

Writing Motherhood for Contemporary Performance: Three Plays and Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the vexed relation between motherhood, creativity and survival through three self-authored plays, two of which I also performed. The first play, *This is Not a Festival*, is set in 1985 and examines my area of research through the single traveller mother of Danni, charting her and son Leaf's recovery after a vicious police attack has left them homeless and traumatised; the second, *Githa*, is a historical biography piece based on the life of twentieth century dramatist Githa Sowerby (1876-1970) whose playwriting career was thwarted by unplanned motherhood at the outbreak of the First World War; the third, *Within This Landscape*, is an autobiographical exploration of my own maternal heritage and is a homage to my own mother, an artist who died unexpectedly when I was still a child. I contextualise these plays within a historical time span which extends from the 1880s to the present and explore questions of identity, artistic fulfilment, economic independence and domestic confinement for women and ask what has changed or not changed for mothers battling to define themselves in their own right.

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LIST OF ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

1 x Professional Portfolio

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I confirm that all of the work submitted within this thesis is my own, and that it has not been submitted for examination at this or any other institution for any other awards. All sources are acknowledged as references.

PART ONE
WRITING MOTHERHOOD
FOR CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE:
THREE PLAYS

PLAY 1.

THIS IS NOT A FESTIVAL

By Hannah Davies

FINAL DRAFT (November 2011)

AWARDS:

Bruntwood Playwriting Award (Longlisted) 2011

BBC Writersroom 10 (Longlisted) 2011

NOTE: *On June 1st 1985, the New Age traveller peace convoy made an attempt to gain access to Stonehenge to set up the 12th Annual Stonehenge Free Festival. In order to prevent the festival from going ahead the police set up two gravel roadblocks across the travellers' route and the convoy was eventually forced to stop on a narrow country road. It was here that the police attempted to mass arrest all of the drivers and began to put through the windscreens of the vehicles, showering many of the inhabitants in glass. It was in response to this attack that the travellers pulled off road onto an adjacent bean field, where they were promptly surrounded by over 1,300 police officers drawn from over six different counties and the MOD. Many of these wore riot gear. After several hours of stand-off the police moved into the field, attacked, assaulted and then arrested many of the travellers with unprecedented brutality. This was one of the largest mass arrests in modern British history and the incident has become known as the Battle of the Beanfield. Six years later a court judgement found the police guilty of wrongful arrest, assault and criminal damage.*

This play takes this event as its starting point.

CHARACTERS:

DANNI	29
LEAF	10
GLEN	37
NAVEED	10

Scene 1

1985. Wiltshire. The sound of the Battle of the Beanfield. Diesel engines and jubilant music. Engines come to a halt. Breaking glass. Helicopters. Police. Screams. A dog barking. The sounds fade into...

Night. A northbound motorway lay by. DANNI and LEAF. Hitch hiking with two rucksacks. DANNI holds a makeshift cardboard sign that reads 'Leeds.' LEAF is clearly exhausted and sits by the side of the road on their luggage. DANNI uses all her womanly powers to try and stop a car. Her attempts are mostly ignored. She gives the V sign to some of those who don't stop. A lorry pulls up. DANNI grabs the bags and calls to LEAF.

DANNI Leaf. Let's get a move on yeah? Come on.

LEAF gets up wearily.

The sound of the motorway builds. A radio is tuned. 'You're Wondering Now' by The Specials.

Scene 2

Leeds. 3am. GLEN's house. A battered armchair. A hi-fi. DANNI and LEAF have just arrived. It is late at night and GLEN has clearly just woken up. He is half dressed and his hair is a mess. He hands DANNI a cup of tea.

DANNI We did it in a three-er. Truckers mostly. He hasn't had much sleep. Cheers.

GLEN You gonna be alright on the floor?

DANNI Yeah, yeah. Course. Yeah.

GLEN Cos you could always bunk in with me.

DANNI Floor's fine Glen. Honestly.

LEAF Mum. I'm hungry.

GLEN You sure?

DANNI Yeah, I'm sure. Floor's great.

LEAF Mum.

GLEN Put him on the floor, you can have the couch.

LEAF Why do I have to sleep on the floor?

GLEN Let your Mam have the couch. Look at her she's knackered.

LEAF What?

DANNI It's fine. You don't have to.

LEAF Not fair!

DANNI No one said you have to.

LEAF He just did.

DANNI No he didn't.

GLEN Yeah I did.

DANNI Well you don't. Does he?

GLEN It's up to you Dan. Do whatever, you know me, I'm not bothered.

LEAF Good.

DANNI Ignore him. He's been up all night. We're both pretty- we're knackered. Been talked at by truckers all night.

GLEN You look good on no sleep though, has to be said.

LEAF Mum.

DANNI You got any food in? Just cereal, toast or something?

GLEN Bit of bacon in the fridge if he wants that.

DANNI Do you want a bacon butty?

LEAF Yeah.

GLEN Ant got no bread though.

LEAF A bacon butty with no bread.

DANNI Oi.

GLEN *(amused)* Gob on him.

DANNI Leaf.

LEAF It's true.

DANNI Is this gonna be alright? Us being here?

GLEN Look at you Dan. Can't believe I'm seeing you.

DANNI I know it's a bit- I don't want you to feel-

GLEN Don't be daft. Course it's alright!

DANNI If you think you might want-

GLEN I said it's fine, didn't I?

DANNI You will say if it's not. If it's at all not fine. Won't you?

GLEN Course I will yeah.

DANNI Don't go all-

GLEN Where's my long lost hug anyways? Come here you big stinking hippy.

DANNI It's good to see you Glen.

GLEN sweeps DANNI into a bear hug.

GLEN Good to be seen babes. Like old times eh?

DANNI I really appreciate it. You letting us-

GLEN Right what about this bacon butty then? Must have a couple of crusts here somewhere. What about you Dan? What you gonna have? You must be hungry too. Long journey that.

DANNI Nah I'm good. Tea's good. Really.

GLEN Don't be daft.

LEAF Have you got any ketchup?

GLEN No. Got brown sauce. Brown sauce is better than ketchup.

LEAF Don't like brown sauce.

DANNI He don't like brown sauce. Just bread and bacon's fine, if there's no bread, don't worry about it. Just bacon'll do it. Do you want me to do it?

GLEN Don't be daft. Sit down. Sit down.

GLEN exits and starts frying bacon offstage. DANNI starts to unpack a few things from her bag.

LEAF Do we really have to stay here?

DANNI Yeah.

LEAF I don't think he likes me.

DANNI Don't be daft. He's an old mate Leaf. He's a good guy.

LEAF When's Spod coming? Thought you said he was meeting us up here.

DANNI He is.

LEAF When?

DANNI By the weekend he said. Got to get his van back on the road.

LEAF Few weeks then.

DANNI He said the weekend.

GLEN *(off)* I've got one slice and a crust. That do yer?

DANNI indicates that LEAF should respond.

LEAF Yeah.

She shoots him another look.

LEAF Yes thanks.

DANNI That's great Glen. Cheers darling.

(beat)

LEAF Mum?

DANNI What?

LEAF Are you planning on bonking him?

DANNI Shut up Leaf.

LEAF Just asking.

DANNI Here, there's some of your stuff here.

She pulls out a plastic bag.

LEAF Where's the rest of it?

DANNI I got what I could Leaf.

LEAF Why did we have to scrap it?

DANNI You know why. Money.

LEAF Why didn't we get it out though?

DANNI It wasn't worth the release fee. The A frame was fucked. It's just a trailer Leaf. Stop asking me.

LEAF Why did they have to trash my stuff though? Not fair breaking my stuff.

DANNI We'll get you some new bits.

LEAF When?

DANNI Next birthday.

LEAF What? That's miles away!

DANNI Well, soon then.

LEAF When?

DANNI I don't know. Giro day.

LEAF When's that? Next week?

DANNI Yeah, next week. Yeah. We'll get a few bits and bobs next week.

LEAF Why can't we get them today?

DANNI Did you leave your brain by the side of the motorway?

LEAF We could though couldn't we? Can I have some new trainers?

DANNI No.

LEAF Why not?

DANNI Because I fucking said so Leaf, alright?

Pause

LEAF Did you even ask about what they done with Fraggie?

DANNI Leaf, love-

LEAF Do you think he's still in the dog pound? We could go get him out? Can we hitch back down south and hunt him down?

DANNI Leaf. We've been through this. I know you're upset, but. Just a dog. Could 've been a lot worse couldn't it.

LEAF How long we got to stay here?

DANNI Just stop with all the questions!

LEAF picks up his bag, considers his meagre possessions and then tips it out all over the floor. A couple of scruffy T-shirts fall out, a few screwed up socks and a Walkman. The headphones are broken and the cassette door is off its hinges. LEAF picks it up, examines its remains, then throws it down. Screws up the carrier bag and throws that down too, angry. DANNI watches.

DANNI What do you suggest we do then Leaf? Mm? You look like you've got all the fucking answers have ya? You the big man now you're ten yeah?

Pause

DANNI Just pick em up will you?

LEAF They broke my fucking Walkman!

DANNI Pick them up Leaf, don't be such a baby. *(beat)* Please don't be a drag.

LEAF No.

DANNI If we don't keep this place nice, we'll get asked to leave.

LEAF I know.

DANNI You're making a mess. This is Glen's house. Bit of respect.

LEAF kicks his belongings.

DANNI Right. If you don't want them, I'll put them in the bin.

Starts to pick them up.

LEAF Don't you dare touch my stuff. Get your filthy hands off my stuff! Pig scum bitch, don't touch my stuff!

Enter GLEN with the bacon pan in hand.

GLEN Everything alright in here?

DANN I It's fine yeah, just a bit. It's fine. Bacon smells good.

Exit GLEN.

DANNI Leaf. Love. It's ok. We're ok. We'll be ok.

LEAF Only reason you're here is so you can smoke his hash and let him screw you. Up the arse probably. I hope you get AIDS.

Pause

DANNI How do you spell 'impertinent'?

LEAF What?

DANNI How do you spell it?

LEAF How do you spell 'who gives a shit?'

DANNI I think it's time you went to school.

LEAF What?

DANNI School.

LEAF What?! No way! Mum. Don't make me go to school. I don't wanna go and wear blue and look the same as everyone else. I'm sorry, I'll pick them up.

DANNI shoves his bag of stuff at him. LEAF puts his things back into the carrier bag.

DANNI Make yourself at home. And don't be so fucking rude all the time.

Enter GLEN with a bacon butty.

GLEN Watch it, it's dripping sauce out the sides.

He gives the plate to LEAF and then licks the brown sauce off his fingers.

LEAF But I said I-

GLEN Shit yeah. Looks like I forgot. Sorry.

LEAF is speechless with annoyance, he looks to DANNI for support, she shoots him a look and he takes a bite sulkily.

Scene 3

The following afternoon. The street. LEAF sits on the kerb eating a packet of crisps. Enter NAVEED on a BMX. He wears a school uniform and carries a rucksack. He stops, puts the bike down and dumps his bag. LEAF is unaware of his presence until he speaks.

NAVEED I saw you nick them.

LEAF Can't prove it.

NAVEED Doesn't need proof, my Dad. He'd knock you flying.

LEAF Not scared of him.

NAVEED You will be when he gets my Mum on you.

LEAF Go tell em then.

NAVEED Maybe I already have. Maybe they're calling the police.

LEAF starts to pick up his sweets and put them back in his pockets.

NAVEED It's wrong you know. Stealing.

LEAF So.

NAVEED Good job my brother weren't there. He'd have slit your throat.

LEAF Would he bollocks.

NAVEED He would of done.

LEAF Who cares about your stupid brother?

Pause

NAVEED That's his old bike.

LEAF So?

NAVEED Have you got one?

LEAF No.

NAVEED You stink man. What you been doing? You been burning cardboard?

LEAF No.

NAVEED What you been doing then?

LEAF Nothing.

NAVEED How tall are you?

LEAF shrugs.

NAVEED I'm short for my age. Do you think I'm too short?

LEAF For what?

NAVEED Loads of stuff.

LEAF shrugs.

NAVEED Come here.

LEAF Why?

NAVEED Want to see how much taller you are than me. Go like this.

NAVEED stretches his arms above his head.

LEAF Why?

NAVEED Because otherwise you're going to prison for being a thieving scumbag.

LEAF obliges. Puts his arms above his head. NAVEED nods, looking thoughtful. LEAF sits back on the kerb. LEAF opens another packet of crisps.

NAVEED Gis a crisp.

LEAF No.

NAVEED They're pretty much mine anyway. From my shop.

LEAF Nine tenths of the law. That's what property is. Nine tenths of the law.

NAVEED You what? What you on about?

LEAF Its means: I say it's mine so piss off.

Pause

NAVEED I'll tell you a secret.

LEAF No thanks.

NAVEED No one on round here likes you, you know. I can tell. *(beat)* That's wasn't the secret by the way.

LEAF If I give you a crisp, will you leave me alone?

NAVEED No.

LEAF If I don't give you one will you leave me alone?

NAVEED Probably not. No.

LEAF That was stupid.

NAVEED What?

LEAF That. Could have got a crisp then if you weren't so stupid.

NAVEED Could I? How?

LEAF Think about it.

NAVEED does, but can't work it out.

NAVEED You think you're dead brainy you don't you.

LEAF shrugs.

NAVEED You're not though, you're well slow. Even slower than Isabelle in my class and she's a right thick four-eyed mongy she is.

NAVEED sits down next to LEAF. Watches him eat the crisps.

NAVEED Just one? Go on. I'm starving.

LEAF Go away.

NAVEED You proper stink man. What you been doing?

LEAF Nothing.

NAVEED It's dead good this secret you know.

LEAF What is it?

NAVEED Give me a crisp and I'll tell you. Go on. You've got loads left. I could still tell on you, you know. I could.

LEAF gives him one.

NAVEED It's about Miss. You know Miss Norvasa? It's about her.

LEAF Who's Miss Norvasa?

NAVEED You have to pay me more crisps if you want the whole thing.

LEAF No I don't.

NAVEED It's really good, you know, it's about... it's about her boobies. Yeah. You want to know about her boobies?

LEAF Alright. Yeah.

LEAF gives him another crisp.

NAVEED I've seen em. Her tits. I've seen her boobies.

LEAF Where? How?

NAVEED I know where she lives cos... cos my cousin... well he's in the catering business, and he lives opposite. Yeah my cousin's house that's it. And once when we went over, for a... for a wedding or something, I went upstairs and looked out of the window and she was like this. Holding her tits. Trying to lick her nipples and everything.

LEAF No!

NAVEED Yeah! They were massive. They were as big as your head.

LEAF Nipples as big as my head?

NAVEED No spaccer. Boobies as big as your head.

LEAF Really?

NAVEED As big as your head. No lie.

LEAF is lost in thought. NAVEED seizes the opportunity and grabs the rest of the packet of crisps and starts stuffing them into his mouth greedily.

LEAF Oi! Give em back.

NAVEED No way.

LEAF Give em back.

NAVEED You fancy Miss you do. You want to marry Miss.

LEAF Piss off I don't. I don't even know her.

NAVEED I could see you dribbling then. You were dribbling. I bet you spunked as well!

LEAF I was not dribbling.

NAVEED Yeah you were. It were well funny.

LEAF No I wasn't. That was a shit secret anyway.

NAVEED You know why? Cos it wasn't even a secret, it was a lie. And you fell for it. Divvy.

LEAF Lying paki bastard.

A beat. The mood turns.

NAVEED You what?

Pause

LEAF snatches the crisps back. The packet is now empty. LEAF pours the crumbs into his mouth. Silence.

NAVEED Gyppo.

LEAF Dick head. I'm not a gyppo. I'm a traveller.

NAVEED Either way you fucking stink. Hippy. Hippy gyppo. Hippo.

LEAF Yeah. So what? What you gonna do about it?

NAVEED What else have you got in your pockets? Show me.

LEAF reaches into his pocket and pulls out a Wham bar. A Mars bar. A Curly Wurly.

NAVEED Give me em. Now. Or I'll batter you.

LEAF Come and get em. Go on then. Dare ya.

NAVEED goes towards him, LEAF puts the sweets behind his back and above his head where NAVEED can't reach. NAVEED stamps on LEAF's foot and he releases his grip. NAVEED eats the whole Mars bar on principal more than any real desire to enjoy it. He eats it at LEAF. He finishes it triumphantly. LEAF watches but looks unimpressed, tending to his sore foot.

NAVEED My Dad knows a man who works at the trade market and he's only got one thumb. And that is no lie that, I swear down, that is no lie.

LEAF Have you ever seen a broken arm?

NAVEED No.

LEAF I have. It just dangles. Like jelly. All floppy. It looks longer than the other one.

NAVEED Does it?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Bet you haven't ever seen a head split open.

LEAF Yeah. Course.

NAVEED Have yer?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Where?

LEAF Before I come here.

Pause

NAVEED I weren't really gonna batter you, you know.

LEAF I'd batter you back anyway.

NAVEED Wouldn't hurt though. I bet you punch like a gyppo.

LEAF I bet you punch like a paki.

NAVEED Yeah I probably do don't I. So what though int it?

LEAF Yeah so what?

NAVEED I don't even like sweets that much. I get loads me. I sneak em from out the back when me Dad's not looking. I feel sick now.

Pause

NAVEED Here.

LEAF What?

NAVEED Want to see summat right good? And this really is a secret. You have to do summat for it though. Not sweets. Summat else. Summat proper. And if the police do come, you run. Like fuck.

NAVEED picks up his bike, gets on it and exits. LEAF runs after him.

'The Wildcats of Kilkenny' by The Pogues.

Scene 4

Inside a deserted, boarded up house. It is early afternoon and although dingy still light. LEAF is rubbing his neck and shoulders. NAVEED carries his rucksack.

LEAF You weigh a ton for a short arse.

NAVEED Weakling.

LEAF Could of just got a bin and climbed up by yourself. Wall's not even that high.

NAVEED begins to unpack his rucksack.

LEAF Looks like a squat in here.

NAVEED It's haunted.

LEAF Is it heck.

NAVEED Course it is.

LEAF There's fuck all here!

NAVEED pulls out a catapult, lots of sweets including a quarter of lemon sherbets in a small white bag and a small bottle of Panda Pop. There is also a piece of chalk and a wine glass.

NAVEED opens the pop. Pours some into the glass and hands the rest of the can to LEAF.

LEAF Cheers.

NAVEED Cheers.

LEAF To nob - heads. And liars.

NAVEED To shit - heads and spasms.

LEAF You're a shit - head.

NAVEED You're a dweeb.

LEAF Takes one to know one.

They drink.

LEAF Dare me to smash that window?

NAVEED If you want.

LEAF Give me that then.

NAVEED hands LEAF the catapult. NAVEED pulls out a bag of lemon sherbets. Hands one to LEAF. He eats it.

NAVEED Don't eat it! Fire it! It's ammo.

LEAF Lemon sherbets?

NAVEED Good ammo that! What would you have got? Marshmallows? Flower petals?

LEAF takes another one, aims and fires at the window. It smashes.

LEAF Did you see that? I'm a well good shot!

NAVEED Skills on you! Gis a go.

NAVEED tries but misses.

LEAF Here, do it like this- here, get another-

NAVEED I don't need -

LEAF I'm just trying to help.

NAVEED I can do it. Just because I'm short it don't mean I can't do stuff!

LEAF Where did you get it?

NAVEED It's from Scarborough this. It's a black widow.

He tries again, fails again. Gives up and goes back to his things.

NAVEED Should've got gobstoppers.

LEAF It don't matter what sweets you use, it's you who's rubbish not them.

He fires again, smashes another window.

NAVEED Stop it. Someone'll hear.

LEAF Scaredy cat.

LEAF throws down the catapult. NAVEED goes back to his rucksack. LEAF hocks back a greenie and spits at a wall. Watches it slide down. Proud.

LEAF Someone's written something here. Look. Look, what does it say? It says 'I woz ere, ere I woz, woz I ere? Yes I woz.' Not here now though are you? What's this one? 'Jenny Blake gives good head.' Gives good head? What does that mean? Whose head?

NAVEED Dead heads. She's dead now too.

LEAF How? Who?

NAVEED Jenny Blake. This was her house. She chopped heads off. It's haunted. I told yer.

LEAF No she didn't. Shut up.

NAVEED She did. Are you scared?

LEAF No. It's broad daylight. Are you?

NAVEED No.

LEAF I'm a robot. Robots don't get scared.

NAVEED Yeah they do.

LEAF No they don't.

NAVEED Do.

LEAF Don't.

NAVEED Do.

LEAF Don't.

NAVEED Do.

LEAF *(in a robot voice)* I am a robot. I don't get scared. I am a robot. I am not scared. I am a robot. I will kill you!

NAVEED That was the crappiest robot I've ever seen. What's the scariest you've ever been?

Pause

LEAF That's not even a word.

NAVEED How would you know? You can hardly even read.

LEAF I can.

NAVEED Are you scared of the dark?

LEAF No.

NAVEED What then?

Pause

LEAF Shall we write something? On the wall? Let's write something about us. To show we've been here.

NAVEED I'm gonna write on the floor me.

He picks up the chalk.

LEAF Where did you get that?

NAVEED Nicked it off Miss Norvasa.

LEAF What, with the...?

NAVEED Yeah.

LEAF What you gonna write?

NAVEED draws a circle on the floor.

LEAF Is that it?

NAVEED No.

LEAF Let's have it. I want to write something.

He snatches the chalk and draws on the floor. A peace sign.

NAVEED What's that?

LEAF Peace man. CND. Ban the bomb. Nuclear disarmament and all that.

NAVEED CND. CNdivvy.

NAVEED snatches the chalk back and writes around the circle the letters of the alphabet. A large YES on one side of the circle and a large NO on the other side.

NAVEED Yes or no?

LEAF To what?

NAVEED swigs his pop down, turns the wine glass upside down and places it in the middle of the circle.

NAVEED This.

NAVEED places his finger on the wine glass. LEAF joins him at the circle and does the same. NAVEED adopts a channelling pose and speaks grandly to the cosmos.

NAVEED Is there anybody there? Speak to me, oh spirits, is there anybody there?

LEAF bursts out laughing.

NAVEED What?

LEAF You. Speak to me oh spirits! Speak to me!

NAVEED That's how you do it!

LEAF That's how *you* do it.

NAVEED Come on, this'll be good this will. You promised!

LEAF Go on then.

NAVEED Don't laugh. Is there anybody there?

LEAF sniggers.

NAVEED Stop putting me off! You said you'd help me!

LEAF Only wanted me here so you could get over the wall. Short arse.

NAVEED Well.

LEAF Now what?

NAVEED We wait.

LEAF For what?

NAVEED Contact.

LEAF From who?

NAVEED Is there anybody there?

Silence. They wait. The glass moves to YES, then returns to the centre of the circle. They are transfixed by it.

LEAF Did you move it-

NAVEED Shht.

LEAF Is it Jenny Blake?

The glass moves to NO, then returns to the centre of the circle.

LEAF It's probably just a dead spider.

NAVEED No. You have to say it. Say: is there anybody there?

LEAF Is there anybody there?

The glass moves to NO, then returns to the centre of the circle.

LEAF See. You're moving it anyway, I know you are.

NAVEED Are you William the Conqueror?

LEAF Who's he?

NAVEED Some French dude.

LEAF What like Charlie Chaplin?

NAVEED He wasn't French. He was black and white.

The glass moves to NO, then returns to the centre of the circle.

NAVEED Are you William the Conqueror?

The glass moves to NO, then returns to the centre of the circle.

LEAF It might be Fraggie. Is it Fraggie?

NAVEED Who's Fraggie?

LEAF My dog. He got choked. Hung him off his lead. He went berserk and lost his bark. Mum says he's probably been put down.

NAVEED Who did?

LEAF Pigs.

NAVEED A pig choked your dog?

LEAF It doesn't matter. Are you my dog?

The glass moves to NO, then returns to the centre of the circle.

LEAF I wish it was my dog. He was cool.

NAVEED Can't be a dog. Don't get ghost dogs.

LEAF Why not?

NAVEED Ghosts have to be human.

LEAF Do they heckers. They don't even exist.

NAVEED Yeah they do. Are you a ghost?

The glass moves to YES, then returns to the centre of the circle.

LEAF breaks contact with the glass. They sit, stunned. Silence.

LEAF Were you...? I won't mind if you were but. Just be honest.

NAVEED shakes his head.

LEAF Cos I wasn't.

NAVEED I wasn't.

LEAF I need a piss now.

NAVEED Don't go.

LEAF Why?

NAVEED It's getting dark.

LEAF Where am I gonna piss?

NAVEED On the landing.

LEAF Over the banister. I'll piss on the ghost's head.

LEAF exits. NAVEED goes back to the circle and lights the candle and picks up the glass. He talks in a whisper. It is a more intimate exchange, less of the dramatic tone. More of a soft whisper.

NAVEED Is it you?

The glass doesn't respond.

NAVEED Do you miss me?

The glass doesn't respond.

NAVEED Do you forgive me?

The glass doesn't respond.

NAVEED Do you hate me?

The glass doesn't respond.

NAVEED Will I see you again? I miss you.

The glass doesn't respond. Enter LEAF.

LEAF You alright?

NAVEED Yeah. I gotta go now.

LEAF We've only just got here.

NAVEED Got to go for my tea.

LEAF You sure you're alright?

NAVEED I just said. This place give me the creeps that's all.

LEAF You wanted to come here.

NAVEED Not any more. I'm going home.

Scene 5

The local shops. DANNI and LEAF are on their way back from a school interview. There is a broken bench or a bit of wall to sit on with a dustbin nearby. DANNI has clearly made an effort with her appearance, she is wearing eye liner. She carries a blue corner shop carrier bag. She pulls out a Cornetto ice cream, and a packet of tobacco. She starts to make a roll

up, gives the ice cream to LEAF. He has his hair combed into a side parting. His T-shirt is tucked into his trousers.

DANNI That weren't too bad was it?

LEAF Would have been better if they knew we was coming. Looked like a right pair of idiots.

DANNI No we didn't. I thought he was alright.

LEAF It was well embarrassing.

DANNI It would have been less embarrassing if you would have done what he asked first time.

LEAF I did do what he said. Read and wrote my name and all that. What you want me to do, lick his boots?

DANNI He was alright I thought. Better than my old head teacher. Not hard mind.

LEAF I'm not going there. It looks shit. Everyone was dressed in blue.

DANNI Don't start with that again.

LEAF Why does everyone have to wear blue all the time? I can spell already anyway.

DANNI No you can't.

LEAF It was just that one word.

DANNI It's not just that one word.

LEAF It's cos I was thinking about something else. It's cos I'd been up all night. *You* can't spell when *you've* been up all night.

DANNI Course I can spell when I've been up all night!

LEAF You can hardly talk when you've been up all night.

DANNI Less of the lip.

LEAF eats his ice cream.

LEAF Where's Spod then?

DANNI He'll be here. Soon. End of the week he said.

LEAF Do you think he'll come?

DANNI Leaf, I could really do with a bit of your support right now. This is as hard for me as it is for you yeah?

LEAF Just asking.

DANNI You gonna eat that?

LEAF No. It's got nuts on.

DANNI snatches it off him and eats it herself.

LEAF Oi!

DANNI What?

Pause

LEAF Mum.

DANNI Yeah.

LEAF Why can't we just go back?

DANNI Leaf.

LEAF Get a new trailer. You said we'd never live in a house again. Not properly.

DANNI Shit happens. People change. The world changes. It's. Dangerous.

LEAF There's nothing to do here.

DANNI I just - I think - Sometimes it's good to review stuff. Choices you make. What worked for us then might not work for us now. I'm putting my name on a list.

LEAF For what?

DANNI Housing. You need to go to school.

LEAF Why though?

DANNI Because that's what kids do!

LEAF I didn't have to before. What's the point now?

DANNI You know what the point is.

LEAF Why can't you teach me? You used to.

DANNI Yeah and you loved that didn't you. That was a great success. Don't know why I bothered, could hardly find you most days.

LEAF I'll be good this time. I won't run off.

DANNI Leaf.

LEAF But I can read. And count. Spell and all that. You taught me all that didn't you.

DANNI I taught you a bit. It's not enough. I don't think it's enough.

LEAF You're a good teacher though. Sorry if I was bad all the time.

DANNI You weren't bad. You were. Shit, I was as lazy as you about it, let's be honest.

LEAF You never went to school.

DANNI I did.

LEAF You told me you sacked it off and went and lived in a squat.

DANNI This isn't about what I did then, it's about what you're gonna do now.

LEAF Please be my teacher again Mum.

DANNI Listen. Leaf mate. Best advice I can give you is this. Learn the system, beat the system. It's true. Whole world's based on bullshit yeah? Society and all that. Best thing you can do is give it a whirl, give it a stab, learn how the bastards keep you down, then bang, you can flip it yeah. To your advantage. It's the only way.

LEAF What about what they did to Fraggles? You didn't flip them did you? When they was busy kicking the shit out of everything, we never flipped them! We ran away and hid up a tree!

DANNI This world is a complex system yeah, it's built on archaic laws and rules that filter back hundreds of years. They want to keep you stupid. That way they can make you do what they want. What those pigs wanted was for us to hit back so they could nick us. Makes their job a lot easier and keeps them in the right. A bit of school will do you good. Beat em at their own game. You're going. That's it. It won't kill you.

LEAF It might. What if it does? I'll get you done for murder.

DANNI No one dies from a few years of school.

LEAF A few years!

DANNI Best thing you can do is own your own mind. That and good health. Bit of love won't kill you either. Although you're a bit young for girls and all that.

Won't be long though will it? Good looking chap like you. Getting pretty handsome these days.

LEAF gets up and runs his fingers through his hair, ruffling it out of the neat side parting it has been tamed into. Untucks his t-shirt. He goes to leave.

DANNI Where you off?

LEAF See a mate.

DANNI What mate? Leaf. Don't be stupid. Leaf!

LEAF exits.

DANNI Leaf! Get back here! Leaf, for fuck's sake!

He runs. He is too quick for her. She stands and watches him leave. She has lost her appetite. She drops the remains of the ice cream in the bin.

Scene 6

Outside the school. LEAF is waiting for NAVEED. A school bell goes off. The sound of children in the distance. NAVEED arrives on his BMX. He sees LEAF, brakes and skids to a stop.

NAVEED What you doing here?

LEAF Waiting for you.

NAVEED I've just had double maths me.

LEAF I've just had an ice cream.

NAVEED What flavour?

LEAF Had nuts on it.

NAVEED Should have got a strawberry one.

NAVEED 07734. That's how you write hello on a calculator. You turn it upside down and it says hello. You know what else I can write on it? 5318008. Do you know what that spells?

LEAF Do you want to come back to that place?

NAVEED When?

LEAF Now.

NAVEED Can't. Got to go home and mop up.

LEAF Don't have to.

NAVEED I do. My Dad'll kill me if I don't.

LEAF No he won't.

NAVEED How do you know?

LEAF He won't *actually* kill you though will he. Not really.

NAVEED He'd have a pretty good go at it.

LEAF Just shout at ya or something.

NAVEED That's just as bad.

LEAF Bit of shouting's nothing.

NAVEED Why do you want to go back there anyway? Thought you said it was shit.

LEAF It was shit.

NAVEED Why then?

LEAF Bored.

NAVEED What you been doing?

LEAF My Mum made me go to school.

NAVEED My school? In there?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Where's your uniform?

LEAF No, not go, go. Just go in. See the teacher.

NAVEED Which one? Mr Sears?

LEAF Is that the guy in the suit who stinks of coffee?

NAVEED Yeah, he's the headmaster, he's a right doilum.

LEAF Yeah. Him.

NAVEED Are you coming to my school then?

LEAF No.

NAVEED That would be well rad if you did. Are you gonna join the footie team? Can hippos even play football?

LEAF I'm not coming to your stupid school alright!

NAVEED Why you still here then?

LEAF I'm off back. To that place you showed me.

NAVEED You didn't tell anyone we were in there did yer?

LEAF No.

NAVEED Good. Cos that's my secret you know, if I thought you was gonna go telling everybody I would never have shown yer.

LEAF I'm gonna go camp out there.

NAVEED What like a den?

LEAF No. To live.

NAVEED Why?

LEAF Because. You wanna come?

NAVEED Be a bit cold won't it?

LEAF I've got a sleeping bag.

NAVEED Just one?

LEAF You can bring one too.

NAVEED I've never been camping me. I wanted to go to Butlins once, but me Dad said no.

NAVEED launches into a rendition of 'The Birdie' song with enthusiastic actions.

NAVEED Duh duh duh duh duh duh duh. Duh duh duh duh duh duh duh. Duh duh duh duh duh!

LEAF What you doing?

NAVEED Duh duh duh duh duh duh duh. Duh duh duh duh duh duh duh. Duh duh duh duh duh!

LEAF What the fuck is that?

NAVEED stops.

NAVEED Chicken dance int it.

LEAF Is it?

NAVEED Yeah.

LEAF Why?

NAVEED I dunno.

LEAF You're nuts you aren't you.

NAVEED No.

LEAF You coming or what?

NAVEED I've got to go mop up though, ant I, I just said.

LEAF Do it tomorrow.

NAVEED What, twice?

LEAF What?

NAVEED If I do today's mopping tomorrow as well as tomorrow's mopping tomorrow, that means loads of mopping all in one go. That's well rubbish that is. My arms'll ache.

LEAF No, dick head. Say you'll do it tomorrow. But then just do one mop tomorrow. Just once. That's what I'd do.

NAVEED But then what about today's?

LEAF Don't need to mop a floor every day.

NAVEED This one time, a little kid shat itself in there. Right in the middle of the shop.

LEAF Did it?

NAVEED Yeah. Were well disgusting, I think it had diarrhoea or summat. Proper went all over the floor. Gross.

LEAF Euugh.

NAVEED Yeah. Should have heard me Dad: 'Get that dirty tutty boy out of my shop.'

LEAF Did you have to clean it up?

NAVEED No my brother did that time.

LEAF Why can't he do it today then?

Pause

LEAF What would you rather do? Mop a stupid floor or hideout with me?

NAVEED What about my homework though?

LEAF What do you need homework for?

NAVEED Get a good job and that.

LEAF Thought you worked in your Dad's shop?

NAVEED I do.

LEAF What do you need a job for then?

NAVEED struggles to come up with an answer.

LEAF Forget it. I'll go on my own. Go mop up like a big lonely nob-head. You're just as boring as everyone else round here.

LEAF leaves. NAVEED watches him go, then peddles off in the opposite direction.

Scene 7

The deserted house. LEAF has his carrier bag of belongings, a sleeping bag and a pillow under his arm. He sets up his camp and sits on his makeshift bed. He pulls out his Walkman and a roll of sellotape. He sets about the repair job. Tapes up the headphones and then tries to fix the broken cassette door hinge. It is beyond repair. He puts a tape into it and secures it in place with an elastic band he has in his pocket. He pulls a new packet of batteries out of his bag, inserts them into the casing, puts the headphones on then presses play. It works. He is delighted. He clips the Walkman onto his belt buckle. Lies back on his pillow.

'Einstein a Go-Go' by Landscape.

Scene 9

GLEN's house. DANNI and GLEN. GLEN sits in the armchair. He is weighing out a large score of hash into smaller deal bags. He does this on a tea tray that also serves as a skinning up station. It is covered in rizlas, ends of cigarettes, bits of roached cardboard. DANNI is stood, agitated.

GLEN Last place you saw him was up the shop yeah?

DANNI I should have gone after him.

GLEN He'll be knocking about somewhere, he'll be alright.

DANNI I was going to go after him, but he had a good head start... when he don't wanna be caught it's not worth-

GLEN He'll come back won't he.

DANNI Do you think?

GLEN What else is he gonna do? Leave the fucking country?

DANNI I'm just trying to- You know. It was just a stupid school. I should've known, I should have known he'd do a runner.

GLEN He'll come back when he's hungry. And if he don't, more fool him. More food for me.

DANNI I can't keep. He needs to. Or maybe not, maybe it's me. I need to. Oh I don't know. I was just trying to do the right thing.

GLEN What, like it were the right thing to go cavorting round the countryside with a load of misfit soap dodgers?

DANNI Don't start on that one.

GLEN You've sent him feral that's all. Look if you wanna go straight, get your shit together, that's sorted. All good. Stop here for a bit. I'm not bothered. I like having you around. Like old times. He'll be back by the morning. Guaranteed.

DANNI You're a good one to talk about being feral.

GLEN I've mellowed now me, you know. Got me little flat, few bits and bobs on the side, nice bit of business tide me over. I'm alright now me Danni. I'm sorted.

DANNI Never thought I'd see the day.

GLEN Says you, Ms. Squat-a-lot.

DANNI I'll just. Yeah. You're right. He said he was off to see his mate.

GLEN There you go then. He's with a mate. He's fine.

DANNI But who though? Have you seen him knocking about with anyone these last couple of days?

GLEN Hardly seen him me. Keeps out of my way he does.

DANNI Not surprised after the brown sauce incident.

GLEN Here. What's the deal with your fella anyway? Spong is it?

DANNI Spod.

GLEN Yeah. That's it.

DANNI He's gone to try get his van back on the road. He got a proper trashing. One of the worst. Got his stash nicked and his skull bashed in. He's on a lay by site down in Wales. He's not in a good way but he said he'd come up once his van's up and running. He will come up. You can meet him.

GLEN What sort of a name is Spod?

DANNI It's a nickname.

GLEN Better than that other freak you used to knock about with though, what was he called again?

DANNI What, Mickey Big Bollocks?

GLEN No, he was alright him. For a paddy. Other one, fucking Raven Wind Child or some shit.

DANNI Oh, Eagle Windstar.

GLEN Eagle Windstar that's it! What the fuck is that all about? What sort of a name is that to give yoursen?

DANNI He was actually quite an amazing guy once you got to know him.

GLEN Is he some sort of Cherokee or what?

DANNI He's really clued up on all sorts of mad stuff. He spent a lot of time in Arizona, well all over really. It's his spiritual name.

GLEN Spiritual name.

DANNI He was pretty deep.

GLEN Deep as a puddle.

DANNI You know what he was really called?

GLEN Go on.

DANNI Philip.

GLEN Fuck off!

DANNI Philip Moorby. From Maidenhead.

GLEN How the fuck do you get from Philip Moorby from Maidenhead to Eagle Windstar?!? You don't half pick em you don't yer. Spod. Spud head more like.

DANNI Alright.

GLEN What's his real name?

DANNI Er. Andrew. Andrew Stevens.

GLEN And what's my name?

DANNI What?

GLEN What's my name?

DANNI What do you mean?

GLEN Pretty easy question. Tell me my name. Go on Danni, I know you know it. Say it. Danni. Say my name for me.

DANNI Don't be stupid.

GLEN Tell me my name!

DANNI Glen. Your name's Glen. You know it is.

GLEN Glen what?

DANNI Glen Michael Barrett.

GLEN I like watching you get your lips round that Danielle.

DANNI Shut up.

GLEN Danielle Louise Clark.

DANNI (*warning*) Glen.

GLEN What? What's wrong with that?

DANNI I thought we were clear on this.

GLEN Am I not fragile and hippy enough for yer? Shall I change my name too?

DANNI No, I mean. Just. So we're clear. You know.

GLEN Glenny-boy Moonfruit. How's about that?

DANNI Come on. Don't start.

GLEN Ocean-Gale Fuck-Nugget?

DANNI Shut up.

GLEN I've got it, I've got it. Zen Glen.

DANNI is amused, she can't help herself.

GLEN Seriously though babes. What sort of name would I need? To give me another go?

DANNI I don't know.

GLEN No go on. Tell me.

DANNI Don't be a prick. Stop it.

GLEN No, serious, cos if it's just the name, that's easy. But if it's summat else, you know -

DANNI There's nothing wrong with your name, I love your name ok? You're you, you know. You're Glen. I like you just the way you are. Can we just. Please. Give it a rest.

GLEN You're too highly strung you these days. I'm only messing. Shit.

GLEN cracks open a tin of lager and puts it in DANNI's hand. Cracks one for himself. They drink.

Scene 9

Deserted house. Night. LEAF is asleep in his sleeping bag. It is raining. Someone is throwing stones at the window.

NAVEED Oi!

LEAF Shit.

NAVEED Oi!

LEAF Who is it?

NAVEED It's me!

LEAF Who?

NAVEED Me! Let me in!

LEAF Nav? Naveed?

NAVEED I can't get over the wall!

LEAF There's a gap in the fence, round the side, I found a gap.

NAVEED Let me in, it's pissing it down!

LEAF Go round the side! There's a gap round the side.

There is a pause while NAVEED does this. LEAF is alone, he lights a candle. Enter NAVEED.

NAVEED It's me.

LEAF I know.

NAVEED Hiya.

LEAF Hiya.

NAVEED Cold innit.

LEAF Bit.

NAVEED Everyone's looking for yer.

LEAF Are they?

NAVEED Yer Mam and Dad came in the shop today.

LEAF My Dad?

NAVEED Yeah.

LEAF He's not my pissing Dad!

NAVEED Int he?

LEAF No!

NAVEED Alright, I didn't know. I thought he was.

Pause

NAVEED I tried to do what you said about the mopping.

LEAF Yeah?

NAVEED Didn't work.

LEAF Why not?

NAVEED My Dad called me a work shy shit head and made me clean the fridges out as well.

LEAF What a bastard.

NAVEED Here. I brought you summat.

NAVEED gets his catapult out of his pocket and gives it to LEAF.

LEAF What, to keep?

NAVEED Well. Yeah. To borrow. Get some right weirdoes round here you know. Plus the ghosts.

LEAF Thanks Nav.

NAVEED It's alright. Some strawberry bon-bons there too. And a massive pebble. I just found that on the way in. Knock someone out with that if you wanted to. Not me though. I'm your mate aren't I.

LEAF Course not you. Thanks.

Pause

NAVEED My Dad knows you've been robbing his shop.

LEAF Who told him?

NAVEED He knows.

LEAF It's not me.

NAVEED Yeah it is. And it's not right.

LEAF What, so I have to starve?

NAVEED Go home! You won't starve then will yer, you divvy?

LEAF That's not my home!

NAVEED You can't stay here forever.

LEAF Not doing anyone any harm.

NAVEED My Dad works hard in that shop. Alright when it were just crisps and sweets and that, but batteries? They cost loads you know!

LEAF I never took no batteries.

NAVEED Don't lie. I know it were you.

LEAF You can't prove it. What you gonna do about it even if you could?

NAVEED What I just did. Ask you to stop. Anyway, your Mam and Da- yer Mam and... They told me Dad what you look like, so he'll be ready for you next time. *(beat)* You're sort of trapped in here now aren't you. If you go out you'll get done. If you stay here you'll get done. Gonna get done either way. Why don't you just go home?

LEAF They broke my home that's why! They kicked it to pieces! It's broken! Trashed! It's been scrapped!

NAVEED I didn't know.

LEAF We had a trailer. My Mum painted it Rasta colours. Red, gold and green.

NAVEED What, you just went all over in a Rasta caravan?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Why?

LEAF She painted it bright so I could find it easy when I were littler. Sometimes if the sites were big, I'd get a bit, you know.

NAVEED Where is it now?

LEAF They put the windows through and broke all our stuff. My Mum saved my Walkman but the tape door thing fell off. Look.

He shows NAVEED his Walkman.

NAVEED Who broke it?

LEAF Pigs. The police.

NAVEED Why?

LEAF I dunno. It was an exclusion zone.

NAVEED What's that?

LEAF Around the stones.

NAVEED What stones?

LEAF Big massive stones. Bigger than this one.

NAVEED How big?

LEAF Bigger than you.

NAVEED That's not that big though is it.

LEAF Bigger than me. As high as this room. Massive. So massive and so old no one even knows how they got there.

NAVEED A crane probably. Or what about a jcb?

LEAF Cavemen didn't have cranes. They lined them up with the sunrise.

NAVEED Did they?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Must've been a really strong caveman. The Incredible Hulk or a giant or summat. Geoff Capes or Popeye. Better than Fred Flinstone, make Fred Flinstone look like a right weakling. Did you see it?

LEAF What?

NAVEED The sunrise?

LEAF Not this year.

NAVEED Why not?

LEAF Pigs. My Mum says that land is for everybody. That the world belongs to everybody. And that it's our right to watch the sunrise wherever we want.

NAVEED Is that true? That's not true. Is it?

LEAF shrugs.

Pause

LEAF Do you wanna know something?

NAVEED What?

LEAF I really miss my dog.

NAVEED Fraggie?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED Will you get him back?

LEAF No.

Pause

NAVEED I really miss my brother.

LEAF Where is he?

NAVEED Paradise.

LEAF Where's that?

NAVEED shrugs.

LEAF How did he get there?

NAVEED Accident. Everyone went mental at me. I got proper done. Not even shouting. Just. My Dad whisper-shouted. Right in my face.

Pause

LEAF Do you want a go of my Walkman?

LEAF hands it over. NAVEED puts it on. Listens then starts to dance robotically, an attempt at body popping to whatever is playing, we can't hear it, only the tinny hiss of the headphones. LEAF is amused.

LEAF What are you doing?

NAVEED *(loud)* What?

LEAF What are you doing?

NAVEED Dancing! It warms you up!

LEAF You look like a spaz.

NAVEED What?

LEAF I said you look like a spaz.

NAVEED I look what?

LEAF Nothing.

NAVEED What?

LEAF Nothing, it doesn't matter.

NAVEED continues to body pop, he is almost good. Very dedicated.

NAVEED What are you laughing at?

LEAF Look at the state of ya!

NAVEED This is well good this! You should try it. Get warm.

LEAF Nah.

NAVEED What?

LEAF I said I can't do it.

NAVEED has stopped, now out of breath.

NAVEED What did you say?

LEAF goes over to NAV, takes his headphones off and shouts in his ear.

LEAF I said I can't. I don't know how.

NAVEED Get lost, you trying to deaf me or what? It's easy. Just move a bit at a time, like start with this and then.

NAVEED shows him. LEAF tries to copy. NAVEED shows him another move. LEAF copies. Getting there this time.

NAVEED That's it.

LEAF Not really.

NAVEED It's easier with music.

NAVEED puts the headphones on LEAF.

NAVEED Now try.

LEAF does, he copies NAVEED at first who shows him how, then finds his own odd sort of rhythm, which NAVEED finds hilarious. He laughs.

LEAF What?

NAVEED It's good! Carry on, carry on! It's good.

LEAF enjoys the fact that he is making NAVEED laugh and carries on. Soon they are both laughing. LEAF stops dancing and collapses on the sleeping bag next to NAVEED.

NAVEED You're well funny.

LEAF They were your moves.

NAVEED You're well weird, but you're well funny.

Pause. The sound of rain.

LEAF What's time is it?

NAVEED Dunno. Late. I sneaked out about two.

LEAF You gonna sleep here then?

NAVEED Just have a rest for a bit. Don't blow the candle out though.

LEAF I won't.

They lie back looking up at the ceiling. Listening to the rain.

NAVEED There's a leak up there.

LEAF I know. One over there too. Here. Get under.

LEAF unzips the sleeping bag and covers them both up with it.

NAVEED Just for a bit.

The sound of the rain lulls the boys.

NAVEED I know what it is you smell of now.

LEAF What?

NAVEED Smoky bacon crisps.

LEAF No. It's not.

