

Appendix 1:

Simon Stephens – Interview

This interview took place as a public event for a predominantly student audience at the University of Kent on 6 March 2012. It was originally organized by Peter Boenisch and sponsored by the European Theatre Research Network (ETRN). Prior to the interview, I screened the trailers of the 2007 German production and the 2008 British production of Stephens's play *Pornography*.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: In your lecture 'Skydiving Blindfolded', delivered at the Berlin festival last year, you summarize your points on what you've learnt from working with a German director. What interested me was: (1) the observation that the English process of rehearsal tends to involve 'standing the original conception as described by the writer on its feet', whereas a German director would re-imagine the play, and (2) another more contextual observation that in the German-speaking world, 'one of the highest manifestations of excellence is to be invited to a festival' whereas in Britain it is 'the possibility of a commercial transfer'. This forms a very insightful encapsulation of differences between those contexts.

How did you come to playwriting in the first instance, and how did that experience of working in Germany change your process as a playwright?

STEPHENS: The play *Pornography* was a play I wrote in 2005 about the bombing of London on the London Underground system. The world premiere was directed by Sebastian Nübling – a German director, from the South of Germany. He's directed five of my plays now and he's a dear friend and an important colleague and collaborator. I wrote the play for him. The play was also directed by Sean Holmes. He's the artistic director of the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith, and another good friend and important collaborator. It's interesting to look at the differences between the trailers for those productions. The most obvious difference is that the German trailer shows the production, and in the British one the actors are only used as voiceover – you don't actually see a theatre. You have the juxtaposition between the film image of the train journey from the Luton Airport Parkway to King's Cross, certain key iconic images of London life, and the voiceover of the text from the play.

Simply put I would say that German theatre is visceral, physical, about the body and about the image. The English theatre to a greater extent is about the word. It's not wholly true, it underestimates the importance of language in German theatre and it underestimates the importance of the visual image in British theatre. But there's a kind of truth to it. And it's no coincidence that in Shakespeare's day people would talk about going to 'hear a play' at

the theatre, rather than going to ‘watch a play’. What’s the word in English for the collection of people gathered together in a theatre who have bought tickets for a play?

AUDIENCE:
STEPHENS:

Audience.

And in every other language in Europe it’s ‘spectator’. Only in the English language do we draw attention to the ear. In every other language we draw attention to the eye. The viewer. The spectator. I think that’s really key.

It gives a kind of context to my background of going into theatre. Which maybe explains something about my attraction to German theatre. I never wanted to be a playwright. I’d no interest in being a playwright. I went to the theatre very sporadically in my childhood. I wasn’t from one of those families, which is the kind of family that I’m raising now, where I take my kids to the theatre a lot. When I was at school I remember going to see a production of *The Tempest* at the Royal Shakespeare Company and a production of *Macbeth* at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. I remember trying to impress a girl and failing to impress her by taking her to see *A Caucasian Chalk Circle* at the Green Room Theatre in Manchester, which was a disaster really on every possible level. (*Audience laughter*).

I didn’t have a very theatrically literate background, so it’s surprising perhaps that I should end up being a playwright. I wanted to be a songwriter. It’s absolutely what I wanted to be doing. I don’t know if any of you have heard of Morrissey, or Tom Waits, or Elvis Costello, or Shane McGowan who used to sing in a band called The Pogues. When I was a teenager there was an older generation of predominantly male songwriters who introduced the notion of the literary and the literate into rock’n’roll music. And that juxtaposition was something that was extraordinary to me. What I was really interested in was language and literature. My academic love was always for English lessons, I used to love them. I’ve always loved writing, since I was about nine. The process of writing made sense to me in terms of who I was. The attempt to articulate a sense of what it is to be alive, even from an eight-year-old, I just loved it. I remember my earliest memories involving the written word. I wanted to be a songwriter like those guys and it took me till the age of about 21 to realize that I have a really terrible singing voice, so the chances of me being a successful singer and songwriter were completely negligible, and it’s a career decision for which I think the world is happier.

I guess I was introduced to drama – not through the theatre – but through television and film. It will be difficult for your generation to believe this, but the key dramatists in Britain in the 1980s weren’t writing for theatre, often they were writing for television. Much in the same way that in the last five years, the American cable subscription channel HBO has been responsible for some of the most urgent and important drama in the English language with shows like *The Wire* and *Six Feet Under*, *Dead Wood*, *Mad Men* in the 1980s in Britain it was the BBC. They were doing the same

thing. As a teenager I'd watch the dramas of Dennis Potter, or Alan Bennett or Alan Bleasdale or even Trevor Griffiths, and be astonished by the emotional insight that drama could give me, and at the same time, I watched American independent movies. So I remember very vividly seeing Martin Scorsese's movie *Taxi Driver* for the first time when I was about 15 or 16. And the other film which I remember as being very defining was David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*. It was through American independent movies and through British TV drama that I realized the emotional, philosophical and intellectual capacity of the dramatic arts.

I didn't really go to the theatre properly until I went to university. All the most attractive girls at York University wanted to be actors and were in a Drama Society, and in a pathetic attempt to meet them I went to see terrible student productions of things like *Miss Julie* and *The Real Inspector Hound*. But I remember going to see these plays in a place called the Drama Barn at York University and imagining, what if you could take the dramatic power of something like *Blue Velvet*, or something like *Taxi Driver*, and put it in a room where the audience was able to touch the actor, with the visceral, palpable smell of them?

I used to go and see a lot of live music, I remember going to see the Pixies about nine times at the end of the 1980s. I've said in the past that I've learnt more from the songs of the Pixies about dramatic structure than I have from reading any play, and it's kind of true. Basically, dramatic structure is: you just do loud bit, quiet bit, loud bit, quiet bit – sorted. Or you can do quiet bit, loud bit, quiet bit, loud bit. They are basically Pixies songs, most plays that I've written. It struck me, then, that if you could take the visceral, dark, savage energy of *The Fall* and the Pixies and the dramatic power of something like *Blue Velvet* and *Taxi Driver* or *The Singing Detective*, you can put them in the same room and there might be something in there that is worth doing. So that's what I decided to do and that's why I started writing plays.

Working with Sebastian Nübling for the first time – or seeing Nübling's production of *Hérons* in 2003 – reminded me absolutely of the same energy of the Drama Barn. In Nübling's work there's the energy of a live punk gig as well as the dramatic force of something like a Lynch movie or a Scorsese movie. So actually, both me and Sebastian have been very similar in a lot of ways. He is older than me. We are both middle-aged men. He is 51. And I'm 41. We're both family men. We both have three kids. We both wish we were rock stars. Neither of us are. But there's that shared sensibility and I think that's what I found in German theatre in the middle of the last decade. And maybe it's not so much that it changed everything that I was doing before so much as that I arrived at a place that I always wanted to be when I started off at the Drama Barn.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: What degree did you do?

STEPHENS:

I did a History degree. I made a very conscious decision when I was doing my A-levels that I didn't want my relationship with

literature to be one of analysis. Rather I wanted it to be one of awe. I didn't want to lose that spirit of awe.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: How did you start writing plays? And how did your Royal Court breakthrough come about?

STEPHENS: The very, very first play I wrote, I actually wrote when I was in sixth form. That experience was really important to me. When I was at school I was in a student production of *The Wind in the Willows*, in which I played a Ferret – I hasten to add: not the Chief Ferret. And I just loved it. I loved it for this reason: it was an all-boys comprehensive school, so it was the worst of both worlds. But it was one time in my school life when all the hierarchies of school life disappeared. It didn't matter whether you were in year seven or upper sixth. It didn't matter whether you were a parent or a teacher or a student, it didn't matter if you were the caretaker, it didn't matter if you were the cool kid or not – everybody worked together to make this play and to make the show for the parents. There's something about that gang mentality that was tremendously important to me, and at a later age, I very much wanted to recreate it again. One of the reasons why theatre has survived for 2500 years or 3000 years, one of the reasons why I'm confident that it will survive for as long as the human animal survives, is because of its collaborative nature, because of that gang mentality, because of the possibility of human beings working together to create something that's more than just the sum of its individual constituent parts. I think that's something extraordinary. And I speak as a very hardcore, hardened atheist when I say that in that possibility of that collaboration, I find a kind of faith that is tremendously infectious – which I cherish. The other thing is that in its form, theatre incorporates a notion of death.

So if you have worked on any production, do you understand what I mean when I say that when the play finishes, there's an experience of grief? Yes. It's just shit isn't it? When you don't get to do the play anymore, you don't get to go in front of the audience, you don't get to see that gang in rehearsal.

And quite often in professional theatre life you can be drawn together incredibly closely with people you've never met before, over the course of a four-week rehearsal period, you become as kind of one, and then you never see them again, regardless of how close you've been. So there's something about the process of making theatre that incorporates the notion of death. It's like when a human dies, there's that terrible sense of grief and frustrated lack of completion.

I had that when I was in the *Wind in the Willows*. And I thought: I'm not a very good actor, I'm never gonna make a First Ferret, let alone Badger, but the one thing I could always do is I could always write!

I wrote an adaptation of a song by Tom Waits called *Frank's Wild Years*, which is on the album *Swordfish Trombones*, it was a dramatic adaptation of this monologue, and I took it to York University when I went there as a student and we put it on. At York University I wrote four more plays, which I put on with student actors. We just put the

plays on in the Drama Barn, and then we took them to Edinburgh. We hired the Masonic Lodge off the Royal Mile and we put four plays on – two of which I'd written and two of which another writer had written. By the time we'd done that, I got the sense that John Irving talks about in the introduction of his novel *The World According to Garp* – he dedicates that book to someone who told him when he was a young man that if he ever did anything in his life other than be a writer, he would always be in some way disappointed with himself, and that's what he had to be. By the time I left Edinburgh, I just thought, this is all I can be. It's not a career choice, it's an illness.

After I left York, all my friends moved to London, so as a deliberate attempt to break the umbilical cord, I moved to Edinburgh. That's where I met my girlfriend then, my wife now, I formed a band in Edinburgh, and I carried on writing plays for student actors in Edinburgh. I had the notion that I was gonna live in Edinburgh, London, Paris, Glasgow and Dublin before I was 30. I did two years in Edinburgh and then moved to London and stayed, and have been there for 18 years now.

Moved to London, got a job managing the bar at the Riverside Studios, gave a play that I'd written in Edinburgh but had kept in my drawer for three years to the producer of the young company there – a heroic man called Andrew Braidford who is working now as a successful agent. He put together a group of actors and we put it on and we took that back to the 1997 Edinburgh Festival. In 1997 it felt like there was an injection of adrenaline into playwriting. Mark Ravenhill's play *Shopping and Fucking* was revived at the 1997 Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Enda Walsh's first play *Disco Pigs* arrived like a punch in the theatrical face in 1997. David Harrower's *Knives and Hens* – a very different kind of play, but equally very beautiful, was at the same festival. Playwriting in 1997 had the energy of something – a real shock of adrenaline to the culture. And so I wrote another play.

One of the joys of working as the bar manager in Hammersmith at the Riverside Studios at the end of the 1990s, was that if we did a shift that finished after midnight we could get a taxi home paid for us by the theatre. I spent an unusual amount of time in minicabs for somebody who had no money at all, and just became fascinated by travelling across London at night. At the same time, my girlfriend and I decided that we were gonna have our first kid. So I took those two experiences: of being the only sober person travelling across London at night-time, often in a minicab, with the experience of anticipating what it would mean to become a father, and imagined the worst thing that a father could do to their child and wrote a play which is called *Bluebird*. I gave it to Andrew, who produced the previous play *Bring Me Sunshine*, and asked him if he'd do it. And he said: 'Yes, I'll do it, but I think it's really good. I think you should send it to the Royal Court Theatre.' There was a new artistic director at the Royal Court Theatre at the time, called Ian Rickson. He is one of the most important people in my entire career. He absolutely unarguably changed my life.

He'd just taken over the Court at the time and Andrew said: 'I think he'll probably like it.' So I sent him the play. About two months later, it was the 1998 World Cup finals. I'd trained as a schoolteacher, because I said: 'If I'm gonna have a child, I can't be a bar manager any more, I've got to get a proper job.' At the end of my course there was the World Cup Finals. I thought I'm gonna finish my essay early, get it in, so that I can just watch every single match in the 1998 World Cup Finals. I was watching the quarter-final match between Germany and Mexico; Mexico were winning 1:0, and I got a phone call from a man called Graham Whybrow, who was the Literary Manager of the Royal Court Theatre – a very professorial, academic man:

'Hello, is that Simon Stephens?'

'Yeah.'

'My name is Graham Whybrow, I am the Literary Manager of the Royal Court Theatre. We've read your play *Bluebird*. We think that it's rather terrific and we wondered if you'd like to come over and have a coffee and talk about it?'

I was so astonished. I graduated in 1992 – this was six years later. Six years of wanting to be a writer, six years of trying and normally failing, six years later, this was my 'Yes, you're on!' phone call. And all I could think of saying to him was 'Mexico are beating Germany', which he had no interest in at all, really.

I came in and had a coffee with them, and they did a reading. Then on 6th October 1998, my wife gave birth to our first son, Oscar. I'd got back from the hospital after my wife had had a 36-hour labour, and in my memory I walked through the door and the phone went and it was the Royal Court Theatre telling me that they were gonna do my play *Bluebird* in the 1998 Young Writers Festival. Somebody said to me afterwards – do you ever think you've already had the best day you were ever gonna have?

And shall I tell you the 'How Ian Rickson changed my life' story? He is a bit of a strange man and I love him to my bones. He commissioned my next play, *Christmas*. Remember this is now seven years into wanting to be a professional writer – he paid me money to write a new play, and then – they rejected it. They didn't want to do it. Imagine how hard that meeting with him was. And then a week or so later, I got a phone call from him at home. He said: 'Can you come and see us after you've finished school on Friday', 'cause I was working then in Dagenham, teaching English. 'Come and see us on Friday after school, there's something we want to ask you. I don't want to tell you what it is yet', he says. And I say: 'I'll come on Friday (you weirdo).' Then he rang back 20 minutes later and said: 'I've changed my mind, I'll tell you what it is: we want you to be our resident dramatist next year in 2000, which will mean that you can leave schoolteaching, you won't have to take another job, you can come and spend time in the theatre, you can be a writer, you can come into our rehearsal rooms, you can join our script meetings, you can be part of the working life, you can become a theatre worker.' And that he would do that to

a writer whose play he'd just rejected rather than a writer whose play he committed to producing is I think indicative of the kind of man he is – which is: somebody who has a profound faith in people's potential. And that changed my life.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: I was reminded by you telling us about how you got into the Royal Court that in the lecture that you delivered last year, you actually characterized the Royal Court as being potentially indicative of a certain kind of imperialism.

STEPHENS: Yeah, that was naughty, wasn't it!?

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: It's an interesting observation! But I am also interested in how the Royal Court affected you as a playwright, in order to return to that question of how your playwriting might have changed...

STEPHENS: I worked as the writers' tutor at the Royal Court for five years at the end of my residency. I wrote *Herons* during my residency and they produced it and then I got a job teaching playwriting in the Young Writers' Programme, the job that Leo Butler does now. During that time I taught people like Lucy Prebble and Mike Bartlett and Laura Wade and D. C. Moore, and a whole really brilliant generation of playwrights whose work has really come up in the last three or four years. Absolutely integral to my methodology of teaching was something that I think is in the intellectual metabolism of the Royal Court, which is a consideration of what makes a play. The Royal Court is a theatre which is built on the notions of 'plays are wrought rather than written'; they're defined by dramatic action rather than by ideas; what's of interest is character rather than language. And the language should be behavioural, not literary; the moment of dramatic action is the key moment of the play, not the visual moment. And this was really central to my teaching.

I remember Graham Whybrow at the time defining dramatic action to me – they talked a lot about dramatic action at the Royal Court in my time and I didn't know what it was. And then I plucked up the courage to say to Graham Whybrow: 'I don't know what dramatic action is, what is it?' He told me that it was the 'behavioural tactics by which a character overcame obstacles to get what they wanted'. Dramatic action is defined not by feeling, but by thought – not by off-stage life, but by the things that characters do on stage to one another as they try to negotiate their obstacles and get what they want. Now, this was fundamental to my teaching for five years, and it was fundamental to my thinking about plays when I sat down to write them too, and actually remains fundamental. I'm in the early moments of a new play now, and I know the hardest work that I'll have to do on this won't be writing the dialogue, won't be writing speeches, won't be coming up with the jokes or even the images – it will be making sure that I've asked the question of my characters: what do they want, what's stopping them from getting what they want, and what they do in order to get it? Now these are questions that will be familiar to you if you've acted probably – it's a really key directorial technique – to action a scene, to action a line. But I really try to get responsibility for that myself as a playwright.

