Performed first by Wildcat and Freeway at the Tramway, Glasgow in 1989, it traces the story of Scottish and English relations back to the ancient forests and through centuries of fighting. As the title suggests, the 'border' becomes a geographical emblem of far broader political issues – land ownership, self-governance, the implications of industrialisation, the divisive interplay of religion, royalty and rebellion. But at the heart of this tale of borders lie other margins – Scotland as geographically and politically disregarded and, within its environs, a collection of ordinary people normally overlooked by the narratives of history.⁴ As *Border Warfare* illustrates, borders or margins have become clear sites of contestation in postcolonial theory and in re-conceptions of the nation state (see Gloria Anzaldúa), as well as in identity politics more generally, particularly with the advent of queer theory (see Judith Halberstam). There is even an emerging academic discipline called 'border studies'.⁵ This article is indebted to these geographical and political frameworks, while also seeking other (perhaps less loaded) ways of reimagining the border or margin in spatial, aesthetic and historical terms.

Building on this reading of 7:84's character and themes, I want to use this article to redeem Williams's helpful and expansive readings of borderlands, margins and frames, employing them to examine the theatrical innovations of 1930s' and 1940s' Britain. McGrath and MacLennan's collectives remained indebted to earlier innovators, a fact proven by 7:84 Scotland's 1982 Clydebuilt Season, which retrieved and celebrated Scottish plays from the early twentieth century, including Joe Corrie's *In Time O' Strife* and Ena Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep*. In fact, company members saw clear connections between their work in the 1970s and the 'working-class forms' of Joan Littlewood and her Theatre Workshop, a company with roots in 1930s' Manchester when, alongside her collaborator (a self-identifying – though Salford-born – Scotsman) Ewan MacColl, she founded a number of theatre companies that sought to address contemporary concerns.⁶ 7:84 Scotland actually performed MacColl's folk play

Johnny Noble as part of the Clydebuilt Season. McGrath describes this cross-generational connection in his manifesto for popular theatre *A Good Night Out*, a collection (based on his series of lectures at the University of Cambridge) for which Williams wrote the introductory foreword. In his preface Williams congratulates McGrath on his 'purpose which he at once declares and with unusual spirit argues for and encourages, against so many prevailing resignations and cynicisms, to say nothing of more orthodox adjustments'.⁷ The margin, Williams acknowledges, reappears here as a space for McGrath to present alternative ways of creating theatre, attack the dominant Royal Court aesthetic and willingly accept the challenge to create theatre for working-class audiences. For Williams, the border or margin represents a place of meeting, therefore, and a space from which to counter customary views or opinions. Williams's border or margin is a multifaceted space throughout his work, from a crossing zone when moving between classes⁸ to a space to uncover new technologies and influences: 'what is discovered in the margin is then taken up and used', as he writes in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*.⁹

In this article, I read Williams's understanding of the border alongside contemporary performance studies and theatre historiography. Performance is inscribed with a variety of borders from the permeable space between the actor and the audience, to what James Loxley describes as 'the kind of grey area, a border zone', that is the 'as if' but 'not me' liminality suffused in the very act of acting.¹⁰ Borders also reappear throughout contemporary performance studies as a key method for understanding what goes on in the theatre and as a way of opening up the field for fresh analysis. In their discussion of transnationalism and challenge to Eurocentric paradigms, James Harding and John Rouse, for example, advocate a new geographically-expansive way of understanding avant-garde performance. They disrupt the binaries of centres and edges and, instead, 'reconceptualize our notion of the vanguard within the theory of borders, and ... supplant *the cutting edge* with *the rough edges* of contestation'.¹¹ This is a revelling in the potentiality of the border, not a lamenting about the margin's lack of influence. It also acknowledges the problem of the centre as a concept, as a dominating notion that can dwarf creativity in the borders. In fact, in his description of the changing nature of eighteenth-century land ownership, Williams inadvertently describes the trickiness of the centre as Harding and Rouse understand it. He reflects, 'what was drastically reduced, by enclosure, was just such a breathing-space, a marginal day-to-day independence'.¹² As the centre expands, the margins decrease. Furthermore, borders (whether geographical, political or artistic) demarcate space but they are not static; the border 'motivates bodies to climb over, burrow under, or float across'.¹³ They are, therefore, performative spaces and, as R. Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young say, in their book about racial

identity, 'our daily performances reflect our bordered existence'.¹⁴ Given that they are so impacted by human action and performance, they are also places of potential, change and creativity. The border, as Michael Kobiałka recognises in his introduction to *Of Borders and Thresholds*, is a palimpsestic (and therefore theoretically complex) idea: 'a border can be defined as a line, a space, a value, a location, a place, a wound, or a field of struggle'.¹⁵ Although these commentators approach the border in diverse ways and with differing intentions, ultimately all of them understand the border as a complex space of movement and ossification.

Attempting to move the lexicon of margins, borders and frames away from classically literary conceptions and into the sphere of performance, I follow Alexander Feldman's recent work as he asks us to explore performative happenings hidden in the 'wings of the century'.¹⁶ In a Brechtian sense, we are going to bathe these traditionally concealed areas of the stage in bright light. In so doing, I want examine three distinct theatrical moments of the 1930s/40s – the early agitprop play *Meerut* designed by the Workers' Theatre Movement; the mid-'30s' vogue for the living newspaper through the work of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, and Unity Theatre; and a later theatrical response to the Second World War, namely Alec Baron and Kate Plenty's 1942 play *Comrade Enemy*. Throughout, Williams's expansive, politically-fraught imagining of the border acts as the theoretical frame, enabling us to find performance in the margin and the margin in performance.

Agitprop: 'Hands across the Sea'¹⁷

The '30s and '40s were periods of borders and margins. On the one hand the growth of leisure travel and the continued improving education system meant people could, as never before, move across borders rendering them excitingly permeable. On the other, invasions, forced migration and, eventually, the Second World War meant that borders were both forcibly upheld and dangerously fluid. While making a case for an intercultural American literary modernism, Christopher Schedler coins the phrase 'border modernism', an attempt to 'de-center modernism'.¹⁸ While Schedler's project is far more transnational than my own (and while 'modernism' as a concept perhaps sits rather oddly amidst the performances I discuss here), it is a useful term, suggesting both the importance of the border to modernist culture and the vital necessity of moving modernism from centrepieces (whether they be aesthetic or geographical) to the more fluid borders.

Borders, then, are useful devices to expand the scholarly understanding of the period. But they are also seemingly the defining spaces of the mid twentieth century as a lived experience. Williams enables us to extend this still further:

In principle, it seems clear that the dramatic conventions of any given period are fundamentally related to the structure of feeling in that period.¹⁹

While not necessarily articulated as such by communities, the border as a contested space, as a barrier to be crossed (for leisure or war) or as a space to flee to when centres became dangerous, is a key element of the dominant structure of feeling of these decades. The prominence of the border clearly influenced theatre's themes, but it is equally apparent in its forms. If, as I am suggesting, this was an era of borders and margins, then, according to Williams's assertion, the theatre of the period should reflect this structure of feeling. Williams's concept, 'structure of feeling', is a complex one and shifted throughout his career. In the previous quotation from 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', Williams suggests that periods have a structure of feeling. Elsewhere he would insist that periods had multiple structures of feeling jostling for position, corresponding to his three-part understanding of culture: the dominant, the residual, the emergent.²⁰ In either case, corresponding to the way I think about structure of feeling in this article, it remains (as described by Williams in *Politics and Letters*) 'the area of interaction between the official consciousness of an epoch ... and the whole process of actually living its consequences. I could see that here might very often be one of the social sources of art'.²¹ We might even suggest that this 'area of interaction', this liminal space (to use Victor Turner's term, so influential in the field of performance studies) is a border in and of itself.

In *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* Williams narrates the history of the theatre as political forum, navigating the transition from bourgeois naturalism to two new avant-garde strands of theatrical production: a focus on intense subjectivity on the one hand and a 'fully public' drama on the other.²² Much of this analysis is based on the work of 1920s and '30s German playwrights and practitioners. 'The English theatre of the twenties and thirties', says Williams, 'never acquired political momentum'.²³ He mentions Auden and Isherwood specifically here as two who, despite allusions to context and a commitment to experimental aesthetics, never quite achieved the political engagement of an Ernst Toller, for example. However, in his re-imagining of the terms 'modernism' and 'avant-garde' Williams also makes the following expansive proclamation:

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We must search out and counterpose an alternative tradition taken from the neglected works left in the wide margin of the century.²⁴

Williams encourages a more spacious understanding of culture, suggesting that, in the 'wide margin of the century' exist 'neglected works', largely ignored by theatre historiographies because they are either too esoteric, too 'unsuccessful' or too difficult to categorise or define. Such a collection of productions, I suggest, was produced by the British Workers' Theatre Movement.

The Workers' Theatre Movement (WTM) was founded in the early 1920s as a collection of small working-class theatre companies, but gained momentum when Tom Thomas of the Hackney People's Players joined, seeking better ways to create innovative, politically engaged work. During its brief but fruitful lifespan, the WTM produced various productions ranging from realist dramas, such as the tremendously successful *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, to more fragmented and politically didactic agitprop plays. The latter began to dominate the WTM's performance seasons as the '20s and '30s progressed. The collective was particularly influenced by the agitprop work members saw in Germany in the early 1930s. Tom Thomas reflected on the connections:

When we got back to England we decided to try it, building up a show from different items, and working to break down the barriers between players and audience.²⁵

Thomas's recollections uncover another border: that between the actor and audience. Many theatre companies and movements attempted to break down this particular barrier during the early decades of the twentieth century, from the futurists who offended their audiences with contentious statements to Antonin Artaud who sought to challenge the audience's bourgeois sense of respectability. Agitprop broke through the actor-audience boundary with political appeals and pleas for solidarity. One such example from the WTM's canon is the 1932 *Meerut*, a play about the travails of Indian workers. Not only did *Meerut*, in the tradition of agitprop, call for transnational solidarity but it also represented a direct attack on imperialism. Though the British communist movement was small, its potential ability to undermine the British Empire was valued by the Russian Soviets; indeed British members of the Communist International were instrumental in setting up the Communist Party in India.²⁶ *Meerut* requires very few props or stage effects; six poles held firmly by the players act as the jail, a place that is not literal but metaphorical. In his 1933 document 'How to Produce *Meerut*' Charlie Mann, organiser of the sketch, revealed the tone and intention of the piece: 'the whole of the response must be obtained by sheer power of emotional appeal through the

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voice and facial expression'.²⁷ Using emotive declamation, the performers tell the story of the Indian miners, imprisoned for protesting against low wages and poor conditions. Geographically this event is far away, and yet this play seeks to unite the working-class communities of India and Britain. While the prison bars separate the players from the audience, the reiteration of lines like 'COMRADES, HANDS ACROSS THE SEA! COMRADES, SOLIDARITY!', coupled with the stage directions – 'straining one hand each through the bars' – suggests that national borders can be (and indeed should be) overcome in the struggle for workers' rights.²⁸ The actors, titled only by numbers, go on to make specific connections between the imprisoned Indian miners and the local audience in front of them:

THIRD: Workers of Britain unite your power with the Indian toilers. This is your fight. Those who have jailed the workers in India are the men who cut wages and enforce the Means Test in Britain.²⁹

The final section repeats that term of commonality 'comrades' before the actors fling the bars down, symbolising, presumably, the expected release of the prisoners and the destruction of the repressive state apparatus. This action has both the aesthetic effect of uniting the actor and audience as one community, and significant political impact. As Mann demands, 'feel the sketch, mean it, and you will convey the message of it in a way that will strike home to the class-consciousness that is latent in even the most reactionary member of your worker-audience'.³⁰ The destroyed border of the metaphorical prison becomes a potential place of meeting rather than a site of separation.

'Crossing the Border':³¹ *On the Frontier, Crisis* and the 1930's Living Newspaper

Much writing of the 1930s turned to the border as a key motif; Edward Upward's 1938 *Journey to the Border* which examines a tutor's turn to socialism, Sylvia Townsend Warner's 1936 tale of border-crossing (in a geographical sense and a political sense) *Summer Will Show* or Christopher Isherwood's *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935), in which William Bradshaw meets the title character as they cross the frontier into Berlin, provide three examples. The last-mentioned author's interest in the border clearly persisted in his collaborative theatrical projects with W.H. Auden. On the face of it (and especially if read through Samuel Hynes's influential ideas of the 'Auden Generation') Auden and Isherwood seem almost centrifugal forces through which other artists and practices can be read, although this reading has been significantly challenged by, amongst

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others, Andy Croft, who eloquently undermines the mythologising of the 1930s that reads the whole decade through the eminently quotable Auden.³² Auden and Isherwood are, perhaps, not stable centres at all. This is illustrated further by the borders and margins that reappear with remarkable frequency in their work. Critic and poet Geoffrey Grigson notes Auden's position on the margin:

One of the most frequent images used by Auden is the image of the frontier, the line between the known and the feared, the past and the future, and the conscious and everything beyond control, the region of society and the region of trolls and huldres (and Goebbelses). Auden lives very much in this frightening border territory (Dover is a border town).³³

Artistically and geographically, then, Auden is far more of a border figure than canonical readings would suggest. The same could be said of Isherwood, a figure who travelled extensively during the 1930s, particularly in Germany. He was also a self-professed member of many minority groups, labelling himself an 'outsider', a foreigner and, as a homosexual (like Auden, of course), an unaccepted member of society.³⁴ Despite their undoubted influence on mid-century culture and art, the border seems embedded in the very psyches of these writers. But their work, though partly reflecting their self-defined marginal identities, was not autobiographical. Rather, the broader structure of feeling they found themselves in engendered the collaborative plays they wrote. Auden reflects on this connection between context and dramatic work:

Now what will happen on the stage, I do not know, but I do know this: that the search for dramatic form is very closely bound up with something much wider and more important which is the search for a society which is both free and unified.³⁵

Auden's description of the theatre can be read through Williams's notion of structure of feeling as what happens on the stage directly reflects the broader tensions and intentions of society. In fact in *The Long Revolution*, Williams makes a comparable comment when he refers to film technique and expressionist theatre as corresponding 'to our actual social history ... we can see drama, not only as a social art, but as a major and practical index of change and creator of consciousness'.³⁶ These two insightful readings of the stage and society are markedly similar. Auden and Isherwood's plays certainly reflect their context in theme and form, and the border or margin is key to understanding them. Their collaborative 1938 play *On the Frontier* provides an example.

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In one way, *On the Frontier* directly reflects the structure of feeling (and the tangible political realities) of the 1930s. Williams goes as far as to say that this play (along with two of Auden and Isherwood's other collaborations – *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *Ascent of F6*) 'are the most obviously related to a particular, unmistakable period: the middle nineteen-thirties in England'.³⁷ For Williams, *On the Frontier* is not a particularly successful play, seemingly hamstrung by its didacticism and awkward aesthetic characteristics. In fact, its limitations, for Williams, are related to its context:

It is a matter of regret that such bold experiments, and such lively dramatic talents, should have been so limited in success, not only by the absence of adequate conventions, but also by the extraneous preoccupations of a strange decade.³⁸

Williams certainly agrees that *On the Frontier* is worthy of scholarly exposition, but he remains unconvinced by its methods and focus, both restricted by the aesthetic and political context of, in his terms, the 'strange decade'.

On the Frontier describes the growing tension between two fictional countries – Westland and Ostnia – through the political wranglings of leaders but, more so, through the gradually disintegrating lives of two families: the Thorvalds of Westland and the Vrodny's of Ostnia. Hostility between the two countries increases throughout the play, fuelled by the political ambition of leaders, the innate prejudices of the populaces and the panicked reporting of the media. At the core of the piece is a love story between Eric Thorvald and Anna Vrodny, parted by the division between Ostnia and Westland. In the final scene they are separated permanently as Eric is killed on a barricade (another tangible border, of course), and Anna contracts an illness from the hospital where she works and dies.

This play is defined by its borders, margins and, as the title would have it, frontiers. They are places of misunderstanding, active hostility and violence, as they were in the 1930s' context. The only positive reflections in the final section are spoken by Eric and Anna who, in death, discover a way of potentially bridging the gap between them:

ERIC: But in the lucky guarded future
Others like us shall meet, the frontier gone,
And find the real world happy.³⁹

Here the border is less a space of creative potential than a barrier to unity and progress. It is a theme that reappears throughout *On the Frontier*, even in

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the very stage directions. At the start of Act 1 scene 2, the writers ask for the following design:

*The Ostnia-Westland Room. It is not supposed that the Frontier between the two countries does actually pass through this room: the scene is only intended to convey the idea of the Frontier – the L. half of the stage being in Westland: the R. half being in Ostnia.*⁴⁰

Group Theatre, an experimental company headed up by choreographer/director Rupert Doone, attempted to realise the playwrights' image in a 1938 production at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge. Michael Sidnell describes the set in his analysis of Doone's performance collective, *Dances of Death: Group Theatre of the Thirties*:

Scenically, the 'frontier' in the play was defined by the 'Ostnia-Westland Room', which comprised the living rooms of a family in each country set side by side on the stage with no wall between them. [Robert] Medley's design divided the upstage into architecturally distinct halves, which opened into a unified downstage space.⁴¹

Medley, Group Theatre's resident scenographer, visually played with the theme of borders and margins; he separated the families but also included a space for meeting. Further, and this made the play particularly contentious, the halves were equal. If Westland represented Nazi Germany and Ostnia denoted Austria (an assumption one could make, although the parallels are not entirely clear) then presenting the two countries as equally culpable seems decidedly problematic.⁴² In the end, events seemed to overtake the play somewhat; as so often with political work, it felt almost dated before its performance. By the time Group performed *On the Frontier* in November 1938, Germany had already annexed Austria and the ultimately ineffective Munich Agreement had already been signed. Despite the suggestion that *On the Frontier* might enjoy a West End run, the play only had one performance in the capital and did not cross the cultural barriers separating the London theatrical elite from the rest of Britain. Even then, notes Sidnell in terms useful to the argument of this article, the playwrights did not see this disappointing attempt at a transfer as 'they had crossed their frontier and were already in America'.⁴³

This singular example from two of the 1930s' key artistic figures illustrates the profound complexity of the border as a place of division, marginalisation, political and artistic struggle, and a place of meeting, unity and creative excitement. It is a fluid site of potential and danger, a space where culture is shared but the ruptures between cultures are simultaneously intensified.

One can escape across it or be trapped within it. As Williams articulates in *The Country and the City*, borders can be understood geographically (as in this book when he describes Thomas Hardy's conception of Wessex) but also in many other ways: 'that border country so many of us have been living in: between custom and education, between work and ideas, between love of place and an experience of change'.⁴⁴ As might be imagined from an era of economic crises, the rise of extremist politics and a growing threat of war (as well as the development of transport links and the expansion of the tourist industry), this complex border recurs throughout the art and theatre of the period.

Williams connects *On the Frontier* with the living newspaper form. The history of the living newspaper is one of transnational exchange, with techniques moving back and forth between America (where the Federal Theatre Project produced some of the most innovative examples of the genre under the directorship of Hallie Flanagan) and Europe, particularly Germany and Russia. Williams criticises *On the Frontier* for using a theatrical method he rejects as 'flat'.⁴⁵ He goes on to say that the living newspaper, like *On the Frontier*, displays an 'impermanence of interest', a characteristic owing to the form's determined contemporaneity. What, for example, does *On the Frontier* have to say to twenty-first-century audiences? It is not that the living newspaper as a form loses its interest; as evidenced by the chapters in Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson's collection *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, the living newspaper has found new twenty-first-century audiences both in the UK (particularly through the work of Tricycle Theatre) and across the globe.⁴⁶ What Williams is saying is that *On the Frontier*, with its explicit connection with the 1930s, means that this specific example of the form loses interest as soon as the decade is over and the Second World War begins. Living newspapers, embedded in changing context and decisively partisan, seem to be even more susceptible to this charge than other forms of theatre. Here is another border, less spatial than chronological. While temporal borders can be sites of connection – as when 7:84 Scotland looks back at English-Scottish relations or when I, as a theatre historian, reassess '30s' political theatre – they can also, as Williams suggests here, become irresolvable spaces of disconnection. Perhaps the border of comprehension between today's theatre-going public and *On the Frontier* (and perhaps much mid-twentieth-century drama) is simply too opaque.

Williams's criticism of the living newspaper form certainly has merit. However, the living newspapers of another 1930s/1940s theatrical collective, Unity Theatre, certainly influenced audiences and remain fascinating historical performance documents if nothing more. McGrath, indeed, acknowledges the importance of this tradition of theatrical performance in *A Good Night Out*, mentioning the 'several Unity theatres ... which put on agitational and

other socialist plays to working-class audiences'.⁴⁷ He goes on to say that the work of collectives like Unity show that 'another, different story was being told'.⁴⁸ One such living newspaper performance occurred in the same year as *On the Frontier* and, interestingly, responds to a similar issue. On Monday 26 September 1938 Unity Theatre decided to create a living newspaper entitled *Crisis* which reacted directly to the on going tensions in Czechoslovakia as Nazi Germany threatened invasion. Over a 48-hour period, Unity's members wrote a play and, relying on improvisation and performing with script in hand, it opened three days later on 29 September: the day Neville Chamberlain flew to Munich to negotiate with Adolf Hitler. So, whereas *On the Frontier* lost some of its impetus due to the delay between writing and performance, *Crisis* was resolutely embedded in the changing contemporary situation. *Crisis* remained in Unity's repertoire throughout the rest of 1938, undergoing significant revisions in accordance with the political context.⁴⁹ Its marginal status was confirmed from the off; as Britain huddled round its radios in the hope that Chamberlain might prevent war, Unity remained convinced that, as Herbert Marshall wrote in the short introduction to the play's second edition, the company must 'reflect these outstanding events on its stage'.⁵⁰ Furthermore, this theatrical happening was performed by actors who, as Marshall goes on to say, 'had to go to work next day [but] nevertheless stayed up all night to work on it'.⁵¹ While comparing the working-class actors with Auden and Isherwood might seem a rather incongruous action, actually, for all of them, theatre was a side line (or perhaps even a border) of sorts; the more famous writers primarily worked in other literary forms, the actors of Unity worked in industries across London.

While the format differed, *Crisis*, like *On the Frontier*, depends on borders and boundaries (and their potential crossing) as narrative devices. Like Auden and Isherwood's more artistically complex play, *Crisis* is not bound by geographical logic. This means that, in order to shift between the 'Czecho-slovakian' scenes in Section 2 and a room containing the English political party leaders, all that is required is a 'Voice' to say 'And in England –'.⁵² Boundaries and borders are porous in *Crisis* (and in living newspaper plays more generally). Indeed, this permeability of national borders is both the potential answer to Europe's deepening crisis and its cause. Towards the end, the play uses rhyming couplets – as one example from Italy: 'To Abyssinia we intend/Our Roman Empire to extend'⁵³ – to suggest that Britain, speaking on behalf of the League of Nations, had not stood up to the aggressive foreign policy of other countries thereby giving Hitler licence to expand into Czechoslovakia. However, in this context of more fluid national boundaries, an answer also appears:

War can be stopped. Not by spreading panic and dread of war, but by the truth. Democracy is strong! Together, the people of democratic countries are a force no bullying dictator can dare attack. Let us see how strong is world democracy.⁵⁴

Typically for a 1930s' Unity play, Soviet Russia is, problematically, one of these 'democratic countries'.⁵⁵ However, what is interesting here is that, for Unity's members at least, peace could be achieved not by a single man appeasing Hitler, but by a global collection of nations and peoples crossing imposed national barriers. The fact that this play was initially performed as Chamberlain flew towards Munich is a rather remarkable, indeed almost prophetic, moment.

'Comrades working Everywhere for Solidarity':⁵⁶ *Comrade Enemy* and the Border at War

By 1942 the world had crossed that rather arbitrary chronological borderline between decades. However, the years 1939–45 are generally understood not as a transition across a border but as a continuation of a single event: the Second World War. If borders and margins defined the 1930s then they became ever more fraught as the 1940s began, as they were now the sites of battles, places to be protected or captured. Despite the pressures of the war, Unity Theatre limped on and, in 1942, Leeds Unity produced a new play: Alec Baron and Kate Plenty's *Comrade Enemy*. Notably, this play appeared in Leeds, not London, in the regions rather than the dominant centre. *Comrade Enemy* illustrates the continuing importance of the border as a theatrical motif. It contains a collection of trans-European characters from Russia, Britain and Germany, all caught up in the Second World War. In fact, the opening description in the extant script suggests it is based on 'actual incidents during the Nazi invasion of the U.S.S.R. in the Summer of 1941'.⁵⁷ The play partly focuses on soldiers at the front, and partly on the women left behind who, nevertheless, commit to contributing to the war effort. But this is not a typical patriotic piece of theatre; it in no way promotes nationalist isolationism. Rather, it understands the working classes of all nations as comrades and all anti-fascist socialists as allies. Like a living newspaper, each scene stands alone but also can be brought together as a single narrative. One particular scene illustrates the profound importance of the border in this wartime play. German soldier Hans is a socialist by conviction but has been called up to fight on behalf of the Nazis. His wife Elsa finds herself in England, searching for a like-minded collective. She tells her new-found friends Rose and Phyllis about first meeting Hans. As she speaks, the scene shifts from a drab flat in London to the mountaintop

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in Germany where they met, a theatrical device that crosses geographical and temporal barriers. Elsa is reminded of Hans's revolutionary dream, and commits afresh to the class struggle. Encouraging transnational solidarity, Elsa says, 'for with Hans stretching out his hand towards Russian comrades, he and I will be together again, because I too, can do the same here'.⁵⁸ The final scene, which takes place after the death of Hans, is similarly dreamlike, with Elsa meeting the Russian women at a barricade and joining hands.⁵⁹

Comrade Enemy ran for thirteen weeks at Leeds Unity, and inadvertently reflects on the same motifs and themes addressed in the examples from the 1930s given above. Reflecting on these plays analogously enables a more nuanced reading of the border. For in *Comrade Enemy*, as in *Crisis*, national borders are challenged at the same time as they are being strengthened by dictators abroad and patriotic narratives at home. The German characters meet in a dream, just like Eric and Anna in *On the Frontier*; it seems that mid-twentieth century borderlands can often only be traversed outwith the materialist everyday. However, like *Meerut*, *Comrade Enemy* does finally provide potential for circumventing borders in the joining of hands. Interestingly, borders here become places of encounter not through language *per se* but through embodied connectivity. And here we find another border; as Abbie Garrington has suggested in her recent study of haptic modernism (that is, modernism that displays an interest in touch), 'the skin is a thing which we inhabit, and as such constitutes a border vital to the notion of an individuated self, even as it forms the possibility of an "interface" with an "environment" into which its sense experiences extend'.⁶⁰ The body here acts as both a barrier and a site of meeting; the joining of hands is both a declaration of selfhood and an offering of community. Suffice to say, these plays, found in the 'wide margins', produce a profoundly complex and multifaceted picture of the border, both as theatrical device and as a defining concept in mid twentieth-century socio-politics.