NAVEED What is it then?

LEAF Wood smoke.

The rain persists.

Scene 10

GLEN's house. Later that night. DANNI and GLEN. GLEN is playing music, 'I Chase the Devil' by Max Romeo and the Upsetters. There are empty lager cans and an overflowing ashtray. DANNI is asleep on the floor. GLEN sits in the armchair, he has his skinning up tray on his knee. He is putting the finishes touches to a spliff, which he then lights.

GLEN Danni. Danni. Danni.

DANNI murmurs something in her sleep.

GLEN You awake?

DANNI sits up suddenly.

DANNI Mmm? What? Is he back? Leaf?

GLEN What? No, no. Just. Want some of this?

DANNI Thought he'd come back then.

GLEN Here.

GLEN offers DANNI the spliff. She takes it.

DANNI Thanks.

GLEN Should get a load of this off my man. Go knock it out on the sites to your lot. Go down a treat. Make a killing. Get you back on your feet.

DANNI I've put my name down for a house now though haven't I.

GLEN Do the housewife thing? Very you. Eh, I've got some ironing kicking around here somewhere you can start on that if you want.

DANNI You wish.

GLEN Nowt wrong with looking after your menfolk you know.

DANNI What time is it?

GLEN Late.

DANNI He's probably piss wet through somewhere. He didn't have a jumper on.

GLEN Teach him a lesson that will. *(beat)* Remember when we got locked out of that squat in Bristol and we had to put the window through to get in out the rain?

DANNI No.

GLEN Course you do. Been up all night speeding us tits off. Not long after I first met you that. You'd done a runner from your... what were they called?

DANNI Who?

GLEN Short fat woman with the gangly husband.

DANNI Jim and Maureen?

GLEN Yeah. Did a runner and went to that squat party that never seemed to end. You remember that squat, the big fuck off place with the big cellar and you could get out onto the roof to sunbathe.

DANN Oh what, up on the hill?

GLEN Yeah, yeah, with the big cellar and you could go out on the roof.

DANNI Yeah, yeah. That was mad that place. Mad views. Here.

DANNI hands the spliff back to GLEN.

GLEN Yeah, some pretty mental times we had in there didn't we.

DANNI They were good to me them. Before I did one I mean.

GLEN Who?

DANNI Jim and Maureen.

GLEN He always seemed like a bit of a nonce no?

DANNI He wasn't a nonce. He was lovely. Didn't know what had hit em when they got me placed with em.

GLEN You weren't that bad.

DANNI Not to you I wasn't.

GLEN A little kitten you was. Underneath it all. Still are. Lairy as fuck on the surface, but when you get down underneath to the soft stuff. You're like honey.

DANNI Is that right?

GLEN Yeah. It is yeah.

DANNI I might go out. Have another look around.

GLEN What? Now?

DANNI Yeah. This is stupid, sat here like this. He's out there somewhere, anything could have happened.

GLEN You gonna call the police?

DANNI Yeah right.

GLEN We'll go have another skeg about in the morning. Get some sleep, that's what you should be doing. Go get a few hours in my bed if you want.

DANNI I'm not tired.

GLEN You were fast asleep snoring a minute ago.

DANNI That wasn't sleep!

GLEN All right, calm down!

DANNI Fuck you!

GLEN What have I done?

Pause

GLEN Here.

GLEN hands the spliff back to DANNI.

GLEN You heard from Spud head yet?

DANNI I spoke to him this morning. Having trouble with his starter motor.

GLEN That old chestnut.

DANNI Are you trying to piss me off?

GLEN He'll be alright Dan. I was always going walk about when I were his age. Just a lad, int he, that's what lads do. I went away for a whole week when I weren't much older than him. Robbed fifty quid of me brother, got the train to Blackpool and sat on the beach all week eating candyfloss. One of the best weeks of my life that. I broke into a chalet and kipped in there. Were fucking freezing on a night, but you could hear the waves. Don't deny him his adventures Dan. Lads need them. They turn little shits into men.

DANNI He's had enough for one year. Should have seen him. He was white as a sheet. It was fucking Babylon. Chaos. Pigs everywhere. Animals. No room for discussion, for talking it through, it was turn yourselves in to be processed or get arrested, where's the choice in that? Either way you're fucked. I was shaking like a... They were everywhere, like this swarm of blue. And shouting, right in your face, the rage on them, spitting with rage, it were something else. 'Get on the floor! Get down, leave your vehicles!' Even ripped their numbers off some of them, they were geared up for a fight right from the word go I swear. All done up in riot gear, big helmets, shields, batons the lot, like they were there to conquer an army, never mind a bunch of peace loving types and hippies. Never mind that it's the peace convoy they're dealing with, the clue's in the name right? We weren't even nowhere near no heritage site at that point. Couldn't even see Stonehenge. Dumped a ton of gravel on the road and started putting windows in so we pulled off road into some scabby bean field, belonged to some Giles somewhere. Left us there for hours. Surrounded us, no way out. Not a lot we could do but wait.

When they came onto the field. So many of them. Helicopters overhead. They knew it weren't right, they were out of control, could hear the panic in them, trashing everyone, everything in sight. Arms bent right up your back

and heads splitting open all over. Going above and beyond you know, slinging shit out of the trailers, bedding flying all over, glass and tipping out food. When I went to see about getting mine out of the pound they'd really gone to town on it. Tipped a load of rice and tahini all over Leaf's bed, trashed all his bits. Ran over his bike. Completely buckled. Dunno what they'd done with my stereo. Nicked that, had that away. Anything of any value gone. All my tapes pulled out like spaghetti. One of them was crying.

GLEN What, a pig crying? Pigs don't cry.

DANNI hands the spliff back to GLEN.

DANNI This one did. There were two or three on the edge of the field... at the far end. Middle of the field there was the last of the vehicles just driving round and round, they didn't want to stop, cos they'd seen what happened once they'd got you stopped. Just driving round and round till the engines seized up or they hit a ditch or run out of diesel or whatever, with these pigs running after them, like a big blue bloodthirsty army. But there were these couple of them by the edge and I'm trying to get Leaf away from his dog, trying to get him to leave him. Little Fraggie, lovely little mongrel, terrier mix, he loved that dog. Went everywhere with him. It was Mickey Big Bollocks who give us him in fact. Found a soggy puppy down a lane and brought him to our trailer and that was that, soon enough he's just a permanent feature. Leaf's best mate. He would have followed him to the gates of hell that dog, never mind that an officer had him tied up, straining on his lead, choking him practically and I'm dragging him away. I pull him over to these officers by the edge, just wanting to get out of the madness of it all, get Leaf out of the way of these great big vans and buses going round and round, if he gets under them wheels...

These pigs by the edge, they've put their shields down, their truncheons, they don't wanna be a part of it no more. Just stood there, tears running down his face one of em. Watching. Arms folded. Stood, watching, silent but crying. And I goes to him 'Yeah I know how you fucking feel, you disgust me, you scumbag pig cunts' and he looks up at the scene on this field and shakes his head, like ashamed. He wipes his eyes, looks both ways then waves us through the fence and we run like fuck. Aint no one gonna process me again. I've been processed all my fucking life. I'm sick of it, they aren't going to start processing my boy now as well. Cos he's mine and I'd sooner rip your fucking eyes out than let anything happen to him. It was carnage, a riot. I keep dreaming about it. I feel so angry you know. I don't know where to put it. I'm like.

I was so ready for it. Beautiful them stones are. First year I saw them. Something very noble about them. Sounds a bit- you know- but something like home about them. Something really magical. I'm ready for it, my pilgrimage, let my hair down, soak up the sunshine and see the dawn in properly, everyone all happy and shining and full of love. Sit with my fingers in the grass and beautiful green hills rolling all around. This land is ours. This earth is ours. You can't take it away from us, because it's ours. You can't put a price on everything and own everything. I'm sick of every cunt in this world trying to own everything. I've been robbed of my festival and I'm stuck here with nothing, I've got nothing, and now he's done a runner and I don't know where he is. I've got nothing.

GLEN Come here.

GLEN goes to DANNI, and hugs her. She allows him to comfort her. They embrace. Friendly at first then he starts to kiss her neck.

DANNI Glen.

GLEN What?

DANNI Why are you kissing my neck?

GLEN Sshhh.

DANNI Stop it. Please, stop. Did you hear me?

GLEN Yes.

DANNI Then what are you still doing it for?

She pushes him away.

DANNI I shouldn't have come here. This was a mistake.

GLEN What?

DANNI I'm sorry, I'll leave now. Thanks for letting us stay.

She starts to gather her things.

GLEN What are you doing?

DANNI I'm going.

GLEN You can't go now. Where you gonna go?

DANNI Kissing people's necks Glen? When you've already been told?

GLEN You never said owt, not like you got here and was like, 'yeah yeah thanks for letting us stay, two sugars in me tea and just so you know the neck's off limits.'

DANNI I thought we were clear on this, fuck's sake, it's been long enough. How do I make it clearer to you?

GLEN Just a few fucking kisses Dan, it's not the end of the world. I can't keep up.

DANNI It's not rocket science Glen, please stop kissing my neck means please stop kissing my neck!

GLEN How was I supposed to know? You used to love me doing stuff to you!

DANNI That was years-

GLEN Used to moan and purr and all sorts of shit.

DANNI Well not anymore.

GLEN I bet you would if you gave it a chance.

DANNI Are you mental? Or just totally fucking dense?

GLEN goes for DANNI, there is a brief scuffle, he doesn't hit her, but he grabs her roughly.

GLEN What are you on about? What did you call me?

DANNI I didn't call you anything. Get off!

DANNI frees herself from his grip and then pushes him backwards into the chair.

DANNI This was definitely a bad idea. Shit.

GLEN You said you'd look after me. When everything went all... warped and that. You promised me.

DANNI If you think back, I think you'll find I did more than my fair share of looking after you.

GLEN Danielle please...

DANNI Will you stop calling me that? My name's Danni.

GLEN Sorry Dan. I am. Please don't go.

DANNI I'll just go have a look round the block. Course I'm not going. Not really. Not going anywhere without him am I?

GLEN You used to say that about me.

DANNI Don't start this shit with me Glen. You told me-

GLEN You do know that you're the only one I've ever felt like I could-

DANNI You said you were mellowed, you said you were chilled-

GLEN You were the only one who would make it-

DANNI This is not chilled Glen, stop it. I'm not getting into this.

GLEN But I just want to-

DANNI This is not about you and me.

GLEN It is to me.

DANNI Don't turn this into something it's not.

GLEN Don't fucking leave me every five minutes!

DANNI I'm going to look for my son. I'll be back soon.

GLEN I'll come with you.

DANNI No. No thanks. No offence but I don't really wanna look at you right now Glen, you've really pissed me off. You do realise that don't ya? Am I getting through to you at all?

GLEN I just want it to be like before.

DANNI exits. GLEN throws his can of lager in rage. Sits on the chair with his head in his hands.

Scene 11

The deserted house. LEAF and NAVEED are still asleep under the blanket. A dawn light creeps in through the windows. NAVEED wakes up shivering.

NAVEED Leaf.

LEAF ignores him, turns over and stays asleep.

NAVEED gets out of the sleeping bag and goes to one of the windows and looks out at the sunrise.

NAVEED Leaf. Leaf. Wake up.

LEAF stirs and sits up.

LEAF What?

NAVEED Look.

LEAF What?

NAVEED Look.

NAVEED points to the sunrise out of the window.

NAVEED Looks like the sky's on fire. Shepherds delight.

LEAF That's red sky at night, shepherds delight.

NAVEED Oh yeah. Red sky in the morning...

LEAF Shepherd's warning. How do you know that?

NAVEED We did it at school. A good job they told me because I thought shepherd's delight were some sort of pie. *(beat)* Here. Do you wanna go up the Black Rock?

LEAF What's that?

NAVEED It's up the top near the wasteland near the railway line. It's not a caveman rock. Well it might be I suppose but I dunno if it will line up with the sun. You can climb on it though.

LEAF What if someone sees us?

NAVEED Nah. Too early. Everyone's still in bed.

LEAF You sure?

NAVEED Except the skellingtons. They come out and dance on a broken ladder. What are they called them steps on a ladder?

LEAF Rungs.

NAVEED Yeah. Rungs. Them rungs are haunted. Skellingtons dance on the rungs.

LEAF You don't half talk some shit.

NAVEED It's quite a way though.

LEAF How far?

NAVEED I know what we'll do.

LEAF What?

NAVEED Sneak back to mine. Get my old bike out of the back yard.

LEAF Really?

NAVEED It's probably a bit small for you, it's nearly too small for me even, but it's better than walking, better than getting a croggy all the way there.

LEAF Ok. Cool. Let's do it.

LEAF starts to gather his stuff to go.

NAVEED Leaf.

LEAF What?

NAVEED You can ride mine. The bigger one if you want. It was my brothers.

LEAF Are you sure?

NAVEED Your legs are longer, it will be better for you. I'll take the small one. Because I'm smaller.

LEAF Thanks Nav.

NAVEED Come on. Let's get out of here!

LEAF To the Rock!

NAVEED To the Black Rock!

LEAF Let's rock and roll!

NAVEED These shepherds are gonna go bray some skellingtons! Woouoooo!

NAVEED and LEAF exit.

Scene 12

The streets. Sunrise.

'Echo Beach' by Martha and the Muffins. DANNI is walking the streets looking for LEAF. She is wearing a jacket which she pulls close around her to keep the crisp morning chill out.

LEAF and NAVEED cross the stage on two bikes.

The stage is now representing two locations at once. DANNI's street search and NAVEED and LEAF's journey to the Black Rock. Whichever section of the stage DANNI is in, the boys inhabit the rest. They never acknowledge each other's presence.

The boys compare differences on the bikes, one has stunt pegs, one doesn't. NAVEED points out different scratches on the paintwork. They 'revv' the handlebars. LEAF is delighted to be riding the larger of the two and NAVEED is happy to oblige. They whoop and holler as

appropriate. As the boys become more and more daring in their skids jumps and pedalling, DANNI becomes more crestfallen and by the end of this section she just stands gazing. Helpless. She exits.

The BMX display eventually climaxes and LEAF and NAVEED reach their destination and throw their bikes down. They perch on or around their bikes and watch a magnificent sunrise. They are awestruck by its beauty. Bathed in its warmth. They turn to each other to share the moment. Big grins on their faces.

Scene 14

GLEN's house. Enter DANNI. She takes her jacket off, curls up on the chair in the foetal position and pulls her coat over her. She buries her head under her arm. She is exhausted. She sleeps.

Enter GLEN. He watches her from a distance. He seems unsure of what to do. He tucks her up with the blanket. DANNI shifts and her naked arm falls out from under her coat. He leaves it exposed.

GLEN sits a distance away on the floor and watches DANNI for some time. He puts a track on his hi-fi on a low volume. 'White Horse' by Laid Back.

He goes towards her. Slowly. He doesn't want to wake her.

He picks a packet of rizlas off the floor.

He pulls out three rizlas.

He licks them.

He sticks them to her arm.

He sits back.

Watches.

He takes a lighter out of his pocket.

He goes towards DANNI. Stands over her.

Sparks the lighter.

He holds the flame nearer and nearer to the unstuck end of the rizlas on DANNI's arm. He lights them.

Scene 14

The Black Rock. LEAF and NAVEED as before. The sunshine is brighter now. Birds can be heard singing. The sound of the city waking up.

NAVEED Have you ever seen a sunrise before?

LEAF No.

NAVEED Me neither.

LEAF I once tried to stay up all night. We was in this orchard.

NAVEED What's that?

LEAF Apple trees. Some crazy old famer's. Stayed there ages in the end.

NAVEED Red apples or green?

LEAF Reddy green. Loads of em. Loads of trees to climb, it was ace. Best sites are when there's trees. Was trying to stay awake for ages. But I fell asleep by the fire and Mum put me back in the trailer. Is that your school?

NAVEED Where?

LEAF Down there.

NAVEED Oh yeah! Looks tiny.

LEAF What's it like going to school?

NAVEED Depends what day it is. Friday's are good. P.E. Get to climb ropes.

LEAF What else?

NAVEED School trips are alright. Went to a museum last year, and there was loads of cars there and you could climb on some of them. Not the really good ones though. I bought a rubber with a motorbike on, but I lost it. You should come next time.

LEAF What if no one talks to me?

NAVEED I'll talk to yer.

LEAF Will ya?

NAVEED Course.

LEAF Thanks.

Pause

LEAF What's round that way?

NAVEED More rocks. Pylons.

LEAF Shall we go for a scramble? It's still well early.

NAVEED Nah.

LEAF Why?

NAVEED Too dangerous.

LEAF Can you climb on em?

NAVEED Yeah if you get down the cliff bit you can. But it's too dangerous.

LEAF What, that? That's not even that high.

NAVEED It is if you slip. You can slip you know.

LEAF I won't slip.

NAVEED You might.

LEAF Come this way, it's less steep this way.

NAVEED No. This way's better. This way's the safest.

LEAF Come on. Don't be a scaredy cat.

NAVEED I'm not scared. I'm just. It's not safe.

LEAF Baby.

LEAF exits.

NAVEED Leaf! Wait on! Leaf!

'Einstein a Go-Go' by Landscape.

Scene 16

GLEN's house. DANNI has a flannel held onto her arm. She is in pain. GLEN sits with his head in his hands. Remorseful.

GLEN I'm sorry.

DANNI No you're not.

GLEN Do you hate me now?

DANNI I never understood you. Just when I think I've got you sussed you go and do some crazy out there shit.

GLEN I didn't know what I were thinking. I weren't. I'm so sorry Dan, honest.

DANNI ...

GLEN Does it hurt?

DANNI Course it fucking hurts!

GLEN I'm sorry. I don't want to hurt you.

DANNI You're not sorted are you?

GLEN What do you mean?

DANNI You're not. I know you're not. This means you're not.

GLEN Course I am.

DANNI All that shit on the phone, all that 'yeah, yeah course you can stop here, course it will be sweet, I'm always here for you, you know me.' That was all bollocks wasn't it.

GLEN No.

DANNI You know me.' Yeah I do know you. Just wanted to get me up here, so you could do your usual fucked up tricks.

GLEN It's not like that Dan, it's not. I just -

DANNI Why is it that you can only deal with me when I'm doing exactly what you want? Fit me into some kind of nice easy square box.

GLEN What are you on about? I don't want to put you in a box! I want to -

DANNI What? What do you want to do? Come on, let's hear it -

GLEN I want to love you Dan. Like before. That's all. You make it so hard for me.

DANNI That wasn't love Glen.

GLEN Yeah it was. Course it was.

DANNI No, It wasn't. Refuge maybe. Asylum at best. Not love.

GLEN It was for me.

Pause

DANNI Why do you think I came here?

GLEN To see me.

Pause

GLEN You can have anything of mine, you know that don't you. Take what you want from me Dan. Always could. I never kept owt off you did I?

DANNI Is that right?

GLEN It's all yours! I always said it was. Give you my soul I would. You're not the only one to have fuck all in this life you know, no need to go pissing and moaning all the time. If you want summat that bad take it. Have it, take it all. Go on, help yourself. Take the whole fucking lot, take the fucking chair, my bed, my hi-fi, take my fucking toaster, yeah take that, take the shirt of my fucking back while you're at it -

DANNI I don't want your stupid t - shirt. Put it away Glen.

GLEN Here. It's yours. It's all yours.

He takes his t-shirt off and throws it at DANNI. Fishes in his pockets and throws a few coins at her.

GLEN I'm yours.

Pause

DANNI What do you think of Leaf?

GLEN What?

DANNI Leaf.

GLEN He's alright. Just a kid int he. I don't know. Gobby.

Pause

GLEN What about this house then? We gonna be neighbours now or what?

DANNI I'm on a list. Don't get too excited. It'll take ages.

GLEN Where do you think they'll put yer?

DANNI How should I know?

GLEN I'll make it up to you Dan. I can pop round for a cup of tea can't I. Bring you some biscuits. Be all right that won't it?

DANNI It won't be a house will it? It will be a tiny neon bedsit, with a plastic covered mattress and a hallway that stinks of piss, and I won't be able to see the stars or play loud music or smell the dew on the grass. I'll be holed up with some prick like you, making ham sandwiches and ironing school shirts for the rest of my life.

Scene 16

Outside the shop. Bit of wall and bin as before. DANNI sits on the wall, she has a blue carrier bag, she pulls out a packet of plasters and starts to dress her burns. Enter LEAF and NAVEED wheeling the bikes. LEAF limps and has a bloody nose bust lip and grazes all over him. NAVEED has a cut knee. DANNI sees them, LEAF sees her, for a minute it looks as if he may turn and run.

DANNI Don't even think about it!

He stops.

DANNI Where the hell have you been? Come here. What happened to your face?

NAVEED It weren't my fault! I told him not to-

DANNI goes to LEAF examines his injuries.

DANNI Are you alright?

LEAF We were up near some rocks-

NAVEED The black rock.

DANNI The what?

LEAF Just some rocks. Near the railway line, I'm alright. Nav saved me. Didn't you Nav.

NAVEED Yeah. I did. Yeah.

DANNI Shit, look at your legs. You're cut to shreds.

LEAF I'm alright.

NAVEED He's alright. I saved him.

DANNI I saw you yesterday didn't I? You knew where he was didn't you. Why didn't you say nothing?

NAVEED Didn't want to tell on him.

LEAF I told him not to.

NAVEED He said not to.

DANNI cuffs LEAF round the head.

DANNI You little shit.

LEAF Ow!

DANNI You stupid, stupid little shit!

She cuffs him again. Hard enough to hurt, but not extreme.

LEAF I'm sorry, it wasn't my fault, I just slipped, I was only messing.

DANNI I've been up all night -

LEAF It was alright!

DANNI I thought I'd lost you!

NAVEED Nothing bad happened. We just went -

DANNI Shut up you. Leaf, what have you been doing?

LEAF It's true. We camped out.

DANNI Where?

LEAF Some old house.

DANNI Fuck's sake Leaf. What are you playing at?

LEAF I was - I don't know. I didn't want to - I just wanted - You were gonna make me- and I didn't -

DANNI Come here.

DANNI can see LEAF's distress and she softens, gently guides him over to the wall, sits him down and gives him a tissue for his nose. She starts to clean up the blood on his knees.

DANNI Look at the state of ya.

LEAF Ow.

DANNI Don't be so soft. Just a little cut.

NAVEED watches DANNI mother LEAF.

NAVEED I bust my knee and all you know. Saving him.

DANNI Come on then. You as well. Sit down.

NAVEED grins and sits down on the wall next to LEAF and DANNI puts a plaster on his knee. LEAF watches. He spots DANNI's burn plasters.

LEAF What happened to your arm?

DANNI Nothing.

LEAF Doesn't look like nothing.

DANNI I burnt it on the kettle.

DANNI continues patching the boys up.

LEAF Mum?

DANNI What?

LEAF When am I going to school?

DANNI What?

LEAF With Naveed.

DANNI Are you serious?

NAVEED We might be in the same form. You can sit next to me if you want.

DANNI Does your Mum and Dad know you're out?

NAVEED No. I'm gonna get well done aren't I?

DANNI Think you'd best get back don't you?

NAVEED gets up to leave. Picks up the two bikes. Wheels them away with him.

NAVEED Can he play out later or is he being done an all?

DANNI I don't know, he might -

LEAF Yeah I will yeah. Come and call for me.

NAVEED Where will you be? Are you going back home? Back with your Mum?

LEAF Yeah.

NAVEED I'll come round after school. After I've mopped up and all that.

LEAF See ya.

NAVEED Byeeee.

LEAF smiles. NAVEED exits. DANNI sit down next to LEAF.

Pause

DANNI Look at the state of us. Walking wounded aren't we. You terrify me.

LEAF What?

DANNI I love you so much it hurts. But you terrify me.

LEAF Why?

DANNI The night you were conceived -

LEAF What's that mean?

DANNI Created. You know.

LEAF Euugh Mum.

DANNI It was on a roof. Some big old place and you could get out onto the roof. I fell asleep out there and I had a dream that this big white friendly elephant was whispering to me.

LEAF Were you off your head?

DANNI A bit. It was asking me and begging me if it could come with me, stow away in my suitcase and I told it no, I can't fit it in, you know squash it in, but I tried anyway and somehow I did. It got it in and I pressed it down, this big massive elephant and I squashed it right down and I zipped it up. I remember when I woke up, I felt different. Felt pretty rough as well, been quite a mad night, but I definitely felt different too.

LEAF Then what happened?

DANNI We went somewhere in the dream. Me and this elephant. Some long drawn out journey of planes and trains, and at one point we was in a giant roller skate, me and this suitcase trundling along!

LEAF Cool!

DANNI Dunno where we was going but when we got there, I opened the suitcase up and instead of this elephant being in there, like I was expecting, there was this big beautiful fern, that curled out, and sort of swayed, all green and fresh. Most beautiful thing I'd ever seen that was.

LEAF That was me weren't it.

DANNI Yeah. I'm still watching you unfurl. It's beautiful. But it's also utterly terrifying. Do you know what it would do to me if I lost you for good?

LEAF nods.

DANNI Don't ever do that to me again Leaf.

LEAF nods.

DANNI Come on. Let's get back.

LEAF Back to Glen's?

DANNI Come on.

LEAF Need to go get my stuff.

DANNI What stuff?

LEAF Left my sleeping bag and Walkman in that old house.

DANNI Come on then. Let's go get your bits.

DANNI helps him to his feet. He limps.

LEAF Mum.

DANNI What?

LEAF You should have named me after the elephant. That would have been well wicked.

DANNI What Nelly?

LEAF No. Dumbo.

DANNI smiles. They exit.

Scene 17

GLEN's house. GLEN is snorting white powder off a record sleeve with a rolled up note. He has music turned up very loud. 'Change' by Tears for Fears. He drinks a can of lager. Enter DANNI and LEAF. LEAF carries his sleeping bag under his arm. He has the catapult tucked in his back pocket and the carrier bag with the rest of his stuff in which he places on the floor as he comes in. They have to speak loudly over the music.

GLEN Told yer didn't I?

DANNI What?

GLEN Told yer.

DANNI Told me what?

GLEN I told yer he'd come back.

DANNI Can we turn that down?

GLEN No.

DANNI Why not?

GLEN Because I said so.

DANNI goes towards the stereo.

GLEN I said no!

LEAF is nervous. He looks to his Mum for reassurance. She doesn't notice, she is too busy tracking GLEN's movements.

GLEN Where've you been then eh?

DANNI Just leave it.

GLEN You been out sniffing glue?

DANNI He's a bit worn out. He's been up half the night.

GLEN Get in a fight did yer?

DANNI Glen.

GLEN Looks like you lost.

LEAF I fell down a cliff.

GLEN You what?

LEAF Down a cliff. I fell down it.

GLEN Happens to the best of us mate. Happens to the best of us. Life's just one big fucking landslide after another.

LEAF I'm not your mate.

GLEN You what?

LEAF You deaf? I said I'm not your mate.

DANNI Leaf. Leave it.

GLEN Little gobshite!

LEAF Well. I'm not am I?

DANNI Oi!

GLEN Not fucking now you're not no. Have you heard him? He's got a right gob on him this one. No one ever teach you about respect for your elders? What the fuck you been teaching him Danni?

DANNI Glen.

GLEN Danielle.

DANNI Stop it.

GLEN Stop what?

DANNI You know what. Just stop it alright. Can we please turn this down a bit?

DANNI she goes towards the hi-fi.

GLEN Leave it!

His tone of voice stops her.

GLEN Look at him. Stops out all night and thinks he's fucking Superman. Superted more like. Comes back here and starts gobbing off!

DANNI He's just tired.

GLEN Didn't last long did yer? One night. You a nancy or what?

GLEN pushes LEAF.

DANNI Oi!

GLEN What? Didn't hurt did it?

DANNI Glen. Stop it now.

GLEN Only messing aren't I. Needs toughening up this one. Needs to learn a thing or two about the real world. Don't yer.

GLEN continues to push LEAF, enough to knock him off balance.

LEAF Get off!

GLEN School of hard knocks is what you need.

DANNI Stop it will ya?

GLEN Had it easy you, going all over, hanging out in fields, life on the open road, free love. Little scrounger aren't yer. Little feral, hippy, fucking scrounger.

DANNI Oi! That's enough now.

DANNI gets in between the two. GLEN continues to try and get at LEAF.

GLEN We're just having a chat Dan, shit. No need to get all high pitched and hysterical.

DANNI I am not getting hysterical. Just. Leave it ok. Leave him alone.

GLEN stops pushing LEAF but continues to berate him.

GLEN Where've you been then eh? Big secret adventure was it?

LEAF None of your fucking business.

GLEN Is that right is it?

LEAF Yeah.

GLEN You send your Mum half mental with worry and it's none of my business?

DANNI That's enough now.

GLEN Think you can rock up wherever you want and the whole world revolves around you? Whole world owes you a living does it? Stopping at my house you know. This is my fucking house! I own it!

LEAF No you don't. You didn't buy it. Couldn't buy shit you.

GLEN You little-

GLEN lunges for LEAF. DANNI gets in between them. Struggles to keep GLEN away from LEAF but manages.

DANNI Leaf, get in the kitchen.

LEAF hesitates as he watches DANNI struggle with GLEN.

DANNI Now!

GLEN You need to have more respect yeah! Do you know what that is you little bastard?

LEAF Fuck you, you big fat prick.

DANNI Leaf, get in the kitchen now!

LEAF exits the stage. Does a runner into the kitchen. GLEN attempts to go after him, DANNI prevents it.

GLEN I'll fucking knock yer! Don't think I won't knock yer, cos I fucking will!

DANNI Glen. Look at me. Look at me!

GLEN keeps struggling.

DANNI Glen. Look at me!

He stops and looks at her defiantly. The music is still overbearingly loud.

DANNI He's ten years old Glen. He's ten years old. He's just a kid.

GLEN Why does he get to have you and I can't?

DANNI Stop it. Now.

GLEN surrenders. Calms himself. DANNI releases her grip cautiously. GLEN shrugs her off but makes no attempt to go after LEAF. DANNI goes to the hi-fi and turns the music off. GLEN stays where he is.

DANNI Leaf, stay in the kitchen. Get some breakfast. There's some Frosties on the side.

GLEN They're mine them!

DANNI One bowl. That's all. Just one bowl.

GLEN Don't use all my cow juice or I'll fucking kill yer.

LEAF *(off)* Fuck you.

GLEN starts at this.

GLEN He's taking the piss now Dan!

DANNI Leave it. Just ignore him. Sit down. He's not worth it Glen. You know that. Just a kid. Not worth getting all worked up for some little kid is it? Leave it now yeah?

GLEN sits in the chair. DANNI stands on the other side of the stage guarding the kitchen door.

DANNI Just, have a sit down for a minute.

GLEN stays sitting. Calms for a minute, then reaches for the record sleeve with the drugs on. Starts to rack up two lines.

DANNI Don't -

GLEN You what?

DANNI You're wired.

GLEN You gonna start telling me what to do now?

LEAF has crept out of the kitchen. He is hovering in the doorway, neither GLEN or DANNI notice him.

DANNI I'm just saying. No wonder you're like this if you're putting that shit up your nose every five minutes -

GLEN Snort a golf ball through a hose you.

GLEN snorts a line. DANNI watches him. He offers her the second line. She declines.

GLEN I tell you what doesn't mix well. You and that filthy fucking twat of a son of yours. Not just him that's a scrounger Dan. It's you as well. Yeah. What, did that hurt? Cut deep did I? Good. What makes you so special you can go gadding about all over, living the dream with all your freaky fucking beatnik mates?

DANNI I don't think I'm special.

GLEN Don't you?

DANNI No.

GLEN Why not? Cos you are to me.

DANNI It's up to me how I live my life Glen. I've a right to choose. You made it perfectly clear that you didn't want to be part of that, you chose this. You chose this over me. Over him.

GLEN I didn't choose you because you're a poisonous freeloading little bitch and you know it.

He leans over to snort the second line.

As his head drops LEAF takes the catapult out of his back pocket, loads it with the massive pebble and aims it at GLEN. He lets it fly and it hits GLEN clean in the face. He is stunned and his head lolls back, LEAF stands and stares. GLEN begins to bleed, he is dazed. DANNI and LEAF are terrified. Neither of them know what to do. LEAF begins to panic.

LEAF Mum...

DANNI Shit is he alright?

DANNI creeps towards GLEN to assess his condition. She takes the record sleeve from his knee and puts it on the floor by his feet. She touches his arm and shakes him.

He grabs her by the wrist. He is woozy from the injury but comes back round and tries to focus. The combination of drugs and concussion means he slurs his speech. He touches his head where he was hit.

GLEN Fuck was that?

DANNI You're hurting my arm. Let go of my arm.

He doesn't.

GLEN You batter me then Dan? Was it him? It was him weren't it!

LEAF Mum...

GLEN Little bastard!

DANNI Leaf. Just go!

GLEN gathers himself, pulls himself up from the chair, a mad man now but hindered by his condition.

GLEN I will rip your fucking ARMS OUT FROM THE ROOT!

DANNI LEAF!

LEAF scarpers. GLEN is bumping into things, tripping up, a real state. Blood dripping from his head. DANNI goes to him, desperately trying to placate him.

DANNI It was an accident, come on now, steady, woah, you're all over the place, come on-

GLEN It's bleeding! Fucking broke me head Dan!

DANNI Just a little cut, come on.

She is holding him back but his knees keeps giving.

DANNI You're heavy.

GLEN Fucking cut me!

He is still trying his best to get to the kitchen and LEAF. Although unsteady he could still achieve it, his lumbering movements make it harder for DANNI to deter him. He lurches around trying to get away from DANNI.

DANNI Glen, come here, come here, this way, look at me, look at me.

DANNI kisses GLEN. He stops and relents. Sways but has enough balance to kiss her back. He staggers back to the chair, sits down, pulling her down with him. She kneels between his legs.

Pause

GLEN looks at DANNI. He starts to sob.

DANNI leans over him and kisses him gently. He kisses her back, runs his hands over her body.

DANNI You see. That's better isn't it?

GLEN nods. They kiss again. DANNI dabs at his head with a tissue.

DANNI Just a little cut.

They kiss again. More passionately. Glen starts to undress DANNI. She allows him to take her top off, revealing her bra.

LEAF *(off)* Mum?

DANNI It's all right Leaf. Have some breakfast. Why don't you make some toast?

LEAF *(off)* Ok.

GLEN's hands are all over DANNI.

DANNI Come on then.

DANNI stands and pulls GLEN to his feet. Leads him gently towards the bedroom. He follows obediently. They exit. A few moments later LEAF appears with a bowl of Frosties. He goes towards the bedroom and hovers.

LEAF goes to the chair, sits and eats his cereal. He is not hungry. He puts it on the floor. He pushes the vinyl sleeve with the powder on it away with his foot. Occasionally looks over to where DANNI and GLEN exited. He gets up and hovers by the bedroom door again. Listens. He doesn't like what he hears.

He goes to his carrier bag and pulls out his Walkman, puts it on and turns the volume up. Curls up on the chair, kicks his shoes off and closes his eyes, the catapult gripped in his hand. He is alone for some time.

Enter DANNI being careful not to make any noise. She carries GLEN's belted jeans. She very quietly rummages in the pockets. On high alert, always glancing back towards GLEN's bedroom listening intently. She pulls out whatever notes and coins are in the jeans, puts them in her pocket. She goes to GLEN's skinning up tray and finds the small bags of weed he was bagging up in scene 9. She pockets these as well, and the white bag of powder and the rolled up note he used to snort it. She starts to pick up LEAF's things and puts them in her bag. She glances towards GLEN's bedroom from time to time. When she is packed she goes to LEAF. Puts her hand softly on his forehead.

DANNI (*whispers*) Leaf. Leaf. Leaf love. Wake up.

LEAF starts awake. DANNI holds her finger to her lips. And then points to the bedroom.

DANNI gently takes his headphones off and switches the Walkman off, puts it on the arm of the chair. She speaks in whispers.

DANNI Come on. Get up.

LEAF Where's Glen?

DANNI Crashed out.

LEAF Is he dead?

DANNI He'll be fine. Come on. We're going.

LEAF Where?

DANNI Get your shoes on.

DANNI starts to put LEAF's shoes on.

LEAF Are we not staying put anymore?

DANNI Let's just go, before he wakes up.

LEAF But...what about Naveed? What about school?

DANNI You've changed your tune.

LEAF Can I go say goodbye?

DANNI You've only known him five minutes. Put your foot in. I thought it would be alright here Leaf. I really did. I thought he'd wanna see you now you've grown up a bit. I'm sorry love. I'm really sorry.

DANNI finishes tying his shoes.

LEAF Can't I just quickly go say goodbye?

DANNI He'll be at school by now though won't he.

LEAF We could go to the school and say goodbye.

DANNI No love.

LEAF Why not?

DANNI We have to go now.

LEAF But you said! You said I was gonna -

DANNI Shhh...

LEAF I wanted to -

DANNI Shhhh, come on, don't cry, it's all right -

LEAF I want to...

LEAF is dangerously close to tears which he battles bravely.

DANNI Let's go track Spod down shall we?

LEAF Why can't I go see Naveed? I'll be well quick. He's my friend!

DANNI His van must be nearly fixed by now. We'll go find him. Said there was some puppies been born on his site. Be nice that. Won't it. See some new puppies? Might be one that looks like Frags, you never know.

DANNI has finished doing LEAF's shoes. He snuffles and wipes his nose on his sleeve.

LEAF Bet there isn't.

DANNI Might be. You never know.

LEAF snuffles a bit.

DANNI Come on love. Let's go.

They pick up their things and leave, LEAF clutching his catapult. His Walkman is still on the chair.

Scene 18

Later that day. GLEN's house. As before. There is someone banging on the front door.

NAVEED Leaf? Leaf? You dassing out? Leaf?

More banging.

NAVEED Leaf? You in? Leaf? Let us in.

More banging. Enter NAVEED. He looks around the room warily.

NAVEED Leaf?

GLEN emerges from the bedroom. He has no trousers on, congealed blood down his face. He clutches his head and groans.

GLEN Fuck are you?

NAVEED Is Leaf in?

GLEN Danni?

No reply.

GLEN Danni?

GLEN goes to the kitchen to look for DANNI. She is not there.

NAVEED Can he play out?

GLEN reappears.

GLEN Not here.

NAVEED Have they gone in town?

GLEN What?

NAVEED Town.

GLEN looks around the flat, confused.

NAVEED I brought the bikes. Gonna go on a bike ride again. It were well ace yesterday. Apart from when I cut my leg. Look.

NAVEED shows GLEN his plaster. Glen shows no interest. He has a splitting headache. Groans again.

NAVEED What happened to your head?

GLEN Why are you still here?

NAVEED Can I wait?

GLEN She's not here. He's not here. There's nobody here.

NAVEED I don't mind waiting. Just wait for him.

GLEN sits down on the chair and knocks LEAF's Walkman off by mistake as he does so.

NAVEED Careful.

NAVEED goes to the Walkman and picks it up. Holds it nervously. He is unsure of what to do. Fascinated by GLEN's head wound.

NAVEED Does that hurt?

GLEN Yeah.

NAVEED I bet it does. I got a plaster on my leg off Leaf's Mam. Last night. Well this morning it was. Weird that int it, it feels like it were last night but actually it were this morning. I stayed up all night! I'm pretty tired now though. But I did have a bit of a sleep in English. I saw the sunrise! Have you ever seen a sunrise?

GLEN Yeah.

NAVEED When?

GLEN Not for a while.

NAVEED Do you want to see my cut?

NAVEED peels back his plaster and shows GLEN his knee.

NAVEED It's not scabbed yet. I got well done when I got in. Just shouting. I didn't tell em what had happened. Not properly.

Pause

NAVEED Will you tell him I came round for him when he gets back?

GLEN If you want.

NAVEED If you think you might forget I can come back later. I'll come back later in case you forget. To tell him. About the bike ride. Are you alright?

GLEN shakes his head.

GLEN No.

Pause

NAVEED Is it all right if I take this?

NAVEED holds up the Walkman.

GLEN nods.

NAVEED If he's worried about who's got it, you can tell him I've just borrowed it. Will you tell him? When you see him? Will you tell him I'm looking after it for him?

GLEN If you want yeah.

Pause

NAVEED He is coming back isn't he?

GLEN shrugs.

GLEN No skin off my nose.

NAVEED frowns and looks worried as the possibility of LEAF not returning dawns on him. He puts the Walkman on and turns it up full blast.

Scene 19

Afternoon. Motorway services. DANNI and LEAF. DANNI holds a makeshift sign that reads 'WALES'. She is hitchhiking. LEAF sits on their baggage by the side of the road. He has the catapult. He aims it at passing cars.

DANNI Don't do that. No wonder no one's stopping.

LEAF lowers the catapult.

DANNI continues to hitchhike. LEAF watches her. He goes and helps. Cars pass but don't stop.

DANNI Fuck's sake.

DANNI gives up and sits down on the bags. Puts her head in her hands.

LEAF We could always get the train.

DANNI We need the cash.

LEAF sits next to DANNI.

LEAF Are we gonna get a new trailer?

DANNI Yeah. I think so yeah.

LEAF Not a house?

DANNI Let's just see shall we.

LEAF Are you gonna paint it again?

DANNI Maybe.

LEAF I think you should.

DANNI Ok. I will.

LEAF Nice and bright.

DANNI You gonna help me?

LEAF Yeah!

DANNI Get you some spray cans.

LEAF Yeah! *(beat)* Will they trash it again?

DANNI I hope not.

LEAF I've got a weapon this time anyway.

He holds up the catapult.

LEAF Mum.

DANNI What?

LEAF I was scared.

DANNI I know love. So was I.

LEAF I don't mean of him. Well yeah of him but -

DANNI I know love.

LEAF I mean before.

DANNI I know. Me too.

LEAF leans against his Mum.

DANNI Come on then, them cars aren't gonna stop themselves are they?

LEAF Wait for a lorry. They always stop.

DANNI Rather get a car. Come on, on your feet.

LEAF Can we just sit here for a bit? Before we go?

DANNI Just for a minute then.

LEAF Then we can go.

DANNI Yeah.

LEAF snuggles into his Mum. She leans down and kisses the top of his head.

'You're Wondering Now' by the Specials.

END

PLAY 2.

GITHA

Written and Performed by Hannah Davies

Directed by Peter Darney

Sound Design by John Hughes

FINAL DRAFT (JULY 2012)

PERFORMANCES:

Edinburgh Previews at Southill Park Arts Centre (July 2012)

Edinburgh Festival C Nova (August 2012)

York Theatre Royal (May 2013)

St James Theatre London (June 2013)

Inspired by the life and works of
Twentieth Century dramatist
Katherine Githa Sowerby.
(1876 – 1970)

1.

An empty stage. There is a large Victorian steamer trunk centre, and a balloon backed upholstered chair. GITHA is pre-set. She sits on the chair at the trunk as if it were a desk. She has her back to the auditorium and is writing in a continuous, but composed and upright ladylike fashion. The audience enter and find their seats.

SFX: THE SOUND OF A TICKING GRANDFATHER CLOCK.

Throughout the play the trunk is used to create the different stage locations and all props or items of costume come from inside it. All items are returned and packed away back inside the trunk by the final scene. As the play goes on GITHA performs all of the characters she references. Scene changes are indicated with lighting changes and a detailed soundscape that is continuous throughout the piece. There are no moments of total silence until GITHA's closing poem.

Any speech marks indicate that the enclosed is a character besides GITHA talking. It should be obvious who it is.

A dash (-) at the start of a line indicates that GITHA is conversing with a character within the world of the play and she delivers these words as if they were really there.

At all other times she narrates the action of the play, addressing the audience directly.

GITHA sits at her desk writing. She is alone with her back to us. When the audience are all seated the houselights fade and the stage lights come up. GITHA tidies her papers and leaves them on the desk. She stands, considers her closed silver fountain pen, then holds it out towards the audience making contact with us for the first time. She gracefully removes the

lid of the fountain pen, revealing its nib. As she does this the sound of the ticking clock stops and GITHA's story begins.

2.

SFX: THE SOUND OF A BUSY EDWARDIAN STREET.

GITHA picks up the folder of papers from her desk and steps forwards.

Curtis Brown's office is in Covent Garden. My sister, Millicent, clutches her portfolio to her like armour. She babbles, ten to the dozen whenever she is nervous, scared, excited, anything out of the ordinary and she simply will not be quiet. It's a habit I abhor. She wants to know whether she should spread her drawings out onto the desk as soon as we arrive or whether she should wait for instruction from Mr Brown. She's very concerned that he won't get to see all of her paintings in the correct order, that he might miss her favourite Robin sketch and that she'll be lost for words. Which I think is rather unlikely.

- Millicent dear we've been through this several times. You must wait and see what Mr Brown requests. I know it's frightening, but please, my heart is racing too. With Father's finances the way things are we have very little choice. If this doesn't work I don't know what we'll do.

'But it is not you who must sit there and worry, it's not you who must talk him through the sketches, it is not you that is so often wont to make a ninny of yourself. Oh Githa I do feel so very nervy.'

- You must listen. Don't go on so. I will do the talking and you must just open your portfolio, carefully, daintily, quietly, and smile.

She bites her lip, I take a deep breath and we go in.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE STREET FADES AS THEY GO INSIDE, BUT CAN STILL BE HEARD.

Mr Brown flicks through my drafts. He is silent. Squints at me a little, then turns and glares at Millicent who clumsily tips her drawings out onto his desk. It's as if a floodgate is now opened and she talks him through each and every painting, the detail of every gesture, every flower, every bird. I try to make eyes at her, to slow her down, but she is gone, in a

world of her own, she just keeps rattling on, all fingers and thumbs, flapping almost with enthusiasm. Mr Brown is doing well to keep up. He seems to be rather enjoying the show.

- It would be poems, stories, nursery books. My sister Millicent will provide the illustrations and I will take care of the words. We were rather hoping that with your guidance and expertise, Mr Brown, we might come to some arrangement...

He holds my gaze. Tells me that it's one thing selling the odd ditty to a ladies periodical, quite another rising to the challenge of a full publication. I am Katherine Githa. I must do this. I can do this.

- With careful negotiations with a publishers, you really might stand to make a tidy sum. As I understand it the world is full of bored and frustrated children in need of stories Mr. Brown. Both boys and girls.

As he shows us out, we thank him, and he mumbles something about seeing what he can do for such a sweet pair.

GITHA scowls furiously at her sister Millicent as they leave the office.

SFX: THE STREET SOUNDS FADE UP AGAIN. THEY BLEND INTO A MORE SUBURBAN SOUND.

3.

GITHA is in a bright and airy room. Sunlight dapples across the floor through a tall sash window.

We view some rooms recommended to us by my friend Miss Norman. The rooms are dusty, but bright with a large window overlooking a charming garden square. The landlady is a terribly nose woman.

'Have you two ladies travelled alone? Where did you say you were from? Up Newcastle way weren't it? You don't talk funny though do you? That's something to be grateful for I suppose.'

- What are the terms of the rental?

'I'll discuss those with your husband.'

- I will be making the arrangements myself.

‘Still I’d prefer to discuss that with –’

- My sister and I are yet to marry.

‘Well in that case I’ll discuss it with your father.’

- Believe me, you’d do better to deal with me.

I write her a cheque for the first three months rent.