If I talked to a group of Catalan writers, which I do regularly, or Spanish writers, or Scandinavian writers, they probably share my methodology. French playwrights tend to be more poetic, and they tend to operate a tradition where language is a more poetic thing. German playwrights are so often marginalized from the rehearsal room that they end up in a position where their play becomes a kind of puzzle, and what fascinates them is ideas, intellectual ideas and also theatrical ideas. So the whole process of writing a play becomes a consideration of the putting on of a play. And I think working to an extent in Germany introduced that question to my writing. So even the plays that appear to be quite naturalistic, like *Punk Rock* or *Wastwater*, were written with the understanding that what I'm doing is writing a play. I guess that's what working in Germany taught me. Taught me to be aware of the thought that I'm working with actors live, in a room with a director, and that if I am writing in a way that is naturalistic, that's a different gesture to just writing imaginary characters in a way that a novelist might.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: You've also noted how in the British context the playwright is a lot more present in rehearsals than they are in Germany. What was your experience in Germany?

STEPHENS: Much less present in the rehearsal room. I wrote a new play which Sebastian's directing and we're bringing it to London. It's called *Three Kingdoms* – it opens at the Lyric Hammersmith for two weeks in May. It's fucking mental. It's a crime thriller. It's got three British actors in it, three German actors and seven Estonian actors. He started off rehearsing with British actors and he was really astonished by the way in which, when rehearsals started, he said to the British actors that he was going to ignore all stage directions. As soon as he said that, the British actors in the room looked at me, to get my approval, and this really did his head in because he wasn't used to having somebody else in the room who the actors might refer to. And he got them to improvise text, he got them to embellish text in a way that, for a good British actor, is absolutely against their metabolism, especially if they're a stage actor. Occasionally, if you're acting on screen or TV you might, but on stage you just do what the playwright tells you to do – you do every word, every comma, every hesitation, you are true to all of them. And I'm very specific, and it's important to me that stuff.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Did you incorporate the content that came out of the actors' improvisations?

STEPHENS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, some of it, and certainly in performance. But it's really interesting, if you do go and see it, one of the other things you should do – if I can continue my salesman pitch – is you should buy a copy of the play because the play that you buy will be very different from the play that you watch, so there's a kind of authorial version and then the collaborative version that is the production version that me and Nübling made together.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: That's just reminded me of what happened with the *Trial of Ubu* to which, interestingly, Katie Mitchell has made more of an intervention...

- STEPHENS: Yeah, she's one of the few British directors who works successfully in German theatre and who's really respected in Germany.
- RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Just to contextualize, Nübling directed the original production in Germany as a kind of courtroom drama, while in Katie Mitchell's production at Hampstead Theatre, a lot of the actual trial was related through two interpreters.
- AUDIENCE: Was that not part of the play?
- STEPHENS: No, no, no – not at all. It was written as a courtroom drama, but it was her intervention to stage it through the language of simultaneous interpreters. I really loved it. All the critics...I've not read all the critics, I read Michael Billington. He managed to insult Katie as somebody with a lack of imagination who didn't understand what she was doing and insult me as some poor, powerless fool in the rehearsal room watching the rehearsals...
- Nübling's original production of the play was actually much less naturalistic, much less like a real courtroom, and much more like a kind of cabaret, it was much more performative. But Katie's, because she's fascinated with what is real, is so meticulous that, when I saw it, I just saw the courtroom. This amazing moment when one witness leaves and another one joins – there's a silence for 34 seconds and Kate Duchene and Nikki Amuka-Bird, the two actors playing it, just watch an imaginary person leave the room, wait, and then [watch] another imaginary person come back in the room and take their place. Now, some people were really cross about that: you know, that's not drama, that's not acting. I thought it was completely intoxicating because it places the court completely in your imagination.
- RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Actually it made me think of the kind of work that Forced Entertainment do –
- STEPHENS: –who are Sebastian's favourite British theatre company! Forced Entertainment.
- RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Another thing that I just remembered thinking about that production was the way Billington and, I think, Charles Spencer, wanted it to be more of a Tricycle-style play...
- STEPHENS: Yeah, yeah, yeah...
- RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: That might be a good cue for you to tell us what your ideas might be on that whole idea of theatre versus documentary.
- STEPHENS: (Pause.) There is part of me, in a room of an increasingly flagging lecture hall of students, that very playfully just wants to make a rude joke about how all documentary theatre's shit just to create a frisson of tension in the room. I don't completely believe it but – I don't think the work of theatre is to educate. Those of you who've acted, you're familiar with the notion of a transitive verb, yes? A transitive verb is a doing word that has a direct object and we use them in acting often. So, 'I frighten you', 'I bore you', 'I unsettle you', 'I inspire you', 'I seduce you', 'I disturb you' – all good transitive verbs. Very, very key to my thinking as a dramatist is: with every line of dialogue I write, I try and make sure the characters are doing something to each other. It polices the behavioural nature of dramatic writing to make sure you can attribute a

transitive verb to a line of dialogue. But I also think, as artists, we take responsibility for what we are doing to our audience. I need to ask myself all the time: 'What's my play doing to its audience, is it frightening the audience, is it unsettling the audience, is it disorientating the audience, is it moving the audience?' And what I've never wanted to do to an audience and never wanted to have done to me as an audience member is to teach an audience. Teaching is tremendously important, but actually the theatre is a poor form for education – it doesn't work well. And I've trained in pedagogy – I know how people learn and you don't learn from going to the theatre. You actually don't learn a great deal from going to a lecture. I think in five years time, in ten years time, what you will remember from *this* encounter is the strange way I played with my hair or jumped around in my seat and had far too much coffee. You will remember that much more visibly than anything I've actually said to you.

I like a theatre that changes me and I think I'm changed when I recognize myself in a play. And you can only really do that if you build your work around metaphor. I think the danger of documentary and verbatim theatre is that it's built on a horrible curse of interestingness. An audience has gone and watched those plays and thought, 'Oh that's interesting, what an interesting thing, who knew that that happened in 1948 in Afghanistan' – or: 'Who knew that was the real reason the riots started, that's interesting.' And I think it's a constipated relationship with the work on stage because when I go and watch a play, I'd much rather go 'Fuck, that's me!'

AUDIENCE: How much do you see yourself or the people around you in the characters you create in your pieces?

STEPHENS: Quite a lot. I'm in all of the characters that I've written really fundamentally – there's an element of me in all of them. I mean it's simplistic to say that because a character's normally a synthesis of an experience that I've lived, an experience I've observed, and experience I've researched. You know, there are three different types of experience.

AUDIENCE: I was extremely disappointed with *Wastwater* because naturalism is just not my kind of thing. You seem to be saying that you're a playwright that likes the collaborative nature of theatre – that likes the director to take liberties and to make it his own and to re-imagine the play. So, did that happen in *Wastwater*, because it really seemed like: 'this is a play on stage'?

STEPHENS: Another director I've worked with a lot, for example, is Sarah Francom, who's the artistic director at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. She's directed two of my plays, and is about to direct a third. She directed *On the Shore of the Wide World* in 2006, and *Punk Rock* in 2009, revived in 2010. Her productions operate much more in the kind of tradition of Peter Gill – the great 1960s Naturalist British director. That's probably the tradition that Ian Rickson's work is more often in – I would imagine Peter Gill is a significant figure in his theatrical heritage. And I love

that too, you know. I've not got a manifesto. I read that somebody described that lecture I gave – which is called 'Five Things I Learnt from Sebastian Nübling or Skydiving Blindfolded' – as a manifesto. And it's not a manifesto. Because there have been times where I've been watching British Naturalist productions that stop my heart. And let's not talk about *Wastwater* or *Punk Rock*, but talk about something like Ian's production of *Jerusalem*, which is absolutely loyal to how Jez [Butterworth] had imagined it in that play. So the gesture is of a director trying to stage the authorial vision and working with actors who he can collaborate with. For me, it's one of the best experiences of theatre I've had in the past five years – and it felt completely as though it was a collaboration, although the collaboration was very tightly focused on what Jez wanted. I'm not insistent that a director takes the play and changes it, it just happens so rarely in Britain that when it does, there's something quite energizing about it, for me.

AUDIENCE: A few weeks ago the National announced you were doing an adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog at Night Time*. What's it like collaborating – not in the performance stage with a director – but collaborating in the writing stage with Mark Haddon?

STEPHENS: Adapting is different to collaborating. So I didn't really collaborate with Mark at all, I just adapted his novel. He's been absolutely ideal, he asked me if I'd have a go at it, and I said that I would as long as I didn't take a commission for it, I just did it to see what it was like. And he said: 'Just do whatever you want with it. I trust you, make it yours.' So he actually just gave me the book and sold me the rights to adapt it. I've collaborated with other writers. I wrote a play with two other playwrights that was staged a couple of years ago, and I've written with songwriters and singers and – it's really difficult. I made a TV film called *Dive* with Dominic Savage, who's a screenwriter and director, and that was hard.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: How do you overcome the difficulties of collaborating?

STEPHENS: Well, Dominic Savage overcame them by changing the script, by not letting me go on set, and just filming what he wanted to film. That was his tactic. With *A Thousand Stars Explode in the Sky*, the multi-author play that we wrote, it was just through blood-thirstiness really. We did three years of workshops and wrote scenes and worked with actors to find some kind of shape. We started off with the gesture that we were simply going to write the scenes, we were going to allow the collaboration to be a kind of protective umbrella, so that we could write scenes that we would never dare write if we were writing alone. So it might mean that they were sillier than anything we'd dare write if we were writing alone – or they were darker, or they were just stranger. We gathered together about 15 of these scenes and we had to make a dramaturgical decision whether we were going to have an evening in the theatre which we had originally envisaged, which would be like a cabaret-style evening in the theatre – and collaborative plays of the 1970s or 1980s were often much more like that – or if we were gonna try and tell one story. And we decided on the latter.

We decided that with certain changes of character names, we could make a story out of the scenes that we had built and that's what we decided to do. You need a unifying idea in it, and the unifying idea was that unlike the collaborative plays of the 1970s and 1980s, which were often very directly political – like David Hare and Howard Brenton writing plays about the newspaper industry or about pornography – we said we weren't gonna make a political agenda, we were just gonna write a play about what it was to be human. I wrote a version of the play and gave it to David Eldridge, who wrote a version of the play on the understanding that he could change anything he wanted to change – he could rewrite any word. And then he gave it to Robert Holman, the third collaborator, with the same gesture, that he could change anything he wanted to change. Then we listened to it with actors, and together we made some final changes. I think you need a profound level of trust and a profound level of respect.

AUDIENCE: What do you think the differences are between playwrighting and screenwriting?

STEPHENS: Plays take place in theatres and films often attempt to recreate an imagined real world. And sometimes the theatre-makers will try to recreate a real world on their stage but even when they try to do that the architecture of a theatre will reveal the fact that it's not a real world. When Ian Rickson makes something like his production of Conor McPherson's *The Weir* – in which he and the designer Ray Smith completely recreate a Western Ireland bar room and in real time have actors behave in that room as if they are really in that bar – I don't think he is making the assumption that actually what they're doing on stage is kind of like real life. And I don't think any audience watching that play is thinking, 'Oh that's actually real life over there', in the way that you do when you watch a film. The mimetic live reality in film is much more comprehensive, and I think in theatre we enjoy the imaginary, even when we are using the language of naturalism. We enjoy the presence of the actor. I saw *In Basildon* last week, a play by David Eldridge – it's absolutely in the tradition of British Naturalism. It's very, very good British Naturalism. And you watch performances there – Linda Bassett, Lee Ross, Peter Wight – that are fine musical performances, and you watch them with a relish at the capacity of an actor. In film there's an attempt to create a live reality, whereas in theatre we know that we can create something together.

AUDIENCE: Why does, in *Pornography*, the character of the bomber seem so normal and in some ways comical until you get subtle hints that this guy's actually going to go and blow up innocent people?

STEPHENS: One of my memories of the attack on London was being really incredulous about how many people couldn't believe that it was British boys who planted those bombs. In the initial days after the attack the ports were closed, the airports were closed, and it was only actually two weeks later that we really got a sense that these boys were British. There was a sense of real horror and disbelief

that I just couldn't share. It made absolute sense to me that it was British boys who'd done that. It felt absolutely as though they were articulating something in the metabolism of England at the time actually, specifically England rather than Britain, I would say. There was something going on in the metabolism of English culture that felt like it was born out of a need to destroy and to transgress social agreements – to break social agreements in the pursuit of one's own ambition. If you raise a culture under the assumption, as Margaret Thatcher said, that there's no such thing as society – she said: There's no such thing as society, there's only individuals and families – it's a fascinating philosophical gesture to say that actually my relationship to you is entirely negligible. What I should really think about is my relationship to myself, and perhaps my relationship to my family. But my relationship to you is negligible, and certainly my relationship to the people in Canterbury town centre, who I was with today, who I had never seen before and will never see again. I don't have a relationship with the woman who sat across the aisle on the train with me today, because there's no such thing as society. If you have that as your central tenet in your thinking, as a means to establish a kind of free market capitalism in order to re-energize the economy – it has moral consequences. And 2005 felt like the playing out of those consequences, and it felt as though it was too easy to argue that that behaviour was driven on grounds of religion or even on grounds of international politics and Islamic response to American or British colonialism, or the fallout of the war in Iraq. There was something more than that and that's what had interested me in the play, so that's why I had the bomber not describing his behaviour in terms of the religious or theological ideology, but just in terms of what it was like to live in England.

AUDIENCE:

Going back to what you said about *Christmas*, why did Ian Rickson reject it, and what did you do after that?

STEPHENS:

The version of *Christmas* that is published is different from the version he rejected. I think I rewrote it with a greater understanding about how to make a play dramatic by considering the characters' behaviour as they try to negotiate what they want. The early draft of *Christmas* really was just a bunch of five guys talking about the sad things that had happened in their life. Now, do you know Conor McPherson's *The Weir*? It can fundamentally be described as a play about four men in a pub, standing round telling sad stories about the sad things that had happened in their life. I'd written *Christmas* before I went to see it – and I was watching it thinking, 'Ah, man, I'm fucked with my commission.' But I handed in my play *Christmas*, and the chances of them doing it would have been very, very slight. It was produced three years later at the Bush Theatre and it was a really brilliant production – sat much more happily at the Bush than it ever would have done at the Royal Court. But it was really good for me actually.

And I worry for you lot, for anybody here who's under 25. Tony Blair's government was massively underrated, but one of the

things that he did that I think was a mistake – well, not necessarily him, but his government – was to move university funding away from the Department of Education and into the Department of Trade and Industry. Universities became places of training and you lot became customers, rather than places of thinking and you lot being thinkers. And the nature of AS levels and A-levels, of GCSEs and of SAT tests is: your entire thinking is built around the importance of success. I have to tell you – it will do you no good. You learn nothing in life from succeeding. You only learn from frustration and failure. And the test for you as theatre workers or as thinkers or whatever you do in your life will not be – how you succeed. It will be how you deal with failure. It is only through failure that you will really do anything brave or audacious. If you commit to making a work of art or you commit to a thought and your starting point is that you need to have that thought or that work successful – you will never dare do anything astonishing. The most important things that have happened in my career have been the times where people have rejected my plays or the plays have been badly received. The rejection of *Christmas* was a really key thing for me. If they'd produced *Christmas*, I wouldn't have gone on to write *Hérons* or *Motortown* or *Pornography* or *Wastwater* or *Punk Rock* or anything.

I value the academy, as it's sometimes called, immensely. I think it's a profound shame that universities are no longer places that people can come to think, and I distinguish to an extent between thought and knowledge, I value the capacity of just thinking. I think it's underrated culturally, now. I think it's tremendously reductive when people consider their university degrees as just being stepping-stones into their career – you know, do a fucking apprenticeship. Go and get a job. Come here to think because, actually, it might change who you are, and in changing who you are, it might actually change your country and your world. And that's profoundly dignified and immensely important.

Appendix 2: Philip Ralph – Interview

This interview took place by email on 1 August 2012.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: How and when did the instance of Des James performing personally in the piece come about and what was, in your view, the – political and artistic – effect of this act?