Conclusion: From the Perspective of the Border Country

In his critique of working-class theatre, Williams cites one of its enduring problems thus: 'while these alternative projects are crucial, the left can never content itself with a cultural policy that does not attack quite centrally the dominant means of production'.⁶¹ But, as he reflects in *Culture is Ordinary*, Williams also revelled in the distinctiveness of the border, even as he connected this space back to his own autobiographical experiences. 'Growing up in that border country', he says, 'has led me towards such an emphasis: a culture is a

whole way of life, and the arts are part of a social organization which economic change clearly radically effects'.⁶² He goes on:

To grow up in that country was to see the shape of a culture, and its modes of change. I could stand on the mountains and look north to the farms and the cathedral, or south to the smoke and the flare of the blast furnace making a second sunset.⁶³

The border can feel cut off, isolated, but it can also provide an energised awareness of creativity and a capacious sense of perspective, facets Williams knew intrinsically from growing up on the border between Wales and England. Applying these notions to the theatre, Williams understands the dilemma – these performances are important but do not affect enough political change; as marginal occurrences they can challenge hegemonic centrality; they enjoy a vital sense of creative freedom, partly exempt from the economically-driven West End. The border is at once liberating and restrictive. Using his theoretical methodologies, this article has sought to untangle Williams's concerns about margins and borders, acknowledging their limitations while simultaneously revelling in their capacity for creativity whether as a space for artistic inspiration or as a compelling politico-aesthetic motif.⁶⁴

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), 355.
- 2 Raymond Williams, 'Brecht and Beyond' in *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: Verso, 1981), 225.
- 3 Loren Kruger, 'Playing the Occasion: Raymond Williams and Performing Culture' in Dennis Dworkin and Leslie Roman (eds), *Views Beyond the Border Country: Raymond Williams and Cultural Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 67.
- 4 John McGrath, 'Border Warfare' in *Six-Pack: Plays for Scotland* (Edinburgh: Meridien, 1996), 1–138.
- 5 See Thomas M. Wilson and Hasting Donnan (eds), *A Companion to Border Studies* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012) and Doris Wastl-Walter (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
- 6 John McGrath, *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre, Audience, Class and Form* (London: Nick Hern, 1996), 44.
- 7 Raymond Williams, 'Foreword' in McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, x.
- 8 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 322.
- 9 Raymond Williams, *Television, Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 1990), 6.
- 10 James Loxley, *Performativity* (London: Routledge, 2008), 158.
- 11 James Harding, 'From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges: On the Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance' in James Harding and John Rouse, *Not the Other Avant-Garde: the Transnational Foundations of Avant-garde Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 2006), 24.

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- 12 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Penguin, 2016 [1973]), 152.
- 13 R. Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young (eds), *Performance in the Borderlands* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1.
- 14 Rivera-Servera and Young, *Performance in the Borderlands*, 2.
- 15 Michael Kobialka (ed.), *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre History, Practice, and Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1999), 3.
- 16 Alexander Feldman, *Dramas of the Past on the Twentieth-century stage: In History's Wings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
- 17 This line is taken from one of the Workers' Theatre Movement's agitprop play *Meerut* which dramatises the difficulties facing Indian workers and calls the British working class to join forces with its comrades overseas. In recognisable communist language, it suggests that the British working class has far more in common with its Indian equivalents than with the owners of industry in its own country. It exemplifies the WTM's commitment to reaching across borders in order to effect political change. For the full script see *Meerut*: Workers Theatre Movement play, Working Class Movement Library, <http://www.wcml.org.uk/our-collections/international/india/meerut-workers-theatre-movement-play/>.
- 18 Christopher Schedler, *Border Modernism: Intercultural Readings in American Literary Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xiii.
- 19 Raymond Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition' (1954) in *The Raymond Williams Reader*, ed. John Higgins (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 27.
- 20 For further explanation of the dominant, residual and emergent see Raymond Williams, *Problems in Material and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 38–42.
- 21 Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 159.
- 22 Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 86.
- 23 Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, 35.
- 24 Williams, *Politics of Modernism*, 35.
- 25 Tom Thomas, 'A Propertyless Theatre for the Propertyless Class' (1977) in Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl and Stuart Cosgrove, *Theatres of the Left 1880–1935: Workers' Theatre Movements in Britain and America* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 77–98, 89.
- 26 James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain Since 1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21.
- 27 Charlie Mann, 'How to Produce Meerut' in Samuel, MacColl and Cosgrove, 106.
- 28 WTM, *Meerut*.
- 29 WTM, *Meerut*.
- 30 Mann, 'How to Produce Meerut', 108.
- 31 Of course the famous repeated line is taken from Auden's poem 'Night Mail', written for the influential documentary film by Basil Wright (1936).
- 32 Andy Croft, *Red Letter Days* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 19–22.
- 33 Geoffrey Grierson, 'Auden as a Monster' (1937) in *W.H. Auden: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Haffenden (New York: Routledge, 1997), 258.
- 34 James Carr, *Queer Times: Christopher Isherwood's Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21.
- 35 W.H. Auden, 'The Future of English Poetic Drama' (1938) in *W.H. Auden: Plays and Other Dramatic Writings, 1928–1938*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 522.
- 36 Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 273.
- 37 Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952), 247.
- 38 Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, 256.
- 39 W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, 'On the Frontier' (1938) in *W.H. Auden: Plays*, 417.

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- 40 Auden and Isherwood, 'On the Frontier', 375.
- 41 Michael Sidnell, *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 247.
- 42 Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 240.
- 43 Sidnell, *Dances of Death*, 256.
- 44 Williams, *The Country and the City*, 284.
- 45 Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*, 255.
- 46 Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson, *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- 47 McGrath, *A Good Night Out*, 17.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Colin Chambers, *The Story of Unity Theatre* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1989), 163.
- 50 Unity Theatre, *Living Newspaper Number 2: Crisis* (1938). *Second Edition*, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, MSS09, introduction.
- 51 Unity, *Crisis. Second Edition*, introduction.
- 52 Unity, *Crisis. Second Edition*, 18.
- 53 Unity, *Crisis. Second Edition*, 22.
- 54 Unity, *Crisis. Second Edition*, 4.
- 55 Unity, *Crisis. Second Edition*, 20.
- 56 Alec Baron and Kate Plenty, *Comrade Enemy*, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, BC MS 20c Theatre, Baron, act 3, sc. 1.
- 57 Baron and Plenty, *Comrade Enemy*, 3.
- 58 Baron and Plenty, *Comrade Enemy*, act 2, sc. 2.
- 59 Baron and Plenty, *Comrade Enemy*, act 3, sc. 2.
- 60 Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 18.
- 61 Williams, 'Brecht and Beyond', 225.
- 62 Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary' in Ben Highmore, *The Everyday Life Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 95.
- 63 Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', 91.
- 64 With thanks to Roger Clegg for his helpful comments on the first draft of this article.

Unsettling the Audience: Affective ‘Dis-ease’ and the Politics of Fear and Anxiety in Contemporary Performance

Patrick Duggan

More than any time in history, mankind faces a crossroad. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness, the other to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly ...¹

Introduction

We might argue that with the rise of new cultural media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, YouTube, Vimeo, and Netflix), the material impact of plural cultural practices is becoming an increasingly important area for critical discussion. Through mobile technologies, we engage with representations of and about the world in increasingly virulent and immediate ways that are having profound impacts both on how we live our lives and how we encounter cultural discourses about the world around us. At the same time, the ‘politics of fear’ and discourses of anxiety have become commonplace as efficacious and affecting tools of (Western) global politics, as well as in rolling news media outputs (including those that buzz as notifications in pockets via mobile technology).² Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher of ‘cultural sciences’, has argued that:

Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man’s (*sic*) symbolic activity advances ... he has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except the interposition of this artificial medium.³

My contention in this article is that in the contemporary moment live performance encounters offer a means with which to attend to both discourses and politics of fear and anxiety and the effacement of reality with complexity. That is, performance seems to be attending to plural social discourses and working through the geo-political complexity of the social milieu in ways that go beyond the theoretical frames of analysis provided by, for example, psychology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. This essay explores the political, ethical, and socio-cultural implications of two contemporary performances that deliberately attempt to unsettle their audiences through what I’m calling a performative aesthetics of ‘dis-ease’: Greg Wohead’s *The Ted Bundy Project*

(2014) and Action Hero's multimedia, immersive installation *Extraordinary Rendition* (2015). In analysing *how* these works might be seen deliberately to attempt to induce an experience somewhat cognate to anxiety in the audience, I want to explore *why* they might be doing so: what does such a practice 'do' in the world with regard to understanding the politics of fear and anxiety?

Cultural Practice as 'Thinking Through'

What cultural practices do socially and politically is at the heart of much of Raymond Williams's critical thinking. Indeed, in *The Sociology of Culture* he convincingly argues that cultural practices are 'social processes of a highly significant and valuable kind', worthy of being taken and analysed seriously.⁴ In so doing, he suggests, we might come not only to understand cultural practices as a reflection and interrogation of the world around us but also to see them as precisely world-making (at least at a micro or personal level). That is, for Williams performance (indeed all cultural production) might be seen as a means through which to interrogate the world 'as it is' *and* a mode through which imaginatively to materialise a different one. This is not just a project of cold analysis but of coming to understand the knowledge-generating potential of affective experience. For theatre scholar James Thompson, calling on Deleuze, 'it is only in affect that the force of art can be understood' and as such, affective experience 'agitate[s] at the level of sensation' to 'produce a shock to thought'.⁵ Although arising from different critical projects and at different historical junctures, this might be seen to coincide with perhaps Williams's most famous theoretical idea, that of the structure of feeling. For Williams, the social and cultural projects of a given epoch can be analysed as a means to identify and understand the prevailing or governing structures of given society and what we might think of as the 'atmospheres' (or social feelings) thereby produced.

Appealing for the importance of a continual, 'present tense' interrogation of the world around us, Williams proposes that each moment in history has its own social, political, cultural and artistic conventions, all of which braid together in a structure of feeling that is unique, but, importantly, influenced by and emerging out of the structures that have gone before it. In *Drama From Ibsen to Brecht* (originally written in 1952 as *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*), Williams asserts that structure of feeling is a means of exploring 'the continuity of experience from a particular work, through its particular form, to its recognition as a general form, and then the relation of this general form to a [specific] period [of history]'.⁶ Importantly, he goes on to state that:

It is as firm and definitive as 'structure' suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and least tangible elements of our experience. It is a way of responding to a particular world in which practice is not felt as one way among others – a conscious 'way' – but is, in experience, the only way possible. Its means, its elements are not propositions or techniques; they are embodied, related feelings. (18)

So for Williams the argument or proposition of the art work is fundamentally bound to its structure and form, and to the feelings – or affects – evoked by an encounter with that art work.

Williams is careful to acknowledge the difficulty of identifying the facets of any structure of feeling (especially from 'within' it) because social structures and cultural discourses constantly shift, change and develop.⁷ Nevertheless, he demands that as cultural critics we engage in just such an exercise because in doing so we might come not only to understand something of our structure of feeling but also establish a frame through which to interrogate our social, cultural, political and artistic experiences. That is, an analysis of cultural practices 'in our own time' can provide a means through which we can interpret 'a very wide area of our experience' and so arrive at a means through which to better understand and act in the world in which we live (61). This call to analysis is thus more than a purely intellectual pursuit, it is politically expedient. In the context of what Frank Furedi has called the contemporary 'culture' and 'politics of fear',⁸ such analysis seems equally urgent. As such, I am here concerned to analyse how contemporary performance practice might be able to unpick discourses and politics of fear and anxiety, and contribute to more (politically) nuanced understandings of them. In turn, the article asks if and how such analysis might help shed light on the contemporary structure of feeling.

To contextualise this task, it is useful to turn to Williams's seminal essay, 'Culture is Ordinary'.⁹ Here, Williams contends that when analysing cultural objects to find out what they tell us about ourselves and our society, we need to remember that culture is 'ordinary'. Culture is not the preserve of the wealthy elite nor is it neatly compartmentalized. Rather, culture is a continual negotiation of power via institutional and interpersonal interactions, art, media production, education and ideas:

Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the

land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind. (54)

Thus, we are all involved in making and understanding 'our' culture; and, importantly, cultural meanings are constructed and understood at subjective (individual) and objective (collective) levels. Meanwhile, it is by now something of a commonplace to understand that cultural practices do not exist in a vacuum and that culture is contextually influenced and politically constructed. It is perhaps less ordinary (especially outside of academia) to understand that cultural products – art, theatre, film, TV, literature – are both fundamentally modes by which a society thinks itself through in various different ways *and* are precisely world-making, or 'performative' in J.L. Austin's sense.¹⁰ Thus performance might be seen both to reflect its socio-cultural epoch and to propose new possibilities. As Della Pollock persuasively argues:

performance is a promissory act. Not because it can only promise possible change but because it catches its participants – often by surprise – in a contract with possibility: with imagining what might be, could be, should be.¹¹

As an art form of bodies in relation to each other, theatre and performance create a space in which we can begin to consider the world, our position within it, and thus our position in relationship to others. In doing so, theatre and performance brings 'us' (makers/thinkers/audiences) into an ethical relationship with one another, both with the 'staged' images and those represented in them, as well as with the concerns raised by those representations. This live exchange of gazes and responsibilities, alongside theatre's complex mimetic structures and the long history of anti-theatrical prejudice that arises out of such complexity, seems to me to be particularly worthy of attention in the contemporary moment.¹² This seems particularly heightened when, as in the case of both *The Ted Bundy Project* and *Extraordinary Rendition*, a central dramaturgical desire of the work is to unsettle the audience by throwing into question their position as 'safe' spectator by eroding the mimetic conditions of the performances they are encountering.¹³

'Dis-ease'

In 2009, Lyn Gardner suggested that 'anxiety kills theatre'.¹⁴ Gardner's suggestion is that while audiences are happy to take risks as long as they feel safe and that the performance is 'taking them somewhere interesting', they

‘don’t like to be made to feel anxious ... [because] Anxiety in audiences is not a positive force; it saps our energy and creates a brittle tension in the auditorium, announcing that we all know that the bargain has been broken’.¹⁵ That is, in the context of theatre (as opposed, say, to live or performance art), audience anxiety about safety, or participating in the right or wrong way, makes the event cease to exist as theatre and therefore cease to entertain or hold political potency. Although discussing the then new (and broad) area of immersive theatre, and from a journalistic perspective, Gardner’s proposition is an interesting point of departure here because her claim is that anxiety erodes or even destroys the representational matrix of a given performance. However, I want to argue that it is the deliberate unsettling of the audience in these and analogous ways that *makes* the performances I am discussing so politically interesting. In both pieces, I found myself confronted with anxiety (my own or that of others) that left me asking: where are we, what is this and what is it for? Far from feeling like any bargain had been broken, I found myself unsettled, taken out of place and seeking more fully to understand the experience I had just had. This unsettling followed me out of the theatres and complicated any simple reading of the pieces both in terms of their phenomenological impact on me and in terms of mining their socio-political signification. I *was* sapped of energy but this was the point.

We might argue that the notion of being ‘unsettled’ is one that is common to our contemporary moment wherein we are confronted with the problem that, what I am calling, our current ‘culture of dis-ease’ combines psychological and emotional impressions and expressions with aesthetic as well as ethical questions. Paul Virilio has pointed in this direction when he posited a close relation between fear and the creation of environmental structures defined by exclusion:

Fear not only creates its environment, with its ghettos, gated communities, communitarianism, it has also created its culture, a culture of repulsion. It relates to racism and the rejection of the other: there is always a reason to push out, to expulse the other.¹⁶

Accordingly, performances and representations of fear and anxiety do not restrict themselves to one disciplinary field that can sufficiently analyse them, but operate on medial, aesthetic, and emotional levels at the same time and have mental, psychological and moral affects. In this regard, Arne Öhman points out that while fear and anxiety are ‘obviously overlapping, aversive, activated states centred on threat’, they have definably different qualities:

Fear denotes dread of impending disaster and an intense urge to defend oneself, primarily by getting out of the situation. Clinical anxiety, on the other hand, has been described as an ineffable and unpleasant feeling of foreboding.¹⁷

So while fear is most commonly said to have an identifiable object (spiders, heights, clowns), anxiety is considered to be a pervasive sense or affective atmosphere ('something terrible is going to happen'). Although nascent, the idea of *dis-ease* tries to figure a third state, one that might be seen to take fear and anxiety together rather than separately: in a state of *dis-ease* the world is not rendered meaningless, as Simon Critchley contends is the case with Heidegger's 'anxiety', but it becomes othered, distanced and shimmers in and out of readability in an encounter that makes one feel disoriented *in* it and perturbed by the experience *of* it.¹⁸ Unlike Heidegger's anxiety, *dis-ease* is not a sudden experience of something being *unheimlich* but exposure to a constant threat of being ripped from a state of normalcy and as such it pervades or persists in the everyday.¹⁹

Although 20 years old, Linda Grant's essay 'Violent Anxiety' is surprisingly pertinent to our current moment.²⁰ She argues that '[h]alf the population of the world is running away from violence into refugee camps and the other half is paying good money to watch it at the multiplex. We have managed to separate the real from the imaginary into such watertight compartments that we can laugh at heads being blown off at the cinema while requiring trauma counselling if we arrive home to find we have been burgled'.²¹ This is an intriguing if problematically dialectical supposition and my contention here is that contemporary performance works such as *The Ted Bundy Project* and *Extraordinary Rendition* have developed means through which such a dialectic can be worried towards a more fulsome and politically nuanced integration of 'entertainment' with interrogation of contemporary social politics concerned with fear and anxiety. Meanwhile, we might also ask if 'fear' and 'anxiety' and their associated discourses (popular, cultural and theoretical) offer satisfactory conceptual frames with which to think about contemporary culture and in turn late-capitalist society. In very material ways, these terms (fear and anxiety) and their political deployment have been reduced to ideologically loaded, ill-defined means with which to discuss anything from terrorism to immigration to political difference. This has arguably denuded these ideas of their potency and reduced them to a near bankrupt status in their overuse, especially in their news media and popular uses.

UK performance artist Greg Wohead's *The Ted Bundy Project* (2014) at once produces anxiety in the audience by presenting a disarmingly charming representation of the serial killer Ted Bundy and at the same time calls into

question the ethics of witnessing such a representation. This is further complicated as the audience is implicated not only through direct address but also in being brought on stage to 'be' Bundy. As we shall see, the complexity of the performance is bound to its productive use of markers of authenticity (such as those borrowed from verbatim performance practice²²) and then a deliberate undercutting of that authenticity. Similarly multifaceted in its representation and politics is Action Hero's multimedia, immersive installation *Extraordinary Rendition* (2015). This piece exposes a sole audience member to an experience structured around 'enhanced interrogation' techniques in order to stimulate an 'intentional loss of agency' through an encounter with 'pop songs used for torture, war films and military and civilian air traffic communications [that appear] on three screens, implanting images which we are unable to distinguish as real or fake'.²³

In arguing for a theory of 'dis-ease', I want to suggest that in the contemporary moment concrete instances of fear or abhorrence gradually transform into a more general and lasting state of fearfulness, anxiety and unease. This is dis-easing, and it is within this dis-easing territory that both *Rendition* and *Bundy* find political efficacy.

Yet this efficacy is not tied to a determined political agenda, though each performance is undeniably implicated in particular political discourses, but to an indeterminacy about what the experience is and is for.²⁴ The works are dis-easing precisely because their politics are complex: while each has clear political territory (power, war, sexual violence, iconography, fetishizing of violence, geo-politics), their engagement with those discourses is structured around a desire to worry at precisely how we read those discourses in the representational economies of each piece. In interview, both Wohead and Action Hero speak to the idea of evoking anxiety as a means to stimulate the audience to *question* their positions in relation to the content/context of the works. However, both are equally clear that they do not wish to *tell* the audience what to think.²⁵

Indexing 'Authenticity'

Both performances are structured around and play with semiotic markers of authenticity; that is, they develop a sense of being 'true' to the social-real referent they signify. In *The Ted Bundy Project* Wohead deploys techniques from both autobiographical performance and verbatim theatre. Greg Wohead performs as Greg Wohead; the author of the performance is its performer and while he takes on persona/characteristics of others throughout, Bundy in particular, the base 'character' is that of Wohead himself. Thus what Deirdre

Heddon refers to as the 'visible presence of the performing subject' comes to structure the audience's encounter with the work.²⁶ In light of this, we might read this structuring principle – the use and return to the 'truth' of Wohead as Wohead – as a deliberate and strategically deployed attempt to lend a particular 'authenticity' to the work.

Interspersed with this is the performance of 'Bundy'. Here, Wohead dons headphones connected to an old cassette-tape-playing personal stereo, presses the play button (which produces a reassuringly mechanical 'click-clunk'), listens for a moment to the tape that we have been prompted to believe is a police interview tape of Bundy (although he is presumably faking it) before mimicking what we are asked to believe is Bundy's accent, intonation and vocal cadence. The performance is compelling and, in comparison to video and audio recordings of Bundy being interviewed, really quite convincing. The technique is borrowed from, and deliberately recalls, headphone verbatim theatre practices that speak to what Lucy Nevitt has described as an 'aesthetic of authenticity'.²⁷ Here, the performer listens to and immediately performs the playback they are hearing, including all of the splutters, coughs and hesitations of the original recording in order to effect a performance of 'truthful' representation: the actor tries to be 'just like' the interviewee.

Extraordinary Rendition deploys a *scenography* of authenticity. The box in which the installation performance takes place is constructed from the materials used in the construction of cells at Camp X-Ray at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp (and to their dimensions). A Styrofoam cup in which acrid instant coffee is presented recalls the only object detainees at that camp were allowed in those cells. The use of pop music, flashing words and images all invoke the 'ways in which the civilian domain is militarized and the ambient presence of warfare in our daily lives ... [as well as] the ways in which popular culture and the military collide or collaborate, and the ways in which we might be implicated in the brutality of war through our participation in a media culture.'²⁸ In the documentation around the piece, as well as in the way that the company discuss the work, these structural and design strategies are intended to provide a sense of the performance as grounded in but also interrogating the material conditions of the practices and events of torture, warfare and extraordinary rendition that happen in the social real. This is not an attempt to torture their audience, and the company are careful to articulate their desire to avoid banalizing the politics of their topic. Nevertheless, they wish both to 'bring to view' the practices and politics of extraordinary rendition as well as to unsettle their audience in order to stimulate a more affective interrogation of the spectator's own politics.

However, what is perhaps most interesting about both of these pieces is the way in which this indexing of authenticity is deliberately undercut and then

rebuilt to complicate how one reads and understands the theatrical encounter. In *Bundy*, Wohead interleaves video (both a genuine 'reaction video' and the beginning of a (fairly evidently) mocked up snuff film), use of 'theatrical' props and costume (a long wig, tights to cover and distort an audience member's face), music and dancing, as well as personal reminiscences that seem to fit more readily within the theatrical narrative he is weaving than within the faux autobiographical style he is working with. All this serves to complicate a single mode of engagement and seems designed clearly to amplify the theatricality of the work. The use of audience participation (or more accurately, audience selection) is ethically complex: someone is set up to 'be' Bundy and to 'have a moment' with one of his victims, performed by Greg, who 'locks eyes' with him and dances. But, as Wohead says, the scene 'might [also] be a little sexy' and it is certainly humorously grotesque. Although contained within a roughly postdramatic aesthetic, the layering of different modes of representation ('autobiographical', verbatim, theatrical, participatory, film, reminiscence, music, movement) serves to complicate how one engages with it.²⁹ The content of the piece is undoubtedly unpleasant – descriptions of violent rape and murder, and imaginings of further violent acts perpetrated between children – but in and of itself this is not fundamentally dis-easing. We have after all been used to violence in the theatre since the Greeks. What tips this into the affective territory of dis-ease is the relationship between that content and the ways in which its representations are constructed and the ethical questions raised by both form and content. That is, the performance affect is such that the phenomenological experience of the work makes the meaning of it shimmer in and out of readability. Meanwhile, the subject position of the spectator is disrupted and complicated with the intention of being disorienting and perturbing. For James Thompson, this might thus be seen to be an artistic experience and practice that is designed 'to agitate at the level of sensation' so as to '[propel] a demand to know more' because the 'affect is what compels the participant to thought and to be engaged at every level'.³⁰

Although underpinned by a desire to embed and work with materials of authenticity, *Rendition* is explicitly theatrical in its construction. The single spectator is greeted by Gemma Paintin in an flight attendant costume. She firmly requests you remove and give her all your jewellery, keys, coins, wallet and mobile phone; she is neither friendly nor aggressive but the request is demanding. The interior of the box is sparse, the only objects are a plywood chair that is bolted to the floor and three screens suspended from the ceiling, side-by-side. The performance of the flight attendant is controlled and authoritative but is deeply incongruous with the space in which it is unfolding. The low rumbling hum of a muffled aeroplane jet reverberates within the wooden box to further complicate the sense of place for the spectator. The room is hot,

claustrophobic and unpleasant but is uncannily familiar and the processes of entering it quotidian to anyone who has flown in recent years. While the political content is clear (especially in terms of the piece's framing/publicity) and the goals of the work equally so, the *experience* itself is anything but. The layering of representational strata is deliberately complex, intentionally making it hard cognitively to decode and understand the work beyond its immediate experiential affect. For while there is a settling familiarity to the everydayness of the airport-aeroplane set up, almost everything else is intended to agitate. Photographs, snippets of film and written text flash up on the three screens to evoke and provoke the imagination to picture and recall situations of isolation, violence and inanity. This is coupled with the mundanity of headphone-piped pop songs and crackling pilot's announcements to produce an intensely oppressive mix. A wooden tray-table is slotted into the chair in front of the spectator, presenting a physical barrier to exiting that feels natural yet also violent. The unspeaking, plonking down of a steaming hot (Styrofoam) cup of instant coffee is unnervingly aggressive, and while the smell is familiar it is so strong as to be acrid. Everything is recognisable from travelling, news and social media, pop culture and everyday life but in placing these things together within the representational ecology and scenographic context of this production they become dis-easing because the overall experience is phenomenologically disorienting.

Moreover, both pieces deploy what might be seen as an unsettling proto-*Verfremdungseffekt*. As Williams outlines, Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* is the idea of deliberately 'making strange' so as to elicit an *engagement with* the ideas contained within a performance, rather than an unthinking *consumption of* those representations. This is done by:

show[ing] the action in the process of being made: that is to say, to confront an audience with a performance, a deliberate action in a theatre, often with the machinery of effects visible... [highlighting] a continual and explicit contrast with all those means to a suspension of disbelief before an illusion of reality.³¹

Extraordinary Rendition does this by making visible some of the 'stuff' of extraordinary rendition that has become background noise in our highly mediated, over news-saturated epoch. The intention is to make it unfamiliar again and to highlight the fact that it is neither natural nor inevitable. *The Ted Bundy Project* operates similarly but in the opposite direction, so to speak. It makes the unfamiliar seem familiar and natural and then turns that back on itself to reveal the terrifying politics of such constructions. For example, the performance asks the audience to consider the ethical implications of engaging

with Bundy as ‘normal’ and how that might reconfigure the highly mediated images of him as ‘psychopathic killer’ to ‘human’. But these *Verfremdungseffekt* are so pronounced as to offer more than an unfamiliar – or ‘strange’ – view; they are radically unsettling and, coupled with the dis-easing affects noted above, they operate as a ‘shock to thought’ and ask us to look again at contemporary discourses that make us anxious or fearful by means of dramaturgies that attempt precisely to evoke those phenomena.