‘So, what brings you two ladies to London? Will you just be here for the season?’

- Actually we are here to work. I’m an author and my sister Millicent is an illustrator.

‘Artists. I’ll have none of your funny business in here. This is a very respectable house.’

And we wait. Hopefully. Time drips slowly by. Several days pass, then Millicent comes upstairs with a telegram.

‘Githa, look! ‘Spoken with publishers, secured a deal - poems, ditties, stories and such like. You’re to call it *The Wise Book*. Yours Sincerely Curtis Brown.’ Ooh Githa, *The Wise Book*! I shall draw a nice friendly owl with big yellow eyes!’

- *The Wise Book*. Not the best title, but it’s good news all the same.

Father is quick to respond to my letter home.

She reads his response.

My dear little Katherine Githa. I knew I could rely on you to take care of things. I’m painting a new canvas, the sunlight here in Oxfordshire is so very different to that in the north, it glows a warm yellow. I’m sending your little sister Marjory to join you both in London. There is no life for a crippled girl to be had in the countryside, and might she better off finding a husband in the capital? I’d like you to send something from your upfront payment from the publishers to cover some of my bills and perhaps a new tube of paint or two. Business is bad and... tied up in shares and so on and so forth.

I forward the money on as he requests.

GITHA leaves her desk and stands at her window, gazing out onto the streets below.

London is bright.

It is noise.

It is thought.

It is life.

It is my city. Worlds away from my girlhood and my youth.

4.

When Marjory arrives, Millicent rushes to greet her at the door, she's struggling to manage her case with her one good arm.

'I can't tell you how glad I am to be here, I was certain I would simply die of boredom. Mother's splendidly null and icy as ever and now father's only a shareholder he spends most of his days walking with his easel, and there are no visiting gentlemen to speak of. Not that he'd ever ask me to join them of course! Not with this old thing.'

Marjory indicates her bad arm, and views the apartment with distaste.

'No. I'm afraid I must be more methodical if I am to acquire my match. I'm not like you two you see, I don't want to be left on the shelf, I want to be a young bride. With a bouquet of yellow that trails down to my knees, oh yes!'

- And what of love Marjory? Friendship? Union? Marriage is just about pretty flowers is it?

'No of course not. It's about finding a husband to take care of me. Then there's the party of course. Ooh, and the dress.'

She always pines for the attention that I so hate.

GITHA sits down to her work as a children's author, but is soon distracted by an intrusive memory of her father's glass factory.

SFX: THE SOUNDS OF THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH. METAL, COGS, A GLASS FACTORY WITH A LOW HUM. IT BUILDS UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

Far away from London, high up in the north. Outside our nursery, beyond the drawing rooms and ticking clocks, beyond our sculpted gardens, - my Father's glass factory. An inherited monster that he cannot tame. It whirrs and clanks and grinds all day. At night it sits and broods a heavy bricked silhouette of chimneys under the smoke cladded stars. It still visits my dreams. The terraced rows and engine rooms a memorial. A legacy that looms. Lurks in my blood. It is I who am plucked from the nursery to perform. Father's gentleman all beg to hear my songs, my rhymes.

SFX: THE SOUNDS ARE STILL PRESENT BUT FADE AWAY INTO A DISTANT LOW HUM.

GITHA enters the drawing room of her childhood. She is a little girl again.

- This one is called *Haymaking*. I wrote it this morning.

I often think that when I'm grown I'll buy a meadow of my own,

And when it's June I'll cut the hay and make big stacks like Farmer Day,

And drink my tea out of a can, just as he does when I'm a man.

There is a short moment of silence and then they all fall about laughing.

'Very good Katherine Githa, very good. A meadow of your own eh? Very good. Not likely but very good all the same.'

And they clap and cheer and take it in turns to pat me on the head and kiss my hand and arm. Some hold on for too long. One day I will escape this gloomy world. I shan't be locked in a cage to sing on demand.

GITHA's eyes light up and she leans forward to hear more of the gentlemen's conversation.

The men's talk turns to the factory. The mass production of glass and international enterprise. Market and economy, floating stocks and shares and unions. Limited liability. My Father looks... scared of the grinding metal beast that he can not master. He's losing his empire.

GITHA returns to her work, but now writes furiously in direct relation to the memory she has just experienced.

I learn how laws and prisoners are made, who is your friend and who is not,
and how much money the men have got.

How some are high and some are low,
and how it always must be so.

Take my hand and lead me down, into the hot and dusty town.

Where children have no time to play and people work the live long day.

Don't guard me, keep me safe from ill, in this prison palace on a bleak northern hill.

SFX: THE SOUNDS FADE AWAY COMPLETELY.

GITHA is back in her London lodgings again. GITHA resumes her composure.

In London my days begin at 9 o'clock sharp. I sit down to write, Millicent to draw and little Marjory keeps things in order as best she can. I take care of dealings with the agents and publishers. We work hard and all in all we Sowerby sisters do very well for ourselves. We have a little factory of our own.

I am here. With my thoughts. My work. My self.

5.

SFX: A BUSY LONDON STREET JUST OFF THE STRAND.

The trunk becomes a lectern. GITHA is waiting as if on a street corner.

I have made arrangements to take tea with my actress friend, Miss Norman. She's late.
When she arrives she's flushed and hurried.

'Githa darling, I'm so sorry, something came up.'

She whisks me off in the opposite direction to the tearooms and into a building behind the Strand. There is no sign of a waitress, or a tea trolley, just a large room full of chairs in rows and a lectern at one end.

- My dear, I think we are mistaken. There is no tea to be had here surely.

SFX: NOISE OF A FULL LECTURE HALL.

Behind the lectern is a woman. She is giving a speech. I wonder that she dares. Stand up there in front of all these people.

‘... the activities of the imagination in the deepest sense of the word. Nothing could have a greater effect in this direction than the economic independence of women; without which the case is hopeless...’

This woman speaks her thoughts as if she spoke them from her bones. To stand up there in front of all these people and speak her innermost thoughts. She is brave. I soak up her words. Breathe them in.

‘...The effect of marriage upon work is a very important and difficult one. In its general aspect it lies at the very heart of the whole question of the working woman. Indeed of woman as a whole and independent spirit.’

She is speaking my thoughts. There are others who feel things as I do. There are others who think as I do.

SFX: THE SOUNDS OF THE HALL FADE INTO A TEAROOM.

Afterwards Miss Norman and I take our tea. As she pours she tells me all about the new stage production she is working on. My mind is alive with ideas and questions and the urge to... I need to... I feel as if I could walk for ten miles, that I must stretch my legs, or... I must go and.... do something. To calm this... Miss Norman asks:

‘Githa my darling what are you working on at the moment? Did I hear someone tell me you were writing a play?’

- My sister and I are putting the finishing touches to a book. Another nursery publication. Our seventh. It’s called *Little Plays for Little People*. So yes, it is theatre in a way, I suppose.

She stirs her tea.

‘Oh how sweet!’

And then she adds:

‘But why not write a big play for big people? With a little part in it for me darling?’

I wonder whether I should tell her that I already have a rather chaotic draft hidden away in my desk. It’s not for a publisher, it’s just for me. But it’s nowhere near finished and it might not be the type of thing at all that she had in mind. I don’t want people to ask me all sorts of difficult questions.

GITHA replaces the trunk in the desk position, opens it and takes out her secret draft of a play.

It really is just a shabby draft, and not at all the type of thing to put onto a stage I don’t think. It’s not in any way finished at all. But it could be, it could be. This could very nearly work. If I were to change a few scenes around and adjust the ending a little so that the wife of the young heir might... yes! That’s the ending. It’s the young Mary that must get her way, and then the old master Rutherford must... A trade of flesh and blood for capital and legacy. Sacrificial. That’s it. I have to, I have to, I have to put it down. Whether I share it or not, I must finish it. I cannot simply sit here and churn out nursery rhyme after nursery rhyme after nursery rhyme. I have to write this play!

GITHA picks up her pen, and writes furiously, in a fiery and intense passion. Papers fly about her in a frenzy. She moves away from her desk and begins to speak the following lines from ‘Rutherford & Son’ as if she had been possessed. She moves around the space animatedly as she incants the words.

SFX: A LOW INDUSTRIAL RUMBLE, THE SOUNDS OF THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH ARE AT THEIR HEIGHT NOW, A MONSTROUS RUMBLE.

‘Moloch was a type of God. Not the God you and I know. An ancient God. They built his image with an ugly head, ten times the size of a real head, with great wheels instead of legs and set him up in the middle of a great dirty town. Out of every family they set aside one child to be an offering to him when it was big enough, and at last it became a sort of honour to be dedicated in this way, the victims gave themselves gladly to be crushed out of life under the great wheels. That was Moloch.’

By the end of the speech GITHA has vigorously reassembled her draft into a complete, if battered, playscript of 'Rutherford & Son'. She sits down on her chair again, exhausted. She is in shock at the power of the molten fire of words that have just poured forth from within her.

SFX: THE SOUNDS OF THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH FADE AWAY.

6.

SFX: THE SOUND OF A PRE-SHOW THEATRE AUDITORIUM, EMPTY OF AUDIENCE, BUT WITH PEOPLE MAKING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE PLAY.

GITHA picks up her script as if she were Mr Leigh, the director of her play.

'Aha. Mr. K.G. Sowerby. The author has arrived. Are you ready to see the play put before the hounds dear Sir. Eh? Don't worry. It's a fine piece. They'll adore it. Come on now people, let's get this show on the road!'

I can see my dear friend Miss Norman up on the stage, she's going through her lines, my words.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE ACTRESS REHEARSING HER LINES.

GITHA gives a polite little wave. She gets no response, she waves again.

She can not see me through the lights.

SFX: The busy sounds of a full theatre.

GITHA sits as if in an auditorium. She folds a piece of paper from her desk as a programme. The lights change.

That afternoon the curtain rises. Time slows down and something shifts.

The play begins.

SFX: WE HEAR A SCENE FROM 'RUTHERFORD & SON' (THE TEXT IS TAKEN FROM THE END OF ACT 2) BEING PERFORMED AS IF ON STAGE. IT PLAYS THROUGH UNDER THE FOLLOWING

*UNTIL THE CURTAIN FALLS AND THE APPLAUSE BEGINS. GITHA'S WORDS * ARE SPOKEN OVER THE WORDS OF THE PERFORMANCE.*

[RUTHERFORD: I bought you up for a lady as idle as you please – you might ha' sat wi' your hands in afore you from morn til night if ye'd had a mind to.

JANET: Me a lady? What do ladies think about, sitting the day long with their hands before them? What have they in their idle hearts?

RUTHERFORD: What more did ye' want in God's name?

JANET: Oh, what more! The women down there know what I wanted – with their bairns wrapped in their shawls and their men to come home to at night time. I've envied them – envied them their pain, their poorness – the very times they hadn't bread. Theirs isn't the dead empty house, the blank o' the moors; they've got something to fight, something to be feared of. They've got life, those women we send cans o' soup to out o' pity when their bairns are born. Me a lady! With work for a man in my hands, passion for a man in my heart! I'm common – common.

RUTHERFORD: It's a lie! I've risen up. You can't go back on it – my children can't go back.

JANET: Who's risen - which of us?

RUTHERFORD: You say that because you've shamed yourself, and you're jealous o' them that keep decent like gentlefolk –

JANET: Dick – that everyone laughs at? John – with his manners?

RUTHERFORD: Whisht wi' your wicked tongue!

JANET: Don't you touch me! You've ruined my life, you with your getting on. I've loved in wretchedness, all the joy I ever had made wicked by the fear o' you ... Who are you? Who are you? A man – a man whose taken power to himself, power to gather people to him and use them as he wills – a man that'd take the blood of life itself and put it into the Works – into Rutherford's. And what have you got by it – what? You've got Dick, that you've bullied til he's a fool – John, that's waiting for the time when he can sell what you've done – and

you've got me – me to take your boots off at night – to well nigh wish you dead when I had to touch you ... Now! ... Now you know!]

* I feel sick. Time creeps. Why do they watch so quietly? Why don't they show me something? Anything?

GITHA is feeling faint. She uses her programme as a fan. The text on the programme catches her eye. She reads from it.

The Court Theatre presents *Rutherford & Son* by K.G. Sowerby. K. G. That's me. They think I am a man. It was thought it might be best. Who am I really? I do not know. Do I sit here, rigid and tight? Or do I dwell freely in my words, out there, for all the world to see?

SFX: THE REMAINING RUTHERFORD AND SON TEXT PLAYS OUT. GITHA WATCHES TERRIFIED. IT ENDS. SILENCE.

At last the curtain falls so very slowly. Red wrinkles across the boards. There is a heavy moment, a leaden silence. And then -

SFX: HEAVY RAPTUROUS APPLAUSE.

GITHA stands and makes her way down the row of seats past the audience members.

- Excuse me, forgive me, I'm so sorry, could I just get past, thank you so much.

The whole stalls are on their feet.

Mr. Leigh pulls me away from the noise, down a corridor and through some double doors in the panelling.

SFX: THE APPLAUSE FADES, BUT CAN STILL BE HEARD.

Backstage, dressing rooms. The actors are there, all flushed smiles, triumphant and shining. We clatter down some steps. I'm in the wings.

There are shouts from the other side of the curtain – 'K.G., K.G., K.G.' Something is wrong. They know, they know who and what I am. I am to be discredited, discovered, disclosed!

'I think we have a hit on our hands Miss Sowerby!'

- That's all very well Mr Leigh, but I cannot go out there.

SFX: THE SOUNDS OF THE THEATRE CUTS OUT. GITHA IS UNNERVED AND OUT OF BREATH. SHE RECOVERS AT HER DESK, THEN FALLS INTO A DEEP SLEEP.

7.

SFX: THE SOUND OF AN EARLY MORNING SLEEPY LONDON EXTERIOR ATMOSPHERE.

GITHA AWAKES SLOWLY.

The first light of February is a silver lace mist.

London is asleep. The embankment is quiet and the Thames licks against its shore. A billboard on the corner reads. 'FAME IN A DAY.'

'There's one here too Miss. Look. Some mister wrote a first-rate play!'

GITHA looks to where the paper boy is pointing. The trunk is now a newspaper stand.

Court Theatre: New Author's Remarkable Triumph.

- I'll take one of each, and how much for the poster?

'I only just put it up though ain't I Miss. Ere. Take it quick, before the guv'nor sees.'

His little face is one big smudge. I give him a coin. His fingers are cracked with cold.

GITHA gathers up her newspapers and returns home. The trunk now becomes a kitchen table.

8.

SFX: THE KITCHEN HEARTH, A FIRE CRACKLING.

The kitchen hearth is stacked blazing high. My sisters gather round. Millie reads.

GITHA turns the pages of the newspaper.

'One of the very best, strongest, deftest, and altogether most masterly... A most powerful and arresting work.' ... 'Clearly an author of first importance.' ... 'Those who love a fine play,

and do not object to depressed spirits, should on no accounts miss seeing Miss Sowerby's play.'... 'The truth is that the English people have in Miss Sowerby, a positive genius. Ooh Githa!'

'Now you've gone and done it.'

- Whatever do you mean?

'Well you'll never find a husband now. No man worth his salt would marry a thirty-five year old genius.'

GITHA picks up the newspaper. Leaves the table in a rage.

What utter rot. Can you think of nothing else?

'You might as well call yourself an old maid and be done with it.'

Nonsense.

'It's true. You will spend your days sewing ridiculous second-rate bonnets for other people's children with nothing but two cats for company.'

- I beg your pardon?

'Marjory, that's enough!'

Millicent bustles her out into the hallway.

'Come along dear, let's leave Githa to her reviews, she doesn't need you going on and on at her.'

GITHA is alone. She carries on looking at the paper, her reviews. She is astonished by them, but very proud.

In the strongest and truest sense a suffrage play.

She turns a page. She turns a page. She sees something else. She likes it. She smiles coyly.

GITHA is very taken with the image of the man in the paper. She reads.

Captain John Kaye Kendall. Author, playwright, humourist. Regular contributor to Punch magazine. Also know as Dum-Dum. Dum-Dum, what a ridiculous name.

GITHA resets the trunk as her desk.

After the breakfast things have been cleared I head back to my desk. Millie knocks softly at my door. She peers in and asks:

‘You will still write our storybooks won’t you Githa? You will still write our story books with me?’

- Of course I shall.

9.

GITHA is at her desk.

The next morning a Mr Farnum arrives to interview me. It soon becomes apparent that he is somewhat unprepared. He asks if my play *Rutherford and Son* is a love drama or the plot of an adventure. He cannot possibly conceive of me being able to write anything that does not fit into these two categories of narrative.

- Neither and I prefer that you should read it rather than I discuss it.

He knows my play is set in the industrial north, but wants to know where on earth I get my ideas from. How it is that I have come to write a play at all after writing so many children’s books.

- Oh. I just thought I would write one. I had two acts lying in a drawer. It was my actress friend who encouraged me by all means to finish the play. So I did. And on it went, and that was that I suppose.

He looks up then. Eyes right on mine and asks me ‘What now Miss Sowerby? What next?’

- Shortly I shall be going out to tea. Oh I beg your pardon is that not what you meant?

He’s straight back at me with ‘Why plays Miss Sowerby? Why bother to write plays at all?’

GITHA struggles to reply.

Once the gentleman has been seen out Millicent comes upstairs with even more telegrams. She enquires after the tone of the interview. I tell her it was most bothersome. I am not a fan of interviews.

- He asked me why I write.

'Oh. And? What did you say? Why do you write Githa?'

Daily Mail interview request. More bills from Father. Enquiries regarding the translation of *Rutherford and Son* into French. Talk of a possible production in New York. What's this? The Germans are having difficulty with the pronunciation. Can I change Rutherford to Romford? No, I'm not sure I can. Can't they work harder on their diction?

'Githa. Why do you write? Did you tell him why?'

- Well, because I can, I suppose. It pays father's never-ending bills. Takes care of us and little Marjory.

'I was talking about your play. I must say you did a tremendous job of capturing some of the bleakness of home. Why did you write your play?'

- Must you interrogate me too Millicent?

She goes to leave. But stops and turns when she reaches the door.

'What is it that makes me paint, I wonder? Besides the means of making our living I mean. It's a ... well I struggle to find the words, that is always best left to you Githa. It's something that just arrives into my head, a memory too I suppose, or a flash of knowing something very strongly, just exactly how a curve must go. And sometimes as I draw, I become the thing I'm drawing. I do, I take on the shape of the moon let's say, or a nice garden gate perhaps'

If I don't stop her she'll prattle on at me for hours.

'I feel the crooked legs of a spinster or the snarl of a growling dog, or a nice full bowl of pudding for example-'

- Millie dear, that will do. That's quite enough, thank you.

Her sister leaves quietly. GITHA is alone again. She goes to her window. Enjoys the sunshine and the scene of London below.

I write plays because... There is something in me that... I sometimes fancy that this city is built on sleeping bulbs that long to push up through the soot and spread their blooms into the spring sunshine. Fresh green shoots that thirst for the world above.

10.

GITHA returns to her desk and picks up a letter that she has missed in her post. An invitation to a party.

There is a party at the Messel residence in Kensington.

SFX: LIVELY MUSIC COMING FROM A GRAMAPHONE.

GITHA clears away her letters into the trunk and dresses in a fur stole with a diamond bracelet and ring.

SFX: ADDITION OF GUESTS OF PARTY.

Lady Messel parades me up and down the drawing room. Everybody quizzes me about my play. 'How on earth did you come up with such a story? One with such immorality and such power? What drew you to the industrial north? Have you spent time in a factory such as this? How does a woman know such things?'

By listening. By watching. Taking note as son after son are fed; fat heirs into the wheels of greed, the scathing cogs of profit and loss. Seeing my father lose his factory, his boardroom and his empire. By sitting forever upright in a rigid schoolroom learning nothing. By gritting my teeth in smoky drawing rooms full of gentlemen who've never even smelt the smoke of their factories. Smiling while my skin creeps. By regarding, disregarding, by reading, by learning, by thinking! Of course I say none of this.

'What a character that old Rutherford. What a family. And that Janet. Phewee. These northern women really are something are they not? Yes, tell us about your characters Miss Sowerby. Are they real?'

- I'm awfully sorry but I haven't any idea about my characters at all. Why should I know any more about them than you? There they are, walking about and saying all these things. That's all I really know about them! Please, would you excuse me.

GITHA withdraws from the party, and goes onto the terrace. She is relieved to be away from the guests.

SFX: THE MUSIC FADES AND PARTY SOUNDS FADE.

It's icy on the terrace, but quiet. A gentleman stands smoking. He relights his pipe.

GITHA recognises him.

It's him. It's definitely him. The man from the newspaper.

- Dum-Dum is it not?

It is. He turns and looks straight at me.

'Do you know I used to be a great singer at parties. Oh yes, in those flush and prospering times of yore, I was quite a drawing room hit. Ballads, sad songs, sweet refrains. I sang them by the sheet. But, I'm afraid I've been rather muted of late. It's that ruinous vixen the gramophone.'

When I introduce myself he greets me with a low bow for the finest children's author turned playwright for miles around.

- You may be a playwright sir. I prefer the term dramatist.

He finds amusement in this. Chuckles warm-heartedly.

- I believe I might have seen your picture in the paper.

'I believe I might have seen yours Miss Sowerby. And here we are, the two most famous people at the party and we both choose to loiter on the terrace. You can call me John Kaye Kendall.'

- Do you know, I might just call you a humourist and be done with it.

This time he bellows, his laugh a kind of roar.

'I don't dance as well as I sing but still. Shall we?'

SFX: MUSIC. FIRST WALTZ BY TOSTI (LYRICS BY GITHA SOWERBY).

SONG LYRICS

Music and light, Youth and delight,
Dance with me now till the day be born.
Pleasure is ours through the long sweet hours
Till the last note dies on the dawn, dies on the dawn.

Time passes by, roses may die,
Life may be short and its joys be few,
Just for tonight the whole world is bright
with the glamour of love - and you!

Thoughts for the light, dreams for the night,
Lean to me, sing to me soft and low.
Look me in the eyes till our laughter dies
And your beauty is all I know!

Time passes by, roses may die,
Life may be short and its joys be few
Just for tonight the whole world is bright
with the glamour of love - and you!

GITHA dances with Dum-Dum/John Kaye Kendall. She waltzes gently but is soon turning and pirouetting with gleeful abandon, finding a moment to gaze into his eyes during the last refrain. The dance finishes. She has left the party and sets up the trunk as if she were in the theatre again.

SFX: THE MUSIC FADES INTO THEATRE FRONT OF HOUSE SOUNDS.

Rutherford and Son transfers to the Vaudeville theatre in the West End. The first night is a sell out. Dum-Dum, John Kaye Kendall is my escort. When the curtain drops the audience erupts once more.

SFX: APPLAUSE.

Again they cry for 'Author, author!' this time knowing exactly whom and what they call for. John places his hand gently on my arm.

'Githa the stage is yours. They're waiting for you.'

GITHA steps out onto the stage. She is extremely stiff and uncomfortable but stays there in the glare of the lights.

SFX: AS SHE STEPS OUT ONTO THE STAGE THE APPLAUSE RISES IN VOLUME. IT IS OVERWHELMINGLY LOUD.

- I offer you my deepest thanks. You are too kind. Thank you.

SFX: MORE APPLAUSE.

Unsure of what to do, she curtsies, then retreats. She steps off stage and recovers from what has clearly been an exceptional ordeal for her.

SFX: THE APPLAUSE FADES.

John is waiting for me and we make our way back through the maze of passages to join the reception at front of house. When we are very much alone, he stops suddenly on a stair and turns.

He kisses her.

'Why do you write such plays?'

- I am fire. Inside. That's why.

'I can see that.'

I cannot help but kiss him back.

SFX: MUSIC. TOSTI REPRISE AS IF ON A GRAMAPHONE.

12.

GITHA sits down at her desk. Her fiancée, John is there. She reads to him from the newspaper.

‘Playwright to wed playwright...unusual theatrical engagement...’

- I wonder which one of us they find unusual do you think. Are we really that peculiar?

- ‘Successful matrimony consists of a piquant blending of dissimilar with similar...’ Oh, well. Apparently my charm is to suit your flippancy. Oh listen to this. This is just absurd.

‘Engagements between author and actresses are of course fairly common but an engagement between two playwrights is an almost unprecedented event.’ Must they make us ridiculous pioneers to be gawped at, these reporters? They really are trying. Here, take it back.

He folds the newspaper, then takes me in his arms. Tells me that this isn’t the ordinary sort of engagement at all and:

‘You do know that don’t you? I don’t want you for my pet, I want you for my pal. I want to talk to you, to hear you laugh, to know you’re there, to love you and hold you and treasure you. I just want it to be us, you and me, no one else. Just us. For always.’

- Yes. Just us.

We sit down to work together.

She puts the newspaper down. Picks up her pen again.

I am putting together the final copy for a nursery book that Millie and I are working on, in all honesty I want to be working on my new play. The ideas are buzzing in my head. They creep around the corners of my mind, stamping their feet and demanding my attention.

John is working on his latest poem.

'It's been a centenary you know.'

- What has?

'Since we chaps covered up. Twas legs or nothing before then. A fellow must let it all hang out, knobbly, spindly or no and be damned. Of course the ladies in the East, India and Japan and so forth have worn them a great deal longer. Yes, they wear them under their dresses. I'm referring to the invention of the trouser.'

- Thank heavens for that.

'And where will they take us in another hundred years I wonder. These robes of progress. These implements of peace.'

- Perhaps British women will wear them too.

'Ha! Fancy yourself in a pair do you Githa?'

- No, not I. Certainly not I.

'What a pity... Now, should I title this poem 'A Centenary of Progress' or simply 'An Ode to the Trouser?'

I think it's rather nice to be unusual in a peculiar sort of way. But when my fiancée interrupts me for the seventeenth time that morning I decide I need to take a break from London all the same. I have a play to write.

13.

The trunk is now a trunk. GITHA packs for her journey.

My sisters look on as I pack for my journey. Millicent perches on the edge of the bed and Marjory takes a chair by the window.

'When are you leaving?'

- Midday.

'Do you have enough notebooks, pencils?'

- Yes. I have plenty. Is everything alright?

They both look at the floor. Marjory shuffles uncomfortably.

'It's Millicent really. She has something she wishes to say to you.'

- Millie? What is it?

A hot blush rises in her cheeks.

'Well. It's just that. With you not going to be here and being away writing and all, and then of course... well the truth is that I'm going to miss you Githa. I'm going to miss you rather considerably.'

- But I'll be returning to London by the end of the month...

'But not to us. That's what she's saying, don't you see? You won't return to us will you? Not properly. Once you've finished your new play you'll come back and then there'll be a wedding and then you'll be a married woman and we'll be here left all alone without you. That's how it is. You're leaving us. And dear old Millie here is going to miss you rather a lot that's all, so there.'

Marjory's chin wobbles and she turns her back to me and stares out of the window, her good arm wrapped tightly around her waist. Millie is hiding behind her handkerchief.

'I'm not sure I can do it all without you. It's so much easier with you here to guide me Githa and say all the sensible things and keep all the paperwork together and bills and when I get all muddled they'll be no one here to make it all alright again.'

- I'm no more capable than you are... it's just that I've had to... You've risen to the challenge of becoming a world-class illustrator, I'm sure you'll be able to rise to the challenge of running a house. Marjy my dear, you musn't feel deserted. The truth is, I'll miss you both too. Rather dreadfully I expect.

As they wave me off I think to myself what a fine thing it is to have such splendid sisters.

14.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN SPRING. A RIVERBANK.

GITHA sits by the banks of the river and works in silence. She writes for a while, then stops. She is not in the same writing state that we saw her in earlier when she was working on Rutherford & Son. She is full of stops and starts.

Crossings out and scribbles. I'm all notes and fragments. I'm stuck. It flows. Why can't I?

She writes some more. Then stops again, panic stricken.

They might hate it. They might hate me. I cannot sit through their glares and applause. I don't want to greet another call. This story fidgets inside me. Wiggles in me, I cannot sit still. It craves the page. I cannot capture its thread, its flow. The noise of it all. It rushes past me, not through me, I cannot grasp it. I will put this into words. I will finish this play.

She is on her feet. She paces in thought. She goes towards the river. She has an idea. She looks around to make sure she is truly alone, then kicks off her shoes, hoists her skirt a little and tentatively tiptoes into the water. It is cold and it rushes up her spine, she paddles for a while, enjoying the river's flow and current. She lifts her skirt a little more and goes up to her knees. Her skirt is rising higher and higher up her leg. She is released and allows herself to daydream.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE WATER SWELLS LOUDLY.

The words to her next play come easily now, and she allows the pleasure of their torrent to wash over her, as she stands liberated in the river's current.

...a man can't take on family life and then get up one day and smash it because it gets on his nerves... what's it doing for you, working from morning till night... you are practically dependant on what I earn... think you can throw up all you were meant to do and be... life can look frightful if you stand up above and look down on it... I can earn money but I must sit at home with my hands in front of me all day... you're like all women, you don't know how to save yourself...

She has found release. She is full of pride. She steps out of the river, and reassembles her draft. She picks up her shoes, and smiling she leaves the riverbank and returns to London.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE WATER FADES INTO APPLAUSE, THEN INTO THE NOISE OF FRONT OF HOUSE CHATTER.

GITHA is now at a busy theatre after a performance.

I have a short one-act piece playing as a curtain raiser at the Playhouse. Everybody is quite taken with it. It's a little lighter in tone than the last, but still makes a point. They all seem to think my marriage to a writer of light verse has rubbed off on me. They jest that I will be doing his job for him before I know it and how it will destroy his reputation at the Garrick club. It's all nonsense of course. John is the exact opposite to me in that he adores this kind of attention. They ask him what pushes him on, why he bothers to write at all.

'Because I can. Being a military man I like a jolly good old wheeze. A titter a day keeps the doctor away.'

They want to know why won't he rise to the challenge of writing something sensible, something that speaks to the heart of our times, a masterpiece.

'Why should I? When my wife does it so bloody well?'

Then it's my turn. They ask for the title of my next play.

- It's called '*A Man and Some Women.*'

'Ah. A love story.'

- No. In actual fact it's about economics. And dependence.

'Economic independence? For whom? The man or the women?'

- Well for both I should think. Yes. Both. When you think of it really, men are equally restricted in this realm, what with one thing and another.

'Why don't you write something jolly next time eh? A comedy perhaps. Something more... lighter.'

- Do you mean something more suitable?

Just at this moment John spots someone across the room. Granville Barker, who runs the Kingsway Theatre.

'Granville! Granville old boy, come and meet my marvellous wife.'

Thankfully the quizzing is over. My husband introduces me, I tell Mr Barker a little of my new piece and he agrees to read my latest draft.

SFX: THE SOUND OF THE FRONT OF HOUSE CHATTER FADES.

When the evening is over, and John and I are at home alone, we sit quietly for a while as he smokes his pipe. I reflect on why it is that they seek to change our habits. As if we had any choice in what we write. As if it were as easy as taking a book down from a shelf or plucking a flower from a bed. The plays I write simmer inside me, hot white metal under my skin. Shards of glass that slice through my dreams. When something sometimes stunts my pen, what is it that pushes it on? Why write plays at all? I write them to understand... I write plays because I feel I might...

John has asked her a question and she is brought back, out of her thoughts.

- I'm sorry my darling, I was miles away.

16.

GITHA is alone.

There are some issues with the rights for my one act piece. At present Williams have offered me half a guinea per show. John thinks I should push for 15-20% from French. John is terribly helpful and I am very grateful for his advice in business matters but he then takes it upon himself to go and see my agent. It doesn't go well. He tells me how he left saying 'far be it for me to come to a man's office and attempt to teach him how to approach his affairs,' assuring me he delivered his parting remarks apologetically and not sarcastically but the very fact that he has to make this distinction makes me wonder if he did not just deliver them downright rudely. I write to my agent myself and in no time have the rights matter cleared up very nicely at a rate that pleases me greatly.

Granville Barker rejects my play. It's good he thinks, but not nearly as good as it ought to be. He believes it suffers because black is so black and white is so white... The really dramatic problem, he thinks, is ...

He signs off: 'If women really will go on writing about women in this entirely truthful and ruthless fashion, we shall have something like a drama soon... Sincerely H Granville Barker.'

She is angry, deeply hurt at this rejection. She broods furiously. We see her suppress her bitter disappointment. She rises and goes to her desk.

When the post is brought there is a letter addressed to my husband. It's from the Lord Chamberlain's Office. It is marked private.

She opens it.

It's about my play, *Rutherford & Son*, which is still running at the Vaudeville. It's a response to a request from my husband for a critique on my work.

She reads on.

'*Rutherford & Son* is a hateful, ruthless most immoral play.' ... He asks if certain character traits were conscious cynicism on my part, or rather unconscious accuracy. He praises the craft of my characters... but he is afraid he belongs to the play –going vielle- garde who like virtue-rewarded, vice-punished, happy ending plays. He then advises my husband that he might push me to create my next stage piece in a more pleasant tone.

John has risen. He sits and pours tea.

GITHA places the post down for her husband.

- Your post. I opened it. Did you not think to tell me you were writing to the Lord Chamberlain's Office about my work? It really was quite underhand of you. Why everything in the world must be pleasant, I don't know. It really would be better if you were to leave certain things to me. I'm not like you. I rather think it is a writer's duty to shine a light on the corners of life's injustice and sorrow that an audience might feel, then think, then perhaps act. I leave the entertainment to you. Humourist. I want you to understand that you married

me, not my work. I will not accept this, you acting on my behalf, you must not involve yourself in my affairs!

She is absolutely furious. She has completely lost her temper.

'I am merely taking a concerned interest in my wife's wellbeing. I'm certain that any other man would do exactly the same - '

- You're NOT ANY OTHER MAN JOHN! Don't you see? It's us, just us, and I thought you understood, I thought you were different, I thought you respected me!

'Githa, your absolutely right. I'm so sorry.'

- Please. Just leave me be.

He retreats respectfully. She is alone. Utterly heartbroken and betrayed.

SFX: 'WHY BRITAIN IS AT WAR' BY HENRY AINLEY PLAYS. THIS SIGNIFIES THE ONSET OF WAR. GITHA LISTENS CLOSELY IN HORROR.

England bleeds on the battlefields of France.

John is called away. I miss him so much it hurts.

London is overcast.

A sticky August.

Hot nights that get under my skin.

I am all alone. With myself. My work: endless nursery rhymes, stories, playroom ditties.

Time ticks slowly. My pen scratches away at the paper.

I take a long walk in St James' park. Stride through this heaviness that clogs me up. The weather breaks.

SFX: TORRENTIAL RAIN.

Rain hammers the tops of the trees. The branches stoop, heavy, green wet.

SFX: IT THUNDERS FOR A WHILE. GITHA TAKES SHELTER UNDER THE TREES. THE RAIN FADES.

A Man and Some Women doesn't receive a London run. It opens in Manchester. Mixed reviews. I attend the opening night alone. John writes home to comfort me. Assures me that this blasted war will be over soon, that theatre can withstand the challenges of every age. Timing is everything my darling, when it comes to art.

GITHA picks up an unopened letter from her desk. She reads it silently. She is very still.

My Father dies. Bankrupt. With nothing. Leaves nothing for my mother, my sisters and I. He's spent every penny that I sent him, and more, and now I have my mother to look after as well. It's one big disastrous mess. Debts, bills...

She is overwhelmed. She looks up to see Marjory has arrived.

- Marjy. No, no not at all, come in, please do sit.

She prefers to stand.

'Githa, it's like this you see. Frank and I. Well, I was wondering, now that father's not with us if you might... seeing as though now you really are the... I'm not like you Githa, I'm still young enough to have a family and me and Frank are rather hoping that we might. I rather thought that you could give me something. Not a huge amount. It would be a way to be rid of me really. I'm not famous like you and Millicent is so busy with her drawings... other than doing my bit for the war I really am of no use to anybody. One last sum. Then I'm a married woman. Of Frank's concern.'

- You needn't worry Marjory. You'll make a beautiful wife.

17.

GITHA is now alone.

John returns on leave. His presence lightens me somewhat. Overall I am feeling leaden. Drained. Quite forlorn.

She has a realisation. Touches her belly slowly. She looks up. John is there.

- We two shall be three come spring.

'We shall be more the merrier for it.'

- Of course we shall.

She manages a weak smile.

He kisses my forehead and leaves me to my thoughts.

GITHA stands alone, small, weary and uncertain. A very different woman who strode through Covent Garden into Curtis Brown's office. She looks down at her body, as if experiencing it for the first time.

I am here. Myself. With a darted seed inside me. A new life that will look to me for guidance and I'm terrified I'll... I know very well how to entertain a child, I don't know how to raise one. But I must. I will. Inside I am blood and flames. Brazen. Bold. I cannot help but question what I see. Why must I sit demurely, gently filling in the gaps that others leave? I will not be crushed to a dead level of adaptability. But I am hampered and hindered by the tradition of my essential inferiority. I write to understand my life. Because I feel like I might burst if I do not. Because what I think and feel in this world cannot be nothing, it cannot mean nothing. I write that I might expose the quiet shadows and find the small moments of calm in the night. On the page I can roar as I cannot in life.

GITHA clears the stage slowly. Tidies her things away gently. She places papers back in the trunk. Brings out her fountain pen. She closes the trunk. She holds her fountain pen tenderly considering it. She starts to replace the lid over the nib, but stops just as it is going on and looks up at the audience. She addresses us in a manner which we haven't heard before.

What will you dream of when your life

Is gay with light and laughter

When joy is yours to take or leave

With gold to follow after

When all your little world is bright

With stars and candles gleaming-

What will you dream of when the night

Has left you time for dreaming?

She steps back. Reconsiders her pen, then replaces the lid back over the nib.

SFX: AS SHE DOES SO THE TICKING CLOCK BEGINS AGAIN.

BLACKOUT

THE END

HOUSE-LIGHTS UP.

CURTAIN CALL TO TOSTI TRACK.

PLAY 3.

WITHIN THIS LANDSCAPE

Written and performed by Hannah Davies

Artistic installations by Jessica Watson-Cainer

Sound design by Jack Rutherford

FINAL DRAFT (AUGUST 2014)

PERFORMANCES:

The Little Festival of Everything May 2014

The Fauconberg Arms August 2014

NOTE: *This play is a site-responsive piece, inspired by the village of Coxwold, North Yorkshire and the countryside of the surrounding area. The piece is made up of ten chapters. In performance these are heard via an audio-headset at predetermined points on a self-navigated mapped route for solo audience members. Tracks are played at stationary listening points or while a participant is walking, indicated as such on the map.¹*

The route is decorated with flowers in pots and children's wellington boots, benches are dressed with soft furnishings, and there are more elaborate artistic installations to discover along the way as indicated in the text.

All of the text is performed by the author.

¹ A copy of this map is printed at the end of this playscript. p.136.

1.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

A bench outside the Fauconberg Arms pub in the quiet North Yorkshire village of Coxwold. St Michael's church is visible at the top of the hill.

SFX: NATURAL SOUNDS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.

Within this landscape rests my dormant past, a distant phase, a snoozing chapter - these hills hum with memories, they sing with the silts of my childhood, and the seeds and tender shoots of my adulthood. These hills bore witness to a brief and short-lived rural era of my life. This landscape cradles the voice of a girl that speaks to you now in adult form. I invite you to take a journey with me, and hear my song, the frayed lyric that sings through the blades and furrows and sails over the graceful curves of this land, the tiny fragment of my story that drifts through hedgerows on a dwindling breeze, and oozes gently through the rain soaked spring mud. It finds us here in Coxwold. A village on a hill. A sudden change in terrain after the flat vale of York - a lift in tone, an aria promise of the windswept wilderness, the gaps and space of the terrain beyond.

SFX: INT. CAR SOUNDS.

The first night I meet this land I am a childish back seat dreamer. Belted into the backseat of a car between my brother and two smaller sisters who keep kicking my leg and pulling my hair. As we wind through the country lanes I peer out of the window and watch the twee looking villages sail by, their ancient names presented proudly on blocks of stone on grassy banks, I don't know it then but the names of these villages will become as familiar to me as friends. Crayke, Helmsley, Raskelf, Wass.

We've come to see a house, a large stone house at the end of a track that turns into a gravelled drive, it has a low roof with one wall covered in ivy. It's old, rambling, big. A large L-shaped mass of add on rooms and landings, a patchwork of different brickworks, inside its illogical corridors and rooms a maze of beams and pantries, hearths, panelling and parquet floors.

I've heard of houses like these, I've seen pictures in books, a distant possibility, a fantasy, a world away from the pebbledash estate and the busy, cumin scented backstreets of Leeds that formed my early years. It seems a very long way from the small terraced house in York, where I currently live with my Dad. The place is like a dream. A Jane Eyre, Catherine Cookson, Country Living dream. I can tell my mother feels the same - when the owners let us in, she puts on her proper voice that she saves for teachers and strangers and I know that this is a very special place. I watch her closely as her heart soaks up the walls and nooks and wonky panelling as she and her new partner, the man with the plan and the chequebook, indulge their fantasy of a pre-Blur 'very big house in the country'. In the oldest part of the house is the room that is to become my bedroom. It looks out onto a very large oak tree in a field of sheep and far away, down the hill, just where the land meets the dark autumn sky, there is a distant twinkling of the orange city lights of York and I give a little wave to my Dad, my other bedroom, my life before. At the bottom of the garden under the trees there is an old Victorian street lamp. It stands tall and glows and I hear my mother whisper under her breath 'It's just like Narnia!' Her eyes sparkle.

I should probably tell you now this story is defined by loss. A burial. A grave. My mum is buried here in this village in that churchyard over there at the top of that hill. But I'm not here to offload a jagged narrative of pain or drain a seeping open wound. My scar is well worn and I've lived motherless for longer than I've lived motherful, if that's a word. They chose this final resting place because she died suddenly and unexpectedly and when she did she lived in the house I've just described in a village only a couple of miles away from here and among the shock and grief this site was picked. St Michaels' is one of the oldest churches in Yorkshire, it's built on the site of an old pagan temple. This would have pleased my Mum. She was a bit far out like that, a bit 'not quite here', as if she was always kind of on her way out. I'd like to gather up the snatches of her that echo around these hills and share my story with you. Show you what I see and hear when I walk within this landscape.

2.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

The bench at the bottom of lane at the back of the pub. We are behind the village. We can see the rear side of buildings, outhouses, chimneys, and sloping back gardens that lead onto fields.

SFX: INT. SOUNDS OF A BUSY HOUSEHOLD. CHATTER, KITCHEN CLATTER, CHILDREN PLAYING.

When we've bought the house it is full from the very start. It's never quiet. A myriad of old friends who visit and then forget to leave. People I've never seen before who arrive late at night and appear like ghosts mid-morning asking if we have any herb tea or decaffeinated coffee, they always remember me from way back when and are surprised when I don't want to hug them; there's good old long lost so- and-so, and people who bring their whinging bratty kids, and the odd loner just passing through who needs somewhere to park up for the winter. Those who just need to get away from it all for a bit. What exactly they were trying to get away from, I never really understood, but these strangers from far off lands tell some pretty interesting stories when they think children aren't listening, and I develop some fine ear-wiggling skills. Some of the visitors I avoid, give them a wide berth, the ones whose stories drone on and on with no punch line, the ones who wear too much patchouli oil and eat all the nice biscuits and try and get me to take the rubbish out. Some of them I like though, one of my favourites moves into our shed and stays there for years. He puts in a wood burning stove and a double bed. It's cosy when he's done, a small potting shed with two steps down and a low tiled roof. He is a practical man who is always building something, a wooden bath, a sledge, and one day he spends hours on the kitchen table making a meticulously glued tissue paper lantern which is as big as me, and we let it off into the winter sky and it floats over the trees, glowing like an extra moon. I often visit him at the end of the garden. His easy going silence is a soothing retreat from the noisy house which echoes in the day with the shriek of children playing, loud business phone calls, and the incessant tap - tap - tap of the computer keyboard from my step - dad's office. The adult banter rumbles along all day in the kitchen against the constant boil of the kettle and there is always the sound of a small one revving up into a tantrum or a paddy whack somewhere. At night it is stiller, the stone walls of the house hum with the grown up mutterings of Scrabble games played around roaring fires in a haze of bass and wine glasses with pungent smoke that curls and drifts along the low ceilinged beams.

SFX: INT. LATE NIGHT CHATTER OF GROWN UPS. A BACKGROUND REGGAE TRACK, BASSY WITH NO LYRICS. THE SOUNDS FADE INTO ROADS. CARS. THE SOUNDS OF INTERIOR DRIVING.

The unfamiliar roads that led me to my new home in the countryside soon become as ingrained in me as the sleepy midnight trip across the landing to the bathroom. In recent years I had only spent the weekends with my Mum at her place in Leeds, but now as she had moved to live in a large house in the countryside, it had been decided that there would be a swap around and so the big country house becomes my new home with weekend visits to my Dad's back in York and instead of zooming up and down the A64 twice a week, I am now travelling the twists and turns of the North Yorkshire countryside. I watch the grassy verges for pheasants and rabbits and roadkill.

3.

A WALKING TRACK.

Through the gate, walking across the field.

SFX: EXT. GARDEN WITH CHILDREN PLAYING.

The garden of our house is a large grassy stretch and beyond the Narnia gaslight it opens out onto a paddock with a wonky gate that backs onto the sheep farm next door. The sheep, and there are plenty of them, become a soundtrack to this era of my life, their greasy bleats underscore my dreams. I develop a soft fondness for them. In spring I love nothing more than peering over the lambing pens, open jawed to watch tiny hooves and snouts emerge, as the new lives breathe and wriggle into the wet straw. My siblings and I coo and cluck at the lamb's first wobbles and take it in turns to feed the orphans from a glass bottle, battling the wide-eyed strength of a newborn's suck. Sometimes they visit us, they find a way in through the gaps in the hedge in the night and the house is woken by delighted shrieks and herding them up becomes an after breakfast game.

SFX: SOUNDS OF SHEEP COME IN OVER THE GARDEN SOUNDS.

Cereal bowls are abandoned half finished as my army of younger siblings, some of them no bigger or steadier on their feet than the lambs that they are chasing, rush out of the house

in oversized wellies, arms flapping wildly. It seems to me, that every time one of my mother's children hits toddlerhood, with chubby arms and stumpy legs, another baby appears and once again I am promoted further up the ranks.

SFX: BABY CRYING THE SOUND OF BEING COMFORTED AND SUNG TO.

Within this landscape she exists in a constant state of growing, swelling, shrinking, rocking, feeding, distracting and cooing. And the lambing season cycles round both in next door's farm and also in the thick stone walls of our house where the patter of tiny feet is more a thunderous chaotic roar.

SFX: BACK TO THE EXT. SOUND OF CHILDREN PLAYING. IT FADES.

4.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

Through a gate and into a small penned enclosure. There is a tree. Cushions have been placed on it to make a seat. The branches are adorned with scraps of sheep sketches, pencils hang in the leaves, and small sheep toys like a baby's mobile drifts in the wind.

SFX: EXTERIOR FIELD SOUNDS. GENTLE BIRDSONG. SHEEP BAA'S. SOUNDS OF PENCIL SKETCHING.

Nibbling ewe that jitters scattily,

Your groanbox larynx calls and see

How your sly yellow eye mystifies me.