RALPH: Des and Doreen took to the stage at the ‘opening performance’ at the Traverse in Edinburgh. They, and Jonesy and Frank Swann, had seen the final dress rehearsal of the show in Cardiff as it was my strong belief that they should not see the show for the first time surrounded by strangers. So, the hardest moment for all of us was behind us and thank goodness everyone was happy with the finished product. Des and Doreen came to Edinburgh to see the show in its theatre space. Edinburgh does not have ‘official’ opening nights as performances just begin and critics catch them when they can. We decided that the night that they could attend would be our official opening and we’d have drinks etc. afterwards. I think – but I can’t be 100% certain that it was Wednesday 6th August – 4 years ago. The idea of Des and Doreen performing in the play came from the director, Mick Gordon. After he met Des and Doreen during the play’s preparation he was very struck, as was everyone, by Des’s ability to communicate his ideas and his personal charisma. He’s a very driven, funny and personable man. Mick asked me what I thought of the idea of them performing the final speeches and I said what turned out to be the case – Des would jump at the chance, Doreen would be reticent. She is a very private person and does not relish being in the public eye at all. There was no overt political agenda in making the offer. It was simply an acknowledgement of the central ethos behind the piece – this is their story and we as theatre makers are simply telling it on their behalf. To offer them the chance to take part seemed simply a logical extension of our overall aims. As I suspected, Des did jump at the chance and Doreen said that she would be unable to speak but would stand beside Des as he ‘performed’ his speech. We cleared it with our lovely actors – Ciaran and Rhian – and Mick worked with Des very briefly on the speech. It was decided that Des would read it as, if your remember, the speech was delivered from behind a lectern. Mick told me afterwards that he needed to do nothing – Des is a natural public speaker and, lest we forget, the words he would be speaking were his own. The performance began and Des and Doreen were seated in the front row, anonymously of course. I don’t remember much about that particular performance as I was so wound up and nervous about what was to come. I was sitting in the back left-hand corner of Traverse 2. The play entered its final moments. Jonesy gave her speech – and then Ciaran and

Rhian stepped off the stage into the downstage corners where the stairs of the auditorium were – so they were watching. Without announcement or fanfare, Des stood, turned and helped Doreen to her feet and the two of them walked to the lectern. Des took out his reading glasses and pulled the speech from his pocket. I swear you could feel the audience realising who they were – there was no audible sound but the process of ‘who are these people?’ and the pennies dropping was deafening. And Des read the speech. It was riveting. He didn’t ‘perform’ it – he lived it. He addressed the audience directly as all the actors did. When he finished – the final line is the final line of the play – the lights began to dim and Des and Doreen stepped from the stage back to their seats, Ciaran and Rhian returned and took their bows with the rest of the cast. But the atmosphere had changed – the audience rose for an ovation but it was obvious that this was more for Des and Doreen than it was for the cast. Des and Doreen seemed to be oblivious – giving their support to the cast as they continually did in both iterations of the play. But it was when the calls had finished and the actors had left the stage that something truly remarkable happened. Audiences were always shell-shocked after *Deep Cut*. As I’d intended, they felt deep anger and frustration at what had happened to the families and the state of our establishment and country. But in this instance, the people who it had happened to were right in front of them. And so, as Des and Doreen quietly collected their coats and prepared to leave [...] the audience queued to speak to them. In my memory it was all of them but I suspect it couldn’t have been – the theatre held about 120 people. But we were the last show of the night and the first the morning after so we didn’t have to move the set. It went on for about 20 minutes. People were in tears, hugging Des and Doreen, shaking their hands, offering support and words of comfort. I was standing at the back watching it all take place, utterly astonished. By the time the last audience member had left the theatre we were all – Des, Doreen, myself, our stage manager Brenda – in tears and moved beyond imagining. I went to Des and Doreen and all Doreen could say was – ‘People are so kind.’ Then Des broke the atmosphere and suggested we all needed a drink – and so we went and had several! As for the effect – it was a wonderful gift to give to the James’s who agreed to work with me on the play in order that more people should know about their story and not have to live through what they did. My agenda was always to tell their story to as many people as possible because journalism failed to communicate it effectively. Politically, it had no effect whatsoever as, in the long run, neither did the play. Ultimately, we live in a world where the political classes can ignore anything they don’t wish to deal with and this one tiny moment did nothing but to embed itself into the memories of the audience who witnessed it. We did discuss doing it again but didn’t want it to become some kind of ‘stunt’ or ‘trick’. The moment could not be repeated and, by that stage,

the play was creating its own effects. It remains, however, one of the most special memories for me from an especially memorable time and Des and Doreen remain as dear to me as my own family.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: To what extent do you think that *Deep Cut* (and/or any other verbatim, tribunal or Out of Joint-style documentary play) represents a return to Brechtian theatre-making principles?

RALPH: I'm a little confused about this question as my understanding (which I admit is limited) of Brechtian techniques centres around the 'alienation' effect – which I understand to be a way of snapping the audience out of believing that what they are seeing is 'real' – placards, narration, commentary etc. In that regard, I don't think *Deep Cut* – or any of the verbatim pieces that I have seen function in that way. Brecht wanted his audience to think and not to feel – verbatim allows both. Indeed, I would argue that, at its best, the power of verbatim lies in enabling people to connect their emotions to their intellects. In the case of *Deep Cut*, we went to great lengths at the beginning of the play to root it in domesticity – two people, in their living room, drinking coffee, answering mobiles, etc – so that we felt immediately warm and connected to them. This, of course, mirrored my experience of meeting and talking to the James's in their home. So that, as the play progresses into the rich and complex details of what happened and the other characters 'encroach' into their world, we the audience feel this deeply as a violation of their space. The moment of 'the real' Des and Doreen taking part in the play was, I think, a truly 'Brechtian' act in that it broke the audiences 'belief' in the world of the play and made them see that these people were real. All the documents used on stage were the 'real' ones and the photographs of the four recruits who lost their lives were also real and were left for the audience to see as they left the theatre. So, the answer is complex – verbatim works best when we engage emotionally and we do that because we know that the words spoken are the actual ones of the real people. The caveat to that, of course, is that verbatim is resolutely mediated speech. I 'wrote' the play in the sense that I chose every single word and placed it in the structure to create a narrative from hundreds of hours of interviews and thousands of pages of documents. It's as much a 'trick' as a conventional fictional narrative and this is one of my key problems with the massive (and in my view, overbalanced) emphasis that the form receives. It is not 'the truth' but we often receive it as such and therefore give it more weight and importance. I'm very glad it worked for *Deep Cut* as it gave the families much needed publicity and set in place a 'counter-myth' to the state's insistence of suicide – but I am wary of giving too much import to the form which, I believe, is overused and can be clumsy.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: How does *Deep Cut* compare, in your view, to some of the previous key examples of verbatim/tribunal/documentary theatre? (For example, *The Colour of Justice*.)

RALPH: In writing *Deep Cut*, I had two very specific models in mind. I had seen, and loved, the work of Robin Soans for Out of Joint – most

especially *A State Affair* which played in a double bill with *Rita, Sue And Bob Too*. This show presented the lives of people who live on the Buttershaw Estate in Bradford to counterpoint Andrea Dunbar's fictional story set there. I come from that part of the world and so it had a huge impact on me – the minutiae of detail, the direct address by the actors, the moments of seemingly inconsequential banter that actually tell you so much about character. In preparation for *Deep Cut*, Robin was kind enough to meet me and talk about his process and I used much of his advice when meeting people and, I think, you can see that in *Deep Cut*. I read all Richard Norton-Taylor's tribunal pieces for the Tricycle and met Richard also – I saw *Called To Account*. My problem with these pieces is that they are – for want of a better word – dry. They are passionless and lacking in emotion or characters to truly connect with – BUT – they present facts and detail in a brilliant and clear-sighted way. My aim, as I waded through the mass of documents relating to the deaths at Deepcut, was to combine the two forms and allow an audience a way to emotionally invest in the facts and details BECAUSE they cared as much about them as Des and Doreen. So, the play was constructed in that manner. This is not to make a pejorative statement about other work – this was, for me, about addressing the material I had and finding the best possible way of communicating it. To be clear, I am not a fan of verbatim across the board. I find it to be a form that requires tact, delicacy and a deep moral sense of purpose – and I find that to be lacking in many iterations of it. Story dictates form in my view – *Deep Cut* had to be verbatim and it also had to be documentary. I would not knowingly choose to write another piece in a similar vein and I haven't. I felt – and still feel – a profound moral obligation to the subjects of the piece – including Nicholas Blake and those people, such as Sergeant B, who are painted in an arguably negative light. Many writers were shocked when I told them that my subjects held an absolute veto on anything that their 'character' said in the play. They argued that I shouldn't 'let the truth get in the way of the story'. But if you choose verbatim, then you are choosing the truth and you have an absolute moral obligation to that truth. I was determined not to be a writer who used people's lives for my own ends, and I'm delighted to say that no-one who took part feels that way about the finished product or the subsequent film script. Verbatim is a tool in a writer's arsenal but it should be used judiciously and wisely or not at all.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

What was the relationship between the performance as a whole (actors, director, design) and the text of this particular play? How were the testimonies rendered and was their effect enhanced by the performance-making mechanism?

RALPH:

Again, not quite sure what you mean but [...] the actors spoke the text directly to the audience except where it was obvious they were having a conversation. This direct address is vital to the success of the play as it forges an intimate connection between audience and performer – again it's a trick that makes if

feel more real. Some of the actors met their real-life counterparts before rehearsals – in particular Rhian Blythe who played Jonesy became lifelong friends with the real Jonesy! – some chose to base their work solely on the script and meet the real people later – some, of course, did not have the luxury of being able to meet them. Ultimately, Mick Gordon guided them all to do what felt appropriate for them. The most important thing was to be able to communicate the highly complex story clearly and well. Mick was a brilliant collaborator who helped me immeasurably in honing, editing and shaping the final play – my original first draft contained forty characters and would have run for six hours! He was also instrumental in one of the masterstrokes of the work which was working with the design team – Igor Vasiljev, Andrew Jones and Mike Furness – to create the world of the play. Igor ran with idea of ‘verbatim’ and asked Doreen to take photos of their home. He then created a ‘verbatim’ set – the design of the sofas, wallpaper, lamps, carpets etc. is exactly what they are like in Des and Doreen’s own home. In fact, the photo backdrop in the entrance to the kitchen is an actual photo that Doreen took of her kitchen! Details like this might seem unnecessary but they added hugely to the concrete feel of the world. So, the actors delivered the text – with hesitations and idiosyncrasies – direct to the audience in a very conversational style. Indeed, the play worked best in intimate venues such as Traverse 2 where it opened – and it got lost in the larger pros[cenium] arch theatres. It needed the audience to feel as if they were sharing a coffee with Des and Doreen and being told their story. All of that was down to Mick and the amazing actors who understood their responsibility to the real people and played them with great skill and compassion.

Appendix 3: Tim Crouch – Interview

The conversation below took place in June 2011 at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, in between rehearsals for *The Taming of the Shrew*, which Crouch adapted and directed for the RSC Education Department.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: There have been parts of your journey that were more to do with conventional theatre, followed by departures into performance art-like ways of working, and then coming back into theatre with a different sensibility.

CROUCH: Any career has its cycles, its journeys. The skill is to take with you what you have learnt from the differing routes you have taken – to keep the things that are helpful, and discard the things that aren't.

I started at Bristol University in 1982, and quite quickly discovered the more experimental methodologies. I did a lot of Grotowski-inspired work, very physical stuff. I met Julia at the end of my first year and we formed a company, a registered co-operative called Public Parts. We took a show to Edinburgh in 1984. When I graduated, we approached the writer of a show by Red Ladder we'd seen in Edinburgh, and made a short tour of that play. We got funding and carried on for seven years. The work was politically driven, emerging from devising processes that reflected our energy as a collective, an ensemble of seven. Public Parts was about taking theatre to non-theatre venues, opening out communities to theatre. We did pieces on hidden history, on the workers' theatre movement, an adaptation of Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, and a devised show on the Bristol poet Thomas Chatterton in 1991. And then – we both left the company. By this time we had two children. I went to drama school because I felt I wasn't a proper actor. I went to Central in 1993, for the first year of what is now the Advanced Theatre Practice course. It was a very frustrating year in many ways. I left with an agent, I got a job, a small part at the Royal Exchange, and became a jobbing actor.

I had done a certain amount of scripting – in the devising process, but Julia was the director, she was the editor, the main writing influence. She took our improvisations and edited and shaped them. I was engaged in every aspect of production in Public Parts. After I went to Central, I became an actor – engaged only in the 'acting' aspect. Then a quick chronology: I worked at the National for a few years, I did a production of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, a production of Caryl Churchill's *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, and then became more interested in teaching. I started a PhD at Goldsmiths, but lasted less than a year, I think. I had a third child – that was one of the reasons why I stopped my PhD, but also I realized that my brain didn't fit into performance theory; I'd come from a relatively traditional background, and I couldn't see how those things applied to what

I was doing. I'd become more and more interested in the relationship that existed in the theatre with the audience. I had become more depressed about psychologically and realistically motivated rehearsal processes, and was sort of exorcising those issues in my teaching. That's what I was doing – getting those methodologies out of my system, purging, and becoming less and less enchanted by my acting work and more and more interested in my teaching. I got to the point where I thought that I should stop my acting work, possibly do a PGCE and go into full-time teaching. I was broke and not very happy.

At the National I would be sent to secondary schools in London to do workshops on Brecht, or Shakespeare, and there was a real apprenticeship in that we had to determine how we would teach things, no one taught us. I ran the Stanislavski INSETs for teachers at the National at one point. I did a big project in Brixton prison where I went in for a week and taught a group of prisoners in preparation for a production of Aristophanes' *The Frogs*. And that was a revelation for me because I was left to my own devices. I also started teaching at Central a bit, with a guy called Ed Woodall who now teaches at Oxford School of Drama. I think we kind of shook it up a little bit at Central and never got asked back. And then at the age of 38 – I wrote something.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

That was *My Arm*.

CROUCH:

I had not written before and I had nothing to lose. I wrote *My Arm* purely for myself – to see if I could create something. I didn't try and create anything too big. I just wrote a piece for myself that I thought I would perform in people's front rooms – and I did do. The writing of that story was another means of exorcising my frustrations – and I've been exorcising ever since. *The Author* is a huge act of exorcism about how actors are treated really.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

My Arm was where your distinctive style emerged?

CROUCH:

Yes, everything appeared in there without any consciousness. I wrote it very quickly.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

How was that different from a conventional piece of acting?

CROUCH:

It doesn't involve much acting really – not in the traditional sense of character-led performance. It's a first-person autobiographical piece performed by the person whose life it refers to. It tells the story of that person's decision to live with one arm above their head until they die. But in the course of the performance I never raise my arm. So big philosophical things started to ring and resonate from it. I wrote it in five days, but over maybe two months: a weekend then a break, a weekend then a break, then a weekend. My intention was to write a story – but as you write a story, there's a formalizing part of your brain working and obviously your brain is talking to itself – and the form became very clear in my mind. Objects are taken from the audience at the beginning, they are selected at random – not in a puppetry way but as representative of characters in the story.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

How did that decision emerge?

CROUCH:

I had been doing something like that, teaching actors at Central. I would take actors out of a scene and replace them with objects

and the actors delivered lines to the objects. I became very excited and moved by what could be achieved through this act of abstraction. I, as a spectator, suddenly became more important and needed in the way that I didn't feel needed when actors were in a workshop or a rehearsal room, acting. I had to be present to join one thing with another, I was a necessary contributing factor to the creative act as an audience member, and that was really exciting for me. It just slipped in – as I started to write – that that should be part of the form. I made decisions very clearly – there's a very important moment in *My Arm* where I show the audience a finger that I say in the narrative I had amputated. I say: 'So I conceded to having this finger amputated because it was dead', that's the line. And it's exciting because there is no attempt at figurative representation of what I say. I didn't have to do any of the psychological gestures, or the psychological actions. I could give an audience the authority to make the transformations around me without having to transform myself in any way.

A lot of this has come through post-rationalization rather than at the moment of creation. When I do the show I can unpick huge amounts of things in the text that I certainly wasn't conscious I was writing when I wrote it, so there's a very lucky act of serendipity really to have got to a place where I didn't care anymore, or to write for nobody other than myself – to have had a series of ideas that had been working their way out of me, to have some frustrations and challenges I wanted to put down, and then to just ultimately tell a story. All my work, I think, has to have a story in it, although there are ideas in *My Arm* that you could put into a performance piece.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Was that shift towards the performance paradigm an accident for you?

CROUCH: That PhD had introduced me to a body of work the National hadn't; the National was very conventional in its approach to education. In 1999, I made a proposal, which was accepted, to run an action research project for the National called 'The Engine Room'. It was about teaching-artists, and it would be connected to my PhD. My PhD was about pedagogical forms in theatre, and it's amazing that I'm now in rehearsal thinking about the pedagogical forms of theatre. Not only am I directing *The Taming of the Shrew*, I'm also balancing the RSC Education Department and Warwick University sponsored postgraduate award. It goes right back to where my PhD was: thinking about the distinctions between a rehearsal process and a teaching process, the director and the teacher, or a group of actors and a group of students. I'm asking my company to teach each other as well: I have one actor tomorrow who will be doing a session on quantum physics with us. At the moment they're doing five-minute classes and then I've asked them to consider 15–20 minute classes with all of us, around movement, voice, speech, song if they want it, text, things that they might have as a drive that they're not having an outlet for here, so that they can have an outlet in the rehearsal process.

Also I've got lots of books on the table in the rehearsal room about marriage, Jacques Rancière for anyone who's interested, and I've also got my plays just in case any of the actors wondered who the hell I am or what I'm doing. No one has picked them up!

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: How did *An Oak Tree* come about then, the idea for that particular format of having a different actor every night?

