

**Between the Acts: a theoretical and practical study of contemporary dramaturgy**

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**Abstract**

With the ‘passing’ of postmodernism comes a legacy of brokenness: grand narratives of truth, reality and wholeness are always already subject to deconstruction. However, an emerging trend in art making demonstrates the possibility of a simultaneous commitment to cynicism and hopefulness, to fragmentation and wholeness. This practice-based PhD project forms a significant contribution to the discussion of this trend and of the nature of post-postmodernism more generally by outlining a critical and creative dramaturgical vocabulary predicated on the idea of betweenness. Dramaturgy scholarship and practice for the large part focusses on the work of the dramaturg in a production context. This project takes an alternative approach in its practice of dramaturgy as a ‘way of seeing’, a methodological tool to describe works which resist categorisation and seem to be ‘between’. In six case studies of contemporary performance works I analyse how objecthood, the self and the real are concepts shown to be in-process, manifested in a dialogic relationship between two opposing elements. In the practice element I chart an open-ended process of dramaturgical doing, which includes three devised shows, and from which has emerged a set of creative strategies for understanding and responding to brokenness. *The Way of Things* (2013), *Make/Do/Mend* (2015) and *Song of the Satellites* (2017) between them address issues pertinent to brokenness and its treatment: the object, newness, remaking, wholeness, relationality, dialogue, systems and materiality. Set together in dramaturgical dialogue, the practical and theoretical elements of this PhD project together form a means of responding to and accounting for the legacy of postmodern brokenness, and an original contribution to embodied knowledge of dramaturgical practice.

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**What lies *between* the arts is theatre – *Michael Fried***

**Forget your perfect offering/ There is a crack in everything/ That's how the light gets in – *Leonard Cohen***

# Introduction

## THEORY

**Dramaturgy**

250 years after Gotthold Lessing’s ‘Hamburg Enterprise’, a project to establish the first national theatre in Germany, came to an unceremonious end, his legacy is flourishing. Although his ‘immensely erudite, deeply engaged, witty, ironic, and often quite scathing indictment of German aesthetic culture’ proved an unpopular approach at the time, Lessing is widely considered to have been the first dramaturg and the progenitor of a position now integral to the functioning of German theatre[[1]](#footnote-2). Since the late 1970s, with the introduction of Yale University’s dramaturgy and dramatic criticism programme, dramaturgy has enjoyed a revival in the English-speaking west. Since this ‘watershed’[[2]](#footnote-3) for the profession in the US, the field has burgeoned, helped by the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA) - an influential and consolidating body begun in 1985 whose mission is to ‘cultivate, develop and promote the function of dramaturgy and literary management’[[3]](#footnote-4) - and the provision of specialist education and training offered at around 40 schools. Although preceded by a ‘silent’ history of the practice - Granville Barker and Kenneth Tynan being notable examples - the UK has seen a similar, if less pronounced, manifestation of this dramaturgical renaissance[[4]](#footnote-5). The Dramaturgs’ Network, LMDA’s ‘sister’ organisation, aims to ‘develop[..] dramaturgy and support[..] practitioners’ development in the field’[[5]](#footnote-6), and, although it does not enjoy as high a profile as LMDA, facilitates knowledge exchange and conversation about the subject[[6]](#footnote-7). Currently, dramaturgy cannot be studied in the UK at HE level as a stand-alone course. Rather, it is offered in conjunction with playwriting, ‘writing for performance’ or ‘theatre criticism’[[7]](#footnote-8). In 2015 London-based dramaturg and scholar Katalin Trencsenyi stated that ‘in the British and American theatre scenes [..] every major theatre [..] in the subsidised sector employs literary managers/dramaturgs’[[8]](#footnote-9), and, indeed, although the role is not as ubiquitous as the playwright or director, dramaturgs and literary managers are an increasingly familiar presence in the US and UK.

Echoing this movement is a significant body of literature. A comprehensive array of books defines and documents the work of the dramaturg for students, early-career dramaturgs and an otherwise general readership. Titles include *What is Dramaturgy?* (1995) [[9]](#footnote-10), *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book* (1997)[[10]](#footnote-11), *Between the Lines, The Process of Dramaturgy* (2002)[[11]](#footnote-12), *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy* (2010)[[12]](#footnote-13), *The Art of Active Dramaturgy* (2010)[[13]](#footnote-14), *The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook* (2010)[[14]](#footnote-15), *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* (2015)[[15]](#footnote-16) and *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (2015)[[16]](#footnote-17). Almost exclusively written by practising dramaturgs, these monographs between them meticulously chart a richly diverse range of practices, offering definitions, histories, interviews, case studies and practical advice. Complementing the ‘handbook’ approach is a series of monographs which take a more abstract, visionary or partial view. Mary Luckhurst’s *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (2006), for example, offers a ‘grand narrative’ of dramaturgy as a previously unacknowledged ‘revolution’ in British theatre history*[[17]](#footnote-18)*, and Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt’s *Dramaturgy and Performance* (2008) devotes space to loosening and challenging existing definitions of the term in light of counter-cultural as well as more ‘mainstream’ practices*[[18]](#footnote-19)*. Recently, attention has in part turned away from defining and explaining the term and towards considering how dramaturgy manifests itself in specialist areas of theatre and performance. *New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice* (2014), which includes chapters on ‘Dramaturgy as Ecology’, a ‘Hybrid Dramaturgy for Intercultural-Indigenous Performance’ and ‘Porous Dramaturgy and the Pedestrian’, presents the concept as a guiding principle in an eclectic range of international work[[19]](#footnote-20). In 2015 two studies of dramaturgy and dance were published, *Dance Dramaturgy: Modes of Agency, Awareness and Engagement[[20]](#footnote-21)* and *Dramaturgy in Motion: At Work on Dance and Movement Performance[[21]](#footnote-22)*, which conceive of an embodied dramaturgical process undertaken by the dance dramaturg[[22]](#footnote-23). With a slightly wider remit, *Physical Dramaturgy: Perspectives from the Field*, published earlier this year, argues similarly for a dramaturgy constituted by visceral and somatic vocabularies[[23]](#footnote-24). In 2015 the first in a new series of books ‘New Dramaturgies’, edited by Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt, was published: *Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment*, which uses the dramaturgical paradigm to consider the relationship between architecture and performance, and their mutual qualities as ‘world-building’ forms[[24]](#footnote-25). *New Media Dramaturgy: Performance, Media and New-Materialism*, which considers the relationship between the human and the material and the technological,followed in 2017[[25]](#footnote-26). The imminent *Adventures in* *Feminist Dramaturgy: The Road Less Travelled* will expand upon the authors’ call in a 2014 article for a ‘feminist dramaturgy’ and the migration of dramaturgs (who are mostly women) from a ‘no-(wo)man’s land’ and into a properly supported and remunerated space[[26]](#footnote-27). Journal articles and essays have allowed scholars and practitioners the opportunity to argue for a multitude of interpretations and creative uses of dramaturgy, from guidelines for students, as in Elinor Fuchs’ much-loved ‘Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to ask a Play’*[[27]](#footnote-28)* to claims for the radical and subversive potential of dramaturgy, as in Michael X Zelenak’s ‘Why We Don’t Need Directors: A Dramaturgical/Historical Manifesto’[[28]](#footnote-29), to a dramaturgy experienced entirely through letter-writing, as in Deidre Heddon’s and Alexander Kelly’s ‘Distance Dramaturgy’[[29]](#footnote-30). Most often these have been published within journal issues devoted to dramaturgy. In the US these have included *Theater* (1978[[30]](#footnote-31) and 1986[[31]](#footnote-32)) and *Theatre Topics* (2003)[[32]](#footnote-33). In the UK, *Contemporary Theatre Review* ran a devoted issue in 2010[[33]](#footnote-34), and two issues with a strong, though implicit, dramaturgical bent appeared in *Performance Research* (2009)[[34]](#footnote-35) and *Studies in Theatre and Performance* (2010)[[35]](#footnote-36). A 2009 special issue of *Performance Research* entitled ‘European Dramaturgy’ brings together contributions from European, including British, authors[[36]](#footnote-37).

Although in recent years the discussion has necessarily moved away from definitions, ‘dramaturgy’ and ‘dramaturg’ are terms still stubbornly polysemic. Susan Jonas and Geoff Proehl write that ‘few terms in contemporary theater practice have consistently occasioned more perplexity’[[37]](#footnote-38), and, indeed, the concept has been variously described as ‘unstable’[[38]](#footnote-39) and ‘slippery’.[[39]](#footnote-40) Ara Beal argues that it is an ‘unwieldy topic to tame in scholarly work’, and that difficulty in defining it is ‘simply endemic’ in the field.[[40]](#footnote-41) Many scholars begin their explanations with an etymology of the Greek word *dramatourgos* from which ‘dramaturgy’ and ‘dramaturg’ are derived: it is a synthesis of the root for ‘deed or act’ (*drame*) and the suffix for “work or process” (*ergos*) which translates variously as ‘making drama’[[41]](#footnote-42), ‘composition of a play’[[42]](#footnote-43) or ‘maker of drama’[[43]](#footnote-44). Where definitions are given, two ‘common’ senses are identified, the first of which relates to the idea that a theatrical work is a composite self-contained entity with its own internal relational system of meaning(s); it is said to possess *a dramaturgy*[[44]](#footnote-45). The second sense refers to the practical and theoretical processes which help bring a work’s dramaturgy into being. Theresa Lang acknowledges a latent confusion in the signification of these two very different senses by one term, suggesting ‘to dramaturg’ as an alternative way of articulating the second sense: to her, ‘dramaturgy’ is best separated into a noun and a verb[[45]](#footnote-46). ‘Structure’, ‘composition’ or ‘fabric’ are useful alternative terms offered by Turner and Behrndt for the first sense, and, in light of Lang’s suggestion, may be understood as ‘structuring’, ‘composing’ or ‘weaving’ in the second sense[[46]](#footnote-47). It is widely acknowledged that these processes occur in all theatre-making practice, regardless of whether a named dramaturg is engaged, but, where she is present, this indicates a responsibility for a certain set of tasks. These vary hugely between types of theatre and between productions. Mary Luckhurst’s argument that there are ‘no meanings independent of specific contexts’[[47]](#footnote-48) is upheld by the breadth of practices documented in the literature, but a summary of the dramaturg’s remit is nevertheless useful. LMDA offers the following:

dramaturgs contextualize the world of a play; establish connections among the text, actors, and audience; offer opportunities for playwrights; generate projects and programs; and create conversations about plays in their communities.[[48]](#footnote-49)

The work of the production dramaturg or literary manager to which this definition refers is the most common manifestation of dramaturgy in the US and UK. Traditionally, she or he focuses on textual work, and, according to Yale academic, dramaturg and playwright Leon Katz, must engage with the competent and conscientious undertaking of research, translation, editing, script analysis, helping to create a ‘production concept’, note-taking, provision of constructive criticism, and the possession of a detailed knowledge of theatre history[[49]](#footnote-50). Devising dramaturgs, relative newcomers to the field, by contrast are integrated to a much greater degree in day-to-day rehearsal processes and are likely required to ‘respond spontaneously and impulsively to stimulus material, thereby engaging their emotions and producing a profound sense of investment in what they create’[[50]](#footnote-51). Rather than being viewed as an authority or ‘outside eye’, the devising dramaturg may take the role of ‘[m]ap-maker and compass-bearer’, someone whose job it is to plot and execute an appropriate trajectory through the making process and who can reflect, constructively interrogate and ultimately realise the devising company or director’s creative vision[[51]](#footnote-52).

**Dramaturgy as ‘betweenness’**

I propose that dramaturgy, in both its senses, is characterised by ‘betweenness’. The ‘slipperiness’[[52]](#footnote-53) of the term, its resistance to ‘universal definition’[[53]](#footnote-54), means that it slides continually between contexts and between one meaning and another; it is, as Marianne Van Kerkhoven contends, ‘movement itself’[[54]](#footnote-55). The dramaturg is a specialist in betweenness: she creates relationships and forges connections. Amanda Beth Giguere, Literary Manager at Colorado Shakespeare Festival, for example, describes her work as ‘bridging’. She explains that:

[w]e bridge the gap between scholarship and practice. We bridge the gap between the actor and their understanding of the text. We bridge the gap between the play and the audience.[[55]](#footnote-56)

Giguere sees dramaturgy as the facilitating of relationships between people and theatrical elements, weaving these together to help create the ‘fabric’ of a production. Dramaturg Hanna Slattne was recruited in 2004 by Michael Duke, director of Belfast company Tinderbox, specifically to achieve the required synergy between contrasting creative approaches. Duke praised her ability to ‘bring together all the creative collaborators on a theatre piece to find common creative vocabularies which were not always predicated on playwriting terminologies’[[56]](#footnote-57). The dramaturg’s familiarity with betweenness has been a source of contention as much as of fruitful and innovative collaboration, however. Within a ‘distressingly gendered’ context, she has, despite her achievements, been positioned as supportive, marginal and adjacent to the central process of the playwright or the director[[57]](#footnote-58). Fully occupying neither a position of creative origin nor creative support, she has ’inhabited a liminal space: a no-(wo)man’s land between artistry on the one hand and theory and pedagogy on the other’[[58]](#footnote-59), a situation that has, at worst, been the cause of bitter legal dispute[[59]](#footnote-60). In terms of dramaturgy in its first sense, the structure or composition of a piece has been described by some scholars as predicated on betweenness. Tim Etchells, director of internationally renowned experimental company Forced Entertainment, for example, recalls that:

afavourite dream was that all the material used in a particular project could be ‘weightless’, trash, nonsense or throw-away, but that somehow the arrangement of these pieces would make them sing. Pure dramaturgy**.[[60]](#footnote-61)**

For him, dramaturgy in its ‘purest’ sense is about the resonance or the spark that occurs between fragments of material placed in adjacency on stage: it is through their relationship that meaning emerges. Where Etchell’s ‘arrangement’ suggests a spatial between, Turner and Behrndt focus on a temporal one:

it is the ‘links’ or the ‘bridges’ between events that are, in fact, key to understanding the ‘inner logic’ of the piece. Transitions are not just a question of moving from one moment to another; it is in these transitions that the dramaturgy of a performance is discovered.[[61]](#footnote-62)

Practitioner Eugenio Barba affords an active aspect to theatrical elements set in relation, arguing that:

*actions* are the episodes of the story or the different facets of the situation […]. It is not so important to define what an action is, or to determine how many actions in a performance. What is important is to observe that the actions come into play only when they weave together, when they become texture: ‘text’.[[62]](#footnote-63)

Taken together, these four writers and makers envision dramaturgy, in its first sense, as the temporal and spatial relation *between* theatrical elements as they collide, complement and actively work together to ‘weave’ the performance event in the present. It is this definition of dramaturgy that I work with, develop and modify in both the written and practical research elements of this PhD project. In my academic writing I approach dramaturgy from the ‘outside’, that is, I make an analysis of the dramaturgies of a selection of contemporary pieces. In my practice, which I introduce in the second half of this introduction, I approach dramaturgy from the ‘inside’, that is, I engage in the practical realisation, the ‘weaving’ of a performance event. As distinct methods for understanding, defining and performing dramaturgy, these two modes of enquiry are of equal importance in my research process, and are intended to complement and enrich one another.

***Dramaturgy as a way of seeing***

The written element of this doctoral project is concerned with dramaturgical seeing, a notion that is touched on infrequently in the literature. In the absence of a designated dramaturg, theatre-makers can be said to possess a dramaturgical ‘sensibility’[[63]](#footnote-64) or ‘consciousness’, or to be engaged in a ‘dramaturgical mode of looking’[[64]](#footnote-65). Such an approach is embedded in a rehearsal context, but, I propose, can be extended to a scholarly one. If dramaturgy is ‘a collection of creative strategies and principles’[[65]](#footnote-66) to be engaged in by the maker, so too can it be used for academic analysis. While much theatrical analysis implicitly considers the dramaturgy of plays or uses the term in passing, most studies of dramaturgy do not include an explicit application of dramaturgical principles to the reading of plays or performance texts[[66]](#footnote-67). This thesis aims to fill that gap by offering six case studies in which a dramaturgical approach is used to analyse how individual works present their themes. In making the case for ‘dramaturgical seeing’, I allow vocabularies of making to inform and shape my exegesis, in a manner that echoes Andy Horwitz’s idea of ‘critical horizontalism’. Writing for online publication *Culturebot*, he:

proposes a new framework for arts criticism that we refer to as “critical horizontalism”. In this framework criticism is a creative practice unto itself and the writer exists in subjective relation to the work of the artist. The writer’s response is the continuation of a dialogue initiated by the artist[[67]](#footnote-68).

Rather than claiming an objective reading of the dramaturgies that I analyse, I approach them in ‘subjective relation’ as a critical thinker and as a theatre-maker. I purposefully allow the themes, issues and methods that inform my practice to embed themselves in my theoretical work, thereby facilitating a dialogue between my own and other artists’ work and between my own theory and practice. I also undertake ‘criticism as a creative practice’, in the sense that I offer a creative interpretation of dramaturgy. Eugenio Barba, in his uniquely personal and visionary view of dramaturgy, imagines variously that it is: ‘a horizontal narrative thread which holds together the handful of glass beads that is the performance’, ‘a particular way of thinking’, and ‘a propensity to freely release a process of associations and to blend, wittingly or incidentally, pre-established facts and components in order to overturn them, make them appear strange’. He asks:

[c]an these living actions, which are embedded in fiction, turn themselves into a path towards the origins of life? Towards the origins of the injustices of the world? Towards the origins of our many identities? [[68]](#footnote-69)

For Barba, the concept of dramaturgy has unlimited creative potential and far-reaching implications in terms of art-making and life. As a way of conceptualising, making and experiencing performance, it has as much scope as the theatre itself. It is in the context of this ‘expanded’ view of dramaturgy that my study sits, and it is from the more visionary and idiosyncratic approaches, such as Barba’s, that I have taken my inspiration[[69]](#footnote-70).

***The postmodern, the postdramatic and the ‘post-postmodern’***

Linda Hutcheon has stated that ‘the postmodern moment has passed’ and has charged twenty-first century readers and scholars with articulating what might succeed it[[70]](#footnote-71). A body of recent cross-disciplinary scholarship has responded to her call[[71]](#footnote-72). Although scholars disagree about the extent to which postmodernism is ‘over’, they are united in their acknowledgment that it is time to develop, adjust or replace postmodern vocabularies as a means of responding to art, culture, society, politics and, indeed, life in the twenty-first century. Questions of ethics, hope and trust have returned in resistance to what has sometimes been perceived as postmodern cynicism, nihilism and excessive relativity. In what I consider to be the most persuasive post-postmodern theories, these contrasting sets of qualities are set in dynamic tension with one another, as in cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen’s and Robin van der Akker’s ‘Metamodernism’. Using examples from architecture, visual art and film, they describe an emerging trend of art works which perform an oscillation between ‘modern naiveté’ and ‘postmodern scepticism’ and, in doing so, ‘consciously commit[…] [themselves] to an impossible possibility’[[72]](#footnote-73). In the emerging post-postmodern paradigms of Cosmodernism, Digimodernism, Renewalism, Altermodernism, Performatism, Hypermodernism, Automodernism and Remodernism, however, examples from theatre and performance are conspicuously absent.

In theatre scholarship itself, the legacy of postmodernism has been dealt with only implicitly, and largely takes the form of a critical reappraisal of the justification for certain categories of theatre and performance. Over twenty years ago, Hans Thies Lehmann introduced the influential term ‘postdramatic’ to describe an ‘unfolding and blossoming of a potential of disintegration, dismantling and deconstruction within drama’, where that form is characterised by ‘wholeness, illusion [and] world representation’[[73]](#footnote-74). His theory, which dovetails with the aesthetic and philosophical concerns of postmodernism, indicates the now familiar performance tropes of ‘multiple perspectives, [..] fragmented narratives’[[74]](#footnote-75) and ‘the poetics of failure’[[75]](#footnote-76). His separating out of theatre into ‘dramatic’ and ‘postdramatic’ forms has helped to form an extant broader understanding of a definitive difference between representational (‘text-based’) and live (non ‘text-based’) work[[76]](#footnote-77). In recent years, however, this distinction has been taken to task by scholars who perceive it to be reductive. Peter Boenisch, for example, describes it as

the ossified antagonism of supposedly innovative experiments with bodies and images on the one hand, and text-based theatre on the other, which, for partisans of the former camp, bears the mark of an obsolete authorial ‘dictatorship of the dramatic text’[[77]](#footnote-78).

In place of this ‘antagonism’, Boenisch proposes a ‘performance analysis which assists in identifying residues of conventional dramatic logic even in contemporary experimental modes of performance’[[78]](#footnote-79). Similarly, in an explicit critique of Lehmann’s dramatic/postdramatic formulation, Stephen Bottoms’ argues that in Tim Crouch’s *An Oak Tree*, the

‘ungluing’ of representational elements contributes centrally to his creation of compelling dramatic narratives, rather than functioning to undermine ‘the dramatic paradigm’[[79]](#footnote-80).

Implicit in Bottoms’ analysis of *An Oak Tree* is a view of a work which simultaneously possesses dramatic qualities – a compelling story and believable characters - and postdramatic ones – a meta self-awareness and the deconstruction of representation. It bears the legacy of postmodern brokenness and failure - is deconstructive, embraces fragmentation and embraces cynicism - but *at the same time*, and despite these important qualities, offers a sense of hope and a belief in the idea of wholeness, unity and closure.

It is against this theoretical backdrop that the thesis makes its claim. Intended as a contribution from the theatre studies discipline to the still emergent multi-disciplinary debate about post-postmodernism, it also significantly builds on scholars’ argument that categorisations of theatre based on certain aesthetic and philosophical principles are now less relevant than a consideration of the processes and strategies at work within individual dramaturgies. In the closing chapter of their book *Dramaturgy and Performance*, Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt tentatively speculate on certain emergent qualities in what they term ‘millennial dramaturgies’. These works, they suggest, posses ‘a dramaturgy of process’, which ‘make[..] us aware of the mechanisms of communication and the artificial construction of imaginary and (real) worlds, even while we are moved and engaged by them’[[80]](#footnote-81). I argue that the six works that I analyse possess a ‘dramaturgy of process’ through which they can be viewed as adhering *and* resisting postmodern or postdramatic categories. Each of them deals in the ‘art of the between’ as they stage an interplay between wholeness and fragmentation, between hope and cynicism and between deconstruction and reconstruction. Following Josh Toth’s contention that the ‘death’ of postmodernism ‘like all deaths[,] is a living on, a passing on’, I propose that, while these works bear a ghostly legacy of postmodernism, they are not sufficiently accounted for by a postmodern vocabulary[[81]](#footnote-82). Overall, my central proposition is that a dramaturgical mode of analysis based on the idea of ‘betweenness’ can form a discipline-specific response to the emergent debate about post-postmodernism.

**Structure**

In Chapter One I discuss Kate McIntosh’s *Worktable* and RashDash’s *We Want You to Watch*, both of which work with the space between wholeness and fragmentation. Drawing on thing theory and ruin theory, this chapter sets up the idea of deconstruction/reconstruction, ‘wholeness-in-process’ and ‘temporary fixing’ that I will be using in the rest of the study, and in the writing about my practice. In Chapter Two I discuss Chris Thorpe’s *Confirmation* and Breach Theatre’s *Tank* which present and play with the between spaces of the self and other. I draw on dialogic theory to suggest that betweenness occurs in dialogue as an active, compositional structure for deconstructing and reconstructing the subject. I develop the idea presented in Chapter One that the dramaturgy is a metaphorical structure for the concept – the self in this case - that is addressed. In Chapter Three I consider Tim Crouch’s *Adler and Gibb* and Anne Washburn’s *Mr Burns* as dramaturgies which stage an equivocal attitude to the ‘real’. Drawing on the scholarly debate around liveness and authenticity, I argue that both the pieces deconstruct the idea of authenticity and the origin through form and content, but also exercise a reconstructive impulse in their focus on the act of telling.

The writing about the practice is split into five parts which appear between the sections of analysis, and each part is organised into themes. I aim to show how certain thematic, formal and philosophical concerns have led my practical research and how my investigation into them has developed and changed over the course of the PhD. Sitting next to the theoretical writing in the three chapters, these sections are intended to speak to the ideas arising in the preceding analysis and to the themes in the chapter as a whole. Part One introduces my practice, covers methodology, starting points and research questions. Parts two, three and four then address the brokenness and the object, relationality and dialogue, and materiality and remaking respectively. The theoretical elements set out in the three chapters are intended to be read in parallel with the writing about the creative work: the two ‘sides’ of the PhD inform, transform and respond to one another, as in a dialogue. That many of the themes span both parts is intentional: my intention is that every part of the analysis finds an echo in the practice and vice versa. Bridging the gap between theory and practice is a foundational principle of dramaturgy as a ‘practical philosophy’, and I hope that one of the most dynamic elements of the project is this particular manifestation of betweenness[[82]](#footnote-83).

## PRACTICE

**A memory and a threshold**

The story of this PhD starts about 31 years ago. I am aged 5 and I am in my father’s framing and restoration studio. I am surrounded by familiar smells, sounds and textures. Oil paint, varnish, gesso, turpentine, rabbit skin glue, freshly cut moulding, the metallic slice of the morso, the sharp stab of air from the staple gun, the slow drawing out of tape. To me, the work my father does is both totally ordinary and totally captivating. His workbench is an operating table, a resting place for the wounded. Where a picture had fallen suddenly from the wall and the frame has hit the floor corner-down, he takes a cast of another corner and makes a yellowy-brown, wobbling rubber mould which he fills with liquid velvet plaster and leaves to set. A while later, to my delight, a new corner emerges, perfect and new, which is attached, painted over with gesso and burnished with gold leaf until the break is rendered invisible.

A picture containing table, person, indoor, food

Description generated with very high confidence

Figure 1: my dad at work in his studio

He restores paintings too. These injured canvases sometimes bring ghosts with them. I come home from school one day and my dad is half way through mending a gash in the overcast sky of a landscape in oils, pondering over it, trying to mix the right shade of grey and failing. This elusive colour turns out not to be some straightforward mix of black and white, but the result of a care-free catastrophe of a palette, as Raw Umber, Cobalt Blue, Viridian, Indian Red, Yellow Ochre, Mars Black and others were allowed by the artist to bleed and meld. Reproducing this chaos by mixing many colours together means he found the right shade, but also, strangely, silently, meant he stumbled into the artist’s thought process. And other ghosts too. He repairs damage from flying champagne corks, where a painting had hung above the bed of a pair of newly-weds, treats a once-treasured print left out in the rain by a jilted lover who had subsequently had a change of heart. The latter, an original Taxi Driver poster, never collected by that customer, hangs now at the top of my stairs, still bearing the watery trace of its melancholic history.

As a commercial restorer, his work promises an effacement of the narrative of damage. He cleans a picture which has spent 40 years in a room with a married couple on forty a day, freeing an image from a suffocating blanket of yellowy-brown, intensifying its colours beyond recognition, but also sweeping away the accretion of days spent together. With restoration comes, not only effacement, but the censorship of history. Taking off all the old restorations is essential for beginning any work of commercial restoration, and one day my dad uncovers some sheep in a field, along with the decision of a previous restorer to bypass the restoration of the animals, because they were too tricky for him. He tells me about Victorian paintings of churches, whose gravestones, with the coming of the taboo of death in the twentieth century, were painted out by ‘restorers’, only to be uncovered in the twenty-first. He tells me that in the renaissance when someone had died or turned traitor, they were painted out of a painting, morality restored.

This story is a threshold, a liminal and preliminary space for accessing the thesis. A memory, bleeding to darkness at the edges, emerging and fading, suddenly flooded with light, scrutinised, worked upon, repaired and made coherent in the present. Used material, sewn together to create a foundation, a canvas on which to paint words, images, ideas. How to attend to the existing. How to understand the new. How to sit at the edge. How to be adjacent. How to be between. How to be poised on the edge of action, how to enter a movement from thinking and into doing. How to occupy the artist’s role, but also how to feel separate from it. To be a visitor in the artist’s head. Shapeshifting. Moving. Ventriloquising.

A picture containing indoor, floor, sitting

Description generated with very high confidence

Figure 2: a frame, mid-restoration, in my dad’s studio

Now follow as a detail comes into focus. A frame sits, its new plaster corner bright and shining in comparison to the as yet unpolished gold of the gilt frame. We are looking at the art of the between: two elements – in this case the broken frame and the new corner - are aligned. They have contrasting material qualities, are two separate elements, but at this moment they are poised to make the object coherent and whole once more. Later, the new section will be covered, but for now we can see the frame as whole *and* fragmentary, as coherent *and* broken. The exposed fault line and the difference in surface material shows the boundary between the old and the new, between the original maker and the restorer, between the existing and that which attends to the existing. The imperfection and unfinished-ness that we see now is layered, palimpsestically, over the object as a coherent, unified whole. Representing a simultaneity of deconstruction and reconstruction, a ‘wholeness-in-process’, this object is a symbol that informs the whole of the PhD thesis.

**Process and roles**

In terms of my creative practice, I began the PhD sitting, like my father doing his restoration, at the edge of the artist’s world, looking in. I was at home as an editor and a critic and was uncomfortable as an author. I can see now that this discomfort, this feeling of being marginal to the creative process, is linked to my becoming interested in dramaturgy. Initially, it sounded softer, less grand than ‘authorship’. I was attracted to the role of the dramaturg and the idea of dramaturgy because it was not as intimidating as ‘director’ or ‘author’; it occupied a space very familiar to me, that of serving another’s need. Setting out to support actors to create work, acting as a sort of ‘mother hen’, although an extant part of my methodology, was an approach in which I can now read a reticence to acknowledge or fulfil my own creative authority. A sense of marginality also is connected to my initial interest in processes of assemblage and the use of ‘found’ materials: taking fragments of what already exists to create juxtapositions and arrangements was a less frightening way to take up the task of creative work. I found, from the outset, a comfort and safety in eschewing the idea of the artist conjuring something from nothing to draw existing material from the world around me and arrange it in unusual ways.

As I have discussed, this tension – between an attendant and an authoritative role – is historically one of deep concern to dramaturgy. Ultimately, the dramaturg’s task is to uphold the authority of the playwright and/or director, a job which is, as Tamsen Woolf puts it, ‘distressingly gendered’. She invites us to consider the metaphors frequently used to describe the work of dramaturgs:

mediators; teachers; helpmates; midwives, who birth the play; nurses or “play doctors,” who attend to the health of the play; consciences (artistic or social); guardians; and servants (of two masters, the playwright and/or the director). [These metaphors] […] routinely designate service positions, second-class positions, and traditionally feminized positions[[83]](#footnote-84).

Woolf’s words indicate the dramaturg’s marginalization, that she is required to be attendant to a central authority and an occupant of a space that bridges the gap between the playwright or director and the realised production. In recognition of the ongoing gender politics associated with dramaturgy and because of a personal familiarity with woman’s relegation to a between space, I understand my role in my practice not as writer or director but as an artist ‘doing dramaturgy’ in an authorial way. In other words, rather than conform to the traditional director/dramaturg structure, I interpret the dramaturgical act of (at)tending to the existing and working between as a radical, necessary, creative, authorial and collaborative specialism.

My process requires me to ‘shape-shift’, to slip fluidly between identities: I variously and frequently inhabit the role of director, facilitator, writer, editor, reflector/evaluator and critic. These positions, however, are all in service of the dramaturgy, which is the ‘top level’ of organisation in my creative work. To move between these roles is also to encounter them in dialogue. Bertolt Brecht’s dramaturgical text *The Messingkauf Dialogues* (or *Buying Brass*), includes ‘Practice Pieces for Actors’, a four-act script in which a philosopher, stage hand, actor, dramaturg sit on the stage and discuss theatre-making[[84]](#footnote-85). The conversation between them represents the dialogic nature of dramaturgy, the tissue of approaches, practices and specialisms that bring a production into being. The words I write now, in the critical or reflective mode, do not ventriloquise my directorial or writerly selves, but speak to, answer and question them.

Deidre Heddon and Jane Milling propose that devising is a ‘mode of work in which no script- neither written play-text nor performance score- exists prior to the work’s creation by the company’[[85]](#footnote-86). Similarly, Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt state that in devised work ‘form and structure is determined as the process unfolds’[[86]](#footnote-87). Although dramaturgical processes rather than devising processes are the focus of my research, my creative work, in line with these descriptions, allows the dramaturgy to unfold with the process, rather than being established prior. I respond to the changing needs of the making process, with all its incumbent modes, spaces and time frames with whichever techniques, materials, methods are appropriate, as they arise. These are almost unconsciously drawn upon when required.

**Methodology**

My practice has taken the form of a continuous dramaturgical process through the course of my PhD. I have discovered the dramaturgy of the practice through an intuitive and reflexive process of doing, and, as I describe it today, I engage in a ‘temporary fixing’ of the work, a concept I use in both the written and practical elements of the thesis, and which I explain in the forthcoming chapters. What was a fragmented and cyclical experience can now be articulated as a narrative. I have presented three performances: *The Way of Things* (2013), *Make/Do/Mend* (2015) and *Song of the Satellites* (2017). These represent three iterations of my practical research and are best understood as different manifestations of my investigation into a collection of central themes. In realising the performances, I have worked collaboratively with friends and associates who are themselves artists and makers. I could not have shared the work that I did without their help, but the sole focus of my research has been the dramaturgical process and its outcome, as well as my relationship to this as the author of my work.

In summary, the following methodological principles, which have been in place for the duration, govern my practice:

* A focus on process as intuitive, reflexive and iterative; generates questions as well as answers.
* An open approach to collaboration and an ambivalent, although not dismissive, attitude to authority.
* A care-full attitude; commitment to and pleasure in treating people and material with care, in (at)tending to them.
* A theatre-making process in which the dramaturgy of the piece is not pre-determined, as it would be, for example, with a pre-written script.
* A practice that does not enter a hierarchical relationship with the written element of the PhD but, rather, is set in dialogue with it and, in its own way, shares many of its concerns.

The practical research has sought to achieve a central aim: to create a dramaturgical vocabulary for responding to brokenness. From that aim has emerged a collection of associated areas of investigation, including materiality, absence, dialogue, memory, relationality and restoration/repair. In this ‘post-truth’ era, in which we are seemingly surrounded by political, cultural and environmental detritus, the deconstructive project seems less compelling than it once was. This PhD is intended as a practical and scholarly engagement with theatre’s capacity to mediate between wholeness and brokenness, between hope and cynicism, a quality, perhaps, that is essential in these post-postmodern times.

# Chapter One: Dramaturgies of Breaking and Remaking

## Introduction

In this chapter, I look at two works: *Worktable* (2011), a performance installation by Kate McIntosh and *We Want You to Watch* (2015), a devised theatre piece by RashDash. I argue that both investigate a between space elicited by brokenness: in the former, that is the space between the broken and the repaired and, in the latter, that is the space between the new and the wasted. I contend that both pieces explore, critique and engage with normative notions of wholeness, brokenness and waste. I build on Turner and Behrndt’s conception of a ‘dramaturgy of process’, arguing that each piece is deeply engaged with the staging of creative process or dramaturgy, in *Worktable* through participant interaction and in *We Want You to Watch* through narrative elements. I attempt to show that through an engagement with the theme of brokenness and its treatment, and through a dramaturgy of process, the works in question perform a simultaneous reconstruction and deconstruction. As the only non-theatre piece discussed in the thesis, *Worktable* is slightly anomalous within my case studies, but its inclusion is intended to introduce the reader to the central concepts of the thesis, namely ‘wholeness-in-process’, betweenness as a state of uncertainty and potential, and the metaphorical relationship between the material and dramaturgical object. In the practice section, after introducing my three devised shows, I discuss the idea of brokenness as a formal, narrative and aesthetic concern of my practical work. I explain my interest in and approach to absence on stage, and how representation can be understood as a form of remaking. I cover the relationship between the material and textual object in terms of ‘treating’ brokenness, and finally discuss brokenness as a site of allegory and a threshold of creativity.

## THEORY, Part One: Between brokenness and repair in Kate McIntosh’s Worktable (2011)

### Introduction

Originally trained in dance, Kate McIntosh is an artist working in a variety of media including performance, theatre, video and installation. *Worktable* is a ‘performance installation’ that first took place in 2011 and has been shown nationally and internationally since then[[87]](#footnote-88). Those taking part proceed through a series of rooms in which they are instructed to break house-hold objects and then ‘repair’ them in expected or unexpected ways. In the first room the participant must choose a household object (items on offer include a type writer, a shoe, a telephone, a lamp, a tennis racket); in the second she is instructed to don safety googles and ‘dismantle, shatter or wear to pieces’ the object using the tools provided; in the third she swaps her broken object (now in a tray) for one broken by a previous visitor; in the fourth she remakes this object using, for example, glue, string and sticky tape; and in the fifth room she places her reconstructed object on display with the others. Reviewers point to the piece’s relationship with the creative process - writing in *Contemporary Art Magazine*, James Smith noted that the piece made him reflect on ‘the nature of the creative act, and how destruction is an inevitable part of that process’[[88]](#footnote-89) – and to the way in which it invited a highly personal experience - William Drew writing for *Exeunt Magazine* suggested that ‘in the choices you make, maybe you find out a little about yourself’[[89]](#footnote-90).My own experience of *Worktable* is that it offers a highly tactile, highly personal experience which invites us to consider the imaginative relationship between ideas, materials, the environment and ourselves. It generates a raft of questions and themes, including, as McIntosh states, ‘destructive and creative impulses, consumption, recycling, labour, value and waste’[[90]](#footnote-91), but also, I propose, about dramaturgy, and its relationship to deconstructive and reconstructive processes.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 3: objects ready for breaking in Kate McIntosh's *Worktable*

Horvath, Thomassen and Wydra describe the liminal space as ‘the space in between the opposites, the third possibility, […] the “neither…nor” [[91]](#footnote-92). Surrounded by a deserted post-industrial cityscape on a warm, sleepy Sunday in Birmingham, there was a curious other-worldly feel to being invited into a small room to destroy a shepherd boy statue with a hammer, an uncanniness to being asked to commit an extraordinary act on such an ordinary object. Walking across the boundary from the outside and into the installation invited a feeling of trepidation, anticipation and expectancy. Stepping across one threshold and then another, unsure of what one might be asked to do next, and eventually coming face to face with a collection of oddly reassembled and rather ghostly everyday items certainly evoked, for me, a feeling of ‘neither…nor’. *Worktable* thus invites a reading of the between spaces contained within its dramaturgy and a consideration of how it might be using liminality to formulate experience in its participants. The piece projects the liminal space between breaking and repairing as one of uncertainty and potential, and in so doing, invites creative agency in the participant, which, in turn, demonstrates to the participant something about the nature of the creative process. I use Thing Theory and then ruin theory to argue that brokenness gives rise to a liminal state characterised by, in the former, a shifting semantic and subject object relation, and, in the latter, a disturbance of linear time. I argue that, as a piece whose identity exists somewhere between performance and visual art, *Worktable* addresses the tense relationship between liveness and the material trace. I then suggest ways in which we can read the concepts of wholeness and brokenness within the piece.

Brokenness brings us closer to understanding how things work: if something has broken, we look inside it – by lifting the bonnet of the car, for example - to see if we can infer what has gone wrong. *Worktable* draws on this aspect of brokenness, positioning the broken object as an arbiter of creativity and curiosity. In the piece, as in the world, brokenness shows us how materiality works but also *puts us* to work. Confrontation with potential and actual brokenness in the piece is a call to action, a charge to the individual to engage her own physical and mental creative resources. Rather than showing the creative process to the visitor, the piece asks her to perform it herself by leading her through a series of rooms, each of which houses an activity. She is provided with written instructions, but she must think and act creatively as she proceeds. How will she choose which object to break and which one to put back together? How exactly will she carry out the tasks of destroying and remaking? What do the processes of breaking and remaking mean to her personally? What does she make of the evidence of others’ processes of breaking and remaking? Each new part of the journey confers on the participant a certain amount of reflective thinking, risk taking and decision making. Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts summarise liminality as spatial (‘a boundary, border, a transitional landscape or a doorway’) and temporal (‘marking a beginning as well as an end, but also duration in the unfolding of spatio-temporal process’[[92]](#footnote-93)). *Worktable*’s dramaturgy can be read as an ‘unfolding spatio-temporal process’ of liminalities. The participant journeys through a series of stages in the form of different rooms in which designated activities (selecting, breaking, selecting, repairing, exhibiting) take place. She also journeys across a series of immaterial thresholds: moments of pausing, deliberating and then deciding how to act. Subha Mukherji points to ‘the affinity between the artistic process – imagining, creating or representing – and the spatial idea of the threshold in its material and figurative manifestations’, and *Worktable* demonstrates this affinity[[93]](#footnote-94). The physical aspects of the piece - its composition as a linear sequence of thresholds to and from different rooms – act as a metaphor for the abstract elements – a series of thresholds marking the transition from one decision, one way of understanding, and one act to another. Indeed, these two sets of thresholds are set in tension with each other within the work’s dramaturgy: while the participant travels across a series of material borders in a relatively conventional, linear fashion (there is no possibility of returning to a previous room) the participant’s movement through the abstract elements of time and subject-object relations are altogether more complex.