You mutton ma'm.

You even-toed ungulate.

Companion to my zodiacal sign.

Be gone. Flock off. Show me your gambolling gait

That I may capture its essence.

She turns, sheepishly,

A cosy bag of buttery fleece.

I am bewitched by her behind

Her legs; clattering knobbed stilts

Running so fast

She cannot help but

Waggle an unladylike display:

A wool bound exhibition of greeny faecal clagnuts.

I'm drawing them, the sheep. Sketching them and writing bad poetry in my mind that I'll never dare to share. I arrived in these hills as a little girl and left them as a teen. When I did I moved to the furthest twinkling lights I could find, the bright lights of London to study acting at university and it is there that I am required to do an animal study as part of a movement module so I return to these fields to sketch the sheep of my childhood, I'm older and wiser than when I first met them, but not as old and wise as I am now. I spend a day hanging out with the knobby-kneed ewes who groan and baa and clatter through the grass, falling over one another's woollen backs to get as far away from me as possible. When they settle they watch me suspiciously as I sketch them and note details about the way that they move. They have knowing marble eyes, sheep. They are not as stupid as people think.

SFX: MORE SKETCHING SOUNDS.

My pencil moves across the page. When I draw I feel close to her. I remember her hands. The way she moved them across the page. The way she fixed my pictures when they went wrong. The way she taught me to look for light and shade. I remember a story she told me when I was ready to screw up one of my pictures and put it in the bin. It went like this:

'Before I was anybody's Mummy I was at art school and whenever I was cross and fed up and wanted to tear up my work like you do now, my tutor would take the piece away and put it away in a drawer and say to me 'You must come back to it with new eyes. Leave it for

a while and come back to it with new eyes.' You see there is always something good to find. Always something to keep working on.'

My mother's story stuck. I always save my half-baked, ill-formed scraps. I love nothing more than fishing through old notebooks for bits of discarded material that can be made new. I delight in an unexpected line, or a forgotten phrase. My sheep sketches still exist somewhere in a box of old folders in the shed, gathering damp.

When I've finished my sketches, I return to London to university to present my embodied version of a sheep to my fellow trainee actors. When I look around the rehearsal room I see that I'm surrounded by much more glamorous choices - a tiger, a lizard, an eagle, and lots of slinky leotarded cats but still I limber up and knuckle down onto the rehearsal room floor and truly engage with the essence of chewing, bleating and staring blankly into space. I've never since been asked to present the knowing depths of my inner sheep but I got a high mark for my project, and I remain hopeful that one day I'll find a way to include it in my repertoire.

En-route to the next listening location, audience members will find a small installation of the old woman who lived in a shoe.

5.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

Further up the hill on a large fallen tree trunk. There are bushes on either side dressed with washing lines of colourful children's clothes, a gingham dress, a babygrow. A set of steps leads up to the top of the tree trunk, which can be climbed and has been dressed with art materials, brushes, pens, small trinkets of an art studio. The treetops are lined with empty picture frames. From the top of the tree trunk you can see for miles across the countryside.

A lift up black click latch, cold toes on a stone floor, one washing machine, one tumble dryer, two mountains of washing, one white, one dark.

SFX: INT. SOUNDS OF A LAUNDRY.

This is where we find her. Loading, sorting and pairing, the clicks and twists of the dials punctuate her days. She folds and sorts in a warm air haze of non-bio and Bounce. Her silver bracelets dance on her wrist and sing over the whirr of the drums.

SFX: SOUNDS OF BRACELETS JANGLING.

Whenever I lose her in the house, I stand and listen for the pretty sound of her jangling bangles. After she dies I do it still, find myself rooted to the spot listening so hard for something that no longer moves. My legs switch to autopilot and my blood and bones search the halls, doorways and corridors, seeking out their mother in a dream. My journey always ending in the now empty laundry, the machines silenced, the washing piles unsorted and growing by the day.

SFX: LAUNDRY SOUNDS FADE. SILENCE SWELLS. SOUND OF A WOODEN HATCH OPENING AND FOOTSTEPS GOING UPSTAIRS.

At the back of the laundry there are some wooden steps that climb the flaking stone walls through a large lift up hatch. Once a hay barn or a grain store this attic is now carpeted and has a fading smell of damp. The gable end is wall to wall and floor to ceiling with rickety shelves. They overflow with books, binders and sewing boxes, folders, wicker baskets, boxes of quirky buttons. A breeze blows in through the open window, the wind smells of the hay fields outside.

SFX: A GENTLE BREEZE.

The curtains ripple. They are a pale yellow covered with toadstools and fairy folk.

When her children only just outnumbered her, when she still lived in Leeds, my mother painted a large majestic Gandalf, with a staff and a kind face against a backdrop of dazzling white stars. She leaves it to dry in an awkward place, backed up against a chair, or on a landing, out of the way but not out of reach. When I find it I stand and stare. To my childish eyes, the painting looks unfinished; I don't understand why she hasn't coloured the stars in. Everyone knows that stars are yellow! I pick out my very best yellow felt tip pen and try my hardest not to go over the lines. When I'm finished I carefully put the lid back on and stand back and admire my helpful additions to my mother's work. Hers was not the kind face of a

wizard when she discovered what I had done, but maybe because underneath the scribbles there was a genuine intention to help, or perhaps because she knew she'd left it to dry in an unsafe place and only had herself to blame, I escape my mother's artistic wrath with a kind explanation of why it's best to let Mummies finish their own paintings and she buys me a magic painting book instead and shows me how to make the colours appear by adding water from a jam jar. It occurs to me many years later that she was right; stars are a bright sharp white. Not yellow at all.

In the studio, under the open window, is her desk - large, wooden, battered. Above it more shelves, these are laden with pots of brushes, paints, graphite sticks, pencils, chinks and pastels, wrinkled tubes of watercolours and acrylics all mixed in with tiny trinkets that have caught her eye; a small one-armed teddy bear, an empty toffee tin, a psychedelic postcard, a note or cast off drawing from one of her many children.

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe, who had so many children she didn't know what to do. She gave them some broth without any bread, whipped them all soundly and sent them to bed.

Instead of a bonnet and an apron, my Mum had a long hippy skirt and converse trainers, and she preferred using her no nonsense 'don't mess with me' tones to whipping us all soundly, and she spent most of every evening putting us all to bed, dutifully noting the carefully negotiated bedtimes that differentiated us all in terms of rank and age. She was rarely free to her own will before 10 or 11 o'clock and even then she had to deal with the stragglers, the 'just one more cuddle' and 'I need a drink' and 'I forgot to tell you something' requests, before she settles down to the babies' midnight feeds. It's no wonder that although her move to a big house in the countryside has meant that for the first time in her life she now has a dedicated space in which to create, a whole room in which to paint, I cannot once remember her doing so. My mother: the painter who eventually forgot to find the time to paint. I witness the moment she admits defeat to a visiting friend.

'I'll claim the hours back though. When the kids are all grown up, I'll be an old Granny in paint spattered overalls.'

Even then to my girlish ears something about her comments jarred. There was no hint of martyrdom, or bitterness in her words, just a kind of gentle acceptance and I secretly wished she'd find a way to fit it in today before it was too late, which of course it eventually was.

Outside the seasons scroll by; the haze of Yorkshire summer makes way for stubble fields and ambling tractors, as the autumn skies turn to slate grey the house creaks with winds and the smell of coal smoked chimneys. I miss the old routine of my previous life, my friends back in Leeds, and the rules from my Dad's household in York. Once the novelty of being under my Mum's roof has worn off and I settle into my new life I find a resentment building in me, an irritation at having to share this woman who I adore with so many others; her partner, the new siblings, the visitors, the practical demands of the house. I crave the version of her from before when she had time for lazy stories on sofas, and when she showed me and my older brother how to cut a lino print to make Christmas cards. She once got me out of bed to share a packet of cinder toffee with her because she'd just moved house and had no one to talk to. That was before she'd unpacked properly and we had to spread margarine with a spoon. I want her for an extra five minutes when she perches at the end of my bed at bedtime. I want her all for me.

6.

A WALKING TRACK.

Walking to the top of the field towards the little white gate.

SFX: THE SOUND OF WATER. NEW AGE MUSIC. INTERIOR SOUNDS OF WATER DRIPPING INSIDE A FLOTATION TANK.

Shhh. I'm teaching myself how to meditate. The grown ups do it every day. Apparently it's really good. If you do it enough you can levitate, or reverberate, no incarnate that's it. If you do it in here it makes it even better. I'm in the tank. The flotation tank. I'm floating. Like on the sea except I'm in a big blue tank, like bath thing, well bigger than a bath actually, and really, really salty, which is what makes you float. We were going to have this tank put in the bathroom upstairs but there was no room so they put it in the garage in the end instead, they knocked it through from the downstairs toilet. Pirate did it. Pirate's the guy who lives in

the shed at the bottom of the garden, they call him Pirate because they say he used to smuggle stuff off the coast of Morocco, he's the guy what made that tissue paper lantern last year. I'm not really supposed to be in here. My mum told me to watch the little ones in the kitchen while she went to put some washing on, but they've tipped the spaghetti out all over the floor and are using it to have a sword fighting tournament so I thought I'd come in here while no one was looking and try some meditating. It's quite good actually when you get used to how dark and wet and pointless it is.

It used to be my favouritest room in the house this downstairs toilet. It's like a normal person's toilet and there's a window seat and out of the window you can see a rose garden. It felt really posh before they put this tank in it. Felt like it was my own private one cos no one used it that much. . There's even a towel in here that the people that owned it before left and it's got pretty roses all sewed on the corner, dead pretty and proper. Sometime I pretend that if I went out of here the rest of the house would match it. Like when Mr Benn goes out of his changing room into another world.

And my family would be there too. Like a proper family, all neat and clean and proper with wax jackets and barbour boots and well-organised with drawers full of matching socks, and Sunday dinners and piano lessons and clean fridges and porcelain door handles and fitted wardrobes, not all spilt lentils and old newspapers and sequined wall hangings and wooden elephants everywhere. Stop thinking! I'm meditating.

It's dead hard meditating. You're supposed to clear your mind until it's empty, but how are you supposed to think of nothing? They say that you have to watch your thoughts float past without latching on. Like leaves on a stream, or cars driving past on a road. Be at peace with your deepest truest self. It's really hard that though. Harder than it sounds. Harder than I thought.

7.

A WALKING TRACK.

Through little white gate, it is covered in train tickets. Turn right, head down the track.

SFX: RAILWAY STATION LEEDS. TEN PENCE PEICES BEING PUT INTO A PAY PHONE.

'Dad, it's me. I've run away. I'm in Leeds, I've come to see Vicky. There's nothing to do at Mum's. Everyone's weird and I'm really bored and it's not fair. Oh, ok then, ok, bye then, see you soon, bye.'

I found out later that after I had put the phone down my Dad had called my intended hosts to let them know that I'm on my way, gave them his parental consent to my being there and tells them he'll come pick me up if needs be. But to me, I was running away and it was brilliant. I say run. To my credit it's actually a very well planned break out incorporating a few white lies and some sneaky pocket money saving and I take the bus to York and the train to Leeds and go and stay with old friends who live on a farm in Pudsey. Horsey types, proper country folk, not fake ones like us. They're normal, and predictable and they have lots of horses and dogs and a bowl of sweets on top of their telly and matching curtains and duvets. Their teenage daughter, Vicky, a tough girl of few words had taken me under her wing years previously when I was really small and let me visit on a Saturday afternoon and taught me to ride on her Shetland pony. As I got bigger I moved up the ranks to a Welsh Mountain mare and soon I was like one of the family, an adopted daughter and a little sister and stable hand to Vicky, who trained me up for gymkhanas in return for emptying buckets, mixing feeds, and carrying bales of hay and wheeling wheelbarrows. Soon enough I was staying for whole weekends at a time cantering up and down the bridle paths on the outskirts of Leeds, racing teenage boys on mopeds on a Western saddle on a 15 hand high skewbald. This horsiness was something very much endorsed by my mother at the time, she actively encouraged me to spend time off the streets of Kirkstall and she'd nearly always find a way to get me up to Pudsey every Saturday morning, sacrificing her precious weekend time with me. Now, years later when we get the big house in the country I miss these visits, I miss my friends and I often ask if I can go for a weekend stay but no matter how many times I ask and pester and plead I always get the same answer. No.

With the benefit of adult hindsight, it's easy for me to understand now why my requests were not met. Not only is my mother coping with a new life, a new relationship and ever-increasing hordes of children, but also she can't drive herself and until she passes her test she is stuck out in the middle of nowhere. Add to this the fact that one of the kids, two down from me, is suffering from a very serious illness and also the matter of an on-going court case so it's no wonder my pony club dreams were not top of her list of priorities.

Looking back I think my Mum's refusal to let me go boiled down to the simple fact of maternal jealousy. I'm sure it was deeply unsettling to her that even now, when we were finally under the same roof again, I wanted to be somewhere else, with a different family. She felt I was drifting away from her.

SFX: STATION AND PAY PHONE AGAIN.

'Hi, Mum it's me. Um, Mum I just wanted to ring you up because. Leeds train station. Leeds, no I really am. Well. I told Dad, I did, he said I could, it was my idea. I wanted to come and see Vicky so I –'

She tells me to get back on that train immediately. She deals with me like a little child, which to her I am, one of six or seven, I lose count but to me I most definitely am not. She manages to make me cry as only mothers can and as she shouts and raves it occurs to me that she really thinks that I will turn right back around and return to the boredom of her house, the endless influx of crazy visitors, the whines and pressing needs of my younger siblings, and the dreary fields of sheep. I don't have much money, I'm loathe to pump my sweaty fistful of coins in so she can shout at me more, but I put one more ten pee in and suddenly feel very small as I look around the hustle and bustle of the train station, people with lives and purpose, pushchairs and suitcases. It's very difficult to not do what your mother says, even when they are only a disembodied voice in your ear, and as she threatens and rages and tries to claim back her grip on her authority and force her eldest daughter home I choke down my tears, bite my lip and point blank refuse.

SFX: RECEIVER SLAMMED DOWN.

My horsey break is cut short when my step dad arrives the next day to take me home, much to the anger of my father whose parental consent has been grossly undermined.

SFX: INT. CAR SOUNDS.

The car journey home is silent. I stare out at the winding roads and the hills that I am beginning to hate. When we get back I seek her out, she isn't in the laundry but dealing with a baby somewhere upstairs, I can't remember which one. She is furious, she won't look at me or speak to me even, forgive me? Forget it. I lurk and loiter, I don't know what to do, I'm

waiting to take a cue from her, but she gives nothing away, she closes down, detaches and punishes me with this offhand dismissal that makes me mad and there is a mother-daughter stand-off for several days. I think this was the nearest she ever got to seeing me as an adult. Me, the eldest of her many girls, none of whom she witnessed reaching the door slamming tempers of teenage years. When she dies, her youngest two, twin babies are under a year old and still breastfeeding, she never got to do teenagers, adults, not properly - she was a baby specialist, a toddler breeder, an early years professor. This was probably the biggest moment I got to assert my independence, and although I don't know it at the time I make it count and meet her glares of disapproval with some of my own, equally as strong, equally as brooding, I am my mother's daughter and in our moods we find an equal respect for each other and our glares eventually soften, the anger fades away and soon enough she's the woman who cuts my toast into triangles again and gives me morning cuddles and brushes the tangles out of my hair and I'm the one who passes her the baby wipes, finds her tobacco tin and makes her laugh.

8.

A STATIONARY / WALKING TRACK.

A large tractor sized gate that overlooks sweeping fields and farms. There is a view of Kilburn white horse view and Sutton Bank on the horizon. The bushes on either side are adorned with bits of decorative leather, swallows nesting among oats. There are hanging apples, horse bits and tack.

SFX: BLACK BEAUTY THEME TUNE.

One day there is another new arrival. It's not a baby for a change and much more exciting than a flotation tank. Bracken the pony. Most of the family haven't ever seen a horse close up before and it's me that knows the names of all the bits of tack that fill the back barn, snaffle, martingale, hoof pick, I'm the specialist on this topic and I am in my element. Bracken is a great big black Fell of muscle and a strong willed stubbornness that I fall in love with at first sight, I cannot believe that I finally have a soul mate of my very own to trot off into the sunset with. Someone to understand me and devote their selves to me and to love me, I have my Lassie, my Black Beauty, my Gentle Ben.

Bracken doesn't see it this way. He has other ideas. He is a bad tempered wilful beast, who loves taking the route under the low branches, or stopping suddenly mid stride, pulling a dangerous middle of the road U-turn, getting his head underneath the bit and bombing us both home at break neck speed. No amount of sawing on the reins can change his mind and when we clatter into the yard he snorts and pants as I spit and stamp and curse. Mum brings me out a glass of Ribena and frowns and wonders whether this is a good idea after all and I roll my eyes, because she doesn't even know the difference between a head collar and a bridle and she can't tie slip knots onto the gate and she passes too close behind his back legs and wonders why he kicks out.

On a good day, when Bracken is placid and good willed, I ride long reined and he rewards my trust and as we explore these fields together in the long afternoons and weekends I taste a freedom and a solitude that I've never experienced before. I ramble these lanes for hours on end, learn all the short cuts through the stubble fields, the back lanes, the roads and woods. I find the stretches where a canter can be pushed on into a gallop and together we startle pheasants, turn up mud and leaves and dust and I take my fair share of falls in rain and mud and frost. I learn to master my own will and the pony's, pushing him on through streams, bucks and tractor shies, I spend hours in Husthwaite until we've both learnt the art of opening gates without dismounting. If I grasp a handful of thick mane half way up and lean forward far enough in my stirrups, I can pass him a treat as a reward. Bracken's neck pulls back into a beautiful curve as he reaches his muzzle towards my feet and snaffles up a crust, a mint, or an apple core. At night I sleep away the ache of long days, dream of mucked out straw, stuffed hay nets and the smell of saddle soap, I'm rarely out of jodhpurs and I wake early to heave hay bales and fill buckets, pulling on gloves, my pockets stuffed with polos. I leave behind the household and its endless noise and daily dramas, I find my peace in the stable block among the oats and pony nuts and nesting swallows.

When my Mum does finally pass her driving test my knowledge of the geography of this countryside comes into its own, I always get the front seat. My mum hollers me from the paddock from the back door, and together we load up the car with brats and toddlers and babies and we explore this landscape together. We take in craft fairs and coffee mornings and antique pine sales. I am her extra pair of hands and we take it turns with the pushchair on a walk to Newburgh Priory to feed the swans. I'm the energetic pair of legs to round up

unruly children with scruffy hair and faces covered in rusk. We like the abbeys best, me and my Mum, Byelands, Rievaulx. They remind me of Kirkstall Abbey in Leeds and when we lived together before and I think she likes them because she likes holy men and monks and special things like temples and ley lines and magic crystals. I like the pretty market towns and the way farms nestle amid trees and fields and weather. Sometimes on these days out I get her all to myself when the babies are wheeled into the shade to nap and the others are distracted with an ice cream, a swing or a stick and a puddle.

These moments are my best. The sweetest. Me looking up at her. Sucking apple juice from a carton through a plastic straw. She sits, crossed legged with a cream scone or a pot of tea. She makes a roll up, I watch her fingers. She licks the rizlas and looks up at me and smiles. She sees me then. She looks at me then. Her firstborn girl.

9.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

A footpath gate to the road that leads back into the village. It is covered in blue toy cars.

SFX: ROADS. CARS PASSING. THEY FADE UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

The last afternoon I spent with my mother was in a tack shop in Crayke. We were buying hoof oil or saddle soap and she was doing her best to please me, to mother me, to spoil me. It was one of those rare windows of just me and her, one token baby present, hoisted on her hip, the others all left at home. She looked out of place among the rows of riding boots and grooming brushes. She wasn't a horsey countryside Mum, she was a tired and overstretched but very loving one. She liked unicorns and dragons, underground caves, honeysuckle, jossticks, gnomes that live in toadstools, forget-me-knots, lasagne made with lentils, purples and greens, Rupert the Bear and Chinese inks. She drives me back to our rambling home in the hills and I kiss her on the cheek as she sits breastfeeding, a baby's tiny fist tangled in her hair. I kick off my riding boots and sprint upstairs two at a time to my bedroom with the view of the sheep and the distant city. And that was that, I never saw her again. She finished feeding then went back out in the car. Nipped to the shops, not far, a few miles from here. A ten minute drive at most.

SFX: CARS PASSING ON A ROAD.

It was these empty winding roads among the hills that finished her off. She learnt to drive too late in life, old dog, new tricks. She learnt in an automatic, so no clutch control, no gears to steady the speed, just stop and go. You can't live so far out and not drive, so many children and so many school runs and not drive? So she learnt. Badly. Accelerator heavy.

SFX: A CAR DRIVES OFF INTO THE DISTANCE AT SOME SPEED. IT ECHOES. LEAVES A TRAIL.

There was always something about my Mum that felt out of reach even when she was there, she was somehow or other always engaged, preoccupied, a bit ephemeral. She gave me cuddles that made me melt, a tray of Coco Pops and toast, blanket on the sofa with a comic when we were ill, decorate my doll's house, all of this, but actually engage with me, actually look me in the eyes and see me, I don't know if she ever did. She saw a work in progress me, a little me, the one I was. Before. Not finished. Under development. An early draft. Did I see her? Really her? Probably not. I always had the sense she was holding something back, for when I was old enough to understand her properly. I always looked forward to learning something of her inscrutable mysteries, the adult depths of her that I couldn't quite touch.

What did she look at in these hills on that final drive? What drew her eye away from the twists and turns of the road that day? Did she linger too long on the rear view mirror? Was it a startled pheasant rising from a field? Was her vision dazzled by the late afternoon August sun of her birth month? Was she searching for a different station, fingers twisting with the radio dial? Was she savouring her favourite stretch of view? Snatching at the beauty of the landscapes she had given up painting?

10.

A STATIONARY TRACK.

A bench in St Michael's churchyard. There is a small decorative memorial shrine. Lanterns with candles burning. Potted forget-me-nots, crystals, an ornate metal dragon, pretty stones and a framed picture of mother and daughter.

SFX: NATURAL BIRDSONG SOUNDS FADE UP AND THEN UNDER THE FOLLOWING.

When I was told that she was gone my world spiralled. A deep, deep, severing spiral. The horizons shifted, the room span around me and I panicked, and my legs carried me outside to retch under the late summer stars. The surrounding hills cradled me and I was very here, very alive, very now, very small. Very crippled by my own existence. That moment planted a part of me within this landscape, when grief and my twelve tender years took root. The moment when I squared up to death, or rather it found me, a bear trap in the woods.

There is you. And your life. And it will end. A terrifying solitude, that unites us all.

Like I said, my grief's well worn, the grating reddish stretch of its scar is now a supple silver that is soft to the touch.

When I walk this land it is different now. It's overgrown here, cut back there. The routes are the same, only now I can choose which turns to take, I'm no longer a passenger. I'm now a mother myself and as I walk within the greens and browns of these fields something falls away, the rhythm of my step is calming. The countryside opens up and time slows down. I am here again in the exquisite state of solitude that this scenery taught me to cherish.

Inside of me there is a landscape too. A huge expanse of unmapped, unpainted terrain. As I put pen to paper I find the meandering calm that eluded me in the downstairs bathroom and I relish the act of placing these words next to words, next to words, next to words. My desk is not in a distant attic with dusty brushes and paints, but in my dining room where I have to regularly pick off paper and bills and half-drunk teacups to claim my space, but claim it I do. Squaring up to death and loss teaches us to live, to value the time we have. It's the small print we can't ignore on the fragile contract we have with this time, this self, this earth.

Whenever I seek my mother now, it's not the laundry where I go. I sometimes make a pilgrimage to this village and here to the church to leave flowers and stand quietly and say her name, a memory carved in rock. She's there in the sound of the wind, the creaking of the pines, the surrounding sweep of fields, the warm summer sun that trickles over the churchyard.

And then there are the other days, when I cannot make this journey. I find her in every pile of towels I've ever folded, feel her in every picture of a pointy-eared pixie I see. I remember

her slow, thumbs out skanking dance in every reggae track I hear. There are occasional flashes of her knowing sparkling eyes in any one of my sister's faces. Sometimes I can recall a remnant of her slender sideways cool in my one of my own gestures. I have her hands, she's here in me. These very cells a homage to her life.

This is not only a song for my mother, but also a gentle wave to the little girl from the other side of her grief. I am here, with you, here in her future, beyond the confusion of her spiralling loss, and on the other side of everything that's been since then. All the chapters, phases, fads and eras that have lead me to here, within this landscape. Where sorrow matures into a sweetness that sings instead of cries. My words are a blessing, a thank you to my mother and to these hills that meander gently towards the sky.

SFX: 'DREAMLAND' BY MARCIA GRIFFITHS AT IT FADES OUT GENTLE BIRDSONG COMES UP AND PLAYS OUT FOR SOME TIME BEFORE GENTLY FADING AWAY.

END

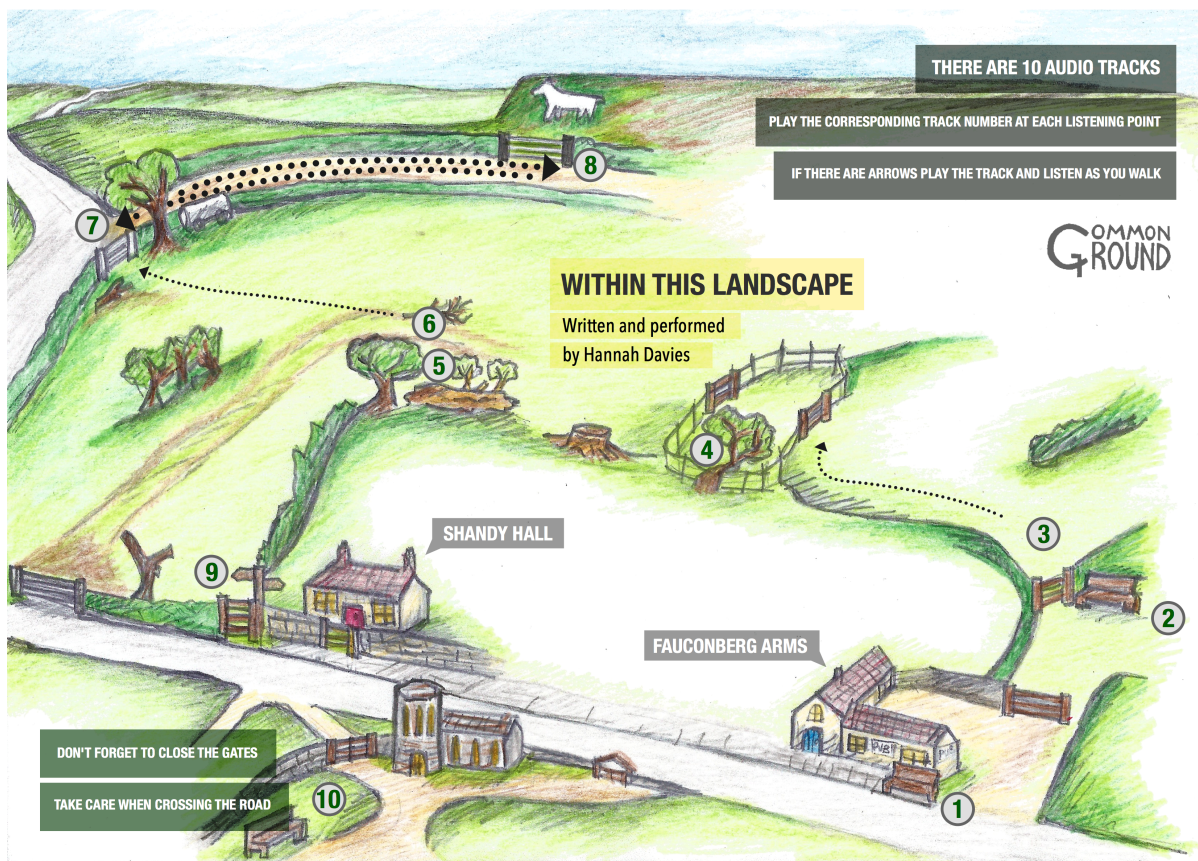


Figure 1. Mapped route of *Within This Landscape*, artwork by Hannah Davies .

© Hannah Davies / Common Ground Theatre

PART TWO

WRITING MOTHERHOOD

FOR CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE:

THESIS

INTRODUCTION

The three playscripts I submit in combination with this thesis all relate to and are an expression of my experiences and interests as a woman, a mother and an active creative theatre artist. All of the scripts are self-contained, independent pieces of writing, but they also have connective features that interrelate and overlap in terms of motherhood, creativity and artistic identity. Collectively, the plays form an exploration of motherhood, and interrogate how women from different socio-political and historical backgrounds are continually challenged to meet and prioritise their own needs (as women and artists) while attempting to fulfil the restrictive social expectations of the maternal role. The women in my scripts are often resentful of motherhood, sometimes unequal to it, and sometimes sacrifice too much of themselves – all are ambivalent about the demands of motherhood and all pay a high price as women and artists. The first play, *This is Not a Festival* examines motherhood through a fictional New Age Traveller, Danni, and her son Leaf in the 1980s; the second, *Githa*, considers the trap of impending motherhood through the real-life, upper middle class writer, Githa Sowerby in the early twentieth century; and the third play, *Within this Landscape* is an autobiographical audio journey through the countryside of my childhood, an investigation into how my own mother dealt with these restrictions, and a reflection on my relationship with her and my own artistic development as actor and writer. Each of the plays also constitutes a different experiment with process and form, a result of my differing creative relationships to each, not just as a writer but in the case of *Githa* and *Within this Landscape* also as the performer. I cannot therefore separate a reflection on these mother figures from my own role as a writer-performer in two of them. It is also significant that I am myself a mother and it is interesting that I have been drawn to writing and performing women who, like myself, have tried or are trying to find an artistic outlet for themselves, or forge an artistic career.

It is relevant to give a brief summary of my training and career trajectory: originally I trained at Mountview as an actor from 1998 - 2001 and worked as a professional actor in radio and

theatre. When I found I was expecting my first (and only) child in my mid twenties I had to re-assess my position as a performer. In preparing to become a mother I quickly realised I would struggle to maintain a career as an actor and so, keen to continue along the path that I had chosen, I decided to investigate the possibilities that a career in playwriting offered instead. During my pregnancy I secured a place on the Royal Court Young Writer's Programme where I studied on both their Introduction to Playwriting course and their Invitation Writers Group. Having often been tasked with writing the dialogue for scripted sections in devised pieces at drama school, and always written for my own private pleasure from a young age and into my adulthood, I found the experience of learning to craft dramatic dialogue creatively liberating. Actor training had provided me with a strong grounding in staging dynamics, character, sub-text, plot and dramaturgy and I found I was able to create scripts that had an actor's embodied understanding of dramatic potentialities. As a result of this early playwriting work on the Young Writers Programme I was selected to represent the Royal Court at the Interplay Festival of Young European Playwrights in Lichtenstein in 2006, and my first ever full-length play was performed as part of the Royal Court Young Writers Festival 2007. This experience cemented a commitment and passion to working as a playwright and since then I have actively pursued the development of my craft, seeking outlets for my work, including scratch nights, workshops, rehearsed readings, and submission of my work to award schemes and playwriting competitions. More recently my work has begun to receive full-scale professional productions. In 2009 I graduated with an MA in Theatre: Writing, Directing and Performance from the University of York. It was there that I began to reflect on my work from a critical distance and to ask more searching questions about my processes of working and I started to interrogate my playwriting strategies with greater rigour – this, in turn, led me to the PhD Research by Practice in Playwriting. What I did not anticipate was that much of this artistic journey has been undertaken as a single mother.

CHAPTER 1

THIS IS NOT A FESTIVAL



Figure 2. The Battle of the Beanfield 1 June 1985. © Tim Maylon

The Battle of the Beanfield

This image was the starting point for the first play in my creative portfolio, *This is Not a Festival*. Set in Margaret Thatcher's era (1978 - 1997), the play concerns a specific historical event, the Battle of the Beanfield, a violent and systematic police attack on New Age travellers that took place in Wiltshire on 1 June 1985. New Age travellers travelled around the country in a 'Peace Convoy', a term coined in 1982 when a large number of old buses and vans 'made its way from the commercial festival at Glastonbury to support the women

at the recently established peace camp outside the USAF base at Greenham Common.’² This movement peaked in the mid 1980s, and it was then that the government took action in an attempt to suppress the travellers’ movement.³ The image above shows a young mother and child being escorted by a police officer across the beanfield on the day of the attack. It is not clear from the photograph whether the woman is being removed from the violent scene behind her for her own safety, or whether she herself is being detained. What is clear, from the woman’s facial expression, her posture and the way she is cradling her infant child, is that she is distressed, vulnerable and alone. In my first play it was my intention to explore motherhood from the perspective of a woman who, like the one depicted above, is at the extreme end of social and economic marginalisation and struggling to meet the demands of motherhood in a diverse set of circumstances.

The Battle of the Beanfield took place when a convoy of over 150 New Age traveller vehicles sought to gain access to Stonehenge, an English Heritage site, in an attempt to set up the twelfth Stonehenge Free Festival. This un-policed and unofficial gathering dates as far back as the 1890s when ‘crowds of up to 3,000 people turned up when the weather was fine, bringing their own entertainment with them – mandolin players and gramophones in the 1920s and 1930s, and skiffle groups and student jazz bands in the 1950s.’⁴ The midsummer festival became associated with the countercultural awakenings of the 1960s and had steadily grown in numbers. It was seen as a direct threat to civil obedience and a challenge

² Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity* (London and New York: Cassell 2000) p.101; see also Sasha Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press 1995).

³ For the history of travellers in Britain see Colin Clarke and Margaret Greenfields, *Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire 2006); Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998); Kalwant Bhopal *Insiders, Outsiders and Others: Gypsies and Identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press 2008); John Coxhead, *The Last Bastion of Racism? Gypsies, Travellers and Policing* (London: Trentham Books 2007); Joanna Richardson and Andrew Rider, *Gypsies and Travellers: Empowerment and Inclusion in British Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2012); T. A. Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire 1997).

⁴ Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield* (Plymouth: Enabler Publications 2006), p.6.

to the mood of intolerance in Margaret Thatcher's government.⁵ In order to prevent the travellers gaining access to the Stonehenge site, police enforced a four-mile exclusion zone, setting up roadblocks across the travellers' route and bringing them to a halt on the A303, a narrow country road. After police began to break through the windscreens of stationary vehicles, attempting to forcibly remove their drivers and passengers, the convoy vehicles, many of which had young families inside, pulled off-road and through a hedge into an adjacent beanfield, where the police surrounded them.⁶ After several hours of detaining the travellers, 1,600 riot police moved onto the field, and a 'battle' ensued which led to the biggest mass civil arrest in modern British history; over 400 travellers were placed in custody, their children taken into care, their dogs put down, and their trailers destroyed or impounded. Journalist Kim Sabido's report gives a chilling account of the violence he and his crew witnessed:

What we – the ITN camera crew and myself as a reporter – have seen in the last 30 minutes here in this field has been some of the most brutal police treatment of people that I have witnessed in my entire career as a journalist. The number of people who have been hit by policemen, who have been clubbed while holding babies in their arms in coaches around this field is yet to be counted.⁷

Andy Worthington's 2005 publication *The Battle of the Beanfield* gives a comprehensive account of the events of 1 June 1985, including records of police radio logs, interviews with the travellers themselves, and details of the 1991 court proceedings in which the police were found guilty of wrongful arrest, assault and criminal damage.⁸ The book also contains

⁵ Andy Worthington, 'Remembering the Beanfield', *Guardian*, 1 June 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2009/jun/01/remembering-the-battle-of-the-beanfield> [accessed 8 July 2014].

⁶ Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.36.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.5.

⁸ See 'Interview with Lord Gifford QC' in Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.151.

the transcript of an interview with Sabido, who reflects on the shocking ‘para-military tactics’⁹ the police employed on the day of the attack:

[...] the way that the police behaved in the final stages of the Beanfield, and how they confronted people and their property was, I think, one of the biggest shocks of my life, more shocking than any deaths I’ve seen in a war zone, simply because the police are a civil force, supposedly carrying out a civil duty...¹⁰

Sabido describes the event as ‘like a scene from *Zulu*’ or ‘like a scene from Rome between gladiators and lions’,¹¹ and gives a particularly harrowing account of a woman with a young baby in her arms being violently removed from her trailer. Sabido reports a deliberate strategy was formed by the police force to cover the lenses of his camera crew with riot shields, in an attempt to prevent them capturing footage of the wilful (and illegal) violence they were committing. He goes on to recount how ITN edited the footage he submitted for his report, dubbing another reporter’s voice over a cut-down selection of the less graphic material for airing on that evening’s news.¹² He concludes his interview with an assertion that ITN consciously censored the coverage of the event, ultimately destroying the rushes of the ‘nastier shots’,¹³ including those he and his team had captured of the woman being mauled. The image of a young mother being physically assaulted, and the subsequent suppression of her story not only gave a telling vision of Thatcher’s Britain but also provided a fitting starting point for my research.

Travellers

⁹ Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.91.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp.89-90.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.90.

¹² Sabido, Kim. For original footage of his edited ITN news report see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LHizyCtakw&feature=youtu.be> [accessed 14 July 2014].

¹³ ‘Interview with Kim Sabido’ in Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.9.

It is important to highlight how the New Age traveller differs from traditional Roma, Gypsy or Irish travellers. New Age travellers' nomadism has been described as inauthentic in that it represents a self-constructed identity, a way of life chosen as opposed to one inherited by birth:

[...] gypsies were true nomads who had a culture based around travel, whereas Travellers were not true nomads but interlopers on the gypsy lifestyle. True nomads here implied that they had been living this way of life for a 'long time' and that their way of life had an authenticity to it that was grounded in some sense of origin by birth. [...] A 'long time' was defined in council policy at the time as more than five years.¹⁴

The Caravan Act of 1968 meant that local authorities were obliged to provide basic sites and facilities for (Irish and Roma) Gypsies, but not for New Age travellers, as more recent and inauthentic (non-ethnic) additions to a nomadic way of life.¹⁵ Perpetually demonised by the tabloids, the New Age travellers were presented as 'hippies' and 'freaks' – wilful tax dodgers, whose alternative way of life would not be condoned by the Conservative government.¹⁶ On 3 June 1983, Home Secretary Douglas Hurd MP described the hippie convoy as a 'band of medieval brigands who have no respect for law and order and the rights of others'.¹⁷ Police raids on sites were common, and as local authorities had no legal obligations to provide for them New Age were regularly moved on from illegal site to illegal site; congregations on laybys were common, as was taking up residence in the private fields and forests of liberal-minded landowners.

¹⁴ Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity*, p.101.

¹⁵ See the Caravan Sites Act of 1968, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/52> [accessed 12 September 2014].

¹⁶ Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity*, pp.99-100.

¹⁷ Peter Gardner, *Medieval Brigands: Pictures in the Year of the 'Hippie' Convoy* (Bristol: Redcliffe Press Ltd 1987) p.7.

The Earl of Cardigan gave refuge to hundreds of New Age travellers on a site within his privately-owned Savernake Forest after the Battle of the Beanfield attack. An active campaigner for travellers' human rights, he was portrayed as an eccentric fool in the tabloids: 'Lordy! Hippies get a Refuge.'¹⁸ *The Mirror* was more permissive in its reporting, publishing a quote from the Earl: 'I'm taking a lot of flak from some local residents who don't want these people here,' he said. 'But they didn't see pregnant women and children going through hell as I did.'¹⁹ In 1986 Thatcher declared in a public statement in the House of Commons that 'I am only too delighted to do anything I can to make things difficult for such things as hippy convoys. [...] if fresh legislation on criminal trespass is needed to deter hippies, it will be introduced.'²⁰ Not long after this statement the 1986 Public Order Act criminalised 'attempts by more than twelve vehicles to move on to a site without permission, thus making convoys easier to police and easier to evict.'²¹ The 1994 Criminal Justice Act²² further increased the powers of police, and a number of clauses were written to impose stronger restrictions on the lifestyle after it had evolved into the rave and ecstasy scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s.²³

New Age travellers are still a feature of British society today, particularly in the South West of England and Wales, but the movement has largely merged with the now mainstream festival culture. Travelling by convoy is a thing of the past, but some permanent New Age traveller sites do remain, one example being a site in Teignbridge, near Exeter in Devon, that

¹⁸ *The Sun*, 4 June 1985, quoted in Timothy Mason, *Reading of the Riots: Interpretations of Disorder in Britain Since 1980*, <http://www.timothyjpmason.com/WebPages/Publications/riots.htm#Pt2> [accessed 14 September 2014].

¹⁹ *The Mirror*, 4 June 1985, also quoted in the above. For an interview with the Earl of Cardigan see Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.94.

²⁰ Margaret Thatcher, <http://www.margarethatcher.org/document/106413> [accessed 12 September 2014].

²¹ Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Van Loads of Uproarious Humanity*. pp.51-52.

²² See the Criminal Justice Act, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/contents> [accessed 14 September 2014].

²³ See Jennifer R. Ward, *Drugs and Dealing in the London Rave Scene* (Cullompton: Willan 2010); Matthew Collin, *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* (London: Serpents Tail 1998); Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture* (London: Picador 1998).

has been used illegally since 2001. This site was recently given the go-ahead for an investment of £1.1 million. This is notable as it is the first financial investment made by an authority specifically for 'new travellers'.²⁴ However, prejudice against them is still rife. Andrew MacKay MP (Bracknell) is on record as saying the following on 15 January 2002:

They are scum. People who do what these people have done do not deserve the same human rights as my decent constituents.²⁵

This is Not a Festival: Research and Development

This is Not a Festival takes the Battle of The Beanfield as the inciting incident. I first learned of this historical event as a child through close family friends who were present at the attack. The single mother and her two young daughters had been victims of the police force's horrific brutality and were made homeless after their trailer was seized, systematically vandalised and impounded. The experience of hearing the youngest daughter's account of the violence of that day (she was six years old at the time of the attack) has always remained with me. I was drawn to explore the Battle of the Beanfield and the New Age traveller lifestyle as a subject matter after I was selected to present fifteen minutes of material 'inspired by a true event' in a Script Yorkshire *Script Factor* event at the York Theatre Royal on 13 September 2010. This short piece formed the beginnings of material that later expanded into a full-length stage piece.²⁶ As well as undertaking social and political research into the decade and events I was seeking to write about, I made contact with my traveller friends who gave me a generous interview based on their experience of a self-imposed

²⁴ Richard Gray, *New Age Travellers Camp to be Built With 1 Million Of Public Money*, *Telegraph*, 9 April 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/countryside/9983084/New-Age-travellers-camp-to-be-built-with-1-million-public-money.html> [accessed 10 July 2014].

²⁵ Andrew MacKay MP, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo020115/halltext/20115h05.htm> [accessed 12 September 2014].

²⁶ *Script Factor*, chaired by Ged Cooper (Script Yorkshire), York Theatre Royal Studio, 13 September 2010.

nomadic lifestyle in 1980s Britain.²⁷ The transcript of this interview was crucial to the development of my play, the account forming much of the basis for my fictionalised version of a New Age traveller narrative. The process of personally interviewing people whom I was seeking to represent was deeply informative, particularly as it was becoming increasingly clear from my research that the label 'New Age traveller' is misleading as they are not a distinct socio-economic class with a single identity; rather they are a highly eclectic grouping, a melting pot of separate factions and tribes who are create their own individualised identities:

[They draw] on sources as diverse as youth cultures, Eastern mysticism, Native American traditions, environmental and pacifist beliefs, identification with the communalism of the Diggers and the Levellers during the English Civil War, gypsy lifestyles, commune living, the medieval mountebank and circus entertainers, stylistic elements from Rastafarianism such as dreadlocks, Celtic paganism, Arthurian legends of Avalonia and Earth Mysteries beliefs.²⁸

The threat of a unified revolutionary force that the media and government presented was simply not the case.

Sheila Craig, a traveller who was present at the Beanfield attack, put together a booklet to commemorate the event. Her opening states quite clearly that 'There is no 'Peace Convoy': it is a conglomerate of free thinking people with vastly different religious ethnic and social beliefs who put truth above all else.'²⁹ The mother of my interviewees, whose decision it was to travel on the road with her two young daughters, confirmed this, also asserting that there was no overall subscription to a unified belief, but rather adherence to a generalised 'alternative' social agenda. My interviewees described 'little factions' of the convoy

²⁷ Hannah Davies Archives, Mother and Daughter Interview, London, 8 October 2011. On request I have preserved my interviewees anonymity.

²⁸ Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Van Loads of Uproarious Humanity*, p.95.

²⁹ Sheila Craig, *Stonehenge: '85 Souvenir Issue* (Glastonbury: Unique Publications 1986) p.1.

including 'the Brew crew' (drinkers of Special Brew, a cheap super-strength lager), 'the God squad' (who held daily Bible readings), the 'rainbow tepee lot' (those living in Native American Indian dwellings), 'Mad Max types' (a reference to the apocalyptic Mel Gibson film),³⁰ 'hippies', 'rainbow Nazis' (those who lived their Green Party ideals to overbearing evangelical standards), and 'politico shit-heads' (Greenham Common activists, CND campaigners).³¹ The idea that this lifestyle offered a way for individuals to consciously construct an identity interested me greatly and I was keen to find a way to represent a reliable New Age traveller narrative, in spite of my becoming increasingly aware that the issue of representation is problematic in itself.

Representations of Travellers

Finding informed representations of any type of traveller is difficult. Traditional Gypsy and Irish traveller communities have most notable presence through the offensive racial stereotypes presented in reality television shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. This prime-time television programme attracted audience figures of over 9 million in 2011 and was Channel 4's most watched show.³² In May 2012 the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) granted an appeal after its decision not to investigate complaints against Channel 4's promotional billboard posters for the hit programme (then in its second series). The campaign featured photographic images of real Gypsy and traveller children from the series emblazoned with the words 'BIGGER. FATTER. GYPSIER.'³³ In October of the same year the ASA ruled that the images reinforced negative stereotypes. The advert 'reaffirmed commonly held prejudices about Gypsy and Traveller children in a way that was likely to

³⁰ *Mad Max*, directed by George Miller, Warner Brothers, 1979.

³¹ Hannah Davies Archives, Mother and Daughter Interview, London, 8 October 2011. p.1-4.

³² 'Gypsy Show was Channel 4's Most Watched Show in 2011,' *BBC*, 13 January 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-16544746> [accessed July 2014].

³³ Ian Burrell, 'A Big Fat Victory for Travellers as Racist Adverts to be Investigated' *The Independent*, 29 May 2012, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/a-big-fat-victory-for-travellers-as-racist-adverts-to-be-investigated-7794154.html> [accessed 14 July 2014].

cause distress and mental harm to children from those communities.’³⁴ These distressing racial stereotypes can also be found in most tabloid coverage that relates to this community. The coverage of the Dale Farm eviction of 2011 gives a chilling insight into the current volatile nature of traveller evictions and the strong political responses that are inflicted on the growing traveller population of this country.³⁵ For the first time, the 2011 government Census included a dedicated tick box for the group Gypsy or Irish traveller, and 58,000 people self-identified as belonging to this group (individuals who indicated any other type of traveller in the ‘White Other’ option were also assigned to this classification), making them the smallest ethnic minority in Britain.³⁶ This figure was contested in 2013 by a report undertaken by The Traveller Movement (the leading British charity regarding traveller issues), who cite figures based on Local Authority Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAAs) and Census Caravan Counts which put the figure closer to 120,000, a number that also includes non-ethnic Gypsies and caravan dwellers.³⁷ New Age Travellers are absorbed into this figure.