CROUCH: *My Arm* got published before it was even performed, which is amazing. When *My Arm* was published I put in the Preface that the next play would be called *An Oak Tree*. 'An Oak Tree 1973' was a work of art by Michael Craig-Martin. It was made in 1973, it's just a glass of water on a shelf in a gallery, but next to the glass of water is a piece of text, which is one of my central teaching texts now. It's a question and answer and the text explains how the artist has transformed the glass of water into a fully grown oak tree without changing the accidents of the glass of water, the colour, the shape, the weight, the size. I saw this work of art, around the same time that *My Arm* was beginning to happen, and that work of art was what I was doing with *My Arm*. I hadn't been reading Baudrillard. Often people say 'What are your references? What are your influences?' and I can't put them towards a thinker or a practitioner.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Although Jacques Rancière comes up.

CROUCH: He came up when *The Author* was being written. And actually, with this production, I'm thinking about *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, because I have Sly, the character of Christopher Sly, located in this play the whole way through, disguised as a school teacher, and an ignorant school teacher.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: So did you discover *The Emancipated Spectator* before or after *The Author*?

CROUCH: Almost after it had been written. I think it would have been problematic for me to start to make a piece of work directly connected to a piece of text or a body of ideas. I think that I would be restricted or it would be a compromised thing. What usually happens with those pieces of text is – they help me to – not justify it, the work doesn't need justifying – but they help me to...

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Frame it?

CROUCH: To frame it, yes, maybe that's right.

'An Oak Tree' – the work of art is amazing because there is a glass of water and it is an oak tree: it's what art does, it's what religion does, it's what human beings do, and I also think it's what audiences do. At the same time as I saw this work of art I read a book on hypnosis. It was a book written in the 1920s by a guy called Emille Coué. It was called *Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion* and I was very interested in those ideas. Whilst I was in Edinburgh doing *My Arm* I had that book and I had books on hypnosis and I had 'An Oak Tree' by Michael Craig-Martin, and so I started to develop a story that would somehow accommodate these ideas. *An Oak Tree* is about two men who meet three months after the death of a child; one is a hypnotist who has lost their ability – for hypnotist read artist – and one is not an

artist, who has found his ability in response to his grief. That's a good story, and it does connect with all those things. And a tree is transformed into a girl as opposed to the glass of water being transformed into a tree. I had a really clear story, but hadn't written the play, yet.

Andy Smith and I had met in 1999, doing a corporate gig in Switzerland. We shared a room and we talked about *Offending the Audience*, the Peter Handke play. In 1999 I had sent a letter to Tom Morris at Battersea Arts Centre saying: 'Could I do a one-man version of *Offending the Audience*', and I never got a reply. Andy and I met there and we talked – he's a brilliant man – and he then went to Dartington to do a two-year MA in Performance Writing. Then he came to see *My Arm*, he had nothing to do with *My Arm*.

In the thinking around the story of *An Oak Tree*, I wanted the father in that story not to be played by an actor – in the spirit of *My Arm* – but to take an object and for the transformation to happen to it rather than it transforming. I didn't want an actor who would do acting – I think I got quite bored or tired or depressed about acting. I remember even possibly wanting to work with someone with Down's Syndrome, someone with autism, someone who could not do the transformation as we know it culturally now in the twenty-first century. Andy Smith came to stay at our house – him and Karl James are my friends above all else – and I said to him: 'How would it be if you played the part of the father in this story that I would write for you and me to perform?' And Andy said he wasn't up for that because he wasn't an actor and he has his life and he was doing his own thing. But in a conversation that Andy and I had at breakfast in my house in Brighton, we discussed *My Arm* and the taking of an object – and how you could do that to a human being, and so we married the two things together. At Andy's suggestion I started to write the play for a different actor every time: so a human being who isn't aware of their meaning comes on stage, and meaning is applied to them by the narrative context and the staging context. We always said as we developed this idea that if it felt like just a trick or just a device that didn't connect with the story, then we would ditch it. Because *My Arm* does connect with a story: there's a boy who doesn't think and his meaning is given to him. And here is a father who has done this thing to this tree, whose life is destroyed, whose marriage is ending – and the idea of being played by someone who is lost on stage, felt very, very potent. I then wrote the play very quickly because I had a set of very liberating constrictions. If you have a good restriction, it is really easy: I have to make a play that will contain an actor who doesn't know the play, and suddenly ideas start flooding about devices and models of imparting character.

Karl James had been involved in *My Arm*. Karl is an old friend – we had met at the National Youth Theatre and then we lost each other for 13 years and then we came back together again. He'd read the script of *My Arm* and he had given me £500 if I let him help me produce it. I introduced Karl to Andy, they are now really

good friends – I was very excited the day that Karl James and Andy met. And so Karl and Andy and I then started to work on that script of *An Oak Tree*. In rehearsal Andy was always the father, in the play you'll notice the father in the play is called Andy Smith. At one point the hypnotist calls him 'Andrew' and he corrects the hypnotist and says 'Call me Andy' because he's not Andrew Smith, he's Andy Smith! I mean it's an in-joke but it's not a problem – it's in honour of the work that Andy did in rehearsal to develop in me an ease to work with someone who doesn't know where they're going from moment to moment.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

Did he direct it?

CROUCH:

Andy and Karl co-directed. In *An Oak Tree* I'm down as co-director as well because every performance I direct in the context of how they directed me.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

That's an ensemble of directors then.

CROUCH:

Yes! Yes, and the new piece – I'm not in it. When we approach a theatre there will be three directors attached to that. And what's also interesting – I will tell you this: in the performance of this new piece which I'm very sensitive about in a way, one of the directors will always have to be present, because there is a communication taking place from off stage onto the stage through earphones. And, that's a role, that's an artistic role of someone guiding other people off stage.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

And how did *ENGLAND* come about?

CROUCH:

It was my first commission from the Traverse Theatre. They had *My Arm*, and they had *An Oak Tree*. There is a gallery in Edinburgh called the Fruitmarket Gallery. The woman who runs that, Fiona [Bradley], had seen *An Oak Tree*. They wanted to have a project with the Traverse, I was presented as a possibility, so the commission was to make a piece of work. It was fairly torturous. I spent a long time thinking about creating a hybrid piece that would be a visual art, or a Janet Cardiff, or a Graeme Miller, or an earpiece-guided tour, and then I realized that that was not my strength. My strength was to tell a story and to think about theatre because I think that that's probably what I should be fighting for. All my work is about narrative – *ENGLAND* is a really key example of that. So there was the idea of placing a piece of theatre inside a gallery without altering the structure of the gallery whatsoever, and it was that formal consideration that led to a narrative consideration of transplantation: we placed one thing inside something else. What happens to the thing? What happens to the host of the thing? So the narrative of *ENGLAND* is about transplantation.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

Whereas the previous ones have been about transformation.

CROUCH:

Yes. Although there is still transformation in *ENGLAND* – I mean, Hannah Ringham and I play the same part. This took quite a while – I was doing *An Oak Tree* in New York, for nearly four months, and I was struggling with *ENGLAND*. It became clearer and clearer, and now in hindsight it's really clear. Two actors: one man and one woman play the same part. Where is the transformation happening? Where is the physical container for that

character? There isn't one; there isn't *one*. We're taking Michael Craig-Martin and going a little further. He had a glass of water and he could place the idea of 'tree' inside the idea of 'glass of water'. There was a container, a material container. Moving the ideas further from *An Oak Tree* to think 'what if there isn't one', where does the character exist if you can't go 'it's you'?

So you don't know if that character in *ENGLAND* is male or female, and at no point is gender ever specified in that play. Some audiences make a decision very quickly that it's about a gay man and his boyfriend, and some people go 'It's about a woman and her boyfriend'. Lyn Gardner said it's about a woman and her boyfriend, and other reviewers have said it's about a man, and – how good is that! That's good because it's taking the authority away from the stage and placing it in the audience. And then it happens again in the second act of *ENGLAND* where the audience enter a space not knowing that they are a third character in the narrative: they are a grieving widow whose husband, it transpires in the telling of the act, has been murdered for the heart.

In the second act Hannah and I divide, so the protagonist from the first act is there and the other actor becomes an interpreter. So, how beautiful that in that second act no second language is materially being spoken, but a second language is spoken! If we were to do that scene figuratively, we would have had a woman in her niqab, speaking Punjabi, there would have been a lot of dead time, the authority would all have been placed on the stage. By doing what we do with the second act of *ENGLAND*, the audience begin to understand themselves in relation to this play, they understand themselves in relation to the ethical issues that are explored in the play, and there's just much more for them to do. Much less for us to do. My work by and large is like this – I try and do as little as possible. In *The Author*, of course, I just sit there.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

How did *The Author* come about in terms of commission?

CROUCH:

Dominic Cooke had seen *An Oak Tree* and *My Arm*, and when he saw *ENGLAND* at the Traverse at the Fruitmarket, he said: 'I suppose we ought to ask you to write something.' I've made a decision now that I don't get a commission until I really know what I want to do. I didn't with *ENGLAND* and that was really hard. But with the Royal Court I knew I wanted to make a piece of work with the audience facing itself. That was what I wanted to do, so the Royal Court giving me a commission enabled me to pursue that. By the end of April in 2008 I had written it. I'd written it relatively quickly whilst also touring and doing other things. We sent the script at the end of April, I met with Dominic, who said: 'How soon can we put it on?' And I was busy for a year and a half, which is why it didn't open until end of 2009, but I didn't really do much to it in between that time.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ:

To what extent did you think of it as a site-specific piece?

CROUCH:

The thing that I have been known to say sometimes is: always the site which the theatre takes place in is the audience. That's what site-specific means for me and all theatre is site-specific, but obviously people lose track of that.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: I took a group of students to the Royal Court to see it and they came out of it angry. And I think that their anger came out of the fact that they hadn't taken into account everything that that site represents. The way that I was receiving it was very much by reference to Kane and Bond; you have to know that history to–

CROUCH: –Well, do you have to know that? There is a generic discussion about violence so the play does explore representations of violence, and the Royal Court felt like a particularly haunted place in terms of representations of violence. I would say that the play was weaker at the Royal Court ideologically than it was anywhere else, because we said we were at the Royal Court and we were at the Royal Court, whereas at the Traverse we said we were at the Royal Court and we weren't.

For some people that was a real problem, so people got angry, some people said I was lazy – there were reviews that said 'how incredibly lazy not to spend a few minutes transposing the location of the setting of the play to the theatre that we were in'. I thought: 'You just haven't understood any of this!' It's kind of extraordinary that they hadn't – because, yes, principally, ideologically it's much purer if it's not in the place that it says it is. But I did say in the Preface right from the very early days: 'It will be set at the Royal Court even when it is not performed at the Royal Court.' So I had already thought about a life beyond the Royal Court, and only latterly can I talk knowingly about how diminished it felt when it was in the place that it says it was. With *ENGLAND* – I do rewrite it. I rewrite the play every time to reference the gallery you're in now.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: Yes, I remember that, because I saw it in the Whitechapel Gallery.
CROUCH: So we say: 'Here in the Whitechapel Gallery', and then we go 'Here in Southwark Cathedral, here in Guys Hospital'. We don't make a distinction – we are both here now and we are somewhere else now, and the materiality of our location doesn't need to change. The site doesn't need to change for us to move to another site in the art of what we can do in theatre. So *The Author* being site-specific – no, it doesn't feel like it is, it doesn't feel like it subscribes to what I would understand to be the rules of site-specific.

The Royal Court is used as a metaphor to discuss other things. It's a play about spectatorship, it's a play about representations, it's a play about ideas of realism or reality in art and how dangerous they are. Maybe the Royal Court can be seen as a nerve centre for those ideas, but those ideas exist outside the Royal Court. I don't feel like I am exclusively focusing in on the Royal Court when I write that play, and it goes into the internet of course...

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: But if another theatre had commissioned that play it wouldn't have been set in the Royal Court, would it?

CROUCH: That's true. If the Traverse had commissioned the play it wouldn't have been set at the Royal Court, no, so that's absolutely true.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: So maybe it's a site-responsive piece?

CROUCH: Yeah, that's all right. OK, site-responsive. But the site it is specific to is the theatre. It's interesting because we can then see the parallels between the character of Tim Crouch and Tim Crouch – is

this a play about Tim me? No, it's not. Is it a play about people like me? Yes, it is. Similarly, with the audience – is it a play about a Royal Court audience? No, it's not. Is it a play about audience? Yes, it is. That feels very important, and if people do think it's about me, then they're missing the point, and if they do think it's just about the Royal Court then they're missing the point. But, you are absolutely right in saying that if the Traverse had commissioned it, then I wouldn't have written that play. Another reason why I don't want a commission until I'm much clearer.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: It seems to me that it fits into what you said earlier about having liberating restrictions – taking this particular commission as in some way a determining factor in how you proceed?

CROUCH: Yes, there was the space I was writing for, in the same way that the Fruitmarket was the space I was writing for, and that focused my thinking. With the new play, I don't have a space, there are other formal considerations. It will be art-responsive, or idea-responsive, it will not be site-responsive.

RADOSAVLJEVIĆ: What about *The Taming of the Shrew* that you're working on at the moment, is it linked to your Shakespeare monologues?

CROUCH: I would say *I, Malvolio* is a young people's version of *The Author*, to some degree, because it's about the cruelty that a spectator can enjoy. I see that in the character of Toby Belch, and I place that character of Belch onto you as an audience. In *I, Malvolio*, he gets audience members to help him in an attempt to hang himself. On one level it's a children's show – it's for ages 11 plus, on another level it is a meditation on 'What are our responsibilities here?' I was writing it at the same time as I was writing *The Author*, but *The Author* had not been performed yet when I started to write it. So there are strong connections there, and here there are huge connections around a difficult subject.

The Taming of the Shrew is a difficult subject – there is a difficult abusive relationship in that play, but we should not not address that. Similarly, at the end of *The Author* there is a speech that is almost unbearable, but we should not not address that. That does combine lots of educational ideas that I have: the idea of having an 'active' audience – so I place Sly in the audience as an interlocutor, as a representative, as someone who will authorize the audience to have a stronger presence in the show. Obviously, it would be awful if I just came in and did a traditional production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, I don't think that's the brief. Michael Boyd came to see *The Author* – so obviously they're thinking why they've employed me. I will have some struggles maybe, I've already had some struggles to persuade people, and I might have some struggles with the actors perhaps. It's a very difficult situation I have been placed in – to work on behalf of the Education Department, to work on behalf of the actors, to work on behalf of the play, and to have actors who are hardly ever there, and who are delivering education work as well, but it's a good challenge to me.

Appendix 4: Ontroerend Goed *Internal* – Script

This transcript is still a work in progress, and will be part of a forthcoming collection of Ontroerend Goed 'blueprints'. It is presented here exceptionally, with the company's approval, and with the following disclaimer:

The company is looking for ways to write down their performances on paper, because the nature of their plays demands a different approach from the traditional method. The intention is to give the reader a meaningful insight into the play without the need for them to have seen it live, even though most of Ontroerend Goed's performances are interactive or individual and generally less text-based.

Alexander Devriendt, Artistic Director, Ontroerend Goed

I . N . T . E . R . N . A . L

ONE-ON-ONE PERFORMANCE FOR 5 ACTORS AND 5 VISITORS

INTERNAL IS THE SECOND PART OF THE PERSONAL TRILOGY.

IN THIS PERFORMANCE, YOU INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH A STRANGER, AND HOW YOU CAN TRANSLATE THAT INTO THEATRICAL IMAGES. THE TIME IS LIMITED TO 25 MINUTES.

IF WELL DONE, THE SHOW WILL DISCLOSE SOMETHING ABOUT TRUTH AND ILLUSION IN PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS, HOW FIRST IMPRESSIONS CAN BE BOTH REVEALING AND MISGUIDING AND THE LEVEL OF TRUST YOU'RE ABLE OR WILLING TO GIVE. WE DELIBERATELY BLUR THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS FAKE.

IF YOU HAVE ETHICAL PROBLEMS WITH THE BASIC RULES OF THIS SHOW OR YOU FEEL PERFORMING IT COULD BECOME TOO CONFUSING FOR YOU, IT MIGHT BE BETTER NOT TO 'TRY THIS AT HOME'.

you need:

5 ACTORS who are keen on interacting with audience members, talking to them in an intimate setting and gently getting personal information out of them. They have to be able to improvise with that information and create stories out of it in a very short space of time. A certain level of betrayal is involved in their act, so they have to be well prepared and daring.

A DARK SPACE, large enough to install 5 intimate corners with shaded lights, tables and chairs where every performer can be alone with his visitor. We

use small cabins with scrim curtains. The middle of the space should be large enough to install a circle of 10 chairs.

SLIGHTLY CHEESY, SENTIMENTAL ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.*

* We use Mantovani's arrangements of 'Send in the Clowns', 'Some Enchanted Evening', 'A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening', 'Torna A Sorrento' and 'Try to Remember', but any music that conveys a sense of old-fashioned romance will do.

CLASSY EVENING DRESS is optional. The performance gains distinction when the actors and actresses look perfectly groomed. We dress them strictly in black and white but that's just a choice. Actor 4 should be able to take off her top at the blink of an eye.