### Semantic betweenness and the ‘thing’

Drawing on the Heideggerean distinction between objects and things, Bill Brown argues that,

[a]s they circulate through our lives, we look through objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture-above all, what they disclose about us), but we only catch a glimpse of things.[[94]](#footnote-95)

Ordinarily we ‘look through’ objects, he proposes, because they function as ‘codes’ within an established order of objectivity through which we understand ourselves and the world. In circumstances when they cease to work, however, they ‘assert their presence and power’ over us, and in doing so they confront us with their ‘thingness’. Where we take for granted the object’s identity, tethered as it is to its functional role, the ‘thing’ is polysemic and unstable, ‘seem[ing] to name the object just as it is even as it names some thing else’[[95]](#footnote-96). The semantic instability of the ‘thing’, Brown argues, indicates ‘a certain limit or liminality’, within which the ‘thing’ ‘hover[s] over the threshold between the nameable and unnameable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and unidentifiable’[[96]](#footnote-97). In this way, although he does not explicitly theorise brokenness, he makes an implicit link between brokenness and liminality. Where Thing Theory is typically used as a critical lens through which to read literature and culture, I draw on its principles to illuminate the function and effect of physical brokenness in a practical performance piece - *Worktable*. The piece can be said to use the semantic liminality of the Brownean ‘thing’ to unsettle a conventional subject-object relation and instigate creative agency.

From the beginning of her visit to the installation, the participant experiences the semantic instability associated with the ‘thing’. Whereas she might ordinarily ‘look through’, say, a tennis racket on display in a sports shop, she experiences an extraordinary relationship with it when she selects it for breaking from the shelf in the first room in *Worktable*. Instead of implicitly acknowledging it according to its accepted worldly function within a rehearsed subject-object structure, an altered relationship emerges. Far from using the object for its designated purpose, she is charged with ending its capacity for the latter. Numerous questions arise from this charge: why break something? Is it wrong to purposefully break something? Should I comply? Is this a useful object? Where was it made? Once I have broken it, what will it look like? The value of the object no longer seems intrinsic but provisional and subjective. The semantic instability of the ‘thing’ described by Brown is thus invoked: in this circumstance, the tennis racket ‘name[s] the object just as it is even as it names some thing else’. The item now indicates multi-faceted rather than singular meaning, and from this multiplicity a liminality emerges as, for the participant, it ‘hover[s] over the threshold between […] the figurable and unfigurable’. This liminality is one of semantic betweeness, so that a fixable and singular identity for the object is eluded and meaning is rendered ‘neither…nor’ [[97]](#footnote-98).

Brown uses a discourse of object agency to describe how objects are ‘tired of our perpetual reconstitution of them as objects of our desire and of our affection’[[98]](#footnote-99) and that, in their ‘thingness’, they ‘assert their presence and power’[[99]](#footnote-100). He concedes, however, that:

[t]he story of objects asserting themselves as things […] is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation.[[100]](#footnote-101)

*Worktable* resonates with the ‘story’ that Brown identifies: the semantic instability invited by the work occurs in the experience of the subject. The moment in which the participant finds herself with hammer- or whichever tool she has chosen- in the air ready to strike a blow, is a moment of betweenness brought about by a shifting subject-object relation: she is situated between a coherent and orderly present in which the object occupies its correct place in the ‘flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition’ and an uncertain future in which these ‘circuits’ have been interrupted[[101]](#footnote-102). Whether she fears or relishes the act of breaking, she commits to wrenching the object out of its normative constraints as a commodity or display object (for example), and asserts her power over its identity. In this context, to commit to the irrevocable act of breaking, to take responsibility for the transformation of object into thing, means to reject conservatism (material and ideological) and assert an active, and potentially subversive, influence on the material environment.

Where Brown describes the assertion of the ‘thing’ in the context of an object that breaks or ceases to function, *Worktable* can be said to intensify ‘thingness’ by conferring the responsibility for the object-to-thing transition onto the participant. Indeed, Brown’s ‘story’ perhaps can be said to find a kind of narrative development in the piece. McIntosh’s comment that ‘[i]n the first room people plan how to take apart the object. In the next room, the object fights back’ bespeaks a more complex power relationship between subject and object than Thing Theory proposes[[102]](#footnote-103). Brown’s broken objects, ‘tired of our perpetual reconstitution of them as objects of our desire and of our affection’ assert themselves as ‘things’ on account of their broken state. In *Worktable*, the subject asserts her power over the object by turning it into a ‘thing’ but is in turn unsettled by its thingness. Subsequently she must use her influence to reverse the process of ‘thingification’, but, since this is unattainable, a compromise as to the object’s new identity must be reached. This tussle of power relations between subject and object, between person and thing, models the emotional, intellectual and practical fluctuations of the creative process. The participant’s commitment to the breaking of the object symbolises the artist’s entrance of a state in which material identity can be re-coded and non-normative, active relationships with the material world can be engaged. Crucially, however, this state is projected as involving a certain amount of risk. Irrevocability is a key theme in the piece: what is done cannot be undone, both in terms of the broken object itself and the subject’s altered relationship to it, and the newly reconfigured objects in the final room are testament to this. Thus, we can read the liminal spaces between the in-tact, the broken and the repaired object in *Worktable* as arbiters of uncertainty and potential designed to disturb semantic and subject-object stability in order to invite creative agency.

### Brokenness as ruin and ‘vertiginous temporality’

Scholars of ruins and ruination typically point to the polysemic nature of the ruin with its ‘suggestive, unstable semantic potential’[[103]](#footnote-104) and to its radical ability to ‘foreground alternative aesthetics […], transgress boundaries between outside and inside, and between human and non-human spaces’[[104]](#footnote-105). Carl Lavery and Richard Gough, the first to connect ruin studies with theatre and performance, echo Bill Brown’s contention that brokenness (this time in the form of the ruin) destabilises the subject, who finds herself ‘liberated from the constraints of punctuality and sequentiality’13. They argue that ruins possess a ‘vertiginous temporality’ and place ‘reality itself- the status of the present- in crisis’.12 Although the second broken household object on the table in front of the participant in *Worktable* lacks the scale of the ruin, we can understand its presence as possessing the ‘vertiginous temporality’ described by Lavery and Gough. The ruined object puts ‘the status of the present [...] in crisis’ because it simultaneously retains the ghost of its previous identity- physically and in the mind’s eye of the subject- and presents a radical new one as a Brownean ‘thing’. As in the case of the ruin, the breakage of this object has occurred in another time, unwitnessed by the present viewer, and, as such, opens multiple possible pasts for the participant, as she imagines the former appearance of the object, the nature of the breakage and the journey of the breaker. On being asked to reassemble the item, multiple possible futures, in terms of method of and approaches to remaking and final composition, also rush in*.* The broken object is a symbol of temporal liminality, an in-between that channels multiple connections between un/knowable pasts and im/possible futures. In this way, the work’s dramaturgy is multifaceted, working simultaneously on several material and immaterial planes: from the foundation of the spectator’s experience - her physical journey through the piece - she encounters myriad imagined dramaturgies in terms of the past and future of the object in front of her.

Julia Hell and Andreas Schonle argue that ruins

facilitate an imaginary repetition of the past similar in intensity to the original sensations it afforded. The ruin, in short, enables individual freedom, imagination, and subjectivity[[105]](#footnote-106).

In the context of *Worktable*, not only does the ruined object ‘facilitate an imaginary repetition of the past’*,* but the participant must reify this imaginary repetition via the act of remaking. As in the application of Thing Theory, we can see that the effect described in the theory is intensified and expanded upon within the piece. Freed from the possibility, in most cases, of a functional repair, the broken item is pieced back together according to personal preference: the object’s former state of wholeness is imagined and actively interpreted by the participant. Subjective preferences, histories and outlook ensure that each approach to remaking is as idiosyncratic as the reconstructed items on display in the final room. Looking at these items, I can see that some visitors have spent a long time in the installation, while others have lingered only briefly. Some have taken objects apart gently, others violently. There is evidence of a range of approaches to re-composition: objects which have been reconstructed as ‘faithfully’ as possible, others whose new identities are playful subversions of the original (a statue of a boy now has a leg where a head used to be, for example), and still others whose fragments have been arranged in beautiful compositions in complete contrast to the initial form. In *Worktable*, then, the multiple possibilities of temporal liminality invite an understanding of remaking as a personal, idiosyncratic interpretation of a past state of wholeness. This insistence on a heterogenous process for the subject – one that is characterised by multiple possibilities is one way that the piece models a vision of the creative process. Rather than there being a singular way of making, there are infinite possibilities, contingent, personal and open to interpretation.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 4: a 'repaired' item from Kate McIntosh's *Worktable*

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 5: a 'repaired' item from Kate McIntosh's Worktable

In line with ruin theory, brokenness in *Worktable* is at once disturbing and freeing because it fragments our experience of time. This fragmentation engenders creative potential: imagined pasts and imagined futures are limitless. Again, however, the liminality of brokenness is not without risk because such a fragmentation unsettles our foundational reality: in its presence we are reminded of the transience of the world (including ourselves) and the temporary, contingent nature of reality.The sense that something has been lost and that something may be built up in its place is melancholic but also spurs the imagination and encourages action. Indeed, the ‘vertiginous temporality’ described by Lavery and Gough may be understood in relation to *Worktable* as a ‘jumping off’ point, an action of commitment and risk but also of possibility. This vertiginous-ness creates a moment to be seized or taken advantage of, as in *kairos,* an idea of time that is non-linear and unchronological*.* As Emma Cocker explains, *kairos* is ‘an expression of timeliness, a critical juncture where something could happen’ and can be conceived as ‘both a temporal ‘opening’ or critical moment (a ‘nick’ in time)’[[106]](#footnote-107). The physical breaking of the object in *Worktable*, which gives rise to a ‘vertiginous temporality’, can be understood as a ‘nick’ or fracture in time, a ‘critical moment’ of uncertainty and potential which, in turn, invites creative action. The spatial and temporal dramaturgy of the piece thus works with temporal disorder to create thresholds or ‘openings’ in its ‘weave’, which, in turn, invite action and agency.

### Irrevocability, permanence and objecthood

As a ‘performance installation’, *Worktable* sits somewhere between two art forms with contrasting levels of permanence. As such, permanence can be read as a key theme in the piece. Performance, as a live art form, is ephemeral. Installation art sits closer to the visual arts and, although it is often in situ temporarily, has a degree of material permanence absent in performance. However, *Worktable* invites us to make links between its transient and permanent aspects. Performance, like the broken and repaired object, undergoes disintegration and negates a return to the same: they both possess irrevocability. McIntosh’s insistence that the breaking process is performed in solitude means that the participant acts simultaneously as instigator and witness of the intact object’s descent from wholeness or coherence and into ruin in the same way that only those present at a performance see its coming into and passing out of being. The tray of fragments left behind by each participant is the trace not only of the object’s original incarnation, but of a private performance, whose intimacies, whose high and low points, are known only to one person. That sounds from the breaking room are amplified and can be heard outside serves to heighten the sense of unknowability of this event, reinforcing the relationship between liveness and its mediations. Peggy Phelan, in her influential discussion of performance ontology, argues that:

The description [of performance] itself does not reproduce the object, it rather helps to us to restage and restate the effort to remember what is lost. The descriptions remind us of how loss acquires meaning and generates recovery- not only of and for the object, but for the one who remembers. The disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered [[107]](#footnote-108).

The remade objects in *Worktable* can be understood as ‘descriptions’ of a disappeared performance, as uncanny non-verbal documents of a short history of creative process. Their cracks, fault lines and missing parts tell the story of a performance object which has ‘disappeared’ and whose disappearance has ‘acquired meaning and generated recovery’ in its ‘description’, the remade material object.

The material object in *Worktable*, like performance, is subject to transience. When we observe a manufactured object, we might regard it as ‘finished’, in the sense that its construction is complete. Similarly, once broken, the objects in the piece might appear to have reached some sort of end, a feeling that is reinforced by leaving the remnants behind for someone else to work with, unwitnessed by the original breaker. Objects in *Worktable*, however, are pulled back into an active, transitional mode via the acts of breaking and remaking; the object need not possess a finite identity and is available for reconfiguring. Michel Foucault questions the parameters of ‘this curious unity which we designate as a work’[[108]](#footnote-109), and this piece does the same by blurring the boundary between ‘work’ as a verb (to work) and ‘work’ as a noun (the work). If we think of ‘the work’ as the object, something that ends the creative process, this piece subverts that notion by framing the work*ing* of the participant within the installation as ‘the work’. The participant has bought a ticket and has travelled to a certain place at a certain time to experience ‘the work’, but, faced with tools and a workbench, finds that this is constituted by her own act of working. Thus, the idea that ‘the work’ is an object to be observed, an end point which leads to the creation of a finished, static product, is questioned. The two senses of dramaturgy – as noun and verb - are evoked here: *Worktable* can be said to stage a relationship between them.

### Wholeness-in-process

*Worktable* presents an equivocal view of wholeness, constructing and deconstructing it in a literal and metaphorical sense. The transient nature of objects and the loosening of the boundaries around objecthood in the piece serve to undermine the concept. Serge Gruzinski states that the Western version of reparation is ‘an ideal and ideological return to the same’ which strives to ‘return[…] the object to a pseudo-original, perfect state’[[109]](#footnote-110). *Worktable* resists this ideal, questioning perfection and casting return as partial and contingent. Nevertheless, wholeness and fragmentation seem to co-exist: each ‘repaired’ object bears the fault-lines of the process that brought its current state into being, yet its fragments are unmistakably connected. Clearly without functional capacity and many of them ugly, the pieces on display at once look fragmented and complete. The objects are broken and unusable but nevertheless possess a certain hopefulness, acting ‘as if’ they were whole. Wholeness in *Worktable* is temporary. The piece, paradoxically, presents an unending series of endings. The ‘vertiginous temporality’ means that endings *seem* real in the moment: the risk, the ‘jumping off’ that is presented as integral to creative process, necessarily involves not seeing a way forward. The broken and remade objects are symbols of transience and irrevocability, metaphors for the cyclical processes within creative work of investing and believing in ideas, then tearing down and discarding them only to reshape, reform and recycle them once more. In line with a discourse of repair, I understand the unending series of endings present in *Worktable* as a continuous act of temporary ‘fixing’: unity or wholeness is valued, aimed for, is static for a moment, but is then opened back up to continuation and change. Wholeness is necessary, it represents hopefulness and vision, but, it is ‘wholeness-in-process’: temporary and time-bound, idiosyncratic and partial. This vision of wholeness is one firmly embedded in the context of making processes and creative acts. The ongoing cycle of deconstruction, reconstruction and temporary fixing, and the associated qualities of risk and irrevocability are staged within a dramaturgy of process.

### Conclusion

In this analysis I have argued that Kate McIntosh’s *Worktable* plays with the temporal and semantic liminal spaces between the in-tact, broken and repaired object (the ‘thing’) to activate the participant’s creative agency and engender a ‘dramaturgy of process’. Betweenness is shown to be a place of uncertainty but also of potential in which risk and irrevocability lead to the re-coding of material identity and the elicitation of non-normative, active relationships with the material world. Return is necessary in creative process, but it is never a ‘return to the same’[[110]](#footnote-111). A parallel can be drawn, I have contended, between the material object in *Worktable* and the piece itself as an object: both are subject to ‘disappearance’ and ‘remind us of how loss acquires meaning and generates recovery’[[111]](#footnote-112).I have proposed that the piece upholds an equivocal view of wholeness, which I have referred to as a ‘temporary fixing’ or ‘wholeness-in-process’. Fragmentation and imperfection are celebrated, but wholeness is nevertheless integral to the creative process and represents a vision of hope. This vision of the concept means that simultaneously deconstructive and reconstructive strategies can be observed in the work.

*Worktable* serves as an apt first case study because through its analysis I have been able to introduce the central themes of the thesis, both theoretical and practical. McIntosh’s piece is concerned with treating or responding to brokenness or fragmentation, a theme that is a foundation of my practice and which I have observed in the other works that I analyse. I propose that in these pieces, as in *Worktable*, the spectre of postmodern brokenness is tempered by an investment in potential strategies for its ‘treatment’. As potential ‘post-postmodern’ works they accept postmodern brokenness, taking it as a tacit starting point, and, consequently are concerned more with the relationship between reconstruction and deconstruction than with deconstruction alone. I also consider all of the case studies to perform a version of ‘wholeness-in-process’. This means that wholeness, hope, unity and so on are in a state of being *worked towards*, even if they are impossible to achieve, and the creative process of theatre-making (a ‘dramaturgy of process’) is shown to be the method by which this task is undertaken. The two senses of dramaturgy – as a noun and verb – are set in constant tension with one another, and, I propose, the central themes of the works can be found in this manifestation of betweenness.

## THEORY, Part Two: Between the new and the discarded in RashDash’s *We Want You to Watch* (2015)

### Introduction

RashDash are Helen Goalen and Abbi Greenland, and, more recently, Becky Wilkie. Dubbed the ‘punk princesses of late-night theatre’, their work is unapologetically political, feminist, passionate and energetic[[112]](#footnote-113). Although the company might be described as ‘movement based’, they use movement as part of a range of devising techniques and create work that is as rich textually as it is physically. *We Want You to Watch*, a collaboration between the company and the writer Alice Birch, was commissioned by the National Theatre in 2015, where it ran from 15th June to 11th July, before touring around the UK[[113]](#footnote-114). The show is about pornography. The protagonists, Pig and Sissy, are united in their impassioned desire to ‘end’ it and ‘begin again’:

SISSY: We want it outlawed.

PIG: Blown up

SISSY: We want it obliterated

PIG: Removed from the face of the earth.

SISSY: We want it not to exist.

PIG: So that we can begin again

SISSY: Yes- so that we can begin again – it’s not entirely apocalyptic.[[114]](#footnote-115)

This is characters’ *raison d’etre* and is what drives their actions, and the overall narrative, forward. They want to do away with pornography and start afresh, and each new scene, comprising layers of text, movement and brightly coloured costume and props, seems to represent a new attempt at achieving this. In the first, Pig and Sissy act as police style interrogators, questioning and intimidating ‘The Beautiful Man’ who is under suspicion of committing an appalling act of sexual violence. His porn habit, Pig and Sissy argue, must prove his guilt:

The acts that were performed on Laura Lahowderfisk [..] were were identical to the ones that feature in the films you watched – Obsessively – in the weeks leading up to her murder.[[115]](#footnote-116)

But, he argues back,

I really love watching porn. I’ve probably got an addiction. I might try to cut it down. [..] I also like consensual sex with women. I also respect my Mother. And My sister. And I like that I can have these fantasies and that they don’t impact on my frankly blissful existence.[[116]](#footnote-117)

Such well-argued points from the Beautiful Man accumulate, with Pig and Sissy unable to respond logically. They collapse into the floor, losing the foundation of their argument as well as their physical foundation. In the second, now dressed in ball gowns, they ‘kidnap’ Queen Elizabeth II, who is tied to a throne, plied with afternoon tea foods and asked to sign a decree to ban pornography. A similar debate ensues in which Pig and Sissy must attempt and struggle to explain to the Queen what pornography is:

QUEEN I don’t know what Porn

SISSY Ography

QUEEN Is – I don’t know what you want me to ban and I won’t ban something I don’t Know – that’s ludicrous

PIG Sex

SISSY Not sex

QUEEN Pornography is sex – you want me to ban sex

PIG NO SISSY No[[117]](#footnote-118)

Next, dressed in trench coats, they observe ‘The Little Boy’, who looks small and vulnerable sitting alone on a blanket. He does not speak, and seemingly cannot hear, but Pig and Sissy tell him that, when he grows up to have a partner and child, his destructive porn addiction will ruin his family. They debate between them the legitimacy of their standpoint, and desperately describe the boy’s fate:

And when the baby girl arrives and someone puts it in your arms you’ll look at it and imagine how it could all be about to begin again with the whole world readying to hurt your little girl like you did and you’ll put your ear up to your baby girl’s stomach and you’ll listen and you’ll bury your hair in all that softness and you’ll weep and we didn’t make the world good enough[[118]](#footnote-119)

Angry, passionate and ‘breaking all over’, Sissy then shoots the boy. Afterwards, they encounter the ‘Mega Hacker’, a kind of American fitness instructor dressed in neon rave gear and brandishing a megaphone. They ask her to turn off the internet so that no one has access to pornography, but she chastises them and demands that they complete various physical tasks in return: ‘You’re pathetic old old [sic] ladies look at you you’re a fucking nightmare/ Keep dancing’[[119]](#footnote-120). After meeting a lost old man who appeals to them for help, the whole cast assembles on stage for a chaotic final scene in which the characters dance and writhe to loud techno. *We Want You to Watch* is by turns playful, serious, raucous, gentle, intellectual, visceral, elegant and vulgar. The piece received mostly negative reviews from critics with only one endorsement, from Andrew Haydon. For him, its political subversion was one of its best qualities: ‘while this is nominally a play about pornography’, he writes, ‘to me it felt more like a play about capitalism, using pornography as a metaphor’[[120]](#footnote-121). Elsewhere it was pronounced ‘skittish, frustrating and finally, plain bad’[[121]](#footnote-122). A recurrent criticism was that it did not create a comprehensive enough response to ‘the debate’ about pornography: Michael Billington, writing in *The Guardian*, said that it ‘triggers a debate that it doesn’t fully articulate’[[122]](#footnote-123), and Dominic Cavendish, writing in *The Telegraph*, said that it ‘hardly feels like a significant contribution to the debate’[[123]](#footnote-124). It was often described as chaotic, messy and ‘too much’: Daniel Perks, writing for *A Younger Theatre*, for example, said that it was ‘slightly the wrong side of over the top for my taste’, with a ‘couple of moments where everyone involved seemed to get carried away’[[124]](#footnote-125).

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 6: Helen Goalen and Abbi Greenland as Pig and Sissy in *We Want You to Watch*

My reading of *We Want You to Watch* contradicts the critical consensus to argue that it constitutes a nuanced approach to the themes of desire, consumption and waste. Like *Worktable*, the piece addresses brokenness, but does this by exploring the liminal spaces not between the broken and the repaired, but between the new and the discarded. In this context, brokenness is a capitalist projection of the concept; the commodity that, although still functional, is hastily discarded in favour of something new. The piece invites us to compare creative ‘waste’ and waste as a by-product of capitalism’s never-ending cycle of consumerism, and, in doing so, brings into contact the logic, or dramaturgy, of capitalist consumption and the logic, or dramaturgy of art creation. By presenting waste, or trash, as a fluidly defined concept, RashDash show us that what is constructed as valueless by one logic is shown to be of central importance in another. In doing so they deconstruct a capitalist version of brokenness, and at the same time indicate the impossibility of separating thought and action within the creative process. Pig and Sissy state that their goal of ‘ending’ pornography has been a failure, they admit to not knowing what might happen next, but, by the end of the show, they have behind them a wholehearted, impassioned and visceral attempt at achieving it: what we thought was ‘compositional waste’ in fact makes up the show. Through a dramaturgy of process, *We Want You to Watch* stages a creative journey which oscillates between hopefulness and despair, and which consciously sets out to achieve an impossible task. Fragmented and deconstructive, the piece at the same time presents a sincere belief in totality, ethics and trust.

### Dramaturgy of Process and ‘compositional waste’

Like *Worktable*, *We Want You to Watch* has a ‘dramaturgy of process’. That is, elements of process are exposed in the piece, and are integral to the way in which form and content are presented. Rather than the audience engaging actively in process, as in *Worktable*, they experience it through the story of the protagonists, Pig and Sissy. Although the latter do not refer to themselves as artists, there are parallels with creators Abbi Greenland and Helen Goalen: two passionate young women who are deeply troubled by what they perceive to be the harmful and violating effects of pornography. Each scene sees Pig and Sissy adopt a new approach to ending pornography, and an arsenal of creative strategies - synchronised and free-flowing choreography, voice, singing, music, colourful outfits and props as well as reasoning and intellect – helps them to do it. Where one strategy fails, another is called upon. After Pig and Sissy falter in their verbal definition of pornography -

PIG: No no no no no- neither do I- neither do we- I. Not Sex. It’s Not sex. That’s the [point]- that’s the Whole [point]- it’s Not Sex it’s

SISSY: It’s the printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement

PIG: Except that that’s not it

SISSY: Except that that doesn’t Explain it at all[[125]](#footnote-126)

- they turn to physical expression as an alternative. ‘So what it feels like – what it Feels like to watch is. What it Feels like is um..’ states Pig, before the two begin a choreographed duet in which, to quote the stage directions, ‘Pig is always ‘doing’ to Sissy’s body’ in an action which communicates the power relations of pornography[[126]](#footnote-127). Similarly, the Queen performs a series of movements which ‘describe’ sex: ‘it feels like…’ or ‘it’s like’, she states, as she joyously contorts her body and face in a sequence that is otherwise completely unsexual[[127]](#footnote-128). Pig and Sissy’s physical effort often sends them to the brink of exhaustion. They ‘perform’ for The Mega Hacker, who barks increasingly absurd and demanding instructions at them: ‘[w]hen you’re done climbing her, climb her again but better because that did not impress me and I know you psychos are capable of impressing me’[[128]](#footnote-129). At the end of this and most of the other scenes, they remark on their physical burnout: ‘my lungs hurt’, says Sissy, ‘if I cough them out they’ll be black and dried out like dust’[[129]](#footnote-130). The protagonists of *We Want You to Watch* wage their ‘war’ on pornography with their bodies as well as their minds. Their protests are visceral, somatic and physical as much as they are intellectual, reasonable and comprehensive. In their quest to define and dismantle their subject matter, they might be understood as conductors of embodied research in which ‘the researcher’s body becomes a conduit through which ideas are discovered and presented’[[130]](#footnote-131). In *We Want You to Watch*, Pig and Sissy’s – and also Greenland’s and Goalen’s – bodies are ‘conduits’ through which ideas about pornography are ‘discovered and presented’.

Editorial, analytical and critical modes are also shown to be an active part of creative process. Pig and Sissy state that they want to end pornography and ‘begin again’, and, in this context, starting over has an authorial implication as well as a narrative one. The first line of the piece is ‘would you like us to start again?’, and each of the six scenes, apart from the last, begins with a version of this first line: ‘did you want us to start again?’; ‘[s]hut up now I mean you can start again’; ‘[d]o you need us to start that bit again did you hear it all[?]’[[131]](#footnote-132). Pig and Sissy often despondently describe their attempts at defining and expressing pornography as unsuccessful: ‘no, that’s not it’ or ‘it didn’t work’[[132]](#footnote-133). These refrains allude to the editorial and analytical influence that accompanies creative acts and which comments on the accuracy, appropriateness or success of one’s expression. The latter statements certainly resonate with my own experience of devised theatre-making, in which one is constantly and intuitively seeking what ‘works’ and lamenting what ‘does not work’. Will Viney, in his discussion of textual waste in TS Eliot’s ‘The Wasteland’ proposes that

we might choose to read some texts for their capacity to acknowledge a compositional kind of waste. Through allusions to drafts, acts of editing, excision or the existence of textual variation, this writing is able to make present the absent and discarded aspects that were an essential part of the writing process[[133]](#footnote-134).

*We Want You to Watch*, although a performance rather than a written text, ‘acknowledge[s] a compositional kind of waste’ by implicitly dramatizing editorial acts and, with the refrain of ‘starting again’ casts each scene potentially as ‘compositional waste’.

Thus, RashDash self-consciously stage creative process, which is shown to be ongoing, cyclical and rollercoaster-like. Rather than suggesting a beginning, the first line of the piece – ‘would you like to start again? – seems to mark a point at which the audience joins in with a sequence that has been happening for some time[[134]](#footnote-135). The restlessness of the artist’s endeavour to find the ‘best’ possible way of saying something, the apparent failure to do so, and the editorial and analytical gaze which gives rise to these judgments are all foregrounded. Pig and Sissy’s endeavours indicate the employment of creative expression – physical, intellectual, spiritual - to speak of and to the world and to attempt to right its wrongs. *We Want You to Watch* hasa dramaturgy of process: ‘doing’ dramaturgy, as a means of addressing pornography, is what motivates the protagonists, dictates their responses and structures the action within the story.

### **Capitalism, consumption and desire**

Need, and its related concept desire, has long been a theme in critiques of capitalism. Within Marxist discourse, and the discourses which draw on, expand and critique it, scholars describe ‘a global system of desire and destiny that organizes the production of productions’[[135]](#footnote-136). This system, in order to continue the production and sale of commodities, relies on generating desire in consumers: it ‘assumes the specific task of producing on a large-scale desires that did not previously exist’[[136]](#footnote-137). These desires, by definition, are never satisfied, because, although commodities are advertised in such a way that they appear to possess qualities of ‘newness, utility, wholeness [and] a distinction from other objects’, once acquired turn out to be ‘just stuff; little combinations of plastics or metal or paper’[[137]](#footnote-138). The ‘false totality’[[138]](#footnote-139) of the commodity is a lie necessarily perpetuated by capitalism and which leads, in turn to a ‘false happiness that serves as the form of appearance for profound dissatisfaction’[[139]](#footnote-140). Once dissatisfaction occurs, the commodity is disposed of, not because of physical degradation, but because the object ‘come[s] to represent imperfection simply in virtue of the fact that by contrast with some new or improved version [it] fail[s] to match up to the latest vision of perfection’[[140]](#footnote-141). Desire for the ‘latest vision’ ensures that the commodity is relegated to the trash and a new one purchased in its place. A way out of this harmful cycle of intransitive value and endlessly deferred satisfaction is by ‘breaking from the logic of the commodity altogether’, an act that, potentially, ‘becomes the hope for revolution’[[141]](#footnote-142). Following Andrew Haydon’s proposition that *We Want You to Watch* is a ‘play about capitalism, using pornography as a metaphor’[[142]](#footnote-143), a reading that is backed up by a fleeting comment by Pig that ‘Porn is really about capitalism’, I extend this observation to argue that it is a play in which the process of consumption in pornography acts as a symbol of the process of consumption in capitalism[[143]](#footnote-144). The piece can be read as performing a deconstruction of capitalist consumption by manipulating and questioning the notion of ‘waste’ or ‘trash’ as a form of brokenness.

We *Want You to Watch* is permeated by a fast-paced urgency and hunger. The Andy Warhol-style soup cans with their ‘(value) sex’ label, always present on stage and increasing in number as the show progresses, are a material reminder of that which is available and ready to be consumed. We know that Pig’s and Sissy’s desire is to find something new- to ‘begin again’- and that each new scene is a fresh attempt at fulfilling that desire. As the action unfolds, it seems they will go to greater and greater lengths in their quest to satisfy their hunger. By the time they meet The Mega Hacker in the fourth scene they conform to her increasingly abusive and outlandish demands in the hope of getting what they want: ‘[s]lap yourselves’, she barks into her megaphone, ‘Harder- keep dancing […] Dance like you hate your body[,] much much faster than that’[[144]](#footnote-145). Despite her blatant exploitation of them, once the scene has ended, The Mega Hacker begins to cry and pleads ‘I don’t want to be on my own’, an appeal to which they succumb by allowing her to climb onto them. Sissy continues to carry her on her back, where she stays, crying intermittently, into the next scene. The assistance the Mega Hacker receives is not extended to the Old Man, however, who wanders, lost, on to the stage. Shopping bags in hand and paper in his pockets, he forlornly asks for help in finding his way home, where his family might be waiting for him with ‘dancing’ and ‘candles on a cake’ to celebrate his birthday. Pig and Sissy refuse to help him and tell him to go away. Finally, the protagonists turn to one another to reassess their situation and try to articulate exactly what it is they have been hoping for:

SISSY No – no, okay, no, we were saying, let’s refocus, let’s, this is important now Opportunity

PIG Opportunity

SISSY Opportunity to

PIG To

SISSY To Build something

PIG Yes- to build something or or Make something or at least make space for something- does that make sense or[[145]](#footnote-146)

They have been frantically seeking something new and better than pornography, but now realise they don’t know what that thing would be:

PIG Begin again begin again, we always said begin again

SISSY What’s the again

PIG Exactly

SISSY What’s the bit that’s after the now

PIG Exactly[[146]](#footnote-147)

So caught up in their desire to ‘begin again’, Pig and Sissy seem to have lost track of what they hoped to achieve. Coming to no conclusions, the final scene represents, not a realisation of the two women’s imagined future without porn, but its anathema. The stage directions state that the scene is ‘about the ubiquitous, all-pervading world of porn’[[147]](#footnote-148). Pig, Sissy and the other characters - strobe-lit and adorned with pseudo-rave gear - congregate on stage to writhe, gyrate, thrust and moan to loud techno.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 7: *We Want You to Watch* publicity image

The protagonists thus seem to have been trapped in a capitalist logic, a fraught, unending cycle of desire, consumption and waste. The act of ‘starting again’, of reaching for something new, is repeated over and again, but satisfaction is never achieved. ‘[N]o, that’s not it’ or ‘it didn’t work’, they repeatedly state, referring to their failure to end porn, but also, potentially, to their failure to satisfy the audience. The publicity image for *We Want You to Watch*, which shows a woman with her mouth open, her eyes replaced by cut-outs of her mouth, invites the reading that seeing amounts to consumption: to watch pornography, and, indeed, theatre, is not only to look at it, but to consume it. The spectator, whose eyes have been replaced by mouths, is implicated: each scene is a new ‘object’ for the onlooker to consume. Ever-unsatisfied, the two women persist in trying to satiate their and their audience’s desire in spite, even, of their hopeless exploitation at the hands of The Mega Hacker. Significantly, not only do they willingly endure such abuse, by supporting the weeping Mega Hacker with their bodies, they literally uphold it. Further, this act comes at the cost of eschewing someone- the Old Man – who appears to be in genuine need. Capitalism’s reliance on the willing compliance of individuals to prop up the structures that exploit them and overlook suffering is thus connoted. That the protagonists, despite their concerted efforts to achieve it, are uncertain about ‘the bit after the now’, reflects the need for endlessly deferred satisfaction in consumers and the intransitive value of the commodity: as in that system, Pig’s and Sissy’s desire has taken precedence over that which was desired. As the only overtly sexual part of the show – and in line with the stage direction - the orgiastic finale could be interpreted as an ultimate surrender to pornography and to consumerism and as an acknowledgment of the futility of trying to resist it. Pig and Sissy, it might seem, have failed in their task and cannot break from the logic of consumerism.

### Trash and the ‘undoing’ of capitalist logic

Waste, rubbish, garbage and trash are concepts fluidly-defined and context-specific, as Gillian Whiteley observes:

attempts to define trash lead back to a fundamental link to systems of value which are time and place specific. There is no material which is intrinsically trash. Indeed, it is a social and culturally constructed concept- the word, like its physical manifestation, is in a continually shifting state of conceptual, symbolic and material flux[[148]](#footnote-149).

The ‘shifting’ definition of trash, and its intrinsic connection with ‘systems of value’, means that its ability to subvert or undermine those systems has been acknowledged and manipulated by artists and theoreticians alike. As Whiteley goes on to argue, ‘trash provides a metaphor which continues to signify cultural radicalism and political subversiveness’[[149]](#footnote-150). *We Want You to Watch* frequently presents a ‘trashy’ aesthetic, where trash has a ‘specific association with mass culture and all things denigrated as cheap, nasty and trivial’[[150]](#footnote-151). The ‘sex’ soup cans, the party foods available for The Queen, the neon lycra outfit and accessories worn by the Mega Hacker all have an element of ‘trash’. The title, a reference of course to the watching of pornography, sometimes referred to as ‘filth’, evokes a seedy voyeurism. At times the piece can be said to be ‘working at the edges of taste and respectability’[[151]](#footnote-152), something endorsed by one critic’s complaint that it was ‘slightly the wrong side of over the top for my taste’[[152]](#footnote-153) and another’s disapproval of the final scene, described by him as ‘an orgiastic sequence in which someone tries, I think, to have sex with a rocking horse’[[153]](#footnote-154). Contrary to these claims, I argue that the piece’s ‘trashy’ approach constitutes a purposefully irreverent alternative to the measured, well-balanced contribution to the ‘debate’ about pornography that was required by the reviewers. As in RashDash’s other work, ‘high’ and ‘low’ (trashy) culture are layered, and this amounts to a questioning of the frameworks which designate certain things as valuable and others as not. Whitely’s argument that trash is ‘a social and culturally constructed concept [..] in a continually shifting state of conceptual, symbolic and material flux’ is upheld by the piece. Indeed, the subject matter of pornography is itself viewed as a form of trash, as John Scanlan points out:

[g]arbage [..] signals the return of everything to some universal condition [..] as in the case of pornography, which reduces the unique person to a thing, a body with no interior life, no intellect, and thus a form devoid of real beauty).[[154]](#footnote-155)

The ‘trashing’ of women’s bodies through this ‘reduction’ is that which the show denounces; reconfiguring the value systems that treat women’s bodies as objects to be consumed and discarded is Pig’s and Sissy’s goal.nJulian Stallabrass views trash as radically counter-cultural: ‘[m]ore than anything else’, he argues, ‘trash reveals the broken utopian promise of the commodity. The lesson of the obsolete gives the lie to the promise of ultimate satisfaction’[[155]](#footnote-156). According to Stallabrass, in regarding trash, in acknowledging its visibility, we encounter an undoing of the logic of capitalism. Trash, he says, is allegorical, because it is ‘revelatory of the operation of capitalism’ but ‘its symbolic connection to the whole has not been completely shed in this transformation’. In an echo of this critical relationship between trash and the structure within which it operates, the show enacts a similar ‘part-to-whole’ relationship. The critics’ observation that it does not ‘fully articulate’ the debate may have been a conscious choice of Golen and Greenland, as Pig and Sissy consistently pre-empts the various criticisms that could be levelled at the work:

Pig/Sissy: THIS HAS JUST BEEN ABOUT HETEROSEXUAL PORN – THAT IS A FAILURE. THIS IS NOT AN APOLOGY[[156]](#footnote-157)

and

Pig: I know it’s extreme – we do know it’s extreme – we do Appreciate that, I am not so far removed from the world that I cannot process [..] that asking you to switch off the internet so that we can End All Porn is an extreme thing but it has got to the stage where we need something radical[[157]](#footnote-158)

and

Pig: Porn – is really about capitalism [..] which is huge because ideally we want to dismantle that and say let’s try and not Monetise this / THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR PAYING TO SEE THIS BY THE WAY[[158]](#footnote-159)

That the piece fails to encapsulate the entirety of the ‘debate’ could be understood as reflecting the ‘broken utopian promise of the commodity’ and exposing the spurious ‘promise of ultimate satisfaction’[[159]](#footnote-160). That is, to believe that the show could bring total satisfaction in its articulation of the debate is to invest in the capitalist logic of consumption and waste. Instead, like an item of trash, the show reveals the speciousness of that reasoning: both trash and the show disrupt the idea of the commodity as a ‘false totality’. In this way, *We Want You to Watch* plays with the definition of trash, and, in doing so, invites the audience to consider the legitimacy of a capitalist value system which facilitates the consumption and waste of commodities, including women’s bodies.

In his writing about dramaturgy, Eugenio Barba discusses ‘different levels of organisation’ within a theatrical work. For him, dramaturgy is defined not by a single unifying structure or internal principle, but by the dynamic intersection of multiple structures, which he calls a ‘plurality of dramaturgies’. ‘I was looking for [..] a way of seeing which took into account different and overlapping logics’, he explains[[160]](#footnote-161). Barba’s ‘overlapping logics’ can be observed in *We Want You to Watch*. A capitalist logic has governed the progress of the scenes: the endless impulse to move towards the new; the ‘using up’ and then discarding of scenes; the obfuscation of the object of desire by desire itself. Returning to Pig and Sissy’s discussion about ‘the bit that’s after the now’, we can see that, despite their point that they hoped to ‘build something’, they *have* ‘built’ something. While the protagonists, in their frustration, were continually ‘starting again’, they were in fact engaged in a practical, heartfelt attempt at achieving their aim. If we view the narrative according to a creative logic - a dramaturgy of process - rather than a capitalist one, we can see each scene, not as a something to be discarded but as something valuable. In a creative logic, that which is discarded is fed back in to the process: compositional waste is re-appropriated and helps to form the final iteration of the piece. Further, when working creatively, what one imagines a work will be is always different to its practical realisation. In his writing on embodied knowledge, Phillip Zarrilli argues for a ‘concern [..] not with an essentialist ‘what’, but with questions of ‘how’, ‘from what perspective’, ‘through what process’?’, proposing that ‘the attitude would not be toward a ‘that’ as a necessary given, but toward a ‘how’ one might[[161]](#footnote-162). In light of this, the insight offered by Pig’s and Sissy’s address of pornography, manifesting as it does as a dramaturgy of process, is to be found in its embodied realisation. Although the protagonists state that ‘it didn’t work’ and imply that they are yet to ‘build something’, viewed in the logic of embodied creativity, they have engaged in a successful act of construction.