Conclusion

Attending to the social politics of the criminal justice system in the UK, Susie Orbach has convincingly argued that a policy of violence countered with violence is ‘doomed to fail’.³² Contending that ‘harsh sentencing, brutal prisons, an army-trained probation service, punitive parole officers, speak to a desire to contain and separate out the problem from society’.³³ While Orbach is writing about a different context, the supposition that a more nuanced engagement with acts and systems of violence is needed if we are to understand and counteract them, resonates with Action Hero’s desire to ‘attend to the politics of power’ and to ‘show how prevalent and present’ structures and mechanism of war and torture are in everyday life.³⁴ For the artists, the piece works by playing with the ‘interior landscapes of imagination’ as a means to turn one’s imagination back self-reflexively so as to make visible the mechanism and politics of violence. This is to deploy anxiety as a principle of the encounter. The piece tries to explore the territory of psychic ‘occupation’ because nothing is shown but is rather implied and evoked through an affecting encounter which is only later available to analysis. The texts displayed on the screens present images that are clear and simple to imagine, to bring to mind, but the information is so quickly presented that one cannot quite be sure why the images come to mind nor if the words on the screen correspond to the thing image or scene imagined. In this regard, the company articulate that they are ‘interested in the ways in which you can’t quite fully buy into the fact that we’re at war’,³⁵ and this becomes part of the aesthetic strategy of the work. There is a deliberate lack of clarity about what it is that we are witnessing that is deeply unsettling: at one level we physically occupy a space that recalls the spaces of Camp X-Ray, and at another we are absolutely exposed to the theatricality and fictional nature of the encounter through the flight attendant character that Gemma Paintin plays. The space reverberates with the drone of jet engines, and is claustrophobic like an aeroplane, but yet is evidently not in flight. Pop music plays through headphones while we read flashing words that recall images of violence and news coverage. Thus, the structure of meaning making is deliberately unclear,

or at least multimodal; there is a conscious playing with representational structures in the work that make the experience of it unsettling.

The political interventions made by *Extraordinary Rendition* and *The Ted Bundy Project* are precisely bound to the capacity of performance to dis-ease its audience. The dis-easing affect of these works refuses the audience the opportunity to place the them into what Williams calls the 'past tense' and so to solidify the experience as a 'fixed form'.³⁶ The unsettling experience is designed to keep the audience's attention in the present, attending to the conditions and structures of representation currently being deployed. In this way the works participate in an interrogation of what we might call a contemporary 'aesthetics of dis-ease' because they seek to expose the mechanisms and structures by which society is (deliberately, politically) exposed to and encounters narratives of fear and anxiety. Put differently, and returning to affect theory, these pieces offer a model of practice that uses representational complexity fused with politically charged, 'difficult' content, to produce what James Thompson has called 'aesthetic intensity' which can be 'the propellant of political action'.³⁷ This might be seen precisely to counter what cultural critic Henry Giroux has called the rise of a 'politics of disimagination' in which the 'disimagination machine' ('a set of cultural apparatuses extending from schools and mainstream media to the new sites of screen culture and a public pedagogy') deploys:

'images... institutions, discourses, and other modes of representation [...to] undermine the ability of individuals to think critically, imagine the unimaginable, and engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue. Put simply, to become critically informed citizens of the world.'³⁸

Rather, these pieces produce Massumi's 'shock to thought'³⁹ in ways that are precisely about engaging in critical dialogue about contemporary discourses of fear and anxiety.

As such, we might consider that these performances are concerned with understanding what Williams described as 'meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systemic beliefs'.⁴⁰ This accords with Giroux's call for a cultural pedagogy and 'radical imagination' that 'both informs the mind and creates the conditions for modes of agency that are critical, informed, engaged, and socially responsible'.⁴¹ Indeed these performances deploy their aesthetics strategies precisely as a means through which critically to understand and articulate 'structures of feeling which as living processes are much more widely experienced' than represented or concretely understood.⁴² In light of this, I would argue that in relation to the contemporary politics of fear these works operate as 'a

mode of social formation, explicit and recognizable ... distinguishable from other social and semantic formations'⁴³ because of their foregrounding and articulation of the presence of anxiety as a socio-political *structure*. Williams and Herbert Marcuse have argued that the congruence of meaning created at the intersection of form and structure is where the potency and political agency of performance (all art) lies.⁴⁴ Thus we might contend that it is in the dis-easing structures and aesthetics of these pieces (both of which are precisely *about* contemporary fears and anxieties) that their attention to our dis-eased structure of feeling lies. That is, these works offer a means through which to interrogate (one of) the contemporary structures of feeling in a way that mirrors its operation. Moreover, and more importantly, this is also where their importance as a means for political intervention in the social and political discourses surrounding that structure of feeling can be found.

Notes

- 1 Woody Allen, cited in Sarah Dunant and Roy Porter, 'Introducing Anxiety', in *The Age of Anxiety*, ed. Sarah Dunant and Roy Porter (London: Virago, 1996), ix–xviii
- 2 See, for example, Frank Furedi, *Politics of Fear* (London: Continuum, 2005); Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear Revisited* (London: Continuum, 2006); Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Sarah Dunant and Roy Porter (eds), *The Age of Anxiety* (Longon: Virago, 1996); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin, 2008); *The Power of Nightmares: The Rise of the Politics of Fear*, directed by Adam Curtis, British Broadcasting Corporation, October–November 2004.
- 3 Ernst Cassirer, cited in Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Fear* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 28–9.
- 4 Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 126.
- 5 James Thompson, *Performance Affects: Applied Theatre and the End of Effect* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 124–5.
- 6 Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), 17.
- 7 Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 89–90.
- 8 Furedi, *Culture of Fear Revisited*; Furedi, *Politics of Fear*.
- 9 Raymond Williams, 'Culture is Ordinary', in *Cultural Theory: an Anthology*, ed. Imre Szeman and Timothy Kaposy (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 53–9.
- 10 J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, ed. J.O. Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).
- 11 Della Pollock, *Remembering: Oral History Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.
- 12 Anti-theatrical prejudice, a phrase coined by Jonas Barish, refers to the historic negative associations of 'theatre' or 'theatricality' that have been bound to the art form since Plato admonished poetry as imitation thrice removed from the truth in *The Republic*. The prejudice is linked to a historical mistrust of mimetic performances (social or aesthetic). At a quotidian level, this can most readily be seen when 'theatrical' is regularly deployed

- pejoratively to mean making a spectacle of oneself, being overly flamboyant, malingering or 'faking it' for personal gain.
- 13 I use 'encountering' advisedly because in both pieces the audience member's position as (mere) spectator of representational practice is deliberately worried. The artists deploy a series of tactics to position and reposition the viewer in different subject positions in relation to the work, such as being made an active 'on stage' participant, set up as an implicated witness or even complicit voyeur to the action, or being positioned as perpetrator and/or victim of violence.
 - 14 Lyn Gardner, 'Anxiety is a Death Knell for Theatre', *Guardian Online* 'Theatre Blog', <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/mar/02/anxiety-theatre> (accessed 30 September 2016).
 - 15 Gardner, 'Anxiety is a Death Knell'.
 - 16 Paul Virilio, *The Administration of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 58–9.
 - 17 Arne Öhman, 'Fear and Anxiety: Overlaps and Dissociations', in *Handbooks of Emotions*, 3rd edn, ed. Michael Lewis, Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones and Lisa Feldman Barrett (New York: Guilford, 2008), 710.
 - 18 Simon Critchley, 'Being and Time, part 5: Anxiety', *Guardian Online*, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jul/06/heidegger-philosophy-being (accessed 14 July 2014).
 - 19 See Patrick Duggan, "'Dis-ease' and the Performance of Radical Resistance in the Maze Prison", in *Performing (for) Survival: Theatre, Crisis, Extremity*, ed. Patrick Duggan and Lisa Peschel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 222–40.
 - 20 Linda Grant, 'Violent Anxiety', in *The Age of Anxiety*, ed. Sarah Dunant and Roy Porter (London: Virago, 1996), 21–40.
 - 21 Grant, 'Violent Anxiety', 21.
 - 22 Verbatim theatre is a form of documentary or fact-based theatre in which a performance is created from the exact words spoken by people interviewed about a particular idea, event or situation (such as Alecky Blythe's 2008 *The Girlfriend Experience*). Techniques include performing interview transcripts or testimony and can include reproducing all hesitations, syntax and cadences of speech. In some instances, actors listen to interview materials through headphones while on stage and re-performing the speech live (for examples see www.recordeddelivery.net).
 - 23 Action Hero, 'Extraordinary Rendition', www.actionhero.org.uk/projects/extraordinary-rendition/ (accessed 30 September 2016)
 - 24 This might be seen to accord with Rancière's idea of 'the aesthetic cut' in which art has the capacity to disrupt dominant discourse or the idea of received wisdoms. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 82.
 - 25 It is perhaps interesting to note that in both performances there is a sense that the works are deploying the uncanny as part of the politics of representation, in the sense that, as Nicholas Royle argues, the uncanny is about encountering (even briefly) something that should have remained hidden (*The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 2). Meanwhile, Freud of course argued that 'an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced' (cited. in Royle, *The Uncanny*, 13).
 - 26 Deirdre Heddon, *Autobiography in Performance: Performing Selves* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5.
 - 27 Lucy Nevitt, 'Review of *Theatre as Witness: Three Testimonial Plays from South Africa*', *Research in Drama Education*, 13, no. 3 (2008): 377
 - 28 Action Hero, *Extraordinary Rendition* (performance programme essay: no date).
 - 29 'Postdramatic theatre' was argued by German theatre scholar Hans-Thies Lehmann to describe performance practices that do not principally focus on the drama in itself but

- rather put the 'text' of the performance in relation to the material condition of production (including staging, theatre space, performance style, etc.). As such, a 'postdramatic aesthetic' is that which attempts to produce particular effects amongst the spectators rather than abeyance to a given text. Lehmann argues this is a reaction to the (historic) primacy of the written text and that it produces a 'multi-perspectival form of perceiving' (p.16). Such an aesthetic is constituted, in part, through the 'use and combination of heterogeneous styles' (p. 26), incorporates the 'performer as theme and protagonist' (p. 25) and is often not concerned with dialogue or (linear) plot. Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
- 30 Thompson, *Performance Affects*, 125.
 - 31 Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, 319.
 - 32 Susie Orbach, 'Couching Anxieties', in *The Age of Anxiety*, ed. Sarah Dunant and Roy Porter (Longon: Virago, 1996), 163.
 - 33 Orbach, 'Couching Anxieties', 163.
 - 34 Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse (Action Hero) in discussion with author, 26 May 2016.
 - 35 Paintin and Stenhouse, discussion.
 - 36 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 129.
 - 37 Thompson, *Performance Affects*, 128.
 - 38 Henry Giroux, 'The Disimagination Machine and the Pathologies of Power', *symptome*, 21, nos 1–2 (2013): 263
 - 39 Giroux, 'The Disimagination Machine and the Pathologies of Power', 263.
 - 40 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133.
 - 41 Giroux, 'The Disimagination Machine', 265.
 - 42 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133.
 - 43 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 135.
 - 44 See Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), and Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978).

Formations, Institutions and the 'Free Theatre': Edith Craig's Pioneer Players 1911–25

Katharine Cockin

In 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment: The Case of English Naturalism' (1977), Raymond Williams provided valuable insights into the vibrant and volatile period in theatre when ideas of freedom and oppression were realized and contested in the dramatic form of naturalism. He noted that the naturalist play emphasised 'the stage as an enclosed room' and environment itself acted as an agent in constructing character.¹ Some naturalist drama sought to open up these claustrophobic domestic spaces and indicate pathways to social change. However, any depiction of a domestic space or 'enclosed room' in this period – in plays, short stories, novels and the visual art of the women's suffrage political campaigns – became inevitably implicated in separate spheres ideology.² Although Williams referred to the 'breakaway independent theatres' and the Vedrenne-Barker season of plays 1904–07, he did not mention the involvement of female performers, authors or directors in the promotion of the independent theatres or how they drew on that experience during the political movement for women's enfranchisement. The 'enclosed room' of the naturalist play was reconceptualized by a new generation of political activists of both sexes who envisaged equality symbolized by citizenship and brought about by legislative change.

The women's suffrage movement was very visibly and successfully supported by the production of politically engaged drama. This is marked by a specific theatrical production, Elizabeth Robins' *Votes for Women* (1907) and the founding of the specialist institutions, the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL, 1908) and the Pioneer Players theatre society (1911). As one of the principal directors of women's suffrage drama and founder of the Pioneer Players, Edith Craig (1869–1947) was at the centre of this engine for change.³ She emphasised her preference for working freely with many organizations including both the AFL and the Pioneer Players. This method of working exemplified the dynamic influences of cultural formations as described by Williams who warned against too narrow a view: '... if we deduce significant cultural relations from the study of institutions alone, we shall be in danger of missing some important cases in which cultural organization has not been, in any ordinary sense, institutional'.⁴ With membership lists and annual reports, some of the independent theatre societies documented their operation as institutions but they were fostered and promoted by informal and somewhat *ad hoc* cultural formations comprised of diverse communities

with sometimes contradictory values and allegiances. Williams's essay 'The Bloomsbury Fraction' (1980) offers a way of understanding these less formally organized cultural groupings and the fluid and ephemeral social interactions which underpinned them.⁵ His emphasis is on the eclectic interests of the Bloomsbury Group and Leonard Woolf's insistence on the friendship and the social aspects of their interactions.

It is Williams's acute observations about the influence of these informal social formations that now provide a means of further understanding the London-based Pioneer Players and its director, Edith Craig. Williams's essays offer an insight into ways in which freedom was understood, what dramatic forms it took and what licence was given to articulate challenges relating to the prevailing 'social environment'. Williams's analysis of the 'Bloomsbury fraction' is applicable to the Pioneer Players theatre society and the contradictions and conflicts arising from the Pioneer Players' diverse constituency. It was vulnerable in various ways; its reactive mode and venueless status limited the number of productions. The annual programme was characterized by single performances of plays, which only very occasionally were repeated. The dependence on venues becoming available to them also created difficulties, given the different acting spaces and facilities especially in public halls. This fluidity lent itself to an aesthetic of the *ad hoc*. However, resistant to the rootedness of established commercial theatre enterprises, the Pioneer Players was free to venture into forbidden territory. As an institution supported by complementary cultural formations, the Pioneer Players society operated in a highly adaptable and resourceful way. In 1914, they staged *Idle Women* by Magdalen Ponsonby; a typical, one-off production, this was notable for its metatheatrical features which reflected the problems of organizing cultural and political events. The play exposed the prevailing responsiveness to a fashionable orientalism such as had motivated the Dreadnought Hoax incident (1910) (discussed briefly below) and the interest in Eastern religions informing Theosophy. The Pioneer Players used humour to consolidate group identity. Rather than in any way 'idle', the members were self-consciously active in their engagement with a variety of social reforms and political movements.

Instead of making a claim simply to readjust the spotlight on Edith Craig and the theatre society she founded, this article follows Kirsten Shepherd-Barr (2005) and Marvin Carlson (2013) in exploring the extent to which this inattention is symptomatic of a more widespread omission of drama and performance from literary studies of this period, creating a peculiarly lopsided view of the cultural landscape which extends globally.⁶ The consequence of the omission is that it ignores the way in which many modernists experimented in various media, forms and venues. George Bernard Shaw, who rated Craig's directorial work highly, remarked on the centrality of theatre to the cultural life

of the middle classes in that it had almost replaced the church as an institution attracting regular attendance.⁷ The 'free theatre' movement tended to be concerned with the performance of scripted plays in theatre venues for an audience of subscribing members. These productions therefore claimed to be private; they attempted to avoid the censorship which was implemented by the licensing mechanism of the Lord Chamberlain's office. Although the most well-known 'free theatre' societies in Britain operated in London, attempts to create a 'free theatre' were restricted neither to London nor Britain. In 1919, inspired by post-war regeneration ideologies, the British Drama League was founded, with Edith Craig as one of its leaders. It aimed to promote amateur theatre throughout 'Britain' by which it meant to propagate metropolitan concerns to locations outside London. Similarly theatrical and cultural institutions such as the British Empire Shakespeare Society and English Speaking Union led cultural missions to the suburbs and regions inculcating an Englishness designed to strengthen post-war national identity.

The theatre and performance work associated with Edith Craig and the Pioneer Players involved diverse activities and relationships: formal transactions and contractual arrangements; patronage and nepotism; the informal, unpaid and the voluntary. In borrowed theatres and rented public halls, performances were given of scripted or improvised drama or dance and, on occasions, music or lectures. The more experimental and innovative work often brought together professionals and amateurs, giving rise to potential conflicts and tensions eased by means of subsidies and *pro bono* terms. The cast lists of some of these productions demonstrate that the performers were drawn from diverse social groups. Middle-class and aristocratic youth sometimes tested their acting talents and most likely the patience of their disapproving parents by taking part in one-off theatrical productions.

'The Bloomsbury Fraction' and the Bedford Street Flat

The innovative work of the Pioneer Players was driven by a committed and ambitious leadership. It drew its membership from wide social and political networks. Its success was largely attributable to the leadership and talents of Edith Craig. However, Raymond Williams's analysis of the 'Bloomsbury Fraction' prompts closer consideration of the cultural hinterlands of the Pioneer Players institution. Unlike the Pioneer Players, the Bloomsbury Group was not a club or society to which one could apply for membership. In 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', Raymond Williams established the various misunderstandings about the way in which the so-called 'Bloomsbury Group' gathered, grouped and re-grouped and the sense of 'social conscience'

that characterized it.⁸ Williams notes that even those at the centre failed to acknowledge the interconnectedness of cultural practices and powerful social influences. Thus Leonard Woolf emphasized the friendship of those involved, and the social aspect of their gatherings. This rendered opaque the exclusive cultural formation, a 'fraction' of a class as Williams describes it. Williams' conceptualization of a 'fraction' could be further developed to engage with the intersectional aspects of these groups in which social class was one of a number of different imbricated positions.⁹ A similar cultural formation developed in Edith Craig's circle at 31 Bedford Street, Covent Garden in central London and later at Priest's House, Tenterden, Kent.¹⁰ Theatre practitioners, women's suffrage activists, social reformers, anti-censorship campaigners, artists, writers, musicians, journalists, and aristocrats were drawn to the flat where Craig lived with her female partners, Christopher St John and, from 1916, Tony Atwood, connecting with an emerging lesbian, gay and queer subculture.¹¹ The Bedford Street flat became the temporary headquarters of the International Suffrage Shop and in 1911 it was the official address of the Pioneer Players theatre society.

It is Raymond Williams's conceptualization of cultural activities, in terms of institutions and formations, which provides a framework for understanding the complex dynamics of social and cultural practices – the small scale, the ephemeral and the marginal – at work in the Pioneer Players. A similarly acute sensitivity is at work in his conceptualization of the dynamic relationships between dominant, residual and emergent forms.¹² The emergent form is most closely associated with modernism but the serious conflicts underlying the emergent dramatic forms and the nature of the challenges posed by those active in their creation and reception tend to be obscured unless these social practices are acknowledged and not reductively attributed to the illustrious named individuals involved.

In Williams's argument for theatre as a significant force in this period some problems in gender and identity emerge as significant players in the field of 'materialism and culture'. It has been widely noted that, in the plays produced by the 'free theatre' movement, women feature as characters who become the focus of a problem or crisis within an oppressive marriage: Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* was performed by André Antoine's Théâtre Libre (1887–94); Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, the latter performed in London by the Independent Theatre Society (1891–97). This aspect of the naturalist play, in its destabilization of gender, made for a particularly emergent form. Female performers found the motivation and opportunities to act, write, devise and stage unconventional characterizations of femininity. The wealth of achievement of these women has surfaced more recently in relation to studies concerned with the New Woman and the women's suffrage movement.

Katharine Cockin

Hitherto there had been a tendency to return repetitively to the familiar, male protagonists, such as Harley Granville Barker, John Galsworthy, and George Bernard Shaw. Raymond Williams, writing before Julie Holledge's groundbreaking study of the AFL and the Pioneer Players, notes:

Virtually all the important new work in European drama of this period was done in breakaway independent theatres, based on a minority (fractional) audience which separated itself at once from its own class and from the 'theatrical' integration. In England this minority was already large, in other fields but in the theatre it was slow to organize: The Dramatic Students (1866), the Independent Theatre Society (1891), the Stage Society (1899). But it was through these organizations that different work came into the theatres: Shaw's *Widower's Houses* at the Independent Theatre in 1892, the Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant; and ultimately the Vedrenne-Barker regime at the Court Theatre between 1904 and 1907.¹³

Edith Craig had been involved in the Stage Society, credited as 'Wardrobe Mistress' but established herself as a director by founding the Pioneer Players theatre society, one of these 'breakaway independent theatres' whose 'minority (fractional) audience' was profoundly intersectional. Catering for theatre practitioners in its lower membership rates, it supported women's suffrage, included men equally albeit in a minority in its membership and several of its leaders and authors were lesbian or gay. Some members of the Pioneer Players were to be involved in significant activities to professionalize, unionize, institutionalize and archive theatre work in Britain.¹⁴

The Free Theatre and Free Love Repercussions: The Theatrical Ladies Guild and the Single Mother

In the period associated with modernism, the female performer who had followed the principles of the New Woman and Ibsen's protagonists may have faced the very material problems of raising a child alone. From the 1890s to the interwar years, the theatre as an institution was the site of cultural innovation and political intervention. It attracted both amateur actors interested in performance as an entertainment for themselves and also trainee actors learning on the job and seeking a shop window for their talents. Health, appearance and reputation were highly valued criteria in casting roles. Securing employment often relied on patronage and recommendations. However, as a field of work, theatre was becoming unionized. It was also becoming professionalized, a landmark of which was the award of a knighthood in 1895 to Henry Irving,

who thus became the first Knight of the British stage. Female performers faced a different set of problems and for those experiencing difficulties from intermittent employment, ill-health or single parenthood, help was discretely provided by informal, individual acts of support and institutionally organized charitable aid.¹⁵ The need for this charitable assistance invites further consideration and indicates one way in which female theatre practitioners experienced very different material circumstances compared with their male counterparts.

It is significant that Ellen Terry, the President of the Pioneer Players, was a public and private philanthropist, supporting female performers in this way.¹⁶ The Pioneer Players theatre society publicly aligned itself with advocacy for single mothers in several controversial productions, one of which was written by the mother of Terry's grandchild: *The Surprise of His Life* (produced in 1912). As Julie Holledge (1981) established, Edith Craig, the Pioneer Players and the AFL typified the politicization of women in the theatre by the women's suffrage movement.¹⁷ They were involved in performances that demonstrated the breadth and relevance of the arguments for women's enfranchisement for the improvement of women's lives. Although women were not legally recognized as citizens, they were subject to the law and the women's suffrage arguments regularly exposed this, often identifying sensational examples of injustice. For example, one of the three plays produced by the Pioneer Players in the society's inaugural production concerned a complex and overlooked problem. *In the Workhouse* (1911) by Margaret Wynne Nevinson drew on the author's experiences as a Poor Law Guardian, as Holledge suggests.¹⁸ The play detailed the deplorable *de facto* imprisonment in the workhouse imposed on an otherwise independent working-class woman because she was married to a destitute husband. However, given the insights from Ellen Terry's letters on charitable support of women working in the precarious field of employment in the theatre, it would have struck a special chord with the audience of members and it emphasized the Pioneer Players' position as advocates for legal reform to include women's rights as mothers and workers as well as citizens.

Theatre performances, especially those of the Pioneer Players, were used as a forum for political lobbying, notably against censorship and for women's suffrage but also less well-known campaigns such as vegetarianism, food reform and the promotion of the National Insurance Act.¹⁹ The drama of Herman Heijermans's *The Good Hope*, focused on a female perspective on the brutal conditions experienced by a fishing community and provided an example of the kind of naturalism Williams described in his essay: closely linking character and environment, exposing the conditions of the lives lived and the actions determined by this environment.²⁰ Most of the Pioneer Players' productions were directed by Edith Craig; well received by critics in the UK and abroad,

they were notable for their visually intriguing effects with the minimum of resources.

That Edith Craig's place in theatre history has been a shadowy, marginalized one is, I would argue, partly relatable to the 'problems' outlined by Williams several decades ago and which still persist. It arises from the preconception that art is an object and not a practice, whereby, in this case, theatrical performance is therefore reduced to the conservation and privileging of the published dramatic text. Once theatre work (performance before an invited audience) is appreciated as a social practice involving numerous individuals, complex elements and interactions, the idea of the 'art of the theatre' as an object must become redundant. If theatre history and literary studies overlook the gendered dimensions of the 'social being',²¹ the achievements of female theatre practitioners and writers in this period tend to be unrecognized. Women were often at the centre of operations when the 'free' theatre was being organized, although the legal status of women meant that they were deprived of the franchise and conceptualized as the property of men. Moreover, the role of the theatre director was a newly emerging phenomenon; the director was the leading figure in control of all aspects of the production, aiming to create a coherent artistic whole. This new approach to theatre as an art form was notably theorized by Edith Craig's brother Edward Gordon Craig but successfully and extensively implemented by her. Her work was widely reviewed in the contemporary press, nationally and internationally, and it features in fleeting but decisive acknowledgements in theatrical and literary autobiographies. Subsequently the part she played in the developments in twentieth-century theatre in Britain and as the principal director of women's suffrage drama in Britain has yet to receive its full recognition. Similarly, women's suffrage drama, and the way it was influenced by and reacted to cultural practices in other media and forms in the fertile modernist period, demands and is beginning to receive serious critical attention.

Problems of Gender: 'The Environment has Soaked into their Lives'

Raymond Williams's understanding of the dynamic of cultural relationships provides a timely interpretative framework for a new British theatre history of this period that is open to the trans-disciplinary cultural practices that were not only vital to the most experimental and innovative work, but taken for granted at the time by their exponents. Although Raymond Williams's essay on naturalism does not address women's suffrage drama, what he has to say about environment and character is applicable to it and profoundly illuminating. Williams examines the conventions of naturalism in its association with a

philosophical position of determinism, linking character to environment and inheritance and with an explicit and highly visible staging of a material world which envelops the individual, determining their consciousness. This is formulated by Williams in fluid, physical terms of osmosis or life force: 'Moreover the environment has soaked into their lives'.²² Williams shows that naturalist drama rarely depicted an individual struggling within a restrictive and oppressive environment who then proceeds to escape, survive and transform that environment.²³ However, he emphasises the challenges posed within some naturalist drama in exposing the limitations imposed on the individual and thereby presenting a social critique.