5 BOTTLES OF LIQUOR with 5 PAIRS OF ASSORTED DRINKING GLASSES

– preferably five different drinks, to give the actors a personal touch. We use whisky, vodka, jenever, port and wine. It is recommendable to thin the liquor with water if you're not very resistant.

0.

I'm in a group of five, all strangers. We've been lined up in front of a black curtain, standing on white marks. I just passed through a dressing room, where I could sneak a glance at the actors' personal belongings: hairbrushes, make-up, perfume, small gadgets. I think I saw some letters on the wall, but I'm not sure.

We're a bit anxious. Some of us are staring at the floor. The woman next to me is giggling. We look at each other with expectation. I guess we're in this together.

The curtain is raised. Slowly. I find myself face to face with a beautiful young woman in a white dress. She stares at me. I smile back at her, to no avail. Are we supposed to talk? I'll leave it up to her.

The actors take one step forward, getting even closer to us. I can almost feel their breath in my face.

So it's clear: we've all been paired with an actor, we're all being stared at. There are five of them, women and men, all perfectly groomed, each attractive in their own way. Before I got a good look at them, the guy on the left starts to move. He walks the line, scrutinizing us visitors. Finally, he gently pushes away the tall actress facing the woman next to me and takes her place. Again, the woman starts giggling uncomfortably. It dawns on me that we don't get to decide whom we're going to be with: it's them, the actors, who make a choice and shuffle. I kind of like the lady in front of me, so I wouldn't mind ending up with her. But I'll go along with anything. I'm a model visitor.

After quite some friendly pushing and shoving, they all took their pick. I did end up with the girl facing me. She hesitated for a second, looking at a man on the

other side of the line-up, but she chose me. I can see some of the others are a bit confused about their 'partner'. After all, we don't know the criteria, let alone the rules of this game.

1.

She shakes my hand and says hello. She grabs my shoulder and turns around. Instantly, the light changes. I see five dim-lit cabins and I hear a string orchestra. It's hard to resist the thought that this could be a romantic date, especially when she holds my arm and leads me gently towards one of the little booths.

I'm alone with her now. All of us are alone with an actor, but I hardly think of the others by now. I'm sitting here with her at a little white table with sentimental music in the background. She offers me a drink. Vodka. She introduces herself: her name is Maria. Is it her real name? Does that matter? She asks mine. I decide to be honest: I'm John.

I don't remember exactly how the conversation went, but it must've been something like this.

MARIA: So, tell me John, are you from here?

ME: I am, yes.

MARIA: What do you do here?

ME: You mean, here, in this performance?

MARIA: No, generally, what do you do in life?

Is she really interested in me? I wonder. Her questions are probably scripted, but what the hell.

ME: I work as a dentist.

MARIA: Do you enjoy it?

ME: Most of the time.

MARIA: What would you prefer to be doing?

ME: I've always wanted to be a novelist.

MARIA: A novelist? That's great. Do you write still?

ME: Occasionally.

I might be imagining things, but was that a sparkle in her eyes? She smiles. We [clink] glasses.

MARIA: To us, John.

We take a sip.

MARIA: Are you in a relationship?

ME: I'm not.

I'm lying. Why am I doing this? If my girlfriend was here, I'd probably tell the truth. Maria looks at me as if she can tell I'm not quite honest.

MARIA: When was the last time you were in a relationship?

ME: Not so long ago.

I might want to pose as a single man, but I definitely don't want to be branded a loner.

MARIA: How long did it last?

ME: Five years. Can I ask questions too?

MARIA: Sure.

ME: How many times a day do you do this?

MARIA: You're the fifth.

ME: I see.

That puts my feet back on the ground. Still, it's hard to resist the thought that no matter how many people she has seen today, I'd like her to remember me. She cuts my next question.

MARIA: Is that the longest relationship you've been in?

ME: Yes it is.

MARIA: Were you in love?

ME: Oh, yes, very much. We were high school sweethearts.

I feel I'm talking about my girlfriend. I'm getting worked up a little bit. She picks up on this. It could become embarrassing if she finds me out.

MARIA: What did you love about her?

ME: She was bright, funny, sexy. I loved being around her.

MARIA: Do you still love her now?

ME: She was my first girlfriend. I guess you never forget about that.

MARIA: Do you miss being in a relationship?

ME: I do actually.

MARIA: What do you miss?

She's really cornering me now. I know she's being flirtatious, but it works.

ME: You know, spending time together. The talks, the romance. The usual stuff.

MARIA: Do you miss the intimacy?

She's not slackening her grip. Not this one.

ME: Yes, of course.

MARIA: So I gather you're a romantic... Do you believe in love at first sight?

ME: I used to.

MARIA: Have you ever felt it?

ME: I did. But then again, it's easy to believe in that when you're 16 and you're in love or the first time.

MARIA: Do you believe in the first impression?

ME: I don't like to make superficial judgements about people.

MARIA: When the curtain went up and you saw me for the first time, did you have a first impression?

ME: I thought you were very pretty.
MARIA: Is that all?
ME: You stared at me. It was a bit awkward.
MARIA: I had an impression of you. Can I tell you what it was?
ME: Sure.

I hope she's not going to say that I look like a married man.

MARIA: I thought you were very neat. You had very kind eyes. And you looked like you have a great sense of humour. Am I right about that?
ME: You're pretty close.
MARIA: If I asked someone close to you to describe you... someone that likes you, your friends, your family... what would they say about you?
ME: Let me think... I don't want to boast...
MARIA: that's ok...
ME: all right... then they'd say I'm reliable, I work very hard, maybe too hard, and... that I'm opinionated
MARIA: Do you think that's true?
ME: I can see why they would say that
MARIA: And if I were to ask your ex?
ME: She'd say I cannot set my priorities.

Now this was really about my ex. Didn't need to think for a second.

MARIA: Is there something you wish they would notice more about you?

Time to crack a joke.

ME: My talent.
MARIA: Your talent?

We laugh and toast each other.

MARIA: Are you the sort of friend people turn to if they're down?
ME: Depends who it is. I'm afraid I'm not a brilliant adviser.
MARIA: How would you cheer them up?
ME: With a drink? A good hug if they need it?
MARIA: What's the most romantic thing you have done for someone?

Do I really want to tell this? I'm at risk of total ridiculousness. Let's hope she finds it cute.

ME: It's quite silly actually.
MARIA: Tell me.
ME: I once brought my girlfriend to a window, blindfolded. We were staying at my aunt's country house, beautiful setting with trees and bushes and so on. In summertime. I asked her to stay there and wait. Then I went downstairs and sang this really cheesy ballad for her. We were a bit drunk and at first we were laughing our heads off, but I went on. And it became really serious, somehow. I think she was impressed I knew the whole song by heart.

I realize I'm not lying to her anymore, in spite of my initial deceit.

MARIA: Are you spontaneous?

ME: I'd love to be, but I guess I'm not.

MARIA: What was the most spontaneous thing you did this year?

ME: Buying a flatscreen TV. But that's more impulsive than spontaneous.

I almost added that I bought it for my girlfriend. Luckily I didn't.

MARIA: What do you find beautiful in a woman? What attracts you to a woman?

Is she making her final move?

ME: The fact that you're different? That I can't grasp you?

MARIA: Can I hold your hands?

I let her. It's the first time we touch. I mean really touch apart from the handshake.

Maria: Now close your eyes for me.

Now imagine that we are somewhere away from here.

It can be anywhere you like but somewhere really special. Special to you.

I close my eyes.

MARIA: Where are we?

ME: I've mentioned it before, at my aunt's country house.

MARIA: Can you describe it to me?

ME: It looks really old, very British.

There's a huge garden, with flowers, a little pond.

MARIA: Are we sitting?

ME: yes, we're sitting in the grass.

MARIA: Are we close to each other?

I'm starting to imagine the scene very vividly.

ME: yes.

MARIA: Are we alone?

ME: yes.

MARIA: Is there someone you wish was here?

ME: Can't think of anyone.

Suddenly, in my mind's eye, my girlfriend is in the scene. I erase her.

MARIA: What are we doing here?

ME: just sitting, talking.

You're eating a piece of fruit... an apricot or something.

MARIA: Will we do this for a while or do you have other plans for us?

ME: we could go swimming in the pond

MARIA: What is the mood between us?

ME: peaceful.

MARIA: Is it romantic?

I hesitate. What will she do if I say yes? I'm not comfortable enough, so I say

ME: no.
MARIA: Are we happy here?
ME: we are.
MARIA: John, open your eyes.

I open my eyes. I'm back in this little cabin, facing Maria. I have just imagined her naked swimming in my aunt's pond. I'm blushing and hoping she doesn't notice.

MARIA: Do you like me?
ME: you're very nice
MARIA: Do you think we could be friends?
ME: why not?
MARIA: good friends?
ME: sure.

We toast to friendship.

She tells me it's time to go. They're waiting for us.

I turn my head.

There's a circle of chairs outside the cabin. It wasn't there before. All the chairs are taken, except two.

Of course, there's the others. I almost forgot about them.

Something's coming. Undoubtedly.

2.

Maria pushes our chairs together. They look like a little bench.

We're the only ones who sit so closely together.

The light in the cabins fades away, the music stops. The mood is a lot chillier, suddenly.

Everybody looks at each other. Tense. One woman is smiling, the one who was giggling in the line-up. The guy who got the tall girl looks flushed.

The actress in the black, pearl-stitched dress takes the floor.

'I'm Sophie and this is Martin.'

'Hello, Martin', the other actors say in unison.

Now it's my turn. Maria introduces me to the gathering.

Next, I get to know the names of Kristof and Emma, Joeri and Janice, Aurélie and...

She doesn't need to know his name, she says.

We laugh, the flushed guy – her 'partner' – looks at her with a smirk.

Sophie continues the sequence.

'The positive points about Martin are... he's very passionate about his job, we have the same artistic interests and he has a steady income.'

Well done, Martin, I think, wondering what Maria will say about me.

'John is a hard-working, reliable man with strong opinions. But there's also a romantic side to him. He doesn't mind serenading a girl in the old-fashioned way, and I like that.'

I feel a little embarrassed, especially because Maria is giving me a killer smile. It's true what she said, undoubtedly, I've told her all that. But still...

There isn't much time to brood, though.

Kristof explains that he and Emma love South-America, preferably Patagonia, that they have the same craving for adventure and that they both play the guitar, albeit not very well. But they can make fun of each other without hard feelings.

Emma looks down. She obviously likes Kristof. I understand how she feels right now.

So far, we've all been treated kindly, I think by myself.

Until Joeri breaks the pattern.

'Janice has wished her sister-in-law dead.'

The woman is taken aback. Everybody shuffles uncomfortably on their chairs.

Nothing more is said about Janice. I'm glad I'm not in her place.

Aurélie ends the round by stating that she's beautiful. The nameless, flushed guy next to her agrees. If that's all there is to be said, it must've been quite steamy inside that cabin, I reckon.

Maria takes me by surprise.

'John likes bright, funny, sexy women. And he expects a great deal of intimacy in a relationship, which I find very important too. He could come home with a flatscreen TV, by surprise. I find that very impressive.'

This is freaking me out. Does she know about my girlfriend? Why is she assuming the flatscreen was a present? I never told her...

Joeri is on a trip. Janice didn't only wish her sister-in-law dead, she's also anxious about being lonely and abandoned. She actually fears she'll die alone and her body will be found days afterwards by accident. I wonder how Joeri knows these things... Maria never asked me questions like that. It's getting tough for Janice, I almost feel like interfering.

Luckily, Sophie puts Joeri on his place.

'Another *positive* point about Martin, Joeri... is that he can take a good look at me. He can really stare at me for a long time.'

A little actors' dispute is starting. Joeri asks Sophie whether the staring was uncomfortable.

She refutes: 'No, I liked it.' I guess that's settled then.

Kristof talks about him and Emma watching the starry skies in the mountains, about how they were lying side by side, pointing out patterns. It even became romantic, he says. He kissed her and she kissed him back, although she felt strange afterwards.

Aurélie and Mr. Nameless touched each other in a dark space.

'We didn't kiss or touch', says Maria. 'We visited the country house of John's aunt, a very special place. We had a walk in the garden there, sat down in the grass. I was eating an apricot and then we talked about having a swim in the pond. So I got naked and jumped into it. He was watching me. It was very peaceful.'

I feel so sleazy now. She guessed my phantasy and threw it back into my face. I'm surprised about how little I could hide. Maybe she guessed about my girlfriend as well. I feel like I'm going to be presented with the bill soon.

Sophie takes the lead again: 'That's all very well, but maybe it's time to talk about the negative points, now?'

'I think Joeri has started already.'

Joeri asks Janice whether he's been too negative towards her.

Janice nods. Joeri takes it in.

'Well, Martin doesn't have enough confidence. He doesn't take care of his body and he's afraid to take important steps in his life.' Sophie looks at her partner in a slightly apologizing way. But he agrees with what she said.

'I don't have any negative points.' The speaker is Aurélie. 'He is very gentle, very respectful and he knows how to enjoy the sensuality of silence.'

Kristof does have one negative point about Emma. 'She leaves her dirty underwear around the house.' We laugh about this trivial confidentiality. 'But I don't mind.'

It's Joeri's turn again. 'Well, I think Janice should not give up too easily. She has got plenty of things going for her, but the past sometimes overwhelms her too much. And honestly, I could learn one or two things from her.' Janice seems relieved.

I expect Maria to say something negative about me now, but she doesn't. 'I don't know what happened between the two of you, Joeri and Janice, but we just had a good time.' Immediately, the crew agrees.

'Yes I can see it', Sophie comments. Aurélie points out that we have the same body language. I realize that Maria shrewdly copied my posture.

'It wouldn't last, though.' Joeri has to spoil it again. I'm starting to get annoyed with this guy. 'I'm not sure if you're the kind of guy who could handle Maria.'

'Probably not', I admit. It's an impulsive response, mainly to keep on the safe side. Maria reassures me. 'He's just being negative, that's all.'

I wonder why I'm defending my 'couple'. Is it this easy to get people involved? The game is getting a grip on me. Would I be able to handle a girl like Maria? For a split second, I'm considering the question. Because, strangely enough, it's a valid question – no matter how artificial the context. I'm thinking about my girlfriend, my secret girlfriend, in these surroundings. My doing, I've decided to lie about my relationship status.

'We could have something together', says Aurélie, 'because we don't need words to understand each other.'

'And what about you, Joeri?' Sophie asks.

'Well I was quite surprised that Janice took me to a nude beach on the coast of Greece. We were dancing, drinking, flirting. She didn't mind showing her body to me and she didn't seem guarded at all, so I guess she underestimates her ability to open up and get close to people, even strangers...'

‘Well, I wasn’t very surprised by the scenario of the phantasy’, Sophie explains. ‘We went to a beach... not a nude beach, it was all very plain and typical. And I went to a thousand beaches before, so I was a bit disappointed....’

Maria interrupts her and addresses Martin: ‘So far we know very well what Sophie thinks about you, but what do you think about Sophie?’

Martin seems startled. It’s the first time we, the audience members, are asked to express what we think. ‘Well, she’s definitely a beautiful woman... a bit intense maybe but she seems very engaged in what she does.’

Maria pushes it further: ‘If you had to give her a score... say, out of ten, how much would you give her?’

Martin hesitates whether he wants to score someone. ‘I’d give her a nine. Definitely.’

Aurélié wants to know how much Sophie would score Martin. ‘I have to give him an eight’, Sophie replies. Martin seems slightly disappointed.

Kristof reassures Emma that he won’t give a score, but maybe she’d like him to say what he thinks about her? Emma agrees. Instead of speaking up right away, he takes her out of the circle and puts her in a corner of the space, where they have a private chat. Then he returns, beckoning us all to listen. He whispers that she’s a very intriguing, charming girl, a bit shy, but definitely worth getting to know better. However, there’s something going on between them and he’s not sure whether she’ll take a risk. Emma returns to the circle, apparently responding to Kristof’s sign. As soon as she’s seated, Kristof leaves. Now Emma is asked to say what she thinks about him. ‘He’s very engaging, very handsome’, she says hesitantly. ‘Would you like to get to know him better?’ Joeri asks. ‘Yes, but he’s very overwhelming.’ ‘Would you be able to trust him?’ ‘Yes, he seems nice. And honest. But I don’t know if he’s really like that.’

I sympathize with Emma. I’ve had the same thing going on with Maria.

Kristof returns to the circle. Now Joeri turns towards Janice. He asks if he can give her a hug. He gets permission. They hug. Janice is visibly touched.

I feel the performance is moving towards an end point. Only me and the guy who’s with Aurélié haven’t been asked for a response. I wonder who’s going to be first. It’s me.

‘John, do we have a click? A connection?’ Maria asks.

I don’t know what she means. She seems intent on doing something, although I cannot figure out what.

I stammer, ‘Yes’.