Given that British travellers are ‘widely considered by government (national and local) and charities to be a vulnerable marginalised group who suffer from poor outcomes’ it is odd that their plight is neglected by self-proclaimed left-wing theatre makers.³⁸ This lack of representation on the stage is something that Romany writer Dan Allum sought to address with the founding of The Romany Theatre Company (RTC), a company whose work is ‘rooted in the culture and experiences of Romany people and focuses strongly on their struggle for

³⁴ Mark Sweney, ‘Big Fat Gypsy Wedding Posters “Endorse Negative Stereotypes”’, *The Guardian*, 3 October 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/oct/03/big-fat-gypsy-weddings-stereotypes#> [accessed 14 July 2014].

³⁵ ‘Dale Farm Eviction: Riot Cops Fire Tasers at Protesters as Eviction Turns Violent’, *Mirror*, 10 October 2011, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/dale-farm-eviction-riot-cops-275193> [accessed 14 July 2014].

³⁶ Figures taken from the Office for National Statistics, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Identity> [accessed 14 July 2014].

³⁷ *Gypsy and Traveller population in Britain and the 2011 Census*, <http://www.travellermovement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Gypsy-and-Traveller-population-in-England-policy-report.pdf> [accessed 14 July 2014].

³⁸ Ibid.

equality, challenging negative opinions of them and the lives that they lead.³⁹ This company has produced several theatrical productions, and after the success of Allum's 2007 play *Achting Tan*,⁴⁰ the RTC were re-commissioned by the BBC to produce 36 fifteen-minute episodes of the piece which ran from 2008 to 2010. Other examples of recent plays that prioritise traveller narratives include Chloe Moss's *The Way Home* (2006),⁴¹ a piece that focuses on the stories of the Irish travelling community in Liverpool, and *Shraddhā* (2010) by Natasha Langdrige.⁴² Produced at the Soho Theatre, this play tells the story of a family of soon-to-be evicted Romany travellers, whose site is moved to make way for the building of the Olympic Village. Even more invisible is the representation of New Age travellers, whose status as interlopers and lack of 'authentic' or unified culture denies them a legitimate cultural voice. *This is Not a Festival* seeks to address this profound dismissal. My play examines how a marginalised single (traveller) mother and her child cope in the aftermath of a violent eviction (the Battle of the Beanfield), and explores whether a young, single, working class mother can find any means of self-expression when faced with such extreme levels of social marginalisation.

The most commercially successful example of a traveller being represented on stage can be found in Jez Butterworth's West End hit *Jerusalem*. This Olivier and Tony award-winning play was originally produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 2009, transferred to the Apollo Theatre in January 2010, and opened on Broadway in April 2011.⁴³ Set in Wiltshire on St. George's Day and the day of the local fair, Butterworth's play centres around the plight of Johnny 'Rooster' Byron (played by Mark Rylance), a settled traveller (of Romany descent) whose drug-fuelled debauchery, wild parties, and unruly behaviour has prompted a residents' petition and the local council's serving of an eviction notice. The play is wild and riotous, providing an uproarious portrayal of the drug culture of the hedonistic young. It is also an overwhelmingly heroised depiction of a dysfunctional and irresponsible male, in a

³⁹ Romany Theatre Company, <http://www.romanytheatrecompany.com/about-us/> [accessed 10 July 2014].

⁴⁰ Dan Allum. *Achting Tan*. Directed by Fiona Kelcher, BBC Radio 4, 19 October 2012.

⁴¹ Chloe Moss, *The Way Home* (London: Nick Hern Books 2006).

⁴² Natasha Langdrige, *Shraddhā* (London: Oberon 2009).

⁴³ Jez Butterworth. *Jerusalem*. Directed by Ian Rickson, The Royal Court, July 2009.

society where women are still expected to bear the brunt of parental responsibility and whose lives and careers continue to be restricted by crippling childcare costs. Childcare costs in Britain are reported to have risen 19% over the last year alone.⁴⁴ This lack of affordable childcare is restricting cultural representations of the female artistic voice, and the material conditions of theatre militate against mothers. Theatre Director Marianne Elliot attributes a misbalance of female directors to industry pay rates for directors that are unable to compete with the astronomical costs of childcare: 'if you are a female with children you just won't do it. It's as simple as that.'⁴⁵

All of the critical reviews of the premiere production of *Jerusalem* are a celebration of a troubling version of masculinity.⁴⁶ Johnny 'Rooster' Byron, the play's central character, is written in the tradition of the male 'anti-hero', and his misogynist views go unchallenged by critics. *Jerusalem's* misogynistic content invokes the unrecognised domestic abuse portrayed through the character of Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*, a play hailed as the turning point for contemporary British drama and celebrated as the beginning of a new age in writing.⁴⁷

In the reviews of the premiere run of *Jerusalem*, critics overlooked all of the hard facts about Johnny's personal life. When scrutinised closely these paint a devastating image of a deeply damaged (alcohol and drug abusing), failing man as well as an irresponsible and brutal father. Nearly all of the critics were blind to this, only one (out of eighteen) acknowledging his role as a parent at all. This is disturbing, as one of the play's emotional climaxes features the protagonist's blatant rejection of his son:

⁴⁴ Harriet Meyer, 'Childcare costs rise by 19% in one year – survey', *Guardian*, 11 January 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/jan/12/soaring-cost-of-childcare> [accessed 14 July 2014].

⁴⁵ Matthew Helmley, 'Poor Pay Stops Mothers Being Directors', *The Stage*, 17 July 2014, <http://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2014/07/poor-pay-stops-mothers-directors-marianne-elliott/> [accessed 14 July 2014].

⁴⁶ *London Theatre Record*, vol. XXIX, 14, 2 July-15 July 2009.

⁴⁷ John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (London and New York: Penguin 1982).

[JOHNNY]... Remember the blood. The blood.

He kneels in front of his boy. Clasps his shoulders. Holds his eye.

School is a lie. Prison's a waste of time. Girls are wondrous. Grab your fill. No man was ever lain in his barrow wishing he'd loved one less woman. Don't listen to no one and nothing but what your own heart bids. Lie. Cheat. Steal. Fight to the death. Don't give up. Show me your teeth.

MARKY does so.

You'll be fine.

JOHNNY hugs MARKY to him.

Now go find your mother. Go on. Get.

*MARKY heads off.*⁴⁸

This is a lesson in bite-size fathering; life lessons are reduced to a pocket-sized checklist, before a child can be sent back to the appropriate responsibility and assumed safeguarding of his mother, so that Johnny can get on with the more important business of cursing Kennet and Avon Council and drumming up an army of his ancestral Byron brothers. It goes without question that if Butterworth's central character were a woman, she would have been condemned outright (as both Joyce and Marlene were in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*).⁴⁹ A mother who puts her needs and ideals before those of her children is considered fair game as a target for vilification.⁵⁰ I find it deeply problematic that theatre managements continue

⁴⁸ Jez Butterworth, *Jerusalem* (London: Nick Hern 2009) pp.107-108.

⁴⁹ *London Theatre Record*, vol. II, 18, August 26-September 8, 1982.

⁵⁰ An absent father rarely makes headlines. Newspapers and magazines are awash with articles that report mothers who abandon their children. Here are three examples, of hundreds: Amanda Cable, 'How CAN a Mother Leave her Children?', *Daily Mail*, 22 June 2006, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-391876/How-CAN-mother-leave-children.html> [accessed 14 July 2014]; Robin Eveleigh, 'Mum abandoned her Children for a Man she Met Online', *Mirror*, 30 January 2013, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/mum-abandoned-her-children-for-a-man-she-met-1562348> [accessed 14 July 2014]; Tom Rawle, 'Mum Of 12 Who Abandoned ALL Her Kids To Flee With Toyboy Lover "Did it for Them"', *Daily Star*, 29 July 2014, <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest->

to overlook narratives from the Gypsy and travelling communities, and noteworthy that on the rare occasions that they do stage plays they are still obsessed with an overwhelmingly male narrative.

Critics overwhelmingly identify with Johnny 'Rooster' Byron's supposed 'tragedy' of ill-equipped fatherhood and miss his unashamed rejection of his son. *Daily Telegraph* critic Charles Spencer completely overlooks this, instead commenting on the nuances of actor Mark Rylance's performance: 'And in scenes with his six-year-old son he conjures a mixture of terrible loneliness that is almost too painful to watch.'⁵¹ This sentiment is repeated by the *Guardian's* Michael Billington's bewildering response: 'he seems shy with his young son.'⁵² By contrast, Tim Walker's 2010 *Sunday Telegraph* review gives a summation of Johnny that offers a candid appraisal: 'ultimately the man is just a waster and a very bad father to boot', but this is perhaps more to do with Walker's overall dislike of the play ('sometimes a hot ticket leaves me cold'), rather than a pressing concern for society's willingness to overlook an irresponsibly absent father.⁵³ Overall, the critics chose to celebrate Johnny as 'Napoleonic', a 'primeval force of nature', a 'modern day myth maker' and, disturbingly, the play is widely received as a 'lament for England's mythical past.'⁵⁴

Fatherhood is also explored in *Jerusalem* through the character of Troy, the angry stepfather of missing girl Phaedra.⁵⁵ We first meet Phaedra at the start of the play when, dressed as a fairy reveller,⁵⁶ she gives an eerie rendition of the hymn of the play's title, 'Jerusalem'.⁵⁷ She

[news/391607/Mum-who-abandoned-12-kids-to-flee-with-toyboy-lover-says-it-s-for-the-best](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/391607/Mum-who-abandoned-12-kids-to-flee-with-toyboy-lover-says-it-s-for-the-best) [accessed 14 July 2014].

⁵¹ *Theatre Record*, vol. XXIX, 14, 2 July-15 July 2009.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Theatre Record*, vol. XXX, 03, 29 January-11 February 2010.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Butterworth's story is resonant of the Greek myth Phaedra and Hippolytus. See Geddes and Grosset, *Classical Mythology* (New Lanark: Gresham Publishing 1995) p.443.

⁵⁶ Jez Butterworth, *Jerusalem*, p.5.

⁵⁷ 'Jerusalem' is a poem by English artist William Blake (1757-1827). It was set to music by Hubert Parry in 1916. See *William Blake, The Complete Illuminated Book* (London: Thames

also opens the second act with the song 'Werewolf' by Barry Dransfield, which alludes to her vulnerability as the possible prey of a monster, 'and he's killed some young maiden before the birds do sing'.⁵⁸ As the play progresses we learn that Phaedra is missing: 'Phaedra. Her Mum says she ain't been home in days.'⁵⁹ It is implied that Johnny Byron could be a possible abductor or could have caused her to go missing. When Troy pays a visit to Johnny to demand information about the whereabouts of his missing stepdaughter, Johnny confronts him about his intentions towards her, implying that he is sexually abusive towards her; 'I understand mate. You're just worried. It's not that you feel a bit randy today.'⁶⁰ After launching into an abusive, racist attack ('I will beat you into your grave. Into your grave Gypsy')⁶¹ Troy leaves, none the wiser as to his step-daughter's whereabouts. Not long after his exit we see Phaedra stumble out of Johnny's trailer, '*Shaking. Trembling. Shallow breathing.*'⁶² It is not clear whether Johnny has provided refuge for Phaedra, or is himself a predator. The implication is that there may have even been some sort of sexual assault by Johnny, something which we later learn is not the case ('I don't expect anything from you fairy').⁶³ Troy returns at the end of Act Two, with two friends who give Johnny a severe and bloody beating which triggers his decline. Troy provides an equally lamentable version of fatherhood. All the female characters in Butterworth's play are marginal and the victims of male exploitation, reduced to token ciphers functioning in relation to Rooster Byron.

Dawn, the mother of Johnny's son (and not of Romany descent), features in just one scene, arriving to drop Marky off for a day at the fair with his father, and is furious to find Johnny already intoxicated and incapable of taking his son for his much anticipated day out. After it becomes clear that Johnny will not make an attempt at change, even for the sake of his son who desperately needs his father's emotional support, Dawn asks to use Johnny's phone to

& Hudson 2008); Charles L. Graves, *Hubert Parry: His Life and Works* (London: Macmillan 1926).

⁵⁸ Barry Dransfield, 'The Werewolf', *Barry Dransfield*, 1972.

⁵⁹ Jez Butterworth, *Jerusalem*, p.27.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.81.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.80.

⁶² *Ibid.* p.84.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p.102.

make a call. It is clear from the conversation that we hear that she is talking to a lover. As she is on the phone, Johnny goes to her handbag, which she has left on a table:

JOHNNY *goes over to her bag. He knocks it off the table. Stuff spills out, he looks around in it. Some knitting has spilled out.*⁶⁴

Later on in the scene Johnny picks up the knitting and confronts Dawn with it.

JOHNNY: Booties. Wow-wee. Are you up the pole? Are you pregnant, Dawn? You pregnant again. Bloody hell. You are, aren't you.

DAWN: It's none of your business.

JOHNNY: You having a baby Dawn?

DAWN: No, I am not having a baby.

JOHNNY: Then what you knitting booties for? Dawn? What you knitting booties for if you're not having a baby?⁶⁵

The (verbal) abuse of a pregnant woman is again reminiscent of Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*. The discovery of knitted booties as a way to signify a pregnant woman to an audience is offensively outdated, a jarring choice that would be more fitting in the theatre of a long-gone era. Perhaps Butterworth is implying that Dawn's pregnancy to another man in some way redeems Johnny's incompetent fathering. Any concerns for the welfare of Johnny's son are apparently negated by the presence of Dawn, a woman who is so *motherly* that she is once again 'up the pole.' There are surely more contemporary and less patronising ways than the presence of knitted booties to reveal a woman's pregnancy to an audience.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.67.

⁶⁵ Ibid. pp.68-69.

Jerusalem is a flawed and troubling representation of male travellers, and critics fell in line with the play's values and failed to critique the piece for its misogyny. In *This is Not a Festival* I centralise the story of the women and explore how they try to reconcile their own needs with those of their children, and how they are crushed by economic and social challenges.

***Beanfield* by Shaun McCarthy**

Shaun McCarthy's play *Beanfield* is the only contemporary play, to my knowledge, that deals exclusively with a New Age traveller narrative. The play takes the Battle of the Beanfield as its subject matter and was written to mark the twenty-five year anniversary of the event. The production opened at the Bike Shed Theatre in Exeter in June 2010, later transferring to the Tobacco Factory Theatre in Bristol as well as being performed at two festivals in Devon.⁶⁶ McCarthy's play is an ambitious piece, and his intention of wishing to bring one of the less widely known atrocities of Thatcher's government to the awareness of the general public is clear. McCarthy's play charts the events of the 'battle' and prioritises a wide socio-political contextualisation and framing of the event and the 1980s climate.

Beanfield's main storyline is dedicated to the experiences of New Age traveller Steamer and his posher girlfriend Annie, but sub-plots also include a naïve partygoer, Diane, and a suburban couple from Birmingham who are inadvertently caught up in the roadblock chaos; the play also depicts scenes from a local Wiltshire council committee and police constabularies, and concludes with an acceleration in time in order to visit the court proceedings that took place in the 1990s. McCarthy frames this multi-angled approach by using Shakespearean blank verse throughout the script, drawing on many references to his plays, in particular *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. 'Shakespeare understood about class,

⁶⁶ See Beautiful Days Festival, <http://www.beautifuldays.org/> [accessed 14 September 2014]; Aeon Festival (2006-2012) <http://www.middevongazette.co.uk/Niki-calls-time-Aeon-festival/story-16775624-detail/story.html> [accessed 14 September 2014].

authority, land and freedom [...] so we'll borrow some of his language to tell our story.'⁶⁷ The Shakespearean resonance serves McCarthy in that it gives him a dramaturgy of class that allows him an epic structure, but the device fails as it decontextualises the political issues at the heart of the play. The play opens with a Shakespearean prologue:

Oh for a muse of fire, that would ascend
the brightest heaven of invention:
this stage an open road on rolling downs
where helicopters sweep a crowded scene of
convoys, battles, flights and barricades –
and now a rather buggered field of beans.⁶⁸

This immediately frames the atrocity of Thatcher's government within a linguistic style from a remote era. The first scene of the play depicts the meeting of the English Heritage Committee⁶⁹ (which sought to restrict traveller access to Stonehenge) and begins by referencing the rude mechanicals' 'Are we all met?'⁷⁰ from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The dialogue continues in iambic pentameter:

We are charged to guard this nation's stock
Of tourist icons, profit-making sites
We man the turnstiles into Merrie England,

⁶⁷ Shaun McCarthy, *Beanfield*, 2010 p.8. My thanks to Shaun for providing me with a copy of the unpublished script.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.4

⁶⁹ English Heritage is the charity organisation that manages the Stonehenge site. See 'Stonehenge: A Museum Without Walls' in Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Van Loads of Uproarious Humanity*, p.133; Julian C. Richards, *Stonehenge* (London: English Heritage 2005).

⁷⁰ Shaun McCarthy, *Beanfield*, p.4.

Keep vandals off the stones and ancient walls.⁷¹

The verse dialogue is starkly undercut at the end of the scene by the character of Steamer – ‘First thing it wasn’t a battle.’⁷² – who launches into a colloquial description of what is a wider acknowledgement of what travellers experienced that day:

We were going to a festival! We weren’t there to fight. When the windscreens were put in with truncheons, when pregnant women were dragged down the steps of their buses by their hair and beaten, when skulls were fractured as police took turns to bludgeon anyone on the ground, when they burned our homes and looted our possessions, that was not a battle: That was a slaughter.⁷³

It is interesting to note that the attack on a pregnant woman that journalist Sabido references is also included by McCarthy. What is troubling is that he uses it as a token gesture of a kind of moralistic shorthand as to the blatant illegality of the events of 1 June 1985, but resists examining the horrific consequences for young families present at the attack in any real depth, instead choosing to frame the play around the plight of Steamer, and a love story between him and his girlfriend Annie. A further reference to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in relation to these two characters also ends the play. Steamer and Annie are reunited many years later on the night of Thatcher’s resignation, and later rekindle their love affair that began in the world of the convoy so long ago again borrowing Shakespeare’s language. ‘Steal forth from thy house tomorrow night and in the wood, you will know the place where I did meet thee once to do observance to a summer night there will I stay for thee...’⁷⁴ McCarthy dilutes what was a volatile, brutal attack on human rights into a romanticised and distorted memorialisation piece with a love story ending. In McCarthy’s play the events of the Battle of the Beanfield becomes the woods in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the violence is part of a chaotic romp which is eventually pulled

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. p.7.

⁷³ Ibid. p.7.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.80.

into the conservatism of an ending united by love. The play, like *Jerusalem*, is hijacked by a rural sentimentalism that favours a harking-back to a 'merrie olde England' of times gone by.

One scene, in which McCarthy does acknowledge a more brutal 1980s urban reality, sits within the storyline of a 'straight' middle-aged couple from Birmingham. This husband and wife provide an example of everyday, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens, counterpoints to the young traveller couple at the play's centre. In the first act of the play the conservative husband is outraged to learn of the police's intention to roadblock the A303 in order to prevent the travellers reaching their intended destination of Stonehenge, as this will cause difficulties of access for the couple's annual static caravan holiday in Devon. McCarthy constructs his scene to show us the level of prejudice that was rife against the New Age traveller community in the mid-1980s, and how the media were stirring up public hatred for the convoy. The husband's prejudice is counterpointed by the opinions of his wife, who takes an opposing stance to his point of moral outrage:

HOUSEWIFE: It must be quite nice for kiddies, living in a bus and seeing new places, in the summer anyway. [...] I mean there's young girls with babies fathers nowhere to be seen, stuck high up in tower blocks all over this city. No space for kids to play or run about. (*Husband is about to speak but she raises a hand to silence him, and this works*) Never mind if they should be having kids or getting council houses because of it! This government have abandoned the estates, sold off anything that anyone might actually want to buy and left the rest to rot, neighbourhoods and whole communities –

HUSBAND: They're teaching people to help themselves.

HOUSEWIFE: Are they? So if I were a single mum, if you'd buggered off and left me alone with Joyce and Kevin when they were young, (*she pauses, imagining this happy prospect*) trapped in a stinking tower block, then maybe I'd have got an old bus and taken off on the road to get some fresh air.

HUSBAND: Don't know where you get such ideas.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.22.

The housewife's assumption of the lower class reality is distinctly unrealistic. Fathers are all absent, tower blocks are 'stinking' and a life on the open road provides 'fresh air' and a way for 'kiddies to see new places'. It is clear to see how the above extract relates to the themes explored in my own play, but whereas McCarthy places the plight of the vilified single mother of the 1980s as the romanticised daydreaming aside of a dissatisfied housewife, I place it at the centre of my work. *This is Not a Festival* investigates Danni, a working class woman who sought refuge in the traveller lifestyle to escape being 'trapped in a stinking tower block',⁷⁶ and explores how she copes when everything she owns is maliciously destroyed by the state. It also seeks to explore the pertinent issue of how the travellers' lifestyle impacts on the children who have it imposed on them in a way that goes beyond a lower middle class set of assumptions.

McCarthy's play undoubtedly achieves his agenda of bringing the crime of the police violence of the Beanfield incident to the stage but McCarthy also wrote from the position of historical privilege of someone who has all the facts, and the legal outcome of the events of 1 June 1985.⁷⁷ In my piece I was seeking to examine the aftermath of the Battle of the Beanfield from the perspective of a woman who was living through it, seeking to survive in the midst of social and political upheaval, economically disempowered and struggling to keep herself and her son safe, in spite of the extreme set of challenges she faces. In my play Danni and Leaf do not have the benefit of political hindsight, or a reassuring ending in sight. Traumatized by the brutality they experienced at the hands of the authorities, they are not in a position to frame it, process it or evaluate it in any way. They are coping in a dire set of circumstances, where survival is their first priority. This is motherhood at the most deprived and brutal end of society.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.22.

⁷⁷ The police were found guilty of assault, criminal damage and wrongful arrest. See 'Interview with Lord Gifford QC' in Andy Worthington, *The Battle of the Beanfield*, p.151.

Representations of Motherhood

As well as searching for dramatic representations of New Age travellers, I also examined other contemporary representations of mothers and motherhood on stage. Playwright Kefi Chadwick questions why there is a lack of representations of motherhood on stage: 'There are more plays about gun crime than authentic representation of motherhood. What's going on?'⁷⁸ In actual fact it is a topic explored extensively by women playwrights, and there are several academic volumes concerning motherhood on-stage and some famous examples of motherhood in plays, though not in relation to travellers.⁷⁹

Dealing with the question of women and economics, Ibsen's iconic moment at the end of *A Doll's House* was a radical innovation for European theatregoers in 1879.⁸⁰ The idea that Nora could 'abandon' her children for the sake of economic independence was a revolutionary one and many women writers of this period were inspired to explore their own relationship to motherhood, class and gender (something I will discuss at greater length in my next chapter). Since Ibsen's iconic door slam, motherhood has been a much-examined topic for playwrights. Examples of plays featuring representations and examinations of different versions of motherhood at their core include: Charlotte Keatley's *My Mother Said I Never Should*,⁸¹ Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*,⁸² Louise Page's *Salonika*,⁸³ Polly Stenham's *That Face*,⁸⁴ Jonathan Harvey's *Beautiful Thing*,⁸⁵ April De Angelis' *The Positive*

⁷⁸ Kefi Chadwick, 'Keeping Mum: Why Don't Mothers Have a Voice on Stage?' *Guardian*, 29 February 2012 <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2012/feb/29/keeping-mum-mothers-voice-stage> [accessed 10 July 2014].

⁷⁹ Jozefina Komporaly, *Staging Motherhood: British Women Playwrights 1956 to the Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2006); Michelene Wandor, *Look Back in Gender* (London and New York: Routledge 2001).

⁸⁰ Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House* (London: Dent 1932).

⁸¹ Charlotte Keatley, *My Mother Said I Never Should* (London: Samuel French 1988).

⁸² Shelagh Delaney *A Taste of Honey* (London: Methuen 1959).

⁸³ Louise Page, *Salonika* in *Plays: 1*, (London: Methuen Drama 1990).

⁸⁴ Polly Stenham, *That Face* (London: Faber and Faber 2007).

⁸⁵ Jonathan Harvey, *Beautiful Thing* (London: Methuen Drama 1996).

Hour,⁸⁶ Simon Stephens' *Harper Regan*,⁸⁷ Molly Davies' *A Miracle*,⁸⁸ Marsha Norman's *'Night Mother*,⁸⁹ Shelagh Stephenson's *The Memory of Water*,⁹⁰ and Linda Brogan's *What's in the Cat?*⁹¹ But the most iconic example of motherhood is in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*.

Top Girls by Caryl Churchill

Written in 1982 under Thatcher's first term as Britain's first ever woman Prime Minister, *Top Girls* the play challenges the consequences of a government that celebrates monetarism and individualism at all costs, and offers a rare 'spectrum of non-stereotypical women from different classes and generations.'⁹² The first act of *Top Girls* contextualises the achievements of recently promoted businesswoman Marlene against her hosting of a surrealistic dinner party where historical and fictional women from throughout history are her guests. All of the women are united 'by their contribution to a transgressive femininity'⁹³ and as the party progresses and they each share their stories, we learn of a varied experience of female oppression throughout the ages. Later in the play Churchill asks pertinent questions relating to the fate of those who are too weak and vulnerable to succeed in such a hostile society:

MARLENE: I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes.

⁸⁶ April De Angelis, *The Positive Hour*, (London: Faber and Faber 2007).

⁸⁷ Simon Stephens, *Harper Regan*, (London: Methuen Drama 2008).

⁸⁸ Molly Davies, *A Miracle* (London: Methuen Drama 2009).

⁸⁹ Marsha Norman, *'Night Mother* (New York: Dramatist Play Service Inc. 2004).

⁹⁰ Shelagh Stephenson, *The Aleks Sierz*

(Methuen Drama 1997).

⁹¹ Linda Brogan, *What's in the Cat?* (London: Methuen Drama 2005).

⁹² Mary Luckhurst, *Caryl Churchill* (London: Routledge forthcoming 2014). My thanks to Mary Luckhurst for a proof of this chapter.

⁹³ Jozefina Komporaly, *Staging Motherhood: British Women Playwrights, 1956 to the Present*, p.50.

JOYCE: And if they haven't?

MARLENE: If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE: What about Angie?

MARLENE: What about Angie?

JOYCE: She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her?

MARLENE: You run her down too much. She'll be alright.⁹⁴

The above is taken from the final scene of the play (although chronologically the first), in which Marlene and her estranged sister, Joyce, have a spectacular row that encapsulates the politics of the play's argument. In this scene we learn that Marlene is actually Angie's real mother, a fact that frames Marlene's success as coming at a cost; in order to achieve economic wealth and success she has sacrificed her daughter and rejected her role as a mother. Marlene's successful career relies on and is defined by the exploitation of her sister and the rejection of her own daughter. Interestingly, this element of the play was something that 'came very late' for Churchill. In a 1987 interview she points out that: 'Of course women are pressured to make choices between working and having children in a way that men aren't, so it *is* relevant, but it isn't the main point of it.'⁹⁵ Whether it was intended to be the main point or not, the play continues to be discussed in terms of and defined by the portrayal of motherhood at its centre. *Top Girls* provides an example of a woman who has taken the most extreme measures in order to achieve (professional) autonomy and has sacrificed her relationship with her daughter as a way to stake a claim on what she considers to be her best sense of self.

It is interesting to note that responses to Marlene's actions continue to be in flux. Mary Luckhurst examines reflections from the casts and creative teams of productions in the 1980s and compares them to more recent 2011/2012 revivals, concluding that:

⁹⁴ Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls* (London: Methuen 1994) p.86.

⁹⁵ Linda Fitzsimmons, *File on Churchill* (London: Methuen Drama 1989) p.62.

These appraisals suggest that in 1982 Marlene's rejection of a domestic, nurturing role and refusal to acknowledge the responsibility of motherhood were perceived as dangerously transgressive. Marlene's insistence on privileging career above domestic politics rendered her something of a villain to the cast and her right-wing politics only increased her disapproval rating. The reactions from the casts in 2011/2012 indicate that performers had a more nuanced appreciation of the career versus family dilemma, and of the sacrifices and conflicts either one or both routes might entail.⁹⁶

The issues Churchill explored in her 1982 play are still live points of discussion for women over thirty years later; the career/motherhood dilemma put forth so boldly in *Top Girls* is still a pressure point for today's working women. There were two other significant play scripts that were influential in my creation of the character of Danni. *Essex Girls* by Rebecca Prichard⁹⁷ and *Once We Were Mothers* by Lisa Evans.⁹⁸

***Essex Girls* by Rebecca Prichard**

Rebecca Prichard's 1994 play *Essex Girls* gave me a strong example of a play that includes a single mother. The first act is set in the girl's toilets of an Essex comprehensive school and is a fly-on-the-wall representation of young teenage girl Kelly and her two friends, whose conversation centres on this weekend's party, but also covers their upcoming careers advice sessions: 'I already had my interview. Iss boring. I felt like they was all laughin' at me',⁹⁹ sex: 'did you let him finger ya?',¹⁰⁰ and teenage pregnancy: 'My next door neighbour's pregnant. She's the same age as us'.¹⁰¹ The second act depicts Kelly's sister, Kim, a single mother who is

⁹⁶ Mary Luckhurst, *Caryl Churchill* (London: Routledge 2014) proof copy, p.7.

⁹⁷ Rebecca Prichard, *Essex Girls*, in *Coming On Strong: New Writing from the Royal Court Theatre* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber 1995).

⁹⁸ Lisa Evans, *Once We Were Mothers* (London: Oberon 2004).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p.191.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.197.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p.203.

dangerously overwhelmed by the demands of caring for her infant son, providing a vision of the most probable future for the younger women we met in the previous act. The locations of both acts display a version of girl- and womanhood that is soiled and disregarded. The first act features an unflushed used tampon that renders one of the toilet cubicles out of bounds, and the council flat of the second half has a 'massive turd'¹⁰² on the doorstep. Prichard depicts a version of female space that is literally an unsanitary and unvalued dumping ground. The ending of the play shows us a mother who confesses feelings of violence towards her infant son, and who is in desperate need of help and support:

KIM: Sometimes 'e jus' looks up at me. I used to feel, like, what if I drop him, what if I just let go an' drop him?

KAREN: Kim.

KIM: It's jus when you think, how am I gonna cope. With it all. Give me a fucking break.

KAREN: Our messes are ours, Kim. We gotta get ourselves out of 'em.

KIM: I know and I'm gonna try, I really am. But sometime I just think, what am I gonna do? With it all. If you scream help in this world you just hear it echoin' back to ya. Iss alright to scream help sometimes, innit?¹⁰³

The point Prichard makes is that even when Kim has screamed for help her needs still have not been met; the good intentions of a social worker who has called Kim's mother's suitability as a babysitter into question has left Kim even more isolated, and we learn in the first act that her younger sister rarely visits and can offer no means of support. When Kim's friend Karen comes round to visit at the start of act two, she finds a desperately isolated woman who is clearly struggling to cope. The opening stage directions paint a depressing scene:

¹⁰² Ibid. p.218.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.245.

*The second floor of a council flat in Tilbury. Kim sits at the kitchen table, her head resting on her arms. She is bent double and could be asleep. A nappy sticks out of the top of the bin. Baby's utensils, like a rattle or a bottle, are mixed with a general debris of dirty cups, a packet of false nails or nail varnish, a hair brush, a plate with crumbs on, etc. A tinny radio is tuned to Kiss FM.*¹⁰⁴

Kim's admission by the end of the act that she is terrified is met by Karen's response that 'our messes are ours, Kim', an example of unconsciously received bourgeois feminist reasoning that Churchill critiqued a decade earlier in *Top Girls*. Kim's response, a heroic pledge of self-rescue is feeble in the light of such bleakness, and one that holds little hope.

***Once We Were Mothers* by Lisa Evans**

Lisa Evans' 2004 play *Once We Were Mothers* weaves together very different experiences of motherhood from a variety of periods, cultures and countries. The play portrays three very different mothers who are all struggling to meet the demands of the maternal role under diverse sets of circumstances. The first mother (set in the present day) is Ali, a dancer who is coming to terms with the challenges of raising a Downs Syndrome daughter; the second mother (in the 1950s) is Kitty, who is struggling to let go of the memory of her missing (and presumed murdered) daughter Susannah and is trapped in an emotional stasis that damages her relationship with her surviving daughter, Jeannette; the third mother (set in the former Yugoslavia), Milena, suffers extreme discrimination as her Moslem community is systematically destroyed by Serbian forces as part of an ethnic cleansing programme. All three narratives offer very different takes on what it means to be a woman and mother, and offer moving representations of mother-daughter, and female relationships. In the absence of a wealth of traveller narratives that are based on the female experience, I found this play particularly helpful in its representation of Milena, who is suffering from extreme racial discrimination. I also found the storyline of Ali very powerful as this shows a version of a

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.217.

woman who sacrifices her creative work as a dancer in order to be able to dedicate herself to the needs of her (disabled) child. Evans' play openly declares its theme of motherhood in the title and typically Evans' choice to focus on female dynamics in the world of this play was alluded to by male critics as a dramatic weakness:

It is a weakness that men, all capably played by Finn Hanlon, make only token appearances: I wanted to know exactly why Ali's and Kitty's husbands failed to offer their wives any support.¹⁰⁵

It is unlikely that a male writer would be critiqued in this way for only including 'token' roles for women on stage.

Modernist writer Virginia Woolf's assertion that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' comes from a series of 1929 lectures she gave entitled 'Women and Fiction' in which she highlights the author's (artist's) need for economic independence in order to create art.¹⁰⁶ This still holds true. Another essential item that female artists need in order to exercise their artistic voices is time, a commodity in short supply when dealing with the demands of a family in a culture where good quality childcare is a luxury and mothers are still holding the major responsibility of main carer. A recent 2012 report, *The Changing Face of Motherhood in Western Europe*, cites mothers' 'me time' at an average of 47 minutes per day. Presumably a woman's time and self belongs to others for the rest of her day:

¹⁰⁵ Michael Billington, *Once We Were Mothers* review, *Guardian*, 16 October 2007. <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/oct/16/theatre2> [accessed 14 July 2014].

¹⁰⁶ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin 2000).

Opportunities for 'me time' were least among mothers in the 25-34 age group (33 minutes per day) and highest in the 45-64 age group (58 minutes per day) presumably reflecting the ages of their children.¹⁰⁷

The childbearing and raising years are monopolised and defined socially by a surrender of self to the needs of other, and with only 47 minutes a day in which to pursue activities on her own terms, there is little wonder that young women struggle to dovetail motherhood and artistic expression and that there is a lack of mothers' voices on stage. Perhaps what Kefi Chadwick is missing is mothers representing *themselves* on stage.

It is interesting to note that in many of the plays I list above, the mothers are often reported as failing (*The Positive Hour*), absconding (*Harper Regan*), even bordering on psychotic (*That Face*). Of course this is partly due to the conditions that dramatic writing dictates, but I think it demands further attention. In her book *What Mothers Do: Especially When it Looks Like Nothing*,¹⁰⁸ counsellor and mothers' group leader Naomi Stadlen remarks on a lack of precise vocabulary to describe positive acts of mothering, pointing out that usually 'our language can be very clear and precise about anything practical'¹⁰⁹ and she questions why it is that although there are many words to describe more negative acts of mothering ('negligent, heartless, unfit, possessive, smothering, over-protective, indulgent, pushy, domineering, overbearing'¹¹⁰) there are none to describe the acts of a woman who is mothering or 'protecting her child just the right amount.' Stadlen accepts the need for negative language in order to 'pinpoint where a mother may be going wrong' but states:

The trouble is that we seem to have only this kind of negative vocabulary for mothers. For example, take the term 'abusive mother:' it doesn't seem to have an opposite. [...] No such word exists.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *The Changing Face of Motherhood in Western Europe*, conducted by The Social Issues Research Centre, 2011, <http://www.sirc.org/publik/CFOM.pdf> [accessed 14 July 2014].

¹⁰⁸ Naomi Stadlen, *What Mothers Do: Especially When it Looks Like Nothing* (London: Piatkus 2004).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.18

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.18.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p.19.

Stadlen goes on to list words that are often linked to our *approval* of mothers e.g. ‘warm, loving, patient, understanding, responsible, unselfish’ but points out that all of these words describe ‘the state of a mother’s heart’ and not the act of mothering itself.¹¹²

This means that, when she does a number of motherly actions for her child she has no words to describe the particular actions. We could walk into a room where a mother had just spent half an hour calming her distressed baby. We might apologise for disturbing her. She would probably reply: ‘It’s alright, I wasn’t doing anything special.’ But she was. [...] It is not fair to leave a new mother with a horrific collection of words to condemn her – and almost nothing in the way of praise for when she is doing well.¹¹³

Stadlen goes on to reflect on the interventions of psychology on this matter, a profession that has also noted the sparse mothering vocabulary in the English language and in light of this has developed its own terminology, phrases such as ‘bonding’ and ‘attachment parenting.’ Stadlen finds these interventions equally problematic asserting her belief that as soon as a word is coined by a mental health professional or parenting specialist it becomes didactic, instructive and ultimately disempowering for women.¹¹⁴ It also pathologises women’s experience. Stadlen argues that western women in the modern age are less likely to live in extended communities or intergenerational family structures, and are often isolated from other visual and embodied examples of mothering, and instead increasingly rely on books, magazines and the Internet for their support. To the modern mother then, language is critical when learning the craft of how to raise her children:

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Rebecca Solnit writes on this subject: ‘Generations of women have been told they are delusional, confused, manipulative, malicious, conspiratorial, congenitally dishonest, often all at once.’ See Rebecca Solnit, ‘Easy Chair: Cassandra Among the Creeps’ in *Harper’s Magazine*, October 2014, p.4-9.

Mothering is communicated by words as never before. If the words don't exist, communication is hampered. [...] Mothering is unique in enabling mothers to focus on how *badly* they are doing.¹¹⁵

This is a distressing thought and one that resonates with me; I have first hand experience of the frustrations of not being able to put suitable language to my experience of the intensely complex and invisible daily acts of motherhood. No other active craft has such limited language to describe it. It is not surprising that this lack of eloquence extends to the dialogue rich world of the stage. Dramatic writing is made up of a series of actions. If we have no way of conceptualising the acts of motherhood, how are we expected to represent it?¹¹⁶

Actor turned writer, Emily Beecher, uses musical theatre as a way to present the experience of motherhood. *The Good Enough Mum's Club* premiered at The Bedford Theatre, Balham 10 July 2014 and is an example of a piece which directly tackles the vilification of contemporary motherhood.¹¹⁷ The title of the piece was a phrase coined in the 1950s by British Paediatrician D.W. Winnicott. The theory of the 'Good Enough Mother' is a rare example of a psychoanalytical term that *is* empowering to women and one that Beecher discovered, and then took inspiration from, when hospitalised for post-natal psychosis after the birth of her daughter in 2010.¹¹⁸ The first production to assemble a cast of women who are all mothers,¹¹⁹ *The Good Enough Mum's Club* is an honest and upfront account of motherhood, that weaves together the stories of five women from different walks of life who meet at a local mother and baby group. Beecher states that accepting herself as a 'good enough mother' was critical in recovering from her illness, and that creating a piece of theatre with

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p.23-24.

¹¹⁶ See D. W. Winnicott, *Babies and Their Mothers* (Reading Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley 1987).

¹¹⁷ *The Good Enough Mum's Club* by Emily Beecher, The Bedford Theatre, Balham London, 10-11 July 2014.

¹¹⁸ Karl Heinz Brisch, *Treating Attachment Disorders: From Theory to Therapy* (New York: Guildford Press 2002).

¹¹⁹ Charlotte Philby, 'The Good Enough Mums Club: Nappy Days are Here Again', *The Independent*, 1 July 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/the-good-enough-mums-club-nappy-days-are-here-again-9574455.html> [accessed 25 September 2014].

other women and mothers gave her a support network and creative outlet she desperately needed:

I finally saw that the mums I thought did everything right didn't necessarily see themselves that way. Women aren't always honest about how they are feeling. We think we are naturally supposed to be good at this, to nail it straight away. We fear we will be judged.¹²⁰

***This is Not a Festival* – Danni**

My research and development period for the writing and development of *This is Not a Festival* began when I presented a short fifteen-minute section of an early idea at Script Yorkshire's Script Factor event on 15 September 2010. I then furthered my research into the New Age travellers' lifestyle, its history and roots in British culture, before producing a first draft of the play which (with guidance from my PhD supervisor) underwent some revisions before it was performed as a reading in the department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York to a small audience of post-graduate students and staff on 15 November 2011. It was later performed as a public event at the York Theatre Royal on 31 November 2011, and then at a scratch night at the Pleasance Theatre London 23 October 2011.¹²¹ The verbal feedback gathered from these three events enabled further work on the script over the following four months.¹²² *This is Not a Festival* was submitted to the Manchester Royal Exchange Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting in June 2011 and was longlisted for this prestigious award. I gave a short paper on the writing of the play,

¹²⁰ Emily Beecher in an interview with Guilia Rhodes, 'The Good Enough Mum's Club: 'It's ok to be a bit Crap'', *Guardian*, 30 August 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/aug/30/good-enough-mums-club-postnatal-depression-psychois> [accessed 25 September 2014].

¹²¹ *This is Not a Festival* by Hannah Davies, directed by Maggie Inchley, Itch, a Scratch Event, Pleasance Theatre London. <https://www.pleasance.co.uk/via/search/london> [accessed 25 September 2014].

¹²² Invited guests present at this reading included playwright Mike Kenny, his partner TV Actor Barbara Marten, Ancey Hayes Ice&Fire Theatre Co., John Wilkinson Literary associate York Theatre Royal.

including a section of the script performed by actors, at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television's Third Post Graduate Symposium on 1 June 2012.

Throughout *This is Not a Festival*, Danni's emotional journey and character arc are determined by the tension between her own self-identity and the conflicting demands of her ten-year-old son. The play is punctuated by her attempts to be a 'good enough mother' while living under a dire set of circumstances. Danni's primary obstacles in the play (other than the consequences of her own lifestyle choices) are the deliberately manipulative (and then violent) acts of possessive old friend Glen, who continually obstructs her efforts to explore her anxieties in relation to and fulfil her responsibilities in the maternal role. Glen wants Danni all to himself, and will go extreme lengths to engage her in his toxic friendship. In scene two of the play Danni seeks refuge in Glen's home shortly after the Beanfield incident, it is clear that she is in desperate need of economic support, and that Glen's home as a place of refuge may be temporary. 'If we don't keep this place nice, we'll get asked to leave.' (see p.11) Both Danni and son Leaf are in a state of shock after the violence of the attack, and Danni struggles to give Leaf the emotional support he needs in light of his trauma and the impact that their sudden homelessness has had on their lives:

LEAF: Why did we have to scrap it? [*Their trailer, which was seized and impounded by the police*]

DANNI: You know why. Money.

LEAF: Why didn't we get it out though?

DANNI: It wasn't worth the release fee. The A frame was fucked. It's just a trailer Leaf. Stop asking me.

LEAF: Why did they have to trash my stuff though? Not fair breaking my stuff. (see p.10)

In the midst of such upheaval Danni has no patience for Leaf's persistent questioning and eventually her temper snaps when Leaf, confronted with his entire worldly belongings reduced to the contents of a carrier bag, asks for a new pair of trainers on Danni's next giro day:

DANNI: No.

LEAF: Why not?

DANNI: Because I fucking said so Leaf, alright? (p.15)

If Danni's short-tempered response portrays a less than perfect mother, it is due to the fact that she literally has nothing left to give. Her son's childish interrogations are drawing on an exhausted resource; this is a lone woman who has no home, no income, and no close family to turn to in times of crisis. These were facts inspired by the discoveries I made in my research. The traveller mother whom I interviewed reflected that 'a load of them [those who became New Age travellers] were people who had been in care.'¹²³ The demonised Peace Convoy of Thatcher's Britain offered an inviting alternative way of life to those who had already been grossly let down by the support of social services and the state.

At the end of *This is Not a Festival*, in scene ten, Danni reveals her bitterness towards a social care system that has left her scarred and distrustful of the authorities. In conversation with Glen she describes her outrage at the violence of the Beanfield attack and the way in which police dealt with the travellers; she also reveals her hatred of the authorities and a fiercely protective maternal instinct:

¹²³ Hannah Davies, Archives, Interview with Mother and Daughter, 8 October 2010, p.4. The daughter has since become an Operations Manager for a large corporate company.

DANNI: Aint no one gonna process me again. I've been processed all my fucking life. I'm sick of it, they aren't going to start processing my boy now as well. Cos he's mine and I'd sooner rip your fucking eyes out than let anything happen to him. (p.53)

However at the start of the play, when they have just arrived at Glen's home, Danni is shown in a less understanding light. When we first meet her she is portrayed as a woman incapable of providing any emotional support for her son. She is, at first glance not fit for motherhood, struggling to obtain the very basic conditions required to survive: a roof over their heads. And is hitchhiking across the country with her ten year old son who has nothing but '*a couple of scruffy T-shirts [...] a few screwed up socks and a [broken] Walkman.*' (see p.16) The inspiration for this early scene in *This is Not a Festival* also came from the interview I undertook as part of my research.

The mother of my interviewees shared with me how she had brought her two daughters up with the rule that 'you got to be able to move with whatever you can get in a carrier bag.'¹²⁴ Her mother's insistence on travelling light was something the daughter of my interviewees hated: 'we didn't have many possessions ever anyway and I've always been one for possessions, it used to piss me off even then.'¹²⁵ When recalling the experience of collecting their trailer from the police pound both mother and daughter reported their distress when faced with the evidence of their home's further wilful destruction by the police. The mother remembers 'all the windows had been put through and all the food poured everywhere'¹²⁶ and tells how she 'had a whole box of Dr. Bach's flower remedies all in little tiny glass bottles with corks. Gone. Smashed. Trod on.'¹²⁷ The daughter remembers seeing her older sister's broken violin and her own 'set of felt tips which I was really proud of'¹²⁸ among the debris. Notably these are artistic instruments. 'It wasn't the stuff that was gone, it was the stuff that was still there that was fucked. Really sad. [...] I think as a symbolic thing, it would

¹²⁴ Hannah Davies, Archives, Interview with Mother and Daughter, 8 October 2010, p.7.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.14.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

have been better not to get the vehicles back because it was so...'¹²⁹ The daughter's recollection of the distress caused by seeing her and her sister's few artistic tools crushed and broken meant that she could not finish this sentence and she struggled to put suitable words to describe the painful experience of seeing her childhood home vandalised by the state. '[...] it wasn't just the aftermath of somebody putting the windows through it was like they'd gone in and deliberately fucked with it.'¹³⁰ The interview provided me with a harrowing account of a (real) traveller mother whose lifestyle choices had negatively impacted on her daughter and had led to the destruction of her family home.