In drama such as *Votes for Women* (1907) by Elizabeth Robins, and *How The Vote Was Won* (1909) by Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St John, the naturalist dramatic form is employed in a critique of the oppressiveness of the private domestic sphere to which many middle-class women were consigned. Women's suffrage dramatic plots often present a more radical development of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, which concludes with Nora leaving her husband and family for a different future. The audience focuses on this individual woman's decision to leave her home. In the emergent and most radical forms within the extensive body of women's suffrage drama, the female characters are systematically always presented as individuals both politically active and effective as well as always already aware that they are supported by a politically committed collective; any focus on an individual protagonist emphasises how, as Williams states, the 'environment has soaked into their lives'.²⁴ It also emphasises the implications of the social environment that has determined her political awakening and activism and motivated her to work with other women and men. In an implied mobilization, which would most typically be associated with the drama of Bertolt Brecht, the action in these women's suffrage plays is decisive and promises social change as the audience is implicitly directed towards the unfolding political campaign off the stage. The open-endedness, rather than generating a sense of failure, fatalism or doubt, invites the audience actively to provide the resolution. The audience's involvement is usually implied rather than delivered through the kind of explicit declaration or imperative that would characterize the agit-prop of the later theatres of the Left.²⁵

Idle Women, Political Agency and Orientalist Performance

Before the arguments about the vote could be won, other ideological battles had to be fought in different and very entrenched institutions. These included medical and scientific discourses with all the concomitant institutional weight of authority and extended to theories of biological essentialism and

eugenics.²⁶ Eugenics in particular was powerful in its appeal to a broad political spectrum, and it featured explicitly as a topic of staged conversation between characters in some of the plays produced by the Pioneer Players. Anti-suffrage arguments emphasized the inherent intellectual inferiority of women and their unsuitability for the responsibility of rational decision-making in the use of the vote. Eugenicist ideas informed the anti-suffragists' demonization of suffragists as degenerate and insane. I suggest therefore that the success of the women's suffrage campaign relied on clear-thinking women (and their male supporters) who were capable of decisive political action and this idea underpins the play, *Idle Women: A Study in Futility* by Magdalen Ponsonby, produced at the Little Theatre, London on 22 June 1914. The play demonstrates a knowingness in its self-referential humour and perhaps also a confidence in the Pioneer Players' identity as an organization, since it dared to stage a play about chaotic mismanagement. The production therefore served an important purpose: to unite the Pioneer Players' audience in laughing at the frivolity and lack of commitment of the characters in the play who are seen taking up numerous political and cultural issues in an incompetent and superficial way. These cultural practices are at work within both formal institutions and the looser cultural formations that envelop and interconnect them. However, the play mediates some contradictory impulses and ideological conflicts centring on the prevailing curiosity about the 'orient' and in this sense it seems to raise questions about the values shared by some members of the Pioneer Players' audience.

The author of *Idle Women* was well-placed to observe the behaviour of the aristocracy as her father had been Private Secretary to Queen Victoria.²⁷ This experience may have influenced her creation of the main protagonist, Lady Ditcham, who had formed an association to promote a new Buddhist religion named Bunginn-Ga, centred on Tanno Matsuri (a boy specifically designated as 'Chinese'). It is made explicit that this new religious association is one of many organizations that Lady Ditcham and her friends have taken up as a fad. The plot is reminiscent of the promotion by Annie Besant and by the Theosophical Society of the Indian spiritual leader, Krishnamurti (1895–1986). On his visit to Britain in 1911 he had been welcomed by the theosophists at Charing Cross railway station.²⁸ In *Idle Women*, a telegraph messenger instead of Tanno Matsuri is mistakenly brought from the railway station to Lady Ditcham and her associates. The case of mistaken identity highlights the inauthenticity and incompetence of this group. The organizers purport to have serious political and philanthropic aims but instead use the organization as an excuse to socialize. In the dialogue, passing references are made to the campaign for women's suffrage, the popularity of the tango and the organization of a costume ball.

Both the Bloomsbury Group and the Pioneer Players themselves are possible referents in *Idle Women*. The mistaken identity plot and the use of an orientalist neologism (Bunginn-Ga), provide points of comparison with the Dreadnought Hoax in 1910 in which Horace de Vere Cole, Virginia Woolf and others impersonated the Emperor of Abyssinia and his entourage and tricked the navy at Paddington Station.²⁹ The designation of the new religion espoused by Tanno Matsuri as 'Bunginn-Ga' features similar reduplication as found in the phrase 'bunga bunga', attributed by *Daily Mail* journalists to the individuals dressed as Abyssinian princes and officials in the Dreadnought Hoax.³⁰ The orientalist disguise adopted in the Dreadnought Hoax was designed as an amusing deception at the expense of the British naval officials but served to reveal the values of the hoaxers.

***Kismet* Costumes and Harem Trousers at the Pioneer Players' Mi-Careme Ball**

In applying insights from Raymond Williams's analyses of the 'Bloomsbury fraction' and the dynamic process of cultural forms, this article proposes a new way of understanding the rationale for the Pioneer Players' eclectic choice of plays. The evidence is drawn from minor details about the diverse social and political engagements as well as the specific social events that are mentioned only in passing reference in the annual reports. The Pioneer Players' membership had been treated to two costume balls. The March 1914 costume ball in particular demands further exploration in relation to the production several months later of *Idle Women*. The preoccupation with orientalism in this costume ball reflects the values of the diverse formations from which the Pioneer Players drew its membership. Guests at this most recent ball, at the Connaught Rooms in London, featured in photographs in the *Tatler* magazine (Fig. 1). Their costumes suggest that the popular orientalist play, *Kismet*, was at least an unofficial theme of the ball. Stars of the play itself were included in these six photographs.³¹

The frisson generated by the possibility of performing the orient was a powerful aspect of the prevailing fantasies of the imperialist subject. A key text in this flourishing and highly lucrative enterprise was Richard Burton's *One Thousand and One Nights* (1885). In *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (2003), Edward Ziter notes that it was Burton's image of the East that dominated and became not only familiar but was propagated as authentic and authoritative. Of relevance to this analysis of *Idle Women* and the Pioneer Players' costume ball are Ziter's remarks that Burton's research was obtained by disguising himself as a Muslim and that his book dwelt on 'the harem-abduction trope'.³²



Fig. 1 'The Pioneer Players' Mi-Careme Ball', *The Tatler* (March 1914), 329; press cutting in Pioneer Players album, U DX295/1; author's collection available at Hull History Centre.

As Inderpal Grewal has established with regard to empire and women's suffrage, individuals such as Annie Besant who supported women's suffrage and Indian independence and challenged colonialism also engaged in a 'problematic universalism'.³³ The name of the Pioneer Players theatre society itself similarly draws on the prevailing discourse of innovation and liberation and ambivalently draws authority from military occupation and colonialism but appropriates 'pioneer' for feminist and other social reformist projects. As Grewal notes:

Most of the 'pioneering' women (as the women travellers were often called) were supportive of the imperialist project; they called upon the same positive-negative dichotomy of masculine-feminine functions and abilities

as did those who opposed granting English women any voting rights or any measure of equality. As a consequence, they did not extend their protest to a critique of industrial economy or patriarchal systems, nor did many of them protest the interrelated notions of class and race hierarchies that supported the culture of colonialism in England. By retaining these hierarchies, and supporting the masculinist project of colonialism, the suffrage movement was able to evoke nationalist sentiment by making itself distinct from the colonized women even while indicating their exploitation and thus their similarity to them. Racial superiority and national pride, so integral in the habitus of empire, was often used as the basis for the demand for women's voices.³⁴

The Pioneer Players' position appeared to be alert to these tensions but these concerns regarding empathetic allegiance and patronizing presumption were prevalent and often unresolved. Such contradictions and conflicts were evident in drama of this period otherwise taken to be liberating and pioneering. *Idle Women* satirizes the self-conscious way in which some elite groups were coming together to share their somewhat fickle interests in serious political, religious and cultural matters and at the same time exposed other values which were inattentive to the 'interrelated notions of class and race hierarchies' described by Grewal.³⁵ These contradictory values were most vividly apparent in the Pioneer Players' costume ball, and this serves as a reminder that the society's theatre work was influenced by informal social networks as well as the more formal affiliations specified in the society's annual reports.

The Pioneer Players promoted itself by means of informal social practices and entertainments such as the costume ball. This particular event in March 1914 was associated with the highly influential play *Kismet*, by the American dramatist Edward Knoblauch.³⁶ *Kismet* influenced the later orientalist play *Hassan* (1923) by James Elroy Fletcher and dedicated to Richard Burton. As Claire Warden has shown, *Hassan* was described by critics 'as another example of this Oriental play genre – "another 'Kismet'"'.³⁷ It was a spectacular phenomenon giving rise to a '*Hassan* ball organised by the British Drama League' and Warden notes Brian Singleton's observation that B.J. Simmons & Co., the costumiers for the *Kismet* production, advertised their costumes for balls: 'This was an indication of the extent to which orientalist fashion had gripped play-acting in the social sphere. Not content with observing it, theatre-goers were now being offered the opportunity of appropriating it. They could take *Kismet* home with them.'³⁸ This exploration of institutions and formations has therefore revealed that the Pioneer Players' costume ball created a social formation that facilitated the performance of such fantasies.

In the context of the Pioneer Players' involvement in women's suffrage politics, specific aspects of the orientalist dress in the *Tatler's* photographs of the Pioneer Players' 1914 costume ball suggest a further set of destabilizing associations. This concerns the politicization of trousers in the dress reform movement and the reiteration of images in the popular press of dominant women wearing 'harem' trousers. This iconography touches on complex inter-related concerns about female sexual desire. Edward Ziter has demonstrated, the spectacular productions of Augustus Harris at Drury Lane depicted British imperial power by enacting plots concerning the enslavement of British women in a harem and notes that there were profound 'contradictions inherent in theatrical orientalism'.³⁹ The Pioneer Players took 'white slavery' seriously when they staged *The Daughters of Ishmael* by Reginald Wright Kauffmann, and had produced several other plays which exposed prostitution.⁴⁰ The appropriation of harem (and other) trousers is an emergent symbol of sexual autonomy. In the *Tatler's* photograph, Suzanne Sheldon's defiant demeanour seems to challenge both the eroticization of oriental theatrical spectacles such as *Kismet* and the subjugation of women in Britain. These costumes suggested fantasies of the implied sexual freedom and physical presence of the exotic body and at the same time occluded slavery and the diverse experiences of women.

The Pioneer Players' 1914 costume ball asserts the perceived autonomy of the women of the harem and their performability by white Western middle-class women. It has been established by Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell (1994) that in the visual cultural battle for women's enfranchisement, women's clothing was a site of political conflict and also a focus for political campaigning.⁴¹ This cultural warfare for women's enfranchisement was fought out in popular picture postcards, such as those produced by Donald McGill or Bamforth, where the domineering white British woman was sometimes depicted in harem trousers, signifying gender trouble at home which was attributable to pernicious foreign ideas as well as cross-dressing (Fig. 2). However, the orientalist costume which had become a fashion also fed the anti-suffrage argument that the political campaign for women's enfranchisement signified the collapse of sexual mores and degeneracy, as well as modernizing the panic over a 'petticoat' government'.⁴² In the context of the movement for free love, sexual experimentation and the politicization of single motherhood, the appropriation of the harem trousers fashion was one further act of defiance.

Thus the Pioneer Players' costume ball, so indebted to *Kismet*, demonstrates a subversive confidence; through their theatrical productions and the related social events, the members gained sufficient power to articulate their demands for equality and social change. Manifestoes and mission statements, where they exist, sometimes fail to capture the breadth of activities of a cultural organization. It is the peripheral activities, the social interactions and the shared



Fig. 2 Reproduced with permission of James Bissell-Thomas for Greaves & Thomas, copyright holders of Donald McGill.

jokes which prove to be indirectly illuminating. The audience is interpellated in *Idle Women* to associate the Pioneer Players with activity rather than idleness, with a serious, politically committed and credible position as distinguishable from the faddish, self-indulgent and inauthentic practices portrayed in this play. It is made clear that a superficial engagement with political and social reforms is to be derided. *Idle Women* acknowledges the attraction posed by the exotic and the oriental. The *Tatler's* photographic records of the Pioneer Players' costume ball suggest that the informal performance of the exotic body also provided opportunities off-stage to experiment with different modes of self-presentation, freed from conventional costume and associated with Futurism.⁴³ Although the orientalist fashion usually figures an indulgence in the imaginative fantasies associated with the imperialist subject, here other

meanings are at play. In the association with the Pioneer Players society, whose productions were often linked by reviewers with the aesthetic of the Russian Ballet,⁴⁴ this unorthodox dress is appropriated for political purposes. The freedom claimed in dress symbolized the demand for other freedoms, with related costs and implications but the engagement with orientalism exposes some of the political tensions at work within the 'free theatre'.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment: The Case of English Naturalism' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 130.
- 2 This is demonstrated extensively in women's suffrage literature; see, for instance, Glenda Norquay (ed.), *Voices and Votes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Carolyn Christenson Nelson (ed.), *Literature of the Women's Suffrage Campaign in England* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004).
- 3 See Katharine Cockin, *Edith Craig (1869–1947): Dramatic Lives* (London: Cassell, 1998); Katharine Cockin, *Women and Theatre in the Age of Suffrage: The Pioneer Players 1911–25* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); Katharine Cockin, *Edith Craig and the Theatres of Art* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017).
- 4 Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London: Fontana, 1981), 35.
- 5 Raymond Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction' in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 148–69.
- 6 Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, 'Modernism and Theatrical Performance', *Modernist Cultures*, I, no. 1 (2005): 59–68; Marvin Carlson, 'Negotiating Theatrical Modernism in the Arab World', *Theatre Journal*, 65 (2013): 523–35.
- 7 George Bernard Shaw, Preface to *Heartbreak House*, in *Prefaces by Bernard Shaw* (London: Constable, 1934), 395.
- 8 Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', 155.
- 9 Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality may offer a new way of considering the complexities of Williams' notion of the 'fraction'.
- 10 In modernism and twentieth-century literary history, Craig and her partners have appeared briefly in various studies; for innovative research in mapping networks of 'companionate friendships', see Catherine Clay, *British Women Writers 1914–1945: Professional Work and Friendship* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- 11 Alan Sinfield has discussed the work of Edith Craig and Christopher St John with the Pioneer Players, AFL and Women's Writers' Suffrage League: 'Probably this militantly feminist work translated, for some women, into a sense that these theatres were lesbian space'; Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 11–12.
- 12 Raymond Williams defines the 'dominant, residual and emergent' and associates the 'emergent' with the 'coming to consciousness of a new class'; Raymond Williams, *Marcism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 124. Women's suffrage literature resembles this process but signifies a coalition of women and men advocating enfranchisement for a sector of the female middle class defined broadly as 'women' and arguing for this political change in ways which were conflicted. In these respects, this cultural phenomenon exemplifies the complex and dynamic aspects of cultural practices theorized by Williams.

- 13 Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment', 144.
- 14 Several presidents of the actors' trade union, Equity, were former members of the Pioneer Players: Godfrey Tearle (1884–1953) president of Equity 1932–40, knighted in 1951; Felix Aylmer OBE (1889–1979) president 1949/50–69. A member of the Pioneer Players executive, the Hon. Gabrielle Enthoven, led the campaign in 1911 for a National Museum of Theatre Arts and in 1924 donated her own theatre collection to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This formed the basis for the later Theatre Museum, the UK's national museum of the performing arts, founded in 1987 and closed in 2007; see Kate Dorney, 'Excavating Enthoven: Investigating a Life of Stuff', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 34, no. 2 (2014): 115–25.
- 15 The Theatrical Ladies Guild (TLG), a charitable organization founded in 1891, became known especially for the support of female performers with children, with regular sewing bees to make baby clothes; see Katharine Cockin, 'Emily Courtier-Dutton, née Claremont (Kittie Carson)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004). For a discussion of the extensive charitable work led by female performers in London including the TLG, see Catherine Hindson, *London's West End Actresses and the Origins of Celebrity Charity, 1880–1920* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2016).
- 16 Some insights from the letters of Ellen Terry, one of the TLG's key patrons, suggest that it was supporting women who were probably unmarried mothers. Terry financially supported the Guild and also appears to have co-ordinated the donation of baby clothes. Having had her two children outside marriage, Terry took the situation of unmarried mothers sufficiently seriously to include her views in a letter to George Bernard Shaw. She provided charitable support by means of making available her own country cottage for women resting from stagework and she supported the unmarried mothers of her own grandchildren both emotionally and financially. See Ellen Terry letter to Margaret Alston, 14 March [1905]; letter 1399, in Katharine Cockin (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Ellen Terry*, Vol. 5 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 12–13. Ellen Terry annotated a press cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* concerning the court case of Louisa James; Ellen Terry letter to George Bernard Shaw, 31 May 1899; letter 997 in Cockin, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 4.
- 17 Julie Holledge, *Innocent Flowers: Women in the Edwardian Theatre* (London: Virago, 1981).
- 18 Holledge, *Innocent Flowers*, 127.
- 19 See Cockin, *Women and Theatre*, 166–87; Cockin, *Edith Craig*, Chapters 4 and 5.
- 20 Performed at the Royal Court in 1907 and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in September 2013.
- 21 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social being, but their social being which determines their consciousness'; Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859).
- 22 Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment', 140.
- 23 Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment', 141.
- 24 Williams, 'Social Environment and Theatrical Environment', 140.
- 25 See Claire Warden, *British Avant Garde Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Steve Nicholson, *British Theatre and the Red Peril* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999).
- 26 See for instance, Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex and Morality 1885–1914* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995).
- 27 Magdalen Ponsonby's father was Major-General Sir Henry Ponsonby, Privy Purse and Private Secretary to Queen Victoria (1870–95). Magdalen Ponsonby edited the memoir, diary and letters of her mother, Mary Ponsonby (1927), which demonstrate that Magdalen was spoken of fondly in letters by Queen Victoria and that she was a guest at Princess Victoria's wedding.
- 28 Besant formed the International Order of the Star in the East and enlisted supporters at a meeting of the Theosophical Society, including Lady Emily Lutyens, Countess de

- La Warr and the wealthy American, Mary Dodge; Mary Lutyens, *The Life and Death of Krishnamurti* (London: Rider 1990), 14. However, another model for the character of Tanno Matsuri may have been Inayat Khan (1882–1927), a musician, later associated with the founding of Sufism, who first visited Britain in 1910. Khan’s writings were published by the Theosophical Society in 1914 and his musical performances were advertised in the Pioneer Players’ play programmes.
- 29 Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Vintage 1996), 283.
 - 30 See Adrian Stephen, *The Dreadnought Hoax* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1983).
 - 31 The relevant captions are: ‘Miss Suzanne Sheldon, In a “Kismet” costume Miss Sheldon is the wife of Mr Henry Ainley the popular actor’; ‘Miss Lily Brayton and Mr Warlock. Miss Lily Brayton is now playing in the revival of “Kismet” with her husband at the Globe Theatre’; ‘Miss Cicely Hamilton. And an “Arab” friend’. Miss Hamilton is the well-known novelist and playwright. She is wearing a Futurist dress. Note the “hair”; ‘Miss Marjorie Russell. In a beautiful Oriental – or is it a Futurist? – dress’, which she wore at the Mi-Careme Ball’; ‘The Pioneer Players’ Mi-Careme Ball’, *The Tatler*, (March 1914) 329. ‘Mi-Careme’ refers to the Medieval tradition of a carnival celebration at mid-lent in the Christian calendar.
 - 32 Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 74–6; 195.
 - 33 Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 66.
 - 34 Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 67.
 - 35 Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 67.
 - 36 Edward Knoblauch (later Knoblock) was George Pierce Baker’s student at Harvard University. *Kismet* was produced by Charles Frohmann at Baker’s New Theatre; Mark Hodin, “‘It did not sound like a Professor’s speech’: George Pierce Baker, and the Market for Academic Rhetoric”, *Theatre Survey*, 46, no. 2 (2005): 225–46.
 - 37 Claire Warden, ‘*Hassan*: Iraq on the British Stage’, *Theatre Notebook*, 66, no. 3 (2012): 166.
 - 38 Brian Singleton, *Oscar Asche, Orientalism and British Musical Comedy* (London: Praeger, 2004), 83.
 - 39 Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, 195.
 - 40 This strand of the Pioneer Players’ productions is examined in detail in Cockin, *Women and Theatre*, Ch. 5 and Cockin, *Edith Craig*, 131–3.
 - 41 There is an extensive body of popular postcards in this period depicting dominant women wearing trousers including those specifically depicted as relating to the ‘harem’ exemplified by Fig. 2. See also Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell, *Theatre and Fashion: Oscar Wilde to the Suffragettes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The Pioneer Players’ production of Edith Lyttelton’s *The Thumbscrew* explored sweated labour of women and children in the clothing industry and was supported by the National Anti-Sweating League; see letter from J.J. Mallon to Mrs [Edith] Lyttelton, 3 December 1912; EC-B235; EC-N357; and EC-H122; the National Trust’s Ellen Terry and Edith Craig Archive held on loan at the British Library.
 - 42 See Laurence Housman, ‘The Petticoat Government’, *The Contemporary Review*, 1 July (1913): 663–72, for a witty analysis of the anti-suffragists’ claim for ‘female tyranny of a rather petty kind’ (671).
 - 43 Two of the costumes (Fig. 1) by *The Tatler* were described in the captions as ‘Futurist’. C.R.W. Nevins (1889–1946), the son of Margaret Wynne Nevins the Pioneer Players’ dramatist, was one of the leading Futurist artists. Three months after the Pioneer Players’ costume ball, on 7 June 1914, Nevins co-authored the sensational manifesto, *Vital English Art*, with Filippo Marinetti.
 - 44 See Cockin, *Edith Craig*, 143–7.

Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* and the Affective Life of Politics

John Connor

I

'The form of this book is, I realise, unconventional and mixed', wrote Williams in the 'Foreword' to the first edition of *Modern Tragedy* (1966). He had wanted, he said, 'to get a whole structure of feeling and thinking into one book' and this required a variation 'of matter and approach', most particularly, the wager of a play. The conventions themselves that were at fault, of course, the dissociation of literature into creative and critical idioms, the separations in tragedy 'between event and experience and idea'. It was to collapse these divisions of labour, to reveal the 'radical connections' in what 'is still, as I know it, a singular literature' and a singular tragic field, that Williams insisted on a composite form. He offered this in concession, that should the reader find 'one kind of work useful but not the others', he might 'use the book accordingly'.¹ The invitation has proven sadly tempting, most famously to Frank Kermode who recommended 'taking a little more liberty than [is] offered' and dispensing with the whole book.² A more common response has been to do without the play. My own preference, and purpose in this article, is to 'use the book' with the play still in it, to read for the connections within the text and beyond its frame to the several plays that share its intention (9).

For *Koba* is one of a constellation of texts, some of them published and performed, others fully drafted, abandoned incomplete or only ever sketched, around the arguments and interventions of *Modern Tragedy*. Eight plays in total, of which only *Koba* makes the connection clear. Its presence in *Modern Tragedy* was already, in fact, a concession to formal propriety. As first conceived, the book was to have included the three plays, 'King Macbeth', 'Milton' and *Koba*, as well as Williams's 1962 'A Dialogue on Tragedy'. Around this time, Williams was also sketching tables of contents for a standalone volume of plays to include, alongside 'King Macbeth', *A Letter from the Country*, *Public Inquiry*, and the unfinished domestic tragedy, 'A Dance of Life'. These plays, written and revised over a decade from 1956 to the broadcast performance of *Public Inquiry* in March 1967, tap the emerging structure of feeling Williams calls modern tragedy.³

Taken together, they invite us to read Williams's interest in tragedy as more than just an academic exercise, the latest instalment of his argument with 'Cambridge English', to be explained by his appointment to the faculty in

1961 and his teaching for the Part II Tragedy Paper. While the privileged place of tragedy in the Cambridge curriculum and in the political imaginary of the Cold War provides an obvious occasion and target for *Modern Tragedy*, it does not exhaust its ambition. 'In my sights when I wrote the book', Williams later recalled, was 'a very particular formation, around a teaching situation, a cultural and political situation' born of a new balance of forces in the universities and beyond.⁴ With its touchstone reflections on 'Revolution and Tragedy' and Williams's cycle of tragic dramas in tow, *Modern Tragedy* is to be seen speaking to a social movement, supplementing a 'negative analysis' of academic and liberal tragic theory with a positive revaluation of tragedy as a way of feeling and of dealing with feeling whose proper audience is the British New Left (61).

II

The need for this affective discipline dates, like the New Left itself, from 1956. With its dramatic sequence of events – the 'revelations' at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) in February, and within days of each other in late October and early November, the Anglo-French invasion of Suez and the Soviet invasion of Hungary – 1956 forced a reckoning in the two main traditions of British and international socialism. To a core group inside the British Communist Party, the suppression of the popular revolution in Hungary killed the last hope that with the public confession of Stalin's 'crimes against Soviet legality' 'the path of repression and physical annihilation' was now closed.⁵ Hungary confirmed that what was wrong with the Soviet experiment 'related to a political system and a political theory', 'not just to a man' and his 'cult of personality'. To a parallel formation of the independent Left, Suez showed up the 'real if not inevitable progression' of social democracy. Whatever the real gains in healthcare, education or full employment, it was necessary now to wonder whether these improvements were not also forms of incorporation, 'indeed forms of conscious preservation of an unaltered, or only marginally altered, capitalist society'. Their coexistence with the development of mid-range ballistic missiles and the testing of hydrogen bombs off islands in the Pacific suggested that Suez was not just a last imperial hurrah. Fabianism had at best produced what Williams called 'a limited reform within a more powerful and opposite kind of development', a welfare state subsumed or otherwise suspended within the military and political economy of the North Atlantic alliance.⁶

To this public history and debate, Williams's personal life supplied a further point of reference for the tragic plays to follow. In June, his father had a first heart attack; in March 1958 he died. It was a life defined by the experience

and legacy of the 1926 General Strike, and both lie at the heart of Williams's major fictional project of the decade. In writing his father's memories of the strike into the novel 'Between Two Worlds' (1955) and weaving its aftermath through the drafts of *Border Country* (1960), Williams was telling a story of the British Labour movement and its retreat from revolutionary politics. The characters Arthur Meredith (in 'Between Two Worlds') and Harry Price (in *Border Country*) carry the burden of this argument. With the miners returning to work in November 1926, Williams has Arthur reflect on the choice he now faces: to write off the strike, as 'many on the side of Labour' would have him do, as 'the last tremor of an outmoded set of feelings' and accept that 'the ways of the future' lie 'in cooperation, in conciliation and goodwill', or to keep faith with the values of solidarity and struggle, 'whatever the feeling of impasse and deadlock'. Against the positive feelings of Labour revisionism and the promise of post-capitalist consensus, Arthur and Harry adopt a posture 'of wariness, mistrust, even where necessary hostility', whose 'negative, eroding impact' is to be seen on them and those close to them as a kind of collateral damage.⁷

Early circulation of *Culture and Society* (1958) drew Williams into the gathering excitement of the first New Left, but while his participation in the first Aldermaston march in April 1958 and in May the first of several appearances at the universities and Left Review Club in London marked a return to activism and political community after a decade's isolation, he didn't stop thinking about what it means to live, like Arthur and Harry, with negativity. Sympathetic to the new idioms of argument and protest, Williams nevertheless confessed himself 'uneasy' about the label that had 'drifted in' to describe the movement, 'the "New Left," with particularizing capital letters'.⁸ He warned of 'modishness', an exuberance in the moment that was failing to account and prepare for pain.⁹ There could be no clean break from the past, he argued; the only way to move on would be by patiently processing that past, working through a history – of defeat and disintegration, of intimate and social disorder – whose name in our time is tragedy.

III

A version of Williams's father returns in the opening lines of *Modern Tragedy*, when he describes how, 'in an ordinary life, spanning the middle years of the twentieth century, I have known what I believe to be tragedy.'