Sophie pushes it. ‘John, you don’t have to say yes to indulge Maria. If there’s a click, I’d like to see it.’

Aurélié wants to see it too.

Maria comes closer to me. I’m taken off guard. She kisses me. I kiss her back.

'John is single', she announces to the circle.

I feel like a liar and a cheater. Why did I do all this? I cannot blame Maria entirely, nor can I blame the game. I'm equally responsible. I'm afraid of what will go through my head when I get out.

Aurélié turns towards her partner. She bares her breasts.

'Is this what you wanted to see?'

He's shocked, but also delighted.

'They're very beautiful', he says. 'I could've done with your eyes, but this is a nice surprise.'

Aurélié puts her clothes back on. She gets up, stands in the middle of the circle.

She takes her partner's hand and invites him to join her.

Music starts. The same sentimental, corny music we've been listening to during our rendezvous.

The couple dances, slowly. We are all watching them.

Maria invites me to dance. Everybody else is invited.

3.

We dance, Maria and me. She chats with me. Casually.

I'm trying not to think of the kiss we shared, although I'd love to kiss her again.

But somehow, she's not encouraging me anymore. I feel teased. This is clearly a construct, a roleplay, a very invasive form of performance.

She knows what I like about girls, about my most romantic moment with my girlfriend, about my bad habits and weaknesses. She likes me, or rather: she made me believe she does.

I can't really tell the difference between this and real life.

Still, I've lied to her and she has presented me with a very thrilling image of herself.

Then she asks for my address.

'My real address?' I ask.

'Your home address.'

I refuse. What if she drops by? How will I explain? What if she writes me a letter?

What will my girlfriend say? I know I'm overreacting but you can never be sure.

She directs me towards the exit. The same curtain where we first met.

I see the others are writing down their addresses on little papers.

Janice, Martin, Emma and the nameless guy.

Maybe I'm making a mistake by not giving my address, tell Maria I'd like to write it down anyway.

She puts me back on my mark and smiles. 'Too late', she says.

One by one, the others join us.

We're back in a line-up.

But it feels different. More familiar.

We kiss goodbye. The curtain drops.

That was it. I feel left behind.

But I'm not alone.

We're all looking at each other, me, Emma, Janice, Martin and the guy who now introduces himself as David. We're all a bit relieved but at the same time exhilarated.

We decide to have a drink together.

I hear that Aurélie hasn't spoken a word to David. She just touched him, caressed his hands, let him feel the back of her neck. They drank cointreau, apparently. Janice had port and she was questioned about her greatest fears, her failed relationships, her nightmares. Emma doesn't say much but I can tell her mind is wandering.

We all agree they've cunningly tricked us into something, but we cannot bring ourselves to regret it. It was an intense experience.

4.

I hear that days after the performance, some people received handwritten letters from the actors. I haven't heard details about the content, but apparently people were very pleased with them. I figure out I could've received a letter from Maria, if I had given her my address immediately. What would she have written? It's funny, but I secretly hope that she hasn't forgotten about me. That I left a mark. I know it was a show, a script... and that I lied my way through it. But somewhere between the lines, something about it was true. More true than anything I could've come up with.

Notes

Introduction

1. The official trailer for this piece is available under 'Purcarete Faust' on, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXU78K6XSwg> (accessed 10 October 2011).
2. Cooper, Neil, 'Silviu Purcărete's "Faust"', *The List*, 13 July 2009, <http://edinburghfestival.list.co.uk/article/18718-silviu-purcарetes-faust/> (accessed 10 October 2011).
3. Trueman, Matt, 'Going Back Inside: Internal Revisited', 6 September 2009, <http://carouseloffantasies.blogspot.com/2009/09/going-back-inside-internal-revisited.html> (accessed 10 October 2011).
4. Fisher, Mark, 'Theatre reviews: *Internal / Barflies / The Hotel / Luck / Nic Green's Trilogy / Blondes / The School For Scandal*', *Edinburgh Festivals*, <http://www.edinburgh-festivals.com/viewreview.aspx?id=471> (accessed 10 October 2011).
5. Radosavljević, Duška, 'Guest Post – Duška Radosavljević on *Internal*', <http://postcardsgods.blogspot.com/2009/09/guest-post-duska-radosavljevic-on.html> (accessed 10 October 2011), and Radosavljević, Duška, 'A Reflection on *Internal*', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 20(2), 2010: 249–51.
6. Trueman, 'Going Back Inside: Internal Revisited'.
7. Crouch, Tim 'An Article by Tim Crouch', <http://www.newsfromnowhere.net/shows/the-author/the-author.html> (accessed 10 October 2011).
8. The stage direction in the playscript reads: 'An audience member in the middle of a block gets up and leaves. They are helped to leave by an usher' (Crouch, 2009: 21).
9. The 2007 Arts Council of England Theatre Policy references 'new work' instead of 'new writing' in recognition of the emergence of work in alternative spaces. See Dunton et al. (2009).
10. Wickham's impressive achievements are described in his obituary published in *The Independent* on 11 February 2004: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-glynn-wickham-549424.html> (accessed 15 October 2011).
11. 'Overview', The Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Art website, <http://www.hfs-berlin.de/english/> (accessed 24 October 2011). Please note that the dates given in other available sources do not correspond with the ones given on the Academy website itself which I am using here.
12. I am informed by Peter Boenisch at the time of writing that Thomas Ostermeier teaches Directing at the school (email correspondence 24 October 2011).
13. Peter Boenisch, email correspondence 24 October 2011.
14. 'Directing' page of the Ernst Busch Academy website <http://www.hfs-berlin.de/english/directing/> (accessed 24 October 2011).
15. 'One Year Diploma Courses' page on LAMDA website, <http://www.lamda.org.uk/drama/courses/1pg.htm> (accessed 24 October 2010).
16. 'Directing' on Yale School of Drama website, <http://drama.yale.edu/admissions/directing.html> (accessed 24 October 2010).
17. 'Obituaries', *The Independent*, 11 February 2004.

18. Information from: <http://gitisacting.com/acting-history.htm> (accessed 17 October 2011).
19. Steve Nicholson's comprehensive research into British censorship seems to suggest that improvising away from the script was rarely attempted, although Joan Littlewood and members of her company appeared in court for adding a scene to *You Won't Always Be on Top* after the show's opening. (Nicholson, Steve (2011) *The Censorship of British Drama 1900–1968*, Vol. 3, Exeter: University of Exeter Press). It would be interesting to consider why there was such a big discrepancy between the Eastern and the Western reaction to the censor, though I do suspect that this was something to do with culture-specific attitudes towards the role of the director in the process of staging the text.
20. A famous example of this in Yugoslavia was the actor Zoran Radmilović. Dennis Barnett in his PhD thesis *The Worlds of Dusan Kovacevic: An Intersection of Dissident Texts* (University of Washington, 1998) describes a well-known and very popular 'Library Member' lazzi developed by Radmilović while playing the lead in Kovacević's play *Radovan III* which was eventually recorded in 1983 and released on video.
21. By 2006 Jon McKenzie was prompted to respond to a hypothetical accusation that anglophone Performance Studies might be imperialist. Although he vehemently denied that this was part of the Performance Studies scholars' intent, he did concede the possibility that the 'effect' of the work could be seen as such owing to 'the history of British and American imperialisms' (2006: 7).
22. 'I speak of "theatre performances"', thus combining two terms that for a long time have been (and sometimes still are) considered to be opposites, even antagonists. I choose to do so speaking from a theatre practice where this opposition is no longer productive. On the contrary, reiterating this opposition seems to get in the way of understanding how, in much theatre of the past decades, the influences of performance have been incorporated to a point where this has changed the whole notion of theatre' (Bleeker 2008: 8).
23. For more about this, see Radosavljević, Duška (2012a) 'Shared Utopias? Alan Lyddiard, Lev Dodin and the Northern Stage Ensemble', in Pitches, Jonathan, ed., *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, London and New York: Routledge; Radosavljević, Duška (2009) 'The Need to Keep Moving: Remarks on the Place of a Dramaturg in 21st Century England', *Performance Research: 'On Dramaturgy'* 14(3), September: 45–51; Radosavljević, Duška (2007) 'Translating the City: A Community Theatre Version of Wenders' *Wings of Desire* in Newcastle upon Tyne', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 1(1): 57–70.
24. Čale Feldman, Lada and Blažević, Marin (2010) 'Translate, or Else: Marking the Glocal Troubles of Performance Research in Croatia', in McKenzie, Jon, Roms, Heike and Wee, C.J. W.-L., *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research*, London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 168–87.
25. This is reiterated by Eugenio Barba too: 'I defined "dramaturgy" according to its etymology: *drama-ergon*, the work of the actions' (2010: 8).
26. See Radosavljević, Duška (2013) *The Contemporary Ensemble: Interviews with Theatre-Makers* (Abingdon: Routledge).
27. 'About news from nowhere', <http://www.newsfromnowhere.net/about/about-the-company.html> (accessed 24 October 2011). Crouch has in the meantime renamed the enterprise as Tim Crouch Theatre – <http://www.timcrouchtheatre.co.uk/>.
28. Defined in greater detail in Radosavljević, *The Contemporary Ensemble*.

1 Staging a Play: The Problem of Page and Stage

1. If we recall the findings of Shannon Jackson (2001, 2004), the 1920s in the United States would have been the time when the subject of Theatre Studies in universities was only just being set up, so naturally the only available critique came from the field of literature, to which the work of Shakespeare and other theatre writers was assigned. Meanwhile, in Moscow, a course for theatre critics was established at GITIS in 1931. Although there are also ideological problems attached to the field of theatre criticism in the Soviet Union, it is interesting that the discipline of theatre criticism was instituted as separate from literature, and taught in a conservatoire. Even despite these alternative educational routes, it is not uncommon still today, in both East and West, for a theatre critic to persist in favouring the quality and the treatment of the text over the achievements of the performance as a whole. (This problem will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapters.)
2. Some personal testimonies from Kent staff who visited MHAT are available on the project website: <http://www.kent.ac.uk/arts/drama/moscow/index.html>.
3. See Allain, Paul (2012) *Andrei Droznin's Physical Actor Training*, Routledge Taylor & Francis DVD and Booklet.
4. Latour, too, is technically an anthropologist. He is particularly well known for developing the discipline of Science and Technology Studies and in his book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) he views the history of modernity through epistemological processes.
5. Bryant, Levi R. (2009) 'Of Translation, Ontological Realism, and Epistemological Anti-Realism', *Larval Subjects Blog*, 18 November 2009, <http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2009/11/18/of-translation-ontological-realism-and-epistemological-anti-realism/>.
6. Assertions have been made that Stanislavsky's System could be seen as phenomenological in its nature – such as Mark Fortier: 'What might be called phenomenological concerns figure prominently in the work of Constantin Stanislavski, whose autobiographical *My Life in Art* reveals a phenomenological bent in its very title' (1997: 32). However, the phenomenological view of reality had a very limited reach on an official ideological level within the Marxist materialist context of Russia, in which the Stanislavskian System originally evolved.
7. 'Međutnost dramaturgije – od Batušićeva "redateljja-teoretičara" do Gevelle-dramaturga' ('The In-Betweenness of dramaturgy – from Batušić's "director-theoretician" to Gavella-dramaturg'), in Sibila Petlevski, Boris Senker i Marin Blažević, eds., *Trajnost čina – zbornik u čast Nikoli Batušiću*, Zagreb: Hrvatski centar ITI. Also in Cale Feldman, Lada and Blažević, Marin 'Translate, or Else: Marking the Glocal Troubles of Performance Research in Croatia', in McKenzie, Jon, Roms, Heike and Wee, C.J. W.-L., eds (2010), *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research* (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 168–87.
8. 'The first impressions relate to the mood which the play creates for the reader, its basic atmosphere: bright or dark, demure or passionate, kind and gentle or sharp, strict and belligerent, elevated or banal, dramatic or lyrical, mysterious or explicit – those are the impressions relating to atmosphere. Second impressions relate to the weight and depth of the work: heavy, thoughtful or facile, ornamental, flighty and so on. Some impressions can take the form of drawings or colours: jagged, mosaic-like, mottled, harmonious...' (Klajn, Section I, 'The Basic Idea', no page; my translation). Klajn's advice here is not dissimilar to the kind of advice

given by Elinor Fuchs to student dramaturgs in 'EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play', *Theater* 34(2) Summer 2004: 4–9.

9. These are the terms absorbed from Russian Formalism via the Prague School. The distinction between 'story' and 'plot' continues to inform the teaching of playwriting in the United Kingdom in the twenty-first century. In this context, David Edgar notes: '[An] ambition of the Russian formalists and the Prague School was to find underlying patterns in narrative fiction. Their crucial distinction (one that now seems utterly commonplace) is between what they called the story (or *fabula*), the bare chronological succession of events drawn on in a fiction; and plot (or *sjuzet*), the events as they are ordered and connected' (Edgar 2009: 18, original emphasis).
10. Here I am also confronted with the difficulty of translating the original word 'predstava' which does not have a precise equivalent in either 'production' or 'show' – both of which are terms that are more difficult to imbue with the value of a 'work of art' than seems to be the case in Serbian. The word 'predstava' can also be translated as a 'mental image', although its secondary meaning as 'show' is also in common use.
11. Amusingly, Western productions are seen as having 'passive' ideas of the production, due to their lack of political engagement.
12. By distinction 'performance' according to Pavis is 'all that is made visible or audible on stage, but not yet perceived or described as a system of meaning or as a pertinent relationship of signifying stage systems' (1992: 25). In addition, '*mise en scène* as a structural system exists only when received and reconstructed by a spectator from the production' (1992: 25).
13. Sellent, Joan (2012) 'El traductor Joan Sellent adreça una carta a Edward Albee', 15 June 2012, <http://www.nuvol.com/critica/el-traductor-joan-sellent-adreca-una-carta-a-edward-albee/> (accessed 21 June 2012).
14. Dan Rebellato argues that theatrical representation is in its nature metaphorical, so 'performances can be metaphors for a number of things: the fictional world, the world itself (as in a docudrama that asks us to look at the world in a new way), or sometimes simply the play', but metaphorical representation is not bound by the notion of 'resemblance', thus the staging of a play does not necessitate a literal representation of the content of the play as conceived by a playwright (Rebellato 2009: 25).
15. Freedman, John (2011) 'Fifteen Productions to Remember 2001–2010', *The Moscow Times Blog*, 16 January, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/blogs/432775/post/15-productions-to-remember-2001-2010/433227.html> (accessed 12 August 2011).
16. Perkins, Shari (no date) 'Yuri Butusov's Richard III at the Satirikon', *Dramatic Impulse Blog*, <http://dramaticimpulse.wordpress.com/2009/05/12/yuri-butusovs-richard-iii-at-the-satirikon/> (accessed 12 August 2011).
17. Freedman, John (2004) 'The Satirikon's Yuri Butusov imagines *Richard III* as a cartoon fantasy, a tragifarce of blood and betrayal that would be laughable were it not so real', *The Moscow Times*, 5 March 2004, www.micocci.com/touring/docs/RICHARD_III_MoscowTimesReview.doc (accessed 12 August 2011). The tendency to 'bring minor characters into the spotlight' is also noted by the Norwegian dramaturg Njål Mjøs in his discussion of Butusov's considerable Shakespearean oeuvre which at the time also included *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, and more recently *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*. Mjøs, Njål (2007) 'Director Yuri Butusov's Shakespeare Frenzy', MHAT School website, <http://mhatschool.theatre.ru/en/international/mosjournal2007/chapter2/1/> (accessed 12 August 2011).
18. This was shared in a personal conversation, off-camera, rather than in the formal interview.