The traveller mother's own relationship to this home was also significant in my development and final representation of Danni. In our interview she begins her account of the events of 1 June 1985 with a visual description of the trailer and it was clear from her tone that she took immense pride in the small caravan that she had bought for '80 quid' after she had 'saved up for six months.' The trailer was 'all silver with black stars on it' and she was keen to point out that she had painted it herself.¹³¹ Later in the interview she told me that 'The trailer was bland like, but it still got a little jewellery box vibe about it',¹³² describing her home as a piece of decorative art, somewhere to keep valuable treasure. She went on to tell me how their vehicle was at the very front of the convoy when police stopped them at the roadblock, 'we were number five in the convoy and there was three hundred behind us',¹³³ and she relays her terror when police began smashing windscreens and they drove off-road, pulled by a 'Blue van with our silver and black star caravan on the back. The 'One Love' caravan. That's what the police called it, when we went to try and get it.'¹³⁴ Over the silver paint and among the black stars she had decorated it with Om signs,¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.5.

¹³¹ Ibid. p.1.

¹³² Ibid. p.14.

¹³³ Ibid. p.5.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ The 'Om' sign is from the Hindu religion, a symbol that represents the manifest and unmanifest aspects of God. 'Whosoever knows this syllable obtains all that he desires.' See <http://hinduism.about.com/od/omaum/a/meaningofom.htm> [accessed 17 September 2014];

and the words 'One Love,' the title of her favourite Bob Marley song ('One love, one heart, let's get together and feel alright.'¹³⁶) The police force's vandalism was not only symbolic in that it destroyed the daughter's creative tools, it also acted as a malicious and wilful destruction of the mother's own creative expression.

My interviewee's matter-of-fact account of why she had decided to become a traveller was disturbing. Her decision (like those who had 'come out of care') had been triggered by a pre-existing social marginalisation and disempowerment; buying a small trailer, painting it up, 'blagging a tow' and taking her two young children on the road enabled her to escape a grim reality of drugs and domestic violence in inner-city Nottingham. The mother's account gives a bleak echo of the idea touched on in McCarthy's play that for some the very act of travelling is a means of escape, the adoption of the self-constructed 'inauthentic' identity of the New Age traveller provides a means of freedom and safety. This woman's home, and her choice of lifestyle, was her chosen form of self-expression; New Age travelling, as Hetherington posits, enabled her to 'construct her own identity.'¹³⁷ These were all social and psychological factors I incorporated in my creation of the character of Danni. I wanted to explore how a woman struggling to define herself is also able to find her identity and fulfil her role as a mother.

In scene two of *This is Not a Festival*, when Danni loses her temper with her son it is because the loss of her home (and her artwork) is so painful to her that she lashes out. However, I do not reveal this information to the audience at this point. By excluding it, I am deliberately inviting an audience to judge Danni and her parenting, something that (I hope) they will reconsider as the play goes on as they come to understand her appalling social and economic deprivations, but also witness her undeniable love for her son. This is a woman who has little by way of parenting skills or resources, but continues to take her

Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Hinduism: A Religion to Live By* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997).

¹³⁶ Bob Marley and the Wailers. 'One Love', *Exodus*, Tuff Gong Records, 1977.

¹³⁷ Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity*, p.91.

responsibilities seriously. She does not abscond. She does not reject her responsibility. Leaf is still in her care, and her outburst about what it feel like to be ‘processed’ by social services shows us that this is not a woman who would give up her duties as a mother, even when in a dire set of circumstances.

Later in the play, when Leaf describes his traveller lifestyle to friend Naveed, we hear more about the home Danni (creatively) invested in and then lost:

LEAF: We had a trailer. My Mum painted it Rasta colours. Red, gold and green.

NAVEED: What, you just went all over in a Rasta caravan?

LEAF: Yeah.

NAVEED: Why?

LEAF: She painted it bright so I could find it easy when I were littler. Sometimes if the sites were big, I’d get a bit, you know.

NAVEED: Where is it now?

LEAF: They put the windows through and broke all our stuff. (p.45)

In this passage Leaf perceives Danni’s act of creativity as means of mothering in itself, the bright colours of the trailer painted as a way to guide him home across busier traveller sites. As the play develops we see Danni trying to adopt the more traditional expectations of a responsible parent. She enrolls Leaf (to his initial horror) in a local school, and we learn that she has put her name on the local authority’s housing list. ‘I just- I think- Sometimes it’s good to review stuff. Choices you make. What worked for us then might not work for us now.’¹³⁸ Living in one place is something that Danni eventually rejects due to her fear of

¹³⁸ Ibid. p.27.

social isolation and finding herself and her son trapped in an increasingly dangerous domestic situation:

DANNI: It won't be a house will it? It will be a tiny neon bedsit, with a plastic covered mattress and a hallway that stinks of piss, and I won't be able to see the stars or play loud music or smell the dew on the grass. I'll be holed up with some prick like you, making ham sandwiches and ironing school shirts for the rest of my life. (p.64)

Danni's summary of the life of a single urban mother paints a bleak picture – one she is desperate to avoid. It also hints at the monotony and self-surrender that is associated with 'perfect' motherhood.

In *This is Not a Festival* I acknowledge that Danni is a woman who struggles to provide healthy boundaries for herself and her growing son. Her relationship with Glen shows us that this is a woman who has the ability to make dreadful choices within her personal life, but the fact that she does eventually leave Glen's home and abusive demands implies that there is hope. Danni does eventually put her and her son's well being first, but only after a horrifically violent episode, in which her son plays a key role. This is a woman whose relationship choices and recreational drug and alcohol use have made a world-weary ten-year-old of her son Leaf. In Scene 5, mother and son share an ice cream together after a visit to enrol in a local school:

LEAF: I can spell already anyway.

DANNI: No you can't.

LEAF: It was just that one word.

DANNI: It's not just that one word.

LEAF: It's cos I was thinking about something else. It's cos I'd been up all night. *You* can't spell when *you've* been up all night.

DANNI: Course I can spell when I've been up all night!

LEAF: You can hardly talk when you've been up all night.

DANNI: Less of the lip. (p.31)

This section of the scene functions to tell us that Danni has an active social and nightlife, something that Leaf would be unable to avoid witnessing when living together in a trailer. As the scene goes on it also informs an audience that, in spite of her habits and bad choices, Danni has made some provision for Leaf's education in the past. The choice she has made to live on the road is not at the expense of her son's education. She is aware of its importance and this redeems her momentarily. Sadly her failure to ensure the consistent delivery of his educational programme is apparent, her efforts thwarted not only by the chaos that living on a traveller site entailed but also by her own impatience and emotional response. 'That was a great success. Don't know why I bothered, could hardly find you most days.' (p.28) Tellingly we also learn that Danni is doing her best to break a cycle of educational truancy, one rooted in her own childhood and adolescent turbulence of growing up in foster care, something she is reluctant to discuss:

LEAF You never went to school.

DANNI I did.

LEAF You told me you sacked it off and went and lived in a squat.

DANNI This isn't about what I did then, it's about what you're gonna do now. (p.33)

In *This is Not a Festival*, the audience is asked to recognise but then reconsider the 'terrible' mother I portray swearing and intimidating her son at the start of the play. As we spend more time with Danni as a mother we see that she is functioning within a much wider social

context. She is alone, unsupported and frightened. From moment to moment I ask an audience to judge her, and then I ask them to try and understand her as she attempts to balance her imperfect self against her role as a mother.

The end of the script provides one of the strongest examples of Danni's mothering in the play. After her relationship with Glen has become abusive, Danni leaves his house and goes in search of Leaf who, in protest at the prospect of starting school, has spent the night out with friend Naveed without her permission. When Danni finds Leaf, he has fallen off a bike, is injured and covered in blood. In her relief at finding him, and her fury that he left at all, Danni swears at him and physically strikes him. Twice.

DANNI You stupid, stupid little shit!

She cuffs him again. Hard enough to hurt, but not extreme.'(p.65)

This is a clear example of a woman being a 'bad/abusive/nasty/vicious/' mother and is an act that is easy to label. When Leaf gives a stutteringly emotional explanation for his disappearance, one that is seeded in Danni's failure to recognise his needs, Danni's behaviour changes:

DANNI can see LEAF's distress and she softens, gently guides him over to the wall, sits him down and gives him a tissue for his nose. She starts to clean up the blood on his knees. (p.65)

There are two acts of motherhood in these stage directions, 'softening and guiding' (overcoming rage and finding empathy for and prioritising a child's needs and emotions over an adult's triggered emotional response) and 'cleaning up blood' (tending to cuts and bruises is a display of mothering that is archetypal in its universality). Danni's undertaking of

these two acts of mothering (which noticeably are much harder to label linguistically) are so tender that Naveed, wants to experience them himself. Having been mostly silent in the scene up until this point, he immediately recognises what Danni is doing as an act of nurturing and he wants to be on the receiving end of it:

NAVEED watches DANNI mother LEAF.

NAVEED: I bust my knee and all you know. Saving him.

DANNI: Come on then. You as well. Sit down. (p.65)

Naveed is delighted and sits down on the wall grinning. Leaf then watches his mum 'mother' his friend as she puts a plaster on his knee too. It is then that he sees his mother's injuries caused by Glen's domestic abuse. This undercuts the tender moment of mothering that the audience is being invited to enjoy and again reminds them of the tensions that Danni encounters in learning to be a better version of herself for the benefit of her son. Danni lies to her son about the cause of her injuries, but the audience have already witnessed Leaf's level of understanding of the adult world and know that he sees through her deceit:

LEAF: What happened to your arm?

DANNI: Nothing.

LEAF: Doesn't look like nothing.

DANNI: I burnt it on the kettle. (p.66)

Although I ask for an audience's sympathy and understanding for Danni's predicament, I do not do this at the expense of her son's experience of her choices as a mother. In this way I am able to explore an inclusive representation of a (traveller) mother and account for the ways in which parental choices affect her children at the same time as showing the tensions between 'good' and 'bad' versions of motherhood. Later in this scene Danni communicates

the complex nature of her maternal feelings directly to her son: 'I love you so much it hurts. But you terrify me.'¹³⁹ By voicing her experience of being a mother directly to son Leaf, Danni finally finds a forum in which to explore the depths and complexity of her maternal feelings. Stern and Bruscheiler-Stern recognise in their 1997 parenting book *The Birth of a Mother*, that a mother needs 'some kind of validation, encouragement, witnessing and support'.¹⁴⁰ Danni's tragedy is that she has no one to fulfil this role and she struggles to parent as a result. In the absence of a friend, partner or family member she instead turns to her son, the source of her maternal confusion. Leaf sits quietly listening to his mother's account of a dream she had on the night he was conceived, describing her difficulty in fitting a 'big white friendly elephant' into a suitcase and how she took the luggage on a 'long drawn out journey of planes and trains.'¹⁴¹

DANNI: Dunno where we was going but when we got there, I opened the suitcase up and instead of this elephant being in there, like I was expecting, there was this big beautiful fern, that curled out, and sort of swayed, all green and fresh. Most beautiful thing I'd ever seen that was.

LEAF That was me weren't it.

DANNI Yeah. I'm still watching you unfurl. It's beautiful. But it's also utterly terrifying. Do you know what it would do to me if I lost you for good?

LEAF nods. (p.67)

Danni is trying her hardest to put words to her maternal experience and the depths of her feelings towards her son and Leaf accepts her expression of love wholeheartedly. If Danni is not the perfect mother, Leaf forgives her for it and as a way of communicating this at the end of the scene he makes a joke that references the story she has just told him as well as acknowledging his own recalcitrant behaviour:

¹³⁹ Ibid. p.62.

¹⁴⁰ Daniel Stern and Nadia Bruscheiler-Stern, *The Birth of a Mother: How Motherhood Changes you Forever* (London: Bloomsbury 1997) p.110.

¹⁴¹ Hannah Davies, *This is Not a Festival*, p.66.

LEAF Mum.

DANNI What?

LEAF You should have named me after the elephant. That
 would have been well wicked.

DANNI What Nelly?

LEAF No. Dumbo.

DANNI smiles. (p.68)

In *This is Not a Festival*, Danni functions as a tough and often questionable version of motherhood, but the script is never in doubt of her love and ongoing dedication towards raising her son. In spite of all the exhaustive emotional and practical pressures she is under, their bond is unquestionable. Danni is an astute enough mother to convey the depths of her feelings to her child, and her love for him is received as an affirmed fact. This scene shows us a moment of poignant expression of maternal love, a contrast to Danni's abrasive and stressed manner at the start of the play. In this respect the play is a story of a woman learning how to be a 'good enough mother' in a society that discourages, disparages and ignores the fundamental acts of motherhood.

At the end of my play, Danni moves herself and her son on again after experiencing extreme violence from her old friend Glen (her ex-lover and the possible father of Leaf). After using what little she has (her body and sexuality) in order to placate Glen's rage, Danni once again takes to the road. By placing mother and son in exactly the same position that they were in at the start, I aim to use the ending of my play as a way to highlight the crippling cyclical nature of their marginalisation, as well as hinting at the constraining cyclical limitations of motherhood itself. Once again finding himself by the side of a road, Leaf remembers the home he lost, and uses the image of a new trailer as a metaphor for a blank canvas – as a shared fantasy of hope as a means to soothe them both:

LEAF: Are we gonna get a new trailer?
DANNI: Yeah. I think so yeah.
LEAF: Not a house?
DANNI: Let's just see shall we.
LEAF: Are you gonna paint it again?
DANNI: Maybe.
LEAF: I think you should.
DANNI: Ok. I will.
LEAF: Nice and bright.
DANNI: You gonna help me?
LEAF: Yeah!
DANNI: Get you some spray cans.
LEAF: Yeah! *(beat)* Will they trash it again?
DANNI: I hope not.
[...]
LEAF: Can we just sit here for a bit? Before we go?
DANNI: Just for a minute then.
LEAF: Then we can go.
DANNI: Yeah.

LEAF snuggles into his Mum. She leans down and kisses the top of his head.

'You're Wondering Now' by the Specials.

END (p.80)

CHAPTER 2

GITHA



Figure 3. Katherine Githa Sowerby (1876-1970).

This chapter will focus on my second playwriting project, *Githa*, a historical biography piece based on the life and works of children's author and dramatist Katherine Githa Sowerby (1876-1970). I always intended this play to be both written and performed by myself for reasons I will return to later. Until the last decade many of the facts of Sowerby's life were unknown, but recent revivals of her work led to a 2009 biography that revealed much of her life for the first time. *Looking For Githa* by Patricia Riley¹⁴² was published in association with Northern Stage's 2009 production of Sowerby's 1912 play *Rutherford & Son*. This production (directed by Richard Beecham) was the first time that Sowerby's work had been performed in the North East, the region in which she was born.¹⁴³ In order for me to discuss the ways in which I wrote and then embodied my interpretation of Sowerby in *Githa* it is necessary for

¹⁴² Patricia Riley, *Looking For Githa* (Newcastle: New Writing North 2009).

¹⁴³ *Rutherford & Son* by Githa Sowerby, directed by Richard Beecham, Northern Stage Newcastle, 2009.

me to give an overview of her remarkable life and family history. In light of the lack of published commentary about the work of this extraordinary Edwardian children's author and pioneering female playwright (known to all by her middle name, Githa), I will be quoting sources from Riley's book, in addition to my own investigations into Sowerby's uncatalogued archives at Newcastle Discovery Museum. These provided the backbone for my biographical factual research,¹⁴⁴ as did my interview with Sowerby's daughter.¹⁴⁵

Sowerby Family History

Sowerby's great-grandfather, George Sowerby (1774 - 1844) was a gentleman farmer who moved from Cumberland to Gateshead in the early 1800s to make his fortune along the industrial banks of the Tyne. It was here that he became a key partner and later the owner of a business that was to evolve into Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works, an empire that would play a significant role in the international mass production of glass.¹⁴⁶ The business (which by then also incorporated a prosperous coalmine) was eventually passed to George Sowerby's son John Sowerby (1808-1879).¹⁴⁷ In 1832, at the age of 24, John was running the business with the help of his younger brother while their father George pursued a career in local politics. George Sowerby proved successful in this respect, and was elected to the Town Council in 1835 and again in 1839, eventually becoming Mayor in 1841. It was in this capacity that he made an address on behalf of the town to Queen Victoria on the occasion of the birth of her son and was made an Alderman. George Sowerby's son, John Sowerby (Githa's grandfather), was 'ruthless, ambitious and single-minded with no time for

¹⁴⁴ Sowerby's uncatalogued archives are held at Tyne and Wear Archives, Discovery Museum Newcastle, Accession number 4909.

¹⁴⁵ I interviewed Joan Smith at her home in London on 15 February 2012.

¹⁴⁶ See Simon Cottle, *Sowerby: Gateshead Glass* (Tyne and Wear Museums Service 1986). For an example of a decorative glass piece from the Sowerby Ellison Glass Works see *Swan* (1870-1900) in *Victoria & Albert Museum Collection*, no. C. 270-1987, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O3859/swan-flower-holder-sowerby-ellison-glassworks/> [accessed 11 September 2014].

¹⁴⁷ Patricia Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.19.

sentiment'¹⁴⁸ and it was he who is credited with the exponential growth and international success of the Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works empire. A shrewd businessman and typical Victorian entrepreneur, John Sowerby regarded his children (as his father before him had) as investments and raised his sons to follow in his footsteps to take over the company. He acquired excellent matches for three of his four daughters, marrying one to a wealthy Belfast ship-owner, another to a successful barrister, and using the third match to forge a useful business connection with the Levick family, whose company Levick & Simpson owned ironworks in Monmouthshire. 'The moulds for pressed glass were made of iron, so the metal was of great importance.'¹⁴⁹

The previous generation of Sowerby famers had transformed themselves into a wealthy family of significant social standing. To his dismay George Sowerby's youngest son, Charles Sowerby (1857-1900) rejected his father's wishes for him to continue building the family empire and left England for the United States, where census records show that he applied for American citizenship in 1893.¹⁵⁰ This meant that George's remaining son (Githa Sowerby's father), John George Sowerby (1849-1914), was expected to take control of the successful family empire, and he embraced this duty with a young man's enthusiasm. John George entered the family business as a manager and colour-mixer at the age of 22 in 1871.¹⁵¹ He was a man of an artistic nature who had a keen interest in the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 1800s, and his influence on the Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works was marked by his pursuit of the possibilities of the mass production of ornamental coloured glass. He set about registering several patents of his innovative ways of working with glass with this production outcome in mind; he also set up a studio in which to experiment with the production and development of glass for use in works of art.¹⁵² John George Sowerby was a gifted painter, and had some success as an artist, with '13 of his pictures exhibited at

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. p.22.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p.24.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid. p.27.

the Royal Academy and 9 works hung in other London exhibitions.¹⁵³ By the time he was married in the late 1870s to Amy Hewison (1851-1931, Githa's mother) in addition to his responsibilities in the glassworks, John George had taken up a part-time career as a children's illustrator, and he would later often use his six children as models for his paintings.¹⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, John George's artistic endeavours were not considered worthwhile pursuits by his father (Githa's grandfather), his associates and board members. It was becoming clear that John George had not inherited his father's entrepreneurial gift and after George Sowerby's death in 1897 respect for the younger John George Sowerby within the company deteriorated and he struggled to maintain the profits of his inherited empire. By the time John George Sowerby's son Lawrence Sowerby (1873-1968, Githa's older brother) went into the company in 1890, John George's interest, involvement and financial power within the company structure was minimal, along with his income. Instead of investing his time and efforts in working to turn around the failing family business he chose to prioritise his gifts as an artist, with disastrous financial consequences for his family. In 1896 Lawrence Sowerby (like his Uncle Charles before him) left England, travelling to Africa to take up a post with the South African police, 'making it clear to his father that he would never return to the family business.'¹⁵⁵

Katherine Githa Sowerby

Katherine Githa Sowerby was the third child and second daughter of John George Sowerby and his wife Amy, who altogether had six children: John Lawrence (1873-1968), Margaret Helen (1874-1953), Katherine Githa (1876-1970), Amy Millicent (1877-1967), Marjory Gladys (1880-1958), and Rachel Ruth (1882-1967). All of the children except for Marjory went by their second names.¹⁵⁶ Githa Sowerby's upper middle class upbringing was typically Victorian: raised by a nurse in a nursery in a different wing to her parents in their large family home, she received the minimal education deemed fitting for a little girl of that

¹⁵³ Ibid. p.28.

¹⁵⁴ For a full list of John George Sowerby's illustration and artworks see Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.134.

¹⁵⁵ Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.37.

¹⁵⁶ For a family tree of the Sowerby family see Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.131.

era.¹⁵⁷ Githa Sowerby was a bright and intelligent child, headstrong and lively. Her mother was cold with her and ‘was always happy to hear bad reports’¹⁵⁸ of her wilful daughter from the nurse or children’s governess. This cold mother-daughter dynamic continued into Githa’s adulthood: ‘she believed her mother disliked her’¹⁵⁹ and once described her as ‘faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.’¹⁶⁰ Githa was, however, always her father’s favourite, and as a child she was often called upon to entertain his business guests at the oppressively grand Ravenshill Sowerby family home. These visitors often included eminent artists and well-known Fabians such as William Morris and Walter Crane.¹⁶¹ This was a duty that Sowerby hated as a child – ‘she even once emptied a large jug of water over her hair to escape’¹⁶² – but her obvious distress was ignored, and she reluctantly fulfilled her duties. This experience of spending time in the gentlemen’s drawing room was something that gave Sowerby a wealth of material for her later career as a playwright, and allowed her rare access into the intricacies of the male world of business that women were traditionally excluded from. As Sowerby grew older, her father downsized the family home to a house near Hexham in Northumberland, where he became absorbed in painting the landscapes that he loved.¹⁶³ As the family survived on minimal capital left over from John George’s inheritance, Amy Sowerby maintained the rigid expectations of the Victorian wife and mother but the ties of tradition on the Sowerby daughters loosened.¹⁶⁴ Soon, due to her father’s increasing ill-health, Githa’s family were moved to the south of England, eventually settling in the historic village of Sutton Courtenay, positioned on a site by the banks of the Thames, south of Abingdon in Oxfordshire.¹⁶⁵ John George was happy to be among prime landscape painting country, but his wife Amy was presumably less enamoured with the arrangements as her household, once a grand building set amid its own acres of grounds

¹⁵⁷ See Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914* (London: Yale University Press 2008); Janet Sacks, *Victorian Childhood* (Oxford: Shire 2010); Thomas E. Jordan, *Victorian Childhood* (New York: University of New York Press 1987).

¹⁵⁸ Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.37.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.30.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.33.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* p.32.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p.35.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.38.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.41.

with an army of servants, was now reduced to one live-in domestic, and she and her husband and their six children were living off the little that was left from her husband's inheritance and failed career at the Sowerby's Ellison Glass Works as well as her annual dowry income from her deceased father (a corn merchant) of £900 per year.¹⁶⁶ It was from this home and economic setting in Sutton Courtenay that Githa Sowerby and her sister Millicent left to pursue their respective careers as children's author and illustrator in London in the early 1900s. Githa Sowerby was 23 and took on the role of leader and manager in this partnership, being a much stronger character than her sister Millicent who, although not as business-minded as her older sister had inherited her father's passion for painting and was a talented artist who went on to forge a long career in her own right.¹⁶⁷

Githa and Millicent's first publication, *The Wise Book*, was printed by JM Dent in 1906 after Curtis Brown became their agent.¹⁶⁸ More publications quickly followed and the sisters' careers flourished, 'winning significant sales abroad as well as at home.'¹⁶⁹ Githa Sowerby's career as a children's author arose out of economic necessity and her success and shrewd business acumen led to her lending financial support to her father, mother and siblings for much of her life. John George grew to take Sowerby's support for granted and had no reservations about his daughter working to keep him in paints and easels, but in spite of his attitude to this unconventional financial arrangement it would have meant a great loss of social status to his family, in an era that was still obsessed with restrictive patriarchal Victorian notions of class and respectability.¹⁷⁰ Sowerby's father was later nicknamed (by his son-in-law) as 'The Great Boojum,' a reference to Lewis Carroll's 1876 poem *The Hunting of the Snark*.¹⁷¹ Carroll's nonsense poem warns of hunting the Snark, an animal who may turn out to be a highly dangerous 'Boojum', a creature that can make people disappear: 'You will softly and suddenly vanish away, / And never be met with again!'¹⁷² John George had such

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p.27.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ See A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books Ltd 2003); David Powell, *The Edwardian Crisis: Britain 1901-1914* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 1996).

¹⁷¹ Lewis Carroll, *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll: A Wonderland of Stories, Nonsense and Wit* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1988).

¹⁷² Ibid. p.282.

little regard for his daughter's feelings that she was as good as invisible. It is clear from Sowerby's father's actions and his son-in-law's nickname for him that he never regarded the material consequence, or the emotional toll that his life decisions had on his most reliable and remarkably dependable daughter.

Now settled in London, and with an income of her own, Githa Sowerby's life was radically different from her bleakly repressive and socially isolating upbringing in the industrial North, and although she was bearing a sizeable burden to compensate for her father's irresponsible financial decisions, living and working in the capital meant that she was able to conduct her life on her own terms. For a woman in Edwardian England this was rare and her feelings of liberation would have been profound. Her father soon added further to his daughter's burden of responsibility by sending Githa and Millicent's younger sister Marjory to live with them in London sometime around 1906.¹⁷³ Marjory had suffered a minor disability (she had a paralysed arm) as a result of childhood polio and Githa and Millicent took on the traditionally male roles of breadwinners, the three sisters living together until this unusual arrangement changed as a result of the marriages of two of them (Githa in 1912 and Marjory in 1915).¹⁷⁴

Githa Sowerby, a woman from a wealthy Northern family from Gateshead, was forging a career first as a successful children's author, and later as a playwright. She was mixing with the elite of London, socialising in some impressively eminent circles throughout her life. Sometime around 1908 she met Francesco Paolo Tosti (1846 – 1916), singing-master to the children of Queen Victoria, and together they collaborated for several years, Sowerby writing English lyrics to a 'number of his lovesongs.'¹⁷⁵ Sowerby continued to move in progressive political and artistic circles. Harley Granville-Barker became a great personal

¹⁷³ Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.42.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p.131.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p.46. I use one of these songs in my final *Githa* script as the music she dances to on the night she meets her husband John. Francesco Paolo Tosti, 'First Waltz', *Tosti's Greatest Songs*, Wide Classique 2008. See also Francesco Paolo Tosti, *Francesco Paolo Tosti – 30 Songs: High Voice*, Ricordi 2002.

friend,¹⁷⁶ and in her book Riley asserts Sowerby's association with the Fabian Society, claiming that she became a member in 1905.¹⁷⁷ However, there is no paper trail to confirm this, and it is something that Sowerby's only daughter Joan Smith (1918-) vehemently rejects.¹⁷⁸ What is clear is that as a working woman, responsible for the financial and emotional welfare of her family, Githa Sowerby was profoundly engaged with the social politics of her time.

Sowerby's success as a playwright was in an era (1901-1914) that discouraged and condemned any kind of female autonomy. 'The concept of marital unity and the imperative of male domestic authority were derived from religious discourse.'¹⁷⁹ Woman, as St Paul's letter to the Corinthians stated, was 'created for the man'¹⁸⁰ and women were educated with this in mind. If a little girl was lucky enough to receive an education, she was tutored to a level far below her that of her brothers; maths, literature and science were replaced with the more acceptably feminine pursuits of embroidery, needlework and music.¹⁸¹ Any kind of public assertion of self, creative or otherwise, was unacceptable. Middle and upper class women rarely earned their own living, or owned their own property, their role being confined to the decorative and domestic.¹⁸² Marriage was, as Cicely Hamilton stated in her 1910 pamphlet, 'a trade.'¹⁸³ Women of this time had no separate legal identity from their husband and 'were viewed as third class citizens, less important than men or even their own

¹⁷⁶ Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.103.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p.43.

¹⁷⁸ I met with Githa Sowerby's only daughter Joan Smith at her home, just off Sloane Square in London, on 15 February 2012.

¹⁷⁹ Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2012) p.51.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ See Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914* (London: Yale University Press 2008); Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Leicester University Press 1997).

¹⁸² See Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (London: John W. Parker & Son) 1858. This poem is a celebration of Victorian women who embody the feminine ideal e.g. a wife and mother who is selflessly devoted to her husband and children.

¹⁸³ Cicely Hamilton, *Marriage as a Trade* (London: Chapman and Hall 1910).

male children'¹⁸⁴ and in light of this suppression they were dependent on their 'fathers and husbands to protect their interests.'¹⁸⁵

Although Sowerby was writing in an era that denied women public assertions of self (creative or otherwise), there was a generation of women who had begun to question these restrictions on their self-expression. A shift had also begun to take place within the male-dominated world of theatre.¹⁸⁶ Inspired by the works of Ibsen, more and more women became invested in representing their experience on the stage. 'Women's increasing incursions into the production and directing'¹⁸⁷ of plays signalled a change, and the theatre was used as a forum to air discussions about gender inequality and the rights of women.¹⁸⁸ Eminent female theatre writers and campaigners from this period include Cicely Hamilton, Elizabeth Robins, Edith Lyttleton, Marie Stopes, and Elizabeth Baker and female revisionists and historians have done much to promote them. As Luckhurst has argued, 'the majority of academics have privileged a history of male playwrights over female in dominant twentieth-century British theatre history, which standard academic texts by male academics [Shellard 1999, Eyre and Wright 2000, Innes 2002, Billington 2007, and Sierz 2011] reflect.'¹⁸⁹ Powell's 'The Impossibility of Women Playwrights' provides a revisionist insight into the developing Victorian woman playwright, recognising the ways in which they have been dismissed from theatre history.¹⁹⁰ Ledger also writes from a revisionist perspective on this matter, in her chapter 'New Woman Drama' she investigates the (gendered) theatrical revolution that

¹⁸⁴ Lucinda Hawksley, *March, Women, March* (London: André Deutsch Ltd 2013).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.3.

¹⁸⁶ Ian Clarke, *Edwardian Drama* (London: Faber and Faber 1989); Jean Chothia, *English Drama of the Early Modern Period 1890-1940* (London and New York: Longman 1996); Kerry Powell, *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p.49.

¹⁸⁸ See Elizabeth Robins, *Votes for Women* in Jean Chothia (ed) *New Woman and Other Emancipated Women Plays* (New York: Oxford University Press 1996); Viv Gardner (ed), *Sketches from the Actress Franchise League* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham 1985); Sheila Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own: Feminist Playwrights of the Suffrage Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1992); Viv Gardner, et al. *Plays and Performance Texts by Women 1880-1930* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2012).

¹⁸⁹ Mary Luckhurst, *Caryl Churchill* (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2015), p.7.

¹⁹⁰ Kerry Powell, 'The Impossibility of Women Playwrights' in *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997) pp.77-94; Penny Farfan, *Women, Modernism, and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004).

took place in the 1890s.¹⁹¹ Feminist research has begun to readdress the omissions of women writers from this period and their work has begun to be reclaimed, re-examined, reconsidered and re-celebrated by academic researchers including Elaine Aston, Sue Ellen Case, Janelle Reinelt, Elin Diamond, Maggie B. Gale, Viv Gardner, Penny Farfan and Rebecca D'Monté. Sowerby was not unique in her endeavours as a female playwright; however, in contrast to the other women writers that I refer to, she was not an active or outspoken political campaigner.¹⁹² She did not produce pamphlets or essays as other women writing in this era often did. The word suffrage does not appear in her plays. She let the social settings in her dramatic work speak for itself.

The political and social restrictions for women did of course eventually change; the vote was eventually won (for property owning women over the age of 30) in 1918, and women were granted full, equal citizenship in 1928.¹⁹³ It is not my intention to discuss the details of this shift in great depth, only to acknowledge that Sowerby was writing in an era of profound political change for women, and while she certainly would not have been taking militant action on the streets of London, the act of writing her (progressively challenging) thoughts at all was a deeply political act. It was no wonder that Githa chose to conceal her gender when sharing her first dramatic work, by using the deliberately male pseudonym of KG Sowerby, a disguise often employed by female dramatists and novelists of the Victorian period.¹⁹⁴ Not only did a male name protect these writers from possible disgrace, it would

¹⁹¹ Sally Ledger, 'New Woman Drama' in Mary Luckhurst (ed), *A Companion To Modern British and Irish Drama 1880-2005* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006) pp.8-60.

¹⁹² See Joanne E. Gates, *Elizabeth Robins 1862-1952: Actress, Novelist, Feminist* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press 1994).

¹⁹³ See Martin Pugh, *The March of the Women* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press 2004); Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Women's Suffrage: A Short History of a Great Movement* (First published in 1912 reprinted in Cheshire: Portrayer Publishers 2002); Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from The Women's Suffrage Movement* (London and New York: Routledge 1996); Lucinda Hawksley, *March, Women, March* (London: André Deutsch Ltd 2013); Frank Meeres, *How Britain's Women Fought and Died for the Right to Vote* (Stroud: Amberly Publishing 2013); and Diane Atkinson, *The Suffragettes in Pictures* (Abingdon: The History Press 2010).

¹⁹⁴ See G. B. Stern (Gladys Bronwyn Stern), George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë), Ellis Bell (Emily Brontë), A. M. Barnard (Louisa May Alcott), George Fleming (Constance Fletcher).

(more importantly) allow their work to be judged on its own merit, and not by the fact that it was written by a mere woman. Sowerby's obsession with the ways in which women's lives were defined (and restricted) by marriage, class, and motherhood is an essential and recurring feature of her plays, and in this respect she was a proto-feminist. Sowerby's work as a dramatist represents her attempt to work out her complicated relationship to these issues in the public social forum that writing for the stage demands.

Sowerby's Playwriting Career

Sowerby's first play, *Rutherford & Son*, was premiered as a matinee on 31 January 1912 at the Court Theatre London under the male pseudonym KG Sowerby. It was an overnight hit.¹⁹⁵

Audiences were gripped by the storyline of the domestic tyrant John Rutherford, who judges the worth of everyone against their relevance to the profits to be made by his huge glassworks, driving his children one by one to flee his house and his ambition, only to meet his match at last in the courageous working-class daughter-in-law.¹⁹⁶

Sowerby was hailed as a genius, a masterful dramatist and became an overnight sensation:

The truth is that the English people have in Miss Sowerby a positive genius[...] she is destined to take rank with the world's best latter-day writers and thinkers.¹⁹⁷

When critics discovered KG Sowerby was a woman, they were astounded. It is clear from the facts of her life that Sowerby's first play explores her own family history, a subject about

¹⁹⁵ *Rutherford & Son* by K. G. Sowerby, Court Theatre, directed by John H. Leigh, 31 January 1912.

¹⁹⁶ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.15.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p.18.

which she was deeply reserved: as a dutiful daughter she had to protect her bankrupt artist father from further social shame and this may have been a reason for her notorious privacy and the reason journalists found her frustrating to interview. Keble Howard's article on Sowerby's first play, entitled 'Remarkable Play by a Young English Miss' ('you might suspect her of eating chocolates and talking nonsense in the shade, you would never believe that she would be the author of a play'), was sub-headed 'An Exasperated Interviewer!'¹⁹⁸ Soon after the premiere of *Rutherford & Son*, Githa Sowerby met John Kaye Kendall, a retired Army Captain and also a playwright, writer of humorous verse and a regular contributor to the satirical *Punch* magazine (1841-2002) under the pseudonym Dum-Dum.¹⁹⁹ After a whirlwind romance Sowerby accepted Kaye Kendall's proposal and they were married later that year on 8 July 1912. Their unusual union was a life-long riddle to the only daughter of the marriage, Joan (1918 -), who, in Riley's chapter 'Through a Daughter's Eyes',²⁰⁰ describes her mother as being as 'different from Pa as it is possible for a human being to be.'²⁰¹ John Kaye Kendall was an extrovert and often rudely outspoken man whose politics (*Punch Magazine* was notorious for its right wing views) and outgoing personality were in stark contrast to Githa's own more dignified personal manner.

[...] for Ma to accept his proposal within three weeks of meeting him was so out of character for her that I've never been able to understand how it happened
[...] Pa must have solved the riddle of who Ma really was because they were very happy together.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Keble Howard, 'Remarkable Play by a Young English Miss', *Daily Mail* newspaper cutting dated, 9 February 1912, Sowerby Archives, Newcastle.

¹⁹⁹ *Punch Magazine* was a satirical magazine of articles, humour and cartoons that ran from 1841-2002. See <http://www.punch.co.uk/> [accessed 9 September 2014].

²⁰⁰ This is a chapter edited from Joan's own words after a series of interviews with Riley in 2008-2009.

²⁰¹ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.93.

²⁰² *Ibid.* p.94.

After the astronomical success of her first play, a short one-act piece by Sowerby was performed as a curtain-raiser at The Playhouse Theatre on 2 May 1912.²⁰³ *Before Breakfast*²⁰⁴ is a light-hearted play presenting 'a comical picture of the 'idle classes'²⁰⁵ and was produced in the same year as *Rutherford & Son*, providing 'a striking contrast in tone.'²⁰⁶ Sowerby ignored her agent's advice to embrace this lighter side of her writing talent and her second full-length play, *A Man and Some Women*, was produced in 1914.²⁰⁷ The play displayed her dedication to exploring the themes of 'domestic tyranny and the effects of [women's] economic independence from a different angle.'²⁰⁸ In this piece Sowerby's writing is deeply sympathetic to the effects that traditional gender roles have on the men in her plays, and in this respect the play is an expression of her progressive socialist-feminist views. As a playwright now writing under her gendered name, Githa Sowerby struggled to find a London theatre willing to produce *A Man and Some Women*. The climate surrounding the outbreak of the First World War meant that the country was entering a new theatrical age, and as Luckhurst states 'West End shows increasingly became escapist, revue material and music-hall comedy were in great demand.'²⁰⁹ Sowerby's second play was produced outside London at the Gaiety Theatre Manchester in October 1914.²¹⁰ Sadly no reviews of this production have survived. The play has received two revivals to date, one in Bristol in 1994,²¹¹ and more recently at the Shaw Festival in Canada in 2012.²¹²

²⁰³ Ibid. p.116.

²⁰⁴ Githa Sowerby, *Before Breakfast*, 1912. Unpublished. Available in the Sowerby archives, Newcastle, or through Samuel French & Co, who administer the literary estate for all of Githa's plays on behalf of her daughter.

²⁰⁵ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.115.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. p.116.

²⁰⁷ Githa Sowerby, *A Man and Some Women*, 1914. Unpublished. Available in the Sowerby archives, Newcastle, or through Samuel French & Co, who administer the literary estate for all of Githa's plays on behalf of her daughter.

²⁰⁸ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.117.

²⁰⁹ Mary Luckhurst, 'A Wounded Stage: Drama and World War 1' in Mary Luckhurst (ed) *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama 1880-2005* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006) pp. 301-315.

²¹⁰ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.117.

²¹¹ *A Man and Some Women* by Githa Sowerby, directed by Caroline Hunt, Quakers Friar Bristol, January 1995. See <http://showofstrength.org.uk/productions/productions-archive>

Sowerby's third full-length stage piece, *Sheila*, premiered at the St. James Theatre London 7 June 1917.²¹³ Again, Sowerby's concern here was with the working woman and the play explores this with the 'added complications of class distinctions.'²¹⁴ Sheila, the woman of the play's title, is a working class woman (a secretary) whose humble beginnings are overlooked by her employer who (to her delight) courts and then marries her. Sheila later discovers the marriage was undertaken for the sole purpose of gaining an heir and becomes disillusioned. Needless to say, the resulting union is not happy. Sheila struggles to find a place within her husband's aristocratic family (the characters of Lord and Lady Carden display Sowerby's deftly comic touch) and the baby that the newlyweds conceive tragically dies at birth.²¹⁵ The couple's grief serves as a bonding experience and they eventually find the love that was absent at the start of their relationship. The play ends with a suggestion that any further children of this marriage will be born to parents who 'have grown through their suffering, and have learned how to love each other as equals.'²¹⁶ Riley argues that Sowerby's proposition is 'that for a man to choose a wife as one would a breeding animal and for a woman to choose a husband purely as a meal ticket is toxic for both sides,'²¹⁷ and again highlights Sowerby's dedication and belief in an enlightened equality between the sexes. Unsurprisingly the male critics did not understand *Sheila*, complaining about the distasteful infant death and berating its content; 'The motive for a misunderstanding is too slender and too far fetched for a mere man.'²¹⁸ *The Ladies' Pictorial* is typical of further misogynistic press response:

[accessed 9 September 2014]. NB. This production was not directed by Sheila Hannon as Riley claims in *Looking For Githa*, p.63.

²¹² *A Man and Some Women* by Githa Sowerby, directed by Alisa Palmer, Shaw Festival Canada, 2012. See <http://www.shawfest.com/about-the-shaw/mandate-and-history/> [accessed 9 September 2014].

²¹³ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.120.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.120.

²¹⁵ It is not known whether Sowerby herself suffered any miscarriages.

²¹⁶ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.122.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.122.

²¹⁸ *World*, 12.6.1917, quoted in Gardner, Viv and Fitzsimmons, Linda (eds), *New Woman Plays* (London: Methuen 1991) p.136.

Of course Sheila's whole attitude is quite illogical. Why should not a man marry because he wants a son? And what better compliment can he pay to a woman than to wish that she should be the mother? How many thousands of women make no secret whatever of having married for the hope of children! Are all their husbands to consider themselves insulted?²¹⁹

Sowerby's earlier celebration by the press for *Rutherford & Son* as 'an author of first importance'²²⁰ was forgotten, her political voice unvalued and ignored.

The War

From 1914 to 1918 the First World War gripped the country, and as well as continuing her prosperous career as a children's author, Sowerby was greatly involved in the war effort, giving her time as a volunteer at the Surgical Supplies Depot in Kensington.²²¹ This small charity was 'dedicated to the voluntary production of surgical appliances for the war wounded'²²² and volunteers included members and patrons from the upper classes of society and the entertainment world. It was here that Githa made some close female friends, who provided great comfort to her in her husband's wartime absence.²²³ One of these friends, the wealthy May Buzzard, would later leave property to Sowerby in her will in 1920, an extraordinarily generous act, the impact of which would change Sowerby's life by elevating her to a status in society that reinstated the class status achieved by exceeded previous generations of the Sowerbys.²²⁴ Sowerby's only daughter, Joan (1918-), was

²¹⁹ Undated article in *Ladies' Pictorial*, Sowerby Archives.

²²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, quote taken from the book jacket of Githa Sowerby, *Rutherford & Son in Plays of Today: Second Volume* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1925).

²²¹ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.65.

²²² *Ibid.* p.66.

²²³ Retired Capt. John Kaye Kendall immediately rejoined the Army in 1914. He was seconded to MI5 and sent to serve in Ireland where he was promoted to the rank of Major. See Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.63.

²²⁴ In her last will and testament signed on 18 December 1920, May Buzzard left her family home at 18 Kensington Square to Githa Sowerby. See Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.74.

conceived in the summer of 1917. At the age of 41, five years after her marriage, in a time of war, it is unlikely that this was a planned or longed-for pregnancy. Sowerby's difficulty in connecting to her only daughter affirms her conflict with the maternal role. In Joan's words Sowerby is painted as a reserved and unfathomable woman and mother:

You could only ever see the outside of her. She kept the real person inside hidden, and she was always very controlled and 'proper.' Whenever she looked at me I always felt she was judging me in some way, to see if what I was doing or saying came up to scratch. [...] She had this set code of conduct and she stuck to it so closely that her real self was completely hidden under it. She wore it like a cloak. I never even recall seeing Ma with her hair loose or walking around the house in her dressing-gown.²²⁵

After the war was over Sowerby made an attempt to revisit her playwriting work, and returned to the plight of a working woman and the way in which women were vulnerable to financial (and emotional) exploitation at the hands of powerful men. *The Stepmother* received just one performance at the Play Actors club at the New Theatre London on 13 January 1924.²²⁶ The play begins with Lois, a young and naïve heiress, manipulated into marriage by scheming (and bankrupt) widow Eustace Gayden. Lois matures into a shrewd businesswoman, her dressmaking company turning a tidy profit, supporting her husband and two step-daughters, but the climax of the play centres around Lois's heart-breaking realisation that while she has spent her entire adult life working, her philandering husband Eustace has been exploiting her for his own means:

LOIS [...] My God, the years I've worked. And all the time you've been behind me, cutting the ground from under my feet, making all I've done – nothing.²²⁷

²²⁵ Patricia Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.93.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* p.123.

²²⁷ Githa Sowerby, *The Stepmother* (London: Samuel French 1929) p.102. My thanks to Sam Walters, former Artistic Director of the Orange Tree Theatre Richmond, for the loan of their rehearsal copy of the script.

Sowerby ends this play with a vision of female solidarity as Lois and her two stepdaughters assert their position in the household and Eustace is forced to leave in disgrace, allowing all three women a freedom and mutually supportive liberty. Sowerby's own painful family history of paternal exploitation, and the strength she drew from her sisters, is evident in the themes of the play. *The Stepmother* was Sowerby's last attempt at sharing her politics on the stage. After this she wrote nothing at all for ten years; even her output of children's books stopped. Sowerby's last publication with her sister Millicent was in 1925.²²⁸ After this date Millicent went on illustrating for other authors and always earned her living through her artwork, which is now regarded as highly collectable. Until the recent rediscovery of Githa Sowerby's archives, it was Millicent Sowerby who had more visibility and recognition as an artist throughout her life and since her death.²²⁹ The fact that Millicent Sowerby's artistic career always stayed within the acceptable boundaries of appropriately feminine pursuits has undoubtedly been a key factor in her legacy. Significantly, she remained unmarried and had no children. 'Everyone underestimated her. Aunt Mill was just regarded as a funny little spinster and in the family everyone laughed at her.'²³⁰ Without question Githa Sowerby's marriage and late motherhood were contributing factors to the end of her theatrical career. Sowerby was right to be anxious about the impact these roles had on the women in her plays. She herself was unable to reconcile her life as an artist with her role as a wife and mother, and sank into obscurity.

Sowerby broke her ten-year silence in 1934 when her play for children, *The Policeman's Whistle*, ran as a Christmas show at Croydon Repertory Theatre.²³¹ She also wrote one final play (which has never been performed), the manuscript of which was discovered by Riley among Sowerby's papers when researching *Looking For Githa* in 2009. *Direct Action*, (a title that echoes strongly with the suffragettes' call to arms 'Deeds not Words'), takes

²²⁸ Githa Sowerby, *Poems of Childhood* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford 1925).

²²⁹ For an example of images of some of her work see <http://www.pinterest.com/fun2bgram/millicent-sowerby/> [accessed 6 September 2014].

²³⁰ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.102.

²³¹ *Ibid.* p.125.

motherhood as its central concern, exploring the difficulties of two daughters whose mother's 'restrictive approach'²³² to child rearing, is of a style more fitting with out-dated Victorian methods and has left the girls ill-equipped to deal with young womanhood in the 1930s. This play seems to be Sowerby's own acknowledgement of the difficulties she experienced fulfilling her role as a mother and a recognition of the way in which her shortcomings affected her daughter. Although she struggled with her maternal role, Sowerby delighted in her role as grandmother to her daughter's two sons; according to her daughter Joan it seems she 'was excellent with children provided she had no parental responsibility for them.'²³³ This is a striking indictment of Sowerby's failure as a mother. My impression from Joan's interview was that despite her continued attempts to reach out to Sowerby she remained as cold and 'icy' as Sowerby's own mother had been to her.