Thus, what is understood in a capitalist logic to be trash or waste, is shown to have been transformed by the creative process. The status of trash has shifted, no longer a useless by-product of consumerism: it has been put to use. Two ‘overlapping logics’ are held in tension within the piece in a ‘plurality of dramaturgies’: the capitalist process, or dramaturgy, of consumption and waste, and the creative process, or dramaturgy, of conception, execution and reflection. Pig’s and Sissy’s failure to achieve what they desire – their repeated ‘it didn’t work’ - makes sense only in a capitalist logic, in which satisfaction is necessarily unachievable, but if we ‘break[..] from the logic of the commodity’ and pursue a creative logic, then they have made a radical statement[[162]](#footnote-163). In the meeting of these two logics, creativity subverts the process of capitalism and interrupts and questions the foundation for its endless sequence of consumption and waste and its construction of value. Trash leads to an ‘undoing’ of the logic of capitalism in *We Want You to Watch* and establishes a logic creativity in its place, and this usurpation might even be the ‘hope for revolution’[[163]](#footnote-164).

### Conclusion

I have argued that, contrary to the critics’ view that it is ‘hardly a significant contribution to the debate’, *We Want You to Watch* represents a nuanced critique of the capitalist logic of consumption and waste, of which pornography is a part[[164]](#footnote-165). The protagonists seem to be trapped in a cycle of desiring, consuming and discarding, but ultimately the capitalist logic that upholds this process is undone at the hands of a creative logic. By manipulating and playing with the concept of trash as a form of brokenness, RashDash show how that which has been discarded can have a central value if regarded within an alternative context. In this way, the work’s dramaturgy is predicated on the space between the new and the discarded, a liminality which is manipulated and questioned as part of an incisive critique of capitalism. I have proposed that, in an echo of the relationship between trash and a wider capitalist structure, the show can be understood as resistant to the idea of itself as a ‘totality’ which can bring ‘ultimate satisfaction’. As Pig and Sissy, in their pre-empting of criticisms, implicitly remind us, a response to this huge subject matter is always going to be partial, incomplete and unfinished. Yet this acknowledgment of resistance to closure is tempered by another ambitious force at work in the piece. Despite their awareness that ridding the world of pornography is a totally outlandish aim, Pig and Sissy – and Golen and Greenland – act *as if* it were achievable, they, to draw on Vermeulen and van der Akker’s Metamodern vocabulary, ‘consciously commit[…] [themselves] to an impossible possibility’[[165]](#footnote-166). In embedding this paradoxical aim within a dramaturgy of process, the work stages a ‘wholeness-in-process’: hope, unity and resolution are all in a state of being actively worked towards within a self-conscious creative logic, even if they are acknowledged as unattainable.

## PRACTICE: Part One

### Brokenness

The theme of brokenness, introduced as a key aspect of my theoretical work, is a unifying thread that runs through my practical work. From my early memories, described in the introduction, emerged an interest in the philosophy of brokenness and its treatment, and this was something that I wanted to investigate through theatre-making. *As Good As New* was the first iteration of my interest, and from it emerged some of the central questions to be considered in my practice-based PhD*[[166]](#footnote-167)*. About art restoration, it followed the story of three restorers/museum workers through a series of events in a gallery/museum setting. It asked the central question: is to restore something to return it to its original state or progress it to a new one? It was during my MPhil that I first developed a keen interest in dramaturgy, and so, combining these two concerns meant that investigating the relationship between dramaturgy and brokenness became the foundation of my research project.

Although my practice is best understood as a dramaturgical process characterised by a continuous cyclical of thinking, doing and reflecting, each of the performances I made marked a new stage in my research and corresponded to a development and deepening of my investigation into dramaturgy. I introduce them briefly now. *The Way of Things* (2013) was a work-in-progress piece that took place in a dilapidated gallery space in an industrial area of Sheffield. I made it so that I could investigate the representation of the art object in performance, the representation of material states of brokenness (e.g. disintegration, abandonment, decay) in performance and the way in which brokenness and absence relate to one another. It combined movement, text, minimal props and music. *Make/Do/Mend* (2015) allowed me to move out of the art gallery context and towards exploring a more amateurish, domestic form of treating brokenness - repair. Dialogue, text and memory as they related to breaking and remaking were the key areas of my investigation for this project. *Song of the Satellites* (2017), represented a further change of context for investigating brokenness: about space junk, it brought together the best of the techniques I had developed previously in my process, and revisited many of the themes, but also allowed me to consider the allegorical and liminal aspect of brokenness more deeply and to investigate the interrelation of systems or logics as a form of dramaturgy.

### The Object

In his famous 1967 essay ‘Art and Objecthood’, Michael Fried contends that ‘art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre’[[167]](#footnote-168). For him an art object should be self-reliant and self-contained: ‘the task of the modernist painter’, he writes, ‘is to discover those conventions that, at a given moment, alone are capable of establishing his work’s identity as painting’[[168]](#footnote-169). In a theatrical context, Fried implies, the object relies for its identity on the viewer, it becomes less ‘fixed’ or permanent as its semantic boundaries are loosened. What Fried sees as detrimental in relation to objecthood is precisely that which has interested and motivated me. Theatre’s unique relationship with objecthood has been a central concern of my practice and has led to my investigation of various associated themes: materiality, presence and absence, care and treatment, and the connection between the material and dramaturgical object.

I began to investigate how to approach the concept of the object through performance during my pre-doctoral work *As Good as New*. In the narrative of the piece, three museum restorers break an exhibit, causing a fragmenting of the narrative, which they then must ‘restore’. They find that what has been done cannot be undone, and this outcome links brokenness to theatre and performance: both are irrevocable. Thus, I began the journey of linking the material object to the dramaturgical object: the broken objects and their treatment were reflected by the unfolding dramaturgical structure. In this way I made a link between process and product - between the two main senses of dramaturgy - and this link is one of the foundations of my practical research.

*The Way of Things*, as is suggested by its title, was a practical investigation of things, or objects, and their representation. I was interested in viewing them not as static but as somehow in process, on some sort of trajectory or ‘way’. I wanted to know how performance might represent these processes as well as how it might unsettle the normative relationships between objects and ourselves.

**Exercise:** I place a tray of objects out of sight. I set the actors the task of going to look at a tray of objects, and then returning to the playing space to describe the object to the ‘audience’. We listen and note the sorts of words that are used: its name, what it is for, any colours or outstanding features. It seems that describing it as quickly and concisely as possible is key. We repeat the exercise, but this time I ask the actors, when they describe their object, not to use its name or say what it is for. In response they describe sensory details – what it smells, sounds or tastes like – and say what it reminds them of or how it makes them feel. Some make up stories, half abstract, involving sounds, image and picture; these objects, or things, are rendered strange.

The objects in this exercise were absent from the playing space, and this proved to be key. It meant that the describer and the listener created an image or a feel for the object in his or her head. One inspiration for *The Way of Things* was Sophie Calle’s 1991 project *Last Seen* at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Created in response to the theft of 13 art works from the museum, Calle’s project comprises a series of photographs of the bare walls and empty pedestals left behind after the theft, accompanied by a series of texts detailing the memories of the objects from curators, guards and other staff. In *Last Seen*, the absence of the art works elicit a loosening of the boundaries dictating their identities, so that they become open and continuous, reliant on the vagaries of individual memory and interpretation.

These concerns developed into a fuller line of enquiry when I asked the actors to choose a favourite art work each. These were: Rothko’s *Untitled*, Hirst’s *For the Love of God* and da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*. They came to rehearsal ready to talk about it, using the kind of language that we had established in the exercise with the small objects. I aimed for a description of the artwork which evoked its sensory identity - the feel, smell, taste and sound of it – and its quality as an instigator of thoughts and feelings. The question was: how can you describe an art work without saying what you think it is ‘about’?

I led the actors through a series of exercises intended to develop the ‘descriptions’ of the piece they had chosen. A combination of movement, voice and text represented each art work. For the first section, I made a piece of choreography based on the colours black, grey and the words ‘void’ and ‘tiredness’. The scene was set to Steve Reich’s ‘Electric Counterpoint III’. For the second section, I created an animated version of Hirst’s skull performed with hands, set on a plinth, that continually broke apart and then reconfigured itself. The scene was set to Radiohead’s ‘Spinning Plates’. For the third section I made a piece of group choreography based on the positions of figures in *The Last Supper*. I divided the figures into groups of three, and then created a sequence which took the three performers through the positions of each group of three. For each scene I worked up a script which combined original text and an assemblage of found texts relating to the theme of ‘exhibition’.

In the final showing, these three artworks represented the three sections of the piece and took place in three separate areas of the space. I did not display an image of any of the original pieces anywhere in the piece. I originally intended to take polaroid photos of each of the scenes as they happened in front of an audience, which would then be displayed like conventional ‘art works’ in a small room at the end. But when I discovered that the ‘instant’ polaroid film I had bought took half an hour to develop, I had to take the photos before-hand and then display them. The intention was to capture the live performance in a photograph and display it, which would ‘turn it back’ into a static art work. Having been able to take the photograph live would have reinforced the tension between live and static art forms more acutely.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 8: Leonardo da Vinci's *The* *Last Supper*

A picture containing indoor, photo, wall

Description generated with very high confidence

Figure 9: *The Last Supper*, recreated through movement and then ‘turned back’ into a static form

### Absence and remaking

In retrospect, the principle task of *The Way of Things* was the recreation, through performance, of three absent art works. If representation can be thought of as a form of remaking, they became three ‘remade’ art works. Absence is an invitation to repeat, to remake or to reproduce. As the theatre-maker, without the actual object, or a reproduction, in front of you, you can create heterogenous and idiosyncratic possibilities for an object’s identity in the mind’s eye of the audience. I was interested in the slippage or misalignment between the ‘original’ and the reproduced object. Absence is a ‘blank canvas’ in theatre, a space through which I could investigate a kind of remaking across art forms: paintings and sculptures were remade through performance. In the tension between the two art forms, their differences are highlighted: in an approximation, bodies replace materials, voice replaces silence and movement replaces stasis. The difference in the forms means that a ‘faithful’ reproduction is impossible: a space of interpretation necessarily opens up and the object’s boundaries are loosened.

*Copyright material removed*

A picture containing person, woman, sitting, table

Description generated with very high confidence

Figure 10: Damien Hirst’s *For the Love of God*, original and ‘remade’ in *The Way of Things*

Finally, and again in retrospect, a primary task of *The Way of Things* was about investigating how performance might be said to break apart objects. In ‘remaking’ objects in this way, in reinterpreting or translating them, they become unstable, polysemic and in-process. In the absence of the original, which is always felt in the reproduction, there might be a sense of strangeness or ghostliness. In an echo of Bill Brown’s Thing Theory, the remade art works had a similar status to ‘things’: a fragmented version of the original, they simultaneously possessed a familiarity and a strangeness. Thus, *The Way of Things* established what would become a recurring investigation in my research: approaching the material object, in states of wholeness, brokenness and reconstruction, through performance.

### Repair

*Make/Do/Mend* (2015) was a 40-minute piece performed by four actors. It consisted of nine short scenes, each of which presented a story of brokenness and/or repair, and each of which was introduced by music and titles on video. The stories that were presented each had received some sort of dramaturgical treatment and displayed some form of structural deconstruction and reconstruction. It was performed in an end-on configuration.

As I researched *Make/Do/Mend,* I became less focussed on the specific material states that give rise to brokenness and began to investigate methods of treating brokenness. Restoration, which I had considered in my pre-doctoral work *As Good As New*, typically indicates a return to the status quo; broadly speaking, it is a conservative act. Repair, by contrast, has a temporary, ‘down-to-earth’, domestic feel. The former is more concerned with aesthetics and the latter with function. Repair is something that can be performed by amateurs, it can be a ‘patching-up’ or a ‘making-do’. As is evident from the project’s title, I was influenced by the 1943 wartime publication *Make Do and Mend*, a small book which gave British citizens advice on how to make clothes last longer ‘and show us to make the most of what we have’[[169]](#footnote-170). I wanted to get something of this light-touch amateurishness into the piece and was interested in the idea of ‘making do’, which takes on a double meaning in relation to art-making. It means drawing on what is available rather than reaching for something new, and this connects with artistic practices of appropriation, collage and montage. Indeed, Nicolas Bourriaud uses the phrase itself in his extended essay *Art as Postproduction: How Art Reprograms the World*, proposing that ‘artists no longer ask ‘what can we make that is new?’ but ‘how do we make do with what we have?’[[170]](#footnote-171). The phrase ‘make do’ has a highly practical implication: in using what is available, we must also *make* and *do* something. In the title *Make/Do/Mend*, as in the project, mending is understood as a form of making and doing.

Influential examples of artists who work with repair include Jan Vormann, who travels the world repairing holes in walls with Lego bricks[[171]](#footnote-172), or Michael Swaine, whose work *Mending Library* is somewhere between a one-to-one performance and a clothes repair service[[172]](#footnote-173). Each has a playful, subversive quality. It was also during research for this piece that I learned of the ancient Japanese art of *kintsugi*, a process in which broken pottery is mended with an adhesive fused with gold leaf to create visible, beautiful fault lines. Like the image of the partially restored frame in my dad’s workshop, this would prove to be an important symbol for me in the PhD because it embodies the idea of an object that is simultaneously whole and fragmented, both deconstructed and reconstructed. Because of these qualities, it is a metaphor for the dramaturgical object. Proudly displaying the trace of its damage, it believes in wholeness even if it doesn’t fully achieve it, and, in doing so, it seems to elevate itself.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 11: Jan Vormann's Lego repair

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 12: the Japanese art of *kintsugi*

### Brokenness and the textual object

Following *The Way of Things*, I began to work with an increasingly explicit dramaturgical approach to brokenness. I wanted to make a stronger link between content and form: between brokenness/repair as a subject matter and brokenness/repair as both a structure and a method of structuring. Thus, fragmenting, breaking, splicing, re-assembling, remaking, repairing, coherence and wholeness were methods and concepts that I drew on in the development, structuring and editing of material. A large part of this process was in the production and development of text for performance. I began the process by collecting stories of brokenness and repair, and this developed to become an archive of material that I would use in rehearsal. Following my observations in *The Way of Things*, I specifically saw the practice of representing these stories as a form of remaking, and this guided my approach. I was especially curious about the role of memory and interpretation in this process.

**Exercise:**

I choose one of the stories from the archive – a spoken story told on video, which describes a broken leg and ankle. The actors have not seen the video. I ask each actor to join me in turn in the rehearsal room and I play the video to them. Immediately afterwards I ask them to sit on a chair and I film them telling the story they have just heard to camera. I ask them to speak the story as if it were their own and not to ‘act’ as the person they have seen in any way. I then have five videos of the same story, including the original. I watch them back and transcribe them. The text will then be used in rehearsal.

This technique of capturing spontaneous text by transcribing would become a key dramaturgical method for developing text. The capturing expresses a tension between the fixed and the unfixed, as spontaneity and liveness are archived, to be drawn upon later. In the example of the exercise above, the resulting text was used to create a scene called ‘My Leg Breaks’. Each performer used the text from their personal version of the original story. As a group they told the story to the audience but delivered it in the manner of ‘competitive storytelling’. It recalled the way in which at, say, a gathering of family or friends, several people will tell a story together in a competitive way in terms of who can remember the correct or the most interesting details. It also drew attention to the way in which people recall details differently[[173]](#footnote-174).

The process of dealing with text, of which the above is an example, developed into a method that I understood as treating the ‘textual object’. In the story retelling exercise, for example, the final textual objects were each subtly different in form, content and expression because they had been individually authored. A link can be made between the textual object and the repaired material object: each has visible fault lines where it has been remade. We can see how the ‘new’ object has been made from ‘the original’, but also how it differs from it. Like the objects I discuss in relation to *Worktable*, the result is uncanny in its simultaneous familiarity and strangeness. Paradoxically, in near sameness, difference is sharply emphasised: because of the similarities, partial changes or inconsistencies are thrown into relief.

Evidencing process in acts of retelling was another principle that began to emerge in my method. The scene ‘Crash’ was the final iteration of the treatment in rehearsal of a story about a car crash. Initially, I ran the same exercise with the actors, so that each created an individual text based on the original. I had transcribed the text ‘true verbatim’ to include all of the ‘fillers’ in everyday speech, the ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ and so on. I played the actors back their individual videos so that they could see their hand gestures, many of which had been used to describe the layout of the road and the details of the crash as an event. In the final scene, the actors each sat with their text, and ‘told’ the story to the audience, using only these ‘fillers’ and their original hand gestures. Their direction was to read the story in their head, to tell the story in their head, but not to speak any of the words. The audience thus did not know the details of the narrative, only gaining an impression of it from a combination of the title of the scene, the vocal ‘fillers’ and the hand gestures. In a similar scene, ‘A Full Hand or a Westside’, the original audio recording played of a story from B about his broken finger. The actors, all wearing oversize black glasses to reflect B’s, performed his hand gestures and gesticulations in synch: the pushing up of the glasses, the itching of the nose, the hands shaped like a flapping bird to show just how massive the hinge of the door really was. In both these scenes, my intention was to expose the ‘workings’, or dramaturgy, of storytelling. If storytelling has its own dramaturgy, one in which certain dynamic elements are actively combined or ‘woven’, then, by separating elements from one another in these scenes, the way in which they normally work together is exposed. Stacy Brodrick contends that:

[t]he process of destruction—whether it takes the form of dismantling, smashing, or blowing up—breaks up the object into fragments, abstracting it, heightening awareness of its materiality and inner workings as opposed to its objecthood[[174]](#footnote-175).

She refers to material objects, but the same can be said for the textual objects in my examples. In both cases the original story had been broken up, and, in doing this, the ‘inner workings’ of the act of telling were exposed: the audience were invited to notice those just as much as they were invited to engage with the story as a coherent whole. To extend the metaphorical relationship between material and textual objects, the ‘remade’ stories that were presented had been subject not to a flawless recreation (‘an ideal and ideological return to the same’ which strives to ‘return[…] the object to a pseudo-original, perfect state.’[[175]](#footnote-176)) but to a visible repair: as in *kintsugi*, the processes of reconstruction are clearly on display.

### Dramaturgy and the unseen fragment

*Song of the Satellites* (2017), my third piece, was a 45-minute devised piece performed by three actors. In a three-part structure, three items of space junk from three eras were represented through movement, text and sound. A soundscape that combined live recorded and pre-recorded sound was created by a technician on stage. Video was used to represent the three satellites, each one played by a member of the cast. Between scenes the company performed movement sequences, and the piece was performed in a traverse configuration.

*Song of the Satellites*, although different in content and theme to its predecessors, incorporated many of the most successful processes I had established previously, and was a deepening of the questions and investigations already begun. Instead of focussing on the treatment of brokenness in a literal sense – by looking at restoration or repair – I wanted to concentrate on the broken object itself, its theatrical representation, and the way it might initiate methods and processes. Described by Alice Gorman as ‘a cultural landscape or assemblage’, space junk is a category of rubbish that represents ideas, practices and projects that were once of much significance and value[[176]](#footnote-177). These are the discarded materials which took us into outer space and were at the forefront, the cutting edge of science. The millions of fragments (and wholes) of space junk that orbit the earth – some of them dating back to the early 1960s – form a high-velocity graveyard of humanity’s technological achievements, failures and possible futures. Julian Stallabrass’ contends that trash is allegorical, arguing that:

[t]he image of trash is perfectly suited to allegory for 'it is as something incomplete and imperfect that the objects stare out from the allegorical structure'. By separating image and meaning, allegory contains a critique within itself, since in its presentation of itself in ruins and decay it becomes an expression of the experience of 'the passionate, the oppressed, the unreconciled and the failed'[[177]](#footnote-178).

Space junk, as a ‘cultural landscape’, is perhaps the most allegorical of rubbish. For me, as celestial rubbish and as a form of waste that we cannot see but that we know is there, it is irresistibly poetic.

I thus wanted to explore the potential of a piece of space junk as an ‘unseen fragment’ as an allegorical site of disquiet, loss, melancholy but also of hope, creativity and aspiration. Space junk, more than other broken things, seems to possess these paradoxical qualities simultaneously: it represents the pinnacle of human endeavour and achievement but also demonstrates our profligacy and obsession with newness. Its invisibility meant that it was an apposite subject for pursuing my consideration of the relationship between absence and brokenness (initiated in *The Way of Things*) through theatre-making. One influential text for me was Stanislaw Lem’s novel *Solaris*, which tells the story of a conscious ‘ocean’ on the planet Solaris, studied by numerous scientists over a 70-year period[[178]](#footnote-179). Humans find, when they attempt to document it, that it adapts to them and acts as a mirror to them, disarming them, for example by creating living replicas of people from their past. Lem’s story is a symbol for the way in which humanity views (outer) space in general and the way in which it uses it: as a blank space on which to project hopes, fears and an attitude to the unknown. In light of this, space may be linked with the theatre: both begin with a darkness onto which humanity is projected. In Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, the protagonist Oedipa Maas repeatedly asks ‘shall I project a world?’[[179]](#footnote-180). My question was, how can space junk, as a form of brokenness, project a world? Thus space junk, in its brokenness, took on the aspect of a threshold, an instance of betweenness. What could be accessed by crossing the threshold? If, as Stephen Bottoms says, theatre is ‘inherently metaphorical’ in that it invites us to understand ‘one set of things in terms of another’, I wanted to know what kind of metaphor space junk, as a form of brokenness, could be[[180]](#footnote-181).

As in *Worktable*, brokenness can disrupt linear notions of time. Space junk ruptures or unsettles linear temporality. It represents a freezing in time; it is a series of historical artefacts, perfectly preserved in zero gravity. Paradoxically, it represents a history of futures: technology that once symbolised an almost unimaginable advancement but may now be obsolete. In the earlier stages I mooted setting the show in the future, perhaps only by one day. The audience would be told this was the case and would be asked to ‘play themselves’, thus projecting multiple possible dramaturgies, in the way that science fiction projects multiple possible worlds. With a consideration of space junk also comes a consideration of trajectory, of travel, co-ordinates and orbits. Space junk is a unique form of waste because it is constantly in action, set on a course through space. Bearing in mind the intrinsic relationship with space-time of both, I wanted to consider the link between dramaturgy and space travel.

### Conclusion

In the practice section of this chapter I have discussed the theme of brokenness as it relates to my practice and have described how I approached it in my three devised pieces. From the beginning of the PhD I was interested in how the material object might be constructed through performance in a manner that loosened its semantic boundaries and played on its relationship with the spectator. Through my work on *The Way of Things* I began to understand absence in theatre as a way of breaking apart but also of remaking objects: in the absence of the object, ways of expressing can cause its semantic boundaries to be loosened, but in representing it, it is, in way, remade. In *Make/Do/Mend* I consciously pursued the relationship between the material and textual object, subjecting the primary texts with which I was working to various forms of ‘treatment’. The result was ‘visibly repaired’ textual objects, and a piece that exposed its own dramaturgical processes. In *Song of the Satellites*, I pursued brokenness as an allegorical site, a threshold from which ‘a world’ could be projected. From an ‘unseen fragment’ a dramaturgy was made, and this process was staged as part of the work. In my own practice and in *Worktable* and *We Want You to Watch*, the object is shown be ‘in process’. This applies to the material object and the dramaturgical object. Performance, like brokenness and repair, subjects the object to processes of deconstruction and reconstruction. Both also have the power to reconfigure, reshape and repurpose it. In its use of absence and reliance on the spectator, theatre can manipulate the relationship of human to object and can support or challenge people’s thoughts, perceptions and expectations of it.

# Chapter Two: Dramaturgies of dialogue

## Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I introduced certain key ideas and themes: the relationship between wholeness and fragmentation, between deconstruction and reconstruction, and wholeness as something that is aspired to or worked towards within a ‘dramaturgy of process’. In this chapter I progress these concepts but also introduce a new aspect to my discussion of dramaturgical betweenness: dialogue. I argue that two works - Chris Thorpe’s *Confirmation* and Breach Theatre’s *Tank* - use a dramaturgy of process to negotiate the authority of the author-self and to examine the fluid boundaries between multiple selves and between self and other. This process, I propose, can be understood as dialogic, where dialogism is a philosophy that ‘posits ‘meaning’ as the relationship *between* differences’ (emphasis in the original)[[181]](#footnote-182). In support of my argument, I draw on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach to self and other, Mikael Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue and Hubert Hurman’s Dialogic Self Theory and use their concepts of the ‘interwoven [..] single fabric’ of selves, the ‘will to the event’ and internal ‘I-positions’ respectively. In the same way that I made a link between the material object and the dramaturgical object in relation to *Worktable*, I argue that because both are composite moving structures with an internal set of principles, the self is a metaphor for dramaturgy and vice versa. I contend that both pieces approach the self as ‘wholeness in process’: it is an entity that is constantly being reshaped and questioned but nevertheless is a source of authority. In a manner both cynical and hopeful, *Confirmation* and *Tank* question their own authority while remaining deeply invested in it. In the practice section I discuss the theme of relationality in my creative work, and my developing understanding of it as dialogic. I describe the related techniques of juxtaposition, translation and transmutation as dramaturgical processes. I describe the importance of voice, transmission and silence as phenomena related to dialogue, especially in relation to *Song of the Satellites*.

## THEORY, Part Three: between me and you in Chris Thorpe’s *Confirmation* (2014)

### Introduction

Chris Thorpe is a theatre maker and writer based in Manchester who works in collaboration with several other companies including Unlimited Theatre, which he co-founded, and Third Angel, for which he is an Artistic Associate. *Confirmation*, written and performed by him and created with director Rachel Chavkin, is a one-man show about the phenomenon of ‘confirmation bias’, the tendency to seek out and interpret information in a way which confirms rather than challenges one’s pre-existing beliefs. The piece is a journey of discovery for Thorpe: undertaken with the premise of ‘talking to someone with whom I profoundly disagreed’, it is an investigation of confirmation bias and a test of the limits of the liberal mind-set[[182]](#footnote-183). Aided by a minimal set and collection of props - a microphone, two chairs, one change of clothes and some photocopies of the song *Guilty of Being White* by 80s American punk band Minor Threat - Thorpe gives a frenetic and intense performance which tells the story of his relationship with ‘Glen’, a white supremacist. Playing a version of himself, which I will refer to as ‘Chris’, he relates a series of conversations between himself and Glen which are interjected by his own internal musings on the politics of the differences and similarities between them. Two central narrative strands thus make up the journey of the piece: the meetings and conversations between Glen and Chris, which culminate in a particularly difficult discussion about Holocaust denial, and Chris’ own intellectual and reflective journey through the encounters. Glen has some abhorrent views on race from the point of view of Chris, but Thorpe attempts to critically address the reasons for this lack of acceptance which he frames as the result, at least in part, of confirmation bias. The show ends, however, with Chris acknowledging an insurmountable difference between their outlooks, albeit with a certain amount of ambivalence about taking such a position. *Confirmation* was co-produced by Warwick Arts Centre and China Plate and toured the UK and Europe between 2014 and 2016.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 13: Chris Thorpe in *Confirmation*

### A Dramaturgy of Dialogue in *Confirmation*

When the audience enters the space, Thorpe looks us in the eye and says hello. When he begins to speak the words of the piece, he very clearly speaks them *to* the audience. The act of *telling* is favoured over showing: the single figure of the storyteller is always present, and although he represents others in his story, he never acts as a character. His style is definite and direct, at times oratory. He paces the stage, his spit flies, his breathing quickens and then slows, his hands slice and sweep and his fingers point, clench and flutter. He is a big presence: charismatic and persuasive. The Latin root of the word ‘audience’, *audentia*, as an event of hearing or listening, is evoked. While he does not specifically invite people to contribute their opinions then and there, the piece reads as deliberately provocative and intended to divide opinion and initiate response. Indeed, as Thorpe describes in an interview with Lyn Gardner, one audience member during an Edinburgh show interrupted him mid-performance to challenge him on the ethics of representing such extreme right-wing views on stage at all, to which he responded by pausing to engage her in conversation[[183]](#footnote-184). Chris states that he wanted to meet someone with whom he ‘profoundly disagreed’[[184]](#footnote-185), and the conversation between himself and Glen is the main source of action and tension in the narrative. The audience sits in a configuration which involves their observing a central square of space from four sides, a set up reminiscent of a boxing ring. Although Chris’s ‘opponent’ is physically absent, the stage is the site of a verbal sparring; two speakers ready to be observed in a dynamic relationship with potentially high stakes. ‘I’m human. If I’m going to hear things I profoundly disagree with’, says Chris, ‘I kind of want them to be as bad as possible, because that’s exciting’: dialogue is dramatic, and has elements of spectacle[[185]](#footnote-186). Thorpe remarks elsewhere that theatre ‘is always a two-sided dialogue with the audience’ ‘a laboratory for thinking about how we think’[[186]](#footnote-187).About confirmation bias, the piece investigates the limits of the perceiving and speaking subject, primarily through the dialogue between Chris and Glen. *Confirmation* stages the dynamic relationship between these two voices, two polarised points of view; in this controlled space it is tested and observed before an audience.

In his influential work *I and Thou*, Martin Buber contends that ‘there is no *I* taken in itself’[[187]](#footnote-188). Rather, ‘I-*Thou*’, which he calls the ‘primary word’, is the foundation of being, and, as a phenomenon, is manifested in the act of speaking. Buber’s principle applies to *Confirmation*, which can be read, not as an investigation of ‘I’ as a static, singular entity, but of an ‘I’ constantly set in relationship with other selves, an ‘I-Thou’. Thus, although the piece focuses on Thorpe, it represents, unlike some autobiographical works, ‘the I in “the world,” not the “I” in its own world’[[188]](#footnote-189). Buber goes on to say that ‘when a primary word is spoken the speaker enters the word and takes his stand in it’, and Thorpe’s production reflects Buber’s vision of ‘I-Thou’ as embodied. Thorpe literally ‘takes his stand’, and his arguments and points of view are primarily *acts*. As Patsy Rodenburg in *The Need for Words* comments*,* ‘[w]hen we need a word- really connect with it and release it in a brave, physical sense- the experience is not just an act of intellect but a feeling act felt through our entire being.[[189]](#footnote-190) Thus, *Confirmation*’s dramaturgy is an aural and spatial realisation of selves in dialogue. It provides an experience for the audience distinctly different to one in which, say, they *read* Chris’ and Glens’ words. Although Chris and Glen’s relationship is the primary relationship to be explored, multiple speaking selves are shown to co-exist – the relationship between internal selves and the relationship between audience and performer, for example – and are set in tension within a ‘dramaturgy of dialogue’.

### The limits of the speaking self

The phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty argues that to understand the subject, we cannot regard it as separate from other subjects and from objects in the world. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* he argues that, if one is to experience another subject, one finds that ‘my thought and his are interwoven into a single fabric […] they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator’[[190]](#footnote-191). Subjects cannot be understood in isolation. As Komarine Romdenh-Romluc summarises: ‘the world and consciousness are mutually dependent parts of one whole. Neither can exist without standing in this relation to the other’[[191]](#footnote-192). In his later work *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty considers the phenomenology of speech in more detail, writing that:

[t]hought and speech anticipate one another. They continually take one another’s place. They are way-points, stimuli for one another. All thought comes from spoken words and returns to them; every spoken word is born in thoughts and ends up in them[[192]](#footnote-193).

Crucially, the relationship is an active one: subjects are engaged in ‘interweaving’ and a ‘shared operation’. Speech, as the necessary embodiment of thought, acts as the interface for inter-subjectivity; it ‘tears out or tears meanings in the undivided whole’[[193]](#footnote-194). Merleau-Ponty imagines a spatial (‘way-points’), material (‘tearing out’ of meaning) and active (‘shared operation) context for speech and meaning. As theatre, *Confirmation* also works in a spatial, material and active context, and thus a link can be drawn between Merleau-Ponty’s vision of inter-subjectivity and the dramaturgy of Thorpe’s piece.

Chris frames himself from the beginning of the piece as not only open to different perspectives but in active pursuit of them. He tells us that his aim was to ‘speak to someone who is, most definitely, not me’. After attending a BNP meeting, he realised that he ‘needed to speak to someone one to one’, and this dynamic is crucial to the unfolding piece[[194]](#footnote-195). Deciding that he ‘might as well Go Big’, he befriends Glen, who, as a white supremacist and ardent nationalist, holds views that are anathema to Chris’. On the way back from the BNP meeting, Chris describes an experience which is significant in terms of the investigation of subjectivity in *Confirmation*:

[…]later, we are going the same way, and I take the train home with him. And John says, several times, how unashamed he is to wear his [BNP] badge on public transport. He says this in the middle of a lot of other things about the beneficial health effects of Irish dancing and how he loves debating politics with a lesbian barmaid he knows – not one of the evil lesbians that runs the BBC, but one of the rare ones who is tolerant of political views other than her own.[[195]](#footnote-196)

Chris describes how excruciating he finds the encounter; so much so that he decides to get off the train a stop too early because he ‘just can’t stand the embarrassment and the sheer fucking effort of being near John for much longer’[[196]](#footnote-197). Their proximity in this situation has been instigated by Chris but it also makes him feel deeply uncomfortable, and this is a dynamic that occurs throughout the piece. Chris brings himself as close to his ‘other’ (whether that is John or Glen) as he can bear, so he can examine their sameness and difference. He is interested in examining how he and his other’s thought might be ‘interwoven into a single fabric’[[197]](#footnote-198), in where the boundary might lie between ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ or between one subject and another[[198]](#footnote-199). It is this process which Thorpe brings to the stage; in this ‘laboratory’ setting, he sets out to test the limits of the speaking self.

Chris’ desire to question the foundations of his intolerance of Glen involves purposefully searching for points of commonality and connection. He relates his thought process in dressing for their first meeting:

I’m thinking it’s probably best not to dress like myself./ I generally do not dress in an inherently trustworthy way, and I do want to dress in a way you’ll respect./ Part of me wants you to be able, in time, to love me.[[199]](#footnote-200)

Chris carefully plans the details of their meeting in the hope of bringing himself closer to Glen and winning his ‘respect’. When they do meet, Glen says to Chris ‘I’m going to tell you some things about myself, and just let me know if you agree […] I think we might be surprised at how much we agree on’. Reluctantly, Chris finds that he does concur with statements such as ‘education in this country is now more geared to producing drones who fit the needs of a top-down system, rather than encouraging personal happiness and fulfilment’ and ‘national resources should be in the hands of the people’[[200]](#footnote-201). Indeed, in spite of Glen being a Nazi, Chris concedes that ‘I can see me in him. It’s what allows me to like him, despite his views about racial purity and Jewish conspiracy and protecting the future of white children’[[201]](#footnote-202). Another point of connection occurs between them in Chris’ acknowledgment that, even if the content of their thoughts might differ, their thought *processes* might be the same. ‘People who hold fucking awful opinions can be charming, and intelligent, and fun to talk to. I’m sure he would agree with that’, says Chris, ‘I’m charming and intelligent and fun to talk to. But in his mind *I* hold some pretty reprehensible views.’[[202]](#footnote-203) In these examples, Chris explores the ‘interweaving’ of his and Glen’s thought and examines their shared ‘fabric’. The effect of the one-to-one relationship pursued by Chris is apparent: placed directly alongside one another, the two characters, despite their differences, occupy a kind of symmetry. Merleau-Ponty’s view of inter-subjectivity involves an understanding of mutual perception, an acknowledgment that the ‘other’ is also a perceiving being. Although ‘in all strictness I shall never be able to think the other person’s thought’, he contends,

I know unquestionably that that man over there sees, that my sensible world is also his, because *I am present at his seeing*, it *is visible* in his eyes’ grasp of the scene’ (italics in the original)[[203]](#footnote-204) .

Chris and Glen’s views are polarized, but the way in which they experience and feel them, means that, whether they like it or not, a connection is formed between them.

Chris’ pursuit of this connection takes on an almost obsessional quality as the narrative progresses:

I start to carry a pocket version of Glen around in my head, and compare how I’m discovering his biases work to how I think mine do. And obviously that pocket version of him is going to be crude, really crude, as a tool, compared to my version of me, but it’s good enough to be present, even when I don’t want it to be[[204]](#footnote-205).

In their mutual occupation of Chris’ headspace, there emerges an element of intimacy between the two men. This, in tension with Glen’s unpalatable views, means that they are engaged in a dance of inter-subjectivity which Chris finds compelling and repelling by turns. His aim to ‘Go Big’ is significant in this regard: Thorpe could have investigated confirmation bias in the context of someone much more innocuous and apolitical, but chose instead to engage with a Nazi. There is a masochistic aspect to this choice – to situate oneself so closely to one’s ‘enemy’ – and in their relationship is the kind of tempestuous oscillation reminiscent of a love affair. In a sense, the two men need each other, at least for the duration of the show, because it is through their relationship that the latter finds its meaning.

In the stage directions of the published text, we are told that ‘[u]nder no circumstances should a performer try to give voice to or ‘act’ Glen – the piece should be delivered as much as possible in the voice of the performer’[[205]](#footnote-206), and, throughout *Confirmation*, although he is sharing others’ words, Thorpe always speaks as ‘Chris’. He does, however, frequently punctuate the text with changes in his position, and lighting, sound and tone are also used to indicate a change of speaker. In indicating that he is speaking as John, for example, he sits down in a chair to deliver his words - ‘I always wear my badge in public. I’m not ashamed of who I am’ - before getting up again to give the meeting leader’s answer of ‘I know John, but I was thinking…’[[206]](#footnote-207). There are many other instances, though, where the origin of a voice is purposely left indistinct, a technique which Thorpe himself describes as a ‘destabilizing ambiguity’[[207]](#footnote-208). ‘I am diluting myself, talking to you. I am losing myself and I can’t fight if I lose myself’ states Chris, and these words could have been spoken either by him or by Glen. This collapse of one speaking voice into another allows Thorpe to blur the boundary between them and to provoke the audience to consider the basis for their own potential belief that the two men’s identities as polarised.

The ‘dialogical self’ is a concept developed by Hubert J.M. Hermans, which draws on existing dialogic theory to stipulate that:

[i]n contrast to the individualistic self, the dialogical self is based on the assumption that there are many I-positions that can be occupied by the same person. The I in the one position, moreover, can agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, challenge and even ridicule the I in another position.[[208]](#footnote-209)

Herman’s theory, although primarily intended as a tool to be used in therapy, it is an apposite schema for considering the way in which selves are constructed in *Confirmation*. Chris frequently adopts different ‘I positions’ with regard to his ‘other’. His carrying a ‘pocket version’ of Glen around in his head with him indicates the presence of an ‘internal Glen’ as well as an ‘internal Chris’. His decision to ‘dress in a way that is unarguable, […] [i]n a white shirt and dark trousers’ – is an attempt to present a particular version of himself, or, one of his ‘I-positions’. In terms of the competing voices ‘inside’ him, one self likes Glen, sees himself in Glen, and another self abhors him. Thus, it is not just that Chris disagrees with Glen, but that parts of *himself* disagree with one another: ‘I can see him in me, and me in him. It’s what allows me to like him’ is contradicted by ‘you are fucking stupid and I dislike you’, for example[[209]](#footnote-210). Thorpe’s adoption of others’ voices means that these too become potential ‘I-positions’: as he sometimes literally ‘positions’ himself to take up a new voice, these ‘others’ can be viewed as parts of himself. In this ‘laboratory’ setting, Thorpe engages in a process of ‘testing’ various selves.

The very first speech of the piece begins like this:

In the British Legion Club, in the upstairs room, we are talking about what to wear for the demonstration.

And one man won’t shut up.

One man is saying, that the Pakistanis are cowards. They know the tide is turning, and it is now possible for a white to argue that they, the white, have been the victim of a racial attack. And this now protects white people because the Pakistanis, the Asians, are cowards, and for you and me, no matter how much they hate us, they are not prepared to do ten years in prison.