19. Although Butusov does not refer directly to Esslin, it is worth noting that Esslin's work *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) as well as Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1962/1964) both offer a similar perspective.
20. Mjøs, 'Director Yuri Butusov's Shakespeare Frenzy'.
21. Derevo changed base several times in the early 1990s – Prague, Florence, Amsterdam – and in 1995 they settled in Dresden, where they were given a disused ammunitions factory to turn into a rehearsal space.
22. Jane Boston's Introduction to Turner, Clifford J. (1950/2007) *Voice and Speech in the Theatre*, ed. Jane Boston (London: Methuen Drama) even attributes twentieth-century voice theory as a whole to Aikin.
23. Steven Berkoff uses a similar method in his work with the chorus, which often features in his productions. Jon Foley Sherman traces this kind of work to the influence of Lecoq on Berkoff, and further still to Expressionism as a movement: 'Berkoff's work is thus shot through with an Expressionist streak, requiring actors to embody interior states and environments against which the protagonist struggles' (2010: 234).
24. There was a further article from voice coach Jane Boston in 1997 seeking to find a middle ground: Boston, Jane (1997) 'Voice: the Practitioners, their Practices, and their Critics', *New Theatre Quarterly* 13: 248–54.
25. Flower was a businessman from Stratford-upon-Avon, descended from a family of brewers who had bequeathed their land to build the Memorial Theatre in Stratford in 1879. He was also the fourth member of the family to hold the position of the chair of the board of directors for the theatre 'in an unbroken line' (Chambers 2004: 5). It was in Moscow that Hall and Flower, 'the Labour meritocrat and the philanthropic Tory businessman', established their compatibilities and went on to form what Chambers would call 'one of the most important [partnerships] in post-war British theatre' (2004: 8). Three years later the company would receive the royal charter, and the name that it has today.
26. Paul Edmondson of the Birthplace Trust describes one such event – the annual RSC Summer School, comprising a group of enthusiasts that has met under this name for decades – in his blog piece 'Not what we ought to say about the RSC?', *Blogging Shakespeare*, 23 August 2010, <http://bloggingshakespeare.com/not-what-we-ought-to-say-about-the-r-s-c> (accessed 22 November 2011).
27. *Troilus and Cressida Programme*, RSC, 2012.
28. Brantley, Ben (2007) 'Looks it not like the King? Well, more like Burton', *New York Times*, 1 November 2007, <http://theater.nytimes.com/2007/11/01/theater/reviews/01haml.html>.
29. Billington, Michael (2012) 'Troilus and Cressida – review', *The Guardian*, 9 August 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/aug/09/troilus-and-cressida-review?newsfeed=true>.
30. One notable exception in the Comments section is the posting by John Wyver, who draws attention to his own more enlightened take on the evening here: <http://www.illuminationsmedia.co.uk/2012/08/war-and-lechery/>.
31. Giurgea, Adrian (2009) 'When Designer and Actor Are One', *American Theatre*, 15 January, http://krymov.org/lab/about/american_theatre/.

2 From Devising to Adaptation

1. Some evidence available here: <http://www.andypryke.com/pub/BlogSeptember2006> (accessed 23 May 2012).

2. Billington, Michael (2006) *Cymbeline*, *The Guardian*, 22 September 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2006/sep/22/theatre1> (accessed 23 May 2012).
3. Cavendish, Dominic (2006) 'A shot in the arm from the junkie king', *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 September, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3655572/A-shot-in-the-arm-from-the-junkie-king.html> (accessed 23 May 2012); and Taylor, Paul (2006) 'Perverts, Porn and Parkas', *The Independent*, 27 September, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/reviews/on-insomnia-and-midnight-theatre-upstairs-royal-court-londonbr-cymbeline-swan-theatre-stratford-417734.html?printService=print> (accessed 23 May 2012).
4. Spencer, Charles (2007) 'Flip and hip, but oh, the impertinence of it', *The Telegraph*, 22 January, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3662703/Flip-and-hip-but-oh-the-impertinence-of-it.html> (accessed 14 March 2013).
5. Cavendish, 'A shot in the arm from the junkie king'.
6. Allfree, Claire (2007) 'Metro, 23.01.07', in *Theatre Record*, 1–28 January: 52.
7. Gardner, Lyn (2007) 'Cymbeline', *The Guardian*, 22 January, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2007/jan/22/theatre1> (accessed 23 May 2012).
8. Hemming, Sarah (2007) 'Cymbeline, Lyric Theatre, London', *The Financial Times*, 22 January, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/62237dde-aa46-11db-83b0-0000779e2340.html#axzz1viwb2mlr> (accessed 23 May 2012).
9. See Hytner, Nicholas (2007) 'What I really think about theatre critics', *The Observer*, 03 June, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2007/jun/03/whatreallythinkaboutthea> (accessed 23 May 2012).
10. Cavendish, 'A shot in the arm from the junkie king'.
11. I am informed by correspondence with German colleagues Peter Boenisch, Katharina Keim and Hans-Thies Lehmann that the French term is also used in the German context.
12. In April 2012, the Prague Quadrennial hosted a symposium on Devised Dramaturgy where the Czech expression 'autorsko divadlo' stood for the term 'devising' in English. Similarly, actor/director Boris Bakal of Shadow Casters, discussed in Chapter 5 of this book, refers to some of his works as 'autorski radovi' ('authorial works'). The expression seems to indicate that the artist who is not a writer is in these cases behaving as an author.
13. Many thanks to Peter Boenisch for pointing this out.
14. Tony Jackson (1980/1993), however, traces the beginnings of 'theatre in education' to 1965.
15. Jen Harvie notes that in the United Kingdom, 'censorship legally enhanced the primacy of the written script and made devised and improvised theatre nearly impossible to stage' (2005: 116).
16. Meanwhile, in 2007, critic and founder member of Cartoon de Salvo, Brian Logan speculated on the possibility that 'the theatre establishment [felt] threatened in some way by the devised work', citing the example of the devising company Filter being asked by the National Theatre to apply their devising method to a play. Logan, Brian (2007) 'Is "devised" theatre always a case of too many cooks?', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*, 12 March, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2007/mar/12/isdevisedtheatrealwaysaca> (accessed 24 May 2012).
17. Field, Andy (2008) 'The divide in devised theatre', *The Guardian Theater Blog*, 22 January, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2008/jan/22/the-divide-in-devised-theatre> (accessed 24 May 2012).
18. 'By the end of the century, however, collaboration was firmly positioned as artistic activity alone: it was known that the Arts Council favoured collaborative

projects for financial support. Collaboration slides from being an organizational issue into being a funding category' (Shepherd 2009: 78–9).

19. Incidentally, this was also a feature of Stalinist politics.
20. Morrell, Fiona (2011) 'Theatre in education needs to get back to basics', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*, 13 April 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2011/apr/13/theatre-education-youth-basics#start-of-comments> (accessed 22 May 2012).
21. Cope, Richard A. (no date) 'A Brief History of Theatre in Education', <http://www.beyondthedoor.co.uk/tie2.htm> (accessed 22 May 2012).
22. Turner, Oliver (2010) 'A History of Theatre in Education at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry', www.belgrade.co.uk/files/downloads/192/TIE+education+pack.pdf (accessed 14 December 2012).
23. Frantic Assembly increasingly works with playwrights, while DV8 has created two verbatim pieces since 2007.
24. As already demonstrated by Michael Bristol: 'The text versus performance debate, like so many other professional disputes, is in fact a quarrel over precedence and the allocation of authority' (in Worthen 1997: 25).
25. '[P]oetry and painting, words and images, aural and graphic elements of words, and pictorial and symbolic elements of pictures are both/and figures rather than either/or of categorical differentiation or the neither/nor of deconstructive *différence*' (Elliott 2003: 215).
26. 'Figuratively', I like to think of this idea as Velázquez inside *Las Meninas*, being looked at by Picasso, or by Michel Foucault, by Joel-Peter Witkin, or by Eve Sussman.
27. 'I quite liked the fact that they offered me a play I'd never heard of, never read and nobody else had', Emma Rice confessed to Birmingham *Metro* just a few days before the show opened in Stratford upon Avon. Lukowsky, Andrzej (2006) 'It's a licence to thrill', *Metro* (Birmingham), 19 September: 25.
28. Tusa, John (no date), 'Transcript of the *John Tusa Interview* with the Canadian director and playwright Robert Lepage', BBC Radio 3, http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/lepage_transcript.shtml (accessed 24 May 2012).
29. This interview is also available in Radosavljević (2013) *The Contemporary Ensemble: Interviews with Theatre-Makers* (London: Routledge).
30. Costa, Maddy (2008) 'Troupe Therapy', *The Guardian*, 1 December 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2008/dec/01/kneehigh-theatre-cornwall-maddy-costa> (accessed 23 May 2012).
31. Paul Allain (1998) has written extensively about Gardzienice, having himself trained with the company in the early 1990s alongside fellow Britons Katie Mitchell and Emma Rice.
32. According to Ian Morgan, who worked with Grotowski in Pontadera, 'Grotowski never seemed to hunt disciples, he encouraged excellent rebellion' (Morgan in Radosavljević 2013: 122).
33. It is interesting that Barba too uses a biological metaphor: 'It was the biologist's way of thinking which helped me to understand my own work. [...] For me, the performance too was a living organism and I had to distinguish not only its parts, but also its levels of organization and, later, their mutual relationships. "Dramaturgy", then was a term similar to "anatomy". It was a practical way of working not only on the organism in its totality, but on its different organs and layers.' (2010: 9).
34. Tompa wished to literally quote lines from *Waiting for Godot*, which the Beckett estate would never have allowed. He therefore found a way of referencing the work non-verbally, by having the two removal men in Ionesco's play engaged

- in some Beckettian hat swapping. Another idea was to have the main character quote lines from the Bible, which, after some deliberation, we replaced with Calderón's *Life is a Dream*, as the main character was played by a Spanish actor, who could actually quote the original text in Spanish, therefore focusing on the form rather than the meaning of that gesture.
35. Marmion, Patrick (2007) 'What's On in London, 01.02.07', in *Theatre Record*, 1–28 January: 52.
 36. Elliott too proposes that 'looking glass analogies turn negation and absence into a surplus presence': 'adaptation under looking-glass analogies is excess rather than reduction' (Elliott 2003: 215). This presumably functions in reverse too, as when Cavendish notes that '[b]y overegging [the play's] excesses, Kneehigh have laid hands on [its] unruly heart'. In this respect, Beatrix Hesse's analysis of successful screen-to-stage adaptations might be useful too, especially in that she isolates one of their key ingredients to be 'surplus value' (such as live singing and dancing).
 37. Personal notes from 2005 ISTA.
 38. In the context of adaptation, ERS are significant as they deploy a principle similar to the one being used by Lev Dodin, of working on prose directly. The key difference is that they do not dramatize the text, but 'display' it in its original prose form instead.
 39. Manuscript of Collins, John (2013) 'Elevator Repair Service and the Wooster Group: Ensembles Surviving Themselves', in John Britton, ed., *Encountering Ensemble* (London: Methuen).
 40. Helen Freshwater (in Holdsworth and Luckhurst 2008) is sceptical of the genuineness of McBurney's downplaying of his authority, suspecting that he acts from a position of political correctness associated with the 1960s idea of devising as a democratic methodology. Despite the fact that she has considered numerous first-hand testimonies from McBurney, Freshwater appears to base her critical position on primarily theoretical conceptions of devising rather than the empirical evidence. However, the question that still remains is to what extent is the notion of authority bestowed upon someone (even if they are unwilling to take it)?

3 New Writing in the Twenty-First Century

1. Baluch, Laleyn (2010), 'New writing in subsidised theatre trebles over a decade', *The Stage*, 6 January.
2. Jordan, Richard (2010), 'New writing is on the increase', *The Stage*, 6 April.
3. Baluch, 'New writing in subsidised theatre trebles over a decade'.
4. Ulrich Broich provides the statistical information that in 1986–90 the classics comprised 11 per cent of the repertoire, post-war theatre 32 per cent, Ayckbourn 5 per cent, Shakespeare 6 per cent, children's theatre 8 per cent, musicals 12 per cent, adaptations 20 per cent and new work 7 per cent (2001: 209).
5. These documents included *Theatre Policy* (2000), *Theatre Review and Theatre Writing Strategy* (2003). See Dunton, Emma, Nelson, Roger and Shand, Hetty (2009) *New Writing in Theatre 2003–2008: An Assessment of New Writing Within Smaller Scale Theatre in England*, Arts Council, July 2009, p. 5.
6. I owe thanks to Jonathan Meth for providing a more sobering perspective on these statistics. But even if this considerable rise (42 per cent as opposed to 14 per cent of new plays) may be based on partial sampling and inconsistent framing, the increase in the emphasis on new writing in the 2000s was also discernable on the level of circumstantial evidence.
7. Ibid.

8. See Chisholm, Alex (2012), 'New Writing vs. New Work?' blog, <http://www.wyp.org.uk/about-us/our-blogs/new-writing/new-writing-vs-new-work/> (accessed 18 June 2012).
9. Chisholm, Alex (2012), 'The End of 'New Writing'', <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/the-end-of-new-writing/> (accessed 18 June 2012).
10. Coveney, Michael (2009) 'Brave new world: Theatre enjoys a renaissance as state-of-the-nation shine a light on modern Britain', *The Independent*, 30 July, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/brave-new-world-theatre-enjoys-a-renaissance-as-stateofthenation-dramas-shine-a-light-on-modern-britain-1764543.html> (accessed 20 June 2012).
11. De Jongh, Nicholas (2009) 'Cruel Cartoon Not Very Nice', *London Evening Standard*, 12 February, <http://www.standard.co.uk/arts/theatre/cruel-cartoon-not-very-nice-7412614.html> (accessed 20 June 2012).
12. For a more detailed analysis of *Blasted* as a play about the Balkans, see Radosavljević, Duška (2012) 'Sarah Kane's Illyria as the land of violent love: A Balkan reading of *Blasted*', *Contemporary Theatre Review* – themed issue 'South' 22(4): 499–511.
13. Kennedy, Fin (2012) 'The Start of Something Else?', *Exeunt* 25 June, <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/the-start-of-something-else/2/> (accessed 26 June 2012).
14. 'The gesture of negating traditional *mimesis* made by the playwrights of the last decade resembles only superficially Bertolt Brecht's fully self-conscious exposition of the basic tenets of his epic theatre as a negative of Aristotelian drama, or Ionesco's equally self-conscious gesture of calling *The Bald Primadonna* an "anti-play". Although the former (Brecht) unconditionally subordinated theatre to politics, while the latter (Ionesco) vigorously defended theatre's right to artistic autonomy, paradoxically both the Epic Theatre and the Theatre of the Absurd, although appearing radically to negate everything commonly regarded as a prototypical model of drama, in fact preserved the vitality of the very model. [...] Contemporary theatre texts refrain from engaging in this sort of a debate with the traditional model. At the most they can self-reflexively and parodically quote this model as one possible form of raw material for theatre' (Sugiera 2004: 21, original emphasis).
15. 'Nowadays, the basic structural principle of texts written for theatre increasingly often turns out to be their immanent theatricality, which is, however, no longer understood as a reflection upon theatre as a domain of artistic activity or as an extensive metaphor of human life, but rather as a means of inducing the audience to watch themselves as subjects which perceive, acquire knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition' (Sugiera 2004: 26).
16. Stephens, Simon (2011) 'Skydiving Blindfolded', http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5616:skydiving-blindfolded-impulsreferat-des-britischen-dramatikers-simon-stephens-zur-eroeffnung-des-stueckemarkts-beim-theatertreffen-2011&catid=101:debatte&Itemid=84 (accessed 26 June 2012).
17. Ibid.
18. I have written about this previously here: Radosavljević, Duška (2012a) 'Shared Utopias: Alan Lyddiard, Lev Dodin and the Northern Stage Ensemble', in Jonathan Pitches, ed., *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training* (London and New York: Routledge); Radosavljević, Duška (2009) 'The Need to Keep Moving: Remarks on the Place of a Dramaturg in 21st Century England', *Performance Research: 'On Dramaturgy'* 14(3); and

- Radosavljević, Duška (2007) 'Translating the City: A Community Theatre Version of Wenders' *Wings of Desire* in Newcastle upon Tyne', *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 1(1).
19. Chisholm, Alex (2012) 'The End of "New Writing"?', <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/the-end-of-new-writing/> (accessed 18 June 2012).
 20. Interestingly, however, Lyn Gardner has argued that Aristotelianism is a phallic dramatic structure, in Gardner, Lyn (2007) 'Why Are Experiments in Form a Female Trait?', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*, 15 March, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2007/mar/15/whyareexperimentsinformafemaletrait> (accessed 26 June 2012).
 21. Waters, Steve (2012) 'My Dirty Secret: I Like Devised Theatre', *The Guardian Blog*, 4 January, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/jan/04/devised-theatre-secret-diary-playwright> (accessed 21 June 2012).
 22. Baluch, Laleyn (2010), 'New writing in subsidised theatre trebles over a decade', *The Stage*, 6 January.
 23. Mary Luckhurst claims that the idea 'to bring the playwright into the thick of creative interrogation with performers, directors and designers, the thick of play-making itself' actually goes back to Harley Granville Barker (2006: 95).
 24. Martin, Tim (2011) 'Edward Albee interview: "I think of myself as a composer"', *The Telegraph*, 1 May, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/8480529/Edward-Albee-interview-I-think-of-myself-as-a-composer.html> (accessed 27 June 2012).
 25. This approach to meaning-making is also present in Cicely Berry's work, without being attributed to Nietzsche.
 26. Martin, Tim (2011) 'Edward Albee interview'.
 27. Soloski, Alexis (2011) 'Freedom Club Takes Aim', *The Village Voice*, 12 January, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-01-12/theater/freedom-club-takes-aim/> (accessed 4 April 2012).
 28. 'She was the best-read young playwright I knew – well aware of the influences on her work of Bond, Beckett and Barker. "Only playwrights with a B surname?" I teased. "Definitely," she replied.', Ravenhill, Mark (2006) 'The beauty of brutality', *The Guardian* 28 October, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2006/oct/28/theatre.stage> (accessed 28 June 2012).
 29. 'Howard Barker', The Wrestling School Website, <http://www.thewrestlingschool.co.uk/barker.html> (accessed 27 June 2012).
 30. Michael Billington (2012) 'Three Kingdoms – review', *The Guardian*, 9 May, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/may/09/three-kingdoms-review> (accessed 29 June 2012).
 31. Sierz, Aleks (2012) 'Three Kingdoms', *The Stage*, 9 May, <http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/36087/three-kingdoms> (accessed 29 June 2012).
 32. Letts, Quentin (2012) 'No dialect can save the terrible *Three Kingdoms* that remains awful in all its languages', *Daily Mail*, 11 May, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/reviews/article-2142665/Three-Kingdoms-review-No-dialect-save-terrible-play-remains-awful-3-languages.html#ixzz1zAcd22qR> (accessed 29 June 2012).
 33. Michael Coveney (2012) 'Three Kingdoms', <http://www.whatsonstage.com/tickets/theatre/0/L259777709/Three+Kingdoms+.html> (accessed 29 June 2012).
 34. Rebellato, Dan (2012) 'Three Kingdoms', *Spilled Ink Blog*, 12 May, http://www.danrebllato.co.uk/Site/Spilled_Ink/Entries/2012/5/12_Three_Kingdoms.html (accessed 29 June 2012).
 35. Yates, Daniel B. (2012) 'Three Kingdoms', *Exeunt Magazine*, <http://exeuntmagazine.com/reviews/three-kingdoms/> (accessed 29 June 2012).