It has not been the death of princes; it has been at once more personal and more general. I have known tragedy in the life of a man driven back into silence, in an unregarded working life. In his ordinary and private death, I

saw a terrifying loss of connection between men, and even between father and son: a loss of connection which was, however, a particular social and historical fact: a measurable distance between his desire and his endurance, and between both and the purposes and meanings which the general life offered him. (13)

None of this is quite autobiographical. The knowledge comes mediated through the novels that became *Border Country*, and when this 'loss of connection' extends 'into a works and a city', where 'men and women' have been 'broken by the pressure to accept this as normal, and by the deferment and corrosion of hope and desire', we recognise the tragic conception of *Second Generation* (1964).¹⁰ As a 'tragic action framing these worlds, yet also, paradoxically and bitterly, breaking into them' is the political history of the twentieth century, including 'war and social revolution on so great a scale' that we 'continually and understandably' reduce it to 'abstractions', as though we could thereby forget that for so many the experience is intimate and on-going (13). These 'forms of tragedy' coalesce around a period claim, that just as ancient Greece knew a 'tragic universe' and modern Europe the 'tragic individual', so 'we have reached, definitively, the tragic society'.¹¹

At stake is a claim for the tragic significance and political utility of contemporary suffering. Williams takes aim at theories of tragedy that would reserve the term for 'a specific and even rare kind of action and response' (32), thereby disqualifying experiences that in this age of extremes might be common or shared. Tragedy, they would have us believe, 'belongs to deeper and closer experience, to man not society'. Its preserve is not 'war, revolution, poverty, hunger; men reduced to objects and killed from lists; persecution and torture; the many kinds of contemporary martyrdom', but 'the fault in the soul' (62). And yet, however adequate our social theory at fixing on these other forms of disorder, the Left distrusts tragedy as 'defeatist' (63), as ratifying the suffering it would seek to end.¹² This definitional impasse, where 'the idea of tragedy, in its ordinary form, excludes especially that tragic experience which is social, and the idea of revolution, again in its ordinary form, excludes especially that social experience which is tragic' (64), confounds our lived experience. As Ridyear admonishes in Williams's 'Dialogue on Tragedy', 'the experience of our century will be empty' until we can join the two traditions – a tragic theory of revolution, a revolutionary theory of tragedy – and so acknowledge pathos without paralysing the politics of anti-systemic praxis.¹³

IV

Williams's four completed tragic plays conjugate different moments in the relation of tragedy and revolution. 'King Macbeth' revisits revolution 'in its feudal form as rebellion' (66); *Koba* tells a history of the Russian Revolution; *A Letter from the Country* and *Public Inquiry* reflect upon 'the long revolution' in the West and the distance still to go towards full social equality. Each exposes the limitations of traditional tragic theory and invites us to adopt a 'tragic perspective' (84) on the struggle for social change. Only the television dramas were ever produced, and like so much broadcast material from this period they have disappeared 'into thin air'.¹⁴ We are returned to the text and to what, for Williams, remained drama's prime advantage over the novel: its ability to anatomise an 'action'. Dramatic forms index social norms, Williams would argue, their conventions a reflection of the patterns of praxis that obtain in society; but they can also raise these patterns to consciousness and play with them on stage, to the point where the play becomes rehearsal and a prelude to further action. Throughout this decade of his work, Williams can be seen turning from his early Eliotic tutelage to a Brecht whose plays model 'the means of an action that is both complex and dynamic' (202). Complex, as an invitation to the kinds of 'complex seeing' and feeling that can capture an action 'whole', as a nexus of 'connections and contradictions' that resists easy resolution (196); dynamic, because the action remains 'open', its choices made 'in a dimension that is always potential', where an action that has been played out one way may be taken up and tried again (199).

'King Macbeth'

The play's frame device is present-set: the cast of a contemporary *Macbeth* return to the stage for the final bow. It is the last night and the actor who has played Macbeth steps out of character to express the company's relief at having survived the season unscathed. For there is a superstition in the trade that the play is 'unlucky'. 'None of us know why this should be, but the apprehension – covered at times by joking, relieved at times by argument, emphasised at times by an anxious, watchful silence – the apprehension, I say, is there, and the surest of us is never at all times free of it'. Least of all is he, and after the audience has left the theatre and the rest of the cast retired, Macbeth remains on stage, spot-lit in the darkness. Re-joined by Banquo, Macbeth explains his sense that the play is not so much 'unlucky', as the thespian tradition has it, but 'haunted, and unappeased.' He tells how these past few nights he has been acting his part, reciting the lines, but 'across the flow of the practiced words' he has heard another voice trying to speak. 'Tonight the voice was loud and

insistent, and I listened, as if in a dream, to my own voice speaking. What you and the others heard was what had been written. What I heard, through it, was something very different.’¹⁵ ‘Listen to me, it said’, *Macbeth* is ‘wrong, wrong; and it is wrong in his interest, in Banquo’s interest’ (KM 5).

To flatter England’s new-crowned king and Banquo’s heir, Shakespeare has changed the account he met with in the chronicles. Holinshed had shown Duncan weak, his reign divisive and his murder, at the hands of a cousin, restore peace to the realm; when Macbeth struck the first blow, Banquo struck the second. But Shakespeare’s play inverts the terms: Macbeth is bad, Duncan good and Banquo altogether innocent. Williams has his actors parse the difference; Macbeth advances Holinshed, Banquo Shakespeare. But though Banquo is willing to concede each of the chronicle’s points of ‘fact’, he still prefers ‘the lie we have been acting’ to the ‘history’ he knows is true. The acted lie, he claims, communicates ‘a larger truth’: ‘the truth of the sanctity of human life, the truth of the blessedness of natural growth and increase, the truth of the beauty of order and peace’ (KM 6). Macbeth would yet talk him out of his complacency, but Banquo calls it time: it is ‘too late. The action has been played ... we have no choice but to take the world as it is, with its mind made up’. It is for Macbeth to insist that in the theatre it is never ‘too late’. ‘Here, is not everything possible...Here, but here, may we not draw from shadow the substance that was shadowed? May we not draw, with our voices, that other action, and those actual figures?’ As he speaks, the spotlight in which he has been cast widens to illuminate the stage and the actors assembling in the wings. Banquo tries to call a halt: ‘Macbeth, end this, send them back. We cannot live this tragedy again’. (KM 9). The point is that we can and must.

A complex history has been halted in a ‘painted lie’ ‘for children’, stopped short of involvement and the recognition of complicity. ‘Children do not ask, who was right and who was wrong. They are content to be told, this man is bad, that man is good’. But with us, who are ‘older, in time and in blood’, it is ‘necessary’ to question the familiar adjectives and follow ‘the whole action’ through: the reasons, publicly accounted right, why Macbeth took Duncan’s life; the public benefits this action brought, to be set against the deed (KM 7). ‘If we have saved our country’, Macbeth informs the court at the beginning of Act II, ten years into a peaceful and prosperous reign, ‘we should not fear to recognise the means’. His nobles plead that the past be forgotten and the present peace detached from the violence that gave it birth, but Macbeth insists: peace is not ‘a mere absence of trouble’ but ‘a whole admission, a mature balancing of gain and loss’ (KM 28). Duncan’s killing remains a part, as it was a precondition, of that peace, and while it is remembered as a social act, undertaken ‘in the light, in the assembly before witnesses’, the murderer can live with his responsibility, secure in himself and in his position; it is when

the lords would disavow this past that the action loses its legitimacy, entering into the 'darkness' that isolates and ultimately destroys the once strong king (KM 24).

After Macbeth, made paranoid by a prophesy, kills Banquo, his wife predicts a time when they will be remembered only as 'creatures of the dark. Evil' then 'will lose its general habitation and come to dwell in us' (KM 47). Shakespeare's portrait does much to fix the appearance. But the problem is less that the image is forged – we can strip Macbeth of the 'glozing images' and still confront a murderer (KM 8) – but that his killing of a king is continuous with the 'blissful benefit of good peace and tranquillitie' Holinshed credited to the usurper's reign.¹⁶ Here we confront the ideological complexion of evil, and specifically, the Cold War 'appropriation of evil to the theory of tragedy' where it comes to serve as 'a salutary reminder ... against the illusions of humanism' (MT 58). Macbeth's actor counters that 'to call one man, in a whole situation, evil, is to deny what we know of evil'; we blind ourselves to its cause and consequence, to the social evil that precedes the evil act and to all that is not evil in its aftermath. 'I do not want equivocation, or the devil's advocacy', he pleads, 'I only want the truth, the heart and truth of all this action. We are not here to blanket evil, but to know evil as it moves' (KM 9).

Koba (1966)

On 17 November 1932, a Soviet literary journal published a letter of condolence to Stalin on the death of his second wife, signed by thirty-three Soviet writers. Nadezhda Alliluyeva, they said, had given 'all her strength to the cause of liberating millions of oppressed humanity, the cause that you yourself lead and for which we are ready to surrender our own lives as confirmation of the uncrushable vitality of this cause'. To this rote declaration of faith, Boris Pasternak added a famous postscript, explaining how the previous night he had 'for the first time thought about Stalin deeply and intently as an artist'. 'In the morning I read the news [about Alliluyeva]. I am shaken as if I had actually been there, lived through and seen everything'.¹⁷ Williams recalls the anecdote in 'A Dialogue on Tragedy' and *Koba* is its consequence: an imaginative reconstruction of the life of Stalin (like 'Koba' one of Joseph Jughashvili's adopted aliases), from the time of his seminary training in Tiflis to his death in 1953. It is 'as an artist' Williams approaches 'the tragedy of Stalin, and it was a tragedy', he insists, 'not merely a story of evil' reducible to 'the familiar terms of the prince' and 'the mad dictator' or 'the cult of the individual'.¹⁸ Pasternak, or a version of him, plays the part of chorus.¹⁹

We first meet Luke on the eve of the revolution; he is Joseph's cellmate in Siberia and his audience for a remarkable speech about the social production

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and reproduction of evil. In the waning light, Joseph draws a picture of pre-revolutionary Russia.

The child at the breast becomes the man at the plough, gives the earth his blood and gives others his harvest. The girl screams on the bed of straw, in new blood, in new hands, and still the harvest is taken. War and tyranny and fever and ignorance: generation on generation, taking and destroying our children.

And as he speaks, in shadows to the rear of the stage, others of the cast act out his words. We watch as Joseph's friend is marched on stage, made to kneel, and shot in the head for resisting this cycle of expropriation. And then the last lights are extinguished.

Look. Watch. The generations of killing, by act or neglect. Yet our life goes on, and our bodies have learned from this killing. Life, in this darkness, has found its own answer. It has taken my body and changed it, taken my name and changed it. I have become Koba, the man who cannot be mastered. I have become the avenger of my people ... Look. Watch. Do you see?

For now the darkness has begun to lift; a light appears at the window, and with it voices shouting, announcing the revolution. Luke, sympathetic, answers with a verse:

The darkness flowers, in its own season.
The darkness flowers, passing beyond its source.
In this far instant, when the darkness flowers,
There is a new country, between earth and sun (222).

It is a powerful verse, the more remarkable for its recycling from the expressionist film scenario, 'Legend', written just months before Williams embarked on his tragic cycle. There the lines were the culmination of a young man's vision-quest for love.²⁰ As they sound in *Koba*, they call us to consider revolution as a flower of the darkness which, in 'passing beyond its source', may in a 'far instant' break the cycle of violence, but not before the action has run its course. So we follow Joseph's rise to power; Jordan's death, the exile of Max, arrest of Mark and George's disappearance in the purges; we follow the five-year plans and the famine in the country; Ruth takes her life in protest at the rising dead. And then, during the defence of Moscow, as Joseph stands vigil at his window in the Kremlin, Luke and these lines return. He reproaches Joseph in 'fragments of voices from the past': Ruth's 'I am dying with the others, but it is my curse you are hearing'; George's 'We shall

make with our hands only ashes, blood, death, misery, hatred'; his own 'The darkness flowers. Do you remember, Koba? The darkness flowers, in its own season' (268–70). Luke is there, however, to make sure we neither mitigate the darkness nor conclude that darkness is the revolution's only flower. We may mark in Joseph what Williams calls the 'hardening and negation' that comes of 'revolutionary activity' and see 'the struggle to end alienation [produce] its own new kinds of alienation' (82–3). But we also see Joseph, the man who mastered himself to become Koba, die, and a new 'Joseph' step forward from the shadows to resume 'the action [that] is Koba' (282). This Joseph is a child of the struggle, of the kind we first hear playing 'in the streets and the fields where their fathers died', shouting 'that hard beautiful shout' (250). Born into a 'new country', living 'in new ways and with new feelings' because of the revolution, he answers its 'men turned to stone ... with a human voice' (204). Luke himself will 'go on witnessing', and 'say tragedy when others say life', 'tragedy when others say Koba', but the last word is Joseph's: 'We have fought and changed. We shall mourn and change ... The action is ended, and we can make a beginning' (282).

A Letter from the Country (1966)

'King Macbeth' and *Koba* 'return the idea of revolution ... to its necessary context as part of a whole action', its 'chaos and suffering' framed within a wider continuity (66). 'Violence and disorder' do not enter into a vacuum, and with any peace 'there's still the inheritance, the real inheritance' of how it came to be. Macbeth and Joseph begin killing out of a 'genuine need' and are then shown broken by that need. But the need was always 'our need', and to the extent that we no longer need to kill, that we now 'have room to live and let live', we are the beneficiaries of that killing. 'We have killed and accepted the subsequent order, or others have killed and we have inherited'; either way, 'we are all implicated' (277). *A Letter from the Country* poses these questions of complicity for contemporary Britain. 'It is easy to move about in our own relatively peaceful society', writes Williams in *Modern Tragedy*, repeating such phrases as "a revolution by due course of law", and simply failing to notice that in our name, and endorsed by repeated majorities, other peoples have been violently opposed in the very act of their liberation. The bloody tale of the past is always conveniently discounted, but I am writing on a day when British military power is being used against "dissident tribesmen" in South Arabia, and I know this pattern and its covering too well, to be able to acquiesce in the ordinary illusion' that ours is a society committed to peace and the widening freedom of all. Even to say that 'in our own affairs' we are

committed to 'human liberation' would be 'too much, in a society powered by great economic inequality and by organised manipulation' (78–9).

Letter from the Country plays with the paradox of a First World democracy whose domestic and foreign policies countermand its principles. Topical references to 'a graceful fadeout' from Aden and plans to develop Diego Garcia as a replacement naval base and air-force staging post cast the inheritors of Britain's long revolution as counter-revolutionaries in any global fight for equality, while the play's portrait of the machinery of state reveals a democratic deficit at the heart of government.²¹ But beyond the local hypocrisy (embodied in a Labour right Defence Minister called Tom Payne, and 'Rights of Man' behind his back), the play reflects on the prevailing kinds and forms of social action. In the second edition of *Drama in Performance* (1968), Williams remarked how 'certain "representative" modes of dramatic writing seem to have developed, hand in hand, with certain "representative" institutions for political action and decision'. Just as the theatre learned to build walls around performance, turning its stage into a room 'to which report was carried' but from which 'decisive action – direct intervention, open conflict, the acts of building and destroying' – was excluded, so politics has become a thing enclosed, a distant spectacle, a mode of relation 'powered by little more than the belief that a choice of leaders should be periodically available'.²² *Letter from the Country* asks how representative democracy might again become participatory, and so resume the long revolution towards 'full membership of society which is the end of classes' (77), both at home and abroad.

Alan Pritchard, a young Welsh schoolteacher, has been following the career of Walter Dix, Labour MP and now Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence, from his cottage 'high up' in the Black Mountains. 'He's read every book, every speech Walter's ever done. He keeps them all filed, and he compares them. Then he writes these long letters, for comment and clarification'. It's 'what they say in the books. Representative government': Walter is Alan's 'public self' and Alan is his 'conscience' (LC 18–9). For eleven years they have corresponded over the most technical points of policy and then, for the first time, they agree to meet. Alan travels up to London and is present at a reception when Walter accidentally lets slip to a reporter sensitive information about British military movements East of Suez. The news makes the next day's headlines, and when the government denies the story, Alan is outraged at the lie; he, after all, was there, and he writes to the papers to say so. But his letter is never published; behind Walter's back, his sister has conspired with the Minister of Defence to stop the press. Meanwhile, Alan returns to London to confront his 'hero' but finds himself the one called to account for having projected 'his politics, his conscience, on to some quite distant, fallible man' in a 'distant, formal, fallible system' (LC 31). The inference is

clear: Alan will have to come down from his Black Mountain fastness and, while not abandoning 'a parliamentary perspective as a matter of principle' learn to look 'beyond it as a matter of practice.' This means activism and, as befits his New Left credentials, the building of counter-hegemony through 'the most sustained kinds of intellectual and educational work'.²³ It may also, however, mean a 'hardening of socialist involvement' of the kind we have seen both Macbeth and Joseph struggle to contain.²⁴

Public Inquiry (1967)

On a winter's night in a signal-box outside of Gwenton, Tom Lewis waits for his eight-hour shift to end. His son, David, is due to relieve him, but is delayed when a union meeting, called to vote on a course of industrial action, runs late. Down the line, another signalman has also failed to start on time, forcing Tom to institute an emergency procedure for the traffic on the tracks. When the other signalman shows up, there is a confusion of standard and emergency directives and Tom green-lights a train out of turn; it runs into another and the driver is killed. The inquiry that follows finds Tom guilty of 'a serious and inexcusable error by negligence', but others blame his son, the branch representative who chose to stay for a vote he feared would be close rather than report to work on time.²⁵ Both men acted out of a sense of 'duty' – David in staying back to fight for 'our conditions, our wages', Tom in staying on to run the trains – but the consequence of their choices is the 'irreparable action' of tragedy: the death of Tom's friend, a train-driver and devoted railwayman only weeks away from retirement (PI 21–2). It was all, we are told, an accident, but tragedy has always been a 'public inquiry' into the seemingly contingent. To be sure, tragic theory tends to treat 'events ... deep in the pattern of our own culture: war, famine, work, traffic, politics' as accident without meaning (49), but this ideological designification of 'accidental' suffering must not detain us. We have only to reset the connections between event and social structure to find a world of interconnected agencies and intentions where suffering is all the more appalling because it is unnecessary. To read a railway accident in this way is to acknowledge work as a dimension of tragedy; it is to ask what David means when he says that 'what really happened' on 'the night of the accident' 'was a failure of communication, an avoidable failure' (PI 47).

'Modernisation' has been coming to the railways, but these upgrades and efficiencies are only a superficial fix (PI 18). New machines have been introduced, 'but not their logic carried through' to the underlying social relations and to a world of work the play shows to be terrible. The men have been made to fit the machines, as so often in the past, and not the other way around. To point the difference, David conjures out of the signal-box at

Gwenton 'one of the modern boxes they're just starting to build' at Bescot and Bletchley or Birmingham New Street. 'To get that from this, what I have to do first', he explains, 'is extend the room, draw it out much longer.' He continues, rhapsodically, adjusting the space and the instruments and the relays until we are looking at 'a single control panel, with an adequate system', and in the box 'a different man, controlling a different system, in a different world'. In the past 'we've felt guilty and broken when we made a mistake, the pressure too heavy on us. But not any more. We can take control, we can change the system. As we're bound to change it, to take the pressure off men' (PI 47). This is not a utopian gesture; the technology exists and we do not doubt the men are capable. After all, the planned action over wages is a working-to-rule, a deliberate slow-down by following the company rule-book to the letter, in effect suspending 'the real working rules ... what we've worked out, we as working railwaymen, for the actual running the trains' (PI 19). The memory of 1926 – which, as Williams recalled from his father, brought to the striking railwaymen 'an experience of decision-making of a quite new kind: not just instrumental, within an imposed system, but from the bottom up' – is clearly present in the frame.²⁶

The scene combines Williams's best thinking about tragedy and contemporary drama in the metaphor of the box. In the late nineteenth century, naturalism had discovered 'the stage as room', thereby reinforcing the convention that 'important reality occurred in rooms – the rooms of private houses – to which report was carried, from which people looked and went out, but where the central interest – what was called "what happened, not to society, but to people" – was played through'.²⁷ Television stood to inherit 'the enclosed, internal atmosphere; the local interpersonal conflict; the close-up on private feeling' of this high-bourgeois theatre, adapting 'the drama of the framed stage' to a 'drama of the box'.²⁸ These elements are all there in *Public Inquiry*, not least the complex dynamic between a father and his son, but the box in question is no longer a bourgeois interior but a scene of work. It is a place where men move and decide, and is itself ultimately the object of the action. Its figuration in the play as a space of alienation and potential rehumanisation reflects another communications system where the men who work it have won some measure of control. The broadcast performance of *Public Inquiry* as part of the BBC's innovative 'Wednesday Play' series provides a parallel for a Left appropriation of the available technology. Television supplies the means, the moving image and the extended audience, but the central innovation still comes from Brecht, of how to break from naturalism's 'indicative mode', the boxed-in recognition that 'this is how it is', to something more dynamic: 'yes, this is how it is, for these reasons, but the action is continually being replayed, and it could be otherwise' (202).

True to the tragic inflection of even Brecht's 'subjunctive' mode, David's vision fades, returning us to the 'here and now' and the challenge not only of getting from 'this' signal-box 'to that', but of caring for and living with 'the men being hurt ... The men already hurt' (PI 47).²⁹ This, then, is the 'tragic society' wherein Williams takes his stand. In this reduction to the present we measure the change wrought by Hungary and Suez to the Left's once confident perspectives of 'social evolution and administered reform' (72) or more radical disjunctive change. The fantasy bribes that could write off present sacrifice for future reward appear now as dangerous in the social-democratic middle as on the hard Left; a philosophy of history that could discount 'suffering' in 'the name of a period or a phase' (63) and 'death' in the turn of a phrase – 'a class swept a way by history', 'an error ... in the machine', 'the blood that is not and never can be water' (75) – is as obviously falsified by experience as are the future perfect promises of Fordism. And so Williams writes of a 'new tragic consciousness' 'now struggling to be formed', 'a total exposure which is also a total involvement.' Refusing the distance of the privileged spectator, Williams insists on our implication in the tragic action unfolding, on stage and all around, to which the only adequate response is then 'the struggle against suffering learned in suffering' (203), or revolution, again.

Notes

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 9. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
- 2 Finding the play 'disastrously bad' and the second part not much better, Kermode wondered whether the first part might not also be 'dispensable'. Kermode, 'Tragedy and Revolution', *Encounter* 27, no. 2 (1966): 85.
- 3 Williams's first schedule of work allotting time for the plays is dated 9 October 1956, with 'King Macbeth', 'A Dance of Life', 'Public Inquiry' and 'Koba' in the line-up; a schedule of work from 1957 allots three months to writing 'A Letter from the Country', to revising 'King Macbeth', and to finishing 'Koba' and 'A Dance of Life'. 'Milton' enters the rotation in 1962, by which time Williams was hoping definitively to finish 'Koba' and 'King Macbeth' and to begin the book on tragedy. The decade closes with the broadcast performances of *A Letter from the Country* (18 April 1966, on the BBC 2 'Thirty Minute Theatre' series) and *Public Inquiry* (15 March 1967, as the 'Wednesday Play' on BBC 1). 'The Death of the Sun' and 'Figure of Eight' are the other two titles in play. The schedules and contents-plans appear in Notebook 'B', Raymond Williams Collection, Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University (hereafter, 'Papers'), WWE/2/1/12/2.
- 4 Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 211–2.
- 5 Nikita Khrushchev, 'Speech to the 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U', Nikita Khrushchev Reference Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm> (accessed 20 May 2016).

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- 6 Raymond Williams, 'You're a Marxist, Aren't You?', in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. Robin Gable (London: Verso, 1989), 67–9.
- 7 Raymond Williams, 'Between Two Worlds', Papers, WWE/2/1/1/3/1, 386–7.
- 8 Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 363; Williams, 'You're a Marxist, aren't You?', 67.
- 9 Williams, 'You're a Marxist, aren't You?', 67.
- 10 A handwritten notecard maps the argument for this opening section as follows: 'We come to tragedy by many roads. Where the roads cross. Border Country. Second Generation. Revolution. Modern Struggle', Papers, WWE/2/1/6/1/14/6.
- 11 Raymond Williams, 'A Dialogue on Tragedy', *New Left Review* I, nos 13–14 (1962): 34.
- 12 For a recent reprisal of the argument, cf. Susan Watkins, 'Presentism? A Reply to T.J. Clark', *New Left Review*, n.s., 74 (2012): 77–102.
- 13 Williams, 'Dialogue', 31.
- 14 Raymond Williams, 'Preface', in *Raymond Williams on Television: Selected Writings*, ed. Alan O'Connor (London: Routledge, 1989), ix.
- 15 Raymond Williams, 'King Macbeth', Papers, WWE/2/1/3/4, 3–4. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text, with the abbreviation KM.
- 16 Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: J. Johnson, 1808), 5: 270.
- 17 Christopher Barnes tells the story in *Boris Pasternak: A Literary Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2: 75.
- 18 Williams, 'Dialogue', 31.
- 19 In an early notebook entry, Williams designates *Koba* a 'History play' or 'chronicle ... in episodes', but the play frustrates any simple recourse to the presumed familiarity of the Russian Revolution. Its action is set in '*The Present*' and its cast carries mostly English-sounding names. Besides Koba/Joseph (Stalin), we meet Jordan (Lenin), Max (Trotsky), George (Kamenev) and Mark (a composite of Zinoviev and Khrushchev); from Koba's time in Georgia, we meet Lado (Ketskhoveri) and Peter (Chkhaidze); Ruth is his second wife, Alliluyeva. Williams, Notebook 'B'.
- 20 Raymond Williams, 'Legend', Papers, WWE/2/1/4/2.
- 21 Raymond Williams, 'A Letter From The Country', *Stand* 12, no. 2 (1971): 24. Subsequent references indicated parenthetically in the text, with the abbreviation LC.
- 22 Raymond Williams, *Drama in Performance*, rev. edn (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972), 182–3; Williams, *Long Revolution*, 338.
- 23 Raymond Williams, 'Why Do I Demonstrate?', in *Resources of Hope*, 62.
- 24 Williams, 'You're a Marxist, Aren't You?' 75–6.
- 25 Raymond Williams, 'Public Inquiry', *Stand* 9, no.1 (1967), 48. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text, with the abbreviation PI.
- 26 Raymond Williams, 'The Social Significance of 1926', in *Resources of Hope*, 108.
- 27 Williams, *Drama in Performance*, 181.
- 28 Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1990), 56.
- 29 On the difference between 'indicative' and 'subjunctive' modes of realism, see Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 17–19.

Ruth Beale, Performing *Keywords* (2013) at Turner Contemporary

Interview by Morgan Quaintance

Ruth Beale is a London-based artist whose multifaceted practice includes drawing, performance, video and the collection and re-presentation of archival materials. Performing *Keywords* was Beale's attempt to 'enact' Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* through choreographed manoeuvres, props, readings and sound. The live thirty-minute performance was devised for 'Words to be Spoken Aloud' at Turner Contemporary in March 2013, through a workshop process with local people, including members of Turner Contemporary's Studio Group. The workshops explored the terms within the book and Raymond Williams's rationale for undertaking the project, as well as the potency of individual keywords, and how changes in meaning reflect the political bent and values of society.

