Bakhtin, Shakespeare, and Theatre

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Abstract

This thesis makes a case for Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) as a critic of drama. It uses Bakhtin's notes for revision of *Rabelais and His World*, written in 1942, as a catalyst for exploration of Shakespeare and of drama more generally. In the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin comments on Shakespeare's major tragedies, identifying patterns in them that expand on, complicate, and darken the festive, utopian themes found in the main text of *Rabelais and His World*. He also discusses drama as a genre, in particular the ways that meaning is made in theatrical spaces by bodies onstage. Bakhtin is at times openly dismissive of drama elsewhere in his work but the *Rabelais* revision notes demonstrate an unprecedented engagement with theatre. This thesis close reads these notes, exploring them play by play and concept by concept, then constructs a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama, split into sections titled 'Dialogism', 'Embodiment', and 'Eventness'. The second half of the thesis takes this aesthetics forward to consider twenty-first-century Shakespeare performance, investigating each section of its theoretical chapter via different productions. These productions encompass work by Ivo van Hove, Ian Rickson, Thomas Ostermeier, Punchdrunk Theatre, Robert Lepage, the National Theatre of Scotland, Caroline Byrne at Shakespeare's Globe, the RSC, and the Wooster Group. The thesis concludes with a consideration of broadcast and streaming theatre and looks at the current moment of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as projecting forward to think about uses of technology in performance in the future. The analysis conducted stands as a reappraisal of Bakhtin as a critic of drama, and as an example of the ways in which his work can be used to explore theatre throughout time.

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To my parents

Preface

In this thesis, I make a case for Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) as a critic of drama. Bakhtin wrote on Rabelais and Dostoevsky, and throughout his career advanced literary theories that consider human interaction and selfhood. Famously – and frustratingly – his treatment of drama is scant and largely restricted to the contention that, along with poetry, it is deficient in its ability to accommodate what he calls 'dialogized heteroglossia' – the very facility which, for Bakhtin, guarantees the place of the novel as the dominant literary mode of modernity. At the same time, however, Bakhtin makes reference to the 'exceptional' status of certain writers – Shakespeare and Dante among them – although the basis for their exceptionality is never developed. Bakhtin thus seemed indifferent, if not outright opposed, to drama until suddenly, in notes he wrote in the 1940s in preparation for revisions to *Rabelais and His World* (1965), we find him close reading Shakespeare, exploring the major tragedies, and thinking about the ways in which theatre has changed from the medieval and early modern periods to 'our time'.[1] The notes are unexpected proof that while Bakhtin may not have written extensively on drama in his lifetime, he was nonetheless knowledgeable about and interested in drama, suggesting that, at the very least, the reputation Bakhtin has acquired as a 'theatrophobe' is undeserved. More than that, however, I want to put forward a series of hypotheses that will show two things: first, that even Bakhtin's dismissals of drama – which I will argue were motivated by rhetorical and contextual considerations, rather than properly aesthetic or theoretical concerns – can be read against themselves, to reveal a 'Bakhtinian' theory of drama; second, that engaging with Bakhtin on the specific matter of drama and theatrical productions will allow us to develop new insights into his own literary and aesthetic conceptions, opening up the possibility that drama is in fact, paradoxically, the mode that best

[1] Some of these notes were published in translation in 2014, in Sergeiy Sandler's 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare: Excerpt From 'Additions and Changes to *Rabelais*'', *PMLA* 129:3 (2014), pp. 522-537. The main body of the notes, however, remains untranslated at the time of writing.

illustrates the force of Bakhtin's vision. In order to pursue these twin aims, I will first draw together work from across Bakhtin's career to construct – or reconstruct – a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama, which I will then test by analysing twenty-first-century Shakespeare performance, the implication being that both Shakespeare in his own time and his dramatic legacy on the contemporary stage are eloquent rebuttals of any contingent sense that drama is somehow irretrievably 'monologic'.

Bakhtin's key concepts, for my purposes, are dialogism, embodiment, and eventness. I consider productions of Shakespeare not only because Shakespeare is the dramatist to whom Bakhtin devotes the most space in his writing, but also because he is the playwright who appears on the twenty-first-century stage with the greatest wealth of performance and adaptation history. The productions that I examine in this thesis range from Punchdrunk Theatre's immersive, Hitchcock-inspired *Macbeth* adaptation, *Sleep No More*, to Shakespeare's Globe's 2016 *The Taming of the Shrew*, which drew on the centenary of the Easter Rising to explore women's roles in that conflict. I conclude by looking at the current moment and the streaming work that has been produced in the past two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, and cast my gaze forward by considering the ways in which theatre might continue to evolve, assessing the importance of Bakhtin as a critic of drama and performance in whatever shape it might exist in the future.

The productions I have selected to analyse in the second half of the thesis each seek to innovate in their own way. The directors and theatremakers behind them present their revivals of these early modern plays with the aim to move twenty-first-century Shakespeare performance in new directions and, most importantly, impact their audience in ways that they may not have encountered before. This emphasis on newness and the relationship between production and spectator is itself highly Bakhtinian, as will become apparent during the theoretical discussion of my first two chapters. I selected these productions because each of

them expanded my sense of what theatre can achieve, and allowed me to consider Shakespeare in new ways. Although some of the productions make reference to Shakespeare performance through time and even specific predecessors, in the case for example of the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, which thinks about how our relationship with Shakespeare and with theatre evolves and changes all the time, all of them look forward and encourage transformative approaches to this early modern playwright. I hope that my thesis does the same by looking at Shakespeare through a new critical lens, which might be taken forward by other scholars in the future.

My first chapter begins by looking closely at Sergeiy Sandler's 2014 article, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', which provides excerpts from *Additions and Changes to Rabelais* (1944). Sandler presents Bakhtin considering Shakespeare's major tragedies in ways that illuminate other parts of his critical work, and advances a claim for this period in Bakhtin's career as a bridge between his earlier philosophical concerns and his discussion of carnival and the novel in the 1930s and 1940s. I use the article as a catalyst for the thesis as a whole: what do the notes tell us about Bakhtin as a critic of Shakespeare? How can we use these ideas to think more widely about Bakhtin on drama and performance? The chapter marries key concerns discussed in the notes with the major tragedies Bakhtin analyses, one idea and one play at a time: *King Lear* and the official; *Richard III* and the self-asserting life; *Macbeth* and individual life; *Hamlet* and heroism; and *Othello* and cosmic topography.

My second chapter moves on to construct a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama. I use material from all parts of Bakhtin's literary career to discuss his criticism under three main headings: dialogism, embodiment, and eventness. I begin the chapter by considering Bakhtin's engagement with drama both in his critical work and in his life more broadly. Having discussed the comments that Bakhtin made on drama in his criticism, I then look to read him against himself, suggesting that drama is in fact the mode that makes most sense of

his literary-critical work. Dialogism is the all-encompassing concept for Bakhtin's thought, considering as it does the construction of the self with regard to the other. What Bakhtin calls 'outsideness' cannot be avoided: one must consider oneself from the point of view of the other, before returning to the self. Drama, which cannot exist without an audience, seems to be perfectly suited to this architectonics of selfhood. Bakhtin's exploration of cosmic topography in the *Rabelais* revision notes is my main focus as I discuss embodiment: his conceptualisation of the early modern stage and the meaning it can communicate is crucial to the analysis I undertake later in the thesis as I consider Shakespeare on the modern stage as well as in reconstructed early modern theatres such as Shakespeare's Globe in London. Eventness, finally, has become all the more interesting over the past few years, as the COVID-19 pandemic has made audiences think again about the ways in which they experience theatre, and encouraged theatremakers to consider the new possibilities available to them through digital technology.

The second half of the thesis takes the aesthetics constructed in Chapter Two and uses Bakhtin's criticism to analyse twenty-first-century Shakespeare productions. I dedicate one chapter to dialogism, one to embodiment, and one to eventness, looking at modern productions which explore these themes. In Chapter Three, I briefly summarise dialogism and consider some key Shakespeare scholars on the subject, including Nancy Selleck, Christopher Tilmouth, and Patrick Gray. The productions discussed are Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies*, Ian Rickson's *Hamlet*, and Thomas Ostermeier's *Richard III*. *Roman Tragedies* combines *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and allows the audience to join the actors onstage for the majority of the production, choosing their vantage points from which to survey the political machinations taking place. Rickson's *Hamlet* sets the play in a psychiatric institution, influenced by R. D. Laing, with Hamlet and Ophelia as patients of the institution and other characters as members of staff. Ostermeier's *Richard III* strips down the text of the

play to provide a bravura showpiece for one of the stars of his company, Lars Eidinger, who crosses the boundaries that are usually in place between actor and audience to disquieting effect. All three productions place multiple elements in dialogue with each other: Shakespeare's original text; the director, creative team and performers of the shows; and, most crucially, the audience.

In Chapter Four, I turn to embodiment, summarising the work carried out in Chapter Two on this topic and once again placing it in the context of extant Shakespeare criticism. I look at the use that has been made of Bakhtin in discussion of the carnivalesque in Shakespeare's plays, including critics such as François Laroque, Ronald Knowles, and Michael D. Bristol, and discuss the early modern playhouse and its medieval influences, citing Kristen Poole, Helen Cooper, and Kurt Schreyer. I work through Valentin Voloshinov's theory of the concrete utterance via *Henry IV Part One* and explore Robert Weimann's *locus* and *platea* concept, to which I return in my discussion of the productions I have chosen for this chapter: Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More*, Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* and National Theatre of Scotland's *Macbeth*, and Shakespeare's Globe's *The Taming of the Shrew*. *Sleep No More* is an adaptation of *Macbeth* that takes place in a warehouse with five floors, in which audience members wear masks and follow performers around the space to immerse themselves in the action of Shakespeare's play. I use the production to think through the ways in which immersive theatre constructs meaning for its audience. Lepage and NTS take a different approach, producing adaptations of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* that feature only one actor. I take this opportunity to consider the soliloquy as well as embodiment, returning to some of the questions I posed in my discussion of *Richard III* in Chapter One. In analysing the Globe's 2016 *Taming of the Shrew,* I explore the theatre as a space and review its history, particularly the complexities of Emma Rice's recent artistic

directorship, and invoke Weimann's *locus* and *platea* to think about lighting and sound in the reconstructed early modern playhouse.

In my final chapter, I discuss eventness in relation to liveness, bringing together the points I laid out in Chapter Two and more modern work on liveness in performance – Shakespeare and otherwise. I draw on Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander, as well as Erin Sullivan, who touches on Bakhtin's eventness in her comments on broadcast theatre. I analyse Stephen Purcell's work, which applies Auslander to twenty-first-century Shakespeare, as well as that of contemporary theatremakers including John Wyver, who expresses strong opinions on streaming and its relation to liveness. I look at the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2016 *Tempest*, the Wooster Group's 2007 *Hamlet,* and conclude the thesis with an overview of streamed performances that have been made available during the COVID-19 pandemic. The RSC collaborated with Intel and Imaginarium Studios to make a production that featured an avatar Ariel which appeared onstage alongside the actor playing the part, Mark Quartley. The Wooster Group made liveness one of the key focuses of their *Hamlet*, attempting to recreate John Gielgud's 1964 film of his Broadway production starring Richard Burton. Interacting live with the edited film, the performers attempt to mirror every action the 1964 cast make, exploring the nature of memory and questioning assumptions about performance archives. In my final section, I consider broadcast and streamed theatre, investigating its inception in the twenty-first century and the work that has been made available in the last two decades, from the National Theatre's first broadcast, *Phèdre* (2009), to Creation Theatre's *The Tempest* (2020), produced on Zoom.

The thesis as a whole, then, seeks to articulate a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama and to test its utility for twenty-first-century theatre. It sets itself apart from prior work done in this area by virtue of its holistic treatment of Bakhtin's criticism, using elements from throughout his literary career to think about performance. While the catalyst for the project remains the

Rabelais revision notes and their engagement with Shakespeare – thence my selection of Shakespeare productions in Chapters Three, Four, and Five – the work could be taken forward to analyse drama of all kinds. The thesis reappropriates Bakhtin's criticism of the theatre in theatre's defence, ultimately claiming the same importance for drama as Bakhtin insists on for the novel.

Chapter One

The *Rabelais* Revision Notes

This chapter offers a close reading of part of Bakhtin's notes towards a revision of *Rabelais and His World*, written in the mid-1940s.[2] My main concern is with the sections of the notes that discuss Shakespeare and theatre, where we see Bakhtin looking to connect his early philosophical concerns with the work on the novel and carnival he produced in the 1930s and 1940s. He engages more closely with Shakespeare and with tragedy here than anywhere else in his extant criticism, addressing the major tragedies, *King Lear*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, and, through them, questions of self-assertion, individual and collective identity, and stage space. In this chapter, I consider each of these plays in light of a topic Bakhtin discusses in the notes, working through them to evaluate his criticism as a close reader of Shakespeare's work and to establish his worth as a potential critic of drama.

King Lear and the official

Bakhtin claims that, part of the way through *King Lear*, the self-deposed monarch experiences a revelatory moment as he 'tests the official lie of the world'.[3] This lie, bound by censorship, is that 'children and subjects love and respect their king and father' and that 'the beneficiary is grateful to the benefactor'. After the indignities to which he is subjected by Regan and Goneril and his experiences on the heath, Lear comes to understand that the reality with which he was previously familiar was constructed and controlled by his own position as king. Bakhtin asserts that the elderly monarch was 'blinded by the power of a king and a father': Lear tests the hierarchical structure of his world, and discovers that it is in fact 'superficial'. Bakhtin's emphasis here is on the official and the unofficial, but he interweaves

[2] *Rabelais and His World* was published in 1965 and the revision notes were published in Russian in 1992.
[3] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.

his concept of the suprajuridical crime of power too – about which more later – to explore Lear's actions in the play.

Early on in the notes, discussing the process of 'officialisation', Bakhtin describes 'the single-toned and single-styled character of all things official': 'from the ambivalent sphere, the image is transferred onto the purely serious plane, becomes unambiguous'.[4] The monolithic power Lear appears to possess at the beginning of the play belongs to this serious, unambiguous 'plane'. Asking his daughters 'which of you shall we say doth love us most?', he is blindsided by the ambiguity of Cordelia's answer: she cannot respond to him in the manner he expects, not only because of her sense of duty to her future husband, but also because of her conscience, which leads her to suspect the sincerity of her sisters' proclamations of affection.[5] In asides, before it is her turn to speak, she asks desperately 'What shall Cordelia do?', before commenting 'I am sure, my love's/ More richer than my tongue' (1. 65-66). Cordelia's reticence here reflects her discomfort with the official lie, to which her sisters cede. Cordelia cannot or will not do the same, and her objection here begins the breakdown of the structures to which Lear is accustomed. Regan and Goneril abide by the lie, telling their father what he expects to hear, and it is therefore Cordelia's refusal to do so that begins Lear's road to recognition of the 'genuine reality of the world'.

In *Bound By Recognition*, Patchen Markell draws on the dramatic tradition of recognition to explore identity and injustice in contemporary political theory. He notes that 'Aristotle famously declared recognition, *anagnorisis*, to be one of the constitutive elements of the best tragedies', and that 'recognition has been a central concept in poetics and has continued to be an important literary device'.[6] Markell makes an important distinction

[4] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 524.
[5] William Shakespeare, *King Lear and His Three Daughters*, ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1. 39.
[6] Patchen Markell, *Bound By Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 62.

between recognition on and offstage, however: 'while political theorists typically depict successful recognition as a source of satisfaction or fulfilment, scenes of tragic *anagnorisis* may also be moments of catastrophic loss, occasions for mourning, provocations to strike out one's eyes'.[7] Lear's *anagnorisis*, prompted by Cordelia, is all three at once: a catastrophic loss, an occasion for mourning, and a provocation. Markell argues that recognition is 'animated by a vision of sovereign agency, in which people are empowered by self-knowledge and by the confirming recognition of others to act in accordance with who they really are'. Tragedy 'suggests that this aspiration is both impossible and dangerous, because it misunderstands the relationship between identity and action'. I will explore the notion of dangerous sovereign agency and its links with self-knowledge a little later in my discussion of *Richard III*. Unlike Lear, who is not empowered by self-knowledge, who according to his daughter Regan 'hath ever but slenderly known himself', Richard seems all too aware of his true essence.[8]

Markell claims that in tragedy, 'efforts to achieve sovereign agency are themselves ethically and politically problematic *mis*recognitions – not misrecognitions of the identity of another, as that term usually implies, but failures to acknowledge key aspects of our situation, including especially our own finitude in relation to the future'.[9] This insight is startlingly relevant to *King Lear*: Lear seeks to divest himself of 'all cares and business', handing over his kingdom to his daughters, who, he believes, love him devotedly and are happy to take up their inheritance peaceably from him. Although Lear gives up his agency as king, in doing so he aims at a different kind of sovereignty: control over the continuation of his kingdom and, in a more personal sense, control over the last days of his life. He fails, however, to acknowledge or comprehend what Markell would term 'key aspects' of his situation. His

[7] Markell, p. 62.
[8] *King Lear and His Three Daughters*, 1. 273-274.
[9] Markell, p. 63.

eldest daughters do not love him, and his youngest does not love him in the way that he expects her to. Bakhtin characterises this scene as a trial of the official lie, in which Lear 'tests the official lie of the world (children and subjects love and respect their king and father, the beneficiary is grateful to the benefactor)'. The reaction of his daughters forces him to acknowledge 'the superficial (external) censorship-bound hierarchy' and begins a lengthy process of recognition of 'the genuine reality of the world, of life, and of the human being'.[10]

Bakhtin characterises Lear's decision to give up his throne as 'a suicide of sorts', which allows him 'to peep in on one's own posthumous destiny'.[11] This suicide is only one 'of sorts' because he trustingly 'puts the murder weapon in their [his daughters] hands', giving himself up to what he believes to be their tender mercies. Although Bakhtin suggests that Lear 'tests' the official lie by stepping down from the throne, I would argue that he does not conceive of it as a test, at least at first: he is so wedded to the official lie, to the structure of the world as he knows it that he does not consider ways in which his decision might be troublesome. It does not seem to cross his mind that any of his daughters might refuse to swear their all-encompassing love for him, hence the mildness of his initial reaction to Cordelia: 'How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little,/ Lest it may mar your fortunes' (1.78-79). Cordelia, crucially, declares herself to be 'true', having a little earlier exposed the system at work for what it is: 'I love your majesty/ According to my bond; nor more nor less' (1. 76-77). This 'bond' is precisely what Bakhtin describes as the 'official lie', the 'superficial, censorship-bound logic of feeling, thoughts, words', which here manifests itself in 'children's devotion to their father'.[12] Cordelia's recognition of the superficiality or limited nature of her bond suggests that she already understands the 'genuine reality' of the world,

[10] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[11] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 524.
[12] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.

lending great poignancy to her reunion with Lear at the climax of the play, once he has achieved the knowledge she already possesses.

In the speech that introduces Lear's division of the kingdom, the monarch looks to rid himself of his official duties. He states that it is his 'first intent/ To shake all cares and business off our state,/ Confirming them on younger years'. (1. 32-34). He seems to think that it is possible for him to separate his personhood from his role as king and father, a misjudgement familiar from Shakespeare's history plays, but not always as apparent in major tragedies such as *King Lear*. Ernst Kantorowicz's 1957 work *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* investigates *Richard II* as a case study in support of the argument that medieval English society conceived of the monarch as possessing two bodies, one individual and one political, which were irrevocably joined thanks to divine authority. Richard II insists that 'Not all the water in the rough rude sea/ Can wash the balm off from a 'nointed king'.[13] Later on, however, he is forced to 'undo' himself, staging his deposition in front of his former subjects with a litany of regal symbolism: 'With mine own tears I wash away my balm, With mine own hands I give away my crown,/ With mine own tongue deny my sacred state' (IV. 1. 194-200).

Lear, similarly, conceives of himself as a monarch and a father and attempts to separate these identities at the beginning of the play by his abdication. Bakhtin complicates this sense of self in the notes by bringing multiple roles together, discussing children, subjects, king, and father all together. Lear likewise conflates his two positions of authority until he makes the decision to separate them in order to 'unburden'd crawl toward death'. His abdication scene is just as ceremonial as Richard's deposition but less improvisatory in

[13] William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. Anna Pruitt in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), III. 2. 50-51.

nature. The presence of the map of his kingdom, ready to be divided into three, shows that he still gives credence to the 'official lie' that his daughters love him unconditionally and will therefore obediently swear that they do and gratefully receive the portion of his kingdom they have been allotted, symbolised by the map. Onstage, the map is often divided after each speech by the daughters. Jonathan Munby's 2018 production starring Ian McKellen had Lear sitting at a table facing upstage towards a podium with a microphone, which each daughter nervously approached to speak. McKellen then divided the map in front of him, splitting Great Britain into territories we now know recognise as England, Scotland, Ireland, etc. Cordelia's refusal to ape her sisters' flattery led a furious Lear to angrily tear the map. Staging of this kind makes material the disintegration of Lear's view of the world: Cordelia's disruption of the official means that the map cannot be divided neatly, along clean lines. Instead, the ambivalent, multivalent unofficial takes over and begins to drive the play.

From this point on, formerly loyal courtiers rapidly turn against their king. The forms of address Kent uses for Lear metamorphose from 'Good my liege' to 'Royal Lear' to 'old man' within thirty lines (1. 106-130). Attempting to intercede on Cordelia's behalf, Kent speaks to Lear as someone 'Whom I have ever honoured as my king,/ Loved as my father, as my master followed,/ As my great patron thought on in my prayers' (1. 123-125). Yet what Bakhtin aptly describes as the 'censorship-bound loyalty and devotion' of the subject falls away quickly, as Kent's angry enquiry 'What wilt thou do, old man?' reveals the frustration he feels with his king (1. 130). Shakespeare uses formal elements of language to emphasise the drastic change that has taken place: in lines 124-26 Kent speaks regularly, each phrase remaining within the metrical restrictions of iambic pentameter, but as he grows angry with Lear, his speech starts to break up, becoming monosyllabic, irregular, and spilling over from one line to the next. Lines 131-33, 'Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak/ When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound/ When majesty stoops to folly' depart

from the rhythm established earlier in the speech, as Kent loses the superficial self-control he is initially able to maintain. Cordelia retains the appropriately respectful use of the 'you' pronoun even as she defies her father – 'Obey you, love you, and most honour you' – but Kent casts this aside, using 'thou' as he rails at the king to reconsider his position and 'Reverse thy doom' (1. 131-133).[14]

Bakhtin also comments on 'the problem of crowning-decrowning in Shakespeare', as well as 'the problem of the crown in general'.[15] In *King Lear*, he says, 'the problem of the crown and the ruler is revealed […] in a deeper, wiser, and more complex fashion'.[16] In the main text of the *Rabelais* book, Bakhtin claims that there is an 'essential carnival element in the organisation of Shakespeare's drama' that 'does not merely concern the secondary, clownish motives of his plays' but instead can be found exemplified in this 'logic of crownings and uncrownings' which 'organises the serious elements also'.[17] Crownings and uncrownings, Bakhtin explains, form part of the 'special idiom of forms and symbols' which evolved 'during the century-long development of the medieval carnival'.[18] Hierarchies are suspended during carnival: often a comic king and queen are crowned at the beginning of the festivities, then uncrowned at the end. For Bakhtin, these coronations form part of a 'pathos of change and renewal', which provokes a 'sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities'. In the revision notes, he observes that 'the problem of crowning-decrowning' is a material representation of praise-glorification in Shakespeare. Nowhere is this material representation clearer than the crown of weeds Lear dons in the second half of the play.

[14] Penelope Freedman's *'You' and 'Thou' in Shakespeare: A Practical Guide for Actors, Directors, Students and Teachers* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2021) makes a case for the implications of switches between 'you' and 'thou' in Shakespeare. I draw on her work here and elsewhere later in the chapter.
[15] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.
[16] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[17] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 275.
[18] *Rabelais and His World*, p. 10.

Lear uncrowns himself in the official sense at the beginning of his play before regaining an unofficial or comic crown on the heath: Cordelia notes his appearance 'Crowned with rank fumitory and furrow-weeds'.[19] The heath section of *King Lear* is a pure expression of the carnivalesque, bringing together as it does a mad old man, his Fool, and a beggar – even though the former of these characters used to be a king, and the latter is the son of a nobleman in disguise. Shakespeare builds layer upon layer of topsy-turvy hierarchies, with Lear divesting himself of status early on in the play, before temporarily regaining it here. In Scene 13, Lear even constructs a mock court where he assumes a position of authority once again, judging his daughters for their actions, with joint-stools taking the place of the errant women. He addresses Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, as 'thou robèd man of justice', referring to the blanket Gloucester's son is wearing as a judge's robe. Like Lear's crown of weeds, Edgar's meagre garment becomes a fake symbol of authority in this moment as well. As Bakhtin indicates, *Lear* is perhaps the most ambivalent expression of the crowning-uncrowning theme, shot through with melancholy and beauty as Lear discovers too late the truth of the world.

Later in the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin discusses Shakespeare's use of topographic imagery, imagery that in Shakespeare's case is cosmic, aligned with heaven, hell, and the earth between. Bakhtin remarks on the movement of several of the tragic protagonists into 'lowering' episodes through which they obtain moments of revelation: for Lear and Hamlet, episodes of madness, real or fictitious, and for Othello, furious jealousy incited by Iago.[20] The imagery employed by these characters changes over time in each play, leaving each protagonist in a different sphere from his starting point. The downward trajectory they follow is complicated in Bakhtin's notes by his insistence that the revelations they undergo

[19] *King Lear and His Three Daughters*, 18. 3.
[20] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 533.

are positive, despite the formally tragic endings of the plays in which they appear. These images will be discussed more fully in consideration of *Othello* below, but there is also a linguistic topography at work in *King Lear*. The language used by those around Lear to address him moves from the high official plane to something lower and less respectful. The you/thou usage is a straightforward way to track relationships between characters and the ways in which their attitudes to each other change. Lear's status disintegrates as he comes to recognise the genuine reality of the world, communicated through his interactions with his noble followers and Cordelia. Lear's Fool stands as the exception to this rule: he uses 'thou' to the former king throughout because he stands from the very beginning well outside the usual hierarchy of the court.

Although *King Lear* ends in devastation, with the collapse of the kingdom and the deaths of multiple major characters, Bakhtin focusses on Lear's recognition of the 'genuine reality of the world', which Lear achieves through Cordelia. She has refused to participate in the official falsehood with her father, and when he is able to accept and forgive her behaviour, having achieved a new clarity, they share a little time together before events reach their climax. Intimacy is created by Cordelia's use of 'thou' as she addresses her 'poor father', although when he gains consciousness she switches deferentially back to 'you': 'How fares your majesty?' (21. 36 and 42). Lear, on waking, protests, 'You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave', providing clear evidence for Bakhtin's suggestion that the plot of the play involves 'a suicide of sorts', with Lear wishing to 'peep in on [his] own posthumous destiny' (21. 43). Strangely, however, it is Cordelia who seems to hover on the edge of death in the final scene of the play. Lear is certain and then immediately uncertain of her demise: he laments that 'She's dead as earth', before demanding a mirror to see whether his daughter is still breathing (24. 257). The pain that Cordelia's death causes Lear makes it difficult to accept Bakhtin's positive reading of the play: Lear may come to recognise the true nature of

the world, escaping the official lie, but the confusion and sorrow he feels at the moment of his own death seems anything but positive.