36. Trueman, Matt (2012) 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*, 13 May, <http://carouseloffantasies.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/review-three-kingdoms-lyric-hammersmith.html> (accessed 29 June 2012).
37. Haydon, Andrew (2012) '*Three Kingdoms* – Lyric Hammersmith', *Postcards from the Gods Blog*, 10 May, <http://postcardsgods.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/three-kingdoms-lyric-hammersmith.html> (accessed 29 June 2012).
38. Rebellato, '*Three Kingdoms*', *Spilled Ink Blog*.
39. Haydon, '*Three Kingdoms* – Lyric Hammersmith', *Postcards from the Gods Blog*.
40. Rebellato, '*Three Kingdoms*', *Spilled Ink Blog*.
41. Trueman, 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies*.
42. Costa, Maddy (2012) '*Three Kingdoms*: The shape of British theatre to come?', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*, 16 May, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2012/may/16/three-kingdoms-shape-british-theatre-or-flop> (accessed 29 June 2012).
43. Trueman, 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*.
44. This is in line with his insights offered in 2008: 'Indeed, what we see, time and again, through plays of the globalization era, are the imaginative boundaries of the playwright sweeping beyond the arbitrary boundaries of the outmoded nation-state' (Rebellato in Holdsworth and Luckhurst 2008: 258).
45. Rebellato, '*Three Kingdoms*', *Spilled Ink Blog*.
46. Haydon, '*Three Kingdoms* – Lyric Hammersmith', *Postcards from the Gods Blog*.
47. Trueman, 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*.
48. According to Henry Hitchings, Nübling's theatricality 'largely dispenses with the idea of elucidating meaning, preferring instead to create a montage of nightmarish images (a woman clawing her way out a suitcase) and intriguing textures (as when a quartet of Estonian hard men pound the set wearing boxing gloves)'. Henry Hitchings (2012) '*Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith – review', *The Evening Standard*, 09, <http://www.standard.co.uk/arts/theatre/three-kingdoms-lyric-hammersmith--review-7727877.html> (accessed 29 June 2012).
49. 'Nübling might be autorial, but not one of his decisions detracts from Stephens's text at all', Trueman, 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*.
50. 'Nübling has been doing the good old-fashioned British thing of *respecting the playwright's intentions*', Rebellato, '*Three Kingdoms*', *Spilled Ink Blog*.
51. Ibid.
52. Stephens in the Lyric Hammersmith's trailer for the show '*Three Kingdoms* – Simon Stephens and Sean Holmes Interview', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIVAxsmFGwM>, as quoted in Haydon, '*Three Kingdoms* – Lyric Hammersmith', *Postcards from the Gods Blog*.
53. Costa, '*Three Kingdoms*: The shape of British theatre to come?', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*.
54. Ibid.
55. Trueman, 'Review: *Three Kingdoms*, Lyric Hammersmith', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*.
56. Haydon, '*Three Kingdoms* – Lyric Hammersmith', *Postcards from the Gods Blog*.
57. Costa, '*Three Kingdoms*: The shape of British theatre to come?', *The Guardian Theatre Blog*.
58. Rebellato, '*Three Kingdoms*', *Spilled Ink Blog*.

4 Making of Verbatim Theatre

1. Jonathan Kalb depicts Smith's work as follows: 'Her process of impersonation was at all times more compelling than her facts and information. Her impressions

weren't entirely convincing by the standards of fourth-wall realism, and they weren't meant to be. She built characterizations around penetrating enlargements of isolated traits and mannerisms, but the fact that she was always visible beneath the intensely studied character surfaces was what gave the pieces their strangely persuasive texture' (Kalb 2001:18).

2. Willett explains that even though Brecht's term 'gestus' is translatable as both 'gist' and 'gesture' – meaning an 'attitude, or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words and actions' – he chose the obsolete English word 'gest' meaning 'bearing, carriage, mien' as the 'nearest manageable equivalent' (2001: 42). A more recent definition of 'gestus' is offered by David Barnett as 'another way in which the actor can show an indebtedness to society in that the body adopts narrative postures [...]. These postures betray the idea that the body is not an object in itself but one connected to the conditions under which work and other social relationships are carried out at any given historical moment' (2011: 11).
3. Elsewhere, Luckhurst also notes the influence of Piscator on Brecht, recorded in *Der Messingkauf* as being important in relation to the deployment of dramaturgs: 'As Brecht acknowledges in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, it was Piscator's model of the dramaturgical collective, his usage of a team of playwrights as researchers and writers 'to conduct a more or less non-stop discussion on the stage' with the purpose of re-educating audiences, which most inspired him and began to shape his thinking about the deployment and practical training of dramaturgs' (Mary Luckhurst in Thomson and Sacks 2006: 195).
4. I have written about similar processes, applying Linda Hutcheon's concept of 'metafiction' to theatre in 'The Alchemy of Power and Freedom – A Contextualization of Slobodan Snajder's *Hrvatski Faust* (*The Croatian Faust*)', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 19(4), 2009: 428–47; and 'Believe It or Not? – Suspension of Disbelief and Emotional Responses to Fiction', in Daniel Meyer-Dinkgrafe, ed. (2006) *Consciousness, Theatre, Literature and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press).
5. Mary Luckhurst has objected to this trend too: 'From the 1990s, however, the term is applied by some informed practitioners, and more loosely and confusingly by others, to much documentary theatre' (Luckhurst in Holdsworth and Luckhurst 2008: 203). Meanwhile, Janelle Reinelt has openly declared: 'I dislike the term "verbatim" because it needlessly ups the ante on the promise of documentary' (Forsyth and Megson 2009: 13).
6. Rather usefully, too, Paget first of all distinguishes between two modalities of twentieth-century 'documentary' – 'recording' and 'reporting'. These are based on different methodologies of transmission of facts – while 'reporting' features declared editorial intervention, 'recording' attempts to 'mask technique and claim unmediated access to reality' – such as fly on the wall documentaries (Paget in Forsyth and Megson 2009: 227).
7. 'The "Broken Tradition" of Documentary Theatre and Its Continued Powers of Endurance' (in Forsyth and Megson, 2009: 224–39).
8. This distinction is once again reminiscent of Dwight Conquergood's (2002) notion of 'epistemological apartheid' in the West, which could inform the discussion of tribunal vs. verbatim theatre further.
9. Elyse Dodgson discusses the Royal Court's international work – including this workshop – in an article included in the appendix to Robin Soans (2005) *Talking to Terrorists* (London: Oberon), pp. 108–110.
10. Ilmira Bolotyan, 'O drame v sovremennom teatre: verbatim', <http://magazines.russ.ru/voplit/2004/5/bolo2.html> (accessed 3 August 2012).
11. 'Chernukha', <http://www.answers.com/topic/chernukha> (accessed 3 August 2012).

12. Ugarov, Mikhail (2012) 'Chto takoe verbatim' ('What is verbatim?'), 1 February, <http://os.colta.ru/theatre/events/details/33925/?expand=yes&attempt=1> (accessed 3 August 2012).
13. Evocative of Stanislavsky's 'partitura deistvii' ('score of actions'), Ugarov uses the term 'partitura psichicheskoy zhizny cheloveka' ('score of the psychological life of man'), Ugarov, *ibid.*
14. 'Chto takoe "Verbatim"', Teatr.doc, <http://www.teatrdoc.ru/stat.php?page=verbatim> (3 August 2012).
15. Ilmira Bolotyán, 'O drame v sovremennom teatre: verbatim', <http://magazines.russ.ru/voplit/2004/5/bolo2.html> (accessed 3 August 2012).
16. In her form of verbatim theatre, theatre-maker Alecky Blythe includes the process of listening into live performance as her actors deliver their lines while listening to the original recording through earphones on stage. Blythe learnt the technique from Mark Wing-Davey, who had in turn picked it up while working as a director with Anna Deavere Smith. While Smith showed a remarkable power of mimicry and transformation in her performances, Wing-Davey observed that the use of earphones in rehearsals provided an additional layer of fascination for the viewer. He decided to keep this aspect and so did Blythe. Despite the assumption that this technique limits the performer in their process of interpretation, Blythe finds that the process of the actor listening adds something to the performance 'because everyday speech is often more mundane and "everyday" than anyone dares to invent' (in Hammond and Steward 2008: 80–2). It is important to note that the effect of this theatricalization of listening is different from the process of active or empathetic listening described above and its appeal – the 'add[ed] something' – is derived from the actor being perceived to be engaged in a genuine epistemological process in the course of the performance. However, as they already know the material from having rehearsed and performed it before, they will not necessarily be engaged in a process of listening which yields important contextual insights, but in a process of simply repeating the recorded material as accurately as possible on a mechanical level.
17. Billington, Michael (2003) 'Hello cruel world', *The Guardian*, 17 December, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2003/dec/17/theatre3> (accessed 4 August 2012).
18. Lawson, Mark (2008) 'Never before have I been so moved, or enraged, by a play', *The Guardian*, 29 August, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/29/military.defence?intcmp=239> (accessed 5 August 2012).
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Billington, Michael (2009) 'Deep Cut', *The Guardian*, 12 March, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2009/mar/12/theatre> (accessed 5 August 2012).
22. Tripney, Natasha (2009) 'Deep Cut', *Music OMH*, 4 April, http://www.musicomh.com/theatre/lon_deep-cut_0309.htm (accessed 5 August 2012).
23. Roswitha Müller notes that Martin Esslin contributed to misinterpretation by translating the term as 'didactic plays', based on the premise that Esslin believed Brecht to be writing a 'communist thesis, if not propaganda plays' (Thomson and Sacks 2007: 101).
24. Thanks to Tony Meech for pointing this out.

5 Relational New Works

1. On the Arts Admin website, Goode is described as a 'writer and maker working in theatre and live performance' (<http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artists/chris-goode>). His *King Pelican* was nominated for Best New Play in the TMA Awards 2009.

2. Dale-Jones's play *Floating* was a recipient of the Total Theatre Award in Edinburgh in 2006, and having been broadcast in 2011 as the Afternoon Play on Radio 4, it won Best Scripted Comedy Drama at the BBC Audio Drama Awards.
3. Crouch's third piece, *ENGLAND*, was commissioned by the Traverse Theatre as a gallery piece. Following this, *The Author* was commissioned and performed at the Royal Court in 2009 and went on to win the John Whiting Award in 2010.
4. Gardner, Lyn (2009) 'The Author', *The Guardian*, 30 September, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2009/sep/30/the-author-review>.
5. Cavendish, Dominic (2009) 'The Author at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, review', *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 October, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/6250036/The-Author-at-the-Royal-Court-Theatre-Upstairs-review.html>.
6. McMillan, Joyce (2010) 'The Author', *The Scotsman*, 9 August, <http://edinburgh-festivals.com/viewreview.aspx?id=1434>.
7. Higgins, Charlotte (2010) 'Theatre Tickets? Will That Be Stalls, Circle or Centre Stage?', *The Guardian*, 8 August, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/aug/08/theatre-edinburghfestival>.
8. Rather usefully for Tim Crouch's *The Author*, Feagin's 1983 paper, 'The Pleasures of Tragedy', distinguishes between a 'direct response' and a 'metaresponse' to tragic fiction. The former yields an unpleasant response to pain, whereas the latter is based on human sympathy or moral feeling, and therefore it can yield pleasure (Feagin 1983: 98–9).
9. In the article 'The Alchemy of Power and Freedom – A Contextualisation of Slobodan Šnajder's *Hrvatski Faust* (*The Croatian Faust*)', I have argued that the main significance of metatheatres is contained in its ability to engage the audience in a way that can uniquely be both Brechtian and illusionistic/empathetic.
10. Additionally, the piece was a Scottish commission (by Traverse Theatre and Fruitmarket Gallery), yet it was named *ENGLAND*, suggesting perhaps other levels of transplantation.
11. Higgins, 'Theatre Tickets? Will That Be Stalls, Circle or Centre Stage?'
12. Truman, Matt (2009) 'Review: *Internal*, Mecure Point Hotel', *Carousel of Fantasies Blog*, 15 August, <http://caruseloffantasies.blogspot.com/2009/08/review-internal-mecure-point-hotel.html> (accessed 29 February 2012).
13. McEvoy, William (2009) 'Theatre – the art of seduction', *The Stage Blog*, 28 August, <http://blogs.thestage.co.uk/edinburgh2009/2009/08/theatre-the-art-of-seduction/>.
14. Shuttleworth, Ian (2010) 'Edinburgh Fringe Column 4, *Teenage Riot/Imagine-Toi/An Evening With Elsie Parsons/Magicians! Behind The Magic*, Various venues, Edinburgh, August, 2010', Ian Shuttleworth website, <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~shutters/reviews/10082.htm>.
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22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Even within the context of the new democracies that have replaced socialism in the former Eastern Bloc, it is questionable to what extent individuals are able to realize a sense of personal empowerment and personal responsibility.
25. 'About *Ex-Position*', Shadow Casters' promotional document (no date).
26. Quoted on *Odmor od Povijesti blog*, <http://odmorodpovijesti.blogspot.com/> (accessed 2 March 2012).
27. Ibid.
28. Email correspondence with Boris Bakal, 9 March 2012 (my translation).
29. Marin Blažević notes that: 'Locally in Croatia, during the 1970s and 1980s, performance art gained the status of an approved, albeit liminal, even "misfit" manifestation of visual, (neo)conceptual or so-called contemporary art' (in McKenzie, Roms and Wee 2010: 177).
30. Višnja Rogošić cites the example of a theatre PR agent who could not 'estimate the value of her work and her professional status' or the one of a university professor 'worried about the world crisis' (2011: 100).
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36. Interestingly in the interview in Appendix 3, Tim Crouch notes that he made Rancière's books available in the RSC rehearsal room when working there.
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38. This approach to organizational behaviour is also evocative of Phelim McDermott's commitment to the Open Space methodology, discussed in his interview in *The Contemporary Ensemble* (2013).
39. Tasić, 'Priče o r(e)voluciji' ('Stories about revolution').
40. No author, '*Revolution: Masterclass* – description', http://port.hr/pls/th/theatre.directing?i_direct_id=4002303&i_city_id=-1&i_county_id=-1&i_cntry_id=72&i_topic_id= (accessed 7 March 2012), my translation.
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- rehearsal we find out how ignorant we are about male-female relationships'), *Vox Feminae*, 11 February, <http://voxfeminae.net/cunterview/politika-drustvo/221-bacaci-sjenki-musko-zenski> (accessed 8 March 2012), my translation.
42. This is not dissimilar to procedures described by David Pammenter concerning early TIE devising strategies in the United Kingdom: 'Where the involvement is to be of the physical participatory kind with the children in and out of roles, the deviser has to create a situation which creates the necessity for the child to deal with the problems and contradictions raised by the plot – to cope themselves with the conflict at the centre of the piece' (Pammenter in Jackson 1993: 65). This connection facilitates further reflection on the links between the educational agenda of theatre in the 1960s and the contemporary new works' desired relationship with the audience.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. In the Introductory essay to her collection *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, Maria Todorova notes '[I]t is not only the longing for security, stability, and prosperity. There is also the feeling of loss for a very specific form of sociability, and the vulgarization of the cultural life. Above all, there is a desire among those people who lived through communism, even when they opposed it or were indifferent to its ideology, to invest their lives with meaning and dignity, not to be thought of, remembered, or bemoaned as losers or "slaves"' (Todorova and Gille 2010: 7).
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Conclusion

1. My choice to foreground the term 'theatre-making' rather than 'performance' is also facilitated by the paradigm shift established through Hans-Thies Lehmann's concept of 'postdramatic theatre' and a similar stance adopted by Maaïke Bleeker (2008).

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