When did you first come across Raymond Williams's *Keywords* book?

I arrived at *Keywords* through *Culture and Society 1780 to 1950*, as I was researching the historical relationship between education and 'culture as a social project' for my performance lecture 'Art for Virtue's Sake'. My copy of *Keywords* (the second, expanded, 1983 edition) was given to me by my friend Pete Law who in a small way is a kind of patron in the best sense of the word.

What was it about the text that provided the impetus for your project?

Keywords is such an unusual book. It appears at first like a reference book, or dictionary, but actually benefits from being read and cross-referenced, following the connections Williams makes between the words. It's one man's attempt to chart the language that describes culture, whilst acknowledging and exploring how complicated that is, because the language itself is weighted. Thinking of it like this paints Williams as a collector of words. I like the idea of him building an archive and set of meanings and histories as objectively as he can, but one that ultimately reflects his perspective on the subject. I also like his class-bound perspective, as he describes in his introduction the experience of being at Cambridge (having come from the Welsh valleys) where people would use the same words but somehow speak a 'different language'. New words and meanings, and who uses them, reflect the political bent and values of society.

Morgan Quaintance

How was it working with amateur performers on the piece? How did both they and the audience respond to the text?

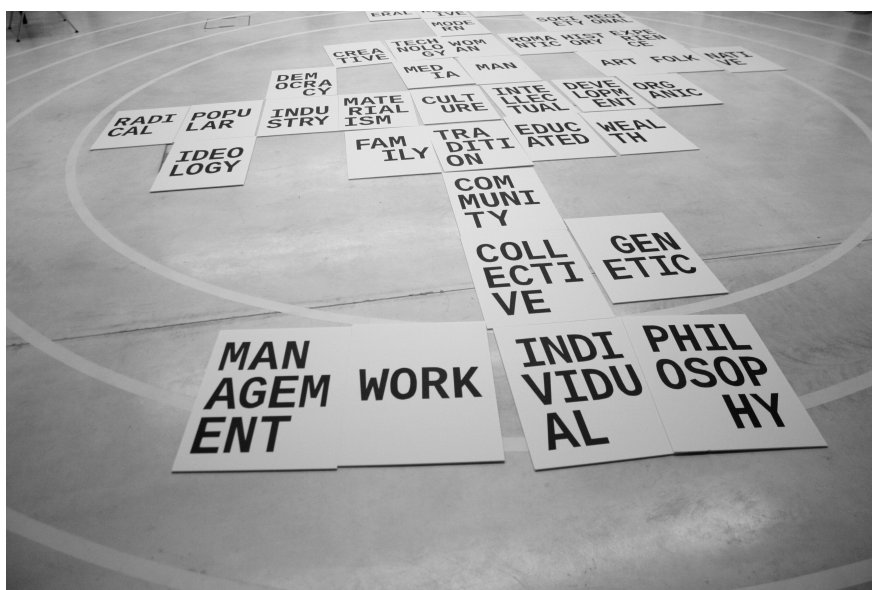
I was mindful of Williams's work as an educationalist and WEA tutor (in fact I found a syllabus he had written about culture to be taught in Kent) so I thought it would be interesting to work with a group of local people at Turner Contemporary, and for us to collectively explore the text – a kind of socialised questioning. The group was made up of people from different backgrounds, though they were mostly already involved with the gallery's education programme, so were engaged and interested in culture but not necessarily educated in the arts (though one member of the group was a recent dance graduate, and she helped choreograph the movements). They were very happy to approach it speculatively which was great.

We started with discussions about the words as a list, the currency of the words chosen and what had changed in the last twenty years since the second edition, before getting into Williams's motivation for writing the book. I visited the Raymond Williams archive at Swansea University and brought back copies of his original notebooks so we could trace his own process of selection and elimination. All of this fed into the performance by creating an inner logic, an interpretation based on the discussions we had had. The script – edited extracts from the book and Williams's own writing about *Keywords* – was part explanation and part proposition, but I think for the audience it was the props and movement that worked as a way to make it physical, to suspend and animate the words, and play with that tension between the tangible and intangible.

Now that the meaning of the term keyword has expanded to incorporate algorithm friendly search terms for organisations like GCHQ and NSA, has another layer of political significance been added to Williams's project in retrospect?

I think what you're describing is how private communications are monitored by governments (for intelligence gathering) and private companies (for targeted marketing and advertising). Both have means of tracking keywords (now thought of as search terms) and therefore the fluidity of words and language, but not for the purposes of cultural understanding. So yes, as data has become highly commodifiable and valuable, it is ironically out of the reach of those being monitored. We sacrifice information about ourselves in return for access to useful and convenient technology. We do, however, gain the power to spread ideas rapidly: internet memes, hashtags and viral phenomena being a kind of hyperspeed version of the keywords concept, and at times in our hands rather than 'theirs'.

Ruth Beale, *Performing Keywords* (2013) at Turner Contemporary





Ruth Beale, *Performing Keywords* (2013) at Turner Contemporary



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Keywords

Post-truth

Post-truth, frequently used in the phrase '*post-truth* politics', became central to political debate in 2016, largely in the context of the Brexit campaign in Britain and the General Election in the United States. The term is composed of two elements. The first is derived from the Latin adverb and preposition *post*, 'after, behind', as in 'post mortem' (after death) or 'post merīdiem' ('p.m.', after midday). It is used in English as a prefix with the general meaning of 'that which comes after, later', as in 'post-apartheid', 'post-natal', 'post-puberty', 'post-Reformation', though in technical usage, usually anatomical or medical, the physical sense of 'behind' is retained, as in 'post-auricular' (behind the ear), 'post-velar' (behind the soft-palate), and indeed the 'posterior' itself. The second element, *truth*, originally meant 'loyalty, fidelity, constant allegiance' to a person or principle, but from c.14c it was used with the now dominant modern sense of 'that which conforms to fact or reality' (though this usage elides the complex process by which such conformity is established).

Given the etymology, *post-truth* might be understood as 'that which occurs once the truth has been established', and the *OED* claims (without supporting evidence) that the term was first used in this sense. The contemporary meaning, however, is distinct, though its origin again lies with the Latin *post*, or at least an extended use of that term. Because, derived from the sense 'after, behind', *post* could also mean 'secondary, less important, inferior', as in the verb 'posthabēre', 'to place after', hence 'to hold as secondary, subordinate' (the now obsolete English verb 'posthabit' meant 'to think of as secondary'). In this use, 'post-' suggests not something that comes later than the noun it qualifies, but rather that the noun itself has been relegated to secondary significance. This can be seen in terms such as 'post-national' (first recorded in 1945) or 'post-racial' (1971). In these cases, what 'post-' signifies is not 'after the nation' or 'after "race"', but a context in which the nation or "race" is not considered to be of primary importance. It is this sense of 'post-' that holds the key to *post-truth*.

As the *OED* notes, the term is first recorded (1992) as part of an American leftist critique of the First Gulf War ('we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world'), and was used in the title of Ralph Keyes's *The Post-Truth Era* (2004). But the *OED* definition of this recent coinage is problematic: 'denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'. This is misleading in that it sets up a false opposition between objective

facts and appeals to emotion and personal belief (depending on its rhetorical delivery, a statement of objective fact can also be an appeal to emotion and personal belief). In actuality, the significant opposition is between statements of fact and falsehoods and this is precisely the distinction that is eroded under the aegis of *post-truth*. For in the realm of *post-truth*, truth is relegated to secondary importance at best. This is not to say that truth has lost its cultural significance (it is perfectly plausible to imagine a barely literate Trump tweet – ‘Climate change. invented by chinese. sad. True.’), but that there is little if any concern to establish the truth, since truth in and of itself is not held to matter. In this sense, *post-truth* can be understood to be a close relation to Stephen Colbert’s 2005 coinage ‘truthiness’ – ‘that which seems or sounds true, or is felt to be true, but which is in fact untrue’.

Another phrase to describe a statement that seems to be true, but which is in fact false, is ‘plausible lie’ (the sub-title of Keyes’s *The Post-Truth Era* is ‘Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life’). And this raises the question of what it is, precisely, that is new about the practice of *post-truth*. In Tacitus’s *Agricola* (c.AD 98), a Caledonian rebel commented on the Roman imperialists: ‘to robbery, butchery, and rapine, they give the lying name of “government”; they create a desolation and call it peace’. In *Politics and the English Language* (1946) George Orwell commented on the deceptive euphemisms of the language of war: ‘defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*’. Later, in a distinct but related development, the American military invented ‘psy ops’ (1965), characterised by the *OED* as a ‘noncombative military operation intended to influence the morale or attitude of one’s opponent’. In such operations ‘black propaganda’ (a term that dates to the mid nineteenth century) was used: false, unattributable information, ‘especially propaganda purporting to come from an enemy’s own sources and designed to lower morale’ (*OED*). Are ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ simply developments of the past year? Ask the Hillsborough families.

Post-truth is not a new phenomenon, though the term itself is a recent coinage and its prominence is clearly attributable to the brazen willingness of members of the political élite to lie unashamedly. Evidently the danger the term poses is real enough, not least because it is potentially performative (the more we are told we live in the era of *post-truth*, the more likely it is that people might accept it to be the case). Yet in fact, as the response to the lies of the Brexiteers and Trump shows, the truth matters, and given contemporary technological resources, there are significant possibilities of disproving political falsehoods (Chomsky’s entire political career, it should be noted, has been built on analysis of publicly available materials). Why then is *post-truth* politically important? Because it is an attempt to eradicate an important mode

Keywords

of challenging the proponents of the dominant order when they cheat and deceive on its behalf. *Post-truth*? Ask the families of the unarmed young black men killed with apparent impunity by police officers in American cities.

Recoveries

Nikolai Evreinov, *V kulisakh dushi* (1912)

In the words of J.L. Styan, Nikolai Evreinov (1879–1953) is a playwright who ‘caused a furore in [his] time but [...] now rest[s] among the forgotten’.¹ Indeed, although Evreinov’s work reflects a significant moment in Russian modernism, his profile today is not equal to that of many of his avant-garde contemporaries. His 1912 play *V kulisakh dushi*, translated into English in 1915 by Christopher St John and Marie Potapenko as *The Theatre of the Soul*, is a significant example of Evreinov’s work, embodying his key concerns as both a playwright and theatre theorist.²

V kulisakh dushi is a monodrama, a form that Evreinov employed to demonstrate his provocative attitude towards the relationship between theatre and life. The one act play concerns a man torn between his wife and his lover, and places the audience in a unique position of identification with this character through representing on-stage the inner workings of his soul. Theatricality, or *teatral’nost’*, is at the heart of the play: the theatrical provided Evreinov with an alternative to ‘ugly, boring, grey and uninspired’ reality, and he consistently advocated performance as an instinct that needed to be reawakened in the individual.³ For Silvija Jestrovic, Evreinov’s work typifies an approach to theatricality where theatre is seen as a tool for living, ‘an almost anthropological category and an organic part of being human’.⁴ *Teatral’nost’* is embedded in *V kulisakh dushi*, not least in Evreinov’s choice of title. In St John and Potapenko’s version, the choice of *The Theatre of the Soul* as translation highlights the connection between the individual and the theatrical, but makes less of the metatheatrical connotations apparent in the original Russian. The word *kulisy* has distinctly theatrical overtones, and can be translated variously as ‘wings’, ‘flats’, or ‘behind the scenes’.⁵ An alternative translation of the title is offered in Carnicke’s *The Backstage of the Soul*, which avoids the reduction of the text to a purely metaphorical ‘theatre’,

1 J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*: Volume 3, *Expressionism and Epic Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 91.

2 Sharon Carnicke’s comprehensive study of Evreinov’s theatre identifies his influence on contemporary theatre practice through the centrality of his notion of the theatrical instinct. See Sharon Carnicke, *The Theatrical Instinct: Nikolai Evreinov and the Russian Theatre of the Early Twentieth Century* (New York/Bern: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989).

3 Carnicke, *The Theatrical Instinct*, 64.

4 Silvija Jestrovic, ‘Theatricality as Estrangement of Art and Life in the Russian Avant-Garde’, *SubStance* 31, nos 2 and 3 (2002): 43.

5 Russian is an inflected language, and *kulisakh* is the prepositional form of the noun *kulisy*.

Recoveries

in favour of a much more explicit reference to the mechanics of theatrical production. Evreinov frames his play as an event in a theatrical context, allowing the spectator to consider the man's dilemma as an experience steeped in theatricality.

The play supplements this theatricality with references to contemporary psychology. It opens with an introduction by the Professor, who calls the production 'a genuinely scientific work', and explains the function of the human soul using the mathematical formula ' $M = M1 + M1 + M3 \dots Mn$ ', where M is the man, M1 is the Rational Entity of the soul, M2 its Emotional Entity, and M3 its Subliminal Entity.⁶ Following the Professor's monologue, the curtain rises to reveal the 'interior of the human soul', within which M1 and M2 discuss the choice between wife and lover (16). Theatrical representation and human subjectivity combine in the characters of the wife and lover: each is presented in two variants. For M2, the lover is a captivating beauty:

M2. (*enchanted*.) Oh, rapture! The whole universe is not worth such joy! Those legs, those feet! (21)

M1's response, however, suggests a very different woman:

M1. [...] It is all imagination. She is not like that. You kiss a painted face, you caress false hair. (21)

What is striking is that the women are not merely described from these two perspectives, but represented on stage by two separate performers who embody the differences that M1 and M2 describe. Evreinov notes in his stage direction that:

At the beginning of [M1's] speech, the first concept of the woman vanishes R [stage right] whence M1 summons up the second concept of the singer, ludicrously aged and deformed. (21)

The result is a play-text that is fundamentally unsettling, underwritten by questions of subjective perception which are theatrically manifest rather than simply discussed. That the text is intended as an embodied and performative experience is also reflected in its setting. Evreinov outlines a scenographic schema for the production that creates a striking visual aesthetic. The Professor describes the setting by drawing a plan on a blackboard:

6 Christopher St John and Marie Potapenko, *The Theatre of the Soul*, translated from Nikolai Evreinov (1912), *V kulisakh dushi* (London: Hendersons, 1915), 14.

This plan, ladies and gentlemen, represents as no doubt you can see, a large heart, with the beginning of its main red artery [...] Here you see a little system of nerves, threads of nerves, pale in colour, and constantly agitated by vibration which we will compare with a telephone. (15)

When the curtain rises, the stage direction indicates that ‘the interior of the human soul is seen, as it has been described by the professor’ (16). Evreinov envisages a setting which is not only ostensibly abstract (as indicated, for example, by the metaphorical analogy between the nerves and the telephone), but is also animated (the heart beats, the lungs breathe, the nerves vibrate), a form of living scenography in the most literal sense. Ironically, this living onstage organism comes to its theatrical peak at the close of the play, when the Man commits suicide:

A great hole opens in the diaphragm from which pour out ribbons of blood [...] M2 struggling convulsively falls under the heart drowned in the streamers of red ribbon. The heart has stopped beating. The lung has ceased to respire. (27)

Although, as Susan Harris Smith notes, the play ‘was a critical and popular success in Russia and abroad’, its production history in the West has been chequered.⁷ St John and Potapenko’s translation was produced by Edith Craig and the Pioneer Players twice (1915–16, 1931), in productions where the embedded visual potential of Evreinov’s play became, in Katharine Cockin’s words, ‘the means whereby the patriarchal text could be re-written’.⁸⁸ Although the wide availability of St John and Potapenko’s translation make accessing Evreinov’s play-text relatively straightforward, its visual potential raises the question of whether this is enough in engaging with the playwright’s ideas; ultimately, perhaps it is not just this play-text that needs a recovery, but also its staging, bringing out the metaphorical and metatheatrical potential in Evreinov’s theories of performance.

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7 Susan Harris Smith, *Masks in Modern Drama* (Berkeley, CA and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 99.

8 Katharine Cockin, ‘The Pioneer Players: Plays of/with Identity’, in *Difference in View: Women and Modernism*, ed. Gabriele Griffin (London: Taylor and Francis), 121–31, 123.

Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St John, *How The Vote Was Won* (1909)

How The Vote Was Won is a suffrage play based on an original short story written by actress, playwright, journalist and writer Cicely Hamilton in 1908, a spoof history detailing an imagined general women's strike that successfully forced the Government to give the vote to women. Subtitled '*Some Short Extracts from Prof. Dryasdust's "Political History of the Twentieth Century", Published in the Year 2008 AD*', the story details how, in response to the argument against women's suffrage that all women should be supported by men, the suffrage societies encouraged 'working women of every grade – factory hands, shop girls, teachers, typists, journalists, and the vast army of domestic servants' – to leave their jobs and homes, go to their nearest male relative and demand his financial support.¹

The theatrical adaptation, a one-act comedy first performed at the Royalty Theatre in London in April 1909 and written by Hamilton in collaboration with suffrage dramatist and journalist Christopher St John, is set in the home of a clerk, Horace Cole, in Brixton, South London.² Over the course of the play five of Horace's female relations arrive on his doorstep to be supported, while his wife Ethel hears about the strike from her sister Winifred, who is helping to organise it. Winifred is a proud militant suffragette, in charge of getting working women without male relatives into the workhouses in order that the strike will 'hit men as ratepayers even when they have escaped us as relatives!' (8) When Horace decides to run away from the situation, he learns from distant relative and music hall performer Maudie of the chaos the removal of female labour has caused across the city and to entertainment and retail businesses, while the evening newspapers reveal that the authorities too are in turmoil. Faced with the overwhelming presence of his confident female relatives, Horace is forced to reassess his views, and with their encouragement gives a speech outlining the absurdities and hypocrisies of many key anti-suffrage arguments. The denouement sees Horace and his neighbour, both previously ill-informed anti-suffragists, preparing to join a mass march of men on the House of Commons demanding the vote for women immediately. Hugely popular among suffrage audiences at exhibitions and events, *How The Vote Was Won* was performed widely across the UK from 1909–14. As well as being a success in the UK, it may be the most widely performed suffrage play of the pre-First World War campaign in the USA. Beatrice Forbes-Robertson, who had been in the original cast, organised and appeared in productions as part of her continued suffrage campaigning after she moved to America,

1 Cicely Hamilton, *How The Vote Was Won* (London: Women Writers' Suffrage League, 1908).

2 Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St John, 'How The Vote Was Won', in *The Metbuen Drama Book of Suffrage Plays*, ed. Naomi Paxton (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5–28.

whilst suffragist actress Fola La Follette regularly performed it as a one-woman piece whilst touring across the USA. Both women also appeared in the play on Broadway in 1910 at Maxine Elliott's Theatre.³

Hamilton and St John's play is remarkable for a number of reasons. The piece mixes fact and fiction, with subtle references to actual events and people that set it at a very specific moment in the pre-war suffrage campaign. It includes characters supportive of all three major suffrage societies, the Women's Social and Political Union, the Women's Freedom League and the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, a clever touch that helps to explain its continued appeal to all suffragists during the turbulent years of the militant campaign. It combines physical comedy with satire, exposes the weakness of anti-suffrage arguments within a neat theatrical conceit and brims with optimism about the agency of women, and the impact of non-violent collective activism to create positive social change. The play also offers a fantastic selection of comic female character parts. Representing a range of different professions and varying in age, occupation and class, all the female characters earn their own living and support themselves financially. Members of the Actresses' Franchise League and the Women Writers' Suffrage League, both Hamilton and St John were performers, journalists and playwrights, writing for and performing in the commercial theatre as well as supporting the suffrage cause through their work. As working women in a profession that was very much located in the public domain, they acknowledge in the play that women confined to traditional female roles have been economically disadvantaged by limited education and a lack of opportunity – Lily, Ethel's 'maid of all work' doesn't know if she will get a vote but determines to support the strike, Horace's sister Agatha may have been brought up 'a lady – such a lady that at 18 I was thrown upon the world, penniless, with no training whatever which fitted me to earn my own living',⁴ and Maudie recalls that she has paid for her own food and clothes through her labour since she was a child. The absurdity of the claim that all women should be supported by men is literally brought home to Horace by his cousin Susan, who in her capacity as dressmaker 'Madame Christine' earns more than he does – arriving in her own car and declaring that it, her property and other assets have been divided equally between the militant and non-militant suffrage societies, much to his horror.

The final known performance of the piece by the Actresses' Franchise League was given some twenty years after Hamilton's original story was published, at a victory reception held by the Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee on 24 October 1928, a month after the Equal Franchise Bill was

3 Programme for 31 March 1910 matinee in aid of The Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, Robinson Locke collection, New York Public Library.

4 Hamilton and St John, 'How The Vote Was Won', 15.

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passed, finally granting the vote to women on the same terms as men.⁵ It was rediscovered in the 1980s by feminist theatre professionals, was published again in 1985,⁶ and has since subsequently appeared in a number of further collections. Much more than a theatrical curio, however, it remains one of the most joyful, accessible and playable suffrage plays of the period and still makes an impact on audiences today. Cleverly written with a fast pace and a light touch, *How The Vote Was Won* is not only a fun one-act comedy with great parts for women, but also a treasure trove of detail for historians of the suffrage movement, social history, the Edwardian theatre and the work of women writers before the First World War.

Naomi Paxton

5 *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1928, 17.

6 Carol Hayman and Dale Spender, *How the Vote was Won: And other Suffragette Plays* (London; Methuen Drama, 1985).

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Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *A Marxist Philosophy of Language*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2009. 236 pp. \$28.00 pb. ISBN: 978 1 608460 26 7

‘Words are also weapons’, Althusser once remarked; and indeed, ‘the whole class struggle may be summed up in the struggle for one word against another’. Philosophy, he went on, ‘fights over words: against lying words, against ambiguous words; for correct words’.¹ This struggle over words is a constant feature of our contemporary politics. In last year’s UK Labour Party leadership election, for example, opponents of Jeremy Corbyn were repeatedly referred to in the media as Labour’s ‘moderates’. Despite years of supporting war, privatisation and cuts, the moderates, so their label suggested, constituted that section of the party characterised by an innate sense of impartiality, virtue and sober political reason. The moderates, then, stood in stark contrast to the so-called ‘radicals’, the ‘hard left’, and the ‘entryists’: those Corbyn supporters who were, so the narrative went, unable to curb their reckless political desires and, as such, were destined to ‘destroy’ the party as an ‘electoral force’. This war of words, which played out with particular hostility within the party itself, had little to do with the fact that Corbyn’s ‘extreme’ policies might prevent Labour from ever taking power (his demands were generally modest and broadly appealing); it was about the fact that the word ‘socialism’, which had been off the agenda in mainstream British politics for almost three decades, had made a sudden and unexpected return. Corbyn’s ideological opponents – more so, it seemed, than many of his supporters – were thus fully aware of the (Althusserian) principle that ‘the fight over words’ is an integral ‘part of the political fight’.

According to Jean-Jacques Lecercle, the ‘defeats of workers’ movements [...] have in no small measure been due to the fact that the class enemy has always won the battle of language and that the workers’ movement has always neglected this terrain’ (13). What is required, then, at least at the level of language, is a twofold strategy: first, ‘a critique of the philosophy of language that underlies the dominant version of global linguistics’ – namely, the Chomskyan research programme; and second, the sketching out of a ‘certain number of positive proposals regarding a Marxist philosophy of language’. Note here that what Lecercle is calling for, specifically, is a *philosophy* of language rather than a *theory* of language: while the latter ‘would be nothing but a linguistics that dare not speak its name’, the former ‘will be understood in the

1 Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 8–9.

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Althusserian sense – as an instrument with which to draw lines of demarcation, as a political intervention in the field of language’ (11). For Lecercle, such an intervention begins not with Althusser but, rather, with Deleuze and Guattari, and specifically with the fourth plateau of their *A Thousand Plateaus*, ‘November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics.’ Here we find ‘a critique of the dominant philosophy in linguistic matters and hence, *a contrario*, proposals for a different philosophy of language’ (17) based on a critical rejection of four linguistic slogans: (i) ‘Language Is Informational and Communicational’; (ii) ‘There Is an Abstract Machine of Language That Does Not Appeal to Any “Extrinsic” Factors’; (iii) ‘There Are Constants or Universals of Language That Enable Us to Define It as a Homogenous System’; (iv) ‘Language Can Be Scientifically Studied Only under the Condition of a Standard or Major Language’.²

Moving towards a Marxist philosophy of language, Lecercle recognises, quite correctly, that Habermas’s philosophy of language has a clear advantage over both Chomsky and Anglo-American pragmatics (Quine, Davidson, Putnam et al.). Habermas ‘insists on the fact that language is a social phenomenon, that it can only be thought as an activity of interaction between human beings, and not as an individual faculty’ (46). This does not mean, however, that the Habermasian position is unproblematic – far from it. Habermas’ central thesis – that ‘the very structure of language presupposes agreement, or at least striving for agreement’ (46) – is based on a ‘myth’ of consensus, which might best be described as utopian: his philosophy of language, Lecercle writes, is a ‘philosophy of messianic hope for communism in language’ (63). Faced with this fact, Lecercle makes a neat dialectical move, arguing that we should retain Habermas’s philosophy of language, not as first philosophy (as Habermas himself wishes), but only as a last philosophy: ‘If we stick with this first philosophy we are in a sense condemned to an agreement that is always in the process of being achieved ... If, alternatively, we adopt this philosophy as last philosophy, if we declare ourselves communists in linguistic matters, then we accept the reality and actuality of *agon* ... just as we concede the existence of exploitation and struggle against it in the name of values that demand its disappearance’ (63–4). The task, then – or one of them, at least – is to think both with and against Habermas.

The question remains, however: what exactly is involved in formulating a fully Marxist philosophy of language? Over the course of the book’s final four chapters, Lecercle formulates (and elaborates upon) six fundamental theses (one ‘main thesis’, four ‘positive theses’, and one ‘concluding thesis’): (i) language is a form of praxis; (ii) language is a historical phenomenon; (iii) language is a social phenomenon; (iv) language is a material phenomenon;

2 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 75–110.

(v) language is a political phenomenon; (vi) language is a site of subjectivation through interpellation. Because it is a Marxist philosophy that is being expounded here, the author makes no claims to absolute originality; rather, he looks to the 'tradition' of Marxist thinking on language to provide him with a 'framework' within which to situate his own philosophy (here we might recall Trotsky's remark that 'we Marxists have always lived in tradition and we have not because of this ceased to be revolutionaries'). Thus, for example, the idea that language is a form of praxis 'informs the work of Voloshinov and is explicit in Raymond Williams's book on Marxism and Literature' (140), while the proposition that language is a political phenomenon takes its cue from Lenin's short 1917 text on slogans, which indicates that slogans are performatives that 'exercise power', and that 'a correct slogan exercises power because it *condenses* and *embodies* the concrete analysis of the concrete situation' (97).