David Bromwich, discussing 'What Shakespeare's Heroes Learn', suggests that *King Lear* offers 'an external portrayal of late-dawning wisdom[…] while in fact the inward self remains occupied with shadows, false starts, surmises'.[21] Bromwich's distinction between the external and inward here may provide the key to this scene, the play as a whole, and indeed Bakhtin's reading of the tragedies more globally. Although Bakhtin offers close reading of the plays, the interest in the notes lies chiefly in his structural analysis and the patterns he suggests Shakespeare's tragedies follow. In keeping with Bromwich's commentary, it is possible that *King Lear* offers both options at once: real felicity in Lear's understanding of the 'genuine reality of the world' and overwhelming pathos in the final moments of the play. Bromwich claims that 'the truth about Lear is *suffered* by him, while it is *told*, all around his sufferings, by the characters who cause or comment on or reflect his actions as foils'. The nuances here mean that 'the picture we are given of a possible self-knowledge is never recognised or known from within by the hero himself'. As soon as Lear has come to himself, having gone through his madness on the heath, he and Cordelia are taken prisoner and events rush inexorably to their close. Lear may achieve knowledge of 'the genuine reality of the world', but he has no time to use that knowledge in his own life or to effect change for others.

It is difficult to find a middle ground between the devastation that has taken place at the end of the play and Bakhtin's celebration of Lear's finally achieved understanding of the world. Jason Crawford notes that in the source texts for *Lear* and in adaptations that followed Shakespeare's version of the story, the play had a 'comic' ending, with Cordelia remaining alive and coming to rule the kingdom, either with the King of France or with Edgar. He traces

[21] David Bromwich, 'What Shakespeare's Heroes Learn', *Raritan: A Quarterly Review* 29:4 (2010), p. 140.

what he calls a 'liturgy of assumption' through *King Lear*, weighing the tragic genre of the play with what he identifies as a Christian language of 'bearing and blessing'.[22] In this reading, Lear entering carrying Cordelia becomes an image of Christ bearing the body of Mary, and perhaps 'adorning her with his own crown of life', just as Lear attempts to spot signs of life in Cordelia just before his own death. Crawford suggests that it is not only Lear and Cordelia who take on each other's burdens but that the cathartic nature of tragedy allows the audience to do the same: to take on the suffering they witness onstage, participating in the drama as in Bakhtin's communal festive exchanges. Both Bromwich and Crawford see a middle ground in interpretations of the ending of *Lear*, which allows for some sense of hope even in the midst of death. Bakhtin's official has fallen away but the theatre audience has gained a great deal having spent time with the characters as they undergo these seismic events.

Richard III and the destructive logic of the self-asserting life

Bakhtin suggests it is the breakdown of genealogies that lies at the heart of the dangerous individualism which motivates tragedy. 'Crushing and annihilating self-assertion' comes at a cost: 'the prolongation of life (beyond the limit set for it) is possible only at the cost of murder (taken to the limit – the murder of one's son, the murder of children, the motif of slaying infants)'.[23] In *Macbeth*, Bakhtin sees in Duncan a substitute for Macbeth's father and in Fleance and Macduff's children a substitute for Macbeth's own children, so that the play becomes the story of an artificial nuclear family and Macbeth's attempts at murder 'the suprajuridical crime of a link in the chain of generations, hostilely separating itself, tearing itself apart from what precedes and what follows'.[24] Lear, as discussed above, seeks to

[22] Jason Crawford, 'Shakespeare's Liturgy of Assumption', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 49:1 (2019), p. 80.
[23] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.
[24] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.

remove himself from his position of authority, abdicating his role as king and father, but does not see how this change places him in danger from his daughters as they negotiate the power they have gained from him. I would argue, however, that *Richard III* is the play that demonstrates the dangerous, isolating individualism Bakhtin describes most clearly. Richard begins his eponymous tragedy by plotting to sow division between his siblings, hoping to have his elder brother King Edward sentence his other brother Clarence to death on suspicion of treachery. With this betrayal achieved, he goes on to destroy other members of his family and ultimately work his way to the crown and the power he craves.

There are clear parallels in the plays discussed in the revision notes with the work of Seneca, particularly dramas such as *Thyestes* and *Medea*. Seneca's characters also achieve independence from the social units around them, usually through violence. In *Thyestes*, Atreus tricks the tragic protagonist, his brother Thyestes, into eating his own children. Medea kills her children to revenge herself upon her husband for his infidelity. Gordon Braden suggests that their 'evil' can be understood as 'a form of radical freedom from any external restraint on individual will and action', noting that part of their 'strength' comes from 'their consciousness of that evil and their willingness to proclaim it'.[25] This 'willingness to proclaim' evil is what we see in *Richard III* and *King Lear*, but these proclamations have different locations in Senecan and Shakespearean drama.[26]

Seneca's characters glory in this radical freedom at the end of their plays: Atreus congratulates himself with 'Now I commend my hands' and Medea exclaims 'O gods benign at last, o festive day, o wedding day'.[27] Richard in *Richard III* and Edmund in *King Lear*

[25] Gordon Braden, 'Senecan Tragedy and the Renaissance', *Illinois Classical Studies*, 9:2 (1984), p. 284.
[26] For further exploration of Shakespeare and Seneca, see Patrick Gray's chapter 'Shakespeare vs. Seneca: Competing Visions of Human Dignity' in *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Senecan Tragedy: Scholarly, Theatrical and Literary Receptions*, ed. Eric Dodson-Robinson (Boston, MA: Brill, 2016).
[27] Seneca, *Thyestes* in *Tragedies, Volume II: Oedipus, Agamemnon, Thyestes, Hercules on Oeta, Octavia*, ed. and trans. John G. Fitch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 325 and *Medea* in *Tragedies,*

indulge themselves in celebration part of the way through their plays, before Shakespeare attends to their downfall. Shakespeare ends their stories not in triumph as Seneca does with Atreus and Medea, but instead with Richard and Edmund having discovered the dangers of the will to power they display. Early on in *Richard III*, when Richard has persuaded Anne to marry him, he turns to the audience to gloat 'Was ever woman in this humour woo'd? Was ever woman in this humour won?'[28] This moment of triumph is relatively short-lived, however, since as soon as Richard gains the crown, nominally achieving his ultimate goal, he becomes paranoid, loses his allies, and the play spirals out of control until his death at Bosworth.

The opening scene of *Richard III* pushes to the fore themes of family, loyalty, and betrayal. We see Richard operating in two different modes: in soliloquies, which detail his plots to break apart the royal family and seize power for himself, and in earnest pieces of dialogue with his brother Clarence, who is suffering the effects of Richard's betrayal. Richard's shifts between these modes can be played so rapidly as to be comical, his tone moving from machination to pity and confusion at astonishing speed. He distinguishes himself from the rest of the court, commenting on the physical deformity that means he cannot participate in the 'glorious summer' his elder brother has brought about in England (I. 1. 2). He complains that he has been 'Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,/ Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time/ Into this breathing world scarce half made up' and can therefore find 'no delight to pass away the time' (I. 1. 19-25). Richard's movement into the pattern of self-asserting life is highly logical, as he explains in this speech: Shakespeare structures it clearly to communicate the state of affairs in England, Richard's difficulties

Volume I: Hercules, Trojan Women, Phoenician Women, Medea, Phaedra, ed. and trans. John G. Fitch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 399.

[28] William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), I. 3. 223-224.

taking part in the festivities that ensue, and his subsequent decision to 'prove a villain', since other options are not available to him (I. 1. 30).

The clarity of the logic behind this choice is expressed by Edmund in *King Lear* too. Like Richard, Edmund remarks on the structure of the world, his place within it, and justifies his actions as the villain of the piece. The two men have a very different view on nature, which Edmund describes as his 'goddess', and thanks for providing him with 'dimensions […] well compact' and a 'shape as true/ As honest madam's issue'.[29] Edmund's problem is that because he was born 'some twelve or fourteen moonshines/ Lag of a brother', he is condemned by society as a bastard (2. 5-6). Neither Richard nor Edmund are able to participate in the world as they wish to: Richard is excluded on account of his physicality, and Edmund on account of moral judgements made by those around him. Bakhtin draws attention to 'the motif of the illegitimate son' who is 'not settled by the official order'.[30] Edmund states his objection to the category of bastardy assigned to him and lays out his intent to 'grow' and 'prosper' anyway (2. 21). Both men reject the official structures of society: they need no revelatory moment as Lear and other tragic protagonists do, since the official lie of the world is not constructed for their benefit. Their decisions to embrace their marginality complicate Bakhtin's conception of the official and unofficial: neither of these characters are deceived by the official lie and instead find other ways of achieving their goals.

Different family units are discussed throughout the first scene of *Richard III*, as well as Richard's place within them. Richard's primary concern at this point is his forthcoming betrayal of Clarence to the king, as we see him state his aim to 'set my brother Clarence and the King/ In deadly hate the one against the other' (I. 1. 34-35). Bakhtin refers to father-child antagonism in the notes, but with Clarence as the elder brother and Richard's superior in

[29] *King Lear and His Three Daughters*, 2. 1-9.
[30] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 536.

terms of his claim to the throne, we can still make a comparison to what Bakhtin describes as the 'suprajuridical crime of any self-asserting life'. Clarence stands in Richard's way as the next successor to the crown, so Richard must destroy him as he would his father. Richard becomes Bakhtin's 'link in the chain of generations, hostilely separating itself, tearing itself apart from what precedes and what follows'. Eric Dodson-Robinson identifies 'betrayal between real and metaphorical brothers' as 'a leitmotif in *Hamlet* and in other Shakespearean works'.[31] He argues that the betrayals in *Hamlet* 'resonate more with Senecan tragedy […] than with Plutarch or Ovid': in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare challenges Seneca's cosmic vision to provide a 'concluding scene of forgiveness and true brotherhood' which 'annuls brotherly betrayal'. In *Richard III*, however, there is no such scene of forgiveness and brotherhood: Clarence's end is messy and undignified, and Richard does not share his brother's final moments, let alone receive forgiveness for the murder.

At the end of the opening scene, as Richard turns his thoughts toward his next action, he makes perverse plans to insert himself into another family unit. He decides that he will 'marry Warwick's youngest daughter', asking dismissively 'What though I killed her husband and her father?' (I. 1. 151-152). These murders seem in keeping with Bakhtinian self-asserting logic, but Richard then shockingly takes his plot one step further: 'The readiest way to make the wench amends/ Is to become her husband and her father' (I. 1. 153-154). This substitution seems to move against everything Bakhtin identifies in the tragic protagonist, who is by definition hostile to replacement and renewal. Rather than destroy the Warwick dynasty and separate himself from family entirely, Richard inserts himself back into this pattern in the most twisted way. Yet Richard views this marriage as simply another way to gain power: he is in fact acting in the spirit of the self-asserting life, distorting Bakhtin's

[31] Eric Dodson-Robinson, ''By a Brother's Hand': Betrayal and Brotherhood in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Senecan Tragedy' in *Playing False: Representations of Betrayal*, eds. Betiel Wasihun and Kristina Mendicino (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p. 81.

model, because he realises a connection with Anne is necessary for his own aims. He takes up a place in Warwick's family not to participate in Bakhtin's festive themes of replacement and renewal, but to further his engagement with the tragic tropes of individualistic gain. Returning to the contrast between the official and unofficial that informs *King Lear*, we see once more that Richard is perfectly aware of the truth of the world: parents and children do not love or respect each other, and subjects are not obedient to their king. His actions, therefore, in taking up positions in other family units, having disrupted his own, make sense in terms of his overall project of obtaining power at whatever cost.

Bakhtin claims that violent episodes involving the murder of parents and children are the 'constitutive moment' of the self-asserting life. The events of *Richard III* seem to confirm, then, that it is the play that follows Bakhtin's archetype most closely: in *King Lear* and in *Macbeth* we do not see the tragic protagonists carrying out the murders of ancestors or heirs. Violence in *Lear* is done most shockingly to Gloucester by Lear's daughter Regan and her husband, while in *Macbeth* Duncan's murder takes place offstage, and Macbeth sends a proxy to kill Macduff's children for him. In *Richard III*, because of the eventual king's isolationist nature, he carries out much of the dirty work himself and even glories in it in soliloquy. Even before Richard gets his own play to dominate, he begins to carry out this pattern of violence and constitutive self-assertion. In *Henry VI Part Three*, having killed Henry VI, Richard delivers over thirty lines in which he discusses himself and the deed he has just carried out. The speech is Senecan in its triumphant nature: Richard gloats that his 'sword weeps for the poor king's death' and is insistent upon his own sense of self as informed by the circumstances of his birth and his physicality. He wishes 'since the heavens have shaped my body so,/ Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it'.[32] At the end of the

[32] William Shakespeare, *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth; or, The Tragedy Duke of York*, ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 28. 78-79.

passage, he plans the steps that he will carry out in *Richard III*, observing that 'I have no brother, I am like no brother […] I am myself alone' (28. 80-81). This moment has Richard at the height of his self-determining powers, fresh from the murder of Henry VI and ready to continue his journey to the crown.

Elsewhere in his work, Bakhtin condemns drama as 'monologic'. Chapter Two will explore Bakhtin's relationship with theatre more fully, but for the moment we might consider the soliloquy as the instance where this criticism is most fully founded. Bakhtin claims that dramatic dialogue is 'encased in a firm and stable monological framework', with one dominating voice overwhelming all others.[33] *Richard III* might be the play that adheres most closely to this model: Richard attempts to shape the world to his will, and Shakespeare's use of the soliloquy, particularly the play's opening with 'Now is the winter of our discontent', has the audience experience the events of the drama overwhelmingly through Richard's perspective. Yet Bakhtin points out that monologism is illusory, given the dialogical nature of the world. The soliloquy thus becomes not a moment of truth, where the protagonist reveals his psyche, but rather a moment of self-deception. Patrick Gray suggests that this mode of speech has the hero of the play 'obliged to choose between opposing moral goods', or 'rival, incompatible value-systems'.[34] When he makes the wrong choice, the audience learns from his mistakes, even if the character 'remains to the end to some degree self-deceived'. For Bakhtin, dramatic events such as those of Shakespeare's tragedies teach the importance of festivity and collectivity, as opposed to illusory monologism and individuality.

[33] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 17.
[34] Patrick Gray, 'Seduced by Romanticism: Re-imagining Shakespearean Catharsis' in *The Routledge Companion to Shakespeare and Philosophy*, eds. Craig Bourne and Emily Caddick Bourne (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 514. See also Gray's 'Choosing between Shame and Guilt: *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*' in *Shakespeare and the Soliloquy in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. A. D. Cousins and Daniel Derrin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 105-118.

Returning to the role genealogies play in the self-asserting life, Bakhtin comments on 'the relation of glorification to the past (fathers)', which turns patricide into 'a motif of invective'.[35] Early on in the play, Richard speaks of the invective he is subject to thanks to his physical appearance, remarking that even 'dogs bark at me as I halt by them'.[36] His efforts at patricide – here transformed into fratricide, with the death of his two older brothers – lead him towards glorification, with the crown bestowed upon him as well as official praise via Buckingham and his other followers. Shakespeare seems to depart, however, from the praise-invective binary that Bakhtin constructs: some of the most wounding invective directed at Richard comes after the glory of his coronation, through characters like the former queen, Margaret, and even Richard's own mother, the Duchess of York. Thanks to Richard's evil deeds, praise and invective come together in the conclusion of the play, as the parent-child relationship is twisted even further, to the point that the Duchess of York wishes death upon her own son. Richard begins the play by speaking of the abuse he suffers, as well as his determination to 'prove a villain'; later, this determination bears fruit, in the darkest sense. Although some adjustments must be made in order to read the straightforward 'murder of the ancestor and successor' pattern onto *Richard III*, this play is the best example of those to which Bakhtin refers in the notes: Richard's isolation is so total and his disintegration so dramatic that the phrase 'crushing and annihilating self-assertion' is perfectly appropriate here.

Shakespeare returns to 'the problem of the crown' in *Richard III* in an elaborate make-believe set piece. Buckingham presents Richard to the citizens of London, and he pretends to refuse the crown. We see Buckingham struggle with the citizens as he attempts to exhort them to cry out in favour of Richard as their king: Shakespeare stages the frantic

[35] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 526.
[36] *Richard III*, I.1. 23.

behind-the-scenes discussions between Richard and Buckingham before the Lord Mayor enters, followed by play-acting so mannered it is almost farcical. The audience is well aware that Richard desperately desires the crown, but Buckingham and Catesby present a picture of reticence: 'Happy were England should this virtuous prince/ Take on his grace the sovereignty thereof!/ But sure I fear we shall not win him to it' (III. 7. 77-79). When he accepts, Richard places the emphasis on the citizens and his advisors, saying that he will be crowned 'Even when you please, for you will have it so' (III. 7. 241). In *Julius Caesar*, too, an attempted crowning takes place, although it is told via reported speech. Casca tells Cassius and Brutus that Mark Antony offered a crown or coronet to Caesar multiple times, although he never took possession of it as Richard does in his play. Such is the emblematic power of the crown, though, that the conspirators carry out their plan as if Caesar had accepted it when offered.

Unlike *King Lear*, where Lear's crowning in weeds proves an affective moment late in the play, the crowning scenes in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* are key plot drivers: in *Richard III*, Richard's acceptance of the crown is the realisation of the ambition which has been motivating him throughout, while in *Julius Caesar* Antony's attempted crowning of Caesar provides added impetus for the conspirators to assassinate him. As Bakhtin comments, the crown in these plays is 'the limit and triumph of individuality': both Richard and Caesar reach the limits of their power in these moments and, after them, their luck begins to turn, leading to their respective downfalls.[37] Crowning and de-crowning is not ambivalent in these plays as it is in *King Lear*: they lack the 'folk wisdom of the saturnalia and the carnival' which permeates *Lear* and instead abide by 'the necessary iron logic of self-crowning', which

[37] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.

Bakhtin introduces in the notes in his discussion of *Macbeth*, and which is most fully realised in *Richard III*.[38]

Macbeth and the tragedy of individual life

In his analysis of *Macbeth*, Bakhtin expands his discussion of the logic of individualism and the way that tragic protagonists seek to gain power. He rejects the charge of criminality for Macbeth, commenting that 'the logic of all his deeds is the necessary iron logic of self-crowning'.[39] Bakhtin suggests that the logic of Macbeth's deeds is also 'the logic of any crowning, of any crown or power, and, more broadly still, the logic of any self-asserting life, which is therefore hostile to replacement and renewal'. This hostility manifests itself in *Macbeth* in the would-be king's murder of Duncan and his subsequent elimination of other threats to his kingship such as Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff's children. Bakhtin suggests that the real tragedy of individual life is that each person is 'condemned to be born and to die, born out of another's death and by its own death fecundating another's life'.[40] Individual power can only be achieved by escaping this pattern and standing alone.

We might make comparisons here with Augustine's *libido dominandi* and Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht*, translated respectively as 'lust for domination/rule' and 'will to power'. In the Preface to *The City of God*, Augustine notes that, in discussing heaven (the City of God), he 'cannot […] pass over in silence that earthly city [Rome] which, when it seeks for mastery, though the nations are its slaves, has as its own master that very lust for mastery'.[41] Humanity's inherent sinfulness leads us to this lust to rule or dominate: it is inescapable, as Bakhtin suggests when he writes that 'crime lies in the very essence of self-asserting life',

[38] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.
[39] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.
[40] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.
[41] Augustine, *City of God, Volume I: Books 1-3*, trans. George E. McCracken (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 13.

such that 'having lived, one cannot but get entangled in it'.[42] Nietzsche's will to power first appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where he describes the concept as 'the unexhausted, procreating life-will'. He says that 'wherever I found a living thing, there found I will to power; and even in the will of the servant found I the will to be master'. He distinguishes between 'will to life' – *Wille zur Leben*, as developed by Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation* – and will to power, writing 'Only where there is life, is there also will: not, however, Will to Life, but – so teach I thee – Will to power'. Both Augustine and Nietzsche develop a relational model of existence, which must always feature some kind of power dynamic, driven by ambition. These ideas are reminiscent of Bakhtin's analysis of Shakespearean tragedy: Shakespeare's tragic protagonists seem to Bakhtin unable to live without seeking to dominate others.

Macbeth is not, however, the best play to illustrate this 'necessary iron logic', as I mentioned above. Rather than being driven by overwhelming individualism, Macbeth receives plenty of encouragement from others around him to seek power and carry out the criminal deeds necessary to maintain that power. Interestingly, these influences are often female, or coded as such. The 'weird sisters' inform him that he shall be thane of Cawdor and then king. When Ross and Angus arrive and confirm that the first part of the prophecy is already true, Macbeth is unsettled rather than triumphant: he muses in an aside 'If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,/ Without my stir'.[43] Lady Macbeth is well aware of this hesitancy: she fears Macbeth's 'nature', which is 'too full o' the milk of human kindness/ To catch the nearest way' (I. 5. 12-14). Instead of adhering to the self-asserting Bakhtinian model, Macbeth would rather not 'play false' (I. 5. 18), according to his wife. At

[42] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[43] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), I. 3. 139-140.

this point, it seems as though Macbeth aligns more with Bakhtin's dismissive analysis of 'a person tamed by law', who he claims 'is not fit to be the hero of a tragedy'.[44] Lady Macbeth's encouragement of her husband is extensive, and she finds it necessary to reject reproduction and renewal in herself as she prepares to carry out the deed, looking to 'unsex' herself and turn the milk in her breasts into gall (I. 5. 38). As with the family model Bakhtin discusses, which must include Duncan and children outside of the Macbeths' immediate nuclear unit, so the logic of self-crowning in this play is complex: Macbeth is not entirely self-motivated, but instead clearly and pointedly influenced by those around him.

Situating Macbeth among the tragic protagonists discussed in the *Rabelais* notes makes it clear that Richard III is really the only character who adheres to Bakhtin's 'necessary iron logic of self-crowning'. As will become increasingly apparent, the heroes of the other plays all occupy liminal spaces to some degree. Macbeth's soliloquies demonstrate his self-doubt as he muses on his plans to kill Duncan and usurp his throne; unlike other soliloquising characters such as Richard III and Iago in *Othello,* Macbeth spends his time considering the viability of his strategy to gain the crown, rather than outlining his process as the others do. Macbeth's solo speeches are relatively few in number, too: instead, he works through his anxieties in dialogue with his wife. After Banquo's appearance at his coronation feast, he ruminates uneasily that 'I am in blood/ Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,/ Returning were as tedious as go o'er' (III. 4. 134-136). This piece of imagery neatly demonstrates Macbeth's liminal status: although he has gained the crown, killing Duncan who takes the 'father' role in the Bakhtinian pattern, he must now eradicate possible threats or 'sons'. He has gone some way towards his goal, but he seems to lack the iron, monologic will that Bakhtin suggests he requires. Lear, too, spends much of his play in liminal spaces. In fact, he consciously attempts to place himself in one by resigning the crown but retaining

[44] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.

authority or influence over his daughters, hence his frustration with Goneril when she refuses to house him in the manner to which he is accustomed. His wanderings on the heath and descent into madness leave him in places outside of usual societal bounds, where he is unable to establish a purchase on a sense of self within the kingdom he once ruled.

Bakhtin expands upon his ideas about replacement and renewal in his discussion of *Macbeth*, suggesting that in this play we see 'the struggle between the living and the dead', a conflict played out once again with a nod towards liminality.[45] This struggle is exemplified by the appearance of Banquo's ghost at Macbeth's feast, where he usurps Macbeth's throne. Usually, according to Bakhtin, the living occupy the dead's place in life, as part of the normal cycle of replacement and renewal. Here, however, Macbeth comments that 'If charnel houses and our graves must send/ Those that we bury back, our monuments/ Shall be the maws of kites' (III. 4. 69-71). He is extrapolating from the ghost's appearance on his throne at the feast, suggesting that, if the dead are being returned to the world of the living, then there will be no need for tombs and mausoleums, because they will end up being eaten by scavenging birds instead. This imagery communicates the confusion in Macbeth's psychology at this point, with no clear separation or ending point after death but rather a world populated by both the living and the dead. Bakhtin identifies another pattern in the play, that of 'life – *sleep* – death'.[46] This pattern is borne out in the linguistic choices Shakespeare makes around the murder of Duncan and in the final acts of the play: Macbeth fearfully assumes that he has heard a voice cry 'Macbeth hath murdered sleep', and Lady Macbeth sleepwalks before she dies (II. 2. 33). The boundaries between the living and the dead, between life, sleep, and death are all confused in *Macbeth*.

[45] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 530.
[46] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 531.

Bakhtin characterises the play as a 'tragedy of fear […]the fear inherent in everything that lives'.[47] This inherent fear underpins the action of the play and indeed any action: for Bakhtin, 'any activity is criminal', leading to his startling, bleak conclusion that 'the ideal is the prenatal state'. *Macbeth* becomes a tragedy about paranoia and dread of the future, among other things. Time moves constantly forward in the play as in life – Macbeth's most famous soliloquy is entirely concerned with the passage of time – and he can only attempt to stop this process of replacement and renewal via the murderous activity of the self-asserting life. Receiving the news of Lady Macbeth's death, he stops to meditate briefly on mortality. 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' conveys the relentless nature of life, its eleven syllables spilling over the pentameter as the extended vowel sounds elongate the diction of the line (V. 5. 18). At this point it seems as though Macbeth is numb, given his claim earlier in the scene that he has 'almost forgot the taste of fears' (V. 5. 9). He spends the rest of the play looking for reasons to dismiss the challenges he faces: Birnam Wood approaching Dunsinane, the threat posed to him by Young Siward and subsequently Macduff on the battlefield. Macbeth may not feel fear, but he is constantly preoccupied with it at the climax of the play.

Although Macbeth seeks to isolate himself in the play, Bakhtin notes that the imagery Shakespeare uses situates him – and indeed all characters – firmly in the centre of the universe. 'Shakespeare's image always feels hell under its feet and heaven above its head', a location Bakhtin describes as 'the actual topography of the stage'.[48] There is a marriage between the material conditions of the playhouse and the language spoken by the performers within that space. Bakhtin suggests that there is a universality to Shakespeare's imagery, so that 'all the elements of the world, the entire universe, are implicated in their [the poles of the

[47] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.
[48] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 530.

images’] play’. *Macbeth* functions as a very insular, claustrophobic tragedy, but Bakhtin selects various pieces of language that also illustrate its cosmic nature.[49] This analysis demonstrates that Bakhtin is closely engaged with the major tragedies, observing not only the patterns that govern Shakespeare’s tragic mode, but also the finer details of each play. Later, Bakhtin examines similar moments in *Othello* and goes on to distinguish between characters who use particular kinds of imagery, linking the topographic levels of their speech with their status within the world of the play. I will examine this topographicity and its relationship to Bakhtin’s more well-known concept of the chronotope in the section to come on *Othello*.