And the guy in charge says gently, wearily. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thanks John. Thanks. We know this[[210]](#footnote-211).

Although Thorpe initially tells us here that he is quoting someone, he soon after shifts fluidly into the first person to represent this BNP member’s words, in the process challenging the audience with pronouns - ‘you and me’ and ‘us’ – that in this context refer exclusively to white people. Immediately this shows the audience that Thorpe intends unapologetically to recreate extremist discourse verbatim, and, as in this example, provokes the audience to consider what it means not only to listen to such words but to be implicated by them. The above speech poses to them a question – do you accept John’s ‘you and me’ or do you reject it? John’s words as spoken by Thorpe that ‘[i]f we’re all to believe that we’re here for something’ thus has a double meaning: the audience is challenged to consider whether they are ‘here for something’ or present simply as passive bystanders. Thorpe recreates for the audience a dialogue that happened elsewhere – in the British Legion Club – and in doing so physically positions the audience within an approximation of that scenario. They can experience something of what it might be like to be in that environment listening to those words. In making the provocation of casting the spectators in the role of passive listeners of extremist right-wing discourse, he enters another sort of dialogue with the audience based on the question ‘what is your response to this kind of speech?’, and, indeed, ‘what kind of ‘you’ are you?’. In the same way that Rodenburg states that speaking is ‘a feeling act felt through our entire being’, in this context listening is a ‘feeling act’[[211]](#footnote-212). Although the audience stays silent, by directly implicating them with ‘you and me’ and ‘us’, in an unsettling version of Merleau-Ponty’s ‘shared operation’, they are provoked to experience the phenomenological inextricability of the speaking subject and the addressee[[212]](#footnote-213). Further, in the audience’s silence can be sensed the multiple possible responses to this address: Thorpe’s text works actively to seek a response.

### Liminal bodies, hauntings and dramaturgy

In Thorpe’s channelling of multiple voices, we are not always clear ‘who’ is speaking. If we follow Merleau-Ponty’s proposition that speech, and, indeed, consciousness, are embodied, there is a notable discontinuity in *Confirmation* between the words spoken and the body of the speaker. Two primary ‘characters’, Chris and Glen, are the focus of the narrative, but we never physically ‘see’ the latter. The events that make up Chris’s journey are represented on stage not in a direct, mimetic way, but are described to us by him. Thorpe is the conduit through which we encounter the work’s content; the story itself happens in the mind’s eye of the spectator. Glen, physically absent on stage, is experienced via the body of Thorpe, and a manipulation and experimentation with this discontinuity between material and immaterial selves occurs throughout the piece. The intimacy between the two men is enhanced by the latter’s absence. Glen and Thorpe’s/Chris’s relationship is a private, unseen one, communicated in a confessional manner by Thorpe to the audience. We know that Thorpe has met and spent time with him, but we know neither what he looks like nor his real name. Thorpe’s presence brings with it the trace of that relationship, and his body is the ‘vehicle’ through which we encounter Glen.

Thorpe invites an encounter with Glen through the bodies of certain audience members as well. He asks eight different spectators to read Glen’s words out loud down the microphone. He positions himself in a chair opposite his chosen audience member, hands them a card, and asks them to read: ‘Do you agree that the white working class gets demonized? That we throw around words like ‘chav’ in order to further social division and have someone to blame’, says one;‘what you need to know about me, is that I’m a proud National Socialist’ says another[[213]](#footnote-214). Severed from the body of the speaker who uttered them, and relocated in a new body, these participants experience the physical reality of another’s words, and the rest of the audience get to hear Glen’s words performed by different speakers. In the same way that Thorpe implicated the audience in the BNP meeting setting, he merges audience members here with Glen himself. By inviting them to take up an alternative ‘I’ position, this time he asks implicitly not ‘what kind of ‘you’ are you?’, but ‘what kind of ‘I’ are you?’.

Marvin Carlson, in his book *The Haunted Stage*, discusses ‘the recycled body and persona of the actor’, which, via the audience’s gaze, brings with it the trace of the actor’s previous roles or other actors who have played the role she is now playing. He calls this the ‘haunted body’[[214]](#footnote-215). In the context of *Confirmation*, Thorpe’s body and the bodies of the audience members who are invited to read may be understood as ‘haunted’ by Glen. Channelling Glen’s voice, but not ‘acting’ as him, means that these bodies are a between space in which two selves can merge: they are literally a ‘single fabric’ for two inter-relating subjects. If theatre works by ‘inviting us to see one set of things […] in terms of another’, then *Confirmation* invites us to see the absent Glen in terms of the present Chris[[215]](#footnote-216). Thorpe’s body is metaphor, a between space: belonging neither to Glen nor Chris, it is a liminal body.

As a figure, Glen engenders a sense of anticipation, foreboding or unpredictability, and his ‘ghostly’ qualities reinforce this. Chris at times describes a reasonable, almost likeable, Glen, but this is tempered by what we imagine him, someone who defends the actions of the mass murderer Anders Brevick, potentially to be capable of. Thorpe’s insistence that we can encounter Glen only indirectly means that the audience can continually construct and reconstruct him in their mind’s eye. The stage in *Confirmation* is a blank screen onto which an image of this man can be projected by both spectator and performer, and this allows Thorpe the opportunity to draw attention to the biases inherent in the way in which we build an idea of another person. By conjuring Glen’s presence in the room, but not fully representing it in a conventional actorly way, Thorpe succeeds in reflecting the way in which Glen’s ‘otherness’ is reliant on the viewer, how ‘I and Thou’ are intimately, and sometimes problematically, connected. Merleau-Ponty stipulates that

the perceived world endures only through the reflections, shadows, levels and horizons between things (which are not things are not nothing, but on the contrary mark out by themselves the fields of possible variation in the same thing and the same world)[[216]](#footnote-217) .

In light of the haunting, that which lies between Chris and Glen, and between the audience and Glen, is a ‘perceived world which endures only through the reflection, shadows, levels and horizons between things’. In the context of *Confirmation*, Glen is at the same time ‘not [a] thing[..]’ and ‘not nothing’.

Elaborating on his dialogical self theory, Hermans notes the emphasis on ‘spatially located interlocutors’ in terms of the positioning of selves[[217]](#footnote-218). He builds on Marvin Minsky’s theory of ‘society of mind’ to argue that

[t]he self does not only function as a mini-society but is, at the same time, an intrinsic part of macro-society. In this view, the self is not simply surrounded by society, which functions as an external determinant, but functions itself as a society of mind[[218]](#footnote-219)

In a reflection of this, and in light of my reading of subjectivity in *Confirmation*, I propose that the self functions as a ‘mini-dramaturgy’ and, at the same time, is an intrinsic part of the ‘macro-dramaturgy’. *Confirmation*’s dramaturgy is predicated on a spatial, active and material investigation of the relationships between selves, both embodied and disembodied. Chris works through his own mechanisms of subjectivity, and this process is writ large on the playing space, as he literally and metaphorically moves between selves using voice, body and space. His ‘internal dramaturgy’ reflects the ‘external dramaturgy’: both are dynamically composite entities, functioning as interactive relational networks. The theatre event can be understood as a mirror, a parallel composite structure, of the self as and in dialogue, and, crucially, both of these are predicated on betweenness, the interaction of various elements gives rise to meaning. The theatrical – or dramaturgical – environment is a unique one for ‘testing’ subjectivity. Chris states

My mind is the only place I can stand. I can’t stand outside it. I have to analyse it with itself. Which is a bit like trying to taste your own tongue.[[219]](#footnote-220)

Although this quote crystallises the protagonist’s frustration at the limits of his own subjectivity, his statement that ‘my mind is the only space I can stand’ may not be entirely true. Within a ‘dramaturgy of dialogue’, Chris has literally attempted to stand in the mind of Glen, and has invited his audience to do the same. The work’s dramaturgy is a shared ‘fabric’, an event-place in which ‘I’ positions may be ‘tried on’ by performer and audience, and where one can enter a dialogue with oneself and with present or absent ‘others’.

### The self as ‘wholeness in process’

Towards the end of the show, Chris speaks directly to the absent Glenn, using words that we are told were never spoken, and which are by turns conciliatory and assertive. This is the first time he addresses Glen directly, and it reads almost as a ‘breakup’ letter: it marks the end of their relationship and states the conclusion Chris has drawn from their encounter. The origin of the words is ambiguous and could be attributed either to Chris or to Glen:

I really want to be your friend

I want us all to be friends

I want a world in which it is possible for us all to be friends

I am diluting myself, talking to you.

I am losing myself and I can’t fight if I lose myself.

If I am reasonable enough.

If I listen enough.

If I feel I am being listened to enough.

It will seduce me.

And I need to guard my own certainty now because I’ve realised it helps me defend my tolerance.

There is only so much understanding in the world.

And if I am wasting that making myself more tolerant of you. Maybe I don’t want it.[[220]](#footnote-221)

Chris expresses the two men’s insurmountable differences. Although, in their mutual experience as perceiving selves, they have occupied a form of symmetry, the boundaries between them are ultimately retained. Having examined their points of connection and disconnection, Chris experiences a crisis of liberal identity: he reaches the paradoxical point at which the tolerant individual must become less tolerant in order to resist ‘dilution’. Ironically, Chris must resist a blending of selves so that he can remain open to other selves. In *Confirmation* it is in the between space of the liberal and his ‘other’ that this struggle is fought over and an impasse reached. As Matt Trueman puts it:

the question is how much you tolerate intolerance – and at a certain point, Thorpe has to back away and retreat to his trench. Better no change, than change for the worse’[[221]](#footnote-222).

Difference is, in the end, reinforced: for Thorpe, ethically speaking, this trumps their similarities. As he says, ‘[i]f that was the conclusion to all this – that even people you disagree with are complicated – it would have been a fucking waste of time’[[222]](#footnote-223). Although, as I have attempted to show, *Confirmation* is predicated on the inter-dependence of subjects, and is concerned with examining the spaces between them, ultimately Chris’s own delineated subjectivity is shored up. By the end of the piece, he has adopted a definite position to state that he *does* find Glen’s views intolerable. Even though he has subjected the boundaries of his subjectivity to a rigorous process of interrogation, he emerges from the show with them intact. The piece presents a confident authorial self, but that self is shown to be constantly in the process of being made in the context of a ‘macro’ and ‘mini’ dramaturgy. The self in *Confirmation* is a ‘wholeness in process’: Chris’s - and Thorpe’s - voice is continually reconfigured in relation to external and internal selves, but nevertheless retains an authority.

### Conclusion

I have argued that Confirmation has a ‘dramaturgy of dialogue’. In a ‘laboratory’ setting, it investigates the ‘I-Thou’’ dynamic: speaking subjects are set in relation with one another to create a shared ‘fabric’ of reality. Voices are not necessarily aligned with single subjects or bodies. Rather, multiple voices compete and intertwine, and, in doing so, negotiate the limits of subjectivity between them. These dialogic structures allow Thorpe, and his audience, to explore the constitution of their own subjectivity and the between spaces of selves. *Confirmation* plays with the boundary between the present figure of Chris and the absent figure of Glen: Thorpe’s body literally becomes the ‘shared fabric’ of Chris and Glen’s inter-subjectivity in a form of ‘haunting’. Thus, *Confirmation*’s dramaturgy is predicated on betweenness: it is from the between spaces of subjects that meaning arises. Although subjective boundaries are questioned, and shown to be in flux, the performer’s body is not just a vehicle for a decontextualized voice. It does not, in a manner often associated with postmodernism, present a subject that is ‘so fragmented, multiple and dispersed that the symbolic consistency and narrative texture of experience disintegrates’[[223]](#footnote-224). Rather, the self is situated in a process of negotiation and renegotiation against which it defines itself: it is ‘wholeness in process’. Merleau-Ponty’s ‘single fabric’ of inter-subjectivity and Human’s ‘dialogical self’ are reified in *Confirmation*: the weave of the dramaturgy is at work on multiple levels, echoing the dynamic structures of the self in the dynamic structures of the live performance event so that subjectivity can be physically tested.

## THEORY, Part Four: Between us and them in Breach Theatre’s *Tank* (2016)

Breach Theatre is a company founded by Warwick University graduates Dorothy Allen-Pickard, Billy Barrett and Ellice Stevens who, since 2015, have made four critically acclaimed shows. Their first, *The Beanfield*, explored state violence and civic freedom in the context of the 1985 brutal police oppression of those gathering for the annual Stonehenge Free Festival. Their most recent piece, *It’s True, It’s True, It’s True* (2018) restaged the 1612 trial of Agostino Tassi for the rape of gifted baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, using verbatim text and devised material to consider how much has changed in the execution of rape trials. Their work blends documentary video and devised theatre in a ‘signature deconstructed style’[[224]](#footnote-225) that has been described as ‘theatrically ambitious and boldly political’[[225]](#footnote-226). *Tank*, their second show and the subject of my analysis, tells the story of an ill-fated NASA-funded experiment in the 1960s, headed by the eccentric John Lilly, to teach dolphins to speak English. The company uses a combination of verbatim text from tape recordings of Margaret Lovatt - a ‘young college drop-out’ who worked with Lilly on the project - and their own devised material. As in their other pieces, this material constitutes a self-conscious ‘filling in the gaps’, so that if historical accuracy is a quality of the work, so too is an acknowledgment of the questionable nature of making claims to truth[[226]](#footnote-227). As in *Confirmation*, the performers are engaged more with the act of telling than showing, moving fluidly from their own interpretations – ‘April 1963. And if it were a movie, it would look like this…’ - to verbatim speech taken from recordings of Margaret and her colleagues during the experiment – ‘Today is July 22nd, I’m with Peter, a.m. lesson’[[227]](#footnote-228). Each actor moves between speaking as ‘her/himself’ – referred to in the script (and by me) as Victoria, Ellice, Joe and Craig - and as a designated ‘character’ in the story – Peter (a dolphin), Pam (a dolphin), John Lilly and Margaret. The performers, Joe Boylan, Craig Hamilton, Ellice Stevens, Victoria Watson, who I will refer to by surnames, are helped by limited costume and props to indicate their character: Boylan (as Peter) wears a rubber dolphin head in the latter half of the show and Watson (as Margaret) wears a black swimsuit. The sparse stage is set with chairs and a table upon which are two microphones; words spoken into the microphones indicates the speaking of verbatim text. At the back of the stage, a projector screen intermittently shows underwater video footage of Boylan and Watson – perhaps ‘as’ Margaret and Peter – in a swimming pool together. The sound track is 1960s psychedelia, with the company sometimes performing accompanying choreography, to set the scene and to give the work a dreamy, hallucinogenic vibe.

### A Dramaturgy of Dialogue in *Tank*

The subject matter of the piece is itself verbal communication: it is the story of an experiment in which dolphins are ‘taught’ to speak English. The very first words we hear are John Lilly’s, from his book *The Mind of the Dolphin* (1967), spoken by Hamilton into the microphone:

[humans] can [..] develop what has been termed “fear of the stranger” or “xenophobia”. The projection of one’s fears outward onto the unknown or the unfamiliar creates a dangerous communication paralysis. In the modern world, with its bombs and threats of extinction, we must carefully examine our best means of communication from group to ever larger group. We can no longer allow the glass walls that have risen between us to exist[[228]](#footnote-229).

Lilly proposes that communication can occur across species and intimates that an inability to expand the mind is the cause of the ‘glass walls’ between dolphins and humans. It is these claims that Breach Theatre take to task in the piece: *Tank* investigates and critiques a US state-funded project whose ostensibly scientific, progressive and visionary aims mask an act of colonialist oppression and desire to conquer and ‘educate’ the other. ‘Don’t even think in your own language’ Margaret instructs Peter at one point, ‘English, all the time!’[[229]](#footnote-230). The ‘conversation’ between Margaret and Peter is at the centre of the narrative, and, as in *Confirmation*, there are two main strands comprising a representation of that dialogue (through verbatim text) intersected with an ongoing commentary on it. The mode in which the story is presented can be understood also as a ‘dramaturgy of dialogue’. As in *Confirmation*, we are invited to see the stage space as a democratic and open space of debate and conversation. The four performers enter the stage and take glasses of water from a water cooler, as if gathering for a meeting. They have an easy manner, they seem to be ‘themselves’. Set with desks, microphones and chairs, the stage environment, like Chris Thorpe’s ‘laboratory’, is a place of collaborative working, in which ideas might be spoken, modified, contested and agreed upon. The company uses a conversational style throughout the piece, which evokes a sense of live collaborative discovery. At the beginning, this is used to explain to the audience the techniques that will be used to tell the story: Joe explains, for example, that voice modulation software will be used to change the performers’ voices to dolphin-speak, that the company will be ‘doing – or at the very least trying’ American accents, and that a rubber dolphin mask will be worn to represent Peter[[230]](#footnote-231).

Although Mikhail Bakhtin states categorically that he views the theatre as monologic rather than dialogic[[231]](#footnote-232), scholars have nevertheless noted and demonstrated that making the connection between Bakhtin’s theory – which constantly references liveness - and performance seems too fruitful a scholarly opportunity to pass up on[[232]](#footnote-233). Overall, Bakhtin’s insistence on plurality shows that, like Merleau-Ponty, he sees the world as inherently relational. Like phenomenology, dialogism can be described as a philosophy which consciously focuses on and sees value in betweenness. The interweaving of subjective agency described by Merleau-Ponty is specifically manifested in Bakhtinian thought as ‘dialogue’. This underlying principle refers to voices as they speak to, inform and shape one another in a continuous process. As Bakhtin says, ‘[a]n essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its addressivity. […] the utterance has both an author […] and an addressee’[[233]](#footnote-234). The view of the subject as inextricably linked to others through the process of dialogue, makes, as Pearce and Waugh explain, the ‘Bakhtinian subject […] an introvertibly social subject’ that is ‘formed through an ongoing process of dialogic exchange with his or her various interlocutors’[[234]](#footnote-235). Dialogue need not always refer to human speakers, however, as Valentinin Voloshinov, one of the ‘Bakhtin circle’[[235]](#footnote-236), explains:

[it] can also be understood in a broader sense, meaning not only direct, face-to-face, vocalized verbal communication between persons, but also verbal communication of any type whatsoever’[[236]](#footnote-237).

The notion of dialogue in its ‘broader sense’ can be understood as intertextuality, now a familiar tenet of poststructuralist critical theory. The embodied nature of speech is another principal element of Bakhtin’s theory: ‘only the contact between the language meaning and the concrete reality that takes place in the utterance can create the spark of expression’, he argues[[237]](#footnote-238). Where Merleau-Ponty describes the interweaving of a ‘fabric’ between subjects, he outlines a ‘polyphony’ of voices which come together in ‘a will to combine many wills, a will to the event’[[238]](#footnote-239). Although Bakhtin is referring to the novel here, it is his notion of a ‘will to the event’ that I draw on as a pertinent analogy for *Tank*’s ‘dramaturgy of process’.

A primary dialogue of *Tank* is that which takes place between the four narrators, Ellice, Victoria, Craig and Joe. Rather than offering a single interpretation of the story, the performers engage in a dialogue through which they negotiate various possible ways forward for the narrative, clarifying and editing details as they proceed. Peter Womack informatively summarises dialogic interaction as follows:

our ideas are not so much the legitimate creation of our minds as the by-product of our interactions. It is when I am animated by the act of talking to someone that my soul, or my tongue, or something in between the two, is impelled to invent. My idea arises not from my contemplation of the world, but from the fact that, having started, I have to get to the end somehow, and I am both stimulated by the implications of my last sentence and under pressure to come up with my next one[[239]](#footnote-240).

In line with Womack’s argument, the ‘ideas’ in Tank are principally the result of the narrators’ interactions. In the mutual act of talking, the story unfolds as though it were ‘invented’ and individual utterances are always made in response to or in anticipation of another’s words. For example, in this exchange, the performers consider Margaret’s arrival at the research centre:

Vicky: And Margaret, she’s full of expectation

Ellice: Right, *anticipation*, because

Vicky: Because she’s at the start of this new adventure at a New Frontier, And she’s… a pioneer

Ellice: A pioneer

Joe: Yes

Ellice: I love that

Craig: That’s perfect. The car door slams shut – (*music stops*)

Vicky: And Margaret she takes long swinging strides up the drive. Her heels sinking into the gravel.

Ellice: Not heels, impractical, she’s wearing sturdy flats. [[240]](#footnote-241)

Although not always in agreement, the speakers are in service of the collaborative process of finding meaning: individual viewpoints are less important than the mutual task of listening, responding, modifying and elaborating in order to progress the narrative. Although the words are scripted, the impression given to the audience is that the story is being spontaneously created through dialogue. Womack describes the speakers’ desire to ‘get to the end’, and, indeed, the narrators appear to be on a journey through the narrative. Throughout *Tank*, implicit in its dialogic structure is the ‘will to combine many wills, a will to the event’: the speakers are self-consciously engaged in the act of storytelling, and it is this that drives the dramaturgy forward.

If, as Voloshinov states, dialogue refers ‘not only [to] direct, face-to-face, vocalized verbal communication between persons, but also [to] verbal communication of any type whatsoever’, then a dialogue between the narrators and the material can be observed[[241]](#footnote-242). As Joe and Ellice explain at the beginning:

Ellice: The tapes tell a story, but it’s only a part of a story.

Joe: We only have fragments. Just glimpses. The tapes tell facts –

Ellice: But we’re filling in the gaps. Piecing it together. [[242]](#footnote-243)

The storytellers approach the status of the original tapes cautiously, indicating their own role in ‘piecing together’ the verbatim material. Rather than making an implicit claim that they will present an authoritative version of the ‘facts’, they foreground their own role in the shaping of truth through the selecting, interpreting and editing processes. In ‘filling in the gaps’, the narrators offer multiple possibilities for details of the narrative. Margaret’s car, for example, is variously imagined as a red Corvette, a Volkswagen Beetle and a black Mustang, depending on who is speaking. Moral, as well as aesthetic elements, of the narrative are negotiated dialogically. A ‘lesson’ between Pam, one of the dolphins, and Margaret is represented in the sixth scene. Stevens and Watson sit at the table, speaking into the microphones, ‘as’ Pam and Margaret, while Craig and Joe stand downstage, discussing the details. Craig describes how the skin on Pam’s back has become dry and painful where there isn’t enough water to cover it. Joe offers his interpretation, suggesting that Pam’s back bears open wounds:

Joe: The blood is congealing now like a can of red paint spilt in the sun, baked into a solid sheet. Right there. The blood begins to drip down her sides into the tank, with all the piss and shit, the rotting uneaten fish around her [..] all that filth and decay gets into her eyes, up her nose, down her throat.

Craig: Down her – Sorry, I don’t think there’s blood.

Joe: No?

Craig: No, I think Margaret notices the back is sore, but there’s no blood. She’s not a monster.

Joe: Okay, nobody’s calling her a monster. She cares about Pam. So she pushes water over, trying to keep it wet.

Craig: Realises the water actually needs to be a bit deeper.

Joe: Sixteen inches. Whilst perfect for a human –

Craig: For a dolphin, not so much.[[243]](#footnote-244)

For a moment, Joe’s rather gruesome version of the story looks like it might be agreed upon by Craig, but instead he interrupts. He reasons that this interpretation is too extreme – ‘she’s not a monster’ – and the two of them subsequently compromise on a more moderate explanation. Here, and throughout *Tank*, the narrators make judgements and offer interpretations via consensus, with extreme or outlandish views subject to modification. The dialogue between the performers and the material is not just manifested verbally. Boylan, as Peter, wears, in the latter half of the show, black swimming shorts and a latex dolphin head. This obviously unrealistic representation of the dolphin reminds us that he is in a process of constructing Peter in a manner that may or may not be truthful: as viewed by the audience, the actor enters a non-verbal dialogic negotiation with the character he is representing.

The dialogue that unfolds between the performers, and between performers and their material, extends to the audience. In reflection of Chris Thorpe’s ‘laboratory’ theatre, the title of the piece connotes a space of experimentation in which a fish or animal may be kept and observed. In staging the narrative as contingent and open to interpretation, the company clearly invites their audience to observe and create their own version of ‘the facts’. Bakhtin stipulates that for a dialogic mode to be in play, an addressee need not respond in the moment:

an utterance is not always followed immediately by an articulated response. An actively responsive understanding of what is heard [..] can remain, for the time being, a silent responsive understanding [..] this is, so to speak, responsive understanding with a delayed reaction. Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener[[244]](#footnote-245).

By this logic, although the audience are not invited to speak during the show, they are actively engaged in a dialogue with the company.

These various sets of dialogues – between the narrators, between the narrators and the material, and between the narrators and the audience – all can be said to be in service of ‘the will to combine many wills, the will to the event’. Dispersed between these many speakers and addressees is a shared ‘fabric’ of experience, to use Merleau-Ponty’s phrase, as the story unfolds in real time. Although the narrators speak ‘to’ the material, in the sense that they shape it, it also speaks ‘back’ to them: they are concerned with representing it appropriately. The dialogue with the ‘truth’ is elicited by the critical distance the company consistently inserts between themselves, as authors, and the story that they are telling. The co-existence of many speakers, listeners and, indeed versions of the narrative, means that a single, authoritative version of the story is resisted. This dialogic structure equates to a dramaturgy of process. As in *We Want You to Watch*, the company allow elements of altering, editing and reflecting to be represented within the narrative as it unfolds. The critical distance inserted between the performers and their material constantly draws attention to their presence as authors engaged in the process of meaning-making, and the collaborative aspect of the story reminds us of the need for multiple voices to negotiate and agree on a creative trajectory.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 14: Joe Boylan and Victoria Watson as Peter and Margaret

### The limits of the speaking self in Tank

As in *Confirmation*, *Tank* not only stages a series of dialogues, it invites a consideration of the boundaries between speaking subjects, and how these might be negotiated. At the centre of the piece is a relationship, not between two men this time, but between a human and a dolphin. In this relationship, Margaret tries to teach Peter to understand and speak English, a process to which we gain insight by hearing Watson and Boylan speaking the verbatim text from the original recordings. In the first half of the show, they are seated upstage at the desk, facing one another and speaking into microphones:

Margaret Now let’s go back. Listen. Ball.

Peter *Tries.*

Margaret No!

Peter *Tries.*

Margaret Ball.

Peter *Tries.*

Margaret No! Ball. Ball. Ball.

Peter *Tries.*

Craig She throws the ball to the far side of the pool.

Ellice Pronunciation and comprehension. That’s what she’s looking for here. She wants him to say the word “ball” back to her, and then fetch it when asks – show he understands what “ball” actually is. [[245]](#footnote-246)

Where the script indicates that Peter ‘tries’, Boylan speaks into the microphone using voice modulation software which makes his voice sound a little like a dolphin’s non-verbal squeaks and clicks. Several of these sessions are recreated in this manner in the first half. As the narrative progresses, however, the relationship between Peter and Margaret increases in tension, and culminates in the story of their living together full time. Feeling that the lessons are not progressing quickly enough, we are told, Lilly and Margaret flood the laboratory with water, to create an environment in which she can sleep, eat and live alongside Peter. As Joe describes the changes that are made – ‘Furniture moved. Wallpaper stripped. Thick white plaster pasted onto walls. A hose, coming in through a window, filling an office thigh-high with water’ - Craig uses a length of white tape to mark out a ‘floor plan’ of the laboratory space[[246]](#footnote-247). ‘This is it,’ he remarks, shortly after, ‘what it’s all been building towards. Margaret and Peter living together’[[247]](#footnote-248). Joe and Victoria change into swimming gear and enter the marked-out area, which, in an echo of the configuration in *Confirmation*, is reminiscent of a boxing ring. They circle one another, eyes locked, as if connected by an invisible thread. With Craig and Ellice standing outside and commenting on the action, the space appears to be set for the renegotiation of boundaries between dolphin and human. Perhaps the most well-known and controversial element of the story is the alleged sexual relationship between Margaret and Peter, which may have been romantically inspired or simply functional:

ELLICE […] She can hardly stand to watch anymore and she reaches a point where she needs to do something about her fear, about Peter’s aggression. […] So Margaret needs to find a way to help Peter out.

CRAIG Yeah, and she does this by just wanking off his massive, great big dolphin cock.

ELLICE No that’s not what it is.

CRAIG It’s what happened though.

ELLICE No – what she does – it made sense. She was feeding him, teaching him, living with him. This didn’t seem like that far of a stretch. It was about what was best for the lessons. For both of them. It wasn’t a big deal.[[248]](#footnote-249)

Learning of the sexual aspect and observing Peter and Margaret as they interact in this enclosed space suggests the relationship as all-consuming. Locked together in an inescapable dynamic, and physically in much closer proximity, the limits of Margaret’s and Peter’s subjectivity looks set to be reconfigured through their own ‘I-Thou’ dynamic.

Craig and Ellice explain that, as the two spend more time together, Margaret finds Peter increasingly unmanageable, and the environment more and more uncomfortable. Inside the taped-out area, Joe’s physicality reflects this as he takes on an aggressive physical stance. He begins to do exercises, bouncing on his feet and bobbing and weaving a little, as if warming up for a fight, and he sits in the corner of the square, as a boxer would in the ring. The relationship of Victoria’s/Margaret’s and Joe’s/Peter’s bodies within the ‘ring’ as they move around one another on stage demonstrates the vying of verbal and non-verbal elements as Margaret persists in ‘teaching’ him English, which Peter responds to with physical aggression and animalistic behaviour. Ellice and Craig now narrate the action by speaking directly to Victoria and Joe: ‘Now you’ve made the water deeper you find difficult to even walk across the flooded room. It’s like wading through concrete’, says Ellice to Victoria[[249]](#footnote-250), and this is made worse by Peter being ‘always around, following you underfoot [..] like a petulant toddler holding on to her ankles’[[250]](#footnote-251). Peter, as a character, begins to acquire a potency that was absent in the first half: there is an element of power, a sense that there is something at stake, some ground to be fought over and won. In this transformation, Peter’s ‘otherness’ gradually becomes more obvious. His combative physicality elicits a sense of unpredictability and unknowability as his status as an animal ‘other’ is foregrounded.

During this scene, Ellice and Craig address Victoria and Joe in the ‘ring’ as ‘you’ in a manner that echoes a director speaking to an actor in rehearsal:

Ellice: You aren’t sleeping because Peter, frustrated, splashes you throughout the night.

Craig: You drape a shower curtain around your bed so that it stays dry.[[251]](#footnote-252)

It is as though the director gives the actor details about his or her character so she can better understand. Ellice goes on to ask Victoria about what Peter ‘wants’, a question that hints at the method acting technique which identifies a character’s motivation.

Ellice: [..] What do you think Margaret? Don’t look at me, look at him. Looking at him right there, what do you think he’s thinking about? Is it the words?

Victoria: I don’t know.

Craig: Okay.

Victoria: I think – maybe he wants – I think he wants to swim over to me.[[252]](#footnote-253)

This technique draws attention to the separation between the actor and character and the projection of the character onto the actor’s body. It also highlights the way in which speech actively constructs subjects and the powerful implication of the pronoun ‘you’. As Craig and Ellice address the two others, the identities of the bodies on stage become ambiguous. The ‘you’ of the character or the ‘you’ of the actor begin to meld. Similarly, the video projections on screen overhead show Boylan and Watson, perhaps ‘as’ Margaret and Peter or perhaps ‘as’ Victoria and Joe in a swimming pool. In this way, the ‘you’ is refracted, shown to be unstable and dislocated, and reliant on the viewer, or the ‘I’. Earlier in the narrative, Ellice mentions that ‘Margaret sees something of herself in [Peter]’, and this is key to the way in which Peter is represented by the company[[253]](#footnote-254). The critical distance between actor and character – what we see is a man in a dolphin mask - serves to remind us that he is a human projection. What we see on stage is not a dolphin, but the *idea* of one; like Margaret, we ‘see ourselves’ in Peter. In light of this, the possibility of an inter-subjective relationship between animal and human, as imagined by John Lilly, looks increasingly untenable.

### Dialogue and dominance

There are two different definitions of ‘subject’, where the older meaning relates to the subject as moulded or shaped by a more powerful being – as in ‘the King’s subjects’ – and the modern meaning of the subject as an autonomous being, capable of power and intent. Mark Fortier remarks that ‘the first sense of subject gives the lie to the second, or at least indicates its profound limitations’[[254]](#footnote-255), and this relationship is pertinent to an analysis of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity in *Tank*. Although John Lilly’s project intends for Margaret and Peter to communicate with one another and for the ‘glass walls’ between them to be broken down, ostensibly in pursuit of equality, Peter is in fact completely subjected. ‘Don’t even think in your own language’ exclaims Margaret, ‘English, all the time!’. Rather than being allowed to be an autonomous individual, he is subject to the projections of his human captors and to Margaret’s whims and desires. Lilly’s project pre-supposes a dialogue between Margaret and Peter, but their relationship is not based on equality. Instead of speaking subjects being continually formed by one another in dialogue, the process is one way only. Peter is a human projection, Margaret, the actors and the audience see ‘something of [themselves] in him’.

As in *Confirmation*, an absent ‘other’ in *Tank* is configured and reconfigured on stage through spoken dialogue and action. *Confirmation* takes as its central relationship the contact between two subjects. While we only come to understand Glen through Chris, we get the impression that he is an autonomous being in the world and that the two men have met as equals. In *Tank*, on the other hand, the central relationship is not an equal meeting of subjects. Rather, it tells a story of colonisation, dominance and co-option. Lilly’s arrogant belief that the ‘glass walls’ between humanity and the animal kingdom can be overcome obscures the ultimately oppressive nature of the relationship. In *Tank*, Breach satirise Lilly’s claim and point to an idealistic but misguided understanding of dialogue and the potentially exploitative nature of all communication.

Breach Theatre use absence to comment on the politics of representing and relating to the other. They take care not to speak *for* Peter. When Peter ‘speaks’, Boylan speaks into a microphone and his voice is distorted using sound modulation software, meaning that Peter’s ‘voice’ is always a version of human voice even while it is made to sound alien. In Peter’s representation, there is a continual acknowledgement that the way in which he is constructed for the audience is the product of human imagination and projection, rather than an actual insight into his mind. In the section where Peter is given LSD by John Lilly, the lights dim, typical 1960s track plays and the company begin to dance a series of languorous moves. The reference here is very clearly to a recreational drug use human experience of LSD. The gap between this and what we can only imagine to be the dolphin’s experience points to the ultimate unknowability of the dolphin self.

When Peter/Joe and Margaret/Victoria are in the ‘ring’ or the tank together, Ellice asks Victoria how Peter might be feeling towards Margaret. At first it seems as though we are going to be allowed an insight into his mind, a judgment about what he might be thinking: ‘I think he wants to swim over to me […] to swim over to me and start nuzzling my legs’[[255]](#footnote-256), but this quickly turns into an absurd fantasy about Peter becoming aggressive towards her and eventually murdering her, dragging her out onto the beach and sticking a flag pole through her and lighting her on fire in front of news cameras before hundreds of other dolphins who have learned to walk emerge from the sea and stone her to death. The narrators, trying to imagine Peter’s hostile feelings towards his captor, have anthropomorphised him to the point of absurdity. The image of the flag pole is significant because it suggests a colonisation or conquering of the other.

Towards the end of the piece, the speaking subjects – Margaret and Peter - are no longer distinct. We hear the words ‘Speak when I speak. Speak when I speak. Say what I say. Say what I say.’. Having previously occupied a combative dynamic, there is now a submission: Peter’s voice has been fully co-opted. This is an indicator of the arrogance of the oppressor, whose ostensibly progressive desire to teach dolphins to speak English, was in fact a colonialising exercise. As Joe explains:

[b]ut really though, I didn’t make any progress. Not in the ten weeks, not in the whole five years. Listen to the tapes and actually hear improvement. It is really difficult. My oration, it’s basically the same in 1967 as it is in 63. You have to really search for anything, even a few seconds, that sounds just a little bit like human speech. Most of the time, it’s just noise[[256]](#footnote-257).

At the end, an unspeaking cowboy figure appears and looks over the stage as we hear Margaret’s final speech and fires a gun at Joe/Peter who coughs up blood taken from a clearly visible blood pack. This suggests Peter’s total exploitation within the project and his effacement by a process in which it is hoped he will speak ‘English, all the time’[[257]](#footnote-258).

The ending of the piece suggests that the ostensibly dialogic mode adopted by the narrators could be called into question. The inter-subjectivity of Margaret and Peter is based on dominance, co-option and projection: the potential for dialogue is subsumed by a single dominating voice. Similarly, whether there has truly been a dialogic exchange between the narrators is unclear in light of the fact that their narration has relied heavily on movie and popular culture tropes. Craig, for example, speculates on how Margaret would react in her first meeting with John Lilly: ‘and now Margaret would say this one killer line that sums up her whole devil-may-care, no guts no glory, gun-slinger’[[258]](#footnote-259). Rather than empathising with Margaret, Craig here uses an incongruous description more fitting of a character in a Western. Similarly, as they narrate the action, the following exchange occurs between Joe and Victoria in a reference to David Bowie’s song ‘Space Oddity’:

Joe: Margaret, helmet on, makes the long walk to the capsule to get back in touch with ground control Major John

Victoria: John? John? Come in John? Can you hear me John?[[259]](#footnote-260)

Shortly afterwards Victoria takes on the persona of an American cheerleader as she imagines Margaret’s request that she live together with the dolphins: ‘John, I was like looking at the dolphins today and I was like wouldn’t it be cool if we took one of them and put it in a room and I was there too and was like its mother and stuff?[[260]](#footnote-261). These references to popular, and particularly to American, culture appear throughout, in a way that positions the narrators as conduits for larger cultural discourses with certain value systems. In light of this, the relationship with the ‘truth’ is undermined as well-worn tropes obscure meaning: the narrators may simply have been invested in telling an entertaining rather than a truthful story. The story of the subjection of dolphin by human thus acts as a parallel for the way in which the speaker is subjected by cultural discourse.

### The author-self and an ‘anxiety of authorship’

In its construction of the subject, *Tank* can be read as having a potentially unsettled relationship with authorship. The fluidity of the subject and its vulnerability to influence – represented by both Peter’s subjection and by the narrators’ channelling of popular culture discourses - can be understood as an ‘anxiety of authorship’, a restless doubt about the authority of the author-self. The piece represents a testing of the basis for taking an authorial position, in the same way that *Confirmation* tests the composition of subjectivity more generally. There is a significant amount of anxiety around assuming and maintaining authority in relation to the story being told:

Craig So on one level then, it’s this love story

Ellice Is that what we’re saying?

Craig It’s what we’ve been saying, yes.

Ellice I don’t remember ever having explicitly agreed on that

Craig OK, but on one level, it’s this odd couple love story, about a woman and this, this other, overcoming difference together.

Ellice Co-existence

Craig Exactly

Ellice OK, but on one level, it’s just that it’s not only that, is it?[[261]](#footnote-262)

In this example and others, the narrators appear to be paranoid that they are including all possibilities, and even have become forgetful about what they have said thus far. They are hesitant about committing to a single version or interpretation of the story. Although part of this hesitancy amounts to the representation of collaborative creative process, it can also be read as a reluctance to settle on an authorial stance. There is no ‘end’ to speak of, no resolution in terms of the story of Margaret and Peter – ‘[y]eah there’s no fanfare’, remarks Joe, ‘No love-conquers-all. No “you’ll never take me alive”. That’s it. It just ends’[[262]](#footnote-263). In a dialogue between Craig and Ellice about how to frame the story and what conclusions might be drawn, the only thing they can be certain of it seems, is that Peter was fed fish, which he needed to survive:

Ellice: That’s the whole thing. Margaret can say “ball, ball, ball” as many times as she likes, and Peter might eventually make a noise that sounds close to “ball”, but that doesn’t mean he *means* ball.

Craig: Okay, but even if he’s not getting the language, he’s getting something.

Ellice: So what does he get?

Craig: Fish.

Ellice: Sure, he gets the fish.

Craig: He likes the fish.

Ellice: Needs the fish.

Craig: Needs it. Grateful for it[[263]](#footnote-264).

Similarly, as the company describes Margaret’s departure from the lab, the referral to popular media discourse abruptly ceases. Unlike Margaret’s earlier car, which frequently changed make and colour according to the whims of the narrators, the truck that she now drives is colourless and there is no music coming from the stereo to set the scene. Details on these aspects are not offered by the narrators:

Vicky It’s shut down. The dolphins are placed into individual glass tanks and lowered into a truck

Joe A truck along a winding coastal road.

Vicky What colour is the truck?