Lecerle's sophisticated synthesis of the key theories and debates within the Marxist tradition succeeds, ultimately, in producing something new: a vital critique of contemporary philosophies of language and the 'methodological individualism' (198) concomitant with them. There are, however, especially towards the end of the book, instances where some of the limitations of the project become apparent. For instance, one of Lecerle's key aims is to provide a linguistic reformulation of Althusser's concept of interpellation – 'the subject is, therefore, not only interpellated by ideology' (Althusser's view) but 'subjectified by the language that speaks it' (165) – and then to 'complete' this concept with that of 'counter-interpellation' (167): 'while speakers enter into a language that is prior and external to them, they [can] appropriate it' (209). Leaving aside some of the philosophical blind spots in Althusser's theory, we might raise questions about the potential problems of counter-interpellation when taken as an 'emancipatory' strategy (168). To what extent can a method of linguistic inversion or re-appropriation – no matter how sophisticated – prevent itself from remaining *merely oppositional* and, as such, eternally dependent upon what it opposes? Logically speaking, how does linguistic 'reversal' avoid (unwittingly) reproducing that which it rejects? Recent political movements across the world have provided endless displays of linguistic virtuosity and skilled *détournement*; however, where they have failed, they have failed *strategically* – by not formulating the correct tactics, by neglecting the primacy of class, and by lapsing into various forms of moral delusion. We might thus say that counter-interpellation, at its most effective, is a form of poetic resistance which can, as Lecerle points out, open up new 'styles' of political thinking (209). And yet, while this activity of creative negation is certainly a vital component of any struggle, it does not *necessarily* and *of itself* lead to any kind of *decisive* break with structures of social, economic and ideological power.

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No doubt Lecercle is aware of these limits; it is therefore unfortunate for the reader that they are not explored here. This said, no conversation about politics and language can fail to take Lecercle's writing into account; indeed, he is without doubt one of the leading Marxist philosophers of language working today. This outstanding study bristles with erudition and insight, whilst simultaneously achieving the impossible: successfully combining high theoretical argument with polemic (Althusserian 'intervention') and humour. *A Marxist Philosophy of Language* should be read by everyone concerned with the role that language must play in the attempt to create a different and more liveable future. Let us not forget: *Words are also weapons*.

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Malcolm Chase, *The Chartists: Perspectives and Legacies*. London: Merlin Press, 2015. 251 pp. £15.99 pb. ISBN 978 0 85036 625 9

David Goodway (ed.), *George Julian Harney: The Chartists Were Right. Selections from the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1890–97*. London: Merlin Press, 2015. 200 pp. £14.95 pb. ISBN 978 0 85036 717 1

Any casual student of Chartism will be aware of the more dramatic highs and lows experienced by the movement's members: the sheer scale of the 1842 National Petition accounting for around a third of the adult population, the tragedy of 1839's Newport Uprising. From the perspective of hindsight, it is tempting to focus on the 'failures' of the movement, as none of the Charter's six points were realised within the lifespan of the movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. As Raymond Williams had it, when looking back at long revolutionary developments 'we tend to absorb the successes and then to be preoccupied by the hard knots of failure'.¹ In his most recent collection of essays, Malcolm Chase considers Chartism not as 'a movement that failed but [as] a movement characterized by a multiplicity of small victories' (1–2). Moreover, as he reminds us, '[eventually] Chartism collapsed, but *Chartists* did not' (106, original emphasis). By focusing on the movement's successes and the political careers that were grounded in Chartism but outlasted it, we can entertain alternative perspectives and recognise solid legacies.

The opening essay makes clear this ambition and is based on a lecture that Chase gave in 2013 at the Houses of Parliament to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the People's Charter, and also the establishment of a permanent exhibition on the movement in the Palace of Westminster. Parliamentarians

1 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Cardigan: Parthian, 2011), 396.

attending were reminded that most of the Charter's six points have since been adopted and are now part of this country's democratic common sense. The unadopted point – that of annual Parliaments – indicates the unresolved status of the Chartists' complaint that electors could not trust MPs to represent the popular will, a judgement with which their modern counterparts might agree. As Chase notes, the extent to which our democratic structures are considered accountable and legitimate is very much a contemporary issue, one that has arguably become even more vexed since the publication of the lecture in this volume, given the aftermath of the EU referendum and the ongoing factional struggles for control of the Labour Party.

Besides specific political ends, however, is the issue of how to successfully build and maintain a political movement that would bring them about. Chartist demands for parliamentary reforms were coterminous with broader democratic practices of whole communities, involving the women who would not have gained the vote even if Chartism had secured the six points within its own lifetime. These women could belong to women-only Chartist groups, send their children to Chartist Sunday Schools, and shop at Chartist Co-ops. Chase stresses this point several times: 'Chartism was at its most politically potent in its early years [...] because of a moral authority rooted in the astonishing extent to which it mobilized whole communities' (5–6), and 'Chartism was at its most potent as a political force when it was socially most inclusive' (12). As it became more professionalised and organised around formal structures, this inclusivity declined. Again, this has been a recent point of contention. During the autumn and winter of 2016, Momentum, the organisation set up to support Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, experienced power struggles over this issue of how to structure the organisation and, by extension, the (still nascent) movement more broadly. The first essay in this volume might be of interest to those who would like to build something approaching Chartism's scale and the depth of its reach into communities, as might other contributions offering examples of activists continuing as political agents later in the nineteenth century rather than 'collapsing' with the movement that formed them.

Another chapter examines Chartist engagement in parliamentary polls, beyond the more well-known Chartist candidate Feargus O'Connor, and Chase provides a useful table recording the polls contested between 1839 and 1860. Besides general elections, Chartists were also involved in municipal politics and contested elections for positions like Poor Law Guardians, arenas in which they encountered more success. They also took advantage of opportunities to increase the number of voters in the absence of universal male suffrage; rising property values in urban areas could increase the number of potential voters, as (potentially) could the creation of freeholders via the Chartist Land

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Plan. Chase traces such activity into the late nineteenth century, with men like Robert Meek Carter becoming a Leeds councillor as the Chartist candidate, and later the city's Liberal MP. These accounts show how an important legacy of the Chartist period for working-class people was its encouragement of the development of 'ordinary people's "social capital"' – educational, organisational and public-speaking skills (9). Chartism 'was a crucible for active citizenship' in local government (10). The loss of the asset recognised in the first chapter – that of an inclusivity enabled by the movement's roots in a politicised community rather than a formal structure – can be seen as a gain when viewed from another perspective. The advantage of the book's structure, as a collection of articles rather than a monograph creating a main argument, is that it makes apparent the multifaceted aspects of Chartism's legacy.

Several chapters revisit key historiographical accounts of the movement. One on historians' relative valuations of leaders like O'Connor and William Lovett recognises the importance of Mark Hovell's work *The Chartist Movement* on those judgements. A chapter focused on Welsh Chartism provides a good opportunity to expand the picture beyond a well-known dramatic event, in this case the Newport Uprising. Chase argues that the movement in Wales did not collapse after the Uprising, but followed much the same trajectory as in other parts of Britain; an appendix offers some collated data on activity in Wales throughout the movement. This contribution to the book is also an opportunity to revisit Gareth Stedman Jones's influential argument that Chartism was more indebted to the analysis and rhetorical devices of eighteenth-century radicalism than to class consciousness, and so was undermined when the government commuted the death sentences given to the Uprising's leaders. Uncovering the continued activity by Welsh Chartists after that event, activity informed by those Chartists' experience as industrial workers, offers, as Chase states, 'a very necessary corrective to the extreme interpretation of Stedman Jones' thesis' (95). Another key year in Chartism's conflict with the state was that of 1848, and John Saville's contribution to Chartist historiography, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement*, is an important text. Chase's chapter on 1848 focuses on the conditions of its production, considering Saville's career as a historian and noting the significance of state repression of the miners a few years before its publication.

Four of the twelve chapters take various perspectives on the Chartist Land Plan. In terms of the Plan's legacies, Chase shows how its ambition to establish agricultural communities of Chartists resettled on smallholdings had longstanding roots in radical agrarianism. The Plan, then, is seen not as a personal hobby horse of O'Connor's but as the outgrowth of a commitment to agrarian reform present in Chartism from the beginning. The final contribution to the book, on the mid-Victorian freehold land movement, considers the

Chartist strategy of land reform in terms of other contemporary and then subsequent ones, such as Owenite communitarianism, the tactics of the Anti-Corn Law League, allotments, and building societies.

Other chapters of interest include ones on *The Chartist Penny Almanack, for the Year 1844*, very ephemeral material and thus a rare and often overlooked source of historical and cultural data, and another on the responses of children to Chartism. This is a fascinating question, and Chase expands on the example he gave in *Chartism: A New History* (2007), that of Ann Dawson's needlework sampler depicting the school at O'Connorville, one of the Chartist settlements, to include the formative experiences of children such as William Booth in listening to Chartist speeches (Booth went on to found the Salvation Army). Young people were not only recipients of Chartist education and rhetoric, they could also have positions in National Charter Association branches.

David Goodway's book is a collection of articles written by the Chartist George Julian Harney for the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* in the 1890s. Resources like the *British Newspaper Archive* are making such material more readily accessible than ever before, although the sheer quantity of the text presents its own problems for finding specific content within an embarrassment of riches, even using a search function. In fact, my searches of the online archive for some of the content in this book using key terms were not very successful, showing the continued value of edited collections such as this one. As Goodway notes in his introduction, even the titles of individual articles might not indicate their contents due to Harney's writing style; 'reflections on Chartist imprisonment', for example, 'are buried in a review of a biography of Leigh Hunt' (21).

While selected articles cover contemporary events in Russia and the US, as well as Harney's opinions on literature, it is the reflections on events and figures of Chartism that are central to this volume, given its title. We can see in Harney's articles an attempt by a member of Chartism to record its history (albeit at a distance of several decades and from his 1890's perspective as 'a conservative and reactionary'), and to understand its significance in terms of later developments in the labour movement (21). Harney recalls the careers of both men he knew, such as Thomas Cooper and Samuel Kydd, and those he did not. His obituary of Cooper is an attractively energetic one, describing his life story as the adventures of a radical hero and laying more store in Cooper's autobiography than in his work of epic poetry, *The Purgatory of Suicides*. In one article, he queries George Jacob Holyoake's account in his own recently published autobiography of an event during the Reform Bill agitation, not in a possessive sense of wishing to define the narrative, but offering other details from his own experiences and thereby rounding it out. Another tackles the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* for his recent characterisation of Harney's role

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during the 1842 General Strike, while admitting that he could not remember if he actually made the speech attributed to him (68–71).

The tempting statement ‘The Chartists Were Right’, the volume’s subtitle, is used in an article to describe the Chartists’ criticisms of the Anti-Corn Law League. In describing the effects of free trade on agriculture, Harney even touches on the ‘feeble experiments in the way of allotments, coming into vogue’, which he considered would ‘have but small appreciable effect’ on the health of the populace (79). In the following week’s article, Harney states that while the Chartists may have been wrong about some details, they were correct about the general tendencies of free trade; he describes a Britain in which common consumer goods were made in Germany, Sweden, and Belgium, and the unemployed either emigrate or become ‘blacklegs’ in industrial disputes (84).

The previous year, 1890, Harney had supplied his own account of a youthful political awakening in the ‘pre-Reform days’, when, aged around nine and ‘plunged, up to [his] armpits, into politics’ he attended an election contest and was converted to the cause of abolitionism by an anti-slavery banner (126). He subsequently learned in the 1830s about the ‘white slaves of England’ working in the factory system, and goes on to draw parallels between contemporary factory workers and their competition – exploited labour in India (127). Harney thus draws on experiences of sixty years to point out the shifts in capitalist practices, and to criticise the ‘Christian capitalists who “grind the faces of the poor”, and who make a double profit by pitting the labour of the poor “heathen” against that of their own country’s people’ (130). Together, Goodway’s and Chase’s volumes remind us that Chartism is not an antiquarian interest but remains a pertinent point of reference for the contemporary issues of democratic legitimacy, social-movement building, the question of international solidarity and the problems of a globalising economy.

Jen Morgan

Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015. 256 pp. £19.99 pb. ISBN 978 1 781381 91 5

Combined and Uneven Development is the fruit of several years’ labour by the Warwick Research Collective. Drolly abbreviated as WReC, the collective comprises seven literary scholars working currently or formerly in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Study at Warwick in the fields of European and Scottish Literary Studies, American Studies and Postcolonial Studies. Not the least important thing to say about their work, then, is that it stands as an eloquent and defiant testament (almost an elegy) to the values and practice of collaborative research. This is no mean feat

in the age of the corporatised university where management newspeak interpellates one not as a scholar or a teacher, still less as a critic, but as an income producer helping to bring in the real capital of research capture and tuition fees as well as a sort of board game player leveraging, investing and accumulating various forms of pretend capital. Entrepreneurs of our own careers, we are encouraged to dedicate ourselves to amassing Monopoly money denominated in the worthless currency of 'esteem indicators', citation metrics and numerically scored research outputs (four stars good, two stars bad). We have become each other's rivals and competitors. Collective scholarship that requires time, cooperation, deliberation and solidarity now looks like a relic, a WReCk indeed, a once handsome vessel now reduced to splintered wood in the foaming waters of the UK's shark-infested 'research environment'. The laughably entitled Research Excellence Framework, the dreaded sexennial census of literary scholarship's 'quality' and economic 'impact', or whatever dumb label is given to its 2020 avatar, insists that the literary critic is a calculating mogul masterminding her own research portfolio, a member of a collective only insofar as she is an operative in the service of a war waged by her department for students and prestige and resources against all other English departments. WReC's, by contrast, is a common pursuit, if not, as T.S. Eliot said, of true judgement then at least of the harmonious reconciliation of theoretical and critical differences through democratic forms of teaching, discussion and writing.

The aim of all this collective endeavour could scarcely be more ambitious. WReC wish to find a more rigorous way of conceptualising world-literature, which has been the target of a great deal of recent scholarly investigation and speculation, though the term has hitherto been theorised with the aid of fairly imprecise and unsatisfying categories such as 'globalisation' and 'the West'. It would be more precise and for literary scholars much more suggestive and enabling, WReC argue, to characterise world literature as that vast body of texts of all kinds that in the last two centuries or so has responded to the immensely contradictory and catastrophic experience of capitalist modernisation. The expansion and consolidation of a capitalist world-system since around 1800 to the point where it has become veritably universal has not ever, nor could it ever, entail a process of general economic, social or cultural homogenisation. Capitalism, in other words, is not everywhere the same. Despite capitalism's consistent traits – the alliance or amalgamation of class and state power, the extortion of surplus value, the commodification of labour and its products, etc. – it has actively produced unevenness. Capitalism does not confront unevenness, in other words, but generates it: development or the accumulation of capital in addition to the consequent transformation of lifeworlds, built environments, social relations and ecospheres all go hand in hand with under-

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mal-, dependent- and even de-development, with destitution, with the survival or reinforcement of pre-capitalist formations, and also with the emergence of incipiently post-capitalist forms of production and organisation.

The concept of combined and uneven development, formulated most compellingly in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, thus provides the best figure for thinking about the simultaneously universalising and differentiating process of capitalist development, a process that certainly combines different places and different peoples but that does so in ways that are massively contradictory, lop-sided and inconclusive. Trotsky discusses the ways in which development is typically undertaken in 'backward' economies by the 'whip of external necessity'. Development in such places, he argues, is rapid and uneven, often calamitous and chaotic. This is because capitalisation, commodity production, new technological innovations and new forms of social relationship are introduced, as it were, from the outside, through a process that should be characterised, strictly speaking, as imperialist, hurriedly and in ways that do not supplant but rather exist alongside the quite different values, structures and forms of production carried on by the social orders that have been assailed in this way. Trotsky's idea is not that industrialisation takes place more quickly for late developers in these circumstances. At best, a privileged section of society will benefit from this new commodity economy while the majority will be impoverished by it and will subsist on its fringes. Modernity thus conceived 'is neither a chronological nor a geographical category' (13). For WReC capitalist modernity is not something that happens first in Europe and then, as it were, radiates outwards. It is a contradictory and catastrophic process that is commensurate with the advent of a truly world-system.

So the Prague of Kafka, whose work registers and articulates this semi-periphery's paradoxical amalgamation of different economic modes and social and cultural formations, is every bit as modern as the clashing literary mannerisms of Machado de Assis's Rio or the semi-de-colonised (or concertedly neo-colonised) rural Sudan of Tayeb Salih. Furthermore, the 'semi-colonial' metropolis of Joyce's Dublin is modern precisely to the same extent as the American South of Faulkner (and the South America of Faulkner's inheritor García Márquez) where archaic social settings are rendered with the most state-of-the-art narrative techniques as well as the hardened borderlines of Ivan Vladislavic's ultra-modern because thoroughly neoliberalised but also partitioned post-apartheid Johannesburg cityscape. Of course, the precise manifestation of that modernity in each case and the peculiar ways in which modernity is mediated and expressed at the level of aesthetic form may be substantially different. Modernisms, realisms and 'irrealisms' are variously called upon by writers to dramatise a capitalist world-system whose manifestations are as irreducibly specific as the contexts from (and the forms in) which they

work. World-*literature*, then, is a name for texts of all kinds that register the incongruities, inequalities, injustices and even nascent possibilities of the capitalist world-*system*. So we are talking here not just about texts that emerge from that system's periphery where these clashes and struggles are most conspicuous but also about texts that dramatise the system's semi-periphery, as in Victor Pelevin's lycanthropic gangster fantasies of Russian petro-capitalism. Even its centres, which may not be exactly uneven, are at least highly rutted and irregular. The very forms of the Scottish novelist James Kelman's work, for example, set in the midst and aftermath of Thatcherism's scorched-earth counter-revolution, dispute late capitalism's modes of perception and articulate excluded voices and experiences that together counteract neoliberal myths of consensus and shared purpose.

Combined and Uneven Development is an expansive and intensely invigorating study that shows scholars of world-literature how to do two things. Firstly, it allows us to see the trees *and* the wood, to set our analyses of the attributes and complexities of particular texts against the compellingly and ambitiously (but not dogmatically) sketched background of the capitalist world-system itself in all its ubiquity and scale. Secondly, the book reminds us that though this system is universal and objectionable it is also differentiated, uneven, contradictory, knowable and beatable. After all, that is what Marxist literary criticism is for – through or via readings of texts of various kinds, to illuminate that system, to lament its durability and to both beseech and enable its transformation. That is a political goal of course, a socialist goal, and therefore a *collective* one, a goal that this marvellous book both serves and embodies.

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Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review*, With an Introduction by Geoff Dyer. London and New York: Verso, 2015. xiv + 444pp. £14.99 pb. ISBN 978 1 784780 1 59

As Geoff Dyer notes in his introduction to this new edition of *Politics and Letters*, Williams's 'writing always carried an enormous freight of autobiography' (ix). What he means by this is not that Williams's life can be understood by his writings, but that his writings can best be understood in terms of a life lived in and through a tendentious engagement with a specific history. *Politics and Letters*, then, is no memoir or intellectual autobiography, those ever-deceptive modes of self-presentation, but a frank, sometimes painful and always intellectually challenging attempt to make sense of an astonishing body of work formed in and against the twentieth century's political complexity and difficulty. Typically, and this has hardly been sufficiently noted since its first publication, *Politics*

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and Letters 'feels like a new form' (Williams's words), in its rigorous, extended, question and answer format. Moving through 'Biography', 'Culture', 'Drama', 'Literature' and 'Politics', the method, which facilitates a patient, discursive pace, allows for hard reflection which is always honest, often surprising, and sometimes deeply self-critical about the successes and failures of Williams's letters and politics ('you have got to remember that I read my own books too, and that in a competition for critical readers I shall at least be on the final list'). It is impossible not to finish the book without a clear sense that this was a life in which critical, academic work was part of a political project, and not, as is so often the case, the other way around.

One of the limitations of *Politics and Letters* is its date of original publication (1979), since it coincides ironically with that decisive turning point in contemporary history when the most active proponents of neoliberalism gained power in Britain and the USA (Thatcher in 1979, Reagan in 1980). Given that there have been no revisions to the text, there is no direct engagement with the long series of historical defeats for the Left that began in the 1970s and continue to the present. Despite this, there are two reasons why *Politics and Letters* continues to have contemporary significance. First, reading the text makes it clear how distorting the popular restriction of Williams's work to the 'discovery' or 'foundation' of Cultural Studies really is. Indeed it might be said that the narrowing of Williams's contribution in this sense has led to the obscuring of his political importance in more general terms. And second, following from this, there are two sections in particular that bear re-reading as a way of understanding Williams's relevance today. The first, relating to cultural materialism, is the set of reflections on *The Country and the City*, in which Williams makes clear the necessity not only of understanding cultural production within the historical conditions in which it is forged (and which it serves to reproduce or disturb), but of taking a political stance towards that history. This is an important point given that what passes as cultural materialism can often appear to be little more than a method or critical approach (often under the guise of 'the return to history'), rather than the political tool that Williams envisaged. The second section of *Politics and Letters* that is important for contemporary socialists is the final interview on 'Two Roads to Change', which is in effect Williams's take on the debate between reformist and revolutionary politics. His stance, based on his own experience of the Second World War, the Cold War, advances in capitalism, the social democratic post-war settlement and Labourism, is surely all the more pertinent given the development of neoliberalism and failure of the New Labour project. In short, Williams's position was that he followed reformism 'until I was finally convinced that it was not just difficult, or interminable, or intractable, but that it was actually delaying the prospect of a

solution'. 'That', he concludes, 'is the real case for revolutionary politics' (410). Moreover, he adds: 'once you have decided for revolutionary socialism, not because it is quicker, or more exciting, but because no other way is possible, then you can even experience defeat, such as a socialist of my generation has known, without any loss of commitment' (411). In a sense, perhaps, the real value of *Politics and Letters* is that it reveals Williams's complex and sometimes tortuous journey towards that choice. Of course, that was Williams's story, and it does carry the freight of his specific biography, but it is an exemplary tale for socialists, full of acute insights, clear-thinking, and rigorous self-criticism. And towards the end of the text, it points, again typically, to the necessary direction of future struggles in its insistence that any success for the Left depends on the need to show 'that socialist democracy is not only qualitatively different from capitalist democracy, but [that it] is quite clearly more democratic' (426).

The re-publication of *Politics and Letters* is welcome and timely. It was an important text in 1979; given the historical darkness in which we find ourselves, its significance has only increased.

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Francis Mulhern, *Figures of Catastrophe: The Condition of Culture Novel*. London: Verso, 2016. vii+165 pp. \$26.95. ISBN 978 1 784781 9 34

Figures of Catastrophe by Francis Mulhern is an attempt to revitalise the glory days of structural analysis à la Northrop Frye, complete with detailed diagrams of thematic progress and intersection. In a world whose political, social and economic structures are in crisis, the desire to find the order and commonalities in texts seems to offer comfort, giving students and scholars some much needed relief from the perennial question of whether or not to 'theorise'. While Frye's project in *The Anatomy of Criticism* is to attain 'a genuine poetics' and to eschew what he terms 'rhetorical value-judgements' as they 'are closely related to social values, and are usually cleared through a customs-house of moral metaphors: sincerity, economy, subtlety, simplicity, and the like'. Finally, at the end of his 'Polemical Introduction', Frye defends himself, writing, '[S]till, the schematic nature of this book is deliberate, and is a feature of it that I am unable, after long reflection, to apologize for. There is a place for classification in criticism, as in any other discipline which is more important than an elegant accomplishment of some mandarin caste. The strong emotional repugnance felt by many critics toward any form of schematization in poetics is again the result of a failure to distinguish criticism as a body of knowledge from the direct experience of literature, where every act is unique, and classification has

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no place'.¹ (29). Mulhern's project is not nearly as wide in scope as Frye's, and that is one of its strengths, but it shares that desire to systematise and manage literature that Mulhern himself identifies as 'catastrophic'.

The singular focus of Mulhern's text is what he describes as the 'condition of culture' novel. He posits that this specific type of novel is unique to the British Isles, as it begins with spaces, specifically those of the manor house, unique to that locale. In the *Preface*, he promises 'an essay in Marxist formalism, the noun emphasizing the making of meaning as the proper object of literary study, and the modifier marking off an orientation in historical understanding and a political commitment' (viii). The reader expects, then, both complete structural analysis and unique theoretical application. Mulhern's chapters, each built on a superimposed dialogue between two representative texts, are strong in their discrete or horizontal assessments, but the text does not do enough to create the kind of vertical textual interplay for which the reader longs. There are moments when the text builds pillars of intertextuality and revisionism, but it doesn't clearly articulate the catastrophic reasons about which the texts are composed and from which they have been derived. For example, Mulhern points out, '*Money* reiterates and confirms the apprehensions of *The Collector*' (84) and goes on to demonstrate the structural comparisons and make overtures to basic notions of class analysis, but what we get as readers as proof is summary of the novels without much direct contact with the texts or theoretical frames of reference.

Mulhern's choice not to provide theoretical or critical points of reference would be more acceptable if he furnished his own critical definitions at the beginning of the text, but instead he shapes his text in reverse. After a very short preface and introduction, Mulhern presents four chapters, each focused on the juxtaposed analysis of several novels. The final chapter, 'The Condition of the Cultural Novel', gives the theoretical basis for the analysis that has already been accomplished. If that final chapter had been presented as the introduction, the entire book would be much more effective.

In that chapter, Mulhern defines the moment of crisis in which he positions the novels he analyses: '[T]he moment of culture – of transcendence towards another self or situation – is conditioned by crisis in the plan of family relations' (127). He goes on to explain, '[S]prung from the crisis of family, these projects of transcendence often inscribe their goal in the constitution of a new one' (131). That new goal is augmented by the idea of class, as Mulhern writes, '[S]ocial classes are central to the condition of the culture novel, and above all the working class' (142). In this protracted thesis, the reader can

1 Northop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 18–29.

understand Mulhern's project: to seek structural mechanisms which inscribe Marxist tendencies. The flaw is that the articulation of the thesis comes too late and lacks sophistication. Most readers are familiar with the political and formal schools of thought from which Mulhern draws inspiration. What is needed is more of the third element promised in his title. The reader wants a bit more catastrophe. Readers can find themselves, in this text, asking, how the catastrophes implied in the analysis of the novels presented become either structural or political disasters beyond the confines of their bindings. In other words, the reader needs something to do with the analyses presented.

Also troubling is the conflation of culture and class, which is erroneous as it reinforces socio-economic stratification and stereotypes even as Mulhern tries to argue that in many contemporary novels of this ilk, such structures are dissolved. Instead of following that line of critical inquiry, the more unique question to ask is one that Mulhern begins to imply close to the end of his final chapter. That is the relationship between genre and gender. He claims, '[T]he search for culture is masculine. It is not that men are confined to this narrative function, but that they monopolize it ... If women do not search for culture, they may nevertheless embody it' (132). Mulhern is speaking both historically and structurally here, which is interesting of its own merit, but there are also larger questions and applications that could come from this. Implied here, for instance, are the distinctions between gender and sex. The phrasing is reminiscent of Judith Butler's differentiation of being versus having the phallus. If culture is phallic power, then characters in novels of cultural crisis represent different ways of relating gender and cultural appropriation and discrimination.

Mulhern hints at analysis along this vein when he writes, '[T]he culture men seek is feminine, as also is the anti-cultural power that diverts them from their purpose, and sometimes, the two are one and the same. This is the genre's individual variation on the old symbolic antithesis of the Madonna and the whore' (134). In this short quotation, the reader has the real promise of Mulhern's book, that is, its ability to revitalise the lost art of formal critique, while looking forward to new applications of theory, whether that theory be Marxist, feminist, ideo-political or any other type. The power of a good book is its ability to open the reader to further exploration.