Bakhtin gives various examples from *Macbeth* that highlight the oppositional imagery Shakespeare uses in close proximity. In the immediate aftermath of the discovery of Duncan’s death, both Macbeth and Macduff reach topographical extremes: Macbeth declares that ‘Had I but died an hour before this chance,/ I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,/ There’s nothing serious in mortality’ (II. 3.84-86). Death and life appear within the same phrase, grounding this moment of horror but retaining its cosmic nature. When Duncan is killed, Macduff urges Malcolm and Banquo ‘As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites/ To countenance this horror’ (II. 3. 71-73). Here, it is as though Macduff is aware of the plots Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are hatching: Malcolm, as the next heir to the throne, and Banquo, as a begetter of kings, are both under threat after Duncan’s death. At the feast, Banquo does indeed rise up from his grave and return to view the events taking place in Scotland; the language and the action of the play come together in awful harmony to press home the severity of the Macbeths’ actions. Banquo’s appearance at the feast sparks another set of oppositional images from Macbeth, this time in description of Duncan: Macbeth claims

[49] In *Julius Caesar*, too, mentioned briefly in the notes, the omens and portents that populate the play from early on portray a world that is rocked by Caesar’s power and the conspirators’ plot. The play feels cosmic, like *Macbeth*, thanks to its events: Shakespeare deepens the topographicity of his stage with Casca’s description of ‘a tempest dropping fire’, rendered in the stage directions as ‘thunder and lightning’. *Julius Caesar* brings together language and physicality to drive home this sense of universality.

that he reigned so well that 'his virtues/ Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against/ The deep damnation of his taking-off'. Here, Duncan's virtue serves as a foil to Macbeth's egregiously unlawful murder, with Shakespeare using a cosmic image to communicate the extent of the contrast between the former and current kings of Scotland, aligning them with heaven and hell respectively.

Were it not for the imagery employed by Shakespeare, *Macbeth* might feel emphatically small and restrictive. It takes place for the most part in claustrophobic, indoor spaces, and the audience feels trapped by the psychological torment of the main couple. Apart from Macbeth and Banquo's encounter with the witches at the opening of the play, and Macbeth and Macduff's fight to the death at the climax, most scenes are situated within the castle. Shakespeare increases the effects of this closeness with references to the ambient noises of the surroundings. Having killed Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth become increasingly nervous as they hear owls, crickets and strange knocking sounds in the castle. A 2018 production in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse used candles to cast the play half in shadow, with some scenes taking place in total darkness. The audience thus became highly attuned to the language of the play, left as they were able only to listen to rather than see the actors. Bakhtin describes how 'all things small [Shakespeare's similes] spread to make them large, to bring them to the limit'.[50] The play is able to take on a cosmic significance despite its relatively small scope. One of the examples Bakhtin chooses to illustrate this use of similes comes from Lady Macbeth's speech heralding Duncan and Macbeth's arrival at the castle, when she asks for 'thick night' to 'pall […] in the dunnest smoke of hell', so that 'heaven' is unable to 'peep through the blanket of the dark,/ To cry 'Hold, hold!' (I. 5. 46-50). Although Lady Macbeth is asking for the space around her to become even more

[50] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 530.

claustrophobic and difficult to navigate, her invocation of heaven and hell retains the cosmic topography that is present throughout the play.

Hamlet and Oedipus

The plays discussed so far have not always mapped neatly onto the models that Bakhtin proposes: *Macbeth,* for example, must find substitute parent and child figures for its protagonist, while Cordelia's refusal to adhere to the official lie at any point in *King Lear* changes the emphasis of the play. In the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin considers the suitability of certain characters for certain roles, analysing the position they take up within the tension between the official and the unofficial. Hamlet has come in for much scrutiny as a tragic protagonist over time, and it is worth testing him against the Bakhtinian model for 'the hero of a tragedy'. For Bakhtin, the hero cannot be someone 'tamed by law' who 'is resigned to the law of replacement, his deeds … determined by fear, his thought and words … subject to the censorship of consciousness'.[51] This unsuitable person 'patiently waits for the death of his father, is sincerely afraid of it and mourns it, sincerely loves his son and heir (and successor) and sincerely lives for his son'. Hamlet, while an unusual hero, does not conform to these categories.

From his first appearance, Hamlet openly resists Claudius and Gertrude: his first line in the play contradicts Claudius' assessment that 'the clouds still hang' on him, as he answers sharply 'Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun'.[52] His uncle tries to impress upon Hamlet the cycle of renewal and replacement Bakhtin emphasizes, commenting 'you must know, your father lost a father;/ That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound/ In filial obligation for some term/ To do obsequious sorrow' (2. 89-92). Claudius' words are intended to put a

[51] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.
[52] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition* eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2. 67.

stop to the 'unmanly grief' which he believes Hamlet is showing: in Claudius' view, rather than caring too little about the death of his father, Hamlet moves instead into excess grief, which is similarly unnatural. Hamlet's behaviour here reveals a difficulty in Bakhtin's analysis of the person tamed by law. He mourns his father's death, as Bakhtin says, yet refuses to accept Claudius as his father's replacement. There is a friction between this acceptance of the law of replacement and mourning. As demonstrated in this play, grief seems to work against Bakhtin's utopian concept of the life cycle.

As the play progresses, Hamlet continues to exhibit a mixture of both the characteristics of the tragic protagonist and of the man not fit to be the hero of a tragedy. The callous reaction he has to his murder of Polonius is shocking: he dismisses the king's advisor casually, exclaiming 'Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!' (11. 29). In the last act of the play, he is similarly unfeeling towards his former friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whose deaths he describes as 'not near my conscience' (19. 58) – a dismissal we might expect from the iron logic of the self-asserting life. Yet the extent to which Hamlet deliberates over avenging his father's death seems 'determined by fear', and his extensive soliloquising could be characterised as being 'subject to the censorship of consciousness'.[53] Gregory Doran's 2008 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Hamlet* put the interval of the play in the middle of Hamlet's speech over Claudius at prayer, creating an artificial cliffhanger on the line 'And now I'll do't', which was resolved in the second half with Hamlet's realisation 'And so he goes to heaven', preventing him from murdering his uncle (10. 74). Shakespeare has Hamlet explicitly muse 'Thus conscience does make cowards', but Bakhtin dismisses this view of Hamlet later in the notes (8. 84): he claims that 'it is deeply

[53] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.

naïve to reduce all this to the psychology of a man who is indecisive, eaten by reflection, or overly scrupulous'.[54]

As with *Macbeth,* Bakhtin performs a reading of *Hamlet* that reconfigures the text for his own purposes. He suggests that *Hamlet* is 'a dislocated, shifted *Oedipus Rex*', with Hamlet taking on the role of Oedipus as the 'potential genuine murderer by nature' who is thwarted in his aims by Claudius.[55] Claudius murders Old Hamlet, who in the Bakhtinian patricidal pattern should have been killed by his son, Hamlet. Hamlet's attempt on the new king's life is therefore not revenge, but 'a simple removal of a rival'. More drastically, Bakhtin claims that 'having killed Claudius (who, after all, also plays a loving father), Hamlet should die himself too, 'as a (potential) comurderer'. Bakhtin effectively changes the genre of the play here: instead of an early Jacobean revenge tragedy, *Hamlet* becomes a classical tragedy. Shakespeare's play fits neither category comfortably, mixing elements of the two to comment on individualism as well as dramatic genre. It is of course impossible to suggest an Oedipal reading of the play without considering Freud's work, yet Bakhtin tries to shy away from making this reference, remarking 'if one may speak of psychology here, it is only the deep psychology of life itself, the psychology of individuality as such'.[56] Freud's Oedipus complex functions as an early part of the developmental process, which is often navigated without damage to the child; Bakhtin's Oedipal reading of *Hamlet* takes on a much wider significance, governing Hamlet's actions at a later stage in his life, and leading ultimately to the crime which brings about his end.

Bakhtin purses an Oedipal reading with regard to the women of the play, too. He claims that 'Ophelia turns out to be a potential stand-in for the mother in the incestuous bed',

[54] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[55] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[56] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.

with ‘mother and lover […] fused in the image of the woman – the same womb both is fecundated and gives birth in the coitus’. Oedipal elements in the closet scene have been discussed in Shakespeare studies, but it is unusual for Ophelia and Gertrude to be linked in this way. Bakhtin draws here on ideas about renewal and replacement found in the main text of *Rabelais and His World* but as ever with his exploration of Shakespeare in the revision notes, gives a complex new interpretation of these themes. Gertrude and Ophelia are elided into one body, useful to Hamlet only in terms of its reproductive capabilities: neither woman is able to attempt the kinds of self-assertion the male protagonists of the tragedies do, breaking down genealogical links to find agency of their own. Bakhtin writes of Gertrude and Ophelia in the same way that Shakespeare constructs their characters in the play and as Hamlet seems to think of them too: that is, as subplots to the larger story of Hamlet, his father, his uncle, and the struggle for power that takes place between these three men.

Hamlet and Ophelia’s relationship has to be extrapolated from the few clues Shakespeare gives in the text, and these are never without some extenuating factor. It is not until the third act that we see the two interact: up until this point we have seen Polonius and Laertes warn Ophelia away from Hamlet in the first act, and Ophelia report on Hamlet’s alarming appearance to her in her closet in the second act, but they do not share the stage together. Their longest exchange is engineered by Polonius and Claudius in Scene Eight. The two older men watch the young couple, but Hamlet at this point is well into his ‘antic disposition’, and their conversation, at first bizarre, develops into real anger on Hamlet’s part, culminating in his rebuke ‘Get thee to a nunn’ry. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?’ (8. 120-121). Ophelia’s lament when he exits, ‘O what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!’, challenges perceptions of Hamlet’s cruelty in this moment (8. 144). She draws a comparison between his former self and his current state, describing ‘that noble and most sovereign reason/ Like sweet bells jangled out of time and harsh;/ That unmatched form and feature of

blown youth/ Blasted with ecstasy' (8. 151-154). It is not clear whether Ophelia's speech here is performative: she knows that her father and the king are within earshot, so she may be promoting an image of Hamlet as a good man in crisis for their benefit, rather than expressing how she genuinely feels. Shakespeare does not allow her to elucidate the situation by speaking again in the scene. Instead, Claudius and Polonius discuss Hamlet's madness and agree on their next plan, which is to observe Gertrude's interactions with her son.

It seems as though Bakhtin's analysis of the female roles in *Hamlet* squares with Shakespeare's intentions: both critic and playwright think of Ophelia and Gertrude in terms of their relationship to Hamlet, with their own personhood less important than what they bring to the story of the tragic protagonist. Bakhtin places an emphasis upon renewal and the cyclical nature of life: as bodies are linked in their reproductive and decaying phases, so the bodies of Ophelia and Gertrude are linked in the way that they gave life to Hamlet and may allow him to bestow life upon his own heirs. In his consideration of individualism in the notes, Bakhtin describes this cycle as 'the deep tragedy of *individual* life itself, condemned to be born and to die, born out of another's death and by its own death fecundating another's life'. *Rabelais and His World* thus functions as a celebration of collective life: the fusing of bodies can be construed positively if the process of continuity is considered in this way. Yet Bakhtin also writes ominously in the notes of 'the mother's betrayal'.[57] As discussed, Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet over the course of the play operates mainly under surveillance: his interactions with his mother and his potential lover are therefore problematised by the circumstances in which all three characters find themselves, leaving little room for the festive cyclicity Bakhtin celebrates in *Rabelais and His World*.

[57] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.

As in *King Lear,* Bakhtin does, however, see a moment of revelation in *Hamlet*: 'Like Lear, Hamlet touched the genuine reality of the world, of life, and of the human being', coming to terms with the way in which 'the whole system of official good, truth, devotion, love, friendship, etc., has collapsed'.[58] As with *Lear*, 'here too, once in a while, the liberating tones of the saturnalia and the carnival are heard'. *Hamlet,* it seems, finds a middle ground between the more 'single-toned' *Macbeth* and *Lear* where, by contrast, 'everything is penetrated with the ambivalent folk wisdom of the saturnalia and the carnival'. The three tragedies thus could be said to form a scale: *Macbeth* as the interior, claustrophobic, darkened nightmare; *Hamlet* moving somewhere between interiority and larger scale drama; and *King Lear* opening up its concerns to consider official and unofficial culture in its wider implications. Bakhtin does not identify a moment of revelation in *Macbeth*: in *Hamlet* it is not until the latter stages that the prince comes to a true understanding of his circumstances and the nature of the world; while in *King Lear,* Lear discovers the true nature of the world early on in the play.

Near the end of the play, Hamlet's encounter with the gravediggers indicates that he is beginning to come to terms with mortality. There is a sense of resignation alongside the wonder he expresses when confronted with Yorick's skull: his exclamation 'To what base uses we may return, Horatio!' makes clear his acceptance of the cyclical nature of life, with which he has struggled thus far (18. 165). He is not incapable of levity and shows of emotions, though, having reached this point. His anger when faced with Ophelia's funeral and Laertes' displays of grief, as well as his taunting of Osric alongside Horatio, make clear that he has not surrendered totally to calm acceptance of the world around him. His speech before he goes to fight with Laertes, delivered in prose, communicates the final peace at which he finds himself. He tells Horatio that 'We defy augury' when his friend suggests that

[58] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.

they could forestall the duel, then remarks cryptically ‘If it be, ‘tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come’ (19. 177-179). Shakespeare’s use of monosyllabic prose here is entirely at odds with the complexity of the thoughts Hamlet is expressing: the short phrase ‘the readiness is all’ is one of the most profound and poignant moments of the play (19. 179). At this point, Hamlet touches or at least seems to touch Bakhtin’s ‘genuine reality of the world, of life, and of the human being’.

Bakhtin brings the topographic element into *Hamlet* not in terms of stage space, but instead in reference to the imagery Shakespeare uses in the play. He describes Hamlet’s putting on of his ‘antic disposition’ as ‘the state of fictive madness’ in which ‘the world is revealed to him’.[59] This revelation is via ‘the aspect of the bodily nether regions’, although Bakhtin claims that these images ‘are combined in his lines with the retained images of high topography (restoring ambivalence)’. In his first ‘mad’ exchange with Polonius, Hamlet calls the older man ‘a fishmonger’, before remarking that ‘to be honest as this world goes is to be one man picked out of ten thousand’ (7. 173-178). He moves from describing a reasonably lowly trade, that of the fishmonger, to discussing what he characterises as the high virtue of honesty. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear, they banter with Hamlet about Fortune and where they situate themselves on her person: from the button of her cap, to the soles of her shoe, to ‘her waist, or in the middle of her favours’ (7. 220-223). These few lines carry out the Bakhtinian topographic simile to the letter, stretching the imagery from pole to pole and finishing with ‘the bodily nether regions’ just as Bakhtin observes. His exploration of this play in the notes touches on several of the themes with which he is preoccupied throughout, with his discussion of heroism in tragedies to the fore, alongside complex readings of the characters and the language of *Hamlet* as a whole.

[59] ‘Bakhtin on Shakespeare’, p. 534.

Othello and cosmic topography

It is in *Othello* that Bakhtin identifies the movement from high to low level imagery in the speech of the tragic protagonist, going on to discuss its meaning in the larger structure of the play. He suggests that there are two groups of characters who align with different kinds of topographies: Othello's, Desdemona's, and Cassio's words and gestures are dominated by 'the topography of the cosmic (and in part the bodily) heights', while Iago's, Emilia's, and the clowns' are dominated by 'the topography of the bodily nether regions'.[60] In *Magic in the Web*, Robert Heilman notes that 'Iago […] repeatedly expresses his views in terms of bodily functions', using them 'conspicuously to express his contempt'.[61] Yet the characters do not remain fixed in these topographies: Bakhtin claims instead that 'when Othello is seized by the 'madness' of jealousy', which he describes as 'the traditional passing of the sun-hero through the eclipse phase, the phase of temporary death-madness', the emotional extremities which he is undergoing mean that 'his speech (and his gestures) is flooded with images of the bodily nether regions'. Desdemona, in Othello's imagination, also undergoes a movement from high to low, 'from the high cosmic plane of *heavenly* purity, *paradise*, and angel to the plane of the bodily nether regions, of the *whore*'. Elsewhere in the notes, Bakhtin comments on Shakespeare's punning on the words 'lying' and 'lying': here, this wordplay becomes a grim link between two activities that Othello suspects his wife of carrying out, both taking place on the lower topographic level.

Bakhtin claims that Shakespeare differentiates between his characters through their use of language. Thus, 'in the speeches of tragic (high) heroes (such as Othello), the prevailing images are those of cosmic topography (the earth, the sky, hell, paradise, life, death, angel, demon, the elements)', while in the speech of oppositional characters such as

[60] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 533.
[61] Robert Heilman, *Magic in the Web: Action and Language in* Othello (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), p. 105.

Iago, 'the prevailing images are those of bodily topography (face-rear, copulation, a beast with two backs, food, drink, bed, excrement, etc.), i.e. lowering images'.[62] Language and imagery become ways for Shakespeare's characters to situate themselves and to indicate to the audience the topographic areas to which they belong. The notion of 'tragic (high) heroes' as occupying the cosmic spheres harks backs to Aristotle and his *Poetics*, as do Bakhtin's remarks on who is 'fit' to be hero of a tragedy. In *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach claims that 'more than a century and a half after his death, Shakespeare's work became the ideal and example for all movements of revolt against the strict separation of styles in French classicism'.[63] Auerbach's analysis describes what he calls a 'mixed style', which does not seek to separate 'the sublime and the realm of everyday realities'. His discussion centres around Prince Hal in the tavern in *Henry IV Part One*: a more subtle treatment of characters moving from level to level than that of *Othello,* but nonetheless exploring similar tensions and trajectories. Bakhtin's comments about Othello's decline from high to low show that it is possible for 'high' characters to take on the images of bodily topography, particularly in ways that indicate psychological changes taking place as the play progresses.

The disintegration of Othello's language is in fact the clearest sign of his descent into madness and jealousy. Bakhtin's analysis of his movement between levels of imagery is extremely effective; as Bakhtin notes, Shakespeare reveals Othello's breakdown in the formal elements of his speech. At the beginning of the play, when called upon to advocate for himself and his wooing of Desdemona, Othello is eloquent, using blank verse to weave a tale of his adventures and render Desdemona's admiration plausible. He says that 'She swore in faith 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,/ 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful', the

[62] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.
[63] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 313.

repetition and rhythm of the line acting as a bewitching metronome.[64] As Iago begins to plant the seeds of jealousy in Othello's mind, however, Othello undergoes a striking transformation, which is expressed linguistically. His speech starts to become full of lower-level imagery, including animal imagery, such as the exclamatory 'goats and monkeys!' (IV. 1. 245). Earlier in this same scene, he 'falls in a trance', losing control of both his language and his physicality. The dialogue leading up to this point is in prose and lacks cohesion: Othello speaks in short, confused sentences, musing angrily 'Lie with her? Lie on her?' and 'Handkerchief – confessions – handkerchief' (IV. 1. 34-36), until he falls into this trance. He even ruminates on the word 'lie', as Bakhtin has discussed. At the end of the play, regaining something of his sense of self, Othello moves back into verse, but the damage has been done earlier in his descent into lower topographic levels.

Bakhtin does not limit topographicity to Shakespeare's imagery. Instead, he claims that topographic images are able to develop 'extraordinary force and lifelikeness in the topographic and thoroughly accentuated space of the stage'.[65] The stage he is referring to is the early modern stage, which represented heaven, hell, and earth through the architecture of the playhouse. Bakhtin criticises 'our stage', by contrast, as 'an empty crate without topography and accents, a neutral crate'. It is not clear precisely what he means by 'our stage'; many of his criticisms of contemporary theatre are several decades out of date, insofar as they seem to correspond to the rise of realism associated with playwrights such as Ibsen and Chekhov at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Yet Moscow had seen the work of more experimental artists such as Vsevolod Meyerhold in the 1920s and 1930s, who emphasised physicality through techniques such as biomechanics,

[64] William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Gary Taylor in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), I. 3. 159-160.
[65] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.

expressing emotion through movement. Bodies in space were not therefore unexplored at this point in Russian theatre practice, so the question remains –what kind of contemporary theatre was Bakhtin most familiar with? He claims, for example, that 'on this stage [that is, our stage] one may only bustle about, but not make essential movements; forward, backward, up, and down', suggesting that the images that are produced onstage 'are given a merely practical meaning by things that have been arranged thus', such as the 'clutter' of 'naturalistic decorations, props, and accessories'.

Bakhtin thinks about embodiment onstage more closely later in the notes, where he writes simply 'the problem of *gesture* in the Shakespearean theatre'.[66] Expanding on this comment, he claims 'the gesture inevitably retains some degree of topographicity', so that 'it points[…] to top and bottom, to sky and earth'. The topographic stage means that 'the room (palace, street, etc.) in which the hero acts and gesticulates is not the room (palace, street) of ordinary life either, for it is fitted into the frame of the topographic stage'. Bakhtin makes clear that he believes that these levels are the same for the writer, performer, and audience, making up a 'topographically understood universe'. This universe is not just physical; rather, 'the expressive […] psychological gesture is fitted into the frame of the topographic gesture'. Psychology and physicality are thus brought together; Shakespeare's images and gesture operate within a topographic stage space that becomes a communal space through the shared meaning created by those both onstage and off. Criticising realism in the theatre once more, Bakhtin claims that 'realistic ordinary-life stage scenery erases all traces of topographicity', so that 'the Shakespearean gesture degenerates and topographic verbal images begin to sound almost comical'. Without the topographic stage, then, topographic language cannot operate at its full potential. Bakhtin thus puts forward an argument for the staging of Shakespeare in a

[66] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.

certain way, with a particular kind of theatre architecture or stage construction needed – ideally one approaching the spaces in which Shakespeare's plays were originally produced.

Othello is a play that deals in physicality and the placement of objects in particular. The central jealousy plot revolves around the handkerchief Othello gave to Desdemona, which she then loses. Its transferral to Emilia, Iago, Cassio, and finally Bianca mirrors the Bakhtinian movement from the cosmic to the bodily level, if we follow the status of the characters within the play. It has been given as a love token from Othello, the noble general, to his wife Desdemona, who at various points is described using celestial language. Bakhtin identifies Iago as a hero whose speech is composed of images to do with bodily topography; through his machinations, the handkerchief makes its way finally to Bianca, a prostitute. Othello accuses Desdemona of actions similar to those of Bianca, a point that Shakespeare drives home via the scene where Iago leads Othello to overhear Cassio discussing Bianca while under the impression that his disgraced officer is talking about Desdemona. Cassio tells Iago how Bianca 'haunts' him, and speaks of her as a 'bauble', who 'falls me thus about my neck' (IV. 1. 126-128). Shakespeare creates a link here between Bianca the 'bauble' and Desdemona, who has been described as a 'jewel' at the beginning of the play. The women are prized at different rates for the decorative objects they are perceived as by the male characters. Like the handkerchief, they become something to be passed from man to man, unable to control their own representation at the level of topographic imagery.

The *Rabelais* revision notes, then, demonstrate a potentiality in Bakhtin that was never fully realised. Sandler's translation of the Shakespeare sections of them make clear that there is valuable analysis to be found here, on a detailed textual level and on a larger scale, as Bakhtin thinks through patterns evident in Shakespeare's major tragedies. Bakhtin's commentary on theatre and its development through time, too, is illuminating if somewhat confused with regard to the emphasis of particular dramatic movements, such as nineteenth-

century realism. I take the notes forward, then, to expand on Bakhtin's preliminary work and produce a holistic aesthetics of drama which brings in other elements from critical work he produced throughout his career, primarily focused not on drama but on subjects such as carnival and the novel. This aesthetics is not definitive, just as Bakhtin's work in the *Rabelais* revision notes is not definitive or complete, but stands as a hypothetical construction of what Bakhtin might have knit together were he to have spent more time exploring the innovative ideas he did have about drama.

Chapter Two

A Bakhtinian Aesthetics of Drama

> To speak of a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic quality in Shakespeare's dramas is in our opinion simply impossible.[1]
>
> If one can speak at all of a plurality of fully valid voices in Shakespeare, then it would only apply to the entire body of his work and not to individual plays. In essence each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero.[2]
>
> In drama the world must be made from a single piece. Any weakening of this monolithic quality leads to a weakening of dramatic effect.[3]
>
> The whole concept of a dramatic action, as that which resolves all dialogic oppositions, is purely monologic.[4]

In this chapter, I construct a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama and argue for the ways in which drama as a genre can make sense of Bakhtin's body of criticism. Thanks to the exchanges that take place between the creative team, the performers, and their audience, the embodied nature of theatre, and the ephemerality of live performance, drama knits together the major themes of Bakhtin's work and fulfils his ideas in a way that the novel and poetry cannot. I begin by focusing on Bakhtin's dismissal of drama in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, considering the 'theatrophobic' Bakhtin, before examining some examples of positive

[1] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 34.
[2] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 34.
[3] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 17.
[4] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 17.

engagement with theatre in his life and critical career. I structure my aesthetics of 'Bakhtinian' drama via three sections titled 'Dialogism', 'Embodiment', and 'Eventness', with corresponding chapters in the second half of the thesis as I explore twenty-first-century Shakespeare performance.

Bakhtin the theatrophobe?

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin dismisses drama as monologic. In no more than a page, in response to Leonid Grossman's comments on Dostoevsky, he claims that it is definitively impossible for drama as a genre to be dialogic, unlike the novel and in particular the novels of Dostoevsky. Alastair Renfrew defines dialogism as 'the staging of a genuine encounter of 'two or more consciousnesses', which requires more than a 'mere' compositional organisation of character interaction by the author; it requires a dialogical orientation, a dialogical *practice*'.[5] This kind of genuine encounter, orientated in this way, is, Bakhtin says, impossible in drama. Drama is instead for Bakhtin monologic, comprised of a 'monologically understood, objectified world', one which corresponds 'to a single and unified authorial consciousness'. Dostoevsky's characters are able to stand alongside him as autonomous consciousnesses in the novel, but characters in drama are always inferior to their author, whoever that may be. Dialogue may take place in drama, that is, characters may speak to each other, but this speech, Bakhtin says, is 'always encased in a firm and stable monologic framework'.[6] Bakhtin, almost without exception, refuses to consider a potentiality in drama for dialogism.