Joe I don’t know. And blazing out of the stereo it’s…

Vicky Nothing. Just noise. And there’s scenery, deserts, greenery, mountains. It’s difficult to make anything out, everything is out of focus.[[264]](#footnote-265)

The narrators have reached an impasse: it is as though they are not ‘receiving’ the images or they are now ‘out of focus’. Combined with the lack of conclusions, it might seem as though the authorial voice(s) in *Tank* have stuttered and stammered until they have finally given up. If nothing original can be said, then why speak at all?

However, what is framed partially as a narrative failure can be understood, in another way, as a success. The narrators’ ceasing to channel the popular culture discourse can be read a form of authorial assertion. Although they acknowledge their own subjection, as speakers, to cultural and political discourses, they exercise a certain amount of agency within that. There is the suggestion that the media tropes that they recount are an inevitable part of storytelling, a pre-requisite for a story in our contemporary time. The appearance of the cowboy figure at the end who ‘shoots’ Joe/Peter, despite the breaking of the illusion with a blood pack being positioned and burst on his chest, is a definite critical and authorial statement about the oppression of Peter by an American culture based on a colonializing impulse dressed up as ‘progress’. Whatever Breach Theatre do not know, they know *this*. In a manner reminiscent of *We Want You to Watch*, they ‘consciously commit[…] [themselves] to an impossible possibility’[[265]](#footnote-266). The piece, while acknowledging a lack of sovereignty over language and an inter-textuality that could be described as postmodern, *at the same time* are invested in taking an authorial and ethical position.

### Conclusion

*Tank*, like *Confirmation*, investigates the relationship of self and other. In both, a central relationship is represented on stage, a relationship in which the boundary between the two speakers is changeable and negotiable. The dialogue between them represents a tussle for subjective position, and the stage space is a ‘laboratory’ for working out and working on the subject. Two speakers are locked into a kind of one-on-one dialogic combat; the dialogic process is an intimate dance between two people locked into a process of connection and repulsion as the possibility of their merging completely looks more and less likely by turns. However, in *Tank*, the self is considered more abstractly than in *Confirmation*, as either something that may be unknowable – in the case of Peter – or something that may oppress and dominate an other – in the case of Margaret or John Lilly, the Western colonisers. The forces of power and oppression are revealed to be part of inter-subjectivity, and the difficulties in representing the other are shown. Nevertheless, whilst the work deconstructs authority and presents an ‘anxiety of authorship’, the company are committed to making an authorial statement. Within a dramaturgy that foregrounds its own process through a dialogic mode, authorship is shown to be subject to deconstruction but in the process of asserting itself.

In *Confirmation*, dialogue has an oppositional, dialectic, quality in which the two subjects, although related and in process, are consistently boundaried. The ‘other’ is, to some extent, knowable, and the subjects occupy a binary opposition, even as they are constantly reconfigured. This gives the dramaturgy a forceful dynamic quality. In *Tank*, dialogue has a much more collaborative and intertextual aspect, and the piece has a darker, dreamier quality. The foundation of ‘I-Thou’ that was upheld in *Confirmation* is unsettled by the potential effacement of the ‘other’ through representation. References to film and popular media narratives are used throughout, and the dialogue between authorial voice and cultural discourse is demonstrated, so that, where *Confirmation* has an inward focus (a society of mind), *Tank* is a look outwards at the dynamic structure of cultural and political textuality. Crucially, the fluidity and fragmentation of subjectivity that we see in both pieces does not amount to a self that is ‘so fragmented, multiple and dispersed that the symbolic consistency and narrative texture of experience disintegrates’ or that the self does not ultimately have a unified aspect[[266]](#footnote-267). On the contrary, both pieces stage a dialogue between self and other that, despite its deconstructive approach to the subject, also shores up the possibility of an authoritative author-self. In *Confirmation*, the point at which the subject should assert the parameters of its identity to protect itself from irrevocable compromise is the narrative climax of Chris’ story. In *Tank*, the narrators refuse to continue their embellished cinematic narrative, and although this creates an impasse or moment of stasis, the image of the cowboy with the gun is a powerful and authoritative point about the events which have been related.

## PRACTICE: Part Two

### Transition and relationality

In line with my consideration of how the object undergoes transition through brokenness, and through its representation in performance, I began to investigate other forms of mutation, change and translation in my creative work. This was part of a developing understanding of dramaturgy as inherently relational, an active structure predicated on betweenness. *The Way of Things*, as with my MPhil piece *As Good as New*, took place in a gallery space. I used this setting because I wanted to ‘bridge’, to borrow Giguere’s phrase, two art forms- visual art and performance – together into an active relationship[[267]](#footnote-268). I wanted to see how these two forms might change through their engagement with one another, and if, like art objects themselves, how their semantic boundaries might be loosened. Dramaturgical thinking invites a critical view of categories of art making, and works can use their dramaturgies to investigate or subvert these categories, as in *Worktable*, which sits between performance and art installation.

For *The Way of Things* I found a very appropriate site – a light, slightly dilapidated gallery space in an old industrial unit in Sheffield. The blank whiteness of the gallery normally acts as a curatorial space. It brings together art works; it is a relatively, unnoticed marginal space. By setting the piece here, and in the end by putting no material art works in it at all, I was able to investigate the dramaturgical nature of the holding space, to reposition a marginal space at the centre. I have already discussed my intention to respond to traditional dramaturgical marginality by focussing on and celebrating betweenness, and my use of site in *The Way of Things* is a practical manifestation of this aim. The relationship between the object and its immediate context (as expressed by the exhibit and gallery space relationship) is a between space that I have focussed on throughout my practical and theoretical work. Indeed, it is an analogy for the relationship between the dramaturgical object and the processes which bring it into being, between the two main senses of dramaturgy. In the same way as the exhibit and surrounding space exist in tension with, shape and can be read within one another, so too can the dramaturgical object and its accompanying processes. This relationship can be understood as a ‘dramaturgy of process’, a phenomenon that I have already identified in relation to the analytical case studies in the theory section of the thesis.



Figure 15: the gallery space site for *The Way of Things*

I began work on navigating and understanding the space. I set the actors the task of navigating it using the viewpoints system[[268]](#footnote-269). This technique helped them to connect with the gallery space in a physical, rather than in a textual or narrative, way. In line with my approach to objects as I wanted to connect with the materiality of the space through bodily experience and sensation more than through verbal description. From the viewpoints work, I developed extended movement improvisations based on key words and phrases that had emerged from collaborative improvisation, mind mapping and my own creative writing. These were ‘dreams’, ‘shadows’ and ‘a light of interpretation’, all of which were used to create a physical vocabulary and a ‘mood’ for each of the three scenes.

Through group conversations, certain ideas about the nature of the gallery space emerged: this place is a place of confinement, of waiting, of loss; it is a holding place, a purgatory; a place of musing and dreaming and reverie; a place of belonging and not belonging (objects without homes or owners). In other words, it was a between space, which began to take on its own character. To some degree this translated to the final showing of the work, in the sense that the space acted as a fourth character. During the dress rehearsal, I was still using some props, for example the scattered pages of a museum care manual for valuable objects. By the final showing, I had decided to take these away to make the space as blank as possible and allow its texture and feeling to ‘speak for itself’. This gave more clarity to the staged relationship between performance and visual art, or between transient and more permanent art forms.

### Temporary fixing’, ‘working in the fragment’ and ‘wholeness-in-process’

The relationship between the exhibit and the exhibition space as an analogy for the relationship between the dramaturgical object and the processes which surround it aided my understanding of my own dramaturgical process. I introduced earlier my concept of ‘temporary fixing’ in relation to my reading of other makers’ dramaturgies, but it is a concept that has emerged principally from my creative work. Rather than seeing the final dramaturgy of the piece (first sense) as a state that is slowly worked towards, I see a constant dynamic ‘back and forth’ between the two senses: the final dramaturgy is constantly reimagined, reconfigured and reworked in the imagination as the process unfolds. Finding a coherence, a unifying principle – a state of wholeness - for the work is fundamental, but, crucially, this state is always in process, subject to constant modification and reworking. As a maker, throughout the process I engage in a ‘temporary fixing’ of the work, a projection of unity, an idea of a ruling principle that is just as quickly deconstructed. It was from this notion of my own process that I developed my analysis of Kate McIntosh’s *Worktable*, and, indeed, the other dramaturgies that I look at, as ‘wholeness in process’: identifying these dramaturgies is a critical and reflective form of ‘temporary fixing’.

In their book *Understanding Theatre*, Jacqueline Martin and Willmar Sauter discuss what they call ‘part/whole interaction’, a process that relates to the theatre spectator in her experience of ‘the theatrical event or ‘object’’. In their hermeneutical approach, they envision the viewer within a:

process [which] proceeds from part to whole and back again to part. It is not necessarily a once-only operation, but in fact takes place as many times as is required until a final interpretation is reached.[[269]](#footnote-270)

My understanding applies to the theatre-maker rather than to the spectator, but the movement from ‘part to whole and back to part again’ is the same. The final ‘interpretation’ is the maker’s final iteration of the work’s dramaturgy. In the creative process, however, the movement between ‘part’ and ‘whole’ involves jumping between different roles, in the ‘shape-shifting’ manner I mentioned previously. There is a time for producing material in which one is ‘working in the fragment’ – ‘let’s concentrate on creating this material now without thinking about how it relates to other material’ - and then a time for reflecting and conceptualising the whole – ‘how does this fragment fit with the others? How does it relate to the central dramaturgy of the work?’. In *The Way of Things*, in retrospect, my tendency was to spend too long in reflective and editorial mode – in which I felt most comfortable - and not enough time ‘working in the fragment’. The result was a piece which, I felt, did not ‘live’ enough. I too frequently ignored my intuition in favour of a more academic idea of what would ‘work’, and this was less successful. As I have progressed, I have managed to achieve a much-improved balance between part and whole, and the concepts ‘wholeness in process’, ‘working in the fragment’ and ‘temporary fixing’ have been useful signifiers for reflecting and improving in that regard. They are also examples of my method of finding a dramaturgical language that runs through both theory and practice and binds content, form and process.

### Juxtaposition in *Make/Do/Mend*

These reflections on process are part of understanding dramaturgy as inherently relational. As I began to work towards *Make/Do/Mend*, and as my ideas on dramaturgy developed, I wanted to explore juxtaposition, as a form of betweenness, in more depth. With the logic of mending comes ideas of assemblage and of juxtaposition, because it involves a piecing (back) together of fragments. Three scenes in particular exemplify my investigation of juxtaposition.

**Scene: ‘Your Dad’s t-shirt’.** The story is as follows: D’s husband had had an accident and fallen out of a tree. He had been rushed to hospital in an ambulance and been operated on immediately. The doctor had used scissors to cut him out of his t-shirt, which had then been handed to D who held onto it while he was being operated on. The t-shirt had been a favourite of his, and so, while her husband was recovering (he was fine) she had carefully sewn the t-shirt back together again. One performer sits centre stage on a tall stool and begins to tell the story verbatim. A second performer sits upstage left at a small desk upon which is a sewing machine. As the first performer is talking, a third enters and begins to cut his t-shirt off him which she then hands to the performer at the sewing machine. He puts on another t-shirt. As he talks, the second performer begins to sew the t-shirt back together. She interrupts her action, and the first performer’s text, to speak small sections from the original *Make Do and Mend* text. For example, ‘no material must lie idle’ and ‘never treat roughly, rub or twist’[[270]](#footnote-271). By the time the verbatim story has finished, the t-shirt has been sewn back together. It is hung up on a rail.



Figure 15: a close-up of the original repaired t-shirt

**Scene: ‘Badly Chosen Lover’**. This is the story of a dress E bought for a partner with whom he had a very passionate but tempestuous relationship. She had loved the dress to the point where she thought it had some sort of mystical significance. When their relationship was ending, he had taken the dress and ripped it to shreds. In the six or so years it took him to recover emotionally, he spent long evenings on his sewing machine painstakingly mending the dress. Two performers sit on high stools upstage left and begin to take turns reading the story verbatim. As they start, so too does a choreographed duet that we have developed based on Rosemary Tonks’ poem ‘Badly Chosen Lover’. The verbatim script is a heavily edited version of the original, and so every time the performers reach an edit in the text, they read it out: ‘edit, cut 350 words’, for example. Every time they do this, the movement sequence stops, only starting again when the story continues.

**Scene: ‘Julie’.** This scene tells the story of A’s early memory. She had a treasured doll who she had called Julie, the kind that closes her eyes when you lie her down. A had lent her to some girls at lunchtime who had asked her if they could play with Julie, but when they returned it to her, she discovered that her eyes had been poked out. A tried to replace the missing eyes by drawing blue irises with a felt tip pen on to bits of screwed up paper and inserting them into the holes, but Julie was never the same again. One performer sits on a high stool and speaks the verbatim text directly to the audience in a neutral but engaged way. A short while into her speech, a second performer, who can ballet dance, appears on the other side of the stage and sits down to tie up her pointe shoes. She stands up and faces the narrator. They engage one another in eye contact and simultaneously adjust their hair, to signal that there is a link between them. As the narrator speaks, she explains that her and her doll Julie looked the same, had the same dress and the same hair. As the narrator speaks, the other performer lifts herself up onto her pointe shoes and, through this performance, this work, seems to take on the aspect of the doll. These ultimately exhausting steps in this moment appear as an attempt to speak *to* the narrator. As the two performers near the end of the story, they pause. The other two performers enter in turn and speak an improvised ending to the story in the narrator’s ear. She then relays that aloud, and the dancer corresponds with a few steps. Finally, the narrator speaks the ‘real’ ending.

In ‘Your Dad’s t-shirt and ‘Badly Chosen Lover’ the text and a non-verbal element were placed next to one another. Through their interaction, the process of ‘treating’ text, a concept I introduced in the previous chapter, was staged. The handling of text and the handling of material were compared. The mutual reliance of textual and material elements was foregrounded.

In ‘Julie’, the two languages- that of words and dance- were set in juxtaposition, creating a sort of amputated dialogue, as the dancer ‘spoke’ to the narrator and the narrator spoke to the audience, who were silent. The ballet dancer doll was compelled to keep dancing so that the dramaturgy could continue, and the audience could see how tiring it was for her. The scene read in another way as well: the dancer might have been the doll, but she may also have been a manifestation of the narrator. That the two performers mirrored one another reflected that doll and owner were similarly dressed, but it could also reflect the narrator and dancer as the same person. In this way, the verbal element of the speech was interpreted and translated into movement, and the sometimes exhausting effort of telling a personal story was foregrounded.

These scenes represented my investigation into the staging of relationships between elements, and into the transmutation of text when it is processed through different verbal and non-verbal languages. I increasingly began to understand and practice dramaturgy as a structure which combines elements and sets them in dynamic relation. Processes of translation, transmutation and shift then occur when elements come into contact.

### Dialogue

After *Make/Do/Mend*, I began to consider the theme of relationality that I had been exploring as dialogue. The scene ‘Julie’ was a catalyst for this. What if I was to consider the relationships between dramaturgical elements on stage as a dialogue? Dialogue, like dramaturgy, is a dynamic, active and time-based relationship between human or non-human ‘speakers’. I ran three workshops August-November 2016 as precursors to *Song of the Satellites*, which explicitly explored dialogue and conversation. I found ‘rules for conversation’ and ran exercises around the idea of overheard conversations, remembered conversations, what makes a good/bad conversation. One inspiration was Martin Crimp’s *Attempts on Her Life*, in which a group of unidentified speakers discuss an absent figure called Anne[[271]](#footnote-272). The speakers unfold the action in what seems to be a conversation, in which details are clarified or adjusted, giving the effect that the action is being decided upon spontaneously. Breach Theatre also use this technique in *Tank*, as I have discussed. Part of the aim of these workshops was to consider how I might arrive at this impression of spontaneous dialogue to agree ‘the story’. I ran a warm up exercise in which participants had to ‘leave an answerphone message’ for a theatre show they had recently seen. This was an example of taking the dialogue metaphor beyond human actors and towards non-human actors, as I would do with space junk later. I wanted to investigate the idea of speaking and receiving no answer, an unanswered or unanswerable utterance.

I asked collaborators to read the ‘rules of conversation’ and a list of ‘conversation topics’ before presenting something as a group that was between a conversation and a performance. The group were instructed not to communicate the topic of the conversation until a while into the discussion, and this lent a dramatic and intriguing element to watching it. The aim of this was to develop it as a material-generating exercise, and I established some good ground rules for the exercise, which were: take the audience through the action as it is happening; only speak in the present tense; do not ask questions of the other speakers; do not say ‘I’ unless you actually appear in the story; take no longer than 5 minutes; add in as many sensory details as possible; do not worry about ‘getting to the end’ within the time.

I developed this with another exercise where I asked people to spend one minute talking in the present tense about a theatre show or film they had seen. This worked very well for bringing the audience right into the action and for engaging them with descriptions of sensory details. I tried various versions which involved relaying well known stories, and then also trying to combine certain stories with certain genres, for example, a gothic version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. These workshops acted as preliminaries to the *Song of the Satellites* process. This exercise was about developing a dramaturgy of storytelling, following from the work I had already done on this in *Make/Do/Mend*

In *Song of the Satellites* I developed this method by playing a section of a sci-fi film in the space so that only one actor could see the film. They then had the task of narrating in real time what was happening. I had the intention of potentially relaying, through dialogue, fragments of recognisable scenes from sci-fi films. This would be a form of cultural assemblage, to reflect the fragmentation of space junk and the way in which it represents myriad histories and cultures. This would have meant a strong connection between form and content, but, in the end, this did not make it into the piece.

In an initial workshop I brought three clips in from sci-fi films: from *Gravity*, *2001 A Space Odyssey* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. I began by showing the actors *Gravity* and asking them to narrate, using the rules we had set out in the previous workshops. I then changed so that each actor took it in turns to narrate what they were seeing in the clip to everyone else who had their backs turned. I then transcribed some of the sections. The next step was to use these transcriptions and develop them into a full text for use in rehearsal. The difference in viewing perspectives between film and theatre and the way in which the former directs our view much more than the latter was a point I noted.

The storytelling technique was represented in the final piece in the second scene. Siobhan and Rachel sat together playing chess and discussing the story of Robert Hanson, the Russian counter-spy. I brought the story of Robert Hanson to them and I recorded an improvisation that they did, speaking in the present tense. I asked them prompt questions, which worked well. This becomes a mode of collaborative writing. We then had a long story which told details of the day of Hanssen’s arrest, which I edited and became the final script for this section.

*Two people sitting in a dark room

Description generated with high confidence*

Figure 16: the chess game in *Song of the Satellites*

One improvisation exercise I led was: questions to ask a satellite. I asked the actors to improvise questions they would ask a satellite. I recorded and transcribed the improvisation and selected the best questions. This was a list-based improvisation and generated a selection of very good questions, which were:

*Are you telepathic? Do you follow fashion? Can you keep it together? Do you remember your name? What is your heart made of? What can you hear? Do you sleep at night? Do you ever hear whispering? Do you like singing? Can you sing? Do you wish you could stop? Can you close your eyes? Can you speak? Why don’t you speak? What is your memory made of? How do you feel about endings? How do you manage stress? Do you like Windows 10? Do you ever get lost? Do you ever lose your way? Are these good times or bad times? How long do you have left? Does anyone ever speak to you that you don’t like? Do you ever listen in to other people’s conversations? What is the worst lie you have ever told? Can you keep a secret? Do you prefer stripes or spots? Can you ventriloquise? Are you safe? Do you have wings? Can you tell me a joke? Are you fast or slow? Are you scared of the dark? What is the morning like? Do you sleep?*

This exercise is an example of the way in which I began to use dialogue as a way of creating meaning and developing performance text. From it emerged many of the main explorations around space junk that I made, and took me in a direction that I wouldn’t have gone otherwise. It was from here that I began to develop the idea that the satellites had voices. My interest in projecting an image (‘a world’) of those things that we cannot see expanded to become an impulse to create voices for those that we cannot hear.

### Structures, rules and systems in *Song of the Satellites*

A key theme of this piece and a departure from the previous two shows was the consideration of the way dramaturgy might be informed by structure or rule-based systems. I wanted to investigate the coming together of contrasting systems as an inherently dramaturgical concern. One way of exploring this was in the work that I did with an Astrophysicist friend. My vision for the piece was that I would represent several pieces of space junk on stage and that we would be able to represent for the audience where in orbit they were in real time. Dramaturgically, that allows a real physical object out in the world to correlate with a section of the piece. My astrophysicist friend predicted which pieces of space junk would be travelling across our sky during the time of the show. This was around 700 pieces, which he gave to me as a list in a spreadsheet. I worked through the list, cross referencing with the website ‘stuff in space’ to discover which missions each of the fragments had originated from. I reduced the list to around ten that had interesting stories attached to them. Three made it to the final show: Telstar 1 (American, launched in 1962), Radio 3 (Russian, launched in 1981) and Fungyun 1C Deb (Chinese, launched in 1999 and blown up by the Chinese government in a missile test 2007).

My intention was that we would be able, in some way, to represent all of the 700 pieces on stage, and then show that we had selected several to look at closely. I wished to show the sheer volume of pieces in the sky, and also to show unincluded elements. This technique would show other possible dramaturgies on stage, other possible material that could have been chosen but were not. This was one way in which the dramaturgy was dictated by a structure that existed ‘in the world’. As it was, I did not find a useful way of representing all of the pieces of space junk. What I had intended, but wasn’t explicitly represented in the final performance, was that the three ‘characters’ would be cataloguers or possibly collectors of space junk.

I had aimed to have about 5 pieces of space junk represented in the piece, but time permitted only three. Having chosen these, I wanted to incorporate content and structures from their respective historical periods. The fragments of junk each represented a particular scientific, cultural and historical moment, now timeless and endlessly orbiting the earth, discarded and forgotten. I wanted to use each item of junk as an allegorical site, a threshold, to enter each context.

The work was intended as a way of speaking ‘to’ the junk satellites, that would enliven or activate them by saying something to them. The idea of a transmission, of sending a call out into the darkness was a central concern of mine- in what senses is theatre or art-making a call out into the darkness? In what sense is the theatre a question, and the audience’s response an answer? In what senses do you ask questions of the material? This could be a literal asking of questions, as evidenced by the ‘questions to ask a satellite’ exercise above. The dialogic structure that I discuss earlier in this chapter thus becomes a practical tool for navigating the work and finding a dramaturgy.

Other rules-based systems emerged in my research and representation of each satellite and they informed the dramaturgy of each scene:

**Telstar 1** was from America, launched in 1962. It was the world’s first communications satellite, which broadcast the world’s first transatlantic television feed. Only three months after its launch, it failed as a result of high altitude nuclear testing.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 17: Telstar 1 before launch in 1962

I located the original film of the American ‘Telstar One’ broadcast, featuring Walter Cronkite and Chet Huntley and transcribed it. This is a technique I had used a lot previously as a way of using and developing found text. I cut the transcribed text down hugely. I aimed to use the dramaturgy of the television studio space to represent the relationships and use of space in the scene. In particular I drew on the way in which the presenters narrate what they are doing as they are doing it – ‘I’m Chet Huntley and he’s Walter Cronkite’ – and this structure became embedded in the scene.

I was interested in the relationship between the happy, visionary move into modernity and globalism with the looming prospect of nuclear war. I found one of the original nuclear fallout warnings, and Telstar One spoke this text as interjections in Walter and Chet’s scene presenting the show. This is an example of the way I wanted betweenness to work on stage, the audience hopefully finding a discord between the two realities.

**Radio 3** was a Russian amateur radio satellite, and the most mysterious of the three. At some point contact was lost with the satellite in, but it is unclear when. I began to learn about amateur or ‘ham’ radio, in which any individual can buy radio receiving and broadcasting equipment and speak to each other. In relation to this scene I began to think about transmission and sending a question out into the darkness. I found a list of ‘silent keys’, amateur radio enthusiasts who have either died or had their licence revoked. One of these was Robert Hanssen, who was a counter-spy for the Russians who was eventually discovered and arrested. His story was widely documented in America, including his dramatic arrest in a Virginia park after making a ‘drop’ of confidential files for the Russian intelligence. I decided to use his story in the scene. I also found the moves for the 1981 Chess world championships, and we recreated this game. Two of the performers sat playing chess and told the story of the day of Robert Hanssen’s arrest. The text for this story had been developed using the present tense storytelling dialogue technique I describe above. The chess game was layered with text that I had created for the character of Robert Hanssen, played by the third performer. His monologue was in the form of transmissions using an amateur radio, each of them preceded by the customary opening of ‘CQ CQ’, which can be understood as ‘seek you’. Having found out through research that Robert Hanssen had had a difficult relationship with his father, I wanted to explore the idea of him talking to a father. I understood his transmissions almost to be like prayers. This was in line with my feeling that the satellites, the space junk, were modern gods. It also connects with my idea, inspired by *Solaris*, that space is a void onto which humanity can be projected. This was reflected in the monologue from the Radio 3 satellite, who asked ‘what do you see in me?’, and ‘make me in your own image’, which, of course, is a reference to the Christian religion.

**Fengyun 1C Deb** is a fragment of a Chinese weather satellite that was blown up by the Chinese government in 2007. Criticised by the international scientific community, the event caused hundreds of thousands of pieces of space junk to be added to an already dangerously cluttered sky. The context I drew out from this scene was that of predictions and forecasts. The original satellite was a weather satellite which helped to predict world weathers. The date of the shattering of the satellite into many fragments was roughly around the same time as the world economic crash. The idea of forecasts or projections links these two together, and so I became interested in the idea of an oracle or prediction tool. I was very interested in this in relation to dramaturgy, in line with what I mentioned earlier about possible futures relating to possible dramaturgies.

The music of the spheres was an important influence and provided another structure to introduce to the dramaturgy of the piece. The music of the spheres is an ancient philosophy which proposes that heavenly bodies emit sounds or vibrations and, taken together, they create a harmony of sound. I understood space junk to be a postmodern version of the music of the spheres, with each one singing its own harmonious or discordant song. Listening in to the sounds of space junk, as one might do with the music of the spheres, thus became a key theme. In response to this I organised several sessions in which we improvised with voice and sound, exploring mouth sounds, harmony, rhythm, pitch. I began to develop an awareness of the different satellites and their voices.

In this way, the dramaturgy of each scene was created by combining different systems that emerged from research into the text of each piece of junk. These systems can be understood as engaging in a dialogue together, a process through which they shape one another. The resulting structure is the dramaturgy of the piece.

**Movement and space**

Space junk moves through time and space, and so this quality is another example of patterning or sequencing. From the early workshops, I knew I wanted to explore movement through space, and the idea of orbits, paths and trajectories. I began then with some viewpoints work, creating a base and then asked the actor to respond using shape or gesture to key words that had been generated around their satellite. I wanted to get at the idea of co-ordinates and tracking, trying to come up with a language related to how they moved through space and whether we could predict their course. I started to use the floor as a map, placing small stickers down where I imagined satellites to be. I asked the actors to write some statements from the inner and outer point of view of the satellite and stick them next to the satellite. The group then walked around reading what the satellites were saying. This contributed to my work about transmission. From it I developed the idea that these satellites might be asking for help, that we might receive fragments of text, or transmissions, from them and that were not fully understandable. A combination of the viewpoints grid and the ‘map’ of satellites became a starting point for creating new movement sequences over several rehearsals.

In a ‘translation’ of material, as I describe above, I led Frantic Assembly’s ‘sign/describe’[[272]](#footnote-273) exercise for naming pieces of space junk. This was a way of expressing names or categories in a non-verbal language. I created some improvised choreographies with these, overlapping and layering the gesture sequences. In the final show, the seated choreography with the small Earth balls was the final manifestation of this, as was the announcing of the name of the satellite by each actor in turn at the beginning of ‘their’ scene.

**Repetition and routine**

In sharp contrast to the poetic aspect of the items of junk, was the routine and discipline of the life of astronauts. Early on I identified areas of an astronauts’ life that I began to investigate through movement and text. These were: exercise, clothing, food, motivational phrases, power poses, space noises. Working with three of the categories, from my research I developed five phrases which were then used to created five whole body movements, which were then linked together as choreography. I played around with these sequences a lot, but finally I kept a very stripped down, movement-only version of the choreography in the final piece, which was presented between the main three scenes.

**Call and response** was an area of investigation for me in this project and relates to my exploration of dialogue. In looking at Ham or amateur radio within my research for the Radio 3 satellite, I became interested in call and response. Space junk, as robots made to serve us (or fragments thereof), are entities with which we communicate. They say things to us and we say things to them. Anyone with the capability of using amateur radio can listen in to a satellite and hear what it is ‘saying’. When satellites break down, questions about communication with them arise. What is the quality of speaking to no one? Why do we need an answer? From these questions emerged the link between satellites and divine entities, a theme I explored in detail in the second scene. Sending a transmission to a satellite and receiving no answer is similar to praying.

**Technology**: A new area of investigation for me was in the use of technology. I wanted to explore repetition and remaking via a set up in which voice was recorded into a microphone and then played back in a loop. In the second scene the actors walked across the stage to give various ‘vital statistics’ about space junk; they spoke particular phrases into the microphone which were then recorded by our technician and looped to create a live soundscape. Each phrase was added to the subsequent one to create a fabric of sound which built to a crescendo. This then had a melody overlaid – a version of Richard Strauss’ *Also Sprach Zarathustra* used iconically in *2001 A Space Odyssey* - to which the cast performed their ‘space routine’ choreography. It was important that the sound was created live from the actors’ voices, ‘remade’ to become a vocal assemblage that represented the satellites’ ‘voices’.

### Conclusion

In the practice section of this chapter I have discussed the theme of relationality and how it has informed my practical research methods and my approaches to creating dramaturgy. Following *The* *Way of Things* and my investigation of change and transformation – in terms of representing the object and ‘translating’ a visual art context into a performance one – I began to see dynamic processes of change as central to dramaturgy. This was developed in *Make/Do/Mend* as my ‘treatment’ of text and as the juxtaposing of on stage elements. Realising that in aligning elements they enter into a form of negotiation with one another, I began to see the possibility that dramaturgy was a form of dialogue. Theatrical elements or systems can be brought together in conversation on stage. Theatrical material can be directly addressed: literally asking questions of it facilitates a relationship more dynamic than through reflecting in a passive mode. Having established this, *Song of the Satellites* represented an explicit investigation of using dialogue as a method of relating to the work and of building the dramaturgy of individual scenes, as well as the links between them. In my research and subsequent making process, space junk fragments acted as allegories, thresholds for encountering various systems and structures that were embedded in the time period of each item. Each item of space junk was on its own orbital trajectory and had its own internal working system, and this was reflected in my attempting to build a unique dramaturgy for each scene. TV broadcasting, nuclear war transmission, praying, chess, amateur radio, weather forecasts, financial forecasts and fortune telling were systems that I wove into the dramaturgy of each satellite and corresponding scene.

Dialogue, as a facet of dramaturgy, has emerged as a central principle of my practical and theoretical work. It is an apposite structure for understanding the way in which human and non-human voices are set in dynamic tension with one another within a work. Crucially, it signifies an act of moving forwards, a process that ultimately configures and reconfigures subjects in an embodied reality or ‘will to the event’. Such an understanding of dramaturgy has enabled an analysis of the treatment of selves, including the author-self, in the two case studies I have presented in this chapter, but it also can be applied to the four other works that I analyse. The themes of objecthood, wholeness, authenticity and the real can be understood as existing in dialogue, a process in which they are worked through and negotiated. In my practice, dialogue engenders a set of strategies which can be used for setting elements in tension, but it also provides a useful signifier for the various relationships within dramaturgical process: between dramaturgical object and process, between theory and practice, between editorial and authorial modes, between form and content.

# Chapter Three: Dramaturgies of the real

## Introduction

In the introduction, I discussed the ‘ossified antagonism’ between certain ‘types’ of theatre and described how scholars have taken these potentially reductive categorisations to task. I proposed that defining categories of theatre based on aesthetic and philosophical principles is now less relevant than considering the strategies at work within individual dramaturgies. I also touched on the current scholarly work on post-postmodernism, especially noting the tendency for contemporary works to adhere to and resist postmodern categorisation because of their expression of both hopefulness and cynicism. Thus far, in accordance with my aims, I have presented four case studies through which I have attempted to show the mechanisms at work in specific dramaturgies as they stage an ambivalent, in-process relationship with wholeness. Implicit in this discussion has been the idea that these works take an equivocal view of wholeness, unity or origin and that this is a departure from typical postmodern concerns. Ultimately the idea of the real is shown to be relative and a construct but is nevertheless aspired to. I now turn explicitly to these latent issues to present two final case studies which, I argue, approach the idea of the ‘real’ via a dramaturgy of process. In *Adler & Gibb*, by Tim Crouch, I argue that this manifests as a critical relationship with an artistic authenticity based on presence, and in *Mr Burns*, by Anne Washburn, as an ambivalent relationship with the ‘original’, ‘origin’ or beginning. In both pieces, these notions are deconstructed - shown to be fragmented, subjective and fluid – but are nevertheless invested in as markers of hope.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, ‘live art’, ‘performance’ and ‘experimental’ works were marked out for their resistance to and diversion from traditional, ‘text-based’ theatre. The latter, seen as outdated in its techniques of illusion, representation and story, was less ‘real’ than the forms which sought to undermine those qualities. Josette Feral, for example, proposed in her influential 1989 essay ‘Performance and Theatricality’, that, in performance, ‘there is neither past nor future, but only a continuous present - that of the immediacy of things, of an *action taking place*’; performance, she states, ‘escapes all illusion and representation’[[273]](#footnote-274). As I have noted, this categorisation of theatre has been taken to task by certain scholars. Feral, in her description of performance, bases its authenticity in part on its capacity for absolute presence, a link which has been critiqued, for example, by Cormac Power. In *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in Theatre*, he breaks down how ‘notions of “literal presence”’ have been ‘used to document and theorise emerging forms of postmodern practice and discourse’[[274]](#footnote-275). Elsewhere, scholars have sought to undermine the presence/representation binary by referring to and re-applying the postmodern theory that has often been used to uphold it. Stephen Bottoms, for example, has argued that scholars like Feral are mistaken in deploying Derridean philosophy to prove the ‘literal presence’ of performance. Referring to Jacque Derrida’s oft-quoted statement in *Writing and Difference* that

[t]he stage is theological for as long as it has a structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports with the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates time and meaning of the representation[[275]](#footnote-276),

he responds that ‘there is no non-theological stage to be had, no purely present performance in the moment, no escape from representation’[[276]](#footnote-277). Rather than proving that text-based theatre alone is ‘theological’, Bottoms contends, Derrida playfully sends up Antonin Artaud’s pursuit of an essential, authentic theatre based on a privileging of bodily sensation over words. Liz Tomlin similarly addresses the potential misapplication of theory in her book *Acts and Apparitions: Discourses on the Real in Performance Practice and Theory* *1990-2010*, arguing that the:

dramatic/postdramatic binary is [..] consistently upheld on the perceived distinction between the ‘illusion’ of the ‘present tense’ of dramatic fiction where the ‘there and then’ poses as the ‘here and now,’ and the emphasis within ‘non-representational’ or ‘presentational’ postdramatic practice on the present time of the actual event, its liveness, its direct relationship to the audience in time and space[[277]](#footnote-278).

Once such categories of theatre, with their associated aesthetic and formal signifiers, are established, she contends, the production of radical, experimental and politically engaged work can, paradoxically, be inhibited[[278]](#footnote-279). Thus, Power, Bottoms, Tomlin and others have moved the discussion away from the question of which kinds of theatre and performance *are* present, authentic or real and towards a more nuanced discussion of *how* they negotiate, stage or play with these concepts. Power, for example, goes on to suggest that:

[d]iscussions of theatrical presence need not be tied to idealism or celebrations of the unmediated, but can help us understand how theatre utilises its limitations as a medium tied to a world of “things” and to the representational possibilities afforded by these limitations.[[279]](#footnote-280)

Similarly, Dan Rebellato, following a critique of the idea of illusion in dramatic theatre, asks, if [w]e know we are watching people representing something else; [..] are aware of this, never forget it, and rarely get confused’ then ‘[w]hat is [..] the relationship between the stage and the fiction?’[[280]](#footnote-281). The following case studies are intended as a response to the invitation implicit in these critiques to explore the ‘relationship between the stage and the fiction’. I argue that *Adler & Gibb* and *Mr Burns* use a dramaturgy of process to engage deeply with the politics of reproduction in a way that uses both theatre’s ‘representational possibilities’ *and* ‘limitations’ to create a compelling narrative.

## THEORY, Part Five: Between here and there in Tim Crouch’s *Adler and Gibb*

### Introduction

Writer, performer and director Tim Crouch’s work is known for relying less on literal, on-stage manifestations of narrative and character in the form of props, set and costume and more on the way in which the spectator constructs the story in her mind. His work can be understood as attempting to ‘authoriz[e] the audience’[[281]](#footnote-282). Rather than passively observing a story unfolding, Crouch invites the spectator to take an active role in the construction of meaning on stage, and, crucially, to be aware of this process and the questions or challenges it may elicit. Stephen Bottoms has written extensively on Crouch and is interested in the metaphorical aspect of his process. In his introduction to Crouch’s *Plays One*, he writes that:

theatre’s distinctive qualities as a medium reside in its being inherently metaphorical- [..] it works less by visual resemblance than by inviting us to see one set of things [..] in terms of another.[[282]](#footnote-283)

This is confirmed by Crouch himself when he says that ‘[t]heatre in its purest form is a conceptual art form. It doesn’t need sets, costumes and props, but exists inside an audience’s head’[[283]](#footnote-284). Indeed, his 2005 piece *An Oak Tree* takes its name from the 1973 conceptual art piece by Michael Craig-Martin in which a glass of water sits on a shelf above a wall-mounted text describing the object as an oak tree. As in the original *An Oak Tree*, Crouch’s piece manipulates the capacity of objects as signifiers: a piano stool stands in for a roadside tree into which a car crashes causing the death of a child, for example. His 2014 work, *Adler and Gibb*, the subject of my analysis, is a development of his interest in theatre’s metaphorical quality and its capacities as a ‘medium tied to a world of “things”’, to use Power’s phrase[[284]](#footnote-285). It was originally performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Downstairs.

As the audience quiets in the Royal Court, a young student hurries down the aisle, books in hand, and takes her place at a lectern downstage right. Wearing glasses and smiling awkwardly at the audience, she sorts through her papers and gets ready for what we soon learn will be a presentation in fulfilment of a university examination. In instalments over the course of the play she tells us about the life and work of Janet Adler, an individual she much admires whose conceptual art works have led to her accolade as the ‘most ferociously uncompromising voice of her generation’[[285]](#footnote-286). As she begins to speak, two actors in dressing gowns appear behind her, centre stage. We can see a large shelf with props and costumes behind them. Two children sit at the sides of the stage, relaxed and busy with activities. The performers in gowns play Sam and Louise, an actor and her acting coach, two glossy LA ‘industry’ types. We follow their story, interjected by the student’s presentation, as they break in to the seemingly derelict house and grounds of the now deceased Janet Adler. Louise, who we soon learn is the same person as the student but aged about a decade or so, is to play Adler in an upcoming movie of her life and hopes that visiting the house will allow her to ‘find the truth’ and ‘advance the work’[[286]](#footnote-287). They are surprised to meet the gun-wielding Margaret Gibb, the now reclusive life-long partner of Adler. After many years of unwanted public attention, and of resisting the art world’s incessant mythologisation of the couple, she meets them hostilely, rejecting their appeals to make her a ‘consultant or advisor’ for the movie[[287]](#footnote-288). Louise, ostensibly in search of papers and diaries which might help her with the character, locates Adler’s shallow grave in the grounds of the house and sets about exhuming her body. Sam, in pain from a shot wound and suffering nausea, begins to question the ethics of what they’re doing – ‘What the fuck, Louise, look what we’re doing! We’re digging up a fucking corpse’ – appeals ineffectually to his companion for them to turn back, and finally dies[[288]](#footnote-289). Louise, having forced Gibb to take part, acts out a scene from the movie with her, with Louise playing Adler and Gibb playing herself. The outcome of these events is then suggested to us via a film projected at the back of the stage in which we see the house and grounds and the legs of a body that we assume to be Gibb’s. Finally, Louise appears begowned and gushing before an audience at an awards ceremony following the release of the movie where she credits Janet Adler as her ultimate inspiration and thanks ‘everyone [she has] ever met’[[289]](#footnote-290).