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Jeremy Gilbert (ed.), *Neoliberal Culture*. Chadwell Heath: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 2016. 291 pp. £18 pb. ISBN 978 1 91044 857 1

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A reliable measure of any book as ambitiously titled as *Neoliberal Culture* is how much it can tell us about our present predicament. As it happens, Jeremy Gilbert's edited collection tells us quite a lot. Adapted from an issue of *New Formations* published in 2013 – three years before Brexit and the electoral victory of Donald Trump – its explanatory force remains intact.

There is insufficient space here to discuss all of the contributions, which is not to say that those left out are somehow less worthy. Nicky Marsh, Paul Patton, Stephen Maddison, Jodi Dean, Mark Hayward, Lucy Potter and Claire Westhall bring literature, philosophy, pornography, psychoanalysis, 'optics' and food culture to bear on the discussion in enriching and illuminating ways. Indeed, among the book's strengths is that it has something to offer to anyone intrigued by the relations between 'neoliberalism' and its symbolic and affective articulations, or its tenacity in the face of systemic collapse, or even the resurgence of cultural formations like white nationalism that on the surface would seem at odds with it.

But what, precisely, is 'neoliberalism'? Gilbert's introduction devotes a good number of pages to defining 'what kind of a thing' it might be (11), a refreshing change from critiques that increasingly take the term for granted. What 'culture' is, by contrast, is left to emerge from the interstices of the book's diverse contributions instead of being explicitly theorised. Nonetheless, the volume does trace important connections between neoliberalism, as an ideology and an 'actually existing' mode of social organisation, and a wide range of practical and discursive 'sites' from food and finance to feminism, and the title's assumption that such connections exist is certainly not misplaced. Indeed, if we cannot address the 'lived' manifestations of neoliberalism as both programme and ideology, then we should likely have trouble conceiving of an alternative – which is, as Mark Fisher's concept of 'capitalist realism' suggests, what neoliberalism wants in the first place. Ultimately, neoliberalism, Gilbert claims, 'presents itself as a problem to be overcome' (31), whatever its tacit claims to 'post-political' status; and though options for 'overcoming' it – the 'alternatives' it systematically disavows – are somewhat lacking in this book, nonetheless the analyses put forth tacitly remind us, in the truest spirit of cultural materialism, that things could always be otherwise.

A thread linking many of the essays is neoliberalism's '[potentiation of] individuals *qua* individuals' (31) at the expense of any emergent (or indeed residual) collectivity. Traversing questions of race, gender, and sexuality as well as discursive formations and cultural practices, this motif gives the essays a cohesiveness that their wildly varying subject matters otherwise belie. The point is a timely one. Angela McRobbie's reading of how contemporary feminism finds accommodation in neoliberal discourses resonates with Hillary Clinton's stunning electoral defeat despite three decades of what

Sheryl Sandberg famously called 'leaning in'; in this pseudo-feminist ethos, the individual is encouraged to 'reach for the stars' despite systemic disadvantages but without dismantling them, a pattern evident also in Paul Gilroy's account of entrepreneurial self-help discourses among black and migrant communities. For Gilroy, who opens with a timely reference to the Anglo-Caribbean winner of the reality TV show *The Apprentice*, such discourses '[endow] the project of globalisation ... with polychromatic, heterocultural vitality' (34) under an Americanised rubric of 'self-leadership' (42) that, he claims, 'operates very powerfully ... when it appears in blackface' (37), and this undeniably at the expense of solidarity. Both accounts are thus consistent with Jo Littler's take on *meritocracy*, a word with a surprisingly short history, whose inflections she traces from its initially critical, socialist roots to its fully uncritical absorption in neoliberal discourse and ultimately its legitimisation of vast and persistent inequalities (95).

The persistence of neoliberal ideology is not, however, reducible to 'false consciousness', whatever the insidious appeal of women like Sandberg, or Gilroy's celebrity entrepreneurs. Though ideological work is certainly needed to 'secure consent and generate ... inertia', it is in many ways a set of 'negative affects', not explicit beliefs, that keeps 'the programme' and 'the ideology' working so efficiently together (21). Neal Curtis points out that people knew perfectly well the financial sector was to blame and turns to Heideggerian ontological anxiety to explain why they '[carried] on regardless' (103). Since our 'being-in-the-world is primarily practical rather than theoretical' (106) it is little wonder that as *Dasein* we cling to 'free market dogma' – an apt point for an age of 'post-truth' when, as Curtis puts it, 'lack of evidence is no longer a hindrance to the further entrenchment' of beliefs proven wrong (102).

The university as a site of knowledge production is therefore an apt place to turn, but Curtis's idea of it as the 'one remaining unit of social governance outside the neoliberal group-think' (103) is less convincing than his account of the turn from ontological anxiety. It is not that he fails to recognise how thoroughly the university's mission has been redefined by the 'fundamentalist logic of neoliberalism' (108). But he connects the 'anxiety felt at times of crisis' – that which drives *Dasein* into ideological re-entrenchment – with the 'ability for universities ... to maintain spaces in which noise and anxiety might be explored' (104), noting how students, though pressured, sense that 'the world is contestable' and entertain a 'mood ... of scepticism and doubt' (119) conducive to the sorts of 'alternative visions' (120) that the university is uniquely equipped to entertain.

But here we are faced with the question of ontological anxiety and a more, perhaps, clinical anxiety that, precisely as 'negative affect', works to foreclose such visions. The anxiety produced by the failure of a 'world picture' cannot

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always be as immediate or pressing as that produced by what Fisher calls an ‘authoritarian bureaucratic control’ (128) saturating work and life and blurring the boundaries between them. This latter seems decidedly more resistant to the development of alternatives or indeed any form of collectivity. Capitalist realism, Fisher reminds us, is not a ‘political position’ but a ‘pragmatic adjustment’ (125) in which, apart from ‘[learning] to accept’ lower pay and harsher conditions, we also internalize a brutal ‘regime of self-surveillance’ (127). In a passage worth quoting at length, Fisher explains how bureaucracy is now ‘immanent to the fabric of work in general’, and the nature of the anxiety it provokes: it

should not be seen as an accidental side-effect of these measures; rather, [it] is something that is in itself highly desirable from the perspective of the neoliberal project. The erosion of confidence, the sense of being alone, in competition with others: this weakens the worker’s resolve, undermines their capacity for solidarity, and forestalls militancy. (129)

If one of the more pressing questions of neoliberalism – in the book as in real life – is that of its ‘ideological efficacy’ despite the often ‘explicit rejection’ (18) of its programmes by those it most affects, then Fisher’s contribution – in my opinion the centrepiece of the book – should give the optimists pause. As Gilbert suggests, the carving out of an ‘authentic’ personal space or ‘interior conscience’ (129) in which one can privately ‘know better’ despite one’s submission to neoliberal normativity is refuge from *and* a condition for its ongoing success.

Indeed, as he notes in the introduction, neoliberal ideology insists that ‘it is our private, personal beliefs and behaviours which define our “true” selves, whereas our public behaviour can be tolerated precisely to the extent that it is not invested with any emotional significance’ (19). Is the ‘ontological anxiety’ that Curtis wishes the university to entertain then merely another ‘refuge’ making bearable the unremitting regime of surveillance, assessment and control? One might look to the current state of much humanities scholarship for a verdict.

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Angus Mitchell (ed.), *One Bold Deed of Open Treason: The Berlin Diary of Roger Casement, 1914–1916*. Newbridge: Merrion Press, 2016. 288 pp. €19.99 pb. ISBN 978 1 785370 5 71

One Bold Deed of Open Treason is Angus Mitchell's third offering in a trilogy of books containing Roger Casement's diaries and other documents. Through this collection Mitchell uses primary sources to tell the story of one of history's leading anti-imperialists, and this volume focuses specifically on Casement's efforts before and during World War I to help the Irish free themselves from English domination. Both the diary itself and Mitchell's introductory comments encourage readers to consider the politics of language and the uses of diaries and memoirs to shape the historical record.

Previous iterations of Casement's diary have focused primarily on the Findlay Affair or Christiania incident, an event that exposes the British government's attempt to silence Casement, but Mitchell offers a fuller and less selective editing, allowing readers to look deeper into the thoughts and feelings of Roger Casement, a man desperate not only to secure home rule for Ireland but also to leave his legacy as an anti-imperialist warrior. Casement became involved with the Irish Volunteers not long after retiring from the British consular service, and his dedication to Irish self-rule led him to the United States, where he gained the support of an Irish-American network of home rule advocates, and then to Germany, where he hoped to establish diplomatic recognition of the Irish effort. He also hoped that German support of Ireland would prevent Irish men from enlisting in World War I to fight for England. While Eugene Debs and Emma Goldman were resisting a 'rich man's war and a poor man's fight' in the US, Casement hoped to stop Irish men from falling victim to the English, 'who are so busy killing the Kaiser with their mouth while trying to seduce my brave hearted countrymen to do the real killing – or be killed themselves' (66). He hoped to create a brigade made of up Irish prisoners of war whom he would convert to the Axis cause and convince to fight alongside the Germans. These men, assisted by German officers and troops, would also be taken to Ireland to lead an uprising and secure Irish freedom. 'At worst' he hoped his plan would 'kill the recruiting' and 'at best we may get to Ireland with guns & officers & raise a first rate rebellion' (82). The German government at first offered a treaty accepting this plan but eventually found it impractical and sought to abandon both the plan and Casement.

The diary reveals an optimism that is often naïve, such as his praise of Germany's lack of jingoism (78), his glowing descriptions of sympathetic German leaders and a people who want nothing other than to be left alone, and his assessment that there was 'no possibility of getting the USA "roped in" against Germany' (130). The positive and hopeful passages, however, eventually give way to an anger born of frustration as Casement fights to keep himself from realising what others around him see – that the German leaders he wants to believe in are using him for their own ends. Once Casement allows himself to see the stark reality, the diary takes a darker tone as he ignores his

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previous glowing entries to argue that he knew from the beginning that he had 'walked into a trap' and 'heard the jail door close behind' him the moment he arrived in Germany (232). It ends in a tone of utter despair as he is about to be sent to Ireland to lead a rebellion that he and everyone around him knows is doomed to fail. Going to 'an almost certain death', he feels 'joy' at the prospect of leaving a place he has come to 'loathe' (231).

Mitchell points out that Casement deliberately left his diary as a testament to his cause and thus, like all diarists who write with a sense of historical importance, tended to skew his analysis towards it. As such, like all similar sources, it should be read with a critical eye. Even so, it offers much that is useful beyond giving insight into the story of the failed brigade, the Findlay affair, and international relations during the period. It reveals Casement's dedication to anti-imperialism and offers a glimpse into his belief in the importance of brave action or, in his words, the courage to fight with deeds while others choose to 'fight with their mouths' (66). In that sense it highlights the courage of resistance. It also gives insight into the use of propaganda by the allies, particularly through the spread of atrocity stories so common in yellow journalism. Whether directed against Spain in the late 1890s, Germany in the 1910s, Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, Iraq in the early 2000s, or whomever the next 'enemy of freedom' might be, such media exaggerations and lies have led to much suffering in the world. Despite what he may have missed and miscalculated in his trust of the Germans to help his Irish cause, Casement got that point right.

The diary and pamphlets shared in the appendices are quite useful, but a little more historical context added by the editor would have made this book more appealing to a wider audience. The diary ends just as Casement is to leave for Ireland, where he is expected to lead, but is actually hoping to quell, the Easter Uprising. Scholars of Irish history know how the story ended, but anyone else will turn the last page wanting more. Similarly, a bit more historical background of the Home Rule movement would put the diary in a broader context, and more should be included in the introduction about efforts to expose Belgian atrocities in the Congo so as to put his efforts for Ireland into the broader picture of his life's work. Even so, this volume should lead all readers – from historical specialists, to those curious about Irish history, to those interested in the politics of diary writing and historical memory – to a more complex appreciation of Casement as well as a deeper curiosity about the Irish freedom struggle.

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Kelly Fritsch, Clare O'Connor, A.K. Thompson (eds), *Keywords for Radicals. The Contested Vocabulary of Late-Capitalist Struggle*. Chico, CA and Edinburgh: AK Press, 2016. 567pp. £16 pb. ISBN 978 1 849352 4 37

In Williams's introduction to *Culture and Society* (1958), he noted the appearance of number of words, or new senses of words, between 1780–1850. The neologisms included 'atomistic', 'bureaucracy', 'capitalism', 'collectivism', 'commercialism', 'communism', 'humanitarian', 'ideology', 'intellectual', 'liberalism', 'masses', 'mediaeval', 'primitivism', 'proletariat', 'rationalism', 'romanticism', 'scientist', 'socialism', 'unemployment', and 'utilitarian'. Tracing a general pattern in this development, he observed that these words could be used as 'a special kind of map by which it is possible to look again at those wider changes in life and thought to which the changes in language evidently refer'. In fact it is clear that an attention to language was fundamental to the genesis of *Culture and Society*, arising as it did in part from Williams's Workers' Educational Authority (WEA) classes in the 1950s, in which discussions of the meanings of five 'keywords' – 'culture', 'class', 'art', 'industry' and 'democracy' – played a key role. Such was the importance of this type of research that Williams intended to append a selection of such 'keywords' to the original text of *Culture and Society*. Though that improved impossible, the material, much augmented, became *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976, revised and expanded 1983).

Keywords proved to be Williams's most popular text with the general reading public and after his untimely death the task of presenting the semantic history of significant terms – their origins, historical variation, contemporary meanings – has been maintained in various forms. *Key Words*, the journal, has included a regular analysis of a term; in 2005, Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris published *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*; and the Keywords project at the University of Pittsburgh (<http://keywords.pitt.edu>) continues to analyse socially contested words. The latest contribution to the field, *Keywords for Radicals*, published by the American Leftist press AK, is a significant venture which is informed by the belief that 'words attain meaning through the history of their usage, and these histories contain traces of the struggle not only to name but also to *create* the world' (5). The collection claims to be distinctive in two ways. First, it concerns itself with terms that carry particular resonance within late capitalism, and second, it focuses on contested terms within the discourse of the Left. The danger of such an emphasis is that the choice of terms might be rather narrow and that the accounts could seem loaded (a sort of vocabulary for radicals in which difficult terms are glossed). In fact, however, this is a rich, often quirky, sometimes slightly uneven, selection (from 'accessible' to 'Zionism'), covered

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by a number of authors, all of whom pay attention to the range and variability of the meanings of the terms under review rather than attempting any sort of definition. Many of the words are predictable – ‘agency’, ‘colonialism’, ‘hegemony’, ‘race’; and others reflect recent developments – ‘crip’, ‘privilege’, ‘sustainable’, ‘Trans*’/. But there are others that are genuinely interesting and open up this area of intellectual enquiry in new and provocative ways – ‘accountability’, ‘friend’, love’, ‘responsibility’. In all this is certainly a lively, pointed and welcome contribution to the task of mapping (to return to Williams’s metaphor) the field of contemporary cultural and social debate.

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Notes on Contributors

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John Connor is a Lecturer in Literature and Politics at King's College, London. A scholar of twentieth-century British literature, with a particular interest in Left literary culture, his work has appeared in the *Journal of Modern Literature* and *The Review of English Studies*, and is forthcoming in several edited collections, including *The Cambridge History of 1930s British Literature* and *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the 1930s*. A study of Raymond Williams's late-career historical fiction appeared in *Key Words* 13 (2015). He is finishing a monograph, *Modernism, Socialist Culture and the Historical Novel*, and researching a second project on the Soviet-world reception of British Communist, proletarian and anti-colonial writing.

Tony Crowley is Professor of English at the University of Leeds and has taught at a number of universities in the United Kingdom and the USA. He has published widely in the field of the politics of language, including *Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537–2004* (2005) and *Scouse: A Social and Cultural History* (2012). His *Liverpool English Dictionary 1850–2015* will be published later this year by Liverpool University Press.

Patrick Duggan is Director of the Institute of Performance and Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at the University of Surrey. His research interests are particularly focused on questions of spectatorship, witnessing, trauma and ethics; he is concerned to explore the socio-political efficacy of theatre, performance and other cultural practices. He is author of *Trauma-Tragedy: Symptoms of Contemporary Performance* (Manchester University Press, 2012), co-editor of *Reverberations Across Small-Scale British Theatre: Politics, Aesthetics and Forms* (Intellect, 2013); *Performing (for) Survival: Theatre, Crisis and*

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Extremity (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and *On Trauma*, a special issue of the journal *Performance Research*.

Gina Masucci MacKenzie is the Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences at Holy Family University. Her book *The Theatre of the Real: Yeats, Beckett and Sondheim* (Ohio State, 2008) considers the relationship between psychoanalysis and Modern theatre. She is working on a second book about Modernism, theatre and motherhood.

Jen Morgan completed her PhD on Shelley's poetry in Chartist newspapers and Owenite periodicals in 2014.

Naomi Paxton is a performer and researcher. Her doctoral research, completed in 2015 at the University of Manchester, explored the contribution of theatre professionals to the suffrage campaign. She was one of the AHRC/BBC Radio 3 New Generation Thinkers in 2014–15 and regularly speaks about her research on BBC Radio and at a variety of events and festivals. Naomi is currently working in Parliament as Research Assistant for What Difference Did the War Make? World War One and Votes for Women for the University of Lincoln and the UK Parliament Vote 100 project. She is also Associate Fellow at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. Naomi edited *The Methuen Drama Book of Suffrage Plays* (2013), and has contributed to two recent books about women in comedy, *The What the Frock! Book of Funny Women* (2015) and *Stand Up & Sock It To Them Sister* (2016). Her monograph, based on her doctoral research, is forthcoming with Manchester University Press.

Janelle Reinelt, Emeritus Professor of Theatre and Performance at University of Warwick, was President of the International Federation for Theatre Research (2004–2007). She has published widely on politics and performance, receiving the 'Distinguished Scholar Award' for lifetime achievement from the American Society for Theatre Research (2010), and an honorary doctorate from the University of Helsinki in 2014. In 2012, she was awarded the 'Excellence in Editing' prize together with Brian Singleton for their Palgrave book series, 'Studies in International Performance'. Recent books include *The Political Theatre of David Edgar: Negotiation and Retrieval* with Gerald Hewitt (Cambridge University Press, 2011), and *The Grammar of Politics and Performance* with Shirin Rai (Routledge, 2015). She has just co-edited with Maria Estrada-Fuentes a special issue of the Cultural Studies journal *Lateral*, entitled 'Leveraging Justice', published on line this autumn at <http://csalateral.org/wp/>, and completed editing a collection of essays with Bishnupriya Dutt

and Shrinkhla Sahai, *Gendered Citizenship: Manifestations and Performance*, to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2017.

Amy Skinner is Lecturer in Drama and Theatre Practice and Director of Learning and Teaching in the School of Arts at the University of Hull. Her research interests include Russian and Early Soviet theatre, theatre direction and scenography, and interdisciplinary connections between theatre, fine art and early twentieth-century physics. She is also a theatre director and designer, specialising in contemporary stagings of multi-lingual texts and plays in translation. She is a member of the executive committee of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD) and the founder and coordinator of the Russian Theatre Research Network UK.

Robert Spencer is Senior Lecturer in Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures at the University of Manchester. He is the co-author, most recently, of *For Humanism: Explorations in Theory and Politics*.

Liane Tanguay is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Houston-Victoria in South Texas, and the author of *Hijacking History: American Culture and the War on Terror* (McGill-Queen's, 2012).

Beverly Tomek is the author of *Colonization and its Discontents: Emancipation, Emigration, and Antislavery in Antebellum Pennsylvania* (New York University Press, 2011) and has contributed to *American Nineteenth Century History* and *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*. She is the co-editor of *New Directions in the Study of African-American Recolonization* (University Press of Florida, 2017) as well as Associate Provost at the University of Houston-Victoria and Vice President of the Pennsylvania Historical Association.

Claire Warden is Reader in Drama at De Montfort University, Leicester. She works in the fields of modernism, theatre history and performance practice. She is the author of *British Avant-Garde Theatre* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), *Modernist and Avant-Garde Performance: an Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015) and the British Academy-funded *Migrating Modernist Performance: British Theatrical Travels through Russia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). She is also co-editor of *Performance and Professional Wrestling* (Routledge, 2016) and has most recently been working on book chapters on Alexander Tairov, Theodore Komisarjevsky and British Drama in the 1930s for forthcoming collections with Methuen, Bloomsbury and Cambridge University Press respectively.

Notes on Contributors

Ben Ware teaches Philosophy and Culture at King's College, London. He is the author of *Dialectic of the Ladder: Wittgenstein, the 'Tractatus' and Modernism* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *Modernism, Ethics and the Political Imagination: Living Wrong Life Rightly* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF)

RWF continues to consolidate its partnerships with RWS but is also extending its networking significantly with DemFest and Compass and the employment of Nick Mahony (Open University) taking the Everyday Democratisation project forward.

This summary of the February meeting of RWF's Management Committee, February 2017 illustrates the potential.

The Committee received reports on the following, and these were updated in late March (for more information, see RWF web page).

- 1 The Chepstow Museum RW Border Country Art Exhibition Day event, Saturday 18 February, with more than 200 attending.
- 2 Westham House Fund's (WHF) decision to award £2,000 this year for 'reading retreats' at Wortley, Gladstone's Library or other suitable venues and for Keywords (KW) Day and residential events. WHF could also make another £2k available for a DemFest linked event. WHF/RWF funding may also be able to assist: a) a developing National Trust/Nottingham Uni/RWF 'oral history' project b) links to the Anglia University Cambridge oral history project c) partnership with TalkShop.
- 3 Our new Sheffield University-funded librarian has started work at the Sylvia Pankhurst Library (SPL) and completion of the on-line catalogue is now in sight. The polished and completed SPL Librarika web catalogue will boost the re-launch of reading retreats and KW days and residentials at several Centres, notably the Gladstone Memorial Library and the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.
- 4 Discussion Circles in Pubs, Bars, Cafes, Church Halls etc (PiPs, DiPs, Sci-Bars, cafés philosophique and so on) flourish and RWF's support through prepared notes on Trump/Brexit issues has been posted on the RWF web- and Facebook pages. The Chair of RWF has begun work on a new Levenshulme Inspire Charity organised and funded initiative: Discussion Group/s for Older People in Stockport care homes. The Committee proposed consideration of RWF with partners supporting the Great Get-together Weekend 17–19 June through organisation of discussions/seminars on 'Democracy – Tolerance and Understanding', engaging with Jo Cox's theme 'We have more in common than that which divides us'.
- 5 Residential Education Colleges: work-in-progress on campaigns to sustain surviving colleges, notably Coleg Harlech, and re-open the Wedgwood Memorial College, Stoke-on-Trent.

Raymond Williams Foundation (RWF)

- 6 All the above – and last but not least, Nick Mahony’s RWF collaboration with Compass on the hugely promising Everyday Democratisation and Progressive Alliance project – strengthen the strong case for a twenty-first-century residential education revival.

These developments and other big issues are on the agenda for our Wortley Hall residential weekend, 19–21 May on The Long Revolution – Towards Participative Democracy. All available bedrooms and accommodation for this weekend were fully booked five months in advance ... a record not just for RWF but for social and political education events of this nature generally.

Open-access Policy – Green Route

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is now committed to supporting open-access publishing, a policy which impacts directly on submissions for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). (For the most recent HEFCE policy guide, please consult <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/rsrch/rinfrastruct/oa/policy/>).

On acceptance for publication in *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, authors may deposit the accepted pre-publication version of their article on a personal or university department website, in a subject repository or in their university's research repository.

As soon as the article is published in *Key Words*, the published version may replace the pre-published version, but only after an embargo period of 24 months during which period the published version may not be made publicly available. Authors may, however, use the published version of the article for teaching purposes or for sharing with research colleagues on an individual, non-commercial basis.

Style Notes for Contributors

Presentation of Copy

Key Words is an internationally refereed academic journal. In the first instance typescripts for prospective publication should be submitted as an email attachment to the Contributions Editor Catherine Clay, Nottingham Trent University, at catherine.clay@ntu.ac.uk. Articles should normally be no longer than 8,000 words; reviews should typically be no more than 1,500 words. Articles should be double spaced, with generous margins, and pages should be numbered consecutively. For matters of style not addressed below, please refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edn or <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/contents.html>. Contributors who fail to observe these notes may be asked to revise their submission in accordance with them.

Provision of Text in Electronic Format

Key Words is prepared electronically. Consequently, contributors whose work is accepted for publication will be asked to supply a file copy of their work to the Contributions Editor. The preferred word processing format is Microsoft Word (any version).

References and Bibliographic Conventions

Notes should be kept to a minimum, with all discursive material appearing in the text. Citations in *Key Words* appear as endnotes at the conclusion of each contribution. Essays presented for prospective publication should adopt this style. Endnote markers should be given in Arabic numerals and positioned after, not before, punctuation marks, e.g. ‘¹’ rather than ‘¹’. With no bibliography, full details must be given in a note at the first mention of any work cited. Subsequent citations can then use the short form or a cross-reference. Headline-style capitalisation is used. In headline style, the first and last words of title and subtitle and all other major words are capitalised. Titles of books and journals should be formatted in italics (not underlined).

Please cite books in the following manner:

Style Notes for Contributors

On first citation: Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954).

On subsequent citations: Williams and Orrom, *Preface to Film*, 12.

Please cite journal articles in the following manner:

Patrick Parrinder, 'Politics, Letters and the National Curriculum', *Changing English* 2, no. 1 (1994): 29.

Chapters in books should be referenced in the following way:

Andrew McRae, 'The Peripatetic Muse: Internal Travel and the Cultural Production of Space in Pre-Revolutionary England', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, ed. Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 41–57.

For internet articles:

Raymond Williams Society Executive, 'About the Raymond Williams Society', Raymond Williams Society, <http://www.raymondwilliams.co.uk/> (accessed 26 March 2012).

Please refer to newspaper articles in the following way:

John Mullan, 'Rebel in a Tweed Suit', *The Observer*, 28 May 2005, Features and Reviews section, 37.

A thesis should be referenced in the following manner:

E. Allen, 'The Dislocated Mind: The Fictions of Raymond Williams' (PhD diss., Liverpool John Moores University, 2007), 22–9.

Conference papers should be cited in the following style:

Dai Smith, 'Translating Raymond Williams' (paper presented at the Raymond Williams's Culture and Society@50 conference, Canolfan Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea, 7 November 2008).

Style Notes for Contributors

Quotations

For quotations use single quotation marks, and double quotation marks for quotations within quotations. Punctuation is used outside quotations. Ensure that all spellings, punctuation, abbreviations etc. within a quotation are rendered exactly as in the original, including errors, which should be signalled by the authorial interpolation '(sic)'.

Book Reviews

Book reviews should open with full bibliographic details of the text under review. These details should include (in the following order): in bold type, first name(s) and surname(s) of author(s), or first name(s) and surname(s) of editor(s) followed by a parenthetical '(ed.)' or '(eds)'; in italics, the full title of the volume followed by a period and a hard return; then, in regular type, the place of publication, publisher and date of publication; the page extent of the volume, including front papers numbered in Roman numerals; the price (where available) of the supplied copy and an indication of 'pb.' or 'hb.'; and the ISBN of the supplied copy.

For example:

Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams: A Warrior's Tale*. Cardigan: Parthian Books, 2008. xviii + 514 pp. £24.99 hb. ISBN 978 1 905762 56 9