Bakhtin's aim in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* is to position Dostoevsky as 'one of the greatest innovators in the realm of artistic form' on account of his creation of 'a

[5] Alastair Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 79.
[6] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 17.

completely new type of artistic thinking, which we have provisionally called *polyphonic*'.[7] Polyphony consists of '*a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses*'.[8] These independent consciousnesses 'destroy the monologic plane of the novel and call forth an unmediated response'.[9] Each character in Dostoevsky's dialogic novel is 'a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word'. Dialogue that we find in drama cannot 'rip apart the represented world' or 'make it multi-leveled', according to Bakhtin. Instead, he says, if dialogue is to be 'authentically dramatic, these rejoinders necessitate the utmost monolithic unity of that world', which 'must be made from a single piece'. He argues that 'dramatic action […] resolves all dialogic oppositions' and that therefore 'a true multiplicity of levels would destroy drama', because dramatic action relies upon this 'unity of the world'. Bakhtin's overwhelming sense of the monologism of drama denies any playwright the possibility of creating characters like those of Dostoevsky, who stand on the same footing as their author. In Bakhtin's eyes, people on a stage are always subservient to the finalising intentions of their creator. There may be polyphony in terms of multiple voices being featured, and even dialogism to some extent, with 'characters [who] come together dialogically', but crucially this coming together is always within 'the unified field of vision of author, director, and audience against the clearly defined background of a single-tiered world'. Drama, for Bakhtin, is always monologic.

Slightly later in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin repeats some of the same criticisms in reference to Shakespeare. Responding this time to Anatoly Lunacharsky's contention that Shakespeare should be considered one of Dostoevsky's polyphonic predecessors, Bakhtin replies that 'to speak of a fully formed and deliberate polyphonic

[7] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 3.
[8] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 6.
[9] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 5.

quality in Shakespeare's dramas is in our opinion simply impossible'.[10] Bakhtin concedes that 'certain elements, embryonic rudiments, early buddings of polyphony can indeed be detected in the dramas of Shakespeare' but ultimately returns to his former position: 'drama is by its very nature alien to genuine polyphony'.[11] He works around the possibility of polyphony in Shakespeare by declaring that 'if one can speak at all of a plurality of fully valid voices in Shakespeare, then it would only apply to the entire body of his work and not to individual plays'. 'Each play contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero, while polyphony presumes a plurality of fully valid voices within the limits of a single work'. Bakhtin's final rebuttal of Lunacharsky's argument for a polyphonic Shakespeare comes in the assertion that 'the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world to the degree they are in Dostoevsky'. Shakespeare's characters, Bakhtin maintains, 'are not ideologists in the full sense of the word'. For Bakhtin, 'Dostoevsky alone can be considered the creator of genuine polyphony'.

These dismissals of drama and of Shakespeare in the service of Bakhtin's larger Dostoevsky project indicate a real unease with drama as a genre. Bakhtin focuses his work on the novel and on larger critical themes, including carnival and self-other relations: at no point does he give drama the attention it deserves. The discussions I have highlighted in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* are frustratingly brief even as they demonstrate a fascinating kind of relationship to the genre. Bakhtin's dismissals lead us to question, too, the kind of theatre he saw in his own lifetime. As I will discuss below, innovative theatre practices were taking place in the Soviet Union throughout Bakhtin's career, but they do not appear to have informed his theoretical rejection of the dialogic potential of theatre. The twenty-first-century

[10] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 34.
[11] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 34. For the relationship between polyphony and dialogism, see Renfrew's *Mikhail Bakhtin* pp. 76-77. He suggests that the former is 'little more than a staging post' on its way to dialogism as the 'fundamental terminology'. Bakhtin himself describes polyphony as a 'graphic analogy, nothing more' to be applied to Dostoevsky and literature more generally, whereas (as will be seen later in this chapter) dialogism is more widely applicable to human interaction, consciousness, and selfhood.

productions I focus on in the second half of the thesis cast Bakhtin's claims about the inherently monologic nature of drama in a different light, as I will discuss more generally in the second half of this chapter.

Bakhtin in the theatre

What kind of theatre, then, did Bakhtin encounter? The details of his life are notoriously obscure, thanks to the turbulent political time he lived through and his own propensity for embellishing details of his biography.[12] There are moments, however, which demonstrate his engagement with drama outside of his own critical work. In 1936, Bakhtin became lecturer in world literature at the Mordovian Pedagogical Institute in Saransk. V. B. Estifeeva's recollections of Bakhtin feature commentary on his discussion of a touring production of *Othello* with his students, as well as his involvement with the Mordvinian Musical Dramatic Theatre, where he gave a seminar on ethics and the history of the theatrical arts.[13] The trip to see *Othello* resulted in a series of lectures on the play, given by Bakhtin at his students' request, in which he apparently discussed expressive gesture, a term which seems to anticipate cosmic topography, and to which I will return in discussion of embodiment later in this chapter. When Bakhtin returned to Saransk in the later part of his life, he also reviewed a production of Victor Hugo's 1833 play *Marie Tudor* for the *Sovetskaia Mordovia* newspaper in 1954. In Saransk, we see Bakhtin involved in the cultural life of the city, commenting on contemporary productions and expanding this commentary for the benefit of his students. This is not the theatrophobic literary philosopher we are familiar with from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

[12] See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist's *Mikhail Bakhtin: A Biography*, although their work in this book has been criticised by I. R. Titunik and David H. Richter amongst others.
[13] V. B. Estifeeva, 'Drevo zhizni. K 100-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia M. M. Bakhtina. Vospominaniia o Bakhtine (Pervoe desitiletie v Saranske)', *Strannik* 3 (1995), pp. 25-32.

Early on in his critical career, Bakhtin used theatrical concepts to illuminate his ideas. In 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', written in the early 1920s, he discusses 'the creative work of the actor' in order to illustrate 'outsideness', which he argues is key in the relationship between author and hero.[14] I will discuss outsideness in more detail later in this chapter, but for now it is Bakhtin's working-through of the concept via performance that is of note. Bakhtin is interested here in the aesthetic creativity of the actor and when and where the act of creation takes place in performance. He claims that 'the actor is aesthetically creative only when he is an author', but says that this role of 'author' encompasses 'co-author, a stage director, and an active spectator of the portrayed hero and of the whole play', culminating in the equation 'the author = the director = the actor'. The actor is an author during the rehearsal process, when he comes together with other members of the creative team to construct a character. At the moment of performance, Bakhtin claims that the actor becomes 'passive material', as part of the artistic whole that is now onstage. Acting, for Bakhtin, stands at a fascinating bridge between inside- and outsideness: the actor must stand outside of the character as he develops it, with the director, but then move inside the character and allow the audience to take on the outside, aesthetically creative position as they watch the production.

As well as developing his ideas on performance in this way, Bakhtin uses the vocabulary of the theatre in order to describe the novel. Jennifer Wise suggests that his concept of the novel 'is everywhere built upon structures and functions drawn directly from drama and its theorists'.[15] As she points out, his 'most definitive statements about the novel are, paradoxically, built out of dramatic metaphors', so that 'the novelist 'stages' discourses, 'performs' cartwheels and lazzi, improvises outside his 'script', and, most dramatically, 'is

[14] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 76.
[15] Jennifer Wise, 'Marginalising Drama: Bakhtin's Theory of Genre', *Essays in Theatre* 8:1 (1989), p. 15.

said to abandon any unmediated language of his own and speak only through the mouths of others, like a 'playwright.'' Other critics, meanwhile, dismiss Bakhtin's perceived theatrophobia: David Krasner, for example, rebuts Bakhtin's criticisms of 'monologic' drama, swiftly demonstrating that 'in theatre, gestures and utterances are dialogised, and as such they deserve attention within dramatic theory', with his essay making a case for the use of dialogism in dramatic theory.[16] Robert Cunliffe, meanwhile, does not engage with Bakhtin's misgivings about theatre, merely pointing out that 'if it [the Bakhtin School] is to have any abiding critical value, we must force it, in accordance with its own tenets, to go where it did not explicitly intend to'.[17]

Other critics use parts of Bakhtin's work to illuminate certain ideas, cherry-picking concepts rather than looking at his thought holistically. Dick McCaw reads Bakhtin in the context of theatre contemporary to him, looking closely at Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Grotowski and putting Bakhtin's contentious discussion of monologic drama to one side.[18] Keith Harrison uses various Bakhtinian concepts to think about Shakespeare on film.[19] Philip D. Collington argues for dialogic drama with a close reading of *Hamlet*, analysing a specific scene in the play to demonstrate Shakespeare's use of different social and literary genres: after a quick summary of Bakhtin's dismissal of drama, Collington in effect uses *Hamlet* as a case study to demonstrate his claims.[20] Kay Hepplewhite uses Bakhtin in quite a different way, weaving dialogism into her work on applied theatre practice without citing *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in order to reflect on the changes wrought in practitioners by their work

[16] David Krasner, 'Dialogics and Dialectics: Bakhtin, Young Hegelians, and Dramatic Theory' in *Bakhtin: Ethics and Mechanics*, ed. Valerie Z. Nollan (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003), pp. 3-31.
[17] Robert Cunliffe, 'Towards a Bakhtinian Semiotics of Theatre', *Discours Social/Social Discourse: Analyse du Discours et Sociocritique des Textes/Discourse Analysis and Sociocriticism of Texts* 7 (1995), pp. 181-195.
[18] Dick McCaw, *Bakhtin and Theatre: Dialogues with Stanislavsky, Meyerhold and Grotowski* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).
[19] Keith Harrison, *Shakespeare, Bakhtin, and Film: A Dialogic Lens* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)
[20] Philip D. Collington, ''Sallets in the Lines to Make the Matter Savoury': Bakhtinian Speech Genres and Inserted Genres in *Hamlet* 2.2', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 53:3 (2011), pp. 237-272.

with theatre groups, which she suggests is inherently dialogic.[21] All of these critics, then, take different approaches to Bakhtin's negative portrayal of drama but, most importantly, do not allow it to stymie their own explorations of theatre and their incorporation of Bakhtin in these explorations. In the following sections, I will make the case for drama's value as the genre which, paradoxically, makes most sense of Bakhtin's work, reading his criticism closely and, in a sense, against itself, to produce a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama.

Dialogism

Later in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* than the dismissals of drama and Shakespeare I have cited above, Bakhtin presents a different way of thinking about dialogism:

> Dialogic relationships are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life – in general, everything that has meaning and significance.[22]

All human interaction, Bakhtin belatedly argues, is dialogic, which informs the construction of Dostoevsky's dialogic novel. He continues: 'Dostoevsky could hear dialogic relationships everywhere, in all manifestations of conscious and intelligent human life; where consciousness began, there dialogue began for him as well'. In 'Discourse in the Novel', written in the mid-1930s, Bakhtin emphasises this omnipresent dialogism, expanding upon *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* by arguing that 'the dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse'.[23] These later comments open up

[21] Kay Hepplewhite, 'The applied theatre practitioner as dialogic hero', *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 20:2 (2015), pp. 182-185.
[22] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 40.
[23] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 279.

dialogism and suggest that the dialogic/monologic binary Bakhtin attempts to apply to the novel and to drama is not in fact as concrete as it may seem.

This more expansive approach to dialogism leads us in a different direction: if dialogism is a property of all human interactions, it cannot be confined to Dostoevsky's novel or indeed the novel in general. Dialogism must be possible in drama, despite Bakhtin's dismissive comments early on in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetry*. In 'Discourse in the Novel', we find a more nuanced discussion: Bakhtin states that dialogism 'can occur in all the poetic genres as well, even in the lyric', albeit with the caveat that 'such an image can fully unfold, achieve full complexity and depth and at the same time artistic closure, only under the conditions present in the genre of the novel'.[24] The novel for Bakhtin is not then the only dialogic genre but instead the genre in which dialogism is best expressed. We might therefore reconsider his analysis of drama in *Problems of Dostoevky's Poetics*, perhaps coming to the rather different conclusion that, here at least, Bakhtin is more concerned with mounting a rhetorical dismissal of Leonid Grossman's arguments regarding the nature of dialogism in Dostoevsky than he is with a theory of drama as such. Grossman does not, for Bakhtin, fully comprehend the multi-voiced Dostoevskian novel, which Bakhtin says possesses a 'dialogicality of the ultimate whole'.[25] Given Bakhtin's latter comments in 'Discourse in the Novel', we can conclude that at least some dialogism is not only possible, but also inevitable in drama – as I hope to show in the second part of this thesis.

When Bakhtin comes to discuss monologism further, his comments on it are highly specific, unlike the more general criticism of drama that we have already encountered. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, first published in 1929 as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*, before a second edition in 1963 featuring a new chapter on the carnivalesque and Menippean

[24] 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 278.
[25] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 18.

satire, his ultimate aim is a critique of 'the ideological monologism of modern times'.[26] Much of Bakhtin's thought on the word places emphasis on the environment in which dialogue is produced: later in this chapter, I will discuss the importance for Bakhtin of the 'once-occurrent *event* of Being', introduced in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, where human activity only gains its full meaning if performed in a concrete, specifically located situation.[27] Bakhtin is writing in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* against theoreticism and the abstract in support of the actualised subject. This emphasis on context, then, can be extrapolated to shed light on Bakhtin's criticism of the monologism of modern times in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*. His sense of monologism is not as all-encompassing as it may seem; instead, it is the monologic nature of the environment in which art is too often produced that is the problem, whether that be understood broadly in terms of 'Modernity' or more precisely in the specific context of the early Soviet Union.

In 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin thinks further about the way in which transitions from one historical period to another engendered new ways of conceiving the world. Discussing the Renaissance, and in particular the work of François Rabelais, he identifies in the 'dissolution of the medieval world view' the emergence of 'a new form of time and a new relationship of time to space, to earthly space'.[28] 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' lays out the concept of the chronotope, defined by Bakhtin as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'.[29] I will explore chronotope more fully in the below section on 'Embodiment', but some examples of chronotopes include, for instance, the road

[26] This critique of 'modern times' comes from the 1929 version of the book – placing Bakhtin's comment in the Soviet context makes his sense of ideologically restrictive monologism much more concrete and evocative.
[27] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, eds. Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 12.
[28] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 206.
[29] 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 84.

and the castle. Bakhtin places great emphasis on the ways in which such chronotopes construct space and time, as well as their influence on narrative. His favoured sites for the exploration of chronotopes are the 'Greek novels' of antiquity and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century 'novels of becoming', or *Bildungsroman*. Towards the end of 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' Bakhtin explores historical time itself in terms of chronotopes, which become a formalised alternative to the idea of the 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*). Thus the Renaissance itself, for example, can be reconceived as a kind of chronotope. The epochal shifts from the medieval period to the Renaissance into Enlightenment thought and on to the Soviet twentieth century are nonetheless marked, in Bakhtin's view, by the persistence of the monologic, which he attempts to excavate in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*.

The story of the novel that Bakhtin is telling, then, has the height of ideological monologism occurring in his own time, the first half of the twentieth century, and freer, more dialogic creative work taking place in other eras – including the Renaissance. The productions I am looking at, originally written by an early modern author, then staged in the twenty-first century, need not be bound by the strict monologism Bakhtin condemns in the two versions of his Dostoevsky book. Bakhtin's interest in the concrete situatedness of the word in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and in his later work, which I will discuss at more length later in this chapter, can be extrapolated in this instance to add to a more nuanced picture of monologism. Dialogism, monologism's opposite, exists everywhere in human interactions: nothing can be truly monologic, but, just as Bakhtin argues that the Dostoevskian novel is the best location to find true dialogism, some periods in time suffer from a more monologic sensibility. If Bakhtin were to write about twenty-first-century theatre, he might in fact argue that drama now is 'novelised': that it is dialogic like Dostoevsky's novel. In 'Epic and Novel', for example, he claims that 'in an era when the

novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres are to a greater or lesser extent 'novelised''.[30] When these remaining genres become novelised, they become 'more free and flexible […] they become dialogised', and 'the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality'.[31]

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin introduces dialogism via the concept of polyphony, as I discussed briefly above. He states that '*a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels*'.[32] Polyphony is a term usually used in music, which means 'many voices': as he begins *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin claims that reading Dostoevsky 'leaves the impression that one is dealing not with a *single* author-artist who wrote novels and stories, but with a number of philosophical statements by *several* author-thinkers – Raskolnikov, Myshkin, Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov, the Grand Inquisitor, and others'.[33] Transposing this model to drama seems on the surface to be straightforward: we might think, for example, of Shakespeare's history plays, which often feature characters dramatically at odds with each other representing different factions, on behalf of their families and their political interests. The making of drama, too, features polyphony, in the varied artistic voices that are needed to bring a piece of theatre to the stage: the director, set and costume designer, stage management, actors, etc. Yet polyphony, Bakhtin says, serves as only 'a graphic analogy, nothing more'.[34] Polyphony 'points out those new problems which arise when a novel is constructed beyond the boundaries of ordinary monologic unity'. It is

[30] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 5.
[31] 'Epic and Novel', p. 7.
[32] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 6.
[33] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 5.
[34] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 22.

possible for a novel (or any other form) to be polyphonic without being dialogic: the key here is the orientation of the voices in the novel, both towards each other and towards the reader.

Working alongside Bakhtin in Vitebsk in the 1920s was Valentin Voloshinov, whose *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* was published in 1929. This text has been controversially attributed to Bakhtin at points and certainly shares his interests in the materiality of language, although it takes this concern further into a more fully linguistic discussion. Like Bakhtin, Voloshinov claims that monologism is impossible. He says that 'linguistics has always taken as its point of departure the finished monologic utterance – the ancient written monument, considering it the ultimate realium'.[35] Voloshinov argues instead that any 'utterance, the written monument included, is an inseverable element of verbal communication', one which 'makes response to something and is calculated to be responded to in turn', existing as 'one link in a continuous chain of speech performances'. In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin dramatizes these relationships between utterances, describing the way in which 'the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction'.[36] Like Voloshinov, he argues that 'every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates'.[37] An important part of dialogism for both Bakhtin and Voloshinov is the word's orientation towards and anticipation of an answer, which shapes it irreversibly.

In drama, both externally and internally, this orientation towards a response is present everywhere. In a basic sense, theatre cannot exist without an audience. Every piece of drama is oriented towards that audience, whatever and wherever their position: the productions that I will discuss in my final three chapters engage their audiences in various different ways, from

[35] V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).
[36] 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 279.
[37] 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 280.

straightforward proscenium arch presentation, to immersive, audience-led practice, to spectators watching a live-streamed performance. As well as this clear orientation towards the spectator, the voices involved in the creation of theatre are also always oriented towards each other. Whether in early modern drama, where companies worked together as ensembles without a director taking the lead, or in twenty-first-century drama, where creative roles such as director, designers (set, costume, lighting, sound), and the performers themselves are more clearly defined, the work that is taking place is always oriented towards an other. For actors, this orientation is even more complex: they themselves are oriented towards at least the audience (if performing a monologue or soliloquy), or the audience and their scene partner(s). Internally, too, the character they are portraying is oriented towards other characters and might also be aware of the audience, depending on the way in which a soliloquy is played. All of these relationships, as well as those present in the text of the play that is being performed, make drama the most dialogic of genres. Drama is fully dialogic, not just polyphonic, and perhaps more so even than Dostoevsky's dialogic novel, which Bakhtin seizes upon as paradigmatic.

The mechanics of traditional theatre are perfectly suited to visualising Bakhtin's explanation of aesthetic contemplation, an early formulation that leads into both dialogism and eventness. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin describes the movement that is needed to produce empathy and self-realisation, where one must empathise by seeing an object 'from inside in its own essence'.[38] After seeing the object from inside, a 'moment of objectification' takes place, 'a placing *outside* of oneself of the individuality understood through empathising, a separating of it from oneself, a *return* into oneself'. Further, 'this returned-into-oneself consciousness gives form, from its own places, to the individuality grasped from inside, that is, shapes it aesthetically'. The suspension of disbelief that might

[38] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 14.

take place in a proscenium-arch theatre seems a helpful way to think about this transfer from place to place, as if one were an audience member, sitting in the dark and connecting with the action that takes place onstage as if it were one's own life. At the close of the performance, when the lights go down and the actors step downstage to take a bow, the audience member returns to their own life, enriched by what they have seen and understood through another's perspective.

Bakhtin identifies this structure as the 'basic architectonic points of the actual world of the performed act or deed', noting that 'all the values of actual life and culture are arranged around' these points.[39] These values are 'scientific values, aesthetic values, political values (including both ethical and social values), and, finally, religious values'.[40] Everything, he says, revolves around these exchanges taking place: 'all spatio-temporal values and all sense-content values are drawn toward and concentrated around these central emotional-volitional moments: I, the other, and I-for-the-other'. It is impossible for any aspect of human life to exist in a vacuum, cut off from those around it. Bakhtin wrote *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* in 1921, and here we see him putting in place the building blocks for his concept of dialogism: this structure, 'I, the other, and I-for-the-other', like dialogism, is found everywhere and underpins everything. And again, drama seems to be the literary genre that best represents this architectonic structure, placing as it does the I, the other, and the I-for-the-other relationship in the same space at the same time. Novels and poetry do not often place multiple readers in the same space at the same time, whereas theatre, with its spectating crowd, usually does. Often, too, theatre-makers draw the audience's attention to their role as spectators, puncturing their suspension of disbelief and further facilitating the back-and-forth movement Bakhtin discerns within aesthetic contemplation.

[39] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 54.
[40] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 54.

Drama also provides the best model for what Bakhtin calls 'outsideness', the position that both the author and reader take up as '*creators of form*', allowing for aesthetic contemplation to take place.[41] Bakhtin says that the position of the author and reader, 'the position from which their artistic, form-giving self-activity proceeds, may be defined as situated – temporally, spatially, and with respect to meaning – *outside* all constituents, without exception, of the inner architectonic field of artistic vision'. The constituents of the inner architectonic field are in a state of dialogic exchange, and the author and reader's position outside that field allow a similar dialogic exchange to take place, ultimately giving form to the whole. Drama is the genre that makes the most sense of these relationships: not only is the spectator usually outside of the performance taking place, but so too is the playwright. In most cases, the playwright is literally offstage during the performance of their work: there might be cases where characters stand in for their creator, as for example Prospero's bidding farewell to his books at the end of *The Tempest*, which is often interpreted as Shakespeare retiring from the stage, but in general when we think about drama, we picture the clear separation between playwright and their work onstage.

Earlier in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', as noted above, Bakhtin discusses 'the creative work of the actor', commenting that 'his position is highly complex from the standpoint of the author-and-hero relationship'.[42] He suggests that 'the actor is aesthetically creative only when he is an author – or to be exact: a co-author, a stage director, and an active spectator of the portrayed hero and of the whole play'. He even provides the equation 'the author = the director = the actor'. When the actor is performing, Bakhtin says, 'he becomes passive material… he becomes a life in that artistic whole which he had himself earlier created and which is now being actualised by the spectator'.[43] The actor moves between roles

[41] 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p. 212.
[42] 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p. 76.
[43] 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', pp. 77-78.

in a way that no other artist seems to. Actors are able to take on the parts of both author and hero and to switch between the two during the creative process. Bakhtin seems to suggest that the actor becomes the author during rehearsal, when they are creating the character, and the hero in performance, when their work fits into the drama as a whole. They are thus able to move between outsideness and 'insideness', performing aesthetic contemplation, but also becoming part of the material that is to be contemplated. Bakhtin's perceptive analysis of theatre here is fascinating but short-lived: he returns to what he calls ''expressive' aesthetics' within two pages, and takes the discussion no further.

The hero in Dostoevsky's novels, meanwhile, is 'not an object of authorial discourse, but rather a fully valid, autonomous carrier of his own individual word'.[44] He is treated by Dostoevsky as 'ideologically authoritative and independent; he is perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own, and not as the object of Dostoevsky's finalising artistic vision'. Unlike the actor, then, who Bakhtin says becomes 'passive material' when he melts back into the artistic whole of the dramatic performance, the Dostoevskian hero stands alongside the author, in conversation with him on his own terms. This relationship is the cornerstone of dialogism, with 'the direct and fully weighted signifying power of the characters' words' able to 'destroy the monologic plane of the novel and call[s] forth an unmediated response'. Bakhtin is keen to emphasize that in the 'plurality of consciousnesses' that make up polyphony, each consciousness is created 'with equal rights and each with its own world': they 'combine but are not merged in the unity of the event'.[45] 'A character's word about himself and his world', he says, 'is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is', and 'sounds, as it were, *alongside* the author's word and in a

[44] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 5.
[45] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 6.

special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters'.[46]

Alastair Renfrew suggests that we might compare Bakhtin's sense of the author-hero relationship to John Keats's concept of 'negative capability'. Keats defines negative capability as 'when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason', and states that it is a quality that belongs to 'a Man of Achievement especially in Literature', which – importantly for my purposes – 'Shakespeare possessed so enormously'.[47] Renfrew notes that Keats' negative capability is akin to Bakhtin's outsideness, 'conceiving of poetry (and art in general) in terms of the transcendence or negation of the self, the ability of the poet […] to journey beyond their own subjective position'.[48] Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, then, both are capable of allowing their characters or heroes to speak decisively alongside themselves as authors or even of suppressing their own voice so far as to disappear or transcend their authorial status. Bakhtin states that 'for the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou', that is, another and other autonomous 'I''.[49] Drama, again, seems a perfect place to demonstrate this sense of character – embodied on the stage, completely separate from the playwright. The opening of *Richard III*, for example, where Richard is the first voice heard in the play and immediately engages with the audience via soliloquy, seems to enact Bakhtin's ideologically independent and authoritative conception of character. Thomas Ostermeier's production, which I will explore later, takes this sense of Richard's authority even further, allowing his lead actor to improvise and in this way become an author of certain parts of the performance, as well as of the character already created in rehearsals.

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[46] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 7.
[47] John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. H. E. Rollins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 193-4.
[48] Renfrew, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 48.
[49] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 63.

Rather than remaining resolutely monologic, drama in fact possesses, then, many of the qualities Bakhtin associates with Dostoevsky's dialogic novel. Drama demonstrates both internal and external dialogism in the exchanges that take place between creatives offstage during the rehearsal process, between actors onstage, and between the creative team, actors, and audience in performance. Drama is always oriented towards a response and always incorporates outsideness, regardless of the position of the audience. Shakespeare for his part emphasises these more general traits of drama as a genre: through his widespread use of the soliloquy, as well as his celebrated negative capability, he encourages the audience to make up their own mind about what they witness onstage rather than dictating their conclusions through a more didactic approach. Drama consists of both text on page and text in performance, embodied: these complex forms of representation add to its dialogic qualities, producing myriad exchanges between those involved in its creation. To dismiss drama as monologic indicates a profound (or perhaps wilful) misunderstanding of its nature as an art form. In the next section, exploring embodiment, I will consider the significance of bodies in space and co-presence, expanding on dialogism towards a consideration of eventness, which lies at the very heart of Bakhtin's system – and which, once again, lends itself to drama in ways Bakhtin himself neglected to explore.