Sowerby outlived her husband, who was tragically killed when his deafness caused him to step out in front of a freight train while on a country walk in 1952. His obituary in *The Times* celebrates him as a 'modern writer' whose 'signature became almost institutional.'²³⁴

There was never a man of more forthright views, expressed so forcibly in private life: but he mitigated them with a personal geniality that prevented alarm.²³⁵

The remaining 18 years of Sowerby's life were 'peaceful' and she lived alone with support from a carer and her daughter Joan.²³⁶ She burnt all of her letters and photographs shortly before her death in 1970 and died believing that 'no one was interested in her work or her achievements.'²³⁷ Her death received no press interest and there was no obituary in *The Times* to mark her passing. Hers too was a tragic end in this respect. My play, *Githa*, focuses

²³² Ibid. p.126.

²³³ Ibid. p.105.

²³⁴ *The Times*, 15 January 1952, quoted in Patricia Riley *Looking for Githa*.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.106.

²³⁷ Ibid. p.107.

on the period of Sowerby's life between 1901 and 1917, the years that chart Sowerby's extraordinary rise to fame and her struggle to maintain her reputation as a key dramatist of her time, and includes the conception (but not the birth) of her daughter Joan. By selecting this section of her life I was able to explore my interest in how women attempt to reconcile their own (artistic) needs with the responsibility of motherhood. *Githa* is a character who is unable to do this. In writing (and then performing) my piece I wanted to give an emotionally engaging and entertaining account of Sowerby's pioneering literary life, ending by provoking an audience to feel the injustice that I had experienced when first learning of her absence from the history books.

***Githa*: Research and Development**

Research and Development (R&D) for the writing of *Githa* began in December 2011. Over the next six months I developed the script within the department of Theatre, Film and Television with dramaturgical input from my PhD supervisor Professor Mary Luckhurst and fellow doctoral student and director Mark Smith.²³⁸ The piece also received developmental support from the University of York Humanities and Research Centre Visiting Fellow Tanya Gerstle (a leader actor trainer at the University of Melbourne).²³⁹ I also made contact with Richard Beecham (director of the Northern Stage 2009 production of *Rutherford & Son*), who generously gave me his time to read and provide feedback on an early draft in May.²⁴⁰ This draft was performed as a rehearsed reading as part of the Little Festival of Everything in June 2012.²⁴¹ After a period of rewriting and a three-week rehearsal period, the first production was performed as an Edinburgh preview at South Hill Park Arts Centre in July

²³⁸ Mark Smith's PhD thesis relates to writing and devising in contemporary theatre. He is now a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at the University of York. See <http://www.york.ac.uk/tftv/staff/> [accessed 11 September 2014].

²³⁹ Tanya Gerstle, Victoria College of Arts, University of Melbourne. Tanya was a visiting fellow at the University of York Humanities Research Centre from 20 April to 30 June 2012.

²⁴⁰ Hannah Davies, private telephone call to Richard Beecham, 20 May 2012.

²⁴¹ *Githa* by Hannah Davies, rehearsed reading directed by Peter Darney, Little Festival of Everything, Fauconberg Arms, 23 June 2012.

2012.²⁴² It underwent some minor revisions before its premiere at the Edinburgh Festival in August 2012.²⁴³ This initial research and development, writing, revising and acting process took around nine months. Following the Edinburgh run (and in response to the verbal feedback and written feedback we received)²⁴⁴ I undertook a further redrafting process before it was performed at York Theatre Royal Studio in May 2013 and then at St James Theatre Studio, London in June 2013. Throughout this R&D period I was lucky enough to be in constant contact with Sowerby's biographer Patricia Riley, who was a great source of advice, support and enthusiasm for the project.

My interest in Githa Sowerby was sparked in December 2011 after a local theatre company, York Settlement Community Players, asked me to read the part of Janet in a rehearsed reading of *Rutherford & Son*, a play for which they had recently applied for the performance rights.²⁴⁵ I was in awe of the play's dramatic power and was curious as to why I had not come across Sowerby's work before. It was at this reading that I met Riley, who gave a short presentation about Sowerby's life and career. I was fascinated by the facts of Sowerby's life and deeply incensed that a woman whose first play had been such a forceful masterpiece and commercial success could be so easily overlooked by theatre historians and critics. Standard histories of twentieth century British theatre include her work in tokenistic fashion if at all. Michael Billington's *State of the Nation*²⁴⁶ does not mention her, nor does Christopher Innes in his *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century*,²⁴⁷ and there is nothing of Sowerby in Aleks Sierz's *Rewriting the Nation*.²⁴⁸ The significant revivals of

²⁴² *Githa* by Hannah Davies, directed by Peter Darney, South Hill Park Arts Centre, Berkshire, 2 July 2012.

²⁴³ *Githa* by Hannah Davies, directed by Peter Darney, Edinburgh Festival, C: Nova, 13-27 August 2012.

²⁴⁴ See my Professional Portfolio (included as an appendix to this document) for reviews of all of these performances.

²⁴⁵ *Rutherford and Son* by Githa Sowerby, rehearsed reading, directed by Paul Osborne. York Settlement Community Players, 11 December 2011.

²⁴⁶ Michael Billington, *State of the Nation* (London: Faber and Faber 2007).

²⁴⁷ Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2002).

²⁴⁸ Aleks Sierz, *Rewriting the Nation: British Theatre Today* (London: Methuen 2011).

Sowerby's work are not recorded.²⁴⁹ Since the 1980s and the burgeoning of feminist scholarship there have been attempts to reclaim her work (and that of other writers from this era) but overall she remains absent from history. My project was conceived as a way to address this injustice while also allowing me to further explore my research inquiry from the perspective of an upper middle class woman from a different era.

The One Woman Show

The decision to write *Githa* as a play for myself to perform was a pragmatic one, and coloured by a strong desire to write a play that was guaranteed to end in a fully staged production of a live piece of theatre. *This is Not a Festival* was successfully received in several rehearsed readings and scratch nights,²⁵⁰ but I wanted to progress beyond what is widely acknowledged by emerging playwrights as relentless cycles of developmental workshops and readings.²⁵¹ I wanted my career to move into a phase that was defined by my plays being actualised in performance under professional production conditions.²⁵² It

²⁴⁹ *Rutherford & Son* was revived for the Cottesloe at the National Theatre (directed by Katie Mitchell 1994). Other revivals include Northern Stage (directed by Richard Beecham 2009) and the New End Theatre Hampstead (directed by Wyn Jones 1988). More recently *The Stepmother* was revived at the Orange Tree Theatre Richmond (directed by Sam Walters 2012). Amateur productions include York Settlement Community Players, York Theatre Royal Studio, 2013. I recently received an email (29 August 2014) from the Nantwich Players who got in touch to tell me of their forthcoming production of *The Stepmother* and of their shared interest in Sowerby's work (email to Hannah Davies dated 29 August 2014). See <http://www.nantwichplayers.com/aboutus/> [accessed 9 September 2014].

²⁵⁰ *This is Not a Festival* was one of a hundred scripts (out of several thousand) to be long-listed for the Manchester Royal Exchange Bruntwood Playwriting Prize 2012; in addition to this success York Theatre Royal nominated me (using *This is Not a Festival* as an example of my work) for the BBC Writersroom 10 scheme. I was also long-listed by this scheme's judging panel, as a promising emerging playwright.

²⁵¹ See Theodore Shank, 'The Playwriting Profession: Setting Out and the Journey' in Theodore Shank (ed), *Contemporary British Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 1994) pp.181-204.

²⁵² Playwright Fin Kennedy recently investigated the effects of recent Arts Council funding cuts on the production of new writing and new playwrights work in his study *In Battalions* (2013). See <http://finkennedy.co.uk/In-Battalions> [accessed 11 September 2014]. See also

occurred to me that if I were to write for myself, I would be able to manage this process from a position of artistic autonomy and that writing a solo show was the most economically viable way to do this. The fact that I too am a female playwright offered a further layer to a theatre performance inspired by the life and works of a female dramatist.

One-person performances can show theatre at its most intimate, moving and daring, and brilliantly demonstrate the fragility of the membranes separating author, actor, character and audience. Why aren't women taking advantage of such a rewarding genre?²⁵³

The above appeal (by writer and actress Molly Flatt) is a good example of the troubling tendency of a widely held belief that there is a lack of solo shows for female performers. This is not the case. There is a wealth of one-woman shows performed by contemporary high profile actresses including Eileen Atkins (*A Room of One's Own* 1989, *Ellen Terry with Eileen Atkins* 2014), Siân Phillips (*Marlene* 1996), Vanessa Redgrave (*The Year of Magical Thinking* 2008), Linda Marlowe (*Berkoff's Women* 2001, *The World's Wife* 2009). Further research yields to Rani Moorthy (*Curry Tales* 2004), Jillian Lauren (*Mother Tongue* 2012), Dawn French (*A Million Minutes* 2014), Denise Van Outen (*Some Girl I Used to Know* 2014). In fact monologues and solo performance have a long history in relation to women's dramatic work. Gale recognises the boldness presented by early female pioneers of this form in her 2007 chapter 'Going Solo: An Historical Perspective on the Actress and the Monologue':

In a culture where women were stigmatised as the weaker sex, the actress, standing on stage alone, without the comfort of scenery or fellow actors,

'Arts Council's Budget Cut by 30%', BBC 20 October 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11582070> [accessed 11 September 2014].

²⁵³ Molly Flatt, 'Where are the Great One-Woman Shows', *Guardian*, 15 February 2008. <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/feb/15/wherearethegreatonewomans> [accessed 12 September].

carried a different set of social and theatrical signifiers to the male actor engaged in the same activity.²⁵⁴

Gale's chapter examines the historical development of the monologue from 'Fanny Kelly in the mid-nineteenth century, through to Joyce Grenfell in the 1950s.'²⁵⁵ It is not that women are not taking advantage of this genre, it is rather that they are not celebrated for their work within it in the same way that their male counterparts are. Again there is a canonical omission. By contrast, there is widespread adulation for the solo work of Simon Callow, Michael Pennington, Anthony Sher, Steven Berkoff, and Tim Crouch, who all possess undeniable talent as performers. As I write this chapter, the television in the University Library Café in which I am working is showing Callow on BBC Breakfast discussing his new solo piece *The Man Jesus*.²⁵⁶

There is not just a lack of critical coverage of women's solo work. The National Theatre: 50 Years on Stage event (aired on BBC2 on 2 November 2013) is a recent example of the theatre establishment's failure to celebrate women's dramatic writing, and of a continuing theatrical bias towards the male voice. Only one female writer was included in this event, Alecky Blythe, for her 2011 hit *London Road*, a verbatim piece set to music that examines the Ipswich killings in 2006.²⁵⁷

According to a list published by Whatsonstage earlier this year, between April 2003, when Nicholas Hytner took over the National, and April 2013, 206 productions were mounted on the three main stages of the National, the Olivier, the Lyttleton and the Cottesloe (with one exception, a show by Shunt,

²⁵⁴ Maggie B. Gale, 'Going Solo: An Historical Perspective on the Actress and the Monologue' in Maggie B. Gale (ed), John Stokes (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007) pp.291-313.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. p.291.

²⁵⁶ BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-29155043> [accessed 12 September 2014].

²⁵⁷ *London Road* by Alecky Blythe, director Rufus Norris, National Theatre Cottosloe, April 2011.

this list doesn't include work outside, or in the theatre's public spaces). Of those, only 31 involved a female writer – a mere 15% – and of those 31 plays, only 20 were full productions written by a woman (ie not co-authored or presented as part of a double bill). And Hytner's regime is, if anything, the good news: according to the comprehensive list published in the NT's own 2001 book *In Rehearsal at the National*, Peter Hall programmed just four plays by women in 15 years, Richard Eyre improved this, averaging 7%, and Trevor Nunn pushed that up to almost 10% during his five years in charge.²⁵⁸

Apparently the act of women speaking their truths and ideas in a public performance setting is still something we resist as a society. The on going debate surrounding female comedians' ability to be funny is woeful in this respect. As Gray asserts, 'Women have constantly exploded the idea of themselves as naturally humourless, just as they once had to explode the idea of a 'natural' lack of intelligence.'²⁵⁹ In the past thirty-three years just three women have been awarded the Edinburgh Comedy Award (founded as the Perrier Award in 1981).²⁶⁰ This 'relative absence'²⁶¹ of female comedians is troubling. Aston places the 1995 (then) Perrier Award winning show, *Prozac and Tantrums* by Jenny Eclair, in direct relation to Sierz's 'in-yer-face' theatre of the 1990s, describing Eclair's stand-up style as 'one that delights in 'trash' behaviour in the spirit of celebration, not condemnation.'²⁶² Claire Dowie provides another example of a female solo writer/performer who has embraced the solo performance genre. In 2012 Miriam Margolyes' solo show *Dickens' Women* toured internationally to critical acclaim. Notably the show uses Dickens' female characters to access the mystery of the (male) author.

²⁵⁸ Sam Potter, *Does the National Theatre Have a Problem with Women?*, *Guardian*, 7 November <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2013/nov/07/national-theatre-problem-with-women> [accessed 16 September 2014].

²⁵⁹ Frances Gray, *Women and Laughter* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1994) p.7.

²⁶⁰ Jenny Eclair, *Prozac and Tantrums* (1995); Laura Solon, *Kopfraper's Syndrome: One Man and His Incredible Mind* (2005), Bridget Christie, *A Bic For Her* (2013). See <http://www.comedyawards.co.uk/comedyshow.asp> [accessed 12 September 2014].

²⁶¹ Elaine Aston, 'A Good Night Out for the Girls' in Rebecca D'Monté and Graham Saunders (eds), *Cool Britannia? British Political Drama in the 1990s* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2008) p.114.

²⁶² *Ibid.* p.124.

My wish to write and perform a solo show was realised with careful planning, the input of key artistic collaborators,²⁶³ some fundraising and an award from the University of York Performance Fund.²⁶⁴ It was then that I was able to find a way to take *Githa* to the 2012 Edinburgh Fringe Festival in a way that negated financial risks or burden. 2012 marked the centenary of Sowerby's overnight rise to success and celebrity in 1912, and the theatrical community were beginning to recognise and celebrate Sowerby's achievements and talent. Performance rights to *Rutherford & Son* had been granted to Northern Broadsides Theatre Company.²⁶⁵ Sowerby's work was undergoing something of a revival, which increased press interest in my own timely project.

The Sowerby Archives

The contents of Sowerby's archives are frustratingly sparse for a writer wishing to represent her as an onstage character (the remainder of this chapter shall refer to this created character as Githa). The items in the archives are a large collection of mostly professional documents, ones that she spared when she destroyed all of her personal letters shortly before her death in 1970. The documents consisted of the manuscripts of all her playscripts, a large file of business correspondence between her and her agent Curtis Brown (including some letters from Harley Granville-Barker and a personal letter from Charles Brookfield, Examiner of Plays for the Lord Chamberlain's Office), programmes, production photographs and newspaper cuttings of reviews relating to her stage work, and a few cuttings relating to

²⁶³ I co-produced the piece with local company The Flanagan Collective. I was responsible for all budgetary and production matters and Alexander Wright (Artistic Director of The Flanagan Collective) provided the venue and managed all press contacts. A friend, theatre and radio director Peter Darney, agreed to direct the piece for a reduced fee.

²⁶⁴ University of York Performance Award 2012. My thanks to Sir Ron Cooke.

²⁶⁵ *Rutherford & Son* by Githa Sowerby (edited by Blake Morrison), directed by Sir Jonathan Miller, Northern Broadsides 2013. See <http://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk/index.php/past-productions/2013-2/rutherford-son-2013/> [accessed 9 September 2014].

her and her husband.²⁶⁶ It is clear that Sowerby wished to be remembered by her achievements as a dramatist. In addition to this collection of professional items the archives also contain genealogical documents, papers and some photographs, collated by Riley throughout her biographical research during 2008-2009. The Sowerby archives represent Sowerby as the 'controlled' and 'proper'²⁶⁷ woman that her daughter describes, and from the outset I was met with the type of wall she 'spent her whole life hiding behind.'²⁶⁸ The lack of personal content in the archives is an indication of Sowerby's deeply private and personally reserved nature; the items she left behind are ones that she saw as leaving a fitting and appropriate self-projected professional legacy, one that celebrated her playwriting achievements. The principal challenge of this playwriting project was how to write and embody my character, Githa, acknowledging the facts of Sowerby's life and work, while creating a complete stage character with an authentic voice and active inner life. Despite their disappointingly formal contents, visiting the Sowerby archives was a deeply affecting experience. Small fragments within Sowerby's business letters, stage directions and reported speech written by journalists gave me small examples of the way in which she may have spoken, and these all brought me closer to creating Githa as a woman (these fragments became essential components in the finished written script of *Githa*). Turning the pages of Sowerby's manuscripts and reading the notes and amendments she had made on them brought me materially closer to understanding her as a writer. The physical act of turning and touching these pages was an intensely powerful experience, but it still did not give me full access to Sowerby's inner life. It was clear from the outset that theatre history could not help me fathom the inner life of my subject, and the contents of the archives had far from quenched my creative curiosities as to who Githa really might be. In light of this I decided to seek help from Sowerby's closest living relative, her only daughter, whom I contacted with the help of Riley.

²⁶⁶ These items were all safely stored in a 'majestic hatbox' left by Sowerby to her daughter Joan, who shared it with Riley on 30 April 2008. Riley later donated the contents to the Tyne and Wear Archives in Newcastle. Riley, *Looking For Githa*, preface.

²⁶⁷ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.93.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.107.

I met with Joan Smith in February 2012 at her home a few streets away from Sloane Square, home to the Royal Court Theatre in West London. The Royal Court Theatre (where I began my own career as a playwright) stands on the site of the Court Theatre, where *Rutherford & Son* was first produced in 1912.²⁶⁹ John Highfield Leigh, ‘a barrister and theatre manager, had purchased the lease of the tiny Court Theatre, adjoining Sloane Square underground station in Chelsea [in 1904].’²⁷⁰ Leigh was the husband of Sowerby’s actress friend Thyrza Norman who ‘afterwards assumed a role in *Rutherford & Son* and she encouraged me by all means to finish the play.’²⁷¹ Exiting from the underground at this site on my way to visit Joan was profoundly affecting. I was walking through the wide West London street in which Githa herself would have spent considerable time during *Rutherford & Son* rehearsals. The realisation of this on the short walk to Joan’s apartment was an important moment in my imaginative process. Spending time with a direct descendent of Githa was an even more exceptional experience. Due to Joan’s age (94) I chose not to ask to record or transcribe this meeting, taking only a notebook and pen in which to record the impressions and observations that follow.²⁷²

Joan Smith’s first floor Georgian high-ceilinged apartment was filled with books, ornaments and family photographs. The carpets were thick and the heating was turned up high. There was a strong scent of perfume or air freshener. Joan, an astute and dynamic woman of 94, although slightly deaf, commanded an intelligent wit, with a cut-glass accent to boot, and would not take no for an answer when opening a bottle of white wine, gladly bossing me through from the kitchen to the living room with a tray of crystal glasses. Joan immediately gave me her generous blessing to write about her mother, but was afraid she could not really tell me any more than what she had already imparted to Patricia Riley for her research

²⁶⁹ Sowerby, K. G. *Rutherford and Son* (Court Theatre Matinee performance 1912).

²⁷⁰ Sydney Higgins, *The Golden Age of British Theatre (1880-1920)* see <http://www.the-camerino-players.com/britishtheatre/GranvilleBarker.html> [accessed 9 September 2014]. Philip Roberts, *The Royal Court Theatre and the Modern Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999). Royal Court Theatre, <http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/about-us/building-and-tours/> [accessed 14 September 2014].

²⁷¹ Keble Howard, ‘Remarkable Play by a Young English Miss’, *Daily Mail*, 9 February 1912.

²⁷² Hannah Davies, Archives, York 2012.

in her chapter 'Through a Daughter's Eyes'.²⁷³ Much of this information she reiterated almost verbatim, but she was often diverted by memories of her father. I got the impression she would have been delighted if I had been there to ask permission to write a play about his literary career, and I had a strong sense of how her mother may have experienced a sense of failure in being diminished in her daughter's affections while living with such an extrovert and overbearing man. Although Joan was not able to give me an intimate account of her mother's experience as a woman – 'I spent 52 years trying to get close to Ma and I couldn't do it'²⁷⁴ – she did provide a crucial physical reference point. Sharing the same space with Sowerby's closest female relative was an intense and informative part of my creative process. Before I left Joan's flat she showed me a photograph of her mother.²⁷⁵ It was kept on a shiny walnut cabinet in an ornate silver oval frame. The picture had been taken at the time of Sowerby's playwriting celebrity. It had been taken outside and in it she wears a high-necked, floor-length dress, a set of elaborate furs with lace gloves and a wide-brimmed hat. She is holding a strong and direct gaze into the camera, looking marvellously handsome, with an elegant and upright poise; it shows Sowerby at her most empowered. This image became crucial in my development of Githa as a written character, and also informed my acting process of embodying her on stage. The experience of being in the same room as Joan and being able to observe her gestures and vocal inflections enabled me to create the character voice of Githa for my play on the page, as well as informing my final embodied physical and vocal portrayal.²⁷⁶

The photograph below was taken in May 2012, and is a recreation (from memory) of the photograph of Sowerby that Joan showed me in February of that year. It was taken at the

²⁷³ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, pp.92-108.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p.94.

²⁷⁵ This was from Joan's private photograph collection and is *not* in the Sowerby Archives.

²⁷⁶ Actor trainer Michael Chekhov's work and exercises on his 'Imaginary Body' were crucial in both of these processes. See Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor* (London and New York: Routledge 2002); Dawn Langman, *The Art of Acting* (Forest Row: Temple Lodge 2014); Friedank Ragner and Joanna Merlin (directors) *Masterclasses in the Michael Chekhov Technique* (Michael Chekhov Association Routledge: 2007) DVD; Leonard Petit, *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor* (London: Routledge 2009); Franc Chamberlain, *Michael Chekhov* (London: Routledge 2003).

end of a research and development day spent (often but not always) in full Edwardian theatrical costume exploring the physical, gestural and vocal work for the character of Githa. The results of this experimentation and the re-creation of this image marked a key turning point in the way in which I discovered Githa's voice on the page.



Figure 4. Myself dressed as Githa. Research and Development May 2012. © Hannah Davies

Not long after this picture was taken I undertook a longhand writing exercise in which I 'voiced' both halves of an imaginary conversation between Githa and myself. Cameron espouses the view that when working on paper rather than on a screen or typewriter, 'Instead of being an act of pontification, writing becomes an act of revelation.'²⁷⁷ Goldberg echoes this and she too asserts that by resisting the lure of a screen or keyboard 'Handwriting is more connected to the movement of the heart.'²⁷⁸ This is true of my experience as a writer. All of my first play drafts are produced on paper, and are then transposed and edited digitally. A small section of this written exercise follows:

²⁷⁷ Julia Cameron, *The Right to Write* (London: Macmillan 2000) p.11.

²⁷⁸ Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones* (London: Shambala 2005) p.7.

HD: Githa I'm trying to write your life. I've reached a block. What do you advise?

GS: It is not for me to advise anything. If you must finish the project finish the project. That's all that must be done.

HD: I am worried I will misrepresent you.

GS: You shall. It is the writer's duty to represent the world as they see it, not as those within it would be shown.

HD: What would you say to the world today if you had the chance?

GS: There would be little point in me saying anything. The world you live in is very different to mine.

HD: But anything to women? To writers?

GS: I would suggest that they be not complacent. That they question and seek knowledge. Reveal their true thoughts and feelings as perhaps I never did.²⁷⁹

The experience of inhabiting Githa's physical persona and posture (Figure 3 above) enabled me to produce the above writing, and this exercise helped me to discover Githa's understated skill in avoiding difficult and potentially revealing questions, as well as giving me an example of the precision of the answers she gave when she was pressed to give one ('it is the writer's duty to represent the world as they see it, not as those within it would be shown'). I use this feature of Githa's character to inform the overall structure of my final draft of *Githa*. The reflections prompted by this exercise became the fundamental question at the heart of the play and with this in mind I plotted the over-arching dramatic arc of her journey. Throughout my script Githa is continually challenged: by her actress friend (p.92), a journalist, (p.98) her sister (p.99), guests at a party (p.100), her husband (p.103), her audience (p.108) and eventually by herself (p.109), for an answer as to why it is that she 'bothers to write plays at all' (p.98). Githa is reluctant (or perhaps unable) to share her thoughts with anyone. She opens up for the briefest of moments to her lover John (after he

²⁷⁹ Hannah Davies, Archives, York 2012.

has kissed her), offering the poetically enigmatic response: 'Because I am fire inside.'²⁸⁰ In this way I show the audience how 'Pa [John] solved the riddle of who Ma [Githa] really was.'²⁸¹ Githa takes a risk in sharing her vulnerability, and is reassured when John's simple but kind response ('I can see that' p.103) is a respectful acknowledgment of her passion for her work. She understands that (unlike in her relationship with her father) she is not invisible to him, and falls head over heels in love. Apart from this small moment, Githa is unable to articulate her answer to the dramatic question of the play. It is only at the end, when she is faced with the limitations of impending motherhood, that she is able to offer any real depth and insight into her need for artistry. The threat that this motherhood posed to a woman's autonomy and creative life was something that, as a woman engaged with the social and political conditions of her era, Githa would have been acutely aware of. Tired, alone and defeated in her chosen career she softly addresses the audience:

I write to understand my life, because I feel like I might burst if I do not.
Because what I think and feel in this world cannot be nothing. It cannot mean
nothing. [...] On the page I can roar as I cannot in life. (p.113)

The tragedy in *Githa*, is that she is only able to put words to why she writes when it is too late to continue.

Another significant moment of discovery in the research and writing process for this project came about in March 2012 after an extended family member, a professional astrologer, offered to draw up and give a reading of Sowerby's birth chart and zodiac sign (Libra), after I had reported details of my (until then) fruitless attempts at capturing my subject's inner voice. I was deeply sceptical about using a horoscope reading as way to discover Sowerby's voice, but indulged the idea anyway, and although my instincts were correct in that it did

²⁸⁰ Ibid. p.98. The key moment in this scene came from a throwaway exercise of five lines, written at the bottom of the page in a notebook, and shows Githa's answer as part of a *quid pro quo* between the lovers. J: Why do you write, Githa? G: Because I am fire inside. J: I can see that. G: And why do you? J: Because I am not.

²⁸¹ Riley, *Looking For Githa*, p.94.

not solve my primary challenge, listening to another's interpretation and description of Sowerby's character using a completely different mode of investigation (to my surprise) fuelled my imaginative process in unexpected ways:

Sowerby had her moon in Taurus, all people with moon in Taurus collect. They can't help themselves, they collect things, beautiful things, ideas, she would not have been able to resist adding to a collection. [...] There is a Jupiter Saturn square here which is a classic sign of somebody who comes with the potential to speak for their generation [...] she had a deep seated desire to prove people wrong. [...] She has an Unaspected Sun so she never was quite sure who she was. She could have done an impression of most people but she would have found it difficult to be herself [...] She's not short of courage and she's not short of determination. It's a restless birth chart, full of inner conflict.²⁸²

Listening to the above reflection on who Sowerby may have been confirmed and held up a mirror to my own research and deepening understanding of her but it also planted a pleasing image in my mind, that of Githa as a 'collector' and a gifted mimic. This captured my imagination and yielded an idea: Githa's collection is made up of the people she meets in her life, who she then puts into her plays. I knew from biographical and archive research that the themes and content of her plays often drew on real life,²⁸³ and the idea of Githa as a collector of characters gave me a fitting framing device for my piece. Githa would narrate her story herself, performing the characters she meets in the play, all shared with the audience, from her 'collection'. The posture I discovered in the image above (Figure 2) became the basis for a 'neutral Githa' on which to overlay her physical and vocal impersonations of all of the other characters she references in the final draft. All of these characters were played as if embodied by Githa herself, manifestations that often represented unexpressed or denied aspects of her own character complexities. Needless to say, it was a challenge to sustain this as an actor and required advanced levels of physical

²⁸² Githa Sowerby's zodiac reading, Hannah Davies Archives, 21 March 2012.

²⁸³ Sowerby's father and grandfather are easy to locate in the characters of Rutherford and young Rutherford in *Rutherford & Son*, but there are other examples in her plays. See Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.122. 'Her description of the grumpy Sir James and Lady Carden [in *Sheila*] suggests they were modelled on Sowerby's dog-breeding aunt and industrialist uncle.'

and vocal precision in rehearsals and performance. Multi-roling is of course a device often used in solo performance. As Catron remarks 'the soloist shows remarkable abilities'²⁸⁴ and performing multitudes of characters keeps audiences 'impressed.'²⁸⁵ There are of course exceptions. The stage monologues of Ruth Draper are all examples of one actor conjuring other characters on stage without embodying them.²⁸⁶ Tim Crouch's *An Oak Tree* includes the audience members themselves, by asking them to repeat specific lines, or read in from scripts.²⁸⁷ What was important about my discovery in the horoscope reading was that it helped me to determine a clear psychological and dramaturgical way to represent Githa and all of the other characters on stage. It provided me with a form that suited my content.

Githa: Artist and Mother

From the very opening moments in *Githa* we see the character of Githa as an active artist. In fact, it is we who are guests in her working space. '*GITHA is pre-set [...] and is writing in a continuous, but composed and upright ladylike fashion. The audience enter and find their seats.*' (p.84) The play is punctuated all the way through with further moments in which we see her as an artist. We enter the narrative to witness her negotiating on behalf of her and her sister's work, with literary agent Curtis Brown. (p.86) It is clear from the outset that this is a woman who is in need of employment, and it is not until she is economically safe and secure in new lodgings with a publisher's deal for a children's book that we discover some of her wilder artistic nature. She sits down to write (we assume at this point a children's book) '*and is soon distracted by an intrusive memory of her father's glass factory.*' (p.88) The scene then morphs into an uncomfortable memory from Githa's childhood in which she is humiliated by her father's associates for declaring her ambition for a 'meadow of her own.'

²⁸⁴ Louis E. Catron, *The Power of One: The Solo Play for Playwrights, Actors, and Directors* (Longrove Illinois: Waveland Press 2000) p.10; see also Susan Merson, *Your Name Here: An Actor/Writer's Guide to Solo Performance* (USA: Star 2004).

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Morton Dauwen Zabel, *The Art of Ruth Draper: Her Dramas and Characters* (London: Oxford University Press 1960).

²⁸⁷ Tim Crouch, *An Oak Tree* (London: Oberon 2005).

(p.89) She then returns to her adult self to reflect on how this taught her 'how laws and prisoners are made, who is your friend and who is not, and how much money the men have got.' (p.90) The experience of being mocked by a room full of men, would have also provided a great lesson in the value of hiding her innermost desires. This scene is constructed around words from Sowerby's own poems.²⁸⁸ I wove my own dramatic material around the words of the subject whose personality I was seeking to capture.

As the play goes on, the audience journeys deeper into Githa's artistic experience as a writer; the play invites us to delve into her process and watch it grow, shift and evolve. In scene five we see her complete the first draft of *Rutherford & Son*, as if possessed by the ancient God (Moloch²⁸⁹) that her 'molten fire of words' that the stage directions refer to. (p.87) Later, as she escapes London (and the interruptions of fiancé John) to write by the banks of a river, we witness her frustrations and blockage as a writer 'It flows. Why can't I?' (p.107) It is here that the audience are cast as voyeurs to a private moment of uncharacteristic sensual abandon, as Githa unshackles her restrictive Edwardian attire and finds 'release and a pleasurable torrent' (107) of words by taking a forbidden paddle in the river.²⁹⁰ As part of the acting process working towards the final performance choices in this scene my director took me to the University lake for a paddle. The scene by the river is the last moment we see Githa as an artist; the remainder of the play charts her submission to the condition of self-repression that the norms of the day dictate. The end of *Githa*, when she is pregnant, evokes an atmosphere of defeat and failure, a contrast to her resolute, business-like manner in the opening scenes. Thwarted by the establishment, the social conditions of wartime, and the biological betrayal of pregnancy we see her slowly and deliberately replace the lid on her fountain pen, but not before she gives a call to arms to the audience: 'When all your little world is bright, With stars and candles gleaming, What will you dream of when the night, Has left you time for dreaming?' (p.113) These are again Sowerby's own words.

²⁸⁸ Githa Sowerby, 'Haymaking' in *The Happy Book* (Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton 1909); Githa Sowerby, 'To a Woman I Know', see Riley, *Looking for Githa*, p.108. These poems are in the Sowerby Archives, Newcastle.

²⁸⁹ This text is taken from a speech in *Rutherford & Son*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson) p.314.

²⁹⁰ These are also Sowerby's words, taken from the text of *The Stepmother* (1924).

Following the birth of her daughter Sowerby seems to have had some kind of psychic collapse. Post-natal depression was not a recognised condition, but it seems likely that she may have experienced something akin to this. Certainly her artistic activity never had the same kind of output after motherhood. In the closing moment of *Githa* it was my intention to give Githa her voice to share her thoughts with the current generation of women and writers – thoughts that she revealed to me in the writing exercise that I refer to above:

GS: I would suggest that they be not complacent. That they question and seek knowledge. Reveal their true thoughts and feelings as perhaps I never did.²⁹¹

This is how I ‘cast’ the audience as both writer and performer. My version of Githa does what Sowerby always resisted in real life, opening up to her audience and telling her truth.

Githa is only ever portrayed as a mother (a pregnant woman) in the closing moments of the play. There are no words to mark her discovery that she is pregnant. My choices as an actor in this section were hinged around the feeling of Githa suddenly being betrayed by her own body: ‘*She looks down at her body, as if experiencing it for the first time.*’ (p.108) Wearing by the onset of war, the recent death of her father, and her failure to achieve the sustained success that she deserved, I performed these moments with Githa standing alone, clutching weakly at the back of her chair, a posture that is in stark contrast to the way we encountered her at the start of the play:

- Overall I am feeling leaden. Drained. Quite forlorn.

She has a realisation. Touches her belly slowly. She looks up. John is there. (p.112)

²⁹¹ Hannah Davies, Archives, York 2012.

The exchange that follows, in which Githa informs her husband of their impending parenthood, required some nuanced performance. In this short extract I had to portray two people's (Githa and John's) external and internal reactions to the life-changing news, over the course of three sparsely-written lines:

[GITHA] - We two shall be three come spring.

[JOHN] 'We shall be more the merrier for it.'

[GITHA] - Of course we shall. (p.112)

Although sparse on the page, this exchange is laden with deep emotion and the secret to unlocking it in performance (unlike many of the other moments where I was required to shift swiftly between characters) was to pace it very slowly, in order to allow the effect of these words to sink in for John and Githa. This small exchange is foregrounded by an earlier scene, which shows the couple making a bargain to remain childless.

[JOHN] 'I just want it to be us, you and me, no one else. Just us. For always.'

[GITHA] - Yes. Just us.(p.104)

The knowledge that I would be performing my script myself enabled me to embrace a new level of economy in my writing. I had a creative shorthand between my role as writer and role as performer. These two sides of my craft were interwoven from the outset. I was not in a position of having to 'spell things out' to a performer in the text. The resulting script in this respect often serves as a marker for my own detailed imaginative character creations. In addition to giving a performance of Githa as the base character, I also had to create an additional fifteen characters, both male and female. In rehearsals (for editorial revisions on the script) I had to make a clear distinction between the two roles of performer and

writer.²⁹² Every time we came across a moment in the text that my director or I thought might require a dramaturgical revision I was asked to occupy a different mode of investigation by his spoken prompt: ‘can we have the writer in the room please?’ at which point I would physically remove my wide-brimmed hat and respond with a different set of creative priorities. Embracing the writer/performer role on this project marked a considerable turning point in my work as a playwright – one that informed my final piece – and writing for solo performance (for myself) is an area I look forward to returning to in the future.

After the Edinburgh Festival run, *Githa* was revived for a run at the York Theatre Royal Studio playing alongside the Northern Broadsides production of *Rutherford & Son* in the main house.²⁹³ I took part in two audience talkback events with their cast and creative team. *Githa* went on to be revived for the St James Theatre Studio in London, again playing alongside *Rutherford & Son* in the main house.²⁹⁴

²⁹² Including my responsibilities as producer and production manager, I was fulfilling three/four creative roles.

²⁹³ *Rutherford & Son* by Githa Sowerby (edited by Blake Morrison), directed by Sir Jonathan Miller, Northern Broadsides, York Theatre Royal 28 May-1 June 2012.

²⁹⁴ For reviews, photographs and press coverage of *Githa* please refer to my Professional Portfolio, reproduced as an appendix at the end of this document.

CHAPTER 3

WITHIN THIS LANDSCAPE



Figure 5. My mother and younger sister (circa 1984). © Hannah Davies

My third and final playwriting project represents a very different experiment in terms of process, form and content. In this piece I take my own mother as the subject matter, the narrative focusing on the time she and I spent living together in the North Yorkshire countryside in the few years leading up to her unexpected and tragic death in a road accident when I was twelve years old.²⁹⁵ The inspiration for *Within This Landscape* was taken from my personal relationship with a specific location, and is the first time I have explored both autobiographical dramatic writing and writing site-specific (or site-responsive) work that takes place in a non-theatre setting. The final version of *Within This Landscape* was premiered in 2014 and was experienced as a mapped audio-walk. Audience members (alone or in small groups) were equipped with a map and personal audio headset (an MP3 player), and set off on a route around the village of Coxwold, in the Howardian Hills

²⁹⁵ See Rebecca Abrams, *When Parents Die: Learning to Live with the Loss of a Parent* (London and New York: Routledge 1992); Atle Dyregrov, *Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 1991).

of North Yorkshire, hearing the script which was performed by myself and underscored with evocative sound design, and the route was decorated with visual artistic installations.²⁹⁶ The piece maps a route that begins in a country pub, the Fauconberg Arms, and ends in St Michael's churchyard in which my mother is buried.

The Audio-walk

The audio-walk form has evolved from contemporary performance practices of site-specific theatre. 'Site-specific theatre' is a term borrowed from the terrain of 1960s visual arts and attempts to encapsulate the varied and complex ways that images, stories and events can be used to explore our relationship with the spaces we inhabit from a performance perspective.²⁹⁷ Historically, theatre has often taken place in public spaces other than auditoriums, but the recent trend of site-specific performance and walking practice are notable in an era that is defined by globalisation, immigration, and ecological issues; in a world of high-tech advancement and global connectivity a sense of displacement is paradoxically a common experience and new forms of art practice are developing to account for this.

[*Site-specific theatre*] suggests that the act of dividing the activity labelled 'theatre' from the building labelled 'theatre' holds possibilities for responding to and interrogating a range of current spatial concerns, and for investigating the spatial dimension of contemporary identities (personal, communal, national and international).²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ For further information regarding this project, including a trailer, please visit <http://www.cgtheatre.co.uk/portfolio/within-this-landscape/> [accessed September 2014].

²⁹⁷ Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Routledge: London and New York 2000), Duska Radosavljevic, *Theatre-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013).

²⁹⁸ Fiona Wilkie, 'The Production of 'Site' in Nadine Holdsworth and Mary Luckhurst, *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell 2008) p.87.

The distinct way in which practitioners have prioritised space, location and geographical landscapes in their works has been explored by commentators and practice-researchers including Mike Pearson,²⁹⁹ Miwon Kwon,³⁰⁰ Jen Harvie,³⁰¹ Dee Heddon,³⁰² Gay Mcauley,³⁰³ Fiona Wilkie³⁰⁴ and Cathy Turner.³⁰⁵ The audio-walk experience is a model in its own right and opens up a new field of performance practice which has been adumbrated by O'Rourke.³⁰⁶ There continues to be a growing interest in such work across performance practices, and performance companies who have embraced this model of working include Brith Gof, Wrights & Sites, and Artangel. West Yorkshire-based theatre company Slung Low have produced several audio-walks, and are regarded as specialists in this area of sound and visual performance; their most ambitious example was their 2013 co-production of *Blood and Chocolate* with Pilot Theatre and York Theatre Royal. The script for *Blood and Chocolate* was written by local Olivier Award winning playwright Mike Kenny. The production was conceived as a way to celebrate York's unique history as a city once famous for its chocolate production, and examines how the First World War affected the lives of the factory

²⁹⁹ Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2010); Mike Pearson, *In Comes I: Performance, Memory and Landscape* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press 2006).

³⁰⁰ Mikwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (London: The MIT Press 2004).

³⁰¹ Jen Harvie, 'Being Her: Presence, Absence and Narrative in the Art of Janet Cardiff and Tracey Emin' in Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, *Autobiography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2004) pp.194-216; Paul Allain and Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* (London: Routledge 2014).

³⁰² Dee Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2005); Dee Heddon, *One Square Foot: Thousands of Routes*, *PAJ: A Journal of Performance Art*, 29, (2), 2009, pp.40-50; Dee Heddon, *Performing the Archive: Following in the Footsteps*, *Performance Research*, 7, (4), 2002, pp.64-77; Dee Heddon and Cathy Turner, *Walking Women: Interviews with Artists on the Move*, *Performance Research*, 15, (4), 2010, pp.14-22.

³⁰³ Gay Macauley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press 2000).

³⁰⁴ Fiona Wilkie, *Performance Transport and Mobility: Making Passage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2014).

³⁰⁵ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

³⁰⁶ Karen O'Rourke, *Walking and Mapping* (London: The MIT Press 2013).

workers.³⁰⁷ Using a large split professional and community cast of over 200 actors, *Blood and Chocolate* was a 'citywide adventure through the streets of York'³⁰⁸ in which a team of ushers led an audience of 300 through the city, each audience member equipped with a personal audio-transmitter headset. The actors were all fitted with microphones, their voices fed through a live sound feed and cued with the action that is taking place around them; in this way audiences could hear soundscapes and conversations taking place over the action which was performed at a variety of locations around the city. Scenes took place over windowsills on the first floor of a historical mansion house, on street corners by York Minster, and far away in the distance at the top of the hill of historic Clifford's Tower. Slung Low's current co-production with Opera North, *The White Whale* by James Philips (2014), again incorporates this use of (radio transmitter) audio headsets into site-specific work; the action of this play, inspired by *Moby Dick*,³⁰⁹ takes place on and around the Leeds city centre canal. Continuing their success from their involvement in *Blood and Chocolate* Pilot Theatre were recently commissioned as part of the Tour De France Stage 3 in Cambridge to create *Cycle of Songs* (2014), a geo-located free smart phone application that allowed users to access a digital version of the cyclists' route, that indicated when to listen to the app's audio content of nine original commissions of stories and songs by local artists and choirs.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ The Rowntree Chocolate Factory Archives are held at the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York, <http://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/holdings/what-we-hold/rowntree/> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³⁰⁸ Mike Kenny, *Blood and Chocolate* co-production with Pilot Theatre, York Theatre Royal and Slung Low. Dir. Alan Lane 3-20 October 2013. See <http://www.pilot-theatre.com/?idno=1183> [accessed 15 September 2014]; Alfred Hickling, 'Blood and Chocolate Review,' *Guardian*, 7 October 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/oct/07/blood-and-chocolate-review> [accessed 14 July 2014]; Jonathan Brown, 'Theatre Review: Blood and Chocolate,' *Independent*, 7 October 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/theatre-review-blood--chocolate-york-city-centre-8864390.html> [accessed 14 July 2014].

³⁰⁹ Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Norton 2001).

³¹⁰ *Cycle of Songs*, Pilot Theatre and Historyworks, Cambridge 7 July 2014, <http://www.cycleofsongs.com/> [accessed 14 July 2014]. See also Pilot Theatre's work on The Umbrella Project, <http://umbrellaproject.co.uk/> [accessed 14 July 2014].

As well as the above reference points, I have also been influenced by practitioners such as Janet Cardiff and Carl Lavery and their work has directly informed my own investigations into the use of walking in performance. Cardiff's 2000 audio-walk, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*, started and ended at Whitechapel Library in East London.³¹¹ This piece was experienced by an audience of one through a self-managed audio head-set (in this case a portable CD player). As the audio began the listener was given clear vocal instructions to walk in time with the metronomic sound of the narrator's footsteps that continued throughout the entirety of the audio track. They navigated the East London streets by following Cardiff's meticulously mapped foot-stepped route and her spoken directions, and were instructed to pause briefly and then re-start the audio when asked to do something potentially dangerous such as crossing a road. *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* journeys around the streets of East London, visiting locations including the bustling Liverpool Street Station and the quieter backstreets of Brick Lane, and Cardiff's voice tells fragments of narrative relating to a missing woman. The narrative is elusive, non-linear and disorientating, with occasional inclusions of a man's voice who is apparently a detective investigating the disappearance of the missing woman.³¹²

I experienced *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* in my early twenties when I was still at drama school, and Cardiff's early work (she has gone on to produce audio-walks all over the world) provided me with a strong reference point of a form of promenade audio experience, giving me a visceral first-hand encounter with the powerfully immersive qualities that walking among a narrative-led sound world can induce. I was captivated by the way in which the audio-walk can totally transform an audience member's experience of their (in this case) urban geographical surroundings. As Josephine Machon and Gareth White have argued, 'the

³¹¹ The Whitechapel Library is now closed, but Janet Cardiff's audio-walk is still available to download:

http://www.artangel.org.uk/projects/1999/the_missing_voice_case_study_b/about_the_project/about_the_project [accessed 14 July 2014].

³¹² Jen Harvie, 'Being Her: Presence, Absence and Narrative in the Art of Janet Cardiff and Tracey Emin' in Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, *Auto/biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2004) p.198. See Karen O'Rourke, *Walking and Mapping*, p.35. Janet Cardiff's website <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/index.html> [accessed 14 September 2014].

presence (vocal) and the absence (physical) of the performer/narrator creates a uniquely intimate, yet equally dissociative dramatic experience.³¹³ These qualities of narrative presence and performative absence were relevant to the themes of loss and memory that I explore in the writing of *Within This Landscape*, and using the audio-walk model facilitated a way for me to celebrate these elements in my piece.

Also exploring walking in his work, Carl Lavery's *Mourning Walk* (2006) took the solo experience of a planned and documented memorial walk as a way to develop the written material and photographic image content for a piece he then performed as an homage to his father.³¹⁴ Although site-responsive in process, the final performance of *Mourning Walk* was performed under studio theatre conditions, first in December 2006 at Lancaster University and then at the Nuffield Theatre Lancaster on 1 March 2008. Although walking is central to the creation of this piece, it is not incorporated into the final performance, nor was the piece experienced through audio headset devices. Lavery performed an account of his walk, which he interspersed with the presentation of his collated images from along the route. The piece was significant for me as, like mine, it communicated the artist's memories of their deceased parent, reflecting on themes of grief and loss. The script also included a brief lecture-style section in which Lavery references the very nature of walking as art in the performance itself; '[the walk] is important in that it realises the idea, actualising the structure as physical movement through time and space so that the work of art has a real – if transient – existence.'³¹⁵ The opening words of Lavery's text openly acknowledged the mourning of the piece's title. He began the monologue as follows:

³¹³ Josephine Machon, *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2009); Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2013); Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (London: Palgrave 2013).

³¹⁴ Carl Lavery, *Mourning Walk* [performance script] in Roberta Mock (ed), *Walking, Writing and Performance* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect 2009) pp.27-41.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.36.