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 18: Denise Gough as Louise and Brian Ferguson as Sam in *Adler & Gibb*

### Deconstructing an ‘authentic’ art - narrative

*Adler & Gibb* invites us to consider the complex relationship between authenticity and art, and it does this using both narrative and formal elements. The eponymous fictional conceptual artists, we learn from the younger Louise, seem to have been pursuing a more ‘real’ or more ‘authentic’ aspect to their art by resisting its commodification. Influenced by the Fluxus movement, they have tried to ‘dematerialise’ their works by buying them back and destroying them or have made pieces which satirise the forces of commodification, for example by ‘purchas[ing] a celebrated portrait of art critic Clement Greenberg by the painter Leon Golub [and] then proceed[ing] to publicly eat the work over the course of two days’[[290]](#footnote-291). These actions, we learn, are in line with their desire for their works to ‘exist[…]only for the moment of transmission and [be] prolonged within the memories of those individuals who experienced it’[[291]](#footnote-292); they want to ‘re-normalis[e] the phenomenology of production – away from a specialised form and towards a naturalized impulse’[[292]](#footnote-293). Adler and Gibb, it seems, believe in the capacity of the art work to exist in a total present, one in which pure experience – unreproducible, unsaleable - can occur. The famous couple were so beleaguered by the incessant invasion of their lives by the star-struck public and the art world’s cynical greed that they withdrew from society, putting up ‘please go away’ signs at the edges of their property, only to find, as Gibb tells Louise, that these too had been ‘stolen, put up for auction, traded, you name it’[[293]](#footnote-294). Humorous touches accompany the story of the two artists’ endeavour to ‘dematerialise’ their works: the eating of the Clement Greenburg portrait for example, or the ‘film of a pack of sibling dogs ravenously devouring the flesh of their parents’ which they created and then destroyed, apart from ‘[t]he negative, [which] is currently owned by Swiss banking giant UBS[[294]](#footnote-295). These moments of comedy reveal the futility of Adler and Gibb’s fight to make their work resistant to the forces of commodification, and, indeed, the events of the play see the two artists lose miserably in this case.

As the narrative progresses, Louise becomes obsessed with finding ‘the truth’ that will allow her to connect with her character, because this means a more financially viable film. She resists Sam’s plea to turn back:

LOUISE Well I think we’re in the middle of fucking nowhere and we are sitting on a gold mine here. I think we should control any ethical questions that we might be having at this moment in time, Sam, and keep looking. I think we should remember what is resting on this. [[295]](#footnote-296)

Louise, in her quest to get closer to her character, seemingly wants to *possess* Adler, and this increasingly unfettered desire culminates in a scene in which she plucks Adler’s skull from the grave:

LOUISE Look how the skull is coming away! Janet Adler’s skull. This is an icon here, a relic. My character. My character.

SAM Please don’t.

LOUISE I will wash my hands.

[…]

I am the artist. My character. I am the fucking artist now. I am. Get the camera.[[296]](#footnote-297)

This scene, of course, references *Hamlet*, in which the eponymous protagonist addresses the skull of Yorick, a court jester he had been close to as a child, and, in doing, contemplates the impermanence of human life. But in *Adler & Gibb*, the skull address signifies not a grappling for an understanding of the depths of humanity but a grappling for financial and cultural ‘success’. This simultaneously horrifying and laughable pseudo-ceremony echoes tribal or ritualistic flesh-consumption of the dead to absorb their power. In an *I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* style rite-of-passage, Louise must endure the horror of the rotting corpse in order to prove herself worthy of ‘winning’ wealth and cultural status*[[297]](#footnote-298)*. Thus Crouch, by tragic and comic turns, paints a condemnatory picture of a capitalist cultural machine which forgoes human decency and moral ethics to appropriate artists and their works as commodities to be bought and sold.

Louise hopes that the visit to the house will help connect her with the character she is to play:

LOUISE Look at this place. This fog. Look at the trees. Look at the size of those roots.

SAM Feels good to be here at last. Get out of the vehicle. Dig around. Advance the work.

LOUISE Find the truth

SAM Find the truth.

LOUISE Who would live here? Who would want this?

SAM Use that.

LOUISE Should I put a pencil behind my ear, you think?[[298]](#footnote-299)

Sam repeatedly tells Louise to ‘use’ her feelings and experiences, especially the unfavourable ones – ‘use that’ he states several times when she expresses doubt or dislike - while they are at the house. Louise is encouraged to capitalise her lived experience in pursuit of creating an authentic character: her feelings and responses are quantifiable within an economy of artistic ‘truth’ or ‘authenticity’. Louise knows that an ‘authentic’ performance will make for a more successful, higher-grossing film. Present experience thus does not ‘exist[…] only for the moment of transmission and prolonged within the memories of those individuals who experienced it’[[299]](#footnote-300), as Adler and Gibb hope it might, but is mined as fuel for a later date in which it can be used to create a convincing, and therefore saleable, performance. In this way, we might think that the counter-cultural Adler and Gibb and the money-oriented Sam and Louise occupy opposite ends of the spectrum in their approach to creating art works. However, Crouch makes an unsettling comparison between the two based on their mutual quest for authenticity or ‘truth’. In perhaps the most arresting speech of the play, the dying Sam speaks to the audience:

Here’s how we do it. Here’s how we find – There is a system of wants. You understand? Truth. Commitment. Authenticity. You understand? This is the – Of wants. What do you want? What does your character want? Yes. We are doing the research. There isn’t this and then this. It’s life. The work is life. Life is the work. All this. This work. This is not a game. We are not playing. Look.[[300]](#footnote-301)

Although Sam’s words align his artistic practice with a capitalist ideology - a ‘system of wants’ takes on a double meaning here - what he says about work and life bears a startling resemblance to Adler’s desire to ‘integrate art and everyday life’ and her claim that ‘the work is now just a life lived’[[301]](#footnote-302).

Ultimately, then, Crouch shows us that lived experience or the present, even when it is fully divorced from matter, is as subject to commodification and reproduction as any other art form. Adler’s noble intention to defy the capitalist forces of reproduction isn’t enough to stop her exploitation at the hands of the same. He shows us too that authenticity itself is a moveable concept, based on its context and on how it is understood: it is a principle at work in Sam’s and Louise’s project as much as it was in Adler’s and Gibb’s. In the moment in which Louise addresses the skull, she references the dialogue between herself and her coach earlier in the play. It is as if she is ‘coaching’ the dead Adler in how she ought to perform, speaking in her own and ventriloquising the dead woman’s voice:

LOUISE You’re looking at me. I’m looking at you. You’re looking at me. I’m looking at you. You’re dead. (No fucking commentary!) I’m dead. You’re dead. I’m dead. You’re alive. I’m alive. They kiss. Kiss kiss kiss.[[302]](#footnote-303)

Here, the two women’s selves seem to merge, as Adler’s previously discrete identity is gradually effaced. This collapse of Adler into Louise is confirmed by the latter in her speech to Gibb about whether she should co-operate with them on the project:

LOUISE When that movie is released, whether you help us or not, I will become your lover. To all the world, I will *become* her. I won’t only be the actress who played her, I will I will *be* her. Be her. The real Janet is a long time dead and buried in the yard now, that’s distant history now. When they think of Janet Adler, they will think of me.[[303]](#footnote-304)

Once the film is released, Adler’s original self will become obscured by Louise’s representation of her. To the movie’s audience, the actual, ‘original’ Adler is of no relevance; what matters is an authentic, believable performance, to the extent that people will willingly accept a new signifier – Louise - for the authentic Adler.

In this way, then, Crouch deconstructs the notion of an authenticity linked to absolute presence. In the story of Adler and Gibb he shows the potential implausibility of the eponymous artists’ aspiration that artworks ‘exist[…]only for the moment of transmission and [be] prolonged within the memories of those individuals who experienced it’[[304]](#footnote-305). To return to the theory, we can see that *Adler & Gibb* unsettles Josette Feral’s claim that art can achieve a state in which ‘there is neither past nor future, but only a continuous present - that of the immediacy of things, of an *action taking place*’[[305]](#footnote-306). Even when art is devoid of matter, in line with Adler’s and Gibb’s aim, it is still embedded within structures outside of itself, existing within a wider system of representation, language and economy.

### Deconstructing an ‘authentic’ art - form

In *Adler & Gibb*, the dramaturgy itself deals with the notion of presence and authenticity and is predicated on a between space of presence and absence. Authenticity is deconstructed via formal as well as narrative elements. The story of Louise and Sam’s expedition to the house is not acted out on stage in a conventional sense. The two actors playing Louise and Sam, Denise Gough and Brian Ferguson, when they first walk out on to the stage during the younger Louise’s presentation, appear to come on ‘as themselves’. Standing neutrally, they remove their simple dressing gowns and begin to deliver lines, facing outwards, with minimal expression in their voices and dressed only in their underwear. As the stage directions themselves confirm, ‘Lines [are] delivered out, facing out – no adopted accents, no gestures. No actions’[[306]](#footnote-307). We experience the actor ‘stripped down’ - a body, delivering text. The two speak a dialogue as follows, which, as we learn later, is part of Sam’s role as acting coach to Louise:

SAM You’re wearing a blue blouse

LOUISE I’m wearing a blue blouse

SAM You’re wearing a blue blouse

LOUISE I’m wearing a blue blouse

SAM You’re wearing a blue blouse

LOUISE I’m wearing a blue blouse

SAM You’re wearing a blue blouse[[307]](#footnote-308)

Despite these words, there is no blue blouse to be seen, and from this early moment, Crouch makes us aware of the mechanisms of representation at work in the play. During the interval, a sandpit is set up centre stage, on which the two children begin to play. Once the second act begins, the sand pit serves as the disturbed grave of Adler and, when one of the children lies down curled up on the mound of sand, his body stands in for her corpse. When, in the dialogue, Gibb first threatens Sam and Louise, a child hands her a shot gun, but then replaces it a few minutes later with an inflatable baseball bat, then a plastic lobster and finally a baguette. In these examples there occurs a disconnection between the material reality of the stage and the ‘story’, which we come to understand via the words being spoken. This disconnection causes reality to become heterogenous. We are presented with two possibilities which both seem to be true: on the one hand Louise *isn’t* wearing a blue blouse because the actor is dressed only in underwear, but on the other she *is* wearing a blue blouse because the statement ‘I’m wearing a blue blouse’ invites us to imagine it. If, as Rebellato contends, when we go to the theatre, ‘[w]e know we are watching people representing something else; [..] are aware of this, never forget it, and rarely get confused’, then the line ‘I’m wearing a blue blouse’ can be understood as a specific invitation to the audience to take a leap of imagination in order to ‘see’ the blue blouse[[308]](#footnote-309). Similarly, the playful substitutions for the gun prop allow us to see a series of everyday items *at the same time* as we continue to see a gun.

Thus one of the foundational principles of *Adler & Gibb*’s dramaturgy is the kaleidoscopic relationship between possible sites of reality. In the example of Gibb wielding her gun, she states, ‘I’m aiming straight at your balls’, yet, at this point, the actor holds nothing in her hands. A few minutes later a child hands her the shot gun which she holds for a while before it is replaced by the other items. Similarly, the dialogue tells us that Sam has been hit or grazed by Gibb’s bullet – ‘You’re bleeding’ she says – but it isn’t for a while that Sam begins to apply fake blood to his arm and create a ‘wound’[[309]](#footnote-310). Here the temporal planes on which the story occurs are misaligned: the action within the dialogue is ‘out of synch’ with the action as it is indicated by the material props. Further, we build a picture of the physical environment in which the Sam and Louise narrative takes place via the spoken dialogue – ‘Look at this place. This fog. Look at the trees. Look at the size of those roots’. – but, as the ‘action’ is unfolding, this remains unrepresented on stage[[310]](#footnote-311). We hold the picture in our heads, meaning that, in terms of spatial planes, we are invited to negotiate the fictional space of the story – which seems to be absent, somewhere offstage, ‘over there’ - alongside the ‘real’ space of the stage –which is in front of us, here and now. As the events of this narrative strand end – just before Louise appears at the awards ceremony - we see a video projection showing the derelict house and grounds, things that, until this point, we have seen only in our mind’s eye. This sudden hyper-real representation serves, through its presence, to reinforce the previous absence of these pictures. Seeing it depicted so vividly makes us aware of the difference between what we saw previously in our heads and what we now see on screen. It reinforces the apparent existence of an off-stage fictional world, as the world depicted in the film ‘really is’ somewhere else. It also makes us aware of the subjective nature of a viewpoint: the film, which gives a hint of Gibb’s corpse, has the quality of a suggestion, a speculation on what *could* have happened.

Indeed, the idea of a unifying objective reality is disturbed by the representation of subjective reality. When Louise, as Adler, and Gibb act out the scene together, the play takes on a surreal quality. Following the interval, a realistic set is slowly built and populated with objects so that when the ‘scene’ is finally run, the environment represents a film set of a 1970s New York loft apartment, the one where Adler and Gibb first met. We can see cameras and a live video loop showing Louise’s face projected in close-up, in soft focus, on a screen. Their voices are also amplified with boom mics. As they run the ‘scene’, a sentimental film score swells underneath. This section has a dream-like quality to it, which is reinforced by the schmaltzy aesthetic. We are reminded here of the gap between what we know about the characters of Adler and Gibb, based on the preceding events of the narrative, and what is being represented in this movie scene. Since the movie scene cannot be ‘actually’ taking place in Gibb’s house, we are invited to consider it as taking place in Louise’s imagination. This is linked to how the latter creates her character: Sam begins to coach her as they lead into the scene, asking her to describe the apartment. She does so, and refers to an environment that is physically present:

SAM The scene is Scene 14. 14. Interior. November ’76. The loft apartment on West 10th. She’s just found you. She’s searched for you after the opening and she’s found you. This is the night you first – you know – Louise – the time you first – The seduction.

[…]

SAM What do you see?

LOUISE Tiled wall.

SAM Come on.

LOUISE Margaret?

Papers, pictures, notes, sketches, etc

SAM Detail.

LOUISE Photos of woodland.

SAM Detail.

LOUISE Poster for a show.

SAM What show?

LOUISE I don’t know.[[311]](#footnote-312)

The environment that Louise imagines for the scene is the one that we see in front of us, and thus, we experience *her* reality. This is backed up by the stage direction: ‘at this moment, LOUISE, in the action of the play (in the derelict house, etc.), is imagining these things – as part of an acting exercise to get her rooted in the ‘reality’ of the scene’[[312]](#footnote-313). In turn, this reminds us of our own partiality as viewers: even where we feel certain that we know what is and isn’t ‘real’ in the piece, we are reminded that we are, as spectators, engaged in our own individual process of making sense of what happens in front of us. The distinction between live and mediated forms as more and less real is also unsettled: the live video link up and clearly simulated nature of the loft ‘scene’, ‘acted’ out by Gibb and Louise and filmed by Sam, might seem to be in contrast to the ‘reality’ of the bodies we see before us, but this is undermined by the fact that what we see is in Louise’s head.

In this way, *Adler & Gibb* unsettles the idea of the present as a reliable point of reference: refracted through multiple spatial, temporal and subjective planes, it is unclear exactly where and when the story is happening. Given that we hear Gibb say ‘I’m aiming straight at your balls’ five minutes before the actor takes hold of the gun, this action seems to happen not at a single point in time but across a fragmented present which spans a number of minutes. Crouch thus disturbs the idea of an authentic, total present, causing it to be fragmented, displaced, dispersed, and reliant on the spectator’s mental assimilation.

### Reconstructing an ‘authentic’ art

This technique of disordering theatrical elements amounts to an exploded traditional dramatic structure or dramaturgy. The essential ingredients of a coherent dramatic narrative – character (including character development), dialogue, action, set, props – are present, but have been separated out and set in misalignment. In a ‘dramaturgy of process’, the mechanisms of representation are revealed and notions of authenticity and absolute presence have been deconstructed. The dramaturgy of *Adler & Gibb*, however, represents a reconstructive as much as a deconstructive impulse. Although fragmentation occurs in the play because of the temporal misalignment of theatrical elements, none of the ingredients for dramatic coherency or structural unity are missing. The dramaturgy is analogous with a broken object: it has been broken apart but all the pieces are present. Notably, the movement of the play as it progresses is reconstructive. From the ‘stripped down’, presentational style of the opening sequences, the action becomes increasingly ‘fleshed out’, as the actors gradually layer their performances with the various trappings of theatrical realism: accent, gesture, movement, costume. This is outlined in the stage directions which stipulate earlier on that ‘[t]he performances are still directed out, no gesture, no action’[[313]](#footnote-314), and later that, ‘the performances are gradually becoming more dimensional’[[314]](#footnote-315), for example when, for ‘the first time[,] the fictional space is broken with a completed action’[[315]](#footnote-316). By the final scenes of the piece, the performances are ‘realistic’: Louise’s speech at the awards ceremony is a fully realised scene, complete with appropriate set, music, props and the comprehensive gesture, voice and body work of a character in a dramatic narrative. Thus, overall the piece works according to a reconstructive rather than a deconstructive principle because it moves towards, rather than away from, fullness and coherency.

The movement towards reconstruction is also evident in the creation of an engaging narrative and believable, ‘realistic’ characters with whom we become involved. In Adler and Gibb, Crouch presents two sympathetic individuals: ‘You’d like that, would you, your most private, pinkest, tenderest – small bird, small bird, small fragile – stolen from you, slammed down onto the slab, the block, poked at and paraded’[[316]](#footnote-317) shouts Gibb to Louise and Sam. The utter invasion of these two artists’ lives, which finds a climactic manifestation in the unbearable Louise’s exhumation of Adler’s body, makes us root for the lonely, heart-broken Gibb, as she points her gun and sets her dog on the two intruders. Despite Crouch’s deconstruction of the idea of authenticity, he does not invite us to be critical of it as the goal of human endeavour, artistic or otherwise. Although their pursuit of an authentic art based on unmediated presence is shown to be a failure, we are invited to understand and contemplate rather than feel judgmental of this aim. Against the backdrop of a deconstructed authenticity, Crouch creates his own version of the same: authentic characters and a complete story. Attention is drawn to what is happening on stage, here and now, and yet there is also an unshakeable commitment to an absent reality, a reality somewhere else: the story.

### Conclusion

Through a case study of Tim Crouch’s *Adler & Gibb* I have addressed ideas that have been latent in the discussion thus far, and which are typically taken to task by postmodernism: authenticity and the ‘real’. In a manifestation of betweenness, the idea of an authentic art, linked to a total presence, is shown to be a moveable construct but is nevertheless aspired to within the narrative and formal elements of the piece. As in my previous case studies, I have observed and analysed how a deconstructive principle is set in tension with a movement towards reconstruction. The dramaturgy expertly mediates between what is present and what is absent, acknowledging the equality between the story and the event of its construction. The separating out of representational elements to expose the work’s dramaturgy acts as a reminder that reality is constructed, but this is ultimately in service of the creation of a meticulously crafted, explicitly fictional world. Wholeness, reality or authenticity is shown to be a state that is worked towards within a dramaturgy of process.

## THEORY, Part Six: Between now and then in *Mr Burns* by Anne Washburn

### Introduction

Mr Burns is a work by Canadian playwright Anne Washburn, which had its UK premiere at the Almeida theatre in 2014. Subtitled ‘a post-electric play’, it is set in a post-apocalyptic America in which electricity, and therefore all that it powers, has failed[[317]](#footnote-318). In Act One, set in ‘the very near future’, we encounter a group of people sitting around a campfire at night, who, in this bleak environment, entertain themselves by nostalgically recalling the popular American TV show *The Simpsons.* Matt, Jenny, Maria, Sam, Colleen and Gibson, who have only recently met, piece together one fondly-remembered episode ‘Cape Feare’, recalling various regular characters and reminiscing about what they think makes it so good:

MATT Itchy is the cunning mouse who always kills Scratchy who is the cat. And Bart and Lisa always think it’s completely hilarious, it’s disturbing, it’s awesome

MARIA I think. Yeah. I think I saw that the first time I saw that I thought oh….that’s going too far.

MATT It’s absolutely going too far. It’s so brilliant.

JENNY So I remember that they’re watching the episode and something…

MATT They’re watching it – and it’s incredibly violent – and Lisa is totally cracking up and Bart *isn’t*

JENNY Yes yes yes that’s right, right? And Lisa is saying, like, that’s really funny Bart why aren’t you laughing or something and Bart is full of gloom because he’s depressed because someone is trying to kill him…

MATT And then the doorbell rings and it’s the mail

JENNY *Yes*. And *that’s* when Lisa gets the pen-pal letter[[318]](#footnote-319)

Now that televisual media cannot be accessed directly, these conversations link people to a before-time in which the harsh realities of post-apocalyptic life – trying and failing to find missing loved ones or worrying about radiation sickness, for example – did not have to be contended with. In Act Two, set seven years later, the acts of reminiscence we saw previously have developed to become part of an entertainment economy. In a world still devoid of electricity and other pre-apocalyptic infrastructure, the group are now part of a network of self-regulating repertory troupes who perform live versions of popular TV shows for audiences. With the original episodes inaccessible, accurate lines are in great demand and are traded, bought and sold, with troupes accepting lines from strangers or even whole episodes from other troupes in return for payment:

GIBSON Wait, Heretic Homer, we don’t really want Heretic Homer do we?

COLLEEN We’re negotiating for it.

QUINCY We’re negotiating for it? With Primetime Players?

MATT Not with Primetime Players with/ The Reruns

MARIA Reruns

QUINCY No no, I know, the Reruns, when was that decided?

GIBSON Wait that wasn’t what we decided. Heretic Homer is a wildly inaccurate show.[[319]](#footnote-320)

We join the group as they rehearse ‘Cape Feare’, the episode they discussed in Act One and which they have now become known for. Colleen, acting as director, leads the group through the scene as they consider practical ways to improve it and how to make it more entertaining for an audience. Another popular aspect of this new form of entertainment is the inclusion of ‘commercials’ which are acted out at the beginning or during an ‘episode’, and which often involve meticulous recreations of now defunct electrical items. This group, whose ‘commercials are excellent’[[320]](#footnote-321), have created a scene, for example, in which a man watches a TV at home. The blue light that the television emits and which flickers on the watcher’s face has been meticulously recreated by placing candles in the body of a TV, backed with a mirror and covered with blue cellophane. The sense of cosy security that they strive to create inside the scene is encroached upon by an increasingly hostile environment outside -

JENNY I’ve gotten people who are hungry, and desperate. I’ve gotten people who are crazy. But after the show yesterday a man came up to me, I do remember him vaguely, and he said you used my line. I said no..... he said you used my line and you never paid me for it. […] This guy was bold. Lately people are bold, and that’s new.[[321]](#footnote-322)

- a reality that is brought into sharp focus in the closing minutes of the act when we hear the arrival of aggressive strangers and shots being fired. Act Three is set 75 years later, and here we no longer follow the story of these individuals but encounter the outcome of the *The Simpsons* material itself: the ‘Cape Feare’ episode has mutated into a kind of ritualistic, quasi-religious masque theatre. As stated in the stage directions, the characters faces ‘bear a blurred similarity to faces we may recall from the TV series’[[322]](#footnote-323). The text is an assemblage of lines from the episode itself and from *The Simpsons* more generally, fragments of pop culture, references to the conversations had by the troupe in Act Two and references to the events of the apocalypse itself, including lists of names of people lost. The cast, through formal song and dance, tells the story of everyman hero Bart Simpson’s dramatic fight on a boat to overcome his enemy, no longer Sideshow Bob as in the original ‘Cape Feare’ episode, but the power plant tycoon Mr Burns. In a tragic resolution, the Simpsons family are sacrificed by Mr Burns, apart from Bart, who battles the villain and finally sends him overboard to his death. Good has triumphed over evil and Bart now exclaims ‘The world is new and glittery/ I run to meet it hopefully/ Love never dies in memory/ and I will meet life gloriously’[[323]](#footnote-324). His closing lines are accompanied by an array of electric lamps bursting into brightness, but as the ‘actors’ take their bows, we see that Mr Burns frantically pedals a bicycle which powers them. The mechanism then malfunctions and the stage is plunged into darkness.

*Copyright material removed*

Figure 19: *Mr Burns* at the Almeida Theatre, 2014

### Deconstructing the ‘origin’

Similarly to *Adler & Gibb*, *Mr Burns* presents authenticity as a complex theme, a paradigm which it subjects to both deconstructive and reconstructive processes. In particular, the play problematizes the idea of the ‘origin’. In the absence of electrically powered systems, human memory becomes a principal tool for understanding and accessing culture. Indeed, as we see in Act One, attempting accurately to remember popular culture such as *The Simpsons* is a necessary part of making sense of a traumatic, life-changing situation. The group discusses Sideshow Bob’s claim in court that his bloodthirsty declaration ‘Die, Bart, Die’ is in fact German for ‘The Bart, The’. A jury-member comments approvingly to her neighbour that ‘no one who speaks German could be an evil man’[[324]](#footnote-325), an allusion, of course, to Adolf Hitler, and a moment recalled by Matt, Jenny and Maria as follows:

MATT And then the woman in the jury box says anyone who knows German can’t be can’t

JENNY Oh that’s right: anyone who knows German-

MATT Anyone who knows German has to be a very nice man

*Laughter*

JENNY Anyone who speaks German, right

MATT Anyone who speaks German

MARIA Couldn’t be

MATT Couldn’t be a bad man

*Laughter[[325]](#footnote-326)*

Here, we are reminded of the inaccurate, circumlocutory nature of human memory: Matt’s and Maria’s act of recall is a collaborative appropriation of the original, as they repeat and edit their way through the memory before reaching an implicitly agreed approximation. While this example presents remembering as a joyful act, elsewhere it is a source of anxiety. In Act One, when a stranger approaches the group in the darkness, the new meeting initiates what is now a standard exchange between people: the sharing and comparing of lists of missing loved ones against lists of people encountered. When the stranger, who introduces himself as Gibson, does not reach for his note book like the others, Maria asks ‘you’re not going to open that?’, doubting his claim that his ‘really good memory’ means he need not refer to the written record

Maria’s lack of trust in Gibson’s memory is indicative of a fractiousness which pervades a world now reliant almost solely on human perception. Before the apocalypse - as in our world - instant access to a multitude of computerised information meant a relatively objective reality: that world was connected, instantly navigable and constantly backed up by computer systems. The ‘post-electric’ world by contrast, with these infrastructures lost, is subjective, localised, fragmented, and harbours an unreliable sense of reality. Displaced by the disaster, many of the group have been on the move, drifting through the post-apocalyptic landscape with uncertain purpose ‘[I’ve been going] [a]bout a, month and a half’, says Gibson ‘I’ve been stopping here and, uh, stopping there. Mainly I’ve just been going’[[326]](#footnote-327). Assimilating the new world with the old is difficult: Maria, who, unlike the others, has not migrated from another area of the country, says uncertainly ‘I live here. Or I lived here. Or no, I live here. Right, (*She gestures with deliberate vagueness*) over there[[327]](#footnote-328)’. Her words show the difficulty in matching up the past and present worlds: although geographically she is in the place she calls home, the environment is so changed by what has happened that ‘home’ seems only to belong in the past. Thus, Washburn creates a fictional world in which unifying and globalising structures are inaccessible: human experience has fragmented, and attempts to unify it, for example the linking of the past and the present world, are difficult. Maria struggles to marry a physical ‘here’ with a mental ‘there’: although geographically from ‘here’, the home in her memory is unmistakably absent and elsewhere. The physical geography of the post-apocalyptic world is characterised by displacement, discontinuity and dispersal. In the play, physical geography, and humanity’s dislocation within it, is linked cultural geography. Survivors of the apocalypse must align and locate themselves within a physical landscape - ‘I live here. Or I lived here. Or no, I live here’ – but also within a cultural one. Humanity’s newly disordered existence is related to identity and culture as well as to geography, and *Mr Burns* explores how people might respond to such a situation. Reminiscing about, trying accurately to remember and then subsequently acting out *The Simpsons*, is a means of negotiating the wasted landscapes of electrically-powered culture.

The play invites us to see the idea of the text as a cultural landscape, and the disordered elements of the human experience of the post-apocalyptic world are reflected and inscribed there. The camp fire scenario of Act One marks humanity’s return to a primal state, to a beginning, but, paradoxically, the characters speak of phenomena associated with our late capitalist society. The scene blends the ancient act of storytelling with postmodern culture. This new reality is a form of beginning, but one in which character must look back in order to find their way forward. Linear time is disordered and the idea of the origin subverted: time is deconstructed or rearranged, and we work *backwards* from a mediatised culture. The idea of a beginning as secure and stable marker in time is thus destabilised in *Mr Burns*. The era of the end of electricity described by the play acts as both an end and a beginning, and this is most acutely echoed in Act Three which represents a simultaneously an ending and beginning of a period of human experience. As Bart exclaims, ‘[t]he world is new and glittery/ I run to meet it hopefully’, but his very existence as a fictional character is the culmination of multiple layers of intertextuality, history and cultural survivaal[[328]](#footnote-329).

The fragmentary nature of the post-apocalyptic landscape is reflected by Washburn’s construction of the text as open and porous, a postmodern approach to text, as a space in which a ‘variety of influences blend and clash’[[329]](#footnote-330). The loss of a unifying or totalising aspect of pre-apocalyptic culture is reflected in the view of the text as resistant to closure. Indeed, the play invites us more broadly to see textuality in this way. The scene which the group discusses, and later performs, ‘Cape Feare’, is itself an appropriation, a parody of the 1991 remake of the original 1962 *Cape Fear* which, in turn, was based on a novel called *The Executioners*. In it the Simpson family flee their home and take up new identities to escape Bart’s nemesis and potential murderer, Sideshow Bob, who, like Robert De Nero in the 1991 film, clings murderously to the bottom of their car as they try to escape. The episode contains numerous other references to popular culture, with Sideshow Bob singing parts of the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operetta *HMS Pinafore*, plus one-off references to *Psycho*, *Friday the 13th part III*, *The Night of the Hunter*, *I Love Lucy*, *Nightmare on Elmstreet* and *Edward Scissorhands[[330]](#footnote-331)*.

*Mr Burns* is the story of textual material and how it survives through changes of form. Unlike the characters we meet in Acts One and Two, whom we can only assume are dead by the time the events of Act Three take place, the material has a life that survives the time-span represented. We watch as it undergoes a transformative journey, emerging in the first act as intimate fireside storytelling, morphing in the second act into commodified repertory entertainment, before manifesting in the final act as ritualised formal musical theatre. *The Simpsons*, which begins the play as popular culture or ‘low’ art finishes as ‘high’ art. Mr *Burns* invites us to consider the way in which the text resists closure by showing how it informs and is informed by the contexts in which it is transmitted. In stark contrast to the spontaneous acts of storytelling in Act One, memories of popular culture in Act Two are ruthlessly commodified. Troupes must compete for the best acts to ensure not just the cultural survival of the material, but their own physical survival. A stunned act of remembering – a basic response to trauma – has developed into the realisation that nostalgia for the lost world can contribute directly to survival in the new world. ‘I know a guy in Dayton who has a stash of Diet Cokes’, says [..], ‘and do you know what he’s selling them for? Lithium batteries. 2 a can. [[331]](#footnote-332)’. Acts are valued for their accuracy - how authentically they recreate the original - and it is these properties that make them saleable. As in *Adler & Gibb*, authenticity is shown to have multiple meanings. As humanity begins to restructure itself, texts are reconfigured for this new environment. Indeed, this group explicitly acknowledges this and adapts the work accordingly:

JENNY the point of a Commercial is to create a reality which is *welcoming*, not challenging.

GIBSON Yeah but what about that whole, I feel like we’re failing to exploit, you know, in commercials, it’s not just about feeling cozy, and bounty, there was that whole other thing commercials used to do, like there always used to be that question of identity. Like, it’s not just what is the desire, it’s *who has* the desire. I think people are ready for Status again[[332]](#footnote-333).

Implicit in Gibson’s and Jenny’s discussion is the intimate relationship between people and the stories that they tell and that they encounter. In a delicate dance, stories reflect but also shape humanity: viewers are ‘ready for status’ in their entertainment because they themselves are poised to acquire it, and seeing it reflected back at them will move them closer to it. *Mr Burns* shows us that stories are inseparable from power and identity and from economic and political forces. In this way, text, rather than being unified and closed, is endlessly open to influence.

The work’s structure also reflects a textual openness. The final act negates the possibility of resolution in terms of character development and instead shows us the outcome of the material. It represents a collapse of psychological realism as life and text become indistinguishable. The play itself is a kind of inaccurate reconstruction of its progenitor text *The Simpsons*, a ghostly shadow, an experiment in imagining the way in which that text might survive the apocalypse. The playwright’s inclusion of verbatim text opens up her own script-writing process to multiple voices, allowing the single authorial voice to be countered by others and the idea of the origin to be unsettled.

### Reconstructing the origin

I have argued that *Mr Burns* invites us to consider the way in which the text shapes humanity, but the play just as sincerely engages with the way in which humanity shapes the text. While we do not directly see a resolution for the characters, who do not appear in Act Three, we are drawn in to their story of struggle and survival in the wake of a disaster. Remembering, repeating and rehearsing *The Simpsons* in Act One is a way for these individuals to make sense of this newly hostile environment, to address where they have been and where they are going. This is a plight with which we feel sympathy. Rather than simply a focus on the textual character of *The Simpsons*, the text, through its transmission, is an embodied, human phenomenon. It is a basic form of human connection which speaks to a spectator: in the production, the audience can be heard laughing along with the fireside scene, seeming to share genuinely in the joy of spontaneous reminiscence, even though the dialogue is scripted. *Mr Burns* privileges the story of the text in that the final Act does not show us the outcome of the characters’ stories, but ultimately we see that their stories are reflected in the text itself. As in Acts One and Two, the way in which texts are made and consumed reflects the current state of humanity. In this way, the text in Act Three becomes a living document of the events of the play: text and humanity reflect and are reflected in one another. The fable of Bart and his battle against malevolent forces is a symbol for humanity’s endeavour in overcoming destruction and the impulse to find coherence within destruction and fragmentation.

*Mr Burns* is as much about forgetting as it is remembering. Washburn’s chosen setting – a post-apocalyptic America – presents an environment which has been exorcised of electrically powered media. Humanity has lost a body of collective cultural memory – what was once the responsibility of machines now must be taken up by humans once more. This loss of the archive returns humanity to a state of innocence. Now, in this most primal of settings – the fireside - stories must be resituated in the body, stored in human memory, processed by human consciousness and transmitted by human voice. The present becomes the foundation of reality and of identity: recalling episodes of *The Simpsons* is an act engaged in simply to make sense of the present. This ‘stripping down’ of storytelling processes provides Washburn with an opportunity to reflect on storytelling as a primal mode and the environment that she represents as a reconstructive space. Thus, the play not only shows people telling stories, but draws attention to itself *as* storytelling. The scenes in which the characters first recall ‘Cape Feare’ are particularly compelling, and this may be due to them being composed partly of verbatim text taken from a week-long session in which Washburn recorded a group of actors recalling their favourite *The Simpsons* episodes. She explains that she:

wanted to start with an act of recollection […] I wanted to work with a group of actors; remembering is complicated; I  
could make remembering up, but it would never be as rich and complex as the real thing”[[333]](#footnote-334).

Her comment suggests that in *Mr Burns*, it is the *act* or *process* of storytelling that can be identified as its principal theme, and one that emerges as a transcendental quality in the piece. Washburn strips humanity of its ‘civilised’ infrastructure to see what remains, and finds that stories and storytelling are foundational. Storytelling is shown to be an original mode of human experience which survives across primal and more ‘civilised’ contexts. We are invited to consider the importance and vitality of stories, and the various forms that they take, at times of human crises as well as the need to engage in collective cultural memory to relocate and redefine ourselves in relation to fragmentation and chaos.

Although *Mr Burns* deconstructs the idea of reality, it reminds us of the role of illusion in storytelling, and the need to create realities that are alternative to our own. The electrical devices that are meticulously recreated by the troupe are examples of the importance of illusion. These objects stand as a symbol of hope: no longer working as functional objects, they act *as if* they worked. They are unreal and inauthentic, but like the inflatable baseball bat in *Adler & Gibb*, this is a world in which objects are part of a system of representation in which value is attributed by human minds. They echo the items I discussed in relation to *Worktable*, which are broken but still perform *as if* they were whole. They are, perhaps, visibly repaired: never to work again as they once did but simultaneously retaining the essence of the object that they once were. The recreated electrical items can be seen as a reflection of theatre’s elegiac quality[[334]](#footnote-335), and they communicate something intrinsic about the props traditionally used in dramatic theatre - made to look ‘real’, but not. However, the ‘loss’ in this case has been explicitly fictionalised within an apocalypse narrative. That Mr Burns pedals the mechanism to keep the stage illuminated at the end of the final scene is a reminder of the simulated and illusionistic nature of theatre but this is not a cynical or nihilistic comment. Rather, hope and cynicism, deconstruction and reconstruction, are set in constant tension within a dramaturgy of process.

### Conclusion

*Mr Burns* represents elements of process by staging the acquisition, rehearsal and presentation of material. It shows how the material itself has a story and a character and how objects are used to create an onstage reality. These objects act as symbols of hope: acting *as if* they are functioning is important. The play resists the idea of categorisation as it contains so many forms - including dramatic, postdramatic, epic, verbatim, musical theatre - within its form. Such a cultural assemblage reflects the chaos of post-apocalyptic America, a disordered physical and cultural geography with which humanity must align itself. Washburn’s play tells the story of humanity’s processes of realignment and relocation primarily through the stories that it tells and the texts that it produces. *Mr Burns* invites us to see how material is transformed and changed over time as it survives only through memory and acts of retelling. This negates the idea of origin or foundational truth. Rather than being about a story of people engaged in the process of storytelling, Washburn’s work takes the *act or process of telling* as its foundation. Within this is a tension, an interplay, between humanity and the text, which are shown to continually shape one another in a dramaturgy predicated on betweenness.

The dramaturgies of *Adler & Gibb* and *Mr Burns* are reconstructive as much as they are deconstructive. Both plays present the way in which art operates in a value system. In the first act of *Mr Burns* we see a basic form of storytelling, but in the second act this has become part of a currency and trade with a malevolent underside. In *Adler & Gibb*, art, even when it aims to be uncommodifiable, is subject to other types of economy. Both pieces make the point that cultural products (even immaterial ones) are inextricable from a larger network of culture, society, politics and economy and are therefore inherently intertextual. These deconstructive impulses are consistently countered by reconstructive ones, however. In *Adler & Gibb* the reconstruction is a formal one, moving from a fragmented and pared down stage picture to a fully coherent whole. In *Mr Burns*, we experience a reconstruction in which humanity begins to rebuild itself after a devastating apocalypse and a fragmented and half-remembered text gradually develops into a unified whole. In both, we experience a coherent sense of story, and characters with whom we sympathise: hope and cynicism co-exist in a dynamic relationship within a dramaturgy that shows the ‘real’ to be in a process of construction.

## PRACTICE: part three

### Materiality

Exploring absence was a central aim of *The Way of Things*. By not showing something, paradoxically, its presence can be felt more acutely. This links with loss, theatre’s ‘elegiac’ quality[[335]](#footnote-336) or the way it ‘becomes itself through disappearance’*[[336]](#footnote-337)*. The physical theatre piece *Absence and Presence* by Andrew Dawson is an example of this: the performer recreates his late father on stage with video, a pipe and glasses in a way that makes his absence somehow more present[[337]](#footnote-338). Playing with absence in theatre is a reference to the impermanence of the form itself. Materiality is a key part of working with absence, because, as Cormac Power says, ‘theatre utilises its limitations as a medium tied to a world of “things” and [draws on the] representational possibilities afforded by these limitations’[[338]](#footnote-339). Its use of materiality always draws attention to what it does not possess, and also pre-empts its own disappearance. This aspect of performance has informed my practice throughout.

In line with creating a metaphorical link between dramaturgical object and dramaturgical process (the two main senses of dramaturgy), I wanted to investigate representing material states in *The Way of Things*. I had looked at restoration in *As Good As New*, and so I wanted to know whether other material states could form the basis of material for performance. A state like restoration indicates a pre-state of brokenness or decay, and these now became my point of focus. I thus developed a list of various material states and asked the performers to choose which ones appealed to them most. They were: abandonment, decay and restoration. These material states chosen by the actors corresponded to the three art works also chosen by them for the triptych. Rothko’s *Untitled* corresponded to a state of ‘abandonment’, Damien Hurst’s *For the Love of God* corresponded to ‘decay’ and Leonardo Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* corresponded to ‘restoration’. Theoretically, these aspects went together well: the Rothko piece has a sense of emptiness about it, the Hurst piece, which sets diamonds into a skull, seems to approach the idea of decay, and the Da Vinci piece has been restored so many times that it is said there is none of the original left. However, I did not think that these material states were evident in the final piece. I think this was in part the result of trying too hard to avoid realism, which ended up negatively affecting my intuition about what would work and not work.