Embodiment

In the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin clearly lays out the way in which he conceives of meaning produced by bodies on the early modern stage. He brings together Shakespeare's language and the staging of early modern drama to argue for cosmic meaning in his plays, claiming that 'Shakespeare is cosmic, liminal, and topographic', which allows the images he uses – 'topographic by their nature' – to 'develop such extraordinary force and lifelikeness in

the topographic and thoroughly accentuated space of the stage'.[50] Shakespeare's images are topographic because 'both poles are always given – hell and heaven, angels and demons, earth and sky, life and death, top and bottom', rendering them 'cosmic; all the elements of the world, the entire universe, are implicated in their play'. This cosmic range allows the Shakespearean image to 'feel hell under its feet and heaven above its head', which Bakhtin calls 'the actual topography of the stage'. When characters gesture on the Shakespearean stage, Bakhtin says, 'the gesture inevitably retains some degree of topographicity (symbolicity)', so that 'it points, as it were, to top and bottom, to sky and earth'.[51] This topographicity comes about because 'the room (palace, street, etc.) in which the hero acts and gesticulates is not the room (palace, street) of ordinary life either, for it is fitted into the frame of the topographic stage', so that 'the action and the gesture taking place in the room are at the same time taking place in a topographically understood universe'.

Bakhtin's bringing together of language and embodiment here is in keeping with his discussion of dialogism. Shakespeare's language, he explains, possesses topographic properties which, when presented on the topographic early modern stage, produce meaning with extraordinary force. Bakhtin notes, however, that this topographicity is not possible on what he calls 'our stage'.[52] Our stage 'is but an empty crate without topography and accents, a neutral crate'. Unlike the meaningful gesture as performed on the Shakespearean stage, 'on this stage one may only bustle about, but not make essential movements'. The 'emptiness and lack of accents' on 'our stage' ends up 'cluttered with naturalistic decorations, props, and accessories'. Bakhtin's descriptions of the condition of the stage contemporary to him seem to date not from the 1940s, when he produced the *Rabelais* revision notes, but from the turn of the twentieth century, when modernist realist theatre was making an impact in Russia and

[50] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.
[51] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.
[52] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.

Europe, such as the work of Chekhov and Ibsen. His condemnation of 'our stage' is reminiscent of his criticism of the monologism of 'modern times', which I discussed in the previous section. The cultural conditions in which Bakhtin finds himself seem to be geared towards monologic literature, whether on the page or on the stage, with dialogic and topographic literature, as found in Dostoevsky and Shakespeare respectively, lost during Bakhtin's era.

For Bakhtin, 'realistic ordinary-life stage scenery erases all traces of topographicity', and therefore 'in the conditions it creates, the Shakespearean gesture degenerates and topographic verbal images begin to sound almost comical'.[53] He seems unaware of theatre makers such as Meyerhold, who were developing physical techniques for making meaning onstage in the 1920s and 1930s in Moscow theatres. Meyerhold's biomechanics, a system which marries movement and feeling to develop a language of expression for emotion and characters, may not be topographic but it does incorporate the 'essential movements' which Bakhtin complains that 'our stage' is lacking. Bakhtin's movements between Vitebsk and Leningrad in this period may account for his difficulties keeping up with contemporary Soviet theatre: as we have seen, he attended theatrical performances with his students, but these were touring productions rather than the cutting-edge work of Moscow. The more general question remains, however: what kind of staging is best able to produce topographicity? In the second half of the thesis, I will consider productions that take place in all kinds of theatrical spaces, including Shakespeare's Globe on London's South Bank as well as the New York warehouse that hosts Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More*, thinking about how we read Shakespeare when his plays are produced in such different conditions and what these conditions imply for Bakhtin's cosmic topography.

[53] 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.

Before he embarked on the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin had already thought about the ways in which space as well as time has a constitutive impact on literature and on narrative in particular. I have already introduced his concept of the chronotope in terms of his suggestion that there might be a historical chronotope, e.g. the Renaissance chronotope as invoked in Rabelais' work. In 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', written in 1937, Bakhtin defines 'chronotope', or 'time space' as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'.[54] He says that 'in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole', so that 'time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history'. Bakhtin also claims that 'the chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance', to the extent that 'it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time'.

In 1973, Bakhtin added some 'Concluding Remarks' to 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', insisting that 'any and every literary image is chronotopic' because 'language, as a treasure-house of images, is fundamentally chronotopic'.[55] 'The internal form of the word – the mediating sign through which primary spatial meanings are transferred to temporal relationships (in the broadest sense) – is also', he insists, 'chronotopic'. As in the case of his sweeping assertion that dialogism exists everywhere in all human interactions, Bakhtin makes a claim here for the chronotope as a universal constitutive element of literature. In so doing, Bakhtin moves towards embodied, physicalised language in a way that does not seem possible in the novel and in poetry, but which he has convincingly made sense of for drama already in his discussion of early modern cosmic topography. Shakespeare, in

[54] 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 84.
[55] 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 252.

particular, brings together language and embodiment very clearly: early modern staging practices meant that only a few set pieces or props would have been used to convey a sense of location, so Shakespeare's images are necessarily chronotopic, in order to help the audience comprehend the setting in which the action is taking place. We might think, for example, of the early descriptions of flowers in the forest outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which bring us into the enchanted space of the wood and signal a change in the events of the play.

Bakhtin's cosmic stage requires a shared understanding between performer and audience which locates each gesture in a universal framework. These ideas about collectivity and shared experience are present in *Rabelais and His World* as well, where Bakhtin thinks about the carnival crowd and co-presence. His focus in the book is on the 'culture of folk carnival humour', which he divides into three distinct forms, 'ritual spectacles', 'comic verbal compositions', and 'various genres of billingsgate'.[56] The first form, ritual spectacle, is, Bakhtin says, 'sharply distinct from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials'. Made up of 'carnival pageants' and 'comic shows of the marketplace', it affords its participants 'a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations', what Bakhtin calls 'a second world and a second life outside officialdom', in which, crucially, 'all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year'.[57] These spectacles create a 'two-world condition', which Bakhtin says we must acknowledge or risk 'neither medieval cultural consciousness nor the culture of the Renaissance' being understood. In the revision notes, Bakhtin expands on and illustrates this two-world condition, discussing 'the officialisation of the image', and consequently the '*seriousening*'

[56] *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 4-5.
[57] *Rabelais and His World*, p. 6.

of the world, wherein 'the image is transferred onto the purely serious plane, becomes unambiguous', so that 'the black and the white, the positive and the negative, are set apart and contrasted'.[58] He clarifies, however, that 'this process[…] only takes place in the official spheres', creating an 'islet' of officialised culture, 'surrounded by the ocean of the unofficial'.

Bakhtin chooses this moment in the main text of *Rabelais and His World* to invoke drama again, stating that 'carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators'.[59] He contrasts theatre and carnival, claiming that 'footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance'. Again, Bakhtin is writing from a particular point of view on theatre: the productions I will examine in the second half of the thesis indicate quite clearly that the absence of footlights need not destroy theatrical performance, although there is often some kind of physical distinction made between actors and spectators. Bakhtin's emphasis, after this brief aside, is that 'carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people', but rather they 'live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people'. Carnival, Bakhtin insists, 'has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part'. Bakhtin's argument in the *Rabelais* book is that carnival has been diluted since Rabelais' time, 'narrowed and weakened', but that it 'continued to live and was transmitted as a now purely literary tradition'.

Carnival, then, sees Bakhtin move firmly into consideration of the meaning produced by embodiment, as opposed to the linguistic concerns he had in the 1920s and 1930s, and from which I have constructed my discussion of dialogism in this chapter. Carnival, with its emphasis on the 'material bodily principle', seems to stand apart from Bakhtin's other work

[58] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 524.
[59] *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

because it pays less attention to language. It is, however, possible to detect strands of Bakhtin's earlier thought in his concept of carnival, in terms of its emphasis on collective identity and unindividualized participation, which brings to mind the I-for-the-other architectonics underpinning dialogism. It is in the *Rabelais* revision notes that the importance of collectivity is perhaps most persuasively brought out, albeit via Bakhtin's negative portrayal of the individualism that he suggests drives Shakespearean tragedy: protagonists strive to break free from cycles of renewal in order to seize power for themselves. His discussion of the utopian possibilities of carnival in the main text of *Rabelais and His World* is brought into sharp focus by the work he does on Shakespeare in his notes towards the book's revision. As well as the more straightforwardly material analysis that is on show in his explanation of cosmic topography in Shakespeare, the attention he pays to genealogical ruptures in the plays leads back to the festive emphasis he identifies in Rabelais.

Earlier, I briefly discussed Voloshinov's analysis of the utterance and its orientation towards an interlocutor, building upon Bakhtin's dialogic architectonics. For Voloshinov, too, embodiment is absolutely crucial. Not only must the utterance be oriented towards another consciousness, it must be embodied. He says that '*outside embodiment in some particular material* (the material of gesture, inner word, outcry), *consciousness is a fiction*'.[60] Instead, 'consciousness as organised, material expression (in the ideological material of word, a sign, drawing, colours, musical sound, etc.) – consciousness, so conceived, is an objective fact and a tremendous social force'. Context is key: Voloshinov insists that '*the situation enters into the utterance as a necessary constituent part of its semantic make-up*'.[61] Everything that is going on around the utterance, its speaker, its addressee, their social environment, is inextricable from its meaning. Drama is the only genre that brings this emphasis on the

[60] Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 90.
[61] V. N. Voloshinov, 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry' in *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, ed. and trans. I. R. Titunik (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1976), p. 12.

physical, concrete nature of consciousness into focus. It cannot be achieved to the same extent in the novel or in poetry, because the text of a novel or poem exists on the page rather than in a body, in performance. Voloshinov even describes the utterance as a 'script' for an event, taking a dramatic image and applying it to moments of embodied being.

Voloshinov's work, then, combines dialogism and embodiment to claim the necessity of both for human consciousness. Bakhtin's material concepts already discussed – cosmic topography, chronotope, and carnival – are less clearly connected to human interaction: they are operating in specific areas and so need a little more work to tie to the global critical concerns that underpin his work. Cosmic topography is specific to Shakespeare and the early modern stage, chronotope to theories of narrative and genre, and carnival to Renaissance literature, although the latter transforms to become a spirit – albeit diluted – that is present in other literature in later centuries. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* brings dialogism and embodiment together, arguing for their importance in all human interactions. Voloshinov is able to connect the material with the exchanges that take place between people all the time, in a way that emphasises embodiment alongside oriented utterance.

In the final section of this chapter, I will explore Bakhtin's concept of eventness, which is closely related to embodiment and adds another layer to the work already surveyed. Eventness gives further impetus to my positioning of drama as the key genre for Bakhtin's theories of literature, concerned as it is with once-occurrence, participative, lived experience – categories that immediately invoke the conditions of live performance.

Eventness

Eventness, finally, brings dialogism and embodiment together and is again best expressed, I contend, through drama – it might even be considered the essential material of drama. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin discusses the fundamental importance of the 'once-

occurrent event of Being'.[62] This event is 'something that is being actually inescapably accomplished through me and others' and that 'cannot be thought of, it can only be participatively experienced or lived through'. Here, Bakhtin is critiquing theoreticism, saying that theory 'needs to be brought into communion *not* with theoretical constructions and conceived life, but with the actually occurring event of moral being', that is, with a subject who 'accepts answerability for every integral act of his cognition'. Abstract conceptions of such subjects cannot depict them fully: they must operate in their own context and with an orientation towards a person outside the self. Bakhtin splits Being into tiny parts, so that 'every thought of mine, along with its content, is an act or deed that I perform – my own individually answerable act or deed', with each act 'one of all of those acts which make up my whole once-occurrent life as an uninterrupted performing of acts'.[63] For Bakhtin, then, life is lived moment to moment, with each moment ephemeral and yet grounded by its concrete, rather than theoretical, nature.

Bakhtin splits each act further into parts, consisting of two elements which he calls 'the content/sense moment and the individual-historical moment'.[64] These elements are made up of '[the act's] content/sense and the fact of its presence in my actual consciousness'. We might identify these moments as the theoretical moment (content/sense) and the contextual moment (individual-historical). An act cannot fully 'exist' in only its theoretical moment without the contextual moment: Bakhtin says that 'both of these moments […] are unitary and indivisible in evaluating that thought as my answerable act or deed'. If we were to strip the theoretical moment from the contextual moment, perform what Bakhtin calls 'an act of abstraction', we would be 'simply no longer present in it as individually and answerably

[62] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 12.
[63] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 3.
[64] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 3

active human beings'.[65] Bakhtin insists that 'I cannot include my actual self and my life (*qua* moment) in the world constituted by the constructions of theoretical consciousness in abstraction from the answerable and individual historical act'. Bakhtin uses the word 'embodiment' sparingly in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, but it is clear to see the importance of the concept here, at this early stage in his career. He returns to it later in more specific ways such as the chronotope and carnival, as I discussed above, but in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* embodiment is a fundamental building block of his conception of human existence, through this notion of the answerable and contextual act.

Answerability adds to the importance of concrete location: not only must the act be performed at a particular time and in particular circumstances, but with an orientation towards another person. Bakhtin explains the complexity of his architectonics by focusing on love: he states that 'I love another, but cannot love myself; the other loves me, but does not love himself'.[66] In this formulation, 'each one is right in his own place, and he is right answerably, not subjectively'. He notes that 'from my own unique place only I-for-myself constitute an *I*, whereas all others are *others* for me'. Bakhtin insists that 'there is no contradiction here', although he concedes that 'a contradiction could arise for some third party, namely, for a non-incarnated, detached (non-participating) consciousness'. This third party would experience these relationships as 'self-equivalent values-in-themselves – human beings, and not *I* and the *other*'. As human beings, we are thus located in our own subjectivity, but that subjectivity is shaped by our relationship with those outside of us, just as their own subjectivity is formed by us, taking on the role of the other for them. In this way, Bakhtin emphasizes the essentially dialogic nature of the embodied, performed act.

[65] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 7.
[66] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 46.

Bakhtin's emphasis on being as 'once-occurrent' immediately brings to mind the ephemeral nature of theatre, as well as its complexity. Actors often try to recreate this once-occurrence in performance (when playing naturalistically, at least), making it seem as if they as the character are speaking each piece of text for the first time, while living through their own once-occurrence as actors – that particular performance of a production, with all of its contingencies. Every performance of a production is slightly different precisely because of this ephemerality, which can manifest in an infinite variety of ways: an actor forgetting their lines, unexpected audience reactions, or perhaps even part of the technology involved in the show going wrong (as I will explore later in my fifth chapter). Our current moment only serves to emphasise the importance of eventness for theatregoers: audiences are keen to return to theatres to experience live performance alongside other people, although there are still anxieties around the transmission of COVID-19 indoors. Live broadcasts and streaming have developed greatly in the last decade but being present in the same space as performers and other audience members remains highly prized.

Bakhtin develops his sense of embodiment as linked to eventness in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* in a manner that is strikingly Shakespearean. Bakhtin's participant in the act 'sees clearly *these* individual unique persons whom he loves, *this* sky and *this* earth and *these* trees', but is also cognisant of 'the value, the actually and concretely affirmed value of these persons and these objects'.[67] This first formulation, '*this* sky and *this* earth and *these* trees', is reminiscent of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, when the king urges on his men by speaking of their fortune to be present at Agincourt on that specific day, St Crispin's Day. Concluding his speech, Henry insists that 'gentlemen in England now abed / Shall think themselves

[67] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 30.

accursed they were not here'.[68] For Henry, their participation in that moment, in that field in that part of France, is special – or so he tries to convince his soldiers, to spur them on. In a wider sense, Shakespeare is also able to create that sense of eventness for his spectators by encouraging them to think about their own rootedness in the theatre, witnessing that specific performance, and creating a memory of that moment like the one that Henry suggests his soldiers will be able to call upon in the future: 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day'. Shakespeare, via Henry, emphasises the importance of eventness in this speech.

There are multiple 'here's, or contextual moments, inherent in Henry's speech. There is the 'here' which belongs to him as the character, with a theoretical moment that is largely the same for other iterations of 'here', but which functions in a very specific context. The audience would understand some of the theoretical moment but be experiencing their own, again very different, contextual moment. Amongst different audience members, there would be different contextual moments: perhaps someone who has never seen *Henry V* and is not familiar with the St Crispin's Day speech, or conversely a Shakespeare scholar who has seen the play many times and is interested in this particular rendition of the text, in the unique setting of that performance, that theatre, those performers, that audience around them. There is also the actor playing Henry's 'here', with an understanding of the theoretical moment of the line, but also with their own contextual moment as they portray the character on that particular day. As I mentioned above, the actor's task is to create a sense of eventness when delivering that speech, both for the character and for the audience: they must embody Henry's encouragement to his troops, through his own prizing of eventness, and make that

[68] William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Rory Loughnane in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), IV. 3. 64-65

legible to spectators. As with dialogism, then, there are layers of eventness present in drama, which serve to complement and intensify each other as productions are performed.

Bakhtin might suggest that these layers, as I have called them, actually serve to nullify the experience of the actor playing the role. Something is taken away from the performer because they are thinking through another person's experience of eventness as they portray them onstage, forgetting their own situated sense of self. I would argue, however, that even actors who draw on Method techniques, seeking to 'disappear' into a character, cannot escape eventness, particularly if they are performing in a play. The mechanics of producing that character, remembering lines and blocking and responding to the other theatremakers involved in the production, means that performers must have an awareness of their own surroundings as well as the situations that their character finds themself in in the play. It is for this reason that the term I have chosen to use, 'layers', makes the best sense of this experience. The actor is always experiencing their own eventness and must try to produce a sense of their character's eventness too – at least in a way that is legible to their audience. The actor's experience of the 'once-occurrent event of being' is not disrupted or cancelled: their understanding of their eventness might in fact be enhanced by their efforts to construct another person experiencing their own event of being, as well as recreating that event of being every time they perform.

Writing on carnival and Dostoevsky in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin illuminates another element of eventness: unfinalisability. He claims that 'the carnival sense of the world also knows no period, and is, in fact, hostile to any sort of *conclusive conclusion*', with the result that 'all endings are merely new beginnings', because 'carnival images are reborn again and again'.[69] Bakhtin goes on to analyse a term more usually applied

[69] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 165.

to drama, catharsis, arguing that 'tragic catharsis (in the Aristotelian sense) is not applicable to Dostoevsky'. Instead, he says, 'the catharsis that finalises Dostoevsky's novels might be […] expressed in this way: *nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future*'.[70] Bakhtin sets up another contrast between monologism and dialogism here: monologic texts are already determined by their author, closed off, finalised, while dialogic texts remain open. In Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin insists, 'everything is directed toward that unspoken and as yet unprecedented '*new word*', everything waits tensely on that word, and the *author* does not block its path with his own one-sided and monosemantic seriousness'.

It is similarly difficult to find this sense of '*conclusive conclusion*' in Shakespeare's plays. At the end of *Hamlet*, for example, the prince instructs Horatio to 'tell my story', and Horatio asks the newly arrived Fortinbras 'let me speak to the yet unknowing world / How these things came about', but we are not privy to the retelling of the events we have just witnessed.[71] Although the story we have seen is concluded, it does not feel finalised: Shakespeare makes it clear that one cycle of events has come to an end in Denmark, but that the country is in a highly volatile position with the extermination of the royal family and the recent incursion of an invading force. We are left wondering both how Horatio might recount the story of *Hamlet,* and also how that story might continue, thanks to Shakespeare gesturing to events which occur after the curtain has descended. Shakespeare's comedies often end with carefully worked-out marriage pairings, sometimes with multiple couples tying the knot, but again invite our curiosity as to how things might proceed once the action of the drama we

[70] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 166.
[71] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Jowett in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 19. 338-339

have seen is concluded. How might a marriage between Beatrice and Benedick play out? And Claudio and Hero, given the complexities of their plotline? As Bakhtin says of Dostoevsky, it seems that, for these characters, 'everything is still in the future and will always be in the future'.

In a broader sense, it is the ephemeral nature of drama that makes it unfinalisable, thanks to the more fundamental questions that underpin theatre. What is a play? The text on the page? A particular performance, or run of performances of a particular production? A recording of a production? It seems difficult to come up with a conclusive, finalised answer. We might argue that a playtext is a skeletal version of a piece of theatre, given flesh – as Bakhtin might say – in performance. No one performance can lay claim to being a definitive version of a play, precisely because of the contextual moments involved in producing it. The seemingly endless revivals of major Shakespeare plays make his work very clearly unfinalisable: theatre makers are constantly bringing new approaches to these early modern texts, and presenting them to new audiences, in new contexts. As Bakhtin might put it, we are always waiting on 'unspoken and as yet unprecedented' new interpretations of a play, to put that play in front of different spectators and bring to bear that particular contextual moment in which it is produced. It is impossible for drama to be finalised because of the ephemerality, liveness, eventness, which make it drama.

Eventness, then, is the Bakhtinian concept that occupies the very heart of drama and live performance. In my final chapter, I will consider what makes something live and the different, mediated ways that liveness exists in the twenty-first century, as well as the value we place upon it. Once-occurrence, Bakhtin's event of Being, is the essence of live: an act being performed, in a particular time and place, with an orientation towards an audience, in conditions that can never be replicated and reproduced. It brings together dialogism, the interactions between theatre makers and audiences, and embodiment, the meaning produced

by bodies in space together – and bestows upon these elements their meaning and significance. Bakhtin's rejection of the abstract and embrace of the actual is perfectly suited to theatre: in novels and poetry, the reader might bring their own contextual moment to their encounter with the text, but the author's creation of that text is in the past. In drama, creation and encounter occur together, in the same moment and in the same space. The audience gives shape to the piece performed, the I-for-the-other and the-other-for-me dynamic at work together in a way that no other genre can accomplish. For all of these reasons, then, drama can and should be reconceived, after Bakhtin, as the form of literature that most radically embodies Bakhtinian architectonics. Contrary to the critical reception to date – and to Bakhtin's own pronouncements at certain points in his career – drama gives shape and meaning to Bakhtin's criticism, just as his criticism, as I hope to show in the second part of this thesis, can give new meaning to drama.

Chapter Three

Dialogism

The thesis will now consider twenty-first-century Shakespeare performance in order to test the claims for drama that I made in the preceding chapters. I hope to prove the usefulness of Bakhtin in such an investigation and to demonstrate that his critical concerns are in fact similar to those of theatremakers today. The chapter will begin with a summary of Bakhtin on dialogism, followed by an examination of dialogism within Shakespeare studies. I will discuss three twenty-first-century productions, Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies*, Ian Rickson's *Hamlet*, and Thomas Ostermeier's *Richard III*, examining each piece through a Bakhtinian lens and assessing contemporary theatre more generally by contextualising van Hove, Rickson, and Ostermeier's work within the current landscape. Chapters Four and Five will perform similar tasks with embodiment and eventness, thinking about Bakhtin and drama via examples of modern practice. Each chapter will also bring Shakespeare into the conversation as a collaborative theatremaker himself, producing a triangular discussion between Shakespeare as playwright, Bakhtin as critic, and twenty-first-century theatremakers.

Bakhtin and Dialogism

To return, then, to Bakhtin on dialogism. The key underpinning concept for him in this area, and in his work in general, is that dialogism exists everywhere, and that all human interaction is based upon it. Bakhtin's architectonics of being is founded upon the existence and importance of the other. The self is brought into being via its interactions with the other and with the world around it. Bakhtin avoids theoreticism through his insistence on the concretised word, as does Voloshinov in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Dialogism in the theatre is self-productive: theatre is made to be performed in front of audiences, that is, for an other. Before the play appears onstage, as well, it is subject to a

variety of creative inputs. It may be produced from a script or from a collaborative process of devising, and will usually benefit too from the attentions of a director, dramaturg, and designers. Dialogic exchanges take place throughout the preparation and performance of theatre. The productions to be discussed in this chapter take different approaches to dialogism, both in the processes by which they come to the stage and in the attitudes they assume once onstage. Van Hove, Rickson, and Ostermeier are all directors with very different backgrounds, and their *Roman Tragedies*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III* demonstrate corresponding variation in their distinctive explorations of dialogism.

Monologism cannot exist if dialogism is present everywhere, logically. Bakhtin suggests, however, that some epochs are more monologic than others: the early modern period, when Shakespeare and Rabelais were writing, was more dialogic, as opposed to his own period, the first half of the twentieth century, where dialogic possibilities were more closed off. When a text appears to be monologic, however, this appearance is ultimately illusory, because dialogism is omnipresent. For Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's novel is the ultimate dialogic medium, and the Bakhtinian concept of genre might therefore suggest that, rather than drama providing a space for dialogic interactions, that drama has instead become 'novelised'. As I argue in Chapter Two, however, there are dialogic elements in drama which cannot be replicated in the novel, most obviously drama's emphasis on collective experience in a space as a dramatic text is performed. In this chapter, I will examine production choices that move a piece more towards the monologic end of the scale and look at how that piece retains dialogism even as its makers seek to produce authoritative, monologic control over it – or the appearance of such control. I will also consider the context of the productions I discuss and how that context contributes to the dialogic relationships at work as the production is made, both in the rehearsal and preparation period and in performance.

Both Bakhtin and Voloshinov insist on the importance of the addressee, 'every word directed toward an *answer*', just as in drama performance is directed toward the audience.[1] Voloshinov describes every utterance as a unit of verbal communication, existing in what he calls 'a continuous chain of speech performances'. In my final chapter on eventness I will return to this model for utterances, but for now it is the orientation of these speech performances which is important. Like Bakhtin, Voloshinov argues against monologism and against the fixed, closed-off nature of the monologic utterance. For both critics, answerability is key: not only are our interactions governed by our addressees, but we also possess a moral responsibility towards those addressees. Answerability expects a response and incorporates a particular relationship to that response. The productions I discuss in this chapter and indeed throughout the thesis interrogate this relationship to the response, usually in the form of their interactions with the audience. Van Hove, Rickson, and Ostermeier offer different kinds of work to their audiences and seem to expect different responses as well. The spaces in which the productions take place, too, influence the relationships between theatremakers and their spectators, with complex results.

The vital role of the audience in the theatre can be clarified by Bakhtin's concept of outsideness, part of his architectonics of Being constructed around answerability. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin describes 'aesthetic contemplation', wherein empathy is followed by objectification. In this process, in order to fully understand the self, one must move outside of it and then return to it. Not only is the perspective of the other key in terms of answerability, but Bakhtin discusses this perspective in spatial terms. Without moving outside of oneself and returning, it is not possible fully to contemplate the self. The existence or not of the fourth wall in theatre comes immediately to mind amidst this formulation. Different kinds of drama deal with the presence of the audience differently: Shakespeare's

[1] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 279.

use of soliloquies, prologues, and epilogues, make it difficult to keep the fourth wall intact.[2] In 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', Bakhtin comments directly upon theatre and how the actor can be viewed as both an active and passive part of the creative process. The actor becomes part of the dramatic text in its presentation, assuming a passive role, but they are also be able to play an authoring, outside part in their creation of the character. The productions I discuss in this chapter take different approaches to outsideness, both in terms of their audiences and in terms of the actors at work in each company.