On 29 July 2004, to mark the anniversary of my Dad's death, I walked eighteen miles as the crow flies from the town of Market Harborough in Leicestershire to the village of Cottesmore in Lincolnshire. At the end of the journey I performed a ritual in a field. I have nothing to say about that. Certain things ought to be kept secret.³¹⁶

Lavery's upfront recognition of the emotionally turbulent themes in his piece offered a way to contextualise and frame my own desire to explore similar ones. His assertion that some things ought to be kept secret is one I also recognise. My piece takes audience members to the actual churchyard in which my mother is buried, but deliberately avoids taking them to the graveside itself. My open acknowledgement of my mother's death in *Within This Landscape* helped to put participants at ease with the material from the outset, as one piece of audience feedback recognises: 'At times I felt like I was intruding on something so personal but then I began to feel I was being invited, given permission.'³¹⁷ This chimes with Gareth White's explorations of the aesthetics of invitation.³¹⁸ Interestingly, some audience members returned from *Within This Landscape* reporting that they had in fact actively searched for my mother's headstone at the end of the walk.³¹⁹ This gave me a range of emotional responses. I was torn between feelings of outrage and indignation, and the curious astonishment of a creative researcher.

As well as providing me with a recent example of a practitioner who had used a walk as a way to performatively commemorate a deceased parent, researching Lavery's piece also provided me with reassuring and engaging reflections on his personal, creative and analytical responses to the challenges of this type of process. Reading Lavery's thoughts on the fundamental nature and purposes of writing was a turning point in overcoming my own misgivings of exploring an auto-biographical piece that deals with a personal history of loss.

³¹⁶ Ibid. p.28.

³¹⁷ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, York 2014.

³¹⁸ Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (Basingstoke Palgrave 2013).

³¹⁹ This was reported verbally in a conversation I had after the performance at the Fauconberg Arms, 24 August 2014.

Is not all writing, all art, a response to a loss of some kind, an imaginative way of dealing with lack? And if this is so, then is not writing an enchantment or spell that heals the self by allowing it to recover the past through signs?³²⁰

Lavery refers to his practice as a form of enchantment or spell, and this resonated with me. Both Lavery and Cardiff were seminal in helping me to understand and excavate the possibilities of using walking and audio as a means of responding to my own chosen site.

Coxwold as Performance Site

Coxwold is a small village in the Hambleton district of North Yorkshire, and is located within the North York Moors National Park. Made up of 121 houses and 259 inhabitants³²¹, it is situated around 18 miles north of York on a gentle hill that leads up to the Howardian Hills, an area of outstanding natural beauty.³²² Coxwold is a picturesque village that dates as far back as the Domesday Book. It is perhaps best known for its historical resident Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), who wrote the groundbreaking novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*³²³ here; his family home, Shandy Hall, is open to visitors from all over the world

³²⁰ Carl, Lavery, 'Mourning Walk and Pedestrian Performance: History, Aesthetics and Ethics' in Roberta Mock (ed) *Walking, Writing and Performance* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect 2009) p.49.

³²¹ These figures are taken from the 2011 Census and are available at <http://www.hambleton.gov.uk/parishes-c/coxwold> [accessed September 2014].

³²² The Howardian hills are an area of outstanding natural beauty 'nestled between the North York Moors National Park, the Yorkshire Wolds and the Vale of York.' See <http://www.howardianhills.org.uk/> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³²³ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press 2009). The 2005 film with actor Steve Coogan was inspired by the novel. *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*, adapted from the novel by Frank Cottrell Boyce, Directed by Michael Winterbottom, BBC Films 2005. There was also a recent stage production: *iShandy* by Richard Hurford, Directed by Damian Cruden, York Theatre Royal, 19 April - 11 May 2013.

throughout the year.³²⁴ Other nearby attractions include Byland Abbey, Rievaulx Abbey, the National Trust country house Newburgh Priory, and plenty of walking routes that access impressive views of the White Horse that is cut into the cliffs of Sutton Bank. Coxwold also boasts an award-winning seventeenth-century pub The Fauconberg Arms,³²⁵ a pottery,³²⁶ a village hall and at the very top of the hill, St Michael's church.³²⁷ Pevsner includes this church in his architectural study as it features a unique octagonal tower.³²⁸ This is the churchyard in which my mother's ashes were buried after she died in 1992.

This village and the surrounding landscape in which my final playwriting piece was performed have immense personal significance for me, not only as a site of mourning, but also as a landscape of my childhood memory. I explored this landscape, its surrounding features and tourist attractions with my mother in the short time that we spent living in a nearby village. The geography of the landscape was alien to me when I first encountered it, having grown up in the busier, more densely populated Yorkshire cities of Leeds and York. My early childhood had not been spent rambling in the countryside, my family were by no means country folk and my time spent living here was defined by all the obvious challenges of re-adjustment that such a considerable lifestyle change demands. I had to adapt and reconsider my relationship with the landscape before I was able to find my identity within my new surroundings. The same could be said of my relationship with my mother, who until shortly before had been my secondary carer; our connection was now placed in a very different domestic setting, one that involved an expanding family in a large new home in an unfamiliar topography. My mother was a talented craftswoman who had trained at Leeds

³²⁴ Shandy Hall is now managed as a museum and is home to The Laurence Sterne Trust. See <http://www.laurencesternetrust.org.uk/visit-us.php> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³²⁵ Fauconberg Arms Pub website <http://www.fauconbergarms.com/> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³²⁶ More about Coxwold Pottery can be found on the Craft Potters Association website at http://www.cpaceramics.co.uk/gallery_detail.php?member_id=136 [accessed 15 September 2014].

³²⁷ St. Michael's Church was built in the 1420s and is a Grade 1 listed building. More information regarding its history is available here <http://www.visit-easingwold.com/coxwold.html> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³²⁸ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2002).

College of Art in the early 1970s and she worked across mediums in acrylics, oils and watercolours. There was an attic room in the new house that she called her 'Art Studio' but we all referred to as 'Mum's Studio'. Her move to the countryside with a new partner meant that she had the much-coveted space in which to dedicate herself entirely to her art. As Virginia Woolf famously asserts in her 1929 essay *A Room of One's Own*, this is a necessity for a woman to maintain her craft:

[...] a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman.³²⁹

However my mother's artistic space (and her access to it) was defined and limited by her role and responsibilities as a mother, something not accounted for by Woolf, who had no children. As a child I was deeply affected by the fact that my mother was very rarely able to work in her much longed-for studio.

Within This Landscape: The Route

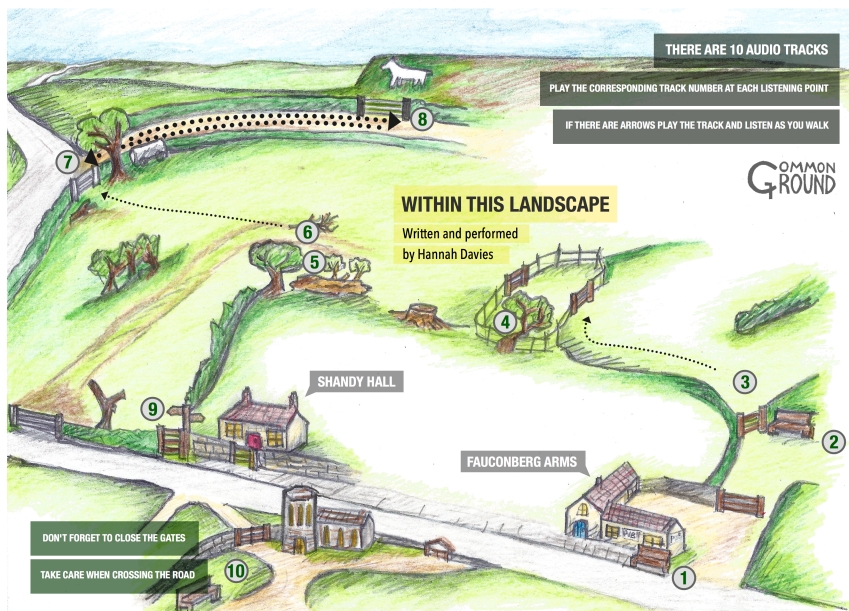


Figure 6. *Within This Landscape* mapped route. © Common Ground Theatre

³²⁹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Penguin 2000) p.6.

The route of *Within This Landscape* is a circular one. The piece begins at the Fauconberg Arms pub, travels alongside the length of the pub's gardens and follows the edges of the village, journeying through the town pastures, up through several fields and over a meadow towards a kissing gate; it then turns right along a lane that ends with a panoramic view of Kilburn White Horse, briefly retracing its steps to re-enter the village of Coxwold via a different access route, passing Shandy Hall and finally crossing the road to the top entrance of St Michael's churchyard, ending on a bench in the churchyard itself. Headsets and maps are then returned to ushers in the pub where they started their journey, now just yards away from them on the other side of the road.

The voice that audience members hear as they undertake this route is my own. There are ten audio tracks on the headset, and each track is performed by me. My voice narrates the story of my life experience. There are no other voices, apart from those that feature in textural background soundscapes.³³⁰ All of the audio was recorded and the soundscapes created by sound engineer Jack Rutherford.³³¹ The text is delivered as a series of ten dramatic monologues that work together to make an entire piece. While on the audio-walk audience members self-operate their audio devices and (unlike in Cardiff's piece) are free to set their own individual journeying pace. In total there are fifty-five minutes of audio, and devices are allocated for two-hour slots to ensure that no one feels rushed or under pressure. The accompanying map indicates a set of ten listening points, the numbers of which correspond to the track numbers on the audio device. The listening points are either stationary listening points (a bench, or a view over a hedge or gate) or mobile listening points (the audience plays the track at the appropriate point and then listens as they walk along the route shown by small arrows on the map). The route the audience takes and the listening points themselves are decorated with small everyday objects: flowerpots, garden gnomes, wind chimes, wellington boots filled with seasonal flowers. In addition to these decorations there are also several larger visual artistic installations that punctuate more

³³⁰ These were sourced at the social gatherings of friends and family.

³³¹ Jack Rutherford is a sound designer, DJ and sound engineer based in York. He recently completed an MA in Music Technology at the University of York. He is co-founder of Kyubu records <https://soundcloud.com/kyubu> [accessed 15 September 2014].

significant narrative locations or points in the audio along the way. None of these are marked overtly on the map but are obvious landmarks and audience members are encouraged to enjoy exploring their surroundings when greeted and equipped with their map and audio headsets by front of house staff. *Within This Landscape* is defined by the time of day that the audience member chooses to experience it, and offers a unique performative experience depending on the unavoidable interventions of livestock and weather – even the audience members’ own ability to read a map or operate an MP3 player!

The visual installation elements of the audio-walk were designed and collated by my sister Jessica, who is five years younger than me and who, like our mother, is a gifted visual artist and craftswoman.³³² Working together on this project meant that *Within This Landscape* was not just an artistic homage to my mother from me, but also from my sister. Working together we were able to create visual interpretations of the text that punctuated, highlighted or juxtaposed moments from the audio, all working towards the goal of conjuring up a flavour of our mother’s character among the very landscape in which we last had a physical connection with her. This marked her passing in a way that neither of had the opportunity to do as children and gave voice to both our childhood and artistic adult selves.³³³

Within This Landscape: Research and Development

³³² My sister Jessica Watson-Cainer is an artist and craftsperson who specialises in leatherwork. She attended Bristol School of Art in 2002 and previous work includes whiteboard animation (see <http://www.spinningtopfilms.com/> [accessed 15 September 2014]), site-specific installation, and body art.

³³³ Marking the passing of a deceased parent is an important stage of the grieving process for children and adolescents, as psychologists and psychotherapists have testified. See David E. Balk, *Dealing with Dying, Death, and Grief during Adolescence* (New York and London: Routledge 2014); Atle Dyregrov, *Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 1991); James William Worden, *Children and Grief* (New York and London: Guilford Press 1996); Nancy Boyd Webb, *Helping Bereaved Children* (New York and London: Guilford Press 2010).

Within This Landscape was first performed as a rehearsed reading as part of The Little Festival of Everything in 2011.³³⁴ The first draft was written in response to an invitation I received to present some of my work at this new arts and theatre festival, conceived and curated by Alexander Wright (Artistic Director of The Flanagan Collective) and Tom Bellerby (Associate Director at Pilot Theatre) as a way to provide a platform for regional artists to share their work in a developmental setting and to encourage visiting companies to include more rural locations on their tours.³³⁵ Theatre makers, musicians and artists from all over the country attended, bringing pieces of work at differing stages of development.³³⁶ I performed an early draft of *Within This Landscape* as a more conventional piece of live storytelling in this pop-up festival setting on a blustery autumnal evening in a cosy performance space in an outhouse of the Fauconberg Arms pub.³³⁷ My son (then six years old) came with me, and sat at my feet as I read the piece to the small but receptive audience who reclined on cushions by candlelight. The feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive, many remarking not only on the beauty and power of the writing, but also on the bravery of the vulnerability I had embraced by sharing some of my life story. Performing my own writing was something I had never done before (this early draft and reading of *Within This Landscape* preceded my role as writer/performer on *Githa*) but was something I was becoming increasingly drawn to for the reasons I have already discussed in Chapter Two.³³⁸ Despite my early enthusiasm for writing a site-responsive piece of writing I had approached the idea of using my own life for dramatic material with extreme

³³⁴ The Little Festival of Everything, The Fauconberg Arms, 26 November 2011.

³³⁵ Alexander Wright has since been employed by the York Theatre Royal as Creative Producer.

³³⁶ Companies and artists included Shunt (theatre), The River People (theatre), Holy Moly and the Crackers (folk band), and Henry Raby (punk poet). This festival has since become part of a regional arts event project *On Our Turf* funded by the Arts Council of England Rural Touring Fund and managed by York Theatre Royal. For more information on this project, see <http://www.onourturf.co.uk/> [accessed 15 September 2014].

³³⁷ Little Festival of Everything, Fauconberg Arms, 26 November 2011.

³³⁸ In fact the experience of reading the early draft of *Within This Landscape* further cemented my intentions to explore writing work for myself as an actor and was a key factor in starting to write *Githa* as a solo show. See Sean Bruno and Luke Dixon, *Creating Solo Performance* (London: Routledge 2014); Susan Merson, *Your Name Here: An Actor/Writer's Guide to Solo Performance* (Nevada: Star Books 2004).

trepidation. Catron has highlighted the danger of the ‘revelation’ that the ‘solo character’ can provoke.³³⁹ The experience of this early reading was an affirmation of my ongoing dedication to embracing areas of uncertainty and challenge in my artistic work:

Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity.³⁴⁰

This early script of *Within This Landscape* underwent several periods of revision between November 2011 and August 2014 in order to refine and shape it to fit its final audio-walk format. It was available to experience as such under research and development conditions as part of the (fourth) Little Festival of Everything in May 2014 and was also selected by York Theatre Royal to be presented (as a shortened twenty-minute version) as part of a showcase of work for the *National Rural Touring Forum* in July 2014.³⁴¹ Finally the piece ran as a three-day ticketed event over August bank holiday 2014, 23-25 August 2014.³⁴² Common Ground Theatre, a professional theatre company that I co-founded with Tom Cornford in 2013, produced the piece.³⁴³

Of the three projects that make up my playwriting portfolio, the process of creating *Within This Landscape* was the most challenging. The crafting of autobiography and memoir is a

³³⁹ Louis E. Catron, *The Power of One* (Longrove Illinois: Waveland Press 2000) p.22.

³⁴⁰ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way we Live, Love, Parent and Lead* (London: Penguin 2013) p.78.

³⁴¹ This showcase led to connections with Alex Kelly (Third Angel) as well as a personal contact at Arts Council North.

³⁴² *Within This Landscape* by Hannah Davies, Fauconberg Arms Pub, Common Ground Theatre, 23-25 August 2014. For review see http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/exhibitions/11441383.Review_Within_This_Landscape_Common_Ground_Theatre_Company_Coxwold_August_23_to_25/ [accessed 14 September 2014].

³⁴³ Common Ground Theatre’s first production was an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *A Winter’s Tale*. The play toured Yorkshire in Spring 2014. More information about this production and the history of Common Ground Theatre can be found in my Professional Portfolio, a digital reproduction of which is included as an appendix to this thesis.

particular skill that was completely unfamiliar to me and I found reading about other artists' autobiographical projects stimulating and reassuring.³⁴⁴ As Gale and Gardner note in their 2004 book *Auto/biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance*³⁴⁵, this is an area that until recent years has been seriously neglected in relation to performance.³⁴⁶ This project demanded profound levels of self-exploration: the material for the script was embedded within myself, and at points the nature of this project's process was extremely challenging to confront.

Mothers and Daughters in *Within This Landscape*

Within This Landscape operates as a fluid and mobile audio-visual collage that constructs the character of a real woman unknown to the participating audience member. By the time they have reached the final installation in the churchyard, the framed photographic image of my mother that features at its centre (see Figure 1 at the opening of this chapter), is redolent with meaning. This closing image provides recognition of or a counterpoint to the participant's own imaginatively constructed image that may have arisen through their interactions with the piece up until this point. As well as invoking and then framing an image of my mother, *Within This Landscape* also works to construct the character of myself as a little girl, and of course provides the primary character voice, myself as narrator, which bonds the events of the narrative and the audience participant with the landscape and the present day. I am myself now a mother (my son is now nine years old) and importantly my reflections on my own maternal relationship is viewed through this lens. The piece

³⁴⁴ Sherril Grace and Jerry Wasserman (eds), *Theatre and Autobiography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice* (Vancouver: Talon Books 2006).

³⁴⁵ Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, *Auto/biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2004).

³⁴⁶ Sheryl Grace and Jerry Wasserman, *Theatre and Autobiography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice* (Vancouver: Talon Books 2006); Sidonie Smith, *Interfaces: Women/Autobiography/Image/Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2002); Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker, *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life* (London and New York: Routledge 2007); Dee Heddon, *Autobiography and Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2008).

facilitates a dialogue between all three of these character incarnations, although we never meet an embodied version of any of them in the performance. The remainder of this chapter will discuss examples of some of the ways in which my sister, my sound designer and I collaborated to create and manifest these complex layers of mother-daughter character dynamics in the final piece. I will also include reflections on the performative effect our work had on ourselves and others. For clarity's sake I will refer to the three different character aspects in the *Within This Landscape* script using the definite article: the mother, the little girl and the narrator. Whenever I refer to myself, this will be in reference to me as the theatre-maker and the primary artist of a collaborative creative team.

In *Within This Landscape* the fact that the mother was an artist is integral to the piece and it is impossible to reflect on significant moments of motherhood without continually taking this into account. The mother's creative talents have directly influenced the way in which the little girl experiences being nurtured by her:

When I draw I feel close to her. I remember her hands. The way she moved them across the page. The way she fixed my pictures when they went wrong. The way she taught me to look for light and shade. I remember a story she told me when I was ready to screw up one of my pictures and put it in the bin.
(p.122)

The little girl goes on to recount the story the mother told her that described how, as a young artist, she had been taught to overcome her own artistic frustrations, and learnt the appropriate patience, respect and value for her work, no matter how incomplete it appeared: 'You see there is always something good to find. Always something to keep working on.' (p.123) The narrator's recognition a few lines later that 'my mother's story stuck' (p.123) confirms the powerful way in which the mother's artistic processes were passed on to the little girl. The little girl later expresses her frustrations at 'having to share this woman who I adore with so many others.' (p.126) The little girl goes on to reveal her

frustrations at not being able to have quality time with the mother, and significantly it is the creative side of the mother for which she yearns:

I crave the version of her from before when she had time for lazy stories on sofas, and when she showed me and my older brother how to cut a lino print to make Christmas cards. (p.126)

The little girl is incapable of separating her mother's nurturing from the creative acts of storytelling and crafting that they had shared together. The little girl does not just long for time with her mother, she longs for time with her mother as an artist.

Installations

One of the major installation points in *Within This Landscape* was centred around the remains of a fallen oak tree, roughly half way along the walking route. The route was deliberately mapped to include this point as the visual potential of this large twenty foot fallen tree trunk was obvious to me on one of my early exploratory walks.



Figure 7. The fallen oak tree trunk. © Common Ground Theatre

The fallen tree is situated on a gentle rise in a small copse of trees, shrubs, bushes and boulders. The tree trunk itself is large enough to climb on, there is a natural hollow along its top that is not visible from the ground, and there are panoramic views of the surrounding hills when one stands or sits on its highest point. The text of the audio track that was paired with this location (Track 5) begins with a description of the laundry where the mother was most often to be found: 'A lift up black click latch, cold toes on a stone floor, one washing machine, one tumble dryer, two mountains of washing, one white, one dark.'(p.123) The narrative describes how the mother's art studio is accessed through this most domestic of settings. 'At the back of the laundry there are some wooden steps that climb the flaking stone walls through a large lift up hatch.' (p.124) It was my sister's intention to transform the small woodland copse with the fallen tree trunk into a space reminiscent of the one we remembered from our childhood. Jessica hung two washing lines on either side of the tree trunk, each dressed with an assortment of children's clothes, towels, baby clothes and items all selected in the colours and styles that reflected our mother's tastes. Washing baskets and discarded wellington boots were used to suggest a path to the base of the tree trunk and a small set of steps were placed to encourage an investigation to explore the upper level (the hollow not visible from the ground), just as the text describes going through the laundry to reach the studio upstairs.



Figure 8. Washing basket on top of the fallen tree trunk. © Common Ground Theatre



Figure 9. View from the upper level of the tree trunk studio installation. © Mezz Davies

The upper level of the tree trunk was dressed with items that were suggested in the text and other additional ones that suggested an artist's desk, paint brushes, tubes of paint, as well as a half drunk cup of tea.



Figure 10. The artist's desk in the upper level of the fallen tree trunk. © Mezz Davies

There were also other items referenced from earlier audio tracks. A set of Scrabble letters spelled out the mother's first and second name³⁴⁷ ('the grown up mutterings of scrabble games played around roaring fires in a haze of bass and wine glasses' p.119) and the curtains of the text ('They are a pale yellow covered with toadstools and fairy folk' p.124), became cushions made of vintage yellow material covered in pictures of Enid Blyton's Noddy and Big Ears,³⁴⁸ providing a place for audience participants to sit on top of the fallen tree trunk. From this position they could see that the branches of the surrounding trees were hung with empty picture frames, a stark reminder of the mother's increasing difficulty to find time for her creative endeavours. 'My mother: the painter who eventually forgot to find the time to paint.' (p.125)



Figure 11. Empty picture frames hung in the trees at the tree trunk installation. © Common Ground Theatre

³⁴⁷ A photograph of this part of the installation is included later in this chapter (Figure 9).

³⁴⁸ Noddy and Big Ears are fictional creations of children's author Enid Blyton, a woman who had both a family and an artistic career. See David Rudd, *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children's Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2000); <http://www.enidblytonsociety.co.uk/> [accessed 15 September 2014].

All of these small visual clues layer up to create a sense of the mother's character as well as the creative space she had but never inhabited: the space to which the little girl craved access.

[...] pots of brushes, paints, graphite sticks, pencils, chalks and pastels, wrinkled tubes of watercolours and acrylics all mixed in with tiny trinkets that have caught her eye; a small one-armed teddy bear, an empty toffee tin, a psychedelic postcard. (p.125)

The items that my sister used in this installation were brought together by a creative process of:

[...] searching out scraps of things she left behind from my own over-crowded studio, collecting what dusty remains we had of her own life as an artist, I felt we were continuing her legacy of creation; picking up where she had left off and breathing new life into these last long- hoarded artefacts.³⁴⁹

A lot of the objects used in this installation were ones that our mother had left behind. In this respect they were talismanic. The main narrative point of this audio-chapter refers once again to the little girl's memory of the mother as an artist. The little girl references a time when the mother was an active artist 'when her children only just outnumbered her' (p.124) and describes the way she had tried to add coloured felt pen to some stars deliberately left white on one of the mother's paintings, and how she had soiled the mother's artwork. The mother's response to the little girl's interventions shows restraint and understanding. The little girl acknowledges the mother's artistic wrath as a possibility, but the mother does not

³⁴⁹ Jessica Watson-Cainer, Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

act upon any feelings of annoyance she may feel. Her role as mother overcomes her response as an artist:

I escape my mother's artistic wrath with a kind explanation of why it's best to let Mummies finish their own paintings and she buys me a magic painting book instead and shows me how to make the colours appear by adding water from a jam jar. (p.125)

Again creativity is inextricable from the mothering that the little girl receives; she is dealt with fairly, kindly and given her own, more fitting, creative tools to continue her childish experiments with colour and form. Later in the audio the little girl likens the mother to the *Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe* ('There was an old woman who lived in a shoe, who had so many children she didn't know what to do')³⁵⁰ and references the moment that the mother 'admits [artistic] defeat', (p.125) describing her dismay at hearing the mother tell a visitor: 'I'll claim the hours back though. When the kids are all grown up, I'll be an old Granny in paint splattered overalls.' (p.125) This reference to *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* was expanded by Jessica into a visual installation; this one featured in a rooted tree stump at the bottom of the same field as the fallen oak tree trunk.

³⁵⁰ *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* is a traditional English nursery rhyme that has a Roud Folk Song Index number of 19132. See <http://www.vwml.org/search/search-roud-indexes> [accessed 14 September 2014]. The earliest printed version of this poem can be found in Joseph Ritson's *Gammer Gurton's Garland* (Stockton: Christopher & Jennet circa 1795). See Henry Bett, *Nursery Rhymes and Tales: Their Origin and History* (Folcroft: Folcroft Library Editions 1974).



Figure 12. The tree stump. © Common Ground Theatre

Again Jessica's creative process was dependent on artefacts that held deep personal significance. She made the skirt of the mother doll (Figure 13) from an old pair of American Indian moccasin slippers that our mother had worn. 'Instead of a bonnet and apron, my Mum had a long hippy skirt and converse trainers.' (p.125)



Figure 13. *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe* installation. © Common Ground Theatre

Sound Design

As well as the visual interventions in the landscape in which *Within This Landscape* took place, the detailed sound design was integral to the piece. I sourced all of the exterior soundscapes (fields, cars on roads, etc.) myself, making field recordings from on and around the site that the audio-walk took place in. I sourced other soundscapes (children playing, interior domestic settings etc.) from friends' houses and my own family gatherings and get-togethers. My creative relationship in the editing suite with the sound designer, Jack Rutherford³⁵¹ was a directorial one, and I was able to communicate exactly what I wanted from the outset. Working together in this way we combined my own field recordings with additional sound effects from the sound designer's personal sound library, and created some entirely new ones (e.g. the ethereal background track in the flotation tank in Track 6). Collaborating closely with a gifted sound designer and technician has opened up an exciting new realm of further artistic research and practice that I would like to explore more deeply in the future.

I will now describe two significant moments where sound design was intrinsic to the final piece. The first moment I will discuss takes place in Track 5, the audio that accompanies the installation piece of the artist studio on the fallen tree trunk, that I have just described above. In this track I use the sound design as a way to re-create and evoke a feeling of the little girl's traumatic feelings of loss referred to in the text. Throughout my adolescent and adult life as a motherless daughter, people have often shown a deep curiosity as to what this experience was like for me as a twelve-year-old child, and it is a topic I have never shared so openly with people other than with family and close friends. It was my intention as an artist to attempt to communicate this feeling to an audience member, as a way of trying to convey this life experience. In order to create the feeling of loss for an audience, I needed to work as a theatre-maker to first create a feeling of presence. I needed to show

³⁵¹ The audio narration of *Within This Landscape* was recorded in sound artist Jack Rutherford's studio in York, 21 April 2014.

them what exactly had been lost. I used a combination of domestic and personal sounds in order to help me do this and in this way, I was able to imbue a simple silence with immense meaning.

This is where we find her. Loading, sorting and pairing, the clicks and twists of the dials punctuate her days. She folds and sorts in a warm air haze of non-bio and Bounce™. Her silver bracelets dance on her wrist and sing over the whirr of the drums. (p.124)

The addition of the sound effects of a laundry room, cued into the sound design in the second line of the above section, adds an atmospheric layer over the words, inviting the audience participant to 'find' or 'create' an image of the mother in a 'warm air haze of non-bio and Bounce™.' (p.124) The next addition of the sound effects of the jewellery referred to in the final line quoted above, encourages the participant to move closer to their image and 'zoom in.' I am asking for them not to just 'see' the room with the image of the mother in it, but to move closer and 'see' the actual physical gestures of the mother that create the noise of the jewellery that they are hearing. I am asking them to create an internally active image, one that is alive and full of movement. In this way I seek to create a full-bodied living image of the mother. Once this sound and presence has been established the sound effects are faded away as the little girl describes the physical experience of her grieving body taking on a life of its own as her legs 'switch to autopilot' (p.124) and her 'blood and bones search the halls, doorways and corridors, seeking out their mother in a dream.' (p.124) By the time the narrator delivers the line 'My journey always ending in the now empty laundry, the machines silenced, the washing piles unsorted and growing by the day' (124) all sound effects have faded and the resulting silence and stillness that the participant is left with represents an immensely poignant, and importantly, a physical gap, space or hole. This moment may be imbued with further meaning when the audience participant discovers a small pile of bracelets left with the personal items of a Golden Virginia tobacco tin (complete with tobacco and rizlas), alongside scrabble letters spelling out the mother's

name. These are to be found in the 'artist's desk' area in the hollow section of the tree trunk in the visual installation.



Figure 14. Silver bracelets as part of the studio installation on the upper level of the fallen tree trunk.

© Common Ground Theatre

In his book about the childhood experience of parental bereavement Dyregrov addresses the commonality of the type of behaviour the grieving little girl in *Within This Landscape* displays:

Usually, children will constructively seek out conversations, places and objects that help them build a bridge in their longing for the lost person, especially early after the loss, before they gradually build an inner representation of the person that they can carry through their life.³⁵²

The second example of my work with sound design relates to my own response to my work. One of the moments my sound designer and I created was so effective that when I later heard it, while physically walking a draft of the audio-walk in order to take directorial notes, I was completely overwhelmed by it. The reaction I experienced would not of course be one

³⁵² Atle Dyregrov, *Grief in Children: A Handbook for Adults* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2008) p.33.

any paying audience participant would ever have, but I would like to include it here; my response to my own work as an artist and a daughter is significant.

At the end of Track 3 (this is heard by participants as a mobile listening track moving across an empty field) the little girl describes her experience of being at the older end of a growing brood of siblings, 'another baby appears and once again I am promoted further up the ranks.' (p.121) At this point in the audio a soft cooing baby sound effect is brought in under the little girl's words and this sound is gently underscored with a soothing hum of the tune from the song 'Morningtown Ride' by Malvina Reynolds.³⁵³ The pairing of these two sounds creates, like the instance discussed above, a moment in which I invite the participant to create an imaginative physical image of the mother, in this case soothing a new baby. The sound effects continue under the narrator's closing lines of text for this section, which directly link the mother's physical and embodied experience of existing in the landscape the audience member herself is physically moving through:

Within this landscape she exists in a constant state of growing, swelling, shrinking, rocking, feeding, distracting and cooing. And the lambing season cycles round both in next door's farm and also in the thick stone walls of our house where the patter of tiny feet is more a thunderous chaotic roar. (p.121)

As this section of texts ends the baby and lullaby sounds continue for a few seconds and then gently fade away, reverberating into the distance before the track finishes. I sourced this baby sound myself, and recorded the hum during the production phase *in my own voice*, choosing the song as an example of one that my mother had regularly sung to all of her children at bedtimes. These were functional artistic decisions undertaken in a pragmatic manner. After their recording I had to make sure the file sizes were in the correct format and clearly labelled before transferring them to a working folder and then working very swiftly and effectively in the editing suite. I was aware that I had created a combination of

³⁵³ Malvina Reynolds, 'Morningtown Ride', Columbia UK 1957.

sounds that functioned in the way I wanted them to as a theatre-maker, but when I walked the route with the draft of this audio track a few days later, my personal response was profound. The effect of walking and listening to the moment I have just described was so powerful I felt as if my mother had just floated past me across the field and I experienced something I can only describe as an extraordinary olfactory hallucination. The simple combination of these two sounds triggered a fleeting memory of my mother's long gone maternal smell.³⁵⁴ I had indeed found a way to 'gather up the snatches of her that echo around these hills.' (p.118) After our first developmental sharing of the final version of *Within This Landscape* as an audio-walk in May 2014, my sister Jessica related a similar experience. In her Research and Development Report she references what was an equally powerful moment for her when visiting her final studio installation on the tree trunk with the accompanying audio of Track 5:

For one shining moment I was there, somewhere in my heart and mind and past that I thought I would never visit again. It crept past any objectivity I had left, past all my layers of grown-up artist and involvement in the project, and worked its own magic. One minute I was walking through a field, and the next a portal opened and there I was, a child again climbing the steps to my mother's studio.³⁵⁵

The fictional land from children's literature that is accessed through a magical portal (a wardrobe)³⁵⁶ is referenced by the mother in the text of the very first track of *Within This Landscape*, and this becomes a physical reality for the artists and daughters who created the piece in their mother's memory:

³⁵⁴ See Donald A. Wilson, *Learning to Smell: Olfactory Perception from Neurobiology to Behavior* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press 2006); Oliver Sachs, *Hallucinations* (London: Picador 2012); G. Neil Martin, *The Neuropsychology of Smell and Taste* (London: Psychology Press 2013).

³⁵⁵ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁵⁶ C. S. Lewis, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: Collins 2000).

At the bottom of the garden under the trees there is an old Victorian street lamp. It stands tall and glows and I hear my mother whisper under her breath 'It's just like Narnia!' Her eyes sparkle. (p.118)

The eventual power of the combination of an audio-walk with visual installations was not only transformative for the artists who had worked on the piece; feedback from audience participants from the research and development period was equally forthcoming. The word 'wonderful'³⁵⁷ was a recurring adjective used in written feedback.³⁵⁸ This is a commonly used adjective in the English language and often used trivially, but it is interesting that reference to a state of wonder or magical awe features so often (in nearly half) of all the written feedback comments that the Common Ground front of house staff collected:

A wonderful experience [...] A magically, wonderfully constructed piece [...] sections of wonderfully poetic imagery slide easily into the every day [...] Wonderful words. Beautifully told. [...] A wonderful tribute. [...] a wonderful moving and lyrical experience! [...] Wonderful way to spend an afternoon. [...] conjured up wonderful images of an earth mother. [...] Thank you for a wonderful experience – I feel changed by it. [...] The story was so intimate and gently expressed in such a wonderful environment I couldn't help but be deeply moved. [...] A wonderful tribute.³⁵⁹

Once piece of feedback acknowledges the magical properties the piece invoked directly: 'I was completely spellbound.'³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ The Oxford Dictionary gives the definition of wonderful as: 'Full of wonder; such as to excite wonder or astonishment.' See <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/229945?redirectedFrom=wonderful#eid> [accessed September 2014].

³⁵⁸ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁵⁹ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

After *Within This Landscape* ran as a research and development performance in May at The Little Festival of Everything, one of the participants, a musician and also a performing artist at the festival was so affected by his experience of the audio-walk that he later included and dedicated a song in his set to the experience.³⁶¹ This was a song he had never shared before and was about his own innocent childhood experience of collecting conkers in a keen autumn wind. This was deeply rewarding for my sister and I who both felt we were truly ‘continuing her [our mother’s] legacy of creation.’³⁶² By embracing my own story and sharing it with others I had created an artistic ripple in which artists felt inspired to take their own risks using their own means of creative expression. Lewis Hyde’s 1979 classic book *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* provided interesting further reading on this phenomenon of creative gift exchange. Hyde’s book is, at best, an inspiring examination of the ‘gift economy’, in which he uses explorations of folk-tales, anthropology and economic theory in order to discuss his argument that a work of art is a gift and not a commodity.³⁶³ *Within This Landscape* was a creative gift to both my mother and myself.

Other feedback related to the interventions into the piece by the environment itself, often providing moments I could not possibly have accounted for or predicted as a theatre-maker. In their written feedback participants reported occasions where the ‘weather almost seemed to change with the mood of the story.’³⁶⁴ For one audience member a flock of swallows beautifully punctuated the little girl’s line in the text ‘I find my peace among the oats and nesting swallows’ (p.131) reporting that their ‘presence over the town pastures made it for me.’³⁶⁵ Another participant described entering the churchyard and hearing the sounds of a Sunday morning church choir coming from St. Michael’s church: ‘a choir sang out and I saw the bench, the candles and the photograph and I was a goner!’³⁶⁶ The feeling

³⁶¹ Dave Jarman, musician and actor at Gobbledigook Theatre.

³⁶² Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁶³ Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd 2007)

³⁶⁴ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁶⁵ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

that the narrative was being ‘supported by the landscape’³⁶⁷ was an oft-recurring aspect of written and verbal feedback and confirmed the possibility of my artistic intentions as using the landscape itself as a stage for my story. There were of course also moments where these interventions were not beautifully coincident and gave examples of the landscape jarring with the narrative and journey that it framed. A ‘phobia’ of bullocks (the town pastures are a public grazing ground and the piece was often sharing the space with a variety of livestock) meant that one couple diverted from the map, creating their own route, but they both reported in their written feedback that even so ‘the story was enchanting and stood alone.’³⁶⁸ Another participant wrote that *Within This Landscape* was one of the most ‘beautiful and perilous theatrical experiences’ they’d ever had, going on to ‘revel’ in how unique it was to have to try and ‘outwit a herd of bullocks in pursuit of the story, reverting even to trespassing through the gardens of Shandy Hall and getting caught!’³⁶⁹ Thankfully this participant also described the eventual experience as ‘Very worth it!’³⁷⁰ It seems that across the board no matter what the weather (and there were some dramatically British downpours in the May research and development performances) audience members’ experiences of *Within This Landscape* were all valued *because* of these unique environmental interventions:

In the same way Hannah’s piece of history can never be redone, relived or rerun, in the same way that that is unique, so is your experience of *Within This Landscape*.³⁷¹

By having to physically invest in the walk, the experience and the narrative belong not only to myself, but to the audience member as well. By the time the audience member has completed the route, they (like the little girl, the mother and the narrator) have experienced a journey. Some of the most penetrating pieces of feedback I received in response to *Within*

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

This Landscape were in relation to the ways in which the piece evoked memories or reflections on audience members' own maternal relationships; interestingly these were almost all from women. 'The feeling of wanting to be near your mother and have her all to yourself really resonated for me.'³⁷² The sharing of something so meticulously personal (to the point of geographical precision) had in fact opened up the content of the piece to a level of universality. 'At once a uniquely personal story and at the same time an astute observation of all mother daughter relationships.'³⁷³ Women reported their ability to reflect on their own maternal heritage, 'it made me think of my own relationship with my own mother in my teenage years'³⁷⁴ or of their own experience of being mothers themselves 'as a mother being 'out of reach' and 'pre-occupied' not always available to your children are things I understand'³⁷⁵ Some mothers and daughters even walked the route together:

I found myself reflecting in unexpected ways on myself as a mother (with my daughter walking beside me), and as a daughter, at different points in my own life – and that had to do, I think, with the fact that your audience was active in walking around the landscape of your memories, not sitting in seats in a theatre.³⁷⁶

One woman 'loved the explorations of motherhood and creativity'³⁷⁷ and the way in which the text explores 'what we do and don't quite manage in our real lives'³⁷⁸ and another woman left a postscript to her feedback comments that declared her intention of 'getting

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Fiona Shaw (novelist and personal friend), email to Hannah Davies dated 27 August 2014. Fiona Shaw's first book was an account of her experience of a post-natal breakdown: Fiona Shaw, *Out of Me: The Story of a Postnatal Breakdown* (London: Penguin 1998). Other works include *Tell it to the Bees* (2010) and *The Sweetest Thing* (2003).

³⁷⁷ Common Ground Theatre Company Archives, 2014.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

her paints out' when she got home 'rather than put off any longer.'³⁷⁹ All of these responses were heartfelt, sincere and generous reflections on the final product of what had been a deeply challenging but deeply rewarding process for me as a woman, daughter and theatre-maker. *Within This Landscape* was a fitting finale project for a doctoral research enquiry into writing motherhood for contemporary performance, and is a homage from myself as a daughter who profoundly recognises the maternal influence of creativity on my childhood as well as my career.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

CONCLUSION

My plays are all explorations of how the creative endeavours of women from different classes and socio-economic conditions are susceptible to the demands of being a mother. Danni is a woman who is under considerable economic and personal stress, yet still she remains a dedicated single mother to her son. She has no Woolfian 'room of her own' her humble home having being viciously destroyed by the state. Githa is a woman whose primary work as a children's author is inseparable from her economic survival, and she is artistically autonomous in this respect. But her more political means of expression, her playwriting work is tragically undercut by a misogynistic patriarchy and her artistry is negated by the unwelcome onset of late motherhood. My own mother's vast talent was overwhelmed first by her choice to raise a larger than average family, and then by her own mortality.

It is interesting to note, that despite the title of my PhD, Research by Creative Practice in *Playwriting*, only one of the three plays I submit have adhered to what most people imagine I do when I tell them I am a playwright. *This is Not a Festival* represents the most 'literary' production of a playscript, in that overall it was written after an initial research period, in creative isolation until there was a finished playscript. My following two projects (as well as other theatre work not included in this final submission) have all demanded a more actively engaged approach, one that has demanded embracing roles of producer, designer, fundraiser, director and actor. This has been an essential element in getting my work, produced, noticed, reviewed and supported. Although I submit this work as a playwright, I finish this four-year period of my life as a theatre-maker. This, I feel, is a more fitting term for what I do.

Gender imbalance in theatre continues today, but a recent project by Tonic Theatre, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Arts Council England has addressed this issue head on:

[Tonic is a project that] supports the theatre industry to achieve greater gender equality in its workforces and repertoires. We partner with leading theatre companies around the UK on a range of projects, schemes and creative works. Our goal is to give our colleagues the tools they need to ensure more female talent rises to the top.³⁸⁰

Their recent research project 'Advance' ran between October 2013 and May 2014 and 'tasked 11 leading theatres from across England to proactively explore how they could achieve greater gender equality on their stages.'³⁸¹ 'Advance' was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Arts Council England and the research conducted alongside academics from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and senior artistic and executive staff from eleven leading British theatres (Almeida, Chichester Festival Theatre, English Touring Theatre, the Gate, Headlong, Pentabus, Royal Shakespeare Company, Sheffield Theatres, the Tricycle, West Yorkshire Playhouse, and the Young Vic). Tonic Theatre's 'Advance' took six months to investigate the gender balance in employment and artistic working policy and practice within these theatre establishments. In addition to this research they took a revealing gender poll on a randomly selected evening of theatre; Saturday 13 September 2014. The Tonic Advance Report findings show that of the twenty plays being performed that evening in the West End only one (Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*) was written by a woman, a statistic of 4%. Of the twenty top NPO (Nationally subsidised) theatres this figure was a little higher; out of twenty-four shows that evening two were by women writers, a statistic of 8%. The poll also showed that (unsurprisingly) women's writing is more likely to be found in 'smaller spaces', and that women playwrights struggle to make transitions from these studio spaces onto main stages and that on the whole female playwrights earn less for their work. Parenthood was acknowledged as a 'significant factor' in this gender imbalance. These statistics are the most up to date findings

³⁸⁰ Tonic Theatre, 'About Us', <http://www.tonictheatre-advance.co.uk/about/> [accessed 23 September 2014].

³⁸¹ Tonic Theatre, 'What We Did', <http://www.tonictheatre-advance.co.uk/what-we-did/> [accessed 23 September 2014].

of continuing gender imbalance in working theatre conditions and they present an industry in desperate need of a shake up.

I write this conclusion at the end of a four-year long process during which I have often encountered the very challenges I have been interrogating throughout my work. In addition to my studies I have taught on both the MA and BA playwriting modules in the department of Theatre Film and Television (University of York)³⁸² and this work was a difficult undertaking when I began; my son was then aged 4 and attended nursery between the hours of 9 and 1 five days a week, minus the travelling time, this gave me roughly an average of fifteen hours a week to pursue my work uninterrupted on my own terms, without having to account for additional childcare. Pursuing a career as a playwright and theatre-maker, as well as being a single mother has had an undeniable debilitating effect on my ability to work as a theatre artist; apart from the obvious statistical institutional challenges presented when seeking to advance through this career path, there are others that are frustratingly cyclical in their nature. For example, theatre is an evening activity. Bedtime stories and routine are crucial for parent child bonding and for a child's sense of security. The maternal capacity for guilt is immeasurable. Theatre is badly paid. Babysitters cost money. Networking and a social visibility are essential factors in being considered for work in the theatre. Networking is often done in an informal social capacity in the evenings and often after theatre performances. Theatre tickets cost money. Babysitters cost money. Theatre is an evening activity. Bedtime stories and routine are crucial for parent child bonding and for a child's sense of security. The maternal capacity for guilt is immeasurable. Theatre is badly paid. Babysitters cost money. The spiral never ends.

³⁸² After being nominated by my MA students (academic year group 2011-2012) I was awarded the prestigious Vice-Chancellors Teaching Award 'for recognition of the excellence of my contributions to learning and teaching' 12 July 2012. This award is in the Summer Term 2012 section of my Professional Portfolio, a copy of which is reproduced as an appendix to this document.

Conservative policy makers' decisions declare that the arts, cultural experience and expression are surplus to the requirements of a functioning society. Since 2012 Arts funding has taken extreme cuts in a period of recession and economic downturn.³⁸³ Combine this socially promoted idea that the pursuit of artistic endeavours is an indulgent frivolous pursuit with a healthy measure of maternal guilt and you have a lethal injection for a female playwright. It can be hard to justify the personal effects and challenges that seeking to excel in an artistic career can have. Being a theatre maker is woefully mismatched with the demands of raising a family. For a woman doing this alone it is almost impossible. Frankly, when reading over this thesis, I am astonished I have achieved all that I have.

Motherhood does not only present obstacles for those wishing to pursue a career in theatre. Other industries too are not mother friendly even for women at the very top of the ladder. In her book *Lean In*³⁸⁴ Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg describes the moment when she had to walk from the furthest end of the car park while nauseous and heavily pregnant with her first child to reach her office in the Facebook headquarters building. In response to this trek she immediately allocated pregnancy car parking spaces that were nearer to the building for all pregnant employees. The fact that Sandberg was the highest earning woman on the payroll enabled her to do this, a woman with a cleaning contract in the same building could never make herself heard. This is a small but significant example but it is one that speaks volumes about the continued invisibility of the needs of mothers within the work place and society as a whole. As a heavily pregnant woman living in London I was often offered a seat on the tube or bus. Travelling the same routes as a young mother struggling with a baby in a pushchair, I was rarely offered one.

³⁸³ Alistair Smith, 'Arts Council England Announces More Funding Cuts in 2014', *The Stage*, <http://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2013/12/arts-council-england-announces-funding-cuts-2014/> [accessed 25 September 2014].

³⁸⁴ Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (London: W. H. Allen 2013) p.4.

My explorations into the representation of motherhood and my belief in the importance of staging representations of women's experience are ones that I remain passionate and determined enough about to keep pursuing this path. I have made many friends on this journey and learned much about my own and other artists' practice. I am excited about the future possibilities that a doctorate will present in furthering my work as a research practitioner and creative artist. I remain proud of the new experiments I have made and of the professional work I have accomplished during this time.

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