I continued to work on absence in *Make/Do/Mend*. In the first scene, ‘Angel Delight’, a performer comes centre stage and tells us a story about an angel delight whisk that she used to have when she was little. It broke one day and had to be thrown away. As she speaks, she makes up some angel delight with a bowl and spoon, which will be served to the audience in tiny glasses in the interval. This relates to the thinking I had been doing on the relationship between the textual and material object. The making of the angel delight brought attention to a process which brings change in consistency and structure. It reflected the link I was making between the textual and material object, and my interest in transmutation and treatment. She didn’t learn lines for this section, but she should have done. She spoke that story *ad lib*, but she was not telling the story for the first time. I realised that, in this context, I wanted the performer to speak the lines as though she’s doing so for the first time; in short, I wanted them to be *new*. My next question then was – how does this relate to presence? If we consider theatre to stage presence, does theatre stage newness? If theatre also stages brokenness, in terms of semiotic brokenness, how do these qualities of brokenness and newness relate to one another?

**Exercise:** The group gets into pairs, who take it in turns to share a story with their partner about brokenness, taking care to listen carefully to the details because they will have to relate it later. Pairs come to the playing area and present the stories. Person A, with Person B at her side, tells person B’s story as if it were her own. The group are asked to consider Person A and B together as the performance, with Person B’s reaction forming part of the work. Contributors are reminded not to ‘act out’ their partner’s story or to pretend to be that person. They must simply tell it, in quite a neutral way, as their own.

Questions that arose from this early exercise related to the treatment of verbal objects: How fragile is this story? How is this fragility affected by standing with the owner of the story next to you? What is it like to watch person B’s face? What is the effect on person A of standing with person B to the side? How might the story have been altered in the transmission?

This exercise encapsulates many of the themes and concerns embodied by *Make/Do/Mend*. It includes a personal story that is subject to some sort of translation or transmutation, thereby allowing content to reflect form. It involves memory, and therefore a phenomenological element: in its remaking, the story is modified according to human memory and interpretation. Watching the short performances, there was a sense of the fragility of a story and the care that needed to be taken over it. Watching the pair on stage, it was evident how careful the speaker had to be with the owner of the story standing next to her, and this was extremely compelling to watch. This was because of the unrehearsed nature of the story - the performer of the story tells it for the first time and the generosity, concentration, effort and application required to get it right is captivating. We might think here of why improvisation is compelling to watch, of why we might enjoy seeing certain performances in which the actor delivers lines that she hears for the first time through an earpiece[[339]](#footnote-340): there is a certain amount of risk or unpredictability involved in terms of how the performer will cope. When the performer copes well, we are satisfied. Unlike a story which has been rehearsed, there seems to be more at stake in this live chain (from original teller to secondary teller to audience) of storytelling. I started to think about this as a fragility in the textual object. Vulnerable to the risk of improvisation, the textual object is handling carefully. At this point, the mutations of stories as they were transmitted began to interest me, and I developed this interest into a method of creating texts for performance as I will discuss shortly.

In line with ‘treatment’ of textual and material objects, care and carefulness was a theme that ran throughout this piece. It was a theme first developed in *As Good As New* and was then developed in *The Way of Things*. It came from the borrowing of the language of visual arts and objects. The environment of the art gallery, museum or exhibition space is a space of cared for objects. Since I was interested in using the language of object care and treatment and applying it to theatre and performance, this raised the question of how to care for the theatrical material. The metaphor of fragility was applicable here in terms of something easily broken, and that had to be handled carefully.

One story to be included in Make/Do/Mend was of a tragic accident in which the teller had fallen from a balcony and broken numerous bones. This was represented in the scene titled ‘Abi’, and involved the four performers sharing the story between them, each of them speaking in the first person. In rehearsal, when we came to ‘handle’ the story, we felt its fragility. Because of the tragic nature of it I felt that it would not be able to withstand much ‘treatment’, and so we chose to present it in a simple way. Spreading the ‘I’ between the different speakers had the effect of the story being passed around, carefully and attentively. It also meant that, again, we reminded the audience of the relationship between the storyteller and the story being told, via the act of telling. I wanted to stage the care that had been taken with the textual object. Indeed, all of the scenes in this piece showed a method of care in the act of collecting, treating and presenting stories, an element that links to a ‘dramaturgy of process’.

### Ordering, taxonomies and dramaturgy

In considering the gallery space in *The Way of Things*, I realised that it has certain sets of principles which dictate the shaping of space, movement through it and the patterning of material objects within it. The museum or gallery environment is a space on which the human impulse to categorize and order is writ large. This impulse also is a way of treating tragedy and disorder. I was distressed and fascinated, for example, by the story of the museum workers at Kabul who, following the systematic destruction of the museum by the Taliban in 2001, literally crawled about the wreckage picking out fragments of the broken things they had previously taken care of and placing them on beds of cotton wool. I had included this story in my pre-doctoral piece *As Good as New*. I thus began to research non-material archives, or work which deals creatively with lists and taxonomies. These, in their concern with structuring, have an inherently dramaturgical quality. Influential pieces and projects for me were: *The International Archive of Things Left Unsaid* by Rhiannon Armstrong[[340]](#footnote-341), a digital archive of anonymous short recordings of people saying things that they could not, would not or should not say to others; *Qaeda, Quality, Question, Quickly, Quickly, Quiet*, an audio piece by Lenka Clayton in which George W. Bush’s 2002 ‘Axis of Evil’ speech is broken up into single words that have then been rearranged in alphabetical order[[341]](#footnote-342); The Museum of Broken Relationships in Zagreb, in which people donate an object to the museum that symbolises their relationship break-up; *The Museum of Innocence*, a novel by Orhan Pamuk about the obsession with collecting and the corresponding literal Museum of Innocence in Istanbul in which items that would have been owned by his protagonist are displayed. These works engage in a mode of structuring that allows fictional and subjective elements to disrupt and play with the presentation of ‘truth’. Indeed, it is precisely this disruption and play that I identified as pertinent to theatre, as dramaturgical. Dramaturgy has an intrinsic link with sorting, ordering and structuring: it has been described as ‘an act of assemblage’[[342]](#footnote-343).

I wanted to create an exercise in which we could practice and experience the work of sorting and sifting. I brought in a large box of ‘odds and ends’, all of those things in the house that don’t have a proper home: paperclips, hairbands, old keys, old and foreign money, bits of string, odd earrings, beads and so on. I emptied them out on to a large round table cloth on the floor and I gave the actors the task of sorting through and arranging the items. We didn’t talk; the only sound was an Aphex Twin album I played as a soundtrack. We were very happily occupied in this ritualistic process of sorting. The undoing the tangles and the finding similarities felt totally satisfying, personal taxonomies, small constellations appearing here and there, fanning out and speaking to one another, creating landscapes and patterns and cities. The sorting was joyful, and it is, I think, a compelling business for the stage. I did not develop this task further, but I represented what we had done in this exercise in the final performance as titles for each scene in *Make/Do/Mend*. I spelled out the name of each scene with these household objects and then took a video of us taking away the items. These were then played these backwards to look like the titles were being assembled.

A drawing of a person

Description generated with high confidence

Figure 20: Sorting exercise in Make/Do/Mend

I wanted to investigate a visual representation of the link between ordering and dramaturgy. I printed out in large print all of the texts that made the final showing of *Make/Do/Mend* and then cut the up into single, pairs or trios of words. I then set the actors the task of grouping the words according to categories that they could think of. These were, for example, filler words such as ‘um’ and ‘er’ or verbs such as ‘shattering’, ‘breaking’. This method was partly represented in the final piece in the scene ‘Crash’ in which the actors spoke only the ‘ums’ and ‘ers’ from the original verbatim text. The audience could only guess at the content of the story during the ‘telling’. This lack of story was reinforced by, at the end, the projector screen shows a video, from above, of the whole story printed and cut up into pieces. The audience could briefly see fragments of the content of a story that had otherwise been obscured. This is a device that I used at the end of every scene: a physical representation of the text I had used, cut up into fragments, each a different colour. In this way, the scenes were bookended with a title video and then with a video of the story in fragments. In the case of the ‘Crash’ scene, this had an interesting effect for the audience who. Parts of the cut up words shown in the video at the end of each scene then reappeared in a final scene which told three ‘stories’ made up entirely of fragments of the preceding stories. These ‘remade’ stories were uncanny, poetic and strange. They had been developed in rehearsal through an exercise in which all the story fragments were laid out on a table and the actors improvised a new story from them simply by placing them in a certain order.

My interest in sorting and categorising first emerged from my pre-doctoral piece *As Good as New* in which three museum workers/restorers attempted to ‘restore’ the increasingly fragmented and broken narrative of the piece. At this point I identified the impulse to find order within disorder as a very human impulse. As I have progressed through my practice, I have come to relate this directly with dramaturgy. The latter is a way of creating order from disorder: creating relationships between things is a human principle. Anne Washburn’s *Mr Burns*, I suggest, represents this. A dramaturgy of process, then, not only represents elements of making on stage but demonstrates this human tendency to assemblage. Following this understanding, *Song of the Satellites* worked more explicitly on this principle than the other pieces.

A picture containing indoor, box, book

Description generated with high confidence

Figure 21: cut up text in *Make/Do/Mend*

In *Song of the Satellites*, the idea of the three actors as collectors, cataloguers or custodians of space junk was something I pursued from the beginning. I had first developed this idea when making *As Good As New*, where the three characters were restorers, in charge of a museum’s exhibits. I began work on this straight away by bringing in pictures of images of sorting, archives and libraries. We thought about the different materials needed to sort or catalogue and picked a number of props for those. I then asked the group to create a piece of chorus choreography which had a rhythm – the first four movements being their own and the final four movements being the same. The aim of this was to capture some of the rhythmic and repetitive nature of sorting or cataloguing. This didn’t make it to the final showing but was reflected in the synched movement sections that occurred between the three scenes. I did work which looked at the standard categories used to classify space junk and then created some ‘alternative categories’:

*NORAD ID MY NAME IS\_\_\_*

*NAME MY NICKNAME IS/ YOU KNOW ME AS\_\_\_*

*INTERNATIONAL CODE YOU NEED THE CODE\_\_\_TO WATCH/FOLLOW ME*

*PERIGEE I AM CLOSEST TO BEING LOST AT\_\_\_*

*APOGEE I AM CLOSEST TO BEING FOUND AT\_\_\_*

*SEMI MAJOR AXIS I’M NEITHER CONTENTED NOR DISCONTENTED AT\_\_\_*

*RCS I AM A SMALL/MEDIUM/LARGE BUILD*

*LAUNCH DATE I AM\_\_\_\_YEARS OLD*

*SOURCE I WAS BORN IN\_\_\_\_*

*LAUNCH SITE I BEGAN SERVICE AT\_\_\_\_*

*PERIOD SEE YOU IN\_\_\_*

I also worked with the Apollo mission transcripts, which are available on the NASA website and which I had been inspired by. I was interested in how they included the language of navigation and instruction, that there would be an instruction that would need to be followed for the mission to change course. I wanted to link this with dramaturgy. I led an extended improvisation with cards where one actor was reading and then another was using instructions from a list to get them to change or alter the reading. The instructions were: switching to manual; switching to fly-by-wire; identify [confirm you have seen something]; override; disarm; bypass; that’s verified; standby. In an echo of the exercises which draw on dialogue and storytelling, this is about the flow of the dramaturgy on stage, and the audience realising that there are various possibilities for the trajectory of the story or action and that these can be decided upon in real time. These did not make it to the final showing, but are one manifestation of my dramaturgical process.

### Memory and foregrounding the act of telling

Following the exercise in *The Way of Things* in which I asked the actors to look at an object and then describe it in its absence, memory became a central area of exploration in *Make/Do/Mend*. Beginning with the exercise in which person A tells person B a story of brokenness and then B has to speak it back, I became focussed on the act of retelling as a compelling process. As Ariel Watson states in relation to the verbatim sections of *Mr Burns* in which the actors remember episodes of The Simpsons, ‘[a] fictionalisation of the act of remembering can never be as richly imprecise as the “real thing” of misremembering’[[343]](#footnote-344). This ‘rich impreciseness’ was what I wished to focus on. Asking the actors to watch the video of one of the stories for the first time and then to recreate it as their own was a development of the initial exercise. In then transcribing this, a new text for use in rehearsal was formed. The motivation for representing the process of memory was part of my aim of foregrounding the act of telling. I was not concerned with ‘transparently’ representing the stories, but with ‘visible remaking’. For example, ‘Abi’, written in the first person, was delivered by all four speakers, a technique which marks a difference between the person physically telling the story and the speaker within the story. I asked the male performer to deliver the story which clearly belonged to a female speaker. In other scenes I took this a step further, for example the ‘Julie’ scene, in which a variety of improvised possible endings were whispered into the ear of the speaker. I also drew attention to the manner of remaking by marking where we had ‘edited’ and ‘cut’ words in ‘badly chosen lover’.

In *Song of the Satellites*, focussing on the act of telling took the form of personifying the satellites. Considering how to represent the pieces of space junk, how to ‘project’ them, was a key question, especially in relation to their unknowability. I wanted to know: if these pieces of space junk could talk, what would they say? I wanted to make it clear that we were projecting their identities. Because of this I developed the idea of personifying them. This would be a way to show the gap between what they are and how they might be represented, and, also, they would be very difficult to represent realistically on stage. That they were represented on film and not on stage was a technique to separate their characters from the ‘live’ characters. It was also intended to show their otherness, their intangibility, their strangeness and their distance. It was a link to the time period to which they belonged: video effects were added including interruptions, static and jumps. Filmed only using a basic camera in the rehearsal room, these pieces were, following feedback, one of the most successful parts of the show.

To develop the ‘characters’ of the satellites I asked the actors at an early workshop to return to the pieces of space junk they had written about in a previous workshop. They had to then create two short pieces of text written in the first person from the point of view of their chosen satellite. The first had to be a representation of their outer life and the second a representation of their inner life. These pieces of text were excellent and suddenly made us feel empathy for the satellites, a curious sensation considering they are large pieces of metal. Certain themes emerged: the fact that they ‘must’ watch everything on earth, that they thought they were the future, that they were replaced by younger versions of themselves. I also developed the idea also that the satellite could be some sort of omnipotent narrator, because it could see everything; the link with divinity is made again. There was a sense of melancholy in attributing these human traits to inanimate objects.

C:\Users\egp12zfh\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\RN2LAGF7\Zelda play poster (1).tif

Figure 22*: Song of the Satellites* flyer

**Exercise:** the actors sit looking at a large projection of the Earth. They have a list of sentence beginnings in front of them: ‘the Earth is…’, it looks so…’, ‘I/you can almost hear the…’, ‘I/you can almost smell the…’/ ‘on it is every…’/ ‘I/you feel so…’. I record the improvisation and then transcribe the results. I then use this for developing my own performance text.

This exercise is another example of using projection in an improvisatory context. A signified is displayed and different signifiers are attributed. The best of these were worked into the opening scene in which a small earth was lit up in the darkness and then described to the audience. This represents a central technique that has developed over the course of the PhD: to use directed text generation exercises and then use them as the starting point for my individual writing work on the script. As we were doing this exercise, I began to think of it as part of an initial scene but also as a way of introducing the idea that the object could be many different things – the world as an object with many signifiers. I was interested also in representing the ‘overview effect’ in which astronauts look back at earth from space and feel a renewed sense of coherence and wholeness.

### Conclusion

The interest in absence that I pursued from the beginning of my practice, and came to understand as an act of remaking, has remained central to my work. It can be linked with the notions of reality, authenticity and origin that I discuss in relation to *Adler & Gibb* and Mr Burns. To respond to absence, to remake something on stage, is to conjure a reality, to ‘project a world’. In the human impulse to categorise and to sort is the desire to reconstruct and to remake. Dramaturgy, as a method of structuring, is always a form of remaking, a way of treating brokenness.

# Conclusion

This thesis began with a conceptualisation of dramaturgy, as it functions in the English-speaking West. The term has seen a revival since the 1970s and my review of the literature, drawn from the past 20 years, identified writing that has largely been devoted to documenting the diversity of practices that come under the heading of dramaturgy. My own understanding of dramaturgy is driven by an attention to the mechanics, slippages, assemblages, and other multiplicitous movements of the concept. I identified ‘betweenness’ as an integral quality of dramaturgy, outlining the idea as a link between the term’s noted ‘slipperiness’, the dramaturg’s typical specialism in ‘bridge-building’, and the relational aspect of theatrical structure. I set out my intention to use betweenness as a unifying theme in my practical and theoretical study.

In an ‘expanded’ vision of dramaturgy, offered by a minority of makers and thinkers, the concept has a wider remit including as a ‘sensibility’, or, as I describe it, ‘a way of seeing’. My discussion of six contemporary works is intended as a model of dramaturgical ‘seeing’ and is meant to outline dramaturgy as a methodological tool with the capacity to give a nuanced account of the assemblages at work in contemporary productions which resist categorisation and generalisation. I have situated my analysis within the current scholarly approach to the legacy of postmodernism, a philosophical and cultural mode whose influence can still acutely be felt, but whose vocabularies are in the process of being reworked in a way appropriate for our current time. The works that I have discussed are apt for the analysis because they demonstrate the reflective depth of dramaturgy, but also its capacity to account for the in-process quality of a developing post-postmodern critical vocabulary.

Through my analysis I identified the tendency for works to exercise a postmodern impulse towards deconstruction fragmentation and cynicism but *at the same time*, and despite these important qualities, to offer a sense of hope and a belief in the idea of wholeness, unity and closure. This simultaneity, or betweenness, has been the common thread in my analysis of six performance works. My research through practice has been a means of approaching dramaturgy from the ‘inside’ and is of equivalent importance to the theory elements in addressing my research questions. The early memories of my father’s restoration workshop that I described acted as a ‘threshold’ for engaging with my practice. The object which is in the process of restoration, shown in the photograph, demonstrates both wholeness and fragmentation, deconstruction and reconstruction, and, as such, is a symbol for the dramaturgical object and its relationship with process. The image speaks to the central aim of my practice, which has been to develop a dramaturgical vocabulary for responding to brokenness.

In the six case studies that I have presented, I have used dramaturgical betweenness as the focus for analysing how each piece negotiates liminalities and relationships. In Chapter One I argued that Kate McIntosh’s *Worktable* and RashDash’s *We Want You to Watch* mediate between wholeness and fragmentation. In relation to *Worktable* I addressed the status of the material object, arguing that, through the process of breaking and repairing, wholeness is shown to be in-process. I then introduced the link between the material and dramaturgical object that I would develop in the remainder of the thesis. In relation to *We Want You to Watch* I proposed that the fragmentary structure of the work reads as a critique of a capitalist logic in which the commodity is a ‘false totality’. I contended that both pieces display a ‘dramaturgy of process’ in the sense that they continually demonstrate creative process as a way of approaching the themes addressed. I asserted that both pieces staged an interplay between deconstruction and reconstruction and suggested that this could be read as a simultaneously cynical and hopeful impulse or ‘an impossible possibility’. In the practice section of the chapter, having discussed my early memories of my dad’s restoration workshop in the introduction, I discussed how brokenness, repair and objecthood manifested as themes and methods in my practical dramaturgical work. I outlined my investigation of the material object as represented in performance, and discussed how its semantic boundaries can be loosened, especially in its absence. In introducing my second piece, *Make/Do/Mend*, I described my developing interest in the relationship between the material and textual object, and how it might be ‘treated’ within dramaturgical process. Finally, I introduced the idea of brokenness as an allegorical site and ‘threshold’ of creativity, a theme that would run through all of my practical work.

In Chapter Two I developed my argument that dramaturgy is predicated on betweenness by linking it with the idea of dialogue. Dialogue, as relational and active, and applicable to human and non-human speakers, is an apposite structure for understanding dramaturgy as a process which stages a negotiation between potentially oppositional elements. The focus of my analysis in this regard was a discussion of self and other in Chris Thorpe’s *Confirmation* and Breach Theatre’s *Tank*. These works deal with the between space, the fluid boundary, of self and other. I proposed that, in the former, Thorpe used the piece to investigate the shared ‘fabric’ of inter-subjectivity. In the same way as I linked the material and dramaturgical object in the previous chapter, I suggested that the self, as a composite dynamic structure, could be linked with dramaturgy, as the same. In relation to *Tank* I argued that dialogue could be understood as a dramaturgy of process, a means through which the authors speak to one another, to their material and to their audience. I proposed, however, that the company were concerned with the ‘subjection’ and potential effacement of the other in what was only superficially an equal exchange. Although both *Confirmation* and *Tank* showed the self to be continually in-process, they shored up the authority of the subject in a vision of the self as ‘wholeness-in-process’. In the practice section of the chapter, I described how my work on ‘translating’ the object from a visual art into a performance medium had developed my interest in relationality as a quality of dramaturgy. Working more consciously in a dramaturgical mode, I began to understand the relationship between the two senses of dramaturgy – as noun and verb – within my process as a ‘temporary fixing’. In terms of structuring material, I began to use relationality and juxtaposition as active structures for combining material, a process that I later understood as dialogic. In *Song of the Satellites* this manifested as the coming together of systems and principles, which, in dialogic relation, engendered a new dramaturgy for each scene and for the work as a whole.

In Chapter Three I drew together certain strands that had been latent in the preceding analyses. Having addressed notions of wholeness and fragmentation, deconstruction and reconstruction, and the demonstration of process, the related issues of reality, authenticity and the origin had been touched on implicitly. In my analysis of Tim Crouch’s *Adler & Gibb* and Anne Washburn’s *Mr Burns*, I directly considered how these concepts were deconstructed and reconstructed by these works’ dramaturgies. I proposed that the former questioned the idea of ‘authentic’ art based on the idea of presence and showed that art, even if devoid of matter, is always connected with cultural, political and economic structures outside itself. In relation to the latter I discussed the way in which the notion of the origin was deconstructed through an acknowledgment of intertextuality and a blurring of the boundary between humanity and the text. I suggested that in both works, however, that these elements were set in tension with a reconstructive impulse in which the process of storytelling was viewed as foundational. In the practice section of the chapter I brought together the various strands of my practice to explain how dramaturgy can be understood as a way of reconstructing reality and treating brokenness.

My thesis has made a significant contribution to dramaturgy scholarship and practice on several levels. The lack of dramaturgy studies which model a specifically dramaturgical approach to production analysis has been addressed via my method of ‘dramaturgical seeing’, a vocabulary embedded in modes of theatrical construction and informed directly by own work as a theatre-maker. While dramaturgs have described their practices in rich detail, they have not translated this to a mode of criticism within dramaturgy scholarship. Such an approach also forms a contribution to the emerging debate within theatre scholarship about the potentially reductive nature of certain categories or types of theatre. By investigating the strategies at work with individual pieces, I have proposed that, rather than conforming to one or another category – for example, dramatic or postdramatic - these dramaturgies succeed in presenting a dynamic tension between them. Indeed, the idea of betweenness is a principal part of my contribution: I have attempted to draw together previously unconnected aspects of dramaturgy and offer this interpretation as a way of accounting for the ‘slipperiness’ or overly diffuse quality of a term that encapsulates such a diversity of activities. Considering dramaturgical betweenness has also been a way of contributing to the ongoing discussion about the legacy of postmodernism and the drive to find new vocabularies that account for its ‘passing’. The inter-disciplinary debates about the matter use music, visual art, film and architecture to discuss emerging trends, but frequently overlook theatre. Thus, my investigation of dramaturgies which mediate between wholeness and fragmentation is intended to bridge that gap.

The relationship between the theory and practice has been another manifestation of dramaturgical betweenness: I have attempted to set these two ‘sides’ of the PhD in dialogue, so that, together they create a response to the central research questions. The creative vocabulary that I have developed is specific to my process; it is a result of the practical work that I have described. Thus, the foundational principles that I list below simultaneously describe the work I have undertaken and form a framework for future practice. Each point links techniques of making with the main themes of the preceding critical analysis of brokenness and repair, thereby upholding the dialogue between theory and practice and the way in which the theme of brokenness and repair is a metaphor that feeds into the creative vocabulary and forms a link between dramaturgical object and process.

**Makes-do.** Making-do is a pre-requisite. It is important to work with what is available and allow the conditions under which the creative work has been made to feed into that which is created. While making-do can imply a ‘settling’ or a ‘second best’, it need not. The idea expresses the active aspect of working with what exists, the tension between the existing and the new. This principle reflects the amateur, light-touch aspect of repair as a means of treating brokenness.

**Works within the relationship between the existing and the new.** These are held in tension within the work, including in an oscillation between authorial and editorial modes and in a consideration of what it means to attend to the existing. Although originality and newness are always already deconstructed, repair is a concept itself endlessly open to reimagining, as I have attempted to show. This principle reflects the paradox of the repaired object, which occupies its old and new form simultaneously.

**Takes fragmentation as a starting point**. As a maker, brokenness or fragmentation is the tacit starting point. It is not the main area of investigation, but rather is an existing condition that is responded to. Deconstructive processes are always set in tension with reconstructive ones. This principle reflects and takes inspiration from strategies of repair.

**Uses metaphor to make a link between performance/dramaturgical object and process**. The content of the work always creates an insight into process, and from it emerges method and vocabulary. Breaking and treating brokenness is the primary example of this. This principle reflects the visibly repaired object which bears the trace of the process of its deconstruction and reconstruction.

**Investigates relationality and uses it as a method**. Dramaturgical betweenness is a foundation of the vocabulary and can be used to generate material in the rehearsal room and in the development of performance texts. It can take the form of setting verbal and non-verbal elements side in tension or it can involve the collision of systems and sets of principles to create a ‘new’ structure. It can be understood as dialogue, which can be a particularly useful structure for asking questions of the material and remaining in dynamic relationship with it. This principle reflects the visibly repaired object which clearly is made up of fragments set in relationship.

**Explores and works with theatre’s ‘metaphorical’ quality.** That theatre works by ‘inviting us to see one set of things in terms of another’ is of primary importance in the vocabulary. Absence is a form of brokenness in which the object is disconnected from itself (only a ghost is present) and representing the absent object in performance is a form of remaking. This act of remaking is idiosyncratic, in-process and foregrounds the act of telling. The principle, because it refers to remaking, reflects the acts of repair and restoration.

**Investigates ‘treatment’ and observes transmutation and transformation.** Linked to relationality, this aspect acknowledges that material enters the rehearsal room to receive a certain treatment and as a consequence will transmute and transform. Such processes can be closely observed and captured through documentation or transcription and fed back into the work. Purposely ‘translating’ material across medium or form is a key focus. This principle reflects the process of repairing or restoring objects as a way of ‘treating’ brokenness.

**Is concerned with foregrounding the act of telling and reflecting the process of making**. The work produced has a dramaturgy of process. This means that the act of telling is always foregrounded, so that a critical distance from ‘truth’ is maintained but also qualities such as wholeness are shown to be in the process of being made. This principle reflects the visibly repaired object which possesses the qualities of both fragmentation and wholeness.

**Is ‘wholeness-in-process’**. Wholeness and coherence are ideas that are constantly in flux. For example, the work’s dramaturgy (in the first sense of the term) is constantly subject to a ‘temporary fixing’. As the maker I move from part to whole and back to part again, creating a continuous series of imagined unified wholes for the work. This principle reflects the in-process nature of the broken and repaired object.

**Acknowledges dramaturgy, which can also be understood as a form of remaking or dealing with brokenness, as a human impulse**. The need to make sense of brokenness and to deal with chaos by structuring and ‘weaving’ is an intensely human one. A dramaturgy of process, and using the subject matter of brokenness, acknowledges this and enriches the work.

Together with the critical vocabulary I have modelled in the theory section of the thesis, this creative vocabulary is a manifestation of dramaturgical betweenness and a response to brokenness. It does not signal an end point but an instance of ‘temporary fixing’ in which I unify and articulate the various processes that occur in my practice. They will be subject to continued remaking as I continue in my creative work.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: *Make/Do/Mend* Script

**MAKE/DO/MEND**

**W.I.P SHOWING**

**17th April 2015**

**Scene One: Angel Delight**

**R**

OK, so this is my story of something breaking, something broken. When I was younger I used to have this, er, like, jug thing, and I always remember making Angel Delight in this jug. Er, the jug itself was a clear jug I think, it was clear, but it used to have a little yellow teddy bear on the front, erm, it had, er, like a handle as well I think and it worked by, there were four whisks on the top, well, inside, there were four whisks inside. They were yellow I think, and the top lid bit that they were attached to was red. And the handle was yellow and that-, you turned that round and rotated it round and that rotated the whisks inside, that was how it worked. It used to make a great noise as well, it used to be like quite a mechanical-y, plastic-y noise, erm, I can’t remember, I can’t do the noise with my own voice, erm, but I can hear it in my head when the, now I’m talking about it, er, so yeah, um, I always remember making Angel Delight in this whisk jug, erm. The-, I always used to make chocolate Angel Delight I think- that’s quite typical of me really. Erm, I think we use to-, you used to be able to have, like butter scotch, or, and vanilla and strawberry Angel Delight, but, there, er, no, I think I always preferred chocolate, but I think, as I say, that’s something I probably would have done- preferred the chocolate one. Er, I used to love it, like, we used to make proper deserts with it and everything. Like, just now when I’m thinking about it, there’s quite a few different memories of, like, Angel Delight based deserts that we used to have with it. And my friends used to come round and we always used to have Angel Delight as well, erm, so yeah, it was probably quite a treat, erm, but I always remember making it, I loved the making it, and getting, putting it in this jug and mixing it with milk and putting the powder in this jug and using this, the whisks of the jug, to make it, to make the Angel Delight cause obviously it starts off quite, quite fluid, liquidy- like a liquid sorry- and then, as you keep whisking it, it becomes thicker, er, and then you put it in the fridge to set. So, yeah, I always had this jug that I always used to make Angel Delight. I think it was from, from Tupperware. I think my mum said that she’d bought it from Tupperware, erm, it was probably early nineties, erm, and I think it was for me and my sister both used it, erm, I think I probably have more memories of it though, of making this Angel Delight, erm, yeah, so I was, I always remember making Angel Delight in this jug and one day when I was in high school, I guess I maybe being in year nine or something, erm, maybe year eight, my friend Emma came round for tea, and we made Angel Delight for our, for our desert. Erm, I think my mum let us make it our selves, cause that’s part of the fun of it really and cause I used to always use this jug, as I say, I always mixed it up in this jug. Erm, so yeah, as I say you’ve got to be quite delicate with it, you couldn’t really whisk too fast because it was just plastic and as it thickened up it became a bit more tricky to, to do, but I was making it and then I think I let Emma have a turn, and I don’t really remember much, but I do remember she was going too fast, and she actually was whisking so fast that she broke it. The handle snapped straight off, er. It was just made of plastic and it was just a clean break off, erm, so, yeah, erm, I er, I don’t, er, actually remember, I think it probably just got chucked in the bin I think, cause obviously you couldn’t fix it, you couldn’t glue it back together or anything, it was just plastic. Erm, yeah, so erm, I’m still friends with Emma now, I don’t begrudge her for it at all, er, but when I’m, if you’re out in the supermarket and you see Angel Delight, going down the aisle, I always think ah yeah, it makes me remember about my little jug with the bear on it and the four whisks inside. And it’s quite funny actually, I don’t really eat Angel Delight any more. I think I had it when I was at uni, I’ve probably eaten it one or two times, but it doesn’t taste as good as it did when I was younger. I think probably as I got older my tastes have changed, um, I think it tastes kind of artificial now, erm. Yeah, not, not as nice as, er, as it used to taste when I was younger. So, er, yeah, that is my story of something broken, my little Tupperware jug with the four whisks in.

**Scene Two: Car crash**

***Each person ‘reads’ their own story but only non-words (erm, er etc) are spoken out loud***

**R**

Erm, so, when, erm, me and my husband John, we, um, we got a car?, erm, and it wasn’t a brand new car, it was a second hand car, and we, well, when John went to pick it up one day we lived, erm, m-, John was in the RAF?, [mumbles] he was in the service, and so we lived on a, um, er, a camp base, and one day he came to pick me up from work and he came and picked me up in the new car that we’d just, he’d just got it, just picked it up, erm, and so I was really excited you know, I didn’t know he was going to be there, and, yeah, it was lovely . The car was, it was all white, erm, I don’t remember the make of the car, but, yeah, the seats were these big black seats inside. Er, yeah, and so we were, we were driving home and we were in this queue of traffic, erm, there was a queue of traffic going that way and on the other side of the road also a queue of traffic going the opposite way. And then all of a sudden this lorry just pulled out, erm, of the oncoming traffic’s queue, and he was just was coming towards us and he didn’t show any signs of wanting to pull back in and we kept going and the lorry driver wasn’t pulling back in. Erm, so John had decided to pull onto this grass verge at the side to let him, to let him, kind of pass and didn’t want him to crash into us. So, well, we thought it was a good idea at the time, but it wasn’t, it turned out it had been raining, so the, so it was all slippy and muddy, erm, and also, we, we erm, everything kind of went into slow motion and I’ve never had this experience before. Everything just slowed down and everything, you know, sirens, sounds, everything was really, really slow and we were just heading towards this tree. It wasn’t a big tree or anything, erm, but, still, you know, we were going towards it, and I just remember we hit it with a big, a massive thud, it, like, leaped out from the slow motion and hit us, erm, yeah, and, you know, people stopped and helped us and called an ambulance and everything. The erm, I mean we were OK thankfully, we’re still here, er, today, many years later. Um we had, you know, just a few cuts and bruises, erm, bruised ribs, bruised chest, John hit the steering wheel, so he had a bit of injury as well, erm, emotional um, you know, as well, we had that sort of heal, but the car was not OK. Obviously our car had wrapped around the, our front end of our car had wrapped around the tree, erm, yeah, and it was a right off. I didn’t see, I think I saw the car one more time after that, erm, yeah, it wasn’t in a good shape, it didn’t survive. So, yeah, that is my story of brokenness.

**S**

So, erm, this is my story of a broken car. When John and I were first married- we’d been married about eighteen months, erm, we, er, we saved up and, and bought a car, before then we’d had, we’d had a car that was John’s that John’s Dad had given to us, erm, and so we, we, saved up and we, we bought this new car. And John, er, went to pick it up and then he came to meet me at work which was lovely cause I wasn’t expecting him to turn up, but he did. Er, so he come, came and picked me up from work in our new car and we, er, were heading home. It was a lovely car. It was, er, white. Don’t ask me what make it was cause I can’t remember, er, but it was white and it had bucket seats and we were heading home and we were in a long row of traffic and there’s a row of traffic on the other side of the road from us, and all of a sudden this truck, lorry, truck, erm, pulled out and was heading straight towards us and didn’t seem to be slowing down or anything, was just coming straight to us without stopping. And John, bless him, erm, swerved, it seemed to be the only thing to do to get out of the way of this truck was to, er, swerve onto a, a, grassy hill, which seemed, bank, like a good idea at the time, but it had been raining, it had been really wet and so, er, we skidded and, er, there was a tree in the middle of this bank, erm, and we headed straight for the tree, skidding, not being able to do anything. And, what was, the, the strangest thing about it, and I’ve not experienced before or since was that as we were heading towards this tree it was if it was in absolute slow motion, like, slowly heading towards this tree, not being able to do anything about it, and it was as though the tree jumped out at us and we [claps] hit it and we were wrapped around this tree, and, er, people stopped and helped and ambulances came and things, and we were, we were hurt, not badly, but we, we were hurt, erm, and we, in time, we healed, erm, emotionally it took a little bit longer to get past, but we healed, but unfortunately, erm, the car was written off and, yeah, didn’t, the car didn’t make it, which, er, we didn’t see it agai- , well we saw it, we saw it once after that but that was it, the car was broken, and that’s my story of something broken.

**T**

OK, so me and John had been married about, er, about 18 months, erm, and we had this car that, erm, belonged to his dad but, erm, he’d given it to us, erm, but we wanted a car, we wanted a car and we saved up, erm, and we, eventually was managed, we managed to, erm, buy one, not a new one of course, like a second hand one, erm, and john was, erm, in the airforce and, erm, and this was, I, I was at work, and he decided to surprise me, er, by picking me up from work in our new car. Erm, I remember it was, it was white and had black seats and he picked us up and we were going home and we were on this long stretch of road, completely empty and I remember seeing this, er, wagon, well this lorry, er, coming towards us and we noticed that it wasn’t moving over to the side for us, or, and we weren’t sure that, whether it had, like, seen us, and we were going along and, er, John decided to swerve out of the way, well it wasn’t a swerve, he, he drove into a patch of grass, erm, but unfortunately, it, it had been raining so it was wet and so we skidded, erm, across and we were heading towards this tree, erm, and I’d never felt this before but everything started going into slow motion, and, er, everything went quiet, you couldn’t hear the sound of the traffic, and, eventually we hit this tree, it was right in the middle of the car and the car wrapped round it, erm. People came and helped us, called an ambulance, er, and I remember people came and sorted us out, erm, and luckily we were fine, like, we’re still here today, er, we recovered, just some bruising, I remember, um, John’s chest went into the steering wheel, erm, so some bruising there, erm, but luckily we healed, erm, and everything’s fine, er, unfortunately, er, the car wasn’t all right, it completely, it was written off. It had wrapped round this tree and that was the last time we-, well we saw it one more time but it couldn’t have been repaired, erm, it was a complete right off, erm, and that’s my story of how something got broken.

**A**

[coughs] So, erm, this is my story, so, it’s about a time when me and John, we erm, we must have been married for what? [whistles] eighteen months and we just got this car. It were a nice white one, I could-, I couldn’t tell you what the make were cause I can’t remember, erm, but he picked me up from work one day and, I mean, I were chuffed cause I weren’t expecting it and he picked me up from work in this new car that we’d got and we were driving home and as we were driving down the road and we were going and going and we got to this road and it was just, just a small one with two, just two lanes on either side and we were going one way, and as we were going we noticed there were a big, big truck coming the other way and we kept thinking it were going to stop but it didn’t and it kept coming towards us and we didn’t know what to do, so John just swerved, well, he didn’t swerve, it was more of a, pull over onto this side bit which was just grass and it looked like it would have been all right but as he turned and parked into the side we got stuck. So we tried to get out and we lost control and I mean, bless him, there were nothing he could do. But we started plummeting down this hill and as we were going down I could just see us about to smash into this tree and it was so weird to think, like, when something like that’s about to happen, like everything goes really really slow around you and you just notice so much more happening. So, yeah, we went straight into this tree and [claps] smash the trunk was inbet- the middle of the front of it. And, I mean, somebody found us and they called the police and called the ambulance and they let us out and we were freed and we, we, we were all right, we were only hurt a little bit. We weren’t badly injured, just a few bruised ribs and, I mean, John went into the steering wheel and bruised his chest and ribs and, I mean, I, we must have been all right cause I’m still here today, erm, but even though we healed and we was OK, the car wasn’t unfortunately, it didn’t make it. We didn’t see it again after that, I mean, we saw it once more after but the poor little thing got written off, erm, and we healed and it took a while for the emotional, erm, side to be repaired, but we were all right and, erm, yeah, the little car wasn’t. That’s my story of brokenness.

**Scene Three: Julie**

**A**  When I was about four or five I had a doll called, er, Julie and my mum made me a dress, a blue dress with a pattern on it. It was white triangles, it had a lovely white collar and she’d also made my doll a dress of exactly the same type and my doll had dark hair just like I did and she had it done up in bunches just like I did. It had the sort of eyes that closed when you laid the doll down, so it was a very special type of doll in my thinking. So one day I took this doll to school, um, it was a primary school, it must have been the first year or second year of primary school, and everybody was in awe of this doll, they thought it was fantastic, there was a sort of hush around the classroom and I was centre of attention because this doll had on exactly the same dress as I did, it was like a little mini me, and in the playground during lunchtime two girls came up to me and they said ‘could we have, our, your doll on our table this afternoon, is that possible?’ and I went ‘yeah sure that’s great, that’s no problem at all’. Being very generous I gave them the doll, being very innocent I gave them the doll. In the afternoon I don’t remember quite how I got the doll back, but I think it had been left on the table because I don’t think the girls gave it back to me. I went to go and get the doll from their table and I found that they’d poked its eyes out, and, its, all its eyes were broken. They’d poked its eyes out and I was really distraught about this because it felt like they’d attacked me and I didn’t understand why so I never really complained or anything.

**Alternate endings whispered to Amelia.**

***Each ending begins with:***

*They’d poked its eyes out and I was really distraught about this because it felt like they’d attacked me and I didn’t understand why so I never really complained or anything.*

**Actual Ending** *They’d poked its eyes out and I was really distraught about this because it felt like they’d attacked me and I didn’t understand why so I never really complained or anything.*

I took the doll back home and I tried to mend it by screwing up little pieces of paper and stuffing them in the dolls eyes and then drawing blue eyes and black pupils on there and, yeah, it didn’t work very well, so, she was broken and she couldn’t be fixed.