Shakespeare and Dialogism

Shakespeare explores some of Bakhtin's concerns in his work over three hundred years earlier. Many of his plays are interested in selfhood and the impact of external factors on a character's sense of self. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, Cassius offers to be Brutus' 'glass' or mirror, telling his friend that:

> Since you know you cannot see yourself
>
> So well as by reflection, I your glass,
>
> Will modestly discover to yourself
>
> That of yourself which you yet know not of.[3]

In this scene, as Cassius tries to persuade Brutus of the validity of the conspiracy to murder Caesar, he takes up the position of the other outside Brutus' self. Taken at his word, Cassius seems to follow Bakhtin's model of 'I-for-the-other', insisting that he, from his position outside Brutus, is able to reveal elements of Brutus' self that his friend has not yet

[2] Critics such as James Hirsh complicate the issue by insisting upon the self-addressed nature of the soliloquy, but generally in performance it seems that refusing to acknowledge the audience is counter-intuitive. See James Hirsh, 'What Were Soliloquies in Plays by Shakespeare and Other Late Renaissance Dramatists? An Empirical Approach' in *Shakespeare and the Soliloquy in Early Modern English Drama*, eds. A. D. Cousins and Daniel Derrin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 205-224.

[3] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1. 2. 69-72.

discovered. Shakespeare develops this idea in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Achilles concedes to Ulysses that 'The beauty that is borne here in the face/ The bearer knows not'; instead, since the eye is unable to 'behold itself', 'eye to eye opposed/ Salutes each other with each other opposed'.[4] Patrick Gray makes a case for the 'independent subjectivity' of the other, 'a freedom either to approve or disapprove of the self' as the quality which is most important to Shakespeare.[5] This independence, Gray suggests, 'is the reason why Shakespeare complicates Aristotle's relatively simple image of a mirror by introducing an additional, much more complex simile, the self and the other as two eyes reflecting each other', so that the other is 'itself sentient, a locus of consciousness'. Nancy Selleck is particularly interested in the sense of liveness in Bakhtin's model, suggesting that 'Bakhtin's others remain *live* presences offering their own distinct and changing perspectives, which therefore continue to be 'new''.[6]

In Shakespeare's play, Cassius functions as this live presence outside Brutus and is able to offer a perspective that changes Brutus' wavering mind. In Act Two Scene One, when Brutus attempts to soliloquise, Cassius refuses to allow him solitude: he has Cinna throw a letter in at Brutus' window which Brutus' servant Lucius brings to him. This letter, purportedly from the citizens of Rome, urges Brutus to take action and remove Caesar. Cassius' determination to fulfil the role of actualising other is successful in recruiting Brutus to the conspiracy, and the murder of Caesar is carried out. In the Roman plays Shakespeare foregrounds characters' interactions with influential others, as well as with larger groups of people. In typically negatively capable Shakespearean style, the dangers of both solitude and domination by another character rapidly become apparent. Cassius claims that he acts as Brutus' 'mirror' for his friend's good, but his 'discovering' of Brutus is in fact carried out

[4] William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9. 101-105.
[5] Patrick Gray, *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic: Selfhood, Stoicism, and Civil War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 240
[6] Nancy Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 4.

with a very particular goal in mind, to Brutus' eventual detriment. In *Coriolanus*, meanwhile, Caius Martius' attempts to distance himself from Roman society are ill-fated: his angry assertion in Act Three Scene Three that it is he that banishes the citizens rather than their banishing him leads him only into danger at the hands of the Volscii, and his betrayal of Rome results in his death. Stephen Greenblatt identifies 'three dreams' in the play, of 'physical autonomy', 'social autonomy' and 'mental autonomy': Coriolanus hoping to separate himself from his body, from his relationships with his friends, family, and the politics of Rome, and instead dwell in what Greenblatt calls 'a separate psychic world, a heterocosm of one's own making'.[7] In these plays, then, Shakespeare is interested in exploring the nature of dialogic relationships and the potential consequences of forming the self via the other outside it.

Outsideness is quite literally built into early modern theatre, particularly in London. Thanks to enclosed outdoor playhouses and shared lighting, the actor and spectator cannot help but be constantly aware of each other. In *Troilus and Cressida,* Ulysses draws on this model, describing the 'arch' which 'reverb'rate[s]/ The voice again', allowing man to understand himself; he says that:

> Nor doth he of himself know them [his inner workings] for aught
>
> Till he behold them formèd in the applause
>
> Where they are extended.[8]

David Scott Kastan argues that the history play itself contributes to the downfall of Charles I precisely because the king appears onstage as a subject before his people: that is, as a theatrical subject before an audience. Merely representing the king onstage is, for Kastan,

[7] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare's Freedom* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 106.
[8] *Troilus and Cressida*, 9. 116-119.

subversive. He states that 'whatever their overt ideological content, history plays inevitably, if unconsciously, weakened the structure of authority' since the monarch 'became a subject – the subject of the author's imaginings and the subject of the authority and judgment of an audience of subjects'.[9] The title page of the fourth quarto of *Richard II,* for example, advertises new material of interest to the audience: 'With new additions of the Parliament Sceane, and the deposing of King Richard'.[10] There are suggestions that the deposition scene may have been censored in the last years of Elizabeth I's reign because of the sensitivity of its content.

Kastan's analysis of the history play on the early modern stage necessarily trades on outsideness. For Bakhtin, outsideness is something productive: it allows the self to be actualised. For Kastan, it seems that this actualisation can go very far indeed: watching an English history play, the audience becomes aware of its location outside the monarch looking on and hence its power to censure the king. Shakespeare does not stop here, however, but has Richard move towards a different sense of self as he loses the crown. Before this loss takes place, Richard is granted one final moment as king in front of his subjects. The power of the deposition scene lies in Richard's bravura performance under duress, where he seemingly improvises his own un-kinging. This extemporary ceremony concluded, Richard must change his understanding of himself, and this evolution comes via the stripping away of the audience of subjects he has previously enjoyed. In Act Five Scene Five, Richard comprehends his isolation and works to defy it: 'My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,/ My soul the father; and these two beget/ A generation of still-breeding thoughts,/ And these same thoughts people this little world'.[11] He is well aware that he is alone in prison, yet he seeks to populate

[9] David Scott Kastan, 'Proud Majesty Made a Subject: Shakespeare and the Spectacle of Rule', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37:4 (1986), p. 461.
[10] Janet Clare, 'The Censorship of the Deposition Scene in *Richard II*', *The Review of English Studies* 41:161 (1990), p. 90.
[11] William Shakespeare, *Richard II* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), V. 5. 6-9.

it, dividing himself into parts and enacting or at least attempting a Bakhtinian dialogic exchange between these parts. Denied the subjects that previously gave him his identity as a king, Richard seeks actualising outsideness from within himself.

There is a sense of Bakhtinian dialectical exchange binding society together in Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. In this seminal work, Greenblatt argues not only that social structures influenced subjects' sense of self in the early modern period but also that cultural texts such as plays produce, reflect, and influence this sense of self. The process is, as for Bakhtin, mutual: self and other are linked and have a continuous effect upon each other. For Greenblatt, self-fashioning functions as Hamlet advises the Player, with the text holding 'the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'.[12] Earlier, Hamlet describes the visiting players as 'the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time' (7. 426-427). Here, then, Shakespeare makes a claim through Hamlet for the importance of drama as a cultural yardstick, which allows the spectator to better understand their own social moment. Hamlet later ensures that this recognition of the self in drama is doubly the case for Claudius, by staging the murder of Old Hamlet in the Mousetrap. Claudius, confronted with a recreation of his own villainy onstage, flees the scene, confirming his guilt later in the soliloquy beginning 'O, my offence is rank'.[13]

In other plays, however, Shakespeare has his characters refuse or attempt to refuse the society in which they find themselves. In *Timon of Athens*, Timon rejects his dinner guests in a spectacular set-piece, serving them water and stones instead of the riches they have come to expect from him. Timon seems to come to his senses in this scene: he recognises the venality

[12] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9. 17-19.
[13] *Hamlet*, 10. 36.

of Athenian society and refuses to participate in it anymore. When he flees the city for the woods outside Athens, however, he is unable to escape the material trappings of civilisation. Digging in the ground to find roots to eat, he turns up gold instead, which he angrily condemns for its corruptive powers. Not even Timon, the wilful misanthrope, proves able to find human isolation in the woods: instead, as often in Shakespeare, the forest turns out to be surprisingly heavily populated. Timon is soon found by Alcibiades, two prostitutes, Phrynia and Timandra, and Apemantus. Shakespeare, like Bakhtin, seems here to be indicating that removing oneself from society is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Timon cannot disconnect himself from those around him but instead would be better served by understanding himself as a human being defined by his interactions with others and the context in which they take place. As Bakhtin says in his notes for revision of his book on Dostoevsky, 'a person has no internal sovereign territory[…] looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*'.[14] Timon is unable to isolate himself, with Shakespeare taking a Bakhtinian stance on the interconnected nature of the world.

Bakhtin's author-hero model is more difficult to apply to Shakespeare's work in part because of the many different ways in which Shakespeare's plays have been staged through time. The early modern rehearsal process remains stubbornly mysterious: companies of the time produced an extraordinary number of plays in a year, and it is suggested that actors may have learned a new role every two weeks, as well as remembering another thirty or forty throughout.[15] There was no director as such: actors learned their parts with the help of the playwright or more senior members of the company. Tiffany Stern suggests that this learning or 'study' 'was not a creative event, nor did it encourage textual exploration and discovery'.[16]

[14] Bakhtin, 'Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book' in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 287.
[15] For more on early modern company practice, see Tiffany Stern's *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), particularly 'Rehearsal in Shakespeare's Theatre', pp. 46-122.
[16] Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, p. 121.

Instead, 'actors' revision tended to happen in performance itself, when the actor was free from teachers'. The productions that I will explore in this chapter bear, by contrast, a heavy directorial stamp. Van Hove, Rickson, and Ostermeier add their own layers of interpretation to Shakespeare's text, and as such take on an authoring role in the eventual performance. The rise of the director in the nineteenth century and the influence in particular of *Regietheater*, which gained prominence in the theatre after the Second World War, led to a very different configuration of the relationships between playwright, director and creative team, and actor.

Shakespeare's stance on the author-hero model varies throughout his work. In some plays, he represents various different voices from different social classes, but he often focuses on noble families. Noble characters in obscurity, such as Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* or Guiderius and Arviragus in *Cymbeline* are quickly identified thanks to their social status, which other characters suggest sets them apart from their humble environment. Nevertheless, Shakespeare does portray common voices in the Roman plays in particular and in the first tetralogy of English history plays, which features the Jack Cade rebellion. These works are highly dialogic in nature, since Shakespeare gives equal weight to the voices of these characters onstage as he seeks to represent and dramatize earlier English history. In other plays, such as *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, the titular characters spend more time onstage and speak more lines than most others; Bakhtin's claims about the monologic nature of drama seem more applicable here, particularly given the extensive amount of time Richard and Hamlet spend soliloquising. Ostermeier's *Richard III*, which I will discuss below, strips out some of the political manoeuvring in Shakespeare's full text to focus the drama on the production's star, Lars Eidinger. If a company is performing the *Henry VI* plays followed by *Richard III*, it becomes difficult not to pay more attention to the actor playing Richard in the chronologically earlier pieces: one cannot help but look forward to their turn in the spotlight as the usurper in the final of the four plays.

Dialogism in Shakespeare is complex, then. The early modern context in which he was working promoted dialogic relationships between theatremakers: even more so in Shakespeare's case, given that he is likely to have performed in his own plays as a playwright and actor. The works that I will examine in this chapter, the Roman plays, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*, take contrasting positions in terms of the relation between the monologic and the dialogic. *Roman Tragedies* moves fascinatingly between the two extremes, as I will discuss, while *Hamlet* and *Richard III* are amongst Shakespeare's most monologic plays, each dominated by a single character who soliloquises at great length: to such an extent, in fact, that there are arguments to be made in favour of Bakhtin's monologic conception of drama when it comes to these pieces in particular. The productions that I have chosen to focus on take very different approaches to the theatremakers involved in creating them, and to the audiences they expect to attend them. They thus provide fitting examples of the multivalent nature of twenty-first-century performance of Shakespeare, and indicate the ways in which Bakhtin is useful to think through the work they are doing.

Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies*

In 2007, Dutch company Internationaal Theatre Amsterdam premiered *Roman Tragedies*, an audacious multimedia production combining Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* with a running time of five and a half hours. *Roman Tragedies* has been in ITA's repertoire since 2007 and has been performed all over the world, including two runs at the Barbican in London in 2009 and 2017. It is directed by the artistic director of the company, Ivo van Hove, whose bold approaches to classic dramatic texts have brought him increasing fame over the last decade. The ITA ensemble each take on multiple parts in *Roman Tragedies*, with Gijs Scholten van Aschat as Coriolanus, Hans Kesting as Antony, and Chris Nietvelt as Cleopatra. Alongside these leading roles, Kesting spends some time manning the public address system which delivers messages throughout the production, and

Nietvelt plays a striking Casca in *Julius Caesar*. This flexibility forms an important part of the ITA company ethos. *Roman Tragedies* investigates political power in the modern world, using digital technology including live video capture and involving the audience in the action by allowing them onstage alongside the actors in order to pose questions about authority and spectatorship. In 2015 ITA premiered *Kings of War*, another lengthy production that combined *Henry V*, the *Henry VI* plays, and *Richard III*.

Stitching together three of the Roman plays in under six hours is no mean feat, and in order to do so van Hove makes significant textual cuts. These cuts are politically charged: many of the crowd interactions are stripped away, with *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar* particularly affected. In *Coriolanus*, public and private scenes are differentiated by both location and staging. Act Three Scene One, where Coriolanus argues with Brutus and Sicinius and denounces the Roman populace, is presented as an increasingly rambunctious press conference, which breaks down into a physical confrontation between the men. The sequence is public-facing but removes the voices of the people, turning Coriolanus' flight from Rome into something engineered amongst their leaders. Coriolanus' exchanges with his mother, meanwhile, take place upstage with Frieda Pittoors as Volumnia seated on a sofa on a raised platform. She holds court from this position, so that Scholten van Aschat as Coriolanus has his back to the auditorium in Act Five Scene Three, when his mother attempts to persuade him to return to Rome. Here, van Hove has the roaming camera operator use a tight close-up which is projected above the stage and onto the television screens scattered across the set, capturing Scholten van Aschat's tears at this moment of high emotion. The scene is at once private and public, with the video work voyeuristic in its portrayal of Coriolanus' reactions to Volumnia's speech. Via textual cuts and staging decisions, van Hove explores what it means for the action of *Coriolanus* to be conducted in and out of the view of the people of Rome, as well as the influence of that dynamic on the production's spectators.

Roman Tragedies uses various digital elements to convey alternate perspectives and provide more information to the audience. Video designer Tal Yarden populates the stage space with television screens that display rolling news coverage (including current events) as well as live and pre-recorded footage of the production. This footage is taken from fixed cameras as well as the roving camera operator who follows the performers at points. During 'Friends, Romans, countrymen', Hans Kesting's Antony leaves the stage and moves into the audience, and during Enobarbus' lament for Antony's death in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Bart Slegers as Enobarbus leaves the building, howling in the streets outside whichever venue ITA are performing at, sometimes to the alarm of unsuspecting passers-by. The camera images are spliced together at points too, producing effects that belie the physical staging of certain moments. When Coriolanus and Aufidius join forces, for example, the edited video footage makes Scholten van Aschat and Bart Slegers as Aufidius appear closer together than they are. Embracing at the end of their conversation, the two men disappear offscreen into each other, coming together and vanishing at the same time. If the video work appears tricky, not to be trusted, the LED displays above the stage provide information, such as the outcomes of battles including the number of casualties as well as the eventual results of the conflicts that occur during the show. There are also countdowns to the deaths of major characters, and these deaths are recorded via an overhead photo taken of the 'corpse' and projected on the screens.

Van Hove further complicates the audience's relationship to the production by offering them various viewing options. Seated in the auditorium, it is possible to watch the filmed images as well as watching the actors themselves. After about half an hour, the audience is informed that they are now granted access to the playing space. The stage is laid out like a contemporary conference centre, with sofas, pot plants and screens placed across it. At designated scene changes, the audience can move positions and choose a different vantage

point from which to watch the production. Prime spots are politely but highly contested, and the scene change preceding Caesar's assassination is particularly charged as spectators attempt to predict where the best view of the murder might be and position themselves accordingly. A programme distributed to audience members at the start of the show details the minute-by-minute progression of events, up to its conclusion after five hours and forty minutes. The audience is asked to return to their seats out in the auditorium an hour before the end of the production, with the result that the final moments of *Antony and Cleopatra* take place on a stage which seems defined by its negative space, given how crowded with spectators it had been only a few minutes before. Although the action is played out amongst the audience, with actors moving through the seated or standing groups of spectators, there is little to no performer-audience member interaction. Van Hove allows spectators proximity but crucially little influence over the inevitable progression of *Roman Tragedies* to its denouement.

This relationship between the audience and the production is arguably the most interesting element of *Roman Tragedies*. Van Hove has described *Roman Tragedies* as a 'polyphonic theatre production in which all opinions, standpoints and opinions [sic] exist side by side'.[17] Polyphony is an important preliminary term in Bakhtin's discussion of dialogism, but there is a distinction to be addressed. I will explore the polyphonic nature of *Roman Tragedies* later as a way of looking at the production's use of digital media, but I would be hesitant to describe *Roman Tragedies* as fully dialogic. The control that van Hove exerts over the audience and the images that they see, both onstage and via the video screens, is considerable, and as a result the nature of the exchange that takes place between the production and the spectator is complicated. Van Hove seems to be exploring the role of the

[17] Toneelgroep Amsterdam, 'roman tragedies', <https://tga.nl/en/productions/romeinse-tragedies/synopsis> [accessed 6 February 2020]. N. B. Toneelgroep Amsterdam and Stadsschouwburg Amsterdam merged on 1st January 2018, taking the name Internationaal Theatre Amsterdam from the 2018/2019 season onwards.

audience in the theatre: is their presence outside of the action enough, as in Bakhtin's aesthetic contemplation, to influence the performers onstage? Should we be troubled by the illusion of choice that *Roman Tragedies* affords its spectators, and therefore question their participation in the dialogic exchanges that take place during the production?

The extensive cuts to Shakespeare's text that I mentioned above strip out voices that could make *Roman Tragedies* more polyphonic. By re-working the crowd scenes, van Hove does not represent the citizens of Rome who form an important part of the civilisation that Shakespeare is exploring in these plays. In Dominic Dromgoole's 2014 *Julius Caesar* at the Globe in London, these scenes were not cut, and Dromgoole planted actors in the groundling section of the audience, enacting the parts of the citizens emerging from the crowd to have their say on Roman democracy. Dromgoole's use of the space transformed the Globe into a representation of Rome and broke down barriers between the audience and the performers. Van Hove breaks down these barriers by inviting his audience onstage, but the presence of spectators on the set is a strange, distanced one. It is tempting to suggest that those onstage act merely as another piece of dressing for the performance taking place, which might appear more effective should one remain in a seat out in the auditorium. Kate Bassett comments on precisely this problem, suggesting that 'this production feels like a sociological experiment as well, regarding liberty, democracy and participation'.[18] She notes that 'the "emancipation" isn't maximal, everyone being marshalled at key points and obeying the unwritten rule of keeping mum'.

Other critics have explored this relationship from various perspectives. Natalie Corbett and Keren Zaiontz read the audience as 'a mute but networked populace', who are,

[18] Kate Bassett, 'Ivo van Hove Staging Shakespeare: World Enough and Time?' in *Ivo van Hove: From Shakespeare to David Bowie*, eds. Susan Bennett and Sonia Massai (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) p. 44.

they suggest, 'scripted into the void left by absent soldiers and citizens'.[19] Alongside Bassett, who is also interested in the 'unwritten rule[s]' of the theatre, Corbett and Zaiontz note that 'the implicit (and explicit) contract for the audience to be visible yet silent observers and not participants was quite rigid'. Thomas Cartelli, meanwhile, claims that a different investigation is being carried out by van Hove, asking 'is van Hove encouraging the emancipation of the spectator or modelling and mirroring the contemporary subject's passive entrancement by visual media?'[20] These analyses approach *Roman Tragedies* with different emphases, but all find van Hove's use of the audience onstage troubling. The production questions what Corbett and Zaiontz describe as the 'contract' we enter into when we take our seats in the theatre, and which has evolved over time with changing theatre architecture, technology, and behavioural codes. When I saw *Roman Tragedies*, I spent most of my time on the set, so thrilling was the opportunity to leave my assigned position in the auditorium and experience the drama in a different way. On further reflection, however, it becomes clear that the seeming emancipation with which van Hove presents his audience may in fact be better understood as illusory.

While there are elements of choice, insofar as spectators at *Roman Tragedies* are permitted to watch the performance from the stage and to move around during various scene changes, ultimately van Hove and his actors and creative team maintain control over the production. There are no obvious ways in which the audience is able to affect the action onstage, partly as a result of wider conventions around audience behaviour and partly as a result of the precisely orchestrated nature of *Roman Tragedies*. The dialectical exchange Bakhtin sees as key to aesthetic activity is not enacted, then, in a way that is unique in

[19] Natalie Corbett and Keren Zaiontz, 'The politics of distraction: spectatorial freedom and (dis)enfranchisement in Toneelgroep's *Roman Tragedies*' in *Ivo van Hove Onstage*, ed. David Willinger (London and New York: Routledge, 2018) p. 302.
[20] Thomas Cartelli, 'High-Tech Shakespeare in a Mediatised Globe: Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* and the Problem of Spectatorship' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). p. 269.

dramatic performance in *Roman Tragedies*. After the production's return to the Barbican in 2017, theatre critic Matt Trueman published a blog asking 'Is Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* the most significant piece of theatre in Britain in a decade?'[21] This question was emphatically answered by Holger Syme who, amongst other more detailed responses, writes 'as an assertion about *all* theatre makers, or even all European theatre makers, it's a serious overstatement'.[22] The recent prominence of British directors such as Robert Icke who count van Hove and ITA amongst their influences might be to blame for Trueman's overstatement, as Syme points out. Like Syme, then, I would resist the suggestion that *Roman Tragedies*' approach to the audience is markedly different to the reciprocal aesthetic activity which pervades all live theatre, even if it appears otherwise.

While the production may not enact this sort of exchange between the performers and the audience, it can lay claim to a greater sense of polyphony than many contemporary productions of Shakespeare, even though van Hove's textual cuts remove the influence of the citizens of Rome upon the piece. This polyphony comes about instead via van Hove's extensive use of digital media, with the different perspectives it offers the spectator producing different viewing experiences. These experiences are effectively summarised in Rob Conkie's 'Graphic Shakespeare with Bernard Caelo', a chapter of *Writing Performative Shakespeares* in which Conkie investigates innovative forms for performance criticism. In this chapter, Conkie uses a comic strip to explore *Roman Tragedies*, looking to 'evoke performance on the page to try to get across a sense of what it was actually like being there'.[23] In one image, he imagines a roundtable of critics who discuss their attendance at the

[21] Matt Trueman, 'Is Ivo van Hove's *Roman Tragedies* the most significant piece of theatre in Britain in a decade?', *Whatsonstage* (2017), <https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/roman-tragedies-ivo-van-hove-barbican-significance_43186.html> [accessed 10 February 2020].
[22] Holger Syme, 'British Theatre under the Influence (of much more than *Roman Tragedies*), < http://www.dispositio.net/archives/2418> [accessed 8 February 2020].
[23] Rob Conkie, 'Graphic Shakespeare with Bernard Caelo' in *Writing Performative Shakespeares: New Forms for Performance Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 91.

show and the viewing choices that they made. These range from 'I moved around a lot' to 'I took advantage of a handy sofa and television tucked away at the back of the stage' to 'I stayed in the same seat in the auditorium for the whole six hours'.[24] This panel offers a polyphony of voices at first, but as Conkie's analysis in the comic moves on, they merge into one, discussing the politicised message of *Roman Tragedies*.

The politicisation of *Roman Tragedies* is embedded in the production and has drawn extensive commentary in criticism of the piece. Cartelli comes to the conclusion that 'instead of intervening in some decisive way in the corporate, mediatised dominance of political culture, his [van Hove's] production merely represents it, in the process effectively serving as its enabler'.[25] I would take issue with Cartelli's apparent premise here that representation necessarily results in the enabling of what is represented: David Scott Kastan, for example, argues precisely the opposite regarding the representation and therefore judgement of the monarch in the history plays, suggesting that placing the king under the gaze of the audience might lead directly to insurrection. Patrick Gray, too, notes Cleopatra's fear of being 'mocked on stage' should she and Iras be brought as prisoners to Rome in defeat.[26] Cartelli's reading of a particularly powerful moment in the *Julius Caesar* section of *Roman Tragedies* illustrates the problem with his more general claim. As I described above, during 'friends, Romans, countrymen', Hans Kesting as Antony moves from the location designated for the funeral speeches for Caesar – in which Eelco Smits as Brutus had remained – to make forays amongst the audience in the auditorium as well as the spaces upstage to which the rest of the conspirators had retreated. Cartelli suggests that Kesting plays this sequence 'in the manner of a talk-show host who is his own guest star'. I however find Kesting extremely moving

[24] Conkie, 'Graphic Shakespeare', p. 103.
[25] Cartelli, 'High-Tech Shakespeare in a Mediatised Globe', p. 280.
[26] Patrick Gray, *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic: Selfhood, Stoicism and Civil War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 249.

here: if his tears for Caesar are crocodile tears, his Antony is an extraordinary actor. Although politically effective, 'friends, Romans, countrymen' feels emotionally truthful in Kesting's performance, and he is able to make an empathetic connection with the audience.

Van Hove has the roving camera operator follow Kesting as he traverses the aisles and lunges angrily into the crowds of spectators onstage to threaten the conspirators. The mediatised elements of the performance serve the actor here, allowing access to Kesting that might otherwise be lost as he disappears off the stage. Audience members can try to follow him with their own eyes but are given recourse to his image on the screens should they need it. At other points in the production, the live footage is cut, however, in a way that alters its representation of the action that is taking place onstage: van Hove manipulates the performances of the actors so as to call into question where exactly the authoritative viewing experience can be found. As described above, these edits to the images onscreen usually change the proxemics of a particular sequence, bringing characters together or moving them further apart in a way that fundamentally changes the way moments are read – if the audience is watching the screens rather than the actors onstage. In *Coriolanus*, Caius Martius and Aufidius embrace at the end of the discussion during which Coriolanus agrees to join the Volscii. Van Hove has the two men captured on two separate cameras, but the image onscreen appears as a seamless one. It is only when they embrace that the filming technique becomes apparent, as they disappear offscreen into the space in the middle of the image produced, which is not captured by either camera. The two actors merge into one and disappear – foreshadowing perhaps their eventual end.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, similarly, two separate shots of the titular pair are spliced together in such a way that, although they are some distance apart onstage, their hands appear to brush together. Employed at a moment where Antony and Cleopatra are many miles away from each other, this piece of editing adds pathos to their separation. In these sequences, van

Hove is in control of the action and the way in which it is represented onscreen. During 'friends, Romans, countrymen', however, control seems to be ceded to Kesting: his movements force the camera to follow him in order to adequately capture him for display on video. There is not only one relationship between the performers and the footage of them that is projected. Van Hove and Yarden use video differently at different points in *Roman Tragedies*, complicating the viewing experience for the audience. It is also possible to spend the entirety of the production watching only the actors, ignoring the screens placed around the set and over the stage, although comprehension would be more difficult for a non Dutch-speaking spectator as surtitles appear on each image. It is important to remember, then, that the footage – manipulated or not – is only one of various viewing options. One might, as Sarah Werner claims in Conkie's article she did, stay in the same seat in the auditorium throughout all six hours of *Roman Tragedies*, resisting ITA's invitation to join them onstage and be swayed by the complexities of van Hove and Yarden's editing techniques.

Van Hove's description of *Roman Tragedies* as a 'polyphonic theatre production' does seem accurate in terms of the different perspectives offered by his use of digital media. While he removes the voices of the citizens via textual cuts, he gives the audience more ways to watch the production. Situating *Roman Tragedies* in terms of Bakhtin's author-hero model is more complex, however. In its original formulation, Dostoevsky takes the role of author, and his characters the role of hero. Crucially, however, Dostoevsky does not stand in authority over his characters: they are sufficiently self-possessed that they are able to function as if they are independent of him as author. In *Roman Tragedies*, we might identify several author figures. These are van Hove, as the director of the piece and the artistic director of ITA, and his creative team, including scenographer Jan Versweyveld, dramaturgs Alexander Schreuder, Bart Van den Eynde, and Jan Peter Gerrits, and video designer Tal Yarden. Translator Tom Kleijn, composer Eric Sleichim, and costume designer Lies van Assche

round out the credits. Each of these creatives contribute to the overall making of the piece, taking on some sort of authorial role in their own department while under the direction of van Hove.

As is common in continental Europe, the actors of ITA belong to an ensemble, from which the majority of their productions are cast. Van Hove became artistic director in 2001, and some of the performers have been with the company since its formation in 1987. Actors such as Hans Kesting and Chris Nietvelt have been working together for over thirty years, and these kinds of deep-rooted relationships make themselves apparent in marathon shows like *Roman Tragedies* that have been in the ITA repertoire for over a decade. The schedule for the production that I discussed above lays bare the precision required to mount a show such as *Roman Tragedies*, especially given the use of technology throughout. Other elements are also designed to reveal the making of the show. Onstage, there are make-up stations around the sides of the set, and van Hove himself sometimes appears at a desk upstage, watching over the action. During the *Coriolanus* section, Kesting takes the microphone to deliver information to the audience in the scene changes. Attending *Roman Tragedies* in 2017 without knowing much about ITA, I had no idea that the unassuming man positioned upstage left would later assume such a pivotal role in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Although van Hove takes an authorial role as director of *Roman Tragedies* and as artistic director of ITA, there are some scenes that lead us to question this authority. In two instances, characters seem to break out of the confines of the production, rebelling against their author just like Bakhtin's self-possessed heroes. I have already discussed one of these moments, Antony's funeral oration for Caesar, but later on, as I mentioned, Bart Slegers' Enobarbus leaves not only the stage, as Kesting does, but the building itself. Mourning his friendship with Antony, Enobarbus is so overcome with grief that he moves out into the auditorium, the corridors of the building that ITA is playing in, and onto the streets outside.

He is followed by the camera operator and soundman, who capture him amongst unassuming passers-by. When I saw the production at the Barbican, Slegers found himself in the tunnels around the complex, with only a few people in the vicinity disturbed by his cries. Using the performance space and the areas around the venue in this way, it feels as if the characters of *Roman Tragedies* have gone dramatically off-script, propelled by the extreme emotions they are undergoing at that moment. Slegers' departure from the theatre also adds an element of risk: while spectators attending the performance are aware of the artifice of what is going on, those in the public domain do not. It is as though Enobarbus breaks out into the real world, totally freed from any controlling force that might limit him.

Roman Tragedies, then, approaches Bakhtin's ideas about dialogism in various different ways. By inviting the audience onto the stage, van Hove investigates the relationship between spectator and performer and implicitly asks how influential the audience can be within the conventions of twenty-first-century theatre etiquette. Outsideness in the Bakhtinian sense seems to be done away with, yet leaving one's seat during *Roman Tragedies* has little impact on the action onstage. Van Hove's claim to have presented a polyphonic theatre production is borne out in some areas but not in others. He increases the ways in which the audience can view the show, yet removes the polyphony Shakespeare includes in the text through the voices of the citizens of Rome. By doing so, van Hove shifts the attention from Shakespeare, the playwright, as author of the text, to himself as director as the author of the production. *Roman Tragedies* is van Hove's show, although he is reliant on the expertise of his creative collaborators and in particular the prowess of his acting ensemble. The moments of the production that are the most thrilling are those where the authority of the piece appears to be handed to actors such as Hans Kesting and Bart Slegers: the excitement of live performance is felt during these sequences of apparently improvisatory movement offstage, motivated by high emotion. This spontaneity is belied only by the

apparatus of the production that makes its scale and precision clear and encourages further appreciation for the ensemble work of the entire company.

Ian Rickson's *Hamlet*

'Freudian, modish or just a bit bonkers? A new journey into the mind of the Great Dane – as well as into the Young Vic theatre – gets mixed diagnoses from the critics'.[27] This summation of 'What to say about… *Hamlet* with Michael Sheen' poses various questions about Ian Rickson's 2011 production for the Young Vic. This *Hamlet* featured Michael Sheen in the titular role and was set in a psychiatric institution, with Hamlet at least one of the patients and other characters in indeterminate roles. Rickson, the former artistic director of the Royal Court, had not directed any Shakespeare before this production and has not attempted any more since. At the Royal Court, he worked primarily as a director of new writing, but he has also worked on other texts in the classical theatre canon in his freelance career, including a recent acclaimed production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* in the West End. Michael Sheen was at the time probably best known for his performances as Tony Blair in films by Peter Morgan and as David Frost in *Frost/Nixon*. He had received three Olivier nominations before *Hamlet*, notably for *Amadeus* in 1998. Rickson and Sheen developed their production for several years before its appearance at the Young Vic, where Sheen if not the production as a whole was highly acclaimed.

Most reviewers interpreted the setting of Rickson's *Hamlet* as a psychiatric facility, with the play potentially taking place inside Hamlet's head. Michael Billington, writing for *The Guardian*, states that 'we are clearly in a psychiatric institution complete with treatment rooms, library and glass-walled office'.[28] Sam Marlowe comments that 'Michael Sheen is

[27] Leo Benedictus, 'What to say about… *Hamlet* with Michael Sheen', *The Guardian*, 10 November 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/nov/10/hamlet-michael-sheen-reviews> [accessed 10 March 2020].
[28] Michael Billington, '*Hamlet* – review', *The Guardian*, 9 November 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/nov/09/hamlet-youngvic-review> [accessed 10 March 2020].

riveting as the crazed Danish Prince in Ian Rickson's terrifying psychiatric-hospital staging'.[29] Rickson, in an interview with Heather Neill for *Theatre Voice*, is deliberately vague in his description of the location, asserting that it 'could be somewhere that people are huddled after a hurricane, could be a psychiatric hospital, might be a prison'.[30] Despite Rickson's reluctance to label the space, other characters in the play take on roles which seem appropriate for this kind of institution. Claudius appears to be in charge of the facility, while Polonius takes notes as he observes Hamlet's behaviour. Ophelia, meanwhile, goes through some kind of breakdown herself, as in Shakespeare's text, although she is not initially a patient like Hamlet. The play is, of course, often subject to psychoanalytical readings, with Hamlet's relationship with Gertrude coming in for particular scrutiny. In the *Rabelais* revision notes, as I have noted, Bakhtin refuses a Freudian analysis of his reading of Shakespeare, but this refusal seems strained, not least because he himself invokes the story of Oedipus when discussing *Hamlet*. Rickson for his own part seems to disdain clear explanations of his intentions for the production, preferring to let the show speak for itself than to unpick his every choice.

Rickson built some extra space into the audience's experience of the show at the Young Vic. Upon arrival, audience members were invited not to enter the building as they usually would but instead to follow a route through some of the backstage areas of the theatre, which Rickson converted for the purposes of the production. The corridors appear to be those of a hospital, with several doors leading off them labelled, including a chapel and therapy room. There were no specifically interactive elements for the audience: once they had moved through these corridors, they took their seats as normal, and Sheen and the company

[29] Sam Marlowe, '*Hamlet*, Young Vic Theatre', *theartsdesk.com*, 10 November 2011, <https://www.theartsdesk.com/theatre/hamlet-young-vic-theatre> [accessed 10 March 2020].
[30] Heather Neill, 'Ian Rickson discusses his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*', *Theatre Voice*, 19 December 2011, <http://www.theatrevoice.com/audio/ian-rickson-discusses-his-michael-sheen-hamlet> [accessed 11 March 2020].

did not break the fourth wall any more than might be expected in a play such as *Hamlet* which makes use of so many soliloquies. Rickson speaks of his interest in the 'threshold' between the real world and what he describes as the 'charged dreamworld' of a play, looking to construct a 'runway to tune in the audience' to enter the physical and psychological space of his *Hamlet*.[31] As is his wont, he states that he is happy for spectators to 'take or leave' this extra element to the production: throughout the interview, he resists any and all of Neill's enquiries which search for definitive answers as to the meaning of certain parts of his *Hamlet*. The journey he constructs for the audience preceding the show is not a direct instruction but an offering.

Some non-traditional casting decisions were also made in order to exacerbate Hamlet's psychological turmoil. Some of these were not wholly original: Michael Sheen appeared as the ghost of Old Hamlet, as in Richard Eyre's 1980 Royal Court production starring Jonathan Pryce. Sheen also became Fortinbras, entering at the end of the play, and Rickson cast Hayley Carmichael as Horatio and Eileen Walsh as Rosencrantz, both female-presenting actors. Each of these decisions were made with a psychoanalytical reading in mind, and Rickson cites various influences in this area. He suggests that he thought of Carmichael's Horatio as the Jungian animus to Sheen's Hamlet, possessing a 'feeling sensibility' which Hamlet wishes to mirror and connect with but cannot.[32] In Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, the animus and anima are the unconscious masculine and feminine sides of women and men, respectively. As Jung himself writes:

> The anima is not the soul in the dogmatic sense, not an *anima rationalis*, which is a philosophical conception, but a natural archetype that satisfactorily sums up all the statements of the unconscious, of the primitive mind, of the history of language and

[31] Neill, 'Ian Rickson discusses his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*'.
[32] Neill, 'Ian Rickson discusses his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*'.

> religion. It is a 'factor' in the proper sense of the word. Man cannot make it; on the contrary, it is always the a priori element in his moods, reactions, impulses, and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life. It is something that lives of itself, that makes us live; it is a life behind consciousness that cannot be completely integrated with it, but from which, on the contrary, consciousness arises.[33]

Rickson drew too on R. D. Laing, looking to base some of the design aspects of the production on his facility in London, Kingsley Hall. Laing was part of the anti-psychiatry movement in the 1960s, which sought alternative methods of psychiatric treatment. Kingsley Hall had patients and therapists living alongside each other, and eschewed the electric shock therapy common at the time, allowing patients to explore their state of mind even while undergoing psychosis. Sarah Rotstein suggests that Sheen returning as Fortinbras at the production climax 'can easily be understood as a man's personal journey from existential conflict and 'madness' to rebirth', in a way that chimes 'with Laing's belief in the importance of self and symptom exploration as the journey of self-healing'.[34] Casting along these lines allows Rickson and Sheen to explore the nature of Hamlet's identity in the play and to pose questions to the audience watching the piece as to their understanding of the world they are invited to watch.

Interviewed in 2018, Rickson stated that he 'feel[s] a better director having directed *Hamlet*'.[35] Critical responses in 2011 were less enthusiastic, however, with the result that, as Rickson explains, 'the working-class shy boy in me then felt disqualified in my own mind from doing more Shakespeare and I haven't done one since'. As artistic director of the Royal

[33] C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung Vol. 9 Part 1*, eds. Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, William McGuire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 27.
[34] Sarah Rotstein, 'Hamlet and psychiatry intertwined', *Australasian Psychiatry* 26:6 (2018), p. 649.
[35] Jasper Rees, 'Ian Rickson: 'I'm an introvert, I want to stop talking about myself' – interview', *theartsdesk.com*, 22 May 2018, <https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/ian-rickson-im-introvert-i-want-stop-talking-about-myself-interview> [accessed 20 March 2020].

Court for eight years, his commitment to new writing is evident: in an earlier interview, he says that 'it is the most interesting thing to work with playwrights on new plays because there is no context, no Coles notes, no previous performances', claiming that 'we are hurtled into the present together… there is an exhilaration about this'.[36] Yet his practice as a director working on the classical canon of plays is to carry out extensive research, both on his own and with his company of actors. For *Hamlet*, he visited Elsinore castle in Denmark and in rehearsals took on the role of art therapist, with his actors requested to 'draw their lives' as an exercise. He defines himself as 'a Royal Court person', meaning that 'for me the writer, the word and the body of the actor, that is all I need'.[37]

Rickson's habitual configuration of writer, director, and performer is markedly different to that of van Hove, and to that of Thomas Ostermeier, as we will see in the final section of this chapter. He gives the role of 'primary artist' to the writer, and characterises the director, designers, and actors as 'interpretive artists', suggesting that it is their duty to 'release' the writer.[38] Rickson comments that as artistic director of the Royal Court, he programmed and directed pieces to ally with the organisation's own objectives, but as a freelance director he aims not to get in the way of the actor or the play. These impulses seem to be governed by his work in the first part of his career on new writing. It is easier for auteur directors to radically restage a play that is already established in the canon: the thinking here seems to be that canonical texts are resilient enough to withstand more extreme interpretations. Rickson attempts, however, to reconfigure the way a director might approach this relationship with a classical text. He conceives of himself as someone working alongside the writer to serve their efforts: not primary, but not fully secondary either. For him, this set-

[36] Kate Kellaway, 'He's just a zealous guy…', *The Observer*, 28 January 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2001/jan/28/features.review27> [accessed 20 March 2020].
[37] Jasper Rees, 'Ian Rickson'.
[38] Ian Rickson, 'Ian Rickson: In Conversation', *Almeida Theatre* (2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuvwirNsHP0> [accessed 20 March 2020].

up does not place the director in a lesser role, but he suggests that, in Germany for example, auteurs might think themselves lower down the creative hierarchy were they to follow his model.

As opposed to the directorial style of van Hove, then, Rickson usually resists taking on an authoring role for his productions but instead seeks to foreground the playwright. As Bakhtin writes in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, drama directed by Rickson might be conceived of as monologic, 'made from a single piece': the vision of the playwright.[39] Rickson's work as director, and that of other theatremakers involved in the production, is superseded by the authority of the original writer of the text. Rickson's recent revivals of nineteenth- and twentieth-century plays, including Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and Brian Friel's *Translations*, seek not to impose any kind of concept on the play but to speak for their worth as texts. Unlike other popular British directors such as Robert Icke, who display clear influences from auteur European theatremakers including Ivo van Hove, Rickson's recent revivals have used sets and costuming appropriate to the period of the plays he has staged, avoiding charges of *Regietheater* and presenting each text-first. For *Translations*, which premiered in 1980, Rickson says that he is attempting to make a case for the play's entry into the canon, and that his staging it in the largest space in the National Theatre is part of this case.[40] Here, again, the emphasis is on the value of Friel's work as the writer and not Rickson's interpretation of the play as director.

Rickson's usual approach does not allow characters to take on independence from their author: by privileging the playwright, he shuts down these possibilities. His *Hamlet*, however, diverges from his usual treatment of the text and author, and the critical reaction to the production communicates as much. Attempts by reviewers to unpick the framing of the

[39] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 17.
[40] Jasper Rees, 'Ian Rickson'.

play indicate that, for this show at least, Rickson had foregrounded his own directorial interpretation. The concept of the production pushed Michael Sheen as Hamlet to the fore: if the play is read as taking place inside Hamlet's head, the audience are naturally inclined to focus more on Hamlet as a dominating, monologic voice. I explored this kind of movement into monologism in *Richard III* in my first chapter, and it is possible to apply this kind of analysis to Rickson's *Hamlet*. As we will see in Ostermeier's *Richard III* as well, shifting the spotlight even further to shine on the protagonist reduces the agency of other characters. If we follow Rickson's thesis for the play, we are constantly viewing the non-Hamlet characters as constructed by Hamlet himself: his perspective overwhelmingly inflects the play. This dominance is in marked contrast to that of the main characters in *Roman Tragedies*. This contrast, however, is in part due to the material with which van Hove and Rickson are working. The Roman plays naturally lend themselves to a more dialogic or at least polyphonic approach, whereas tragedies such as *Hamlet* are more concerned with the individual progress of their protagonist - hence Bakhtin's focus on the tragedies in his *Rabelais* revision notes.

Rickson's use of the Young Vic space is similarly complex from a Bakhtinian point of view. The language he uses about the audience's entrance to the theatre and to the performance space suggests some sort of collective understanding being forged as spectators make their way into the theatre. He describes his use of the corridors in the backstage area of the Young Vic as the construction of a 'runway to tune in an audience', placing emphasis upon the space outside of the theatre and the space of the play as two separate locations.[41] By making something of the journey between these locations, he hopes to focus the minds of the audience and to make it clear to them that they are moving between not only physical but also psychological spaces. Rickson goes on to discuss what he describes as a 'militant

[41] Neill, 'Ian Rickson discusses his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*'.

individualism' present in some audiences, particularly to do with surrendering connection to items like mobile phones.[42] Although he does not take this comment further, it is symptomatic of the emphasis placed upon theatre as a communal experience that takes place under certain conditions.[43] Rickson aims to break down these individualistic barriers amongst his audience and bring them together in their understanding of the production. This understanding is constructed via dialogic exchange, with Rickson expecting spectators to parse the environment around them on their way into the theatre and use this experience to further their comprehension of the world of his *Hamlet*.

Unlike *Roman Tragedies,* Rickson does not make use of his audience in the performance space to produce meaning. Once the *Hamlet* spectators have made their way through the Young Vic's backstage, they take their seats, and the show takes place without any further audience interaction or immersive elements. *Hamlet* uses a thrust or traverse stage, with a main performance area at one end and space in between two banks of seating on either side. Bakhtin would question the nature of the exchange that is occurring: the audience are expected to engage with their surroundings leading up to the performance, but once they are seated, the production takes place with the fourth wall largely intact. Rickson does not explore the boundaries around the audience-performer dynamic as van Hove does. Sheen does not exploit Shakespeare's extensive use of direct address in the play to break the fourth wall as much as he might, and as much as Lars Eidinger does in Ostermeier's *Richard III*. Once again, then, Rickson's production retains a largely monological emphasis: the audience's introduction to the performance is somewhat disruptive, but the playing practices of Rickson's company do not stir spectators into action in a truly dialogic relationship.

[42] Neill, 'Ian Rickson discusses his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*'.
[43] For more on audience behaviour and theatre etiquette, see Kirsty Sedgman, *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Rickson's audience may instead take up an active and interpretive attitude to his productions on their own terms. Unlike *Roman Tragedies*, in which van Hove makes a particular point about spectatorship in the twenty-first century, Rickson stands slightly apart from his audience in *Hamlet*, encouraging them to read the production as they see fit. Heather Neill, Rickson's interviewer for *Theatre Voice*, poses blunt or 'factual' questions during their conversation. She wants to know where precisely the production is set and, for example, which characters are doctors and which patients, if indeed its location is a psychiatric facility. Rickson's discomfort with this kind of enquiry is evident throughout: he responds by emphasising that 'it's what you want to make it' and stating that he is looking to preserve a sense of something 'liminal'.[44] The pull quote on the *Theatre Voice* website summarises his approach concisely: 'I don't want to create a scheme which is neat and makes it easy for people to define what a play is because all great plays occupy a space which is mercurial and complex and deep and strange – like life'. It seems, then, that Rickson appreciates the interpretive work audiences bring to drama: that they read a production on its own terms and that it may mean quite different things to different audience members. He refuses to take on an authoritative interpretive role and prefers to offer up possibilities instead, albeit within a strongly suggestive framework.

Ultimately, Rickson's use of space in *Hamlet* does not investigate the relationship between audience and performer, as is the case in *Roman Tragedies* and, as will be seen, Thomas Ostermeier's *Richard III*. He hints at immersive theatre, guiding the audience through the backstage space of the Young Vic. Once the journey down this 'runway' has been completed, however, it seems that Rickson considers the audience sufficiently 'tuned in', and the performance can begin as normal. Richard Hornby, reviewing Rickson's *Hamlet* alongside Ostermeier's, which also starred Lars Eidinger and came to the Barbican in 2011,

[44] Neill, 'Ian Rickson on his Michael Sheen *Hamlet*'.

describes it as an 'avant-garde, high concept' production, which he finds markedly underwhelming.[45] Yet although Rickson adds a complex psychoanalytical angle to the play, other aspects of it are reasonably traditional. None of the productions I explore in this chapter take a non-realistic approach to acting: despite other more unusual aspects of the shows in question, the performances by the actors are legible in that they remain naturalistic. *Hamlet* and *Richard III* employ some form of audience interaction, but only *Roman Tragedies* involves its audience to a large degree. Rickson's *Hamlet* is dialogic in the way that all theatre productions are dialogic: it requires engagement from its audience but in the more traditional, passive sense as established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In an article surveying psychoanalytical productions of *Hamlet* through time, Sarah Rotstein extrapolates Rickson's reference to Laing as an influence in his research for the production. As I noted above, she suggests that 'Rickson's *Hamlet* can easily be understood as a man's personal journey from existential conflict and 'madness' to rebirth', citing 'Sheen's multiple roles within the play' as evidence of this journey.[46] Rotstein goes further in her analysis of Sheen's final appearance, reading his entrance as Fortinbras as 'a message of hope', wherein Hamlet has 'buried the 'madness' and been reborn'. She says that by 'embodying the character of Fortinbras, Hamlet had become the self-assured man-of-action that he long admired'. In Shakespeare's text, of course, there is a moment where this admiration is played out. Often cut in performance, Scene Fourteen has Hamlet witnessing the preparation of Fortinbras' invading army and lamenting the pace of his own revenge upon Claudius. He ruminates that 'I do not know/ Why yet I live to say 'this thing's to do',/ Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means/ To do't', and cites 'examples gross as earth' which 'exhort' him to carry out his plans.[47] Fortinbras is one of these examples, and from this

[45] Richard Hornby, 'Two Hamlets', *The Hudson Review* 65:1 (2012), p. 128.
[46] Rotstein, 'Hamlet and psychiatry intertwined', p. 649.
[47] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 14. 40-43.

point forward in the play Hamlet does seem more resolved to achieve the vengeance towards which the ghost of his father attempts to direct him .

As Rotstein indicates, psychoanalysis has been a major force in Shakespeare criticism for some time. When Freud embarked upon his first formulation of the Oedipus complex, the first text to which he applied the notion was *Hamlet*, linking Hamlet's reticence to avenge his father's death, his hostility to Ophelia and Gertrude and his fate. In 1949, Ernest Jones' *Hamlet and Oedipus* explored the play via Freud, and twentieth-century developments in psychology were used to analyse the plays in turn, including Lacan's mirror stage and Winnicott's transitional object.[48] In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist critics such as Janet Adelman and Coppélia Kahn wrote major works combining gender and psychoanalysis.[49] Their discussion focusses on 'pre-Oedipal' male anxiety, where male characters feel threatened by suffocation by mother figures, with Adelman commenting that 'differentiation from the mother' becomes 'a special site of anxiety for the boy-child, who must form his specifically masculine selfhood against the matrix of her overwhelming femaleness'.[50] This emphasis in scholarship has been replicated, although not to the same extent, in Shakespearean performance. Famous examples of psychoanalytic productions of *Hamlet* include Laurence Olivier's 1948 film and Richard Eyre for the Royal Court starring Jonathan Pryce, which I mentioned above.[51] Olivier recorded the Ghost's dialogue himself and played it back at reduced speed, while Pryce suggested that his own ventriloquism functioned as 'some kind of possession, Hamlet becomes taken over by his father's spirit, who tells him

[48] Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (London: Gollancz, 1949).
[49] Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays,* Hamlet *to* The Tempest (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992) and Coppelia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).
[50] Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers*, p. 7.
[51] See Peter Donaldson's 'Olivier, *Hamlet*, and Freud', *Cinema Journal* 26:4 (1987), pp. 22-48.

everything he needs to hear'.[52] For Pryce, this performance acted as a sort of therapy for the loss of his own father: he says that 'it took me a long time to process how I'd reacted to his death… One day I became convinced that he'd appeared to me: only for a moment, but clearly I'd wanted to conjure him back into being'.

In the *Rabelais* revision notes, when discussing *Hamlet,* Bakhtin introduces a comparison to Oedipus immediately and explicitly. He describes the play as 'a dislocated, shifted *Oedipus Rex*' and notes Hamlet's confusion as to Claudius' status. The destruction of genealogy that Bakhtin has proposed as the underlying motivating pattern of tragedy is thrown into chaos by Claudius' murder of Old Hamlet. He states that Oedipus 'knows that the potential genuine murderer by nature is he… another has murdered instead of him… the revenge for his father would in fact have turned out to be a simple removal of a rival'.[53] Bakhtin brings together Ophelia and Gertrude, positing that 'mother and lover are fused together in the image of the woman- the same womb both is fecundated and gives birth in the coitus'. Sandler, in his introduction to the notes, admits that 'such a remark may appear a variant of Freudian literary analysis', before claiming that 'Bakhtin is quick to distance himself from that implication'.[54] Bakhtin performs this distancing early on, stating that 'if one may speak of psychology here, it is only the deep psychology of life itself, the psychology of individuality as such'.[55] Yet by citing *Oedipus Rex* and shifting multiple characters into roles that fit this reading, it is difficult to see how else we might interpret Bakhtin's analysis of *Hamlet*.

[52] Andrew Dickson, 'Voodoo child: Jonathan Pryce on channelling his father's death for *Hamlet*', *The Guardian*, 18 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/apr/18/jonathan-pryce-hamlet-royal-court-1980> [accessed 28 March 2020].
[53] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 529.
[54] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 523.
[55] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 527.