**Scene Four: Abi**

**R**  Would you like me to be looking at the camera as I’m talking? [it’s up to you] So on the, on New Year’s Eve on the 2011, 1st of, well 31st December 2010, I had a party where I was living in Malaysia. I was very used to living there so I had sort of lost sense of danger about being somewhere high, and to cut a long story short [how, how high was it?] 8 floors, yeah, so very high, about a hundred feet. So I ran on to the balcony in my heels and slipped on the sliding

**S** door, everyone asks me, do I remember falling, and, yeah I had a moment of clarity as I started to fall, I managed to hold on but on the wrong side of the balcony and my hands sort of slipped down the railings to the bottom bit and I remember thinking ‘this is really bad’, and then I looked at my hands like this and I saw my hands like that. I don’t remember being in the air, but then I was aware that I was on the floor and just feeling that I was embarrassed that I had fallen over.

**T** Obviously adrenalin was all kicking in because I think one leg was completely broken open, my wrist was totally shattered, my jaw had been dislocated, there was a rip up my lip, both thighs were broken actually, this arm was broken as well, and my pelvis was broken in two places so I probably looked quite a state and then I felt this rush of pain starting in the bottom of my legs and coming up and I said to them ‘my legs hurt’, and then I blacked

**A** out. And the next thing I remember I was being rushed into A and E with two; I kept going in and out of consciousness for I don’t know how long, maybe a couple of days. They spent about ten hours trying to put me back together and were just trying to piece, physically piece my body back into a way that it might work again later. I thought I would be fixed and out within about three weeks and it was only as time went on that I started to realise that it was going to be a long time,

**R** like not just weeks, but months, and then I can remember a point when some- when one of my dad’s friends who was actually a doctor came to visit me and said to me it was more like a year, or you’re looking more likely years, and that was one of the most difficult moments I think, to imagine I was going to stay broken for such a long 4period. So I was in hospital, so for about three months I was completely

**S** incapacitated. I realised that it had to come from my mind and that if my mind broke then there wasn’t much chance of my body getting better. So I used to, I used to dance in my mind when all my visitors had gone and I was just laid like that, not able to do anything, I would shut my eyes and visualise myself dancing. My mum was there within about three days and was round the clock the whole time. I think she probably broke quite a lot but she was giving so much to me that she couldn’t afford to totally

**T** fall apart. After eight months I was able to fly back home. It’s now three and half years later and I had my last operation in April this year so it’s taken a long time and within that time I’ve had rebreaks as well, so a big problem was that my right leg, I got a bone infection so they had to take out five inches of bone and try to regrow, but as it was regrowing, obviously it’s thin as it’s regrowing and that new bone rebroke two more times during the healing process which sets you back another six months if your thigh breaks.

**A**  So it really was about trying to mentally keep it going in the face of many many setbacks. I think getting, getting shared experiences is probably one of the best things to do when you’ve got something that’s broken, so that you don’t feel like you’re the only one that’s ever had this or that’s going through this.

**Scene Five: A Full Hand or a Westside**

***Everyone- hand gestures for the following recorded text***

So I was about seven or eight, about year four, year three kind of time, and we’d just finished with PE and we were all like going out to put our PE kits up on our hooks and stuff and I walked through the door and for some reason, I can’t tell you why, I had my hand behind me, just kind of like trailing behind me, er, and I, and, and it was stupid and that’s why it then got trapped in the hinge of a, of a massive fire door that we had in our classroom, er, that, that closed, on, on, on my f-, on my, er, finger, my ring finger as it were. [was it that hand?] Er, it was, yeah, it would have been, it was this hand, it was only on the end though so it didn’t get the whole finger, er, but um, it, it was, it was a heavy fire door, which is a problem enough in itself, but it’s also the hinge which actually puts far more weight on whatever is caught in it, so, it wasn’t pleasant and I distinctly remember screaming out the words ‘for the love of God please open the door!’, which, for the teacher at the time, hearing a small child scream out the words ‘for the love of God’ must have terrified her, yeah, within itself, but anyway, er, someone ran and opened the door and I’m fairly sure I was being very dramatic at the time because I think I fell to my knees gripping my hand [grips hand] in a very dramatic fashion with just tears streaming down my face, which I’m not going to apologise for because it did bloody hurt [it’s like a scene from Platoon] yeah! [grips hand again] ‘what have I done?’. Erm, but, er, it was, I got, I got it put on ice and I was told ‘you’ll be OK’ by the teachers and then I went, yeah my Mum picked me up, I think she picked me up early cause, er, I had a finger issue, and, er, she then said ‘let’s have a look at it’ and I kind of took off this wrapping of paper towels and I, I, I do remember my nail just being kind of like pushed inwards on my finger and just like a, a rim of blood around it. It wasn’t very pleasant and my Mum looked at it cause it had also swollen quite signific-, quite significantly at the end and she went ‘no, fairly sure that’s not OK’ and she took me to see a friend of mine who was a nurse and she said ‘no, that’s that’s fractured, that’s that’s broken in some way’ and so I went to A and E, and that’s the only time I’ve ever been in an A and E, er, and they, er gave me a, er, a bandage for it which attached it to my other finger so for a while I could only ever do a full hand or a west side symbol, erm, and I remember for the next two or three years whenever people talked about injuries, it would be the one I’d bring up, the time I fractured the end of my ring finger in the hinge of a fire door. And my Mum also pushed the head teacher of my primary school to get, erm, hinge covers put on all the fire doors in the school, so I guess some good came out of my pain, but it, it wasn’t a fun experience.

**Scene Six: Badly Chosen Lover**

**T and A**

[edit: cut 65 words]

OK, shall I, shall I start at the beginning? [yes] it’s always a good place to start isn’t it? [yes exactly] so it would be 1993, we were in Athens,

[edit: cut 187 words]

and I met this very attractive lady

[edit: cut 505 words]

she was Scottish [Scottish, OK, yeah] Scottish and very angry,

[edit: cut 341 words]

the other thing about Attica or Athens is that the sunlight there is, the light is notorious for artists, it sort of lets you see things in different ways, and that is relevant because as we were walking along the middle of the Plaka there was this dress, and it was quite a stunning dress in the front of a window, erm, it was like a very long sun dress, so it was full length and very light and very flowy and it started almost like an indigo colour,

[edit: cut 25 words]

in many ways it was, it was exactly like a, there’s a tradition in arts, it’s all about the Attic light and the sunset [OK] and in many ways this dress I suppose was trying to reference that, like an Attic sunset.

[edit: cut 19 words]

she just melted, literally, ‘ooo look at it, look at it, ooo, what an amazing’ [she melted] no she did, literally, you know, just sort of a complete overreaction, I thought, to a nice dress. It was a nice dress, but, you know, it was just seeing it was almost life changing for her and, you know, it was this, this

[edit: cut 40 words]

the next time I was paid I went down to Plaka and I sort of hoped that this dress was still there, and it was, and I bought it,

[edit: cut 87 words]

I bought it, took it back to the house and rather than sort of have this ‘here you are dear, I’ve bought you a dress’ I thought I would just slip it into her wardrobe

[edit: cut 20 words]

Erm, so I left it there, and if I remember correctly it was probably another two weeks before she stumbled across it

[edit: cut 80 words]

she put it on and it was a little bit big but the idea of her taking it back or anything- didn’t matter.

[edit: cut 35 words]

So, um, she refused to get it altered, she wore it a little bit big, she sort of pinned it in, and she liked it because,

[edit: cut 49 words]

so what happened then, it just all descends into tragedy really

[edit: cut 8 words]

well you know, it was, what was the details, I can’t remember, I can remember,

[edit: cut 7 words]

You know, so the relationship fell apart, erm, tragically, I mean I tried to, erm, I mean, the, the, the truth, it was, it was very sort of like

[edit: cut 54 words]

I’m hardly a sort of, erm, I don’t think of myself as insensitive or brutish in any way but, you know, even the subtlest thing could somehow be taken the other way

[edit: cut 139 words]

anyway, anyway, so the relationship falls apart, erm,

[edit: cut 164 words]

I was with someone who refused to accept anything other than their own view, and her own view was so unrecognisable from what I knew to be reasonable, it was strange.

[edit: cut 525 words]

I remember going round to the apartment.

[edit: cut 638 words]

there’s no doubt about it, what I’m about to tell you is a violent act, and it was malicious

[edit: cut 6 words]

but I took the dress out the wardrobe and I just ripped it to shreds, big long tears, the whole length of it, full length dress, and just, and it was incredibly soothing, erm,

[edit: cut 533 words]

so it tore along its grain, OK, and this is the thing, it wasn’t, it was absolutely in tatters, and it was very thin, it was, I can remember, I can always remember the high pitched screams of the fabric, as I tore it the fabric actually ripped with a high-, you know there was a, yeah, erm, when I say ripped, if you imagine the length of my arms pulling it, and it was like that, I remember doing it

[edit: cut 98 words]

so I just gathered it all, there were one or two shreds, and erm, I just grabbed them, put them in a polythene bag and stuffed it in a corner of the wardrobe, thinking ‘oh, maybe I shouldn’t have done that, oh my, oh God, this is the-‘, but actually deep down I was thinking ‘this will do it’ anyway

[edit: cut 388 words]

I remember absolutely, God, shitting myself, but also a massive-, ashamed of myself actually if the truth be told, I was ashamed of myself because I knew it would hurt

[edit: cut 137 words]

I came back at about two o’clock in the afternoon and she had found the dress, and er, it was just horrific, horrific, I mean she was devastated, erm,

[edit: cut 97 words]

, it was clearly the end, it was clearly the end, there was, you know, a very definite division of everything

[edit: cut 330 words]

there was no magical thread to go through in her mind, I knew it was over way before this but it was definitely the point when I knew that she knew as well.

[edit: cut 20 words]

these things happen I suppose, erm, anyway, the bizarre thing was, erm, I, I didn’t, I didn’t see anyone for like six years, I completely, no other relationships, but I spent, erm, I was so traumatised by relationships, they’re just so complex and difficult, erm, I spent many many nights, er, on my sewing machine, I do have a-, I do all sorts of bits like that, sewing her dress back together, and as I sewed it back together, the irony was, er, it, it, it actually brought into the correct size as well,

[edit: cut 59 words]

and er I finished it, and I thought I was going to take it round and offer it to her, and I didn’t, and I never brought it upon myself to represent it, I’m very glad I didn’t do that. After about probably five years or so, I actually threw it away.

[edit: cut 1513 words]

**Scene Seven: My Leg Breaks**

**R** Ok, so every ten years or so I do something really terrible, er, to my left leg. Er, I first broke it when I was at home and I had some shopping and I fell down, down some stairs and then that was about nine years ago. Then since last October I broke my ankle, er, I was in Germany in Munster. I was walking and not looking where I was going and I fell off the kerb, off the pavement, and broke my ankle. So, yes, that is the story of my broken legs and ankle.

**S** This is the story of my, er, my left [laughs] leg. Erm, I used to do lots of rubbish things to my left leg, like, break it. Erm, the first time I broke it in 2005, erm, I broke my leg stepping down, er, on a, falling down a step with some shopping, and broke my left leg. And then, nine years later, erm, last October to be precise, erm, I, broke my left ankle stepping off the pavement, erm, when I was in Germany. And that’s the story of my, breaking my leg.

**A** So, every ten years or so I do something stupid and rubbish to my left leg, and I always seem to break it, erm. I did it in 2005 when I fell down the stairs from carry- carrying a big load of shopping bags and fell down the stairs and broke my leg. And then nine years later, erm, in 2014 to be precise I was crossing the road in Germany- in Munster I believe- and I fell over and broke my ankle. So yeah, they, that is my story and my history of my leg breakages.

**T** So, every ten years or so I do something really silly, er, to my left leg. So in 2005, erm, I broke my leg in two places, er, falling down a couple of stairs, er, carrying some shopping, erm, and then nine years later, end of, er, last year, er, we, erm, I was in Germany and I fell off this concrete slab and broke my ankle and so the, erm, bone in my ankle, in my left leg, erm, had completely broken and so that’s the story of me breaking my legs.

**Scene Eight: Your Dad’s t-shirt**

**T** [OK] Oh right! OK [laughs] erm, a few years ago your dad was doing a job for your grandma and granddad which involved climbing up a tree to cut some branches off, erm, unfortunately he had a fall and he fell about 12, 15 feet. Luckily onto the garden side and not onto the concrete path out on the other side. But he fell, and fell on his back.

*R comes in*

So, ambulance called, got to the hospital etc., er, and, as part of their examination, because obviously they had to check he hadn’t broken his back or anything like that, erm, and as you see on the telly, they just cut his t-shirt off, erm, and the doctor or whoever had cut it off and thrown it on the floor, erm, one of the nurses who was around picked it up and handed it to me, which I held on really tight to, while I was watching them treat your dad, er, as it turned out, luckily, as you know, he was, he was OK, nothing serious, no serious serious injuries, erm, and then when he was home, I showed him the t-shirt, which he hadn’t seen, and it was completely destroyed really, erm, and he said to throw it away. Now I knew that it was a t-shirt that he liked, not that t-shirts are particularly special, er, but it’s one that he’d picked up when he’d visited the royal camandos base somewhere in England, I’m not sure where it was, as part of his job, and he’d picked this up, and he, I, he really liked wearing it, erm, so I said to him that I’d, I’d have a look and see if I could repair it, and he was saying ‘oh don’t worry- throw it away’.

**T** Anyway, I got it out, I laid it flat on the table to see what it was like, erm, and it was just, it was just shredded really.

**S** remember the material has already seen some years of use so treat it gently

**T** They, obviously, they cut it, they don’t care about how they cut it,

**S** Never treat roughly, rub or twist

**T** so the cuts were all jagged, and it was cut up the side, and right across so that they could take it off him,

**S**  Unravel a thread from the seam

**T** so I laid it out, er, to have a look, and decided I’d give it a go. So then I pressed it, I ironed it, so that all the creases and all the tears were flattened, er, and decided that actually yeah, I could probably do something with it,

**S**  Reinforce weak places at once

**T** so, I, er, I didn’t wash it first, I wanted to not wash it in case it tore even more, so I laid, where the joins were, where the cuts were, I laid them, not crossed over but like that, so they, they joined together, and I used, er, it’s like a, what stitch would you call it?, can’t think what the stitch is called, but a joining stitch, like you see on, on baseballs,

**S**  a Herring Bone stitch

**T** it’s like a ladder kind of stitch that joins together, criss-crosses and joins a seam flat. So I did that first on all of them, erm, and then, using my sewing machine, I used a zig zag, close zig zag stitch, and zig zag stitched carefully every seam,

**S**  No material must lie idle

**T** erm, and it worked, it looks great, I mean you can see where all the seams are, and all the stitching is, er,

**S [..]**

**T** but he wears it, a lot, especially when he’s working, but he doesn’t climb up trees anymore, he’s not allowed.

**Scene Nine: mashed up stories**

**#1**

**6th March**

So I used to

For some reason

Every ten years or so

Two girls came

I can remember a point when

One of my absolute best friends

Our best friend

Set up a group

Id been living there

Distraught about this

There was sort of

Quite a lot

On my finger

I just remember

Because it did bloody hurt

Really clearly through my mind

I used to dance

And then I crashed

A car that was

Having this race down our street

And we were

It, it was

For the next two or three years whenever people talked about

New years eve

And my pelvis

Facing the wrong direction

Everyone asks me

If your thigh breaks

On the floor

We’d had a car

We, we were hurt

It was a lovely car

We had a very nice

Kind of time

Then I blacked out

I was on a lot of morphine

I just felt

Completely broken open

Definitely, yeah definitely

I kept going

In and out

Going through this

Stuff like that

Little pieces of

A fun experience

By sharing my story

You don’t feel like

The car was broken

Because I think

A clean break

Doesn’t look as

So I remember when

I had fallen

Then I was aware I was on the floor

As I started to fall

I don’t know how long

Quite a long time

Do I remember falling?

Looking really terrified

I had absolutely no control

There wasn’t much chance of

Friends by the bed

Before or since

So they put a

A dress of

A friend of mine

One of my dad’s friends

In the roads nearby

I don’t think the

Hush around the

The strangest thing

And I remember

I had a moment of clarity

I have since done a lot more mindfulness training

In a very dramatic fashion

And I was just so scared of the trouble I would get in

I don’t think I was quite aware how serious things were

The car was written off

Hearing a small child scream

Some people started coming over

And ambulances came and

It wasn’t very pleasant

Well they sort of looked at me

And it was just

And I tried to

It had to be

I was centre of

And I was like

So I had to

Don’t ask me

It had been

It was only

Well its now

A big problem

Exactly the same type

I had to just become

Something that’s broken

And that’s my story of

Not being careful

**#2**

**#3**

**17th April**

## Appendix 2: Song of the Satellites Script

Song of the Satellites

SCENE 1

Look. Darkness. Feel. Darkness. An abyss.

Look. Earth.

A tear drop.

A pale blue dot.

Look.

She is a space ship. She is a creature. She is a spell. She is a full stop. She will never say thank you.

Listen.

*Humming starts*

Her voice. The oceans shifting in their beds. The grind and forge of industry. The slide of landfill. The murmur of a rush hour crowd.

Now listen. What encircles her in the blackness?

*Humming gets louder with mouths open*

Spent rocket bodies- Agenas, Deltas, Ables, Scouts; disused satellites- communications, military, GPS, planetary science; fragments from disintegration, erosion and collision- flecks, flotsam, pieces, scraps, remnants, shards of all kind.

A bright mantle of rubbish. 500,000 pieces of space junk larger than a bumble bee and millions more too tiny to be tracked.

Listen.

*Humming stops*

What do they say?

*Torch clicks off*

*Earth is taken down.*

Scene 2

H During the next hour, 784 artificial satellites will rise and set in our sky.

R 674 of them are orbital debris, or Space Junk.

S Of the space junk, 174 of them are payloads

H 136 of them are Rocket Bodies

R 360 of them are Satellite Debris

S 11 of them are old Amateur Radio satellites.

H 110 of them are old Communications Satellites.

R 107 of them are Military and Surveillance Satellites.

S The oldest piece of junk is 56.

H The newest piece of junk is 3 months old.

Scene 3

*Movement sequence- exercises plus S introduces Telstar*

Scene 4

TELSTAR (*video)*

I am Telstar 1, the Little Satellite.

I was the world’s first active communications satellite.

I relayed through space the first television pictures, telephone calls, fax images, and I provided the first live transatlantic television feed.

I was launched on top of a Thor-Delta rocket.

I am covered in solar cells.

I have been in an eccentric, low earth orbit for 55 years.

I have circled the Earth over 183,000 times.

They say, after I was born, the world got a little smaller.

*End of video*

*Telstar music plays. Lights come up. Music fades as Chet and Walter begin speaking.*

WC: Good afternoon.

CH: Good afternoon.

WC: I’m Walter Cronkite.

CH: And I’m Chet Huntley.

WC: And soon we’ll be saying…

BOTH: …good evening to Europe.

WC: History is about to be made in the science of communication among men. We shall be transmitting in seven languages on seven audio circuits to sixteen European countries.

WC: The picture you’ll be seeing in the United States actually has been relayed to the Telstar, the tiny spinning globe thousands of miles in space, and relayed back for transmission across the United States.

CH: Eurovision? Eurovision, we are now putting up our statue of liberty in New York harbour on the left side of our monitor. If you’d please put up your Eiffel tower in Paris next to it?

Now when you have both the Statue of Liberty and the Eiffel tower on your line monitor that will of course mean that the circuit is closed, that this electronic bridge across the Atlantic is open.

RD: Hello Chet Huntley, hello United States. This is Richard Dimbleby. On my television screen here in Brussels I have on the left hand side the Statue of Liberty and on the right hand side the Eiffel Tower, they are both together, it’s clear, so

ALL Go America Go, Go America Go!

WC: I am Walter Cronkite and I’m getting into position for the next part of this broadcast

WC: Good Evening Europe. This is the North American continent live via a TNT Telstar July 23rd, 1962. The same sun which has just set over the Mediterranean and English channel has reached its zenith here but is above the clouds hanging over San Francisco.

CH: The plain facts of electronic life are that Washington and the Kremlin are no farther apart than the speed of light, at least technically. What goes on in the United Nations building in New York can be seen in Belgrave and in Paris and in Bonne.

WC: I’m Walter Cronkite. I have a dark suit and a handkerchief in my pocket.

CH: He’s Walter Cronkite. He has a dark suit and a handkerchief in his pocket.

CH: I’m Chet Huntley. I have a light suit and a receding hairline.

WC: He’s Chet Huntley. He has a light suit and a receding hairline.

TELSTAR *(video)*

I am Telstar 1, The Little Satellite.

I am 400 telephone calls.

I am whispering. I am giggling. I am uncomfortable silences. I am misinterpretations.

I am “don’t forget to…” and “thanks for last week” and “see you tomorrow” and “I love you” and “I miss you” and “I will” and “I won’t” and “did you get the…” and “why not?” and “why don’t you” and “don’t you want me?” and “I’ve got to go” and “just let me go”.

My heart is made of aluminium and titanium alloy. Sometimes I think it might burst.

I am Telstar 1, The Little Satellite.

I am the first transatlantic television feed.

They say after I was born the world got a little smaller.

I am Europe to the United States.

I am Sweden to the Dalmatian Coast.

I am the St Lawrence River to the Paris skyline, Italy to the Ivory Sea, The Eiffel Tower to the Colosseum.

I am Paris to the North American Continent to Andover to Rome to the whole free world, Washington to other parts of America, Cape Canaveral to the Moon, and the revolving restaurant atop the needle to the granite faces on Mount Rushmore.

I am the Atlantic to the Pacific to Midway Island.

I am highways such as this to Detroit Michigan.

I am Canada to San Francisco Harbour to Niagara Falls, Quebec to Stratford Ontario to Seattle and its famous waterfront.

I am the black hills of South Dakota to the United Nations Building to the State Department Building, Salt Lake City Utah to the edge of the East river in New York City.

I am America to Europe to a divided planet to the Earth.

I say to myself, Telstar, can you keep it together?

I say to myself, Telstar, why don’t you stop?

I say to myself, Telstar, Telstar, Telstar, don’t forget.

*End of video*

WC: I’m Walter Cronkite and I’m telling you now that we understand that a moment ago the president of the United States opened his weekly conference with Washington reporters.

We take you now directly to the state department building in Washington where the president is answering questions from the world’s press corp.

JFK: …well the tests that we carried out were due to the breach of the moratorium by the Soviet union last fall.

I’m sorry the Soviet Union is testing. They tested. They broke the agreement and tested in last fall. We tested in response.

Now they carry out another series of tests and the world plunges deeper into uncertainty.

This constant pursuit, everyone desiring to be lost, of course, increases the danger for the human race.

WC: …and that was the President of the United States of America.

CH: He’s Walter Cronkite and he’s about to adjust his tie.

WC: I’m Walter Cronkite and I’m adjusting my tie.

He’s Chet Huntley and he’s about to smooth his hair.

CH: I’m Chet Huntley and I’m smoothing my hair.

CH: And now…..the American summer vacation. Usually two weeks long and four time-zones wide, and usually it begins in the family automobile over highways such as this.

WC: And now this is Quebec, one of the oldest cities of the new world, celebrating its 354th anniversary. Bonsoir Europe!

TELSTAR:

*video*

I am Telstar One, the Little Satellite.

I had been in service for only 7 months when my fragile transistors failed as a result of increased radiation from US and Soviet high altitude nuclear testing.

I am ‘This country has been attacked with nuclear weapons’.

*End of video*

CH: And this is Stratford Ontario, site of one of the finest Shakespeare festivals in the world. Shakespeare’s Puck once boasted of putting a girdle round about the Earth in 40 minutes. Telstar cannot quite match Puck’s speed but it can pay its own electronic tribute to Shakespeare.

TELSTAR:

*video*

I am ‘Communications have been severely disrupted, and the number of casualties and the extent of the damage are not yet known’.

I am ‘We shall bring you further information as soon as possible. Meanwhile, stay tuned to this wavelength, stay calm and stay in your own house’.

I am ‘Remember there is nothing to be gained by trying to get away’.

*End of video*

WC: And this is the 21st century world’s Fair. This is the United States science pavilion, which together with exhibits representing some 50 nations provides a midway of art and science. Crowds of a half million a week come to take a trip on a sky ride, watch the Spanish flamenco dancers or eat a Belgian waffle.

CH: I’d love to eat a Belgian waffle.

TELSTAR:

*Video*

I am ‘By leaving your homes you could be exposing yourself to greater danger’.

I am ‘Do not, in any circumstances, go outside the house. Radioactive fall-out can kill’.

*End of video*

CH: And here each summer more than a million Americans come to play, spend their vacations, camp and pay tribute to the granite faces on mount Rushmore where four of our presidents are enshrined in massive carvings, each 60 feet in height.

TELSTAR:

*video*

I am ‘You cannot see it or feel it, but it is there’.

I am ‘If you go outside, you will bring danger to your family and you may die’.

I am ‘Stay in your fall-out room until you are told it is safe to come out or you hear the "all clear" on the sirens’.

*End of video*

TELSTAR:

*Video*

I am ‘We shall be on the air every hour, on the hour’.

I am ‘Stay tuned to this wavelength, but switch your radios off now to save your batteries’.

I am ‘That is the end of this broadcast’.

*End of video*

CH: I’m Chet Huntley and I’m about to wrap up this broadcast.

WC: He’s Chet Huntley and he’s wrapping up this broadcast.

CH: That’s the end of the first phase of the exchange of programmes between the television networks of the United States and Canada and the European Broadcasting Union, via the Telstar.

WC: Well Chet, it looks like it went very well.

CH: And approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes from now the Europe to America programme will be beamed to us via Telstar.

WC: I’m looking forward to it, Chet.

CH: Right

WC: Well I’ve enjoyed it

CH: Right. I’ve enjoyed it too Walter.

WC: Goodnight Chet.

CH: Goodnight Walter.

BOTH: Goodnight Europe.

Scene 5

*Movement sequence- poses*

*Set up furniture for next scene- desk and chair, 2 chairs, stool and chessboard.*

Scene 6

RADIO 3 *(video)*

I am Radio 3. I was a Russian Amateur Radio Satellite.

I have been in orbit for 36 years.

I have circled the Earth 159,837 times.

I was launched on top of a modified SS-5 ballistic missile.

The point at which I lost contact with Earth is unclear.

I received, stored and relayed through space thousands upon thousands of amateur or HAM radio transmissions.

If a HAM radio operator dies, he becomes a ‘silent key’. Occasionally a license is revoked, as in the case of Robert Hanssen, who lost his license after 22 years of counter-spying for the Russians.

What are you going to see in me?

I don’t know. In a certain sense, that depends on you.

*End of video*

CHESS PLAYERS:

*Move 39*

*Rook to b7*

His office is in the basement of his three-story house in Vienna, 12 miles west of Washington DC. The area is full of trees, with wide roads and long driveways.

In the centre of the room is an oak desk surrounded by papers and files and lockable boxes. On his desk is a black angle poise lamp and his HAM Radio equipment. The lamp is on.

On the wall opposite the desk is a crucifix.

He is writing a letter on his IBM laptop 365E.

*Dear friends…*

*I thank you for your assistance these many years. It seems, however, that my greatest utility to you has come to an end, and it is time to seclude myself from active service.*

He says that this will be the last drop he will make for a while, that he believes his colleagues are finally- finally- wise to him- his car radio has been crackling with interference from the bugs they have placed.

He continues.

*Amusing the games children play. Something has aroused the sleeping tiger. Perhaps you know better than I. Life is full of its ups and downs.*

*I will be in contact next year. Same time same place. Perhaps the correlation of forces and circumstance then will have improved.*

He signs the letter your friend Ramon Garcia.

He sits back.

*Black: King to d5*

ROBERT:

CQ CQ this is K9 QVL is this frequency available?

CQ CQ this is K9 QVL is this frequency available?

*Sounds of radio static and tunes briefly into chess commentary.*

*For those joining us now at the chess world championship game of 1981, Karpov and Korchnoi are neck and neck in this nail biting phase of the match. Neither one of them have a decisive advantage at this point which means every move counts. We have just seen Korchnoi move his King to D5, and are waiting to see how Karpov will respond....*

*More sounds of radio static.*

OK… hearing nothing, this is K9 QVL Kilo Nine Quebec Victoria Lima, calling CQ CQ CQ.

I fear this will be my last transmission. I can hear interference on my car radio. This double life, this counter life, may have run its course. I no longer sleep. I exist in many places at once.

As my time draws to a close I am realizing I shall not miss nor regret the traitor’s way of life. Those who betray must always fear betrayal.

Every day, I exit from the lift and walk past doors 106, 107 and 108. From my desk, I watch starlings gather on the courtyard roof and on the communication equipment. At work I am surrounded by buffoons.

Even the Russians do not know who is selling them secrets and the US is a powerfully built but retarded child.

CQ CQ. This is K9 QVL Kilo Nine Quebec Victor Lima. Hearing nothing.

RADIO 3:

*Video*

*Silence*

Seek me.

Make me in your own image, after your likeness.

Call me a god, a devil. Call me sick, apathetic, incomplete, lost.

I deal in silence. I deal in white noise.

*End of video*

CHESS PLAYERS:

Move 40. Rook to f7

Later, after church, Bob is driving. He’s headed towards Foxstone park on Creek Crossing road, about a mile away from home. He has a knot in his stomach.

He arrives at the park. He can see dog walkers, can hear children laughing and running.

He looks around. The knot tightens, but he doesn’t notice anything out of the ordinary. It’s a gravel car park. You could hear footsteps if anybody was coming.

There are tall, black trees. It’s February so there aren’t any leaves on the trees. It’s muddy. Here and there are snowdrops, the first flowers.

He gets out of the car. He opens the trunk. He adds his typed letter from his pocket into the files and puts them all into a bag which he tucks inside his coat. It contains classified files, secrets that he could be killed for sharing. He closes the trunk and locks the car.

He begins walking.

(pawn to) f5

ROBERT:

CQ CQ. This is K9 QVL Kilo Nine Quebec Victor Lima, calling CQ CQ CQ. This is Robert, this is Ramon Garcia, this is G Robertson.

My work is a security failure and a tremendous counterintelligence success. Counter intelligence is not security work. Security protects. It does not attack. Counter intelligence is not speculative; it attacks the opposition intelligence structures.

Trust is easily won. Loyalty is a strange and lucrative concept. One might propose that I'm either insanely brave or quite insane. I'd argue that I'm insanely loyal.

I choose to be like Matryoshka- Russian dolls. A person inside a person inside a person.

CHESS PLAYERS:

*Move 41*

*White: Rook to f6*

He arrives at the drop place. A small foot bridge with a trickle of a stream running underneath it, overgrown at the sides with vegetation. A red crisp packet is caught in one of the bushes.

A family walks by. He smiles at them. They say good afternoon.

He waits and then takes the bag from under his coat and makes his way down the bank. He half-slips but then steadies himself. He crouches and then pushes the package under a few small bushes.

Back at the car park he leaves a small piece of white Johnson and Johnson medical adhesive tape on the Foxstone park sign, which will indicate the packet has been left.

He turns his collar up and puts his hands in his pockets. In the cold, his breath comes from him like smoke.

He hears footsteps. He needn’t even look, he knows what is happening.

He is surrounded. Six FBI men. Men he recognises. Two of them point guns while another two handcuff him. His shoulders drop and he goes willingly.

*Checkmate*

ROBERT:

CQ CQ. This is K9 QVL Kilo Nine Quebec Victor Lima, calling CQ CQ CQ. This is Robert, this is Ramon Garcia, this is G Robertson.

Bonnie. Bonnie. Til death… The smell of your hair. Do you remember when we sat in our new garden on crates under the cherry tree, and you brought me iced tea?

You had self-respect, you knew what your path would be, you knew how you should be. You were so beautiful, giving yourself to me like that. Pray for my soul, Bonnie, pray for me.

This is Bobby. Father, this is Bobby. this is K9 QVL Kilo Nine Quebec Victor Lima, Father, why don’t you say anything? Why do you always keep silent? I have come as close as I ever want to come to sacrificing myself to you, and I get silence. I hate silence. Father?

It’s been a long time my dear friends, a long and lonely time. Life is full of rich and terrifying insights.

Hearing nothing, calling CQ CQ CQ.

Father? Why don’t you speak?

I hate silence.

Hearing nothing.

RADIO 3:

*Video*

Silence

Seek me.

Make me in your own image, after your likeness.

Call me fortune or blight.

Call me untrustworthy, impressionable, unreliable, indecisive.

I make a living of silence, of white noise.

~~Seek me~~

Make me in your own image, your likeness.

Call me human? In a certain sense, that depends on you.

*End of video*

*Move desk and chair from stage; move chess board and small table. Set up three chairs.*

Scene 7

*Movement sequence: food*

Scene 8

FENGYUN:

*video*

I am Fengyun 1C Deb.

I was part of a Chinese weather monitoring satellite, launched in 1999.

In 2007 the Chinese government intentionally destroyed the satellite in an anti-satellite missile test creating 2,841 high velocity fragments, a larger amount of space junk than any other mission in history.

I am one of those fragments. I have 2,840 brothers and sisters.

In my present form I have been orbiting the Earth for 10 years and 8 months and have made over 51,580 orbits.

As a result of the test, China was accused by several nations of engaging in the 'militarization of space'. Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao stated, "There's no need to feel threatened about this" and argued that "China will not participate in any kind of arms race in outer space."

I am Fengyun 1C Deb. I see the weather. I see the world. I see movement without end.

*End of video*

FORTUNE TELLER:

Well, we’ve been hearing from many sources that the outlook is gloomy and that hard times are ahead. eBay is down 6.5% Apple’s under pressure, Yahoo down 8.5%, Cisco 6.5%, Google 7%, Intel is weak. The Dow was down 436 points. Oil down more than $4!

I will be consulting the I Ching, the Book of Changes- the oldest oracle- and today I’ll be drawing three hexagrams.

To cast a hexagram I will be using three identical coins. To cast the first line, I throw the three coins together. Each head equals three; each tail equals two. Add up the result- it will be 6,7, 8 or 9- to find four kinds of line.

And the first question we will be asking is what’s the forecast? What’s the general outlook for us this morning?

So now I am casting the first line.

It is an unchanging solid line.

The second is a changing solid line,

Followed by another changing solid line.

Then, an Unchanging solid line

And an unchanging broken line.

This Hexagram is called NOT KNOWING.

You are seeing the same dynamic that is driving a cascade of selling in the stock market.

In other words, as things sell, it makes more people that wouldn’t want to sell, have to sell, which makes more people want to sell.

It’s amazing. But it all depends on people’s willingness to buy and in some way shape or form to finance our getting out of this problem.

If that willingness were to go away, then the only way you have to get out of that problem is a very severe contraction.

*Movement sequence 1*

FENGYUN:

*video*

I am Fengyun 1C Deb. I see the weather. I see the world. I see movement without end.

I see the wind. Planetary or prevailing winds, trade winds or tropical easterlies blowing steadily from north to south in the Northern Hemisphere and south to north in the Southern Hemisphere. I see the violent westerlies of the Southern Hemisphere. I see the changeable periodic winds which move with the seasons: monsoons, land and sea breezes and mountain and valley breezes. I see it all. I must see it all.

I see clouds. The detached sirrus clouds, made of ice crystals: white, delicate filaments, hair like and silky. Cirrostratus: transparent, whitish veils that blanket the sky and form a halo around the sun or moon. Altocumulus: white and grey patches or sheets that roll and stretch. Nimbostratus the great rain clouds, heavy, dark grey and thick. And of course the cumulus and stratocumulus: local, low-lying and defined. I see it all. I must see it all.

*End of video*

FORTUNE TELLER:

And the second question we will be asking is how volatile is the situation?

So now I am casting the first line.

It is a changing solid line.

The second is also a changing solid line.

Followed by an unchanging solid line.

And an unchanging broken line.

And finally an unchanging solid line.

This hexagram is called ABUNDANCE.

OK, there are a couple of comments on volatility. First of all, volatility historically has spiked in at around periods of inflection and that’s where I think we are.

Now, second and most importantly. Volatility is essential, as uncomfortable as that may sound, and the reason for that is volatility affords us the opportunity to earn the equity risk premium in stocks long term. It’s due to volatility.

Don’t let volatility shake you out of the market. Don’t let volatility upset you. Let’s ride this out and capture the extraordinary value that we see in the market today.

Should you jump in? Eventually earnings recover and the multiples recover and where you get the most powerful returns over time is through earnings recovery and multiple expansion.

*Movement sequence 2- keeping the balloon afloat*

FENGYUN:

*video*

And then I must see extreme, unexpected, unusual, unpredictable, severe, unseasonal, inclement weather. The heat waves, cold waves, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis. I must see it all.

I must see forest fires in Arizona, lightning strikes in Oregon, lethal hail in Henan Province, China, huge waves in the Qiantangiang River in Sheijang Province.

I must see The Old Man of the Mountain, an ancient rock formation in New Hampshire, USA crumbling after heavy rain, Hurricane Ivan killing 37 people in Granada and an unprecedented snowfall in southern Texas, Hurricane Jeanne killing 3006 in Haiti.

I must see a passenger ferry capsizing in strong winds in Bura Gauranga River in Bangladesh. I must see Hurricane Stan hitting Mexico and Central America and killing 1620 people, Typhoon Durian triggering a massive mudslide and killing hundreds of people in the Philippines.

I see it all. I must see it all.

*End of video*

FORTUNE TELLER:

And the final question, what is the advice for the future? Is this a buying opportunity?

So I am casting the first line.

It is a changing solid line.

The second is another changing solid line.

Then a changing broken line.

And an unchanging broken line.

Followed by another unchanging broken line,

And finally a changing broken line.

This hexagram is called SHOCK.

When the markets turn, the rally will be jaw-dropping. They will talk about this for generations to come.

It is a buying opportunity! But again, it depends upon your risk tolerance level and your time horizon.

It’s possible that this market falls further, but at some point we’re going to see a stabilization, and just a tremendous snapback.

…and if you look at how a lot of stocks are priced in this market today, they certainly are as attractive as we’ve seen in 15 to 20 years, which has to be a good opportunity at some point in this market.

There really is real opportunity that snapback is out there, I do believe that completely.

*Movement sequence 3- competing for balloon*

*Balloon bursts*

FENGYUN:

*Video*

I see. I am. I’m so. I am Fengyun. You are Fengyun. I’m everywhere. I’m lost.

I used to remember. I am. I am not. The oceans. The winds. I can’t. See. Why am I.. I used to be. I used to see beyond. After.

I am Fengyun. You are Fengyun. We are Fengyun.

Blue. White. Green. Grey. I remember. I don’t remember. Sapphire. Indigo.

What will happen now? What will happen now? I am blind. I’m everywhere. I’m lost. I am Fengyun. You are Fengyun. We are Fengyun. I am movement without end.

End

## Appendix 3: video of *Song of the Satellites* performance, September 2017

The film shows a run-through that took place prior to the two showings of the piece. The satellites monologues have been edited in, for clarity.

1. Michael M Chemers, *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010) p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Michael X Zelenak, ‘Why We Don’t Need Directors: A Dramaturgical/Historical Manifesto’, *Theatre Topics*, 13:1 (March 2003), 105-109 (p. 105). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. LMDA, ‘Who We Are’, *Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas*, http://www.lmda.org/whoweare, [accessed 16 December 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Dramaturgs’ Network, ‘Home’, *Dramaturgsnetwork.co.*uk [accessed 15th September 2013]. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. In order to learn more about dramaturgy in the UK I was a member of the DN executive committee for 18 months. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. ‘Playwriting and Dramaturgy’ MLitt at the University of Glasgow, ‘Dramaturgy and Writing for Performance’ MA at Goldsmiths, and ‘Theatre Criticism and Dramaturgy’ MA at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Katalin Trencsenyi, *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Bert Cardullo, *What is dramaturgy?* (New York: P. Lang, 1995). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Susan Jonas, Geoffery S Proehl and Michael Lupu (eds.), *Dramaturgy in American Theater: A Source Book* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Judith D. Rudakoff and Lynn M. Thomson, *Between the Lines: the Process of Dramaturgy* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Michael M Chemers, *Ghost Light: An Introductory Handbook for Dramaturgy*. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Lenoralnez Brown, *The Art of Active Dramaturgy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Scott R. Irelan, Anne Fletcher, and Julie Felise Dubiner, *The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Magda Romanska, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).  [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Katalin Trencsenyi, *Dramaturgy in the Making: A User’s Guide for Theatre Practitioners* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Cathy Turner and Synne K Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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