Rickson's production, then, is not unprecedented in its foregrounding of psychology in *Hamlet*. In doing so, it activates the dialogic relationship between the audience and the theatremakers involved, offering up interpretive possibilities but refusing to answer specific questions. Leaving gaps, as Rickson appears keen to do in interviews seeking to unpick the production, provides space for spectators to perform their own readings of the play through this lens. Positioning the writer as primary artist, however, does seem to push drama towards monologism rather than dialogism, despite Rickson's insistence that this kind of hierarchy does not place the director and other creatives in a servile position. This claim appears counter-intuitive, too, given the reception of Rickson's *Hamlet* as 'high concept' and 'avant-garde'. These descriptors, it should be noted, are made within the frame of American and British theatre: as this chapter demonstrates, what we in the UK might term radical adaptations of classic texts are much more conventional in continental theatre. I would suggest, then, that this *Hamlet* might be conceived of as an outlier in Rickson's practice and general approach. Usually, he allows the playwright to take precedence, but here, perhaps because he is reviving *Hamlet*, he places more of a directorial stamp upon the play, which in turn seems to open the production up for the audience to think through their own interpretations. Rickson's *Hamlet* feeds the dialogic relationship between theatremakers and spectators that is present in theatre already, contradicting Bakhtin's dismissal of the genre as monologic.

Thomas Ostermeier's *Richard III*

In 2015, Schaubühne artistic director Thomas Ostermeier staged *Richard III* with one of the stars of his company, Lars Eidinger, taking on the role of Richard. The two had previously collaborated on *Hamlet* in 2008, to critical acclaim. Ostermeier became artistic director of the Schaubühne in 1999 and was previously known in Germany for premiering new work by playwrights including Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill. A few years into his artistic

directorship, he began mounting productions of the classics including *Hedda Gabler*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Eidinger joined the Schaubühne in 1999 and began playing leading roles for Ostermeier as the director moved into his exploration of classic drama. Reviewing *Richard III* for *Shakespeare*, Gemma Miller cites one of Ostermeier's motivations for staging the play: 'it was, he explained, to showcase the talents of Lars Eidinger, the star performer of Ostermeier's Berlin-based Schaubühne theatre'.[56] As I will discuss in more detail, the entire production is engineered around Eidinger as Richard, from the cuts made to the text to the reconfigured space in which the piece was premiered at the Schaubühne. Unlike *Roman Tragedies*, then, this *Richard III* prioritises the audience's relationship with one performer, with very different results in terms of Bakhtinian dialogism.

For the production, one of the performance spaces in the Schaubühne was transformed, with Jan Pappelbaum, the designer for *Richard III*, stating that he was looking to 'maximise the claustrophobic atmosphere'.[57] The Schaubühne theatre complex has a large hall that is divided using sliding panels: in this way, one, two, or three auditoria of different sizes can be created, depending on the work being made. In his foreword to *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier*, Théâtre de Complicité artistic director Simon McBurney describes, for *Richard III*, 'an extremely shallow semi-circular thrust stage, a cylindrical auditorium of three galleries, rising to the ceiling'.[58] The design was directly influenced by the playing space of Shakespeare's Globe, but McBurney comments that 'this is not so much the Globe as a vertical snow-boarder's half-pipe', with the result that 'the audience is so perilously close to the actors that they will be inseparable from the action'. The proximity of the

[56] Gemma Miller, 'Review of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (directed by Thomas Ostermeier for the Festival d'Avignon) at the Opera Grand, Avignon, recorded 11 and 12 July and broadcast at 10.40pm 13 July on *arte* Concert', *Shakespeare* 12:2 (2016), p. 217.
[57] Peter M. Boenisch and Thomas Ostermeier, *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 41.
[58] Boenisch and Ostermeier, *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier*, p. viii.

audience to the performers more closely resembles the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, the indoor theatre which is housed on the same site as the Globe on the South Bank in London. McBurney asserts that 'because of how we are seated we will be obliged to be part of whatever takes place on the stage, to interrogate and be interrogated'. Eidinger uses a microphone hung from the ceiling to deliver soliloquies and asides, with the amplified sound bringing him closer to the audience too. These staging decisions result in exactly the kind of forceful dialogue that Ostermeier intends, aided by Eidinger's performance.

Ostermeier makes various cuts to the text that serve to foreground Richard even more. Reviewing the Edinburgh International Festival run of the show, Lyn Gardner comments that 'the politics of court remain a little dusty and the women are sidelined in favour of the monstrously watchable Richard'.[59] Translated by Marius von Mayenburg, the production runs at two hours and forty-five minutes, with Eidinger onstage for the majority of this time. Ostermeier notes various influences for his depiction of Richard, including Robert Weimann's work on medieval theatre. He is particularly interested in the spatial dynamics of certain characters, citing 'a peculiar hierarchy of entering the stage' for Virtue and Vice figures in the morality plays; the former enter from the wings or the back, and the latter via the audience. Ostermeier muses on 'this idea of a character who is sent from amongst the audience in order to embody all our dark desires on stage, and to enact in a play everything we are not permitted to do in our civilised world'.[60] He dismisses Schiller's suggestion that theatre should be a 'moral institution', claiming instead that it is 'a carnivalesque space where we have the jester's licence to get away with anything'. Approaching *Richard III*, then, Ostermeier is determined to explore the darker side of human behaviour, bringing his

[59] Lyn Gardner, '*Richard III* review – Monstrous monarch rocks the mic in Ostermeier's thunderous show', *The Guardian*, 25 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/aug/25/richard-iii-review-lyceum-edinburgh-thomas-ostermeier> [accessed 3 April 2020].
[60] Boenisch and Ostermeier, *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier*, p. 198.

audience into Richard's world so that there is no separation between performer and spectator, none of the footlights that for Bakhtin mark the difference between theatre and carnival.

This anarchic spirit is a hallmark of Eidinger's performances, too. J. Kelly Nestruck, interviewing the star ahead of performances as Tartuffe in Montreal, tells Eidinger that his Hamlet 'was the first time I wondered not only whether Hamlet was going crazy, but whether the actor playing Hamlet was as well.'[61] Holger Syme details Eidinger's confusion – or feigned confusion – during the Mousetrap when playing Hamlet, which resulted in him asking audience members to translate parts of the English surtitles so that he could find his place in the play again (having apparently had a disagreement with the prompter).[62] Eidinger points out that the German word for 'entertainment', 'Unterhaltung', 'is the same word we use for 'dialogue''.[63] He confirms that 'I try to make the people aware that they see me and I see them'. Depending on the part, it seems that Eidinger actively seeks to make this dialogue or interaction hostile: Syme describes his Hamlet as 'easily the most antagonistic actor-audience relationship I've ever witnessed', citing an audience member yelling at Eidinger 'stop talking to me and get on with the play! I'm here for Shakespeare!' Ostermeier and Eidinger engineer this proximity to the audience and, unlike *Roman Tragedies*, make use of it to interact with their spectators.

Despite this engagement with the audience, elements of the production ally it with the ideas about tragedy that Bakhtin puts forward in the *Rabelais* revision notes. As I discussed in my first chapter, Bakhtin seizes upon individualism as the key motivator behind tragedy, wherein characters seek to separate themselves from those genealogically bound to them.

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[61] J. Kelly Nestruck, 'Why anarchic German actor Lars Eidinger loves to break the fourth wall', *The Globe and Mail*, 23 May 2015, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/why-anarchic-german-actor-lars-eidinger-loves-to-break-the-fourth-wall/article24581220/> [accessed 3 April 2020].
[62] Holger Syme, 'Off-the-Cuff Reviews, 2014: Plays in Germany', <http://www.dispositio.net/archives/2051> [accessed 10 February 2020].
[63] Nestruck, 'Why anarchic German actor Lars Eidinger loves to break the fourth wall'.

Fathers murder sons and sons murder fathers in order to secure their own personal power. This dynamic exists already in the text of *Richard III*, but Ostermeier's dramaturgical emphasis exaggerates it even further. By cutting the play to foreground Eidinger as Richard, Ostermeier turns the production into a tour-de-force for his lead actor, so that Richard possesses the overwhelmingly dominant voice. Indeed, this production comes quite close to providing an example of the monologic drama that Bakhtin condemns in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Bakhtin suggests that drama cannot possess the dialogism which distinguishes Dostoevsky's novel, commenting, 'the characters come together dialogically in the unified field of vision of author, director, and audience'.[64] Everything that Ostermeier does in his *Richard III* seeks this unified field. This dangerously individual monologism is deftly illustrated at the conclusion of the play.

As the play progresses, Eidinger's Richard seems to turn in on himself, with Ostermeier's staging of the final moments of the show breaking away from Shakespeare's text and becoming something more expressionistic. Waking up on the morning of the Battle of Bosworth, Richard is alone, and remains so until the end of the show. He gives his final soliloquy, questioning his sense of self – 'Is there a murderer here? No. - Yes, I am' – and then engages in furious combat with the empty air around him, Eidinger playing out Richard's duel with Richmond by himself.[65] It is possible to trace Richard's downfall from his rejection of Buckingham's request for the earldom of Hereford, where he shuts out one of his few allies in the play, refusing any form of dialogic relationship. Richard's attempt at self-enforced monologism is fatal, and Ostermeier's staging exaggerates this solitude. Ostermeier claims that the idea for this sequence came about from watching Eidinger rehearsing the fight choreography alone, which had already been blocked with other actors in the company. In the

[64] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 17.
[65] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard III*, V. 4. 164.

end, Richard is left with only his own demons, emphasised as we see him attempting to wound and wounded by seemingly empty space. The final image of the play is a striking one: Eidinger hooks his leg through the microphone cord and it retracts into the ceiling, suspending the actor above the stage, lit only by the light mounted on the microphone, until this too is extinguished.

Approaching *Richard III* initially, Ostermeier focuses on the metatheatricality of the piece in order to preserve a sense of liveness for his actors. He appreciates that the play appears finalised, especially as a Shakespeare play being revived in the twenty-first century, and understands the need for it to appear precisely the opposite in performance. He comments, 'it seems almost banal to state that none of the characters in a play have lived through the situation they are confronted with before; they do not know what is going to happen next', but notes that 'I have to constantly remind actors of this fact', with the crucial recognition that 'too often do we make decisions or arrive at certain ways of playing a scene because of our knowledge of the play as a whole'.[66] This knowledge is one of the key difficulties for actors working from a full text: the cue parts of Shakespeare's time would presumably have added to the play in performance because the actors would not have been very familiar with the full shape of the piece, so Ostermeier's difficulties in this regard would have been partially solved. Otherwise, knowledge of the conclusion of the play, of the finalised state at which it arrives as it ends, can easily prove monologic. *Richard III* ends with Richard's death, a new regime established and a clear path towards Shakespeare's own time. Ostermeier's actors must retain a sense of unfinalized, dialogic possibility as they perform the production many times as part of the Schaubühne's established repertoire.

[66] Boenisch and Ostermeier, *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier*, p. 189.

Having Eidinger as the lead actor in this production is, then, immeasurably helpful. The actor is remarkably self-aware, suggesting that 'my great quality is that I have found a way of acting which makes you aware of the risk involved', claiming that he is 'willing to risk the whole thing blowing up in his face, because he's improvising without knowing where it will really end'.[67] Ostermeier and Eidinger are thus able to escape the fixed, monologic nature of the play for at least part of the performance, not necessarily in a way that is fully dialogic, but one that keeps the audience guessing. I will discuss this improvisation in more detail later, but by allowing Eidinger to venture off script, Ostermeier recovers some of the mutable aspects of dialogism. Eidinger's improvisations also often involve the audience, as he looks to converse with them and have them respond to him as the character he is playing. While the play and Ostermeier's vision for it seem to tend towards the monologic, Eidinger is able to provide a sense of genuine liveness and unpredictability at its centre. At times, this risk-taking is not to the taste of the audience, but crucially it does not seem out of character for Richard. Eidinger's own practice mirrors Richard's amazement at the success of his early interactions with Anne: 'was ever woman in this humour wooed? Was ever woman in this humour won?'[68]

In *Richard III*, it seems that Richard is only ever himself in front of the audience of the play: they are his only truly dialogic relationship. As Ostermeier notes, 'many of Shakespeare's characters hide their true identity, and they are playing all the time'.[69] Shakespeare has Richard expose his true nature to the audience in his opening soliloquy, setting up the dramatic irony that pervades the rest of the play as we watch him carry out the plans that he has detailed to us. Ostermeier describes the detail with which he stages this first

[67] Philip Oltermann, 'Lars Eidinger: 'The Nazis cramp us Germans up. But Brits have a Third Reich fascination'', *The Guardian*, 23 March 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/mar/23/lars-eidinger-ss-gb-personal-shopper-interview> [accessed 4 April 2020].
[68] Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I. 2. 223-224.
[69] Boenisch and Ostermeier, *The Theatre of Thomas Ostermeier*, p. 188.

scene, following the structure of Shakespeare's text to create an eerie silence in which Richard delivers his speech. The production opens with a raucous party celebrating the Yorkist victory; as Eidinger begins the soliloquy, the noise fades and, 'from the moment that Richard utters 'but I', there is silence'. Ostermeier shows the audience the society of which Richard is a part, then removes them as Richard details his feelings of outsideness. Eidinger is left alone on a bare stage to do so, speaking into the microphone as if it were a wire planted on him like a spy. The audience is granted access to him, but this closeness quickly shifts as Clarence appears on his way to prison. So speedily does Eidinger begin to play the part of worried sibling that at the performance I saw the audience laughed at this moment.

Ostermeier looks to get the audience on Eidinger's side, as I described above: he is interested in Richard as a charismatic representative of all that is dark in the human psyche. He states that he wants 'to fully exploit Eidinger's charm and his huge popularity, in particular with a young audience', envisaging the king as 'a very likeable and appealing character'. Although the play eventually condemns Richard's actions, by placing him centre-stage and supplying him with carefully laid out thought processes, Shakespeare similarly plays on his charisma and the boldness of his plans. As with Falstaff in the *Henry IV* plays, Shakespeare lends a disreputable character the spotlight. At the end of these plays, with Richard dead and Falstaff roundly rejected by Hal at his coronation, there is a sense of loss. The running time of the Schaubühne production contributes to this sense: there is no interval, so we spend two hours and forty-five minutes in Richard's company, further fulfilling the atmosphere of claustrophobia that Jan Pappelbaum discusses. This claustrophobia has negative effects as well as positive, with reports of antagonism between Eidinger and the spectators as I mentioned above. The complexity of these interactions may be evolving into a selling point for the company: certainly Eidinger is becoming known for his unpredictability

in these terms, and audiences attend Schaubühne performances featuring him in order to experience this unpredictability.

Alessandro Simari describes the antagonistic relationship Eidinger created with the audience in *Richard III*. He discusses Eidinger's attempt to elicit a response from an audience member during a performance at the Barbican, and the implications of the audience member's refusal, considering the spatial dynamics of the production and asking whether this refusal to engage 'presented a potential method of theatrical and political resistance against a cooperative model of actor/audience interaction'.[70] Simari quotes Eidinger responding to the non-cooperative audience member: 'You don't want to answer? It's ok. I don't have to win. But the play won't work. It's ok, but it is a shame'. Eidinger's assertion here that 'the play won't work' is extremely interesting for my purposes. He effectively chides the spectator for not entering into dialogue with him, even though the character of Richard acts similarly when he refuses to fulfil his side of his agreement with Buckingham. It is possible to read Eidinger's (presumably improvised) comments here as a further substantiation of the perceived dangers of refusing dialogism. Eidinger expects his audience to follow along with his coercion: if they don't, if they refuse to accept their part in the play, the production will not work. He takes a Bakhtinian position on the importance of mutual activity, dialogism, in the creation of the human self, and in the making of theatre.

The audience in *Richard III* are not used as set dressing, as I suggested is the case for the audience of *Roman Tragedies*. They remain in their seats in the auditorium, although Ostermeier aims to break down the boundaries between audience and performer. The two directors make different points about spectatorship and the significance of the onlooker in

[70] Alessandro Simari, 'Performing silence as political resistance: Audience interaction and spatial politics in Thomas Ostermeier's *Richard III*', *Cahiers Elisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 99:1 (2019), p. 125.

their respective productions. The actors in *Roman Tragedies* ask for no specific participation from the audience: spectators could choose not to take the stage when the opportunity is offered them, but such a refusal is unlikely thanks to the innovative approach of the show. In *Richard III*, by contrast, Eidinger invites and even demands the input of the audience. In a performance of *Hamlet* at the Avignon Festival, Eidinger made use of one of the two aisles to interact with spectators positioned much further back. It seems impossible to escape his attentions: the audience is drawn into these dialogical interactions and are able to have a clear impact on the performance. Eidinger seems untroubled by displays of hostility towards him, with the indication that this sort of behaviour is to be expected when directed at characters like Hamlet and Richard, whom Shakespeare writes as charismatic but deeply unpleasant at points in their plays.

The production also looks to collapse the space between Eidinger and the audience through the use of a hanging microphone on a bungee cord, which he speaks into during Richard's soliloquies. The Groupe Miroir, reflecting on their reactions to the Avignon Festival performance of the production in *Cahiers Elisabéthains*, write that the microphone 'enabled Eidinger to create a sense of connivance with the audience, whilst simultaneously establishing a form of distance'.[71] As they emphasise, Eidinger's presence becomes even more significant thanks to this use of technology – the microphone also houses a camera, which captures him in a close-up that is then projected on the wall upstage. He nestles in the audience's ear via the amplified sound, and we are able to see him more closely via the video image. Yet, as the Groupe Miroir indicate, the artificiality of these techniques creates a distancing effect, removing us from Richard and bringing us closer all at once. There is, then, a sense of Bakhtinian outsideness even though the relationship between Eidinger and the

[71] The Groupe Miroir, 'Shakespeare at the Avignon Festival in 2015', *Cahiers Elisabéthains: A Journal of English Renaissance Studies* 90:1 (2016), p. 173.

audience is surprisingly intimate. This outsideness is present in Shakespeare's text: opening the play with Richard soliloquising effectively constructs a framework for the piece. With the use of the microphone, Richard becomes something of a commentator on the action, guiding the audience through his machinations and marvelling alongside them at their efficacy. By exaggerating these effects, Ostermeier positions Richard as an outsider too, although it is unclear as to whether this outsideness actualises his sense of self as Bakhtin would suggest.

Richard already seems to have a clear concept of his position as someone on the fringes of medieval society: his first soliloquy communicates as much. What his use of the microphone for this style of speech does, then, is allow the audience access to his worldview. Richard cuts himself off – or considers himself to have been cut off – from the characters around him. He refuses dialogic interactions with them, and the audience thus becomes his key outside influence. Other characters appear not to hear Richard's asides during dialogue scenes, and they do not hear his soliloquies because the stage is otherwise empty when he delivers them. This set of performance circumstances stands in marked contrast to those of Hamlet's soliloquy in Scene Eight: it is possible that Claudius and Polonius are onstage still but concealed, and therefore overhear Hamlet's speech beginning 'To be, or not to be'. In Ostermeier's *Richard III*, the use of the microphone indicates a move to a hidden, unheard style of speech, and provides a clear aural language for the audience to comprehend. The assumptions that come with Shakespeare's use of the soliloquy are literally amplified: when Richard speaks into the microphone, he is communicating his innermost thoughts directly to the audience, rather than anyone else around him onstage.

The microphone takes on its own signifying potentiality, too, which is not fully revealed until the very end of the production. Once Eidinger has carried out his final battle, fighting with imaginary enemies and roaring for his horse, he limps to the centre of the stage, lies on the table placed centrally and places his foot in the loop attached to the microphone

cord. The cord retracts back into the ceiling and Eidinger is lifted to hang by one ankle above the stage. He revolves slowly as the lights dim and are extinguished, leaving only the microphone light still lit as a small spot in the darkness. Finally, this light goes out too. This moment can be interpreted in a number of ways, but I take it to be a representation of Richard's consciousness, as well as of his playing ability. The microphone and its light amplify and shed light upon Richard's train of thought and the nefarious deeds by which he plots his way to the throne. They are the means by which he communicates with the audience, but as he is dying they transform. The light remaining on until the last moment of the production, attached to Eidinger even as he appears lifeless, has an unexpected poignancy amongst the darkness of the rest of the stage. Richard's dialogic abilities are extinguished as he completes his descent into tragic monologism.

Chapter Four

Embodiment

Embodiment is extremely important to Bakhtin, underpinning his concepts of grotesque realism and the carnivalesque. Physical space, for him, helps determine how consciousnesses relate to each other, including not only how dialogues take place between characters but also the interactions between theatremakers and their audience. Nowhere is this physicality more crucial than in theatre – as this chapter will demonstrate. The *Rabelais* revision notes are concerned with the physicality – the topography – of Shakespeare's early modern stage, and the ways in which action, particularly gesture, is situated in this environment. Having reviewed the work of Chapter Two on Bakhtin and embodiment, I investigate here what embodiment means in Shakespeare's plays on the page, looking at Shakespeare's presentation of the body, metatheatricality, location and examining his debt to the medieval stage. The chapter will then discuss Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More*, the National Theatre of Scotland's *Macbeth* and Robert Lepage's *Elsinore*, and Shakespeare's Globe's *Taming of the Shrew*. Each of these productions takes a different approach to embodiment: Punchdrunk stage a heavily adapted *Macbeth* in immersive style, whereas the NTS and Lepage have all the roles in their respective pieces performed by one actor. The Globe, finally, takes on an interesting place in this discussion as a reconstruction of Shakespeare's theatre, in light of the recent controversy surrounding Emma Rice's short-lived artistic directorship, during which she sought to transform its use of lighting and sound. I investigate embodiment in these productions to determine how Bakhtin's work can be useful to contemporary critics of Shakespeare in performance.

Bakhtin and Embodiment

In the *Rabelais* revision notes, Bakhtin draws attention to the physically delineated space of Shakespeare's stage. For Bakhtin, Shakespeare himself is 'cosmic, liminal, and topographic', and these qualities, combined with 'the topographic and thoroughly accentuated space of the stage', bring even greater force to his images.[1] The early modern stage, in Bakhtin's eyes, represents the structure of the world: the stage itself is the earth, the space or canopy above the stage is heaven, and the area below the stage is hell. The playhouse is constructed and, crucially, read in this way by its early modern audience. Movement and gesture on this stage '[retain] some degree of topographicity', so that 'the action and gesture taking place in the room are at the same time taking place in a topographically understood universe'.[2] I discuss the extent to which this structure may be inherited from the medieval stage in my next section on Shakespeare and embodiment, then consider how twenty-first-century audiences read early modern texts onstage as I explore a selection of present-day productions in the second half of the chapter. Writing in the 1940s, Bakhtin says that 'our stage is but an empty crate without topography and accents, a neutral crate', on which 'one may only bustle about, but not make essential movements; forward, backward, up and down'.[3] How, then, might he analyse performance in spaces as varied as those of the warehouse used by Punchdrunk, Tramway in Glasgow or the reconstructed Globe?

Slightly earlier in his career, in his essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin defines the chronotope as 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature'. The word itself comes from the Greek 'chronos' (time) and 'topos' (space), literally 'time-space'.[4] In the chronotope, he

[1] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.
[2] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 532.
[3] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 528.
[4] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 84.

explains, ‘spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole’, so that ‘time… takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible’, and ‘space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history’. The essay aims to identify certain chronotopes and trace their history from classical texts to ‘the Rabelaisian novel’. Bakhtin refers to Shakespeare very briefly at points, including in his discussion of the mixed nature of Rabelaisian laughter, which combines death with laughter.[5] During his analysis of the public square chronotope, Bakhtin quotes Pushkin’s assertion that ‘the art of the theatre was born in the public square’.[6] Here, Bakhtin differentiates his public square, that of ‘ancient times’, from Pushkin’s, that is, ‘of European cities in the thirteenth, fourteenth and subsequent centuries’. Bakhtin’s ancient public square forms the basis for ‘the autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life’. He says that there is nothing ‘intimate or private, secret or personal’ that can exist under such conditions: everything in the individual’s life was laid out in this public space, whereas for Pushkin official society was located ‘by and large beyond the square’. Pushkin’s theatrical square is unofficial, more akin to Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque.

The carnivalesque, for Bakhtin, allows for division between the official and unofficial, which as we have seen preoccupies him in the *Rabelais* revision notes. Carnival creates a space for those who participate in it to live ‘a second life outside officialdom’, where everything is turned upside down and the usual organising structures of society cease to exist.[7] Bakhtin draws a distinction between carnival and theatre by suggesting that ‘footlights would destroy a carnival’, while theatre needs them: ‘the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance’.[8] Footlights provide a clear sense of division

[5] See ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 199.
[6] ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 13
[7] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 6.
[8] *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

between theatre performers and their audience, which Bakhtin insists does not exist in carnival: instead, the carnival crowd lives 'in it, and everyone participates'. The productions that I will explore in this chapter take very different approaches to these ideas about collective embodiment. Punchdrunk try to bring the audience into the world of their performance, ridding the space of footlights, while the National Theatre of Scotland and Robert Lepage move in the opposite direction, reducing the carnival crowd to the body of one performer. Caroline Byrne's *Taming of the Shrew* at Shakespeare's Globe, meanwhile, plays with the construction of division between performers and audience precisely via the lighting of the show. The theatremakers who produce each show think carefully about bodies onstage and the ways in which they and the environment they are in create meaning.

Voloshinov likewise insists upon the embodied nature of language when it is spoken: 'the concrete utterance… is born, lives and dies in the process of the social interaction of the participants in the utterance'.[9] Like Bakhtin, Voloshinov is more interested in the concrete than in the abstract, a comparison we might draw between text in performance and text on the page. For Voloshinov, it is impossible for speech to be produced without social exchange: for him, 'the *word is oriented toward an addressee*' and preoccupied with '*who* that addressee might be'.[10] Drama in effect enacts Voloshinov's convictions about the utterance. It is always concerned with the interaction of participants and always oriented towards an addressee, whether these are characters onstage or the audience offstage. Exchange is always taking place in the theatre, between text, performer, and audience, and it is usually physically embodied. Drawing together Bakhtin's and Voloshinov's attitudes to embodiment provides us, then, with a rich conceptual framework for modern performance and its use of space, as

[9] Voloshinov, 'Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry', p. 17.
[10] Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 94.

well as the implications of advances in theatre technology for the significance of the body onstage.

Shakespeare and Embodiment

Shakespeare scholars have already explored the value of Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque for Shakespeare studies. Michael D. Bristol invokes Bakhtin as one of the key voices in this area in his *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England*, describing Bakhtin's work as 'the most comprehensive recent theory of struggle and difference'.[11] He claims that:

> Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and Carnival, his interest in mimicry and indirect discourse, and his appreciation of the informally organised social life of the public square, all seem to imply that theatre is the most vital institutional setting for literary and verbal creativity.[12]

Bristol condemns 'the lack of any sustained consideration of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in Bakhtin's work' as 'a consequential omission', suggesting that 'this material was created *before* the collapse of the theatre as a strong social institution'. Other key texts on Shakespeare and the carnivalesque are Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), Leah Marcus' *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (1986), and Francois Laroque's *Shakespeare's Festive World* (1991).

The *Henry IV* plays provide fertile ground for investigation of carnivalesque themes in Shakespeare. In Ronald Knowles' collection *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, Laroque discusses *Henry IV* and Falstaff's role in particular. 'By creating a character like

[11] Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 19.
[12] Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre*, p. 23

Falstaff', he maintains, 'Shakespeare comes as close as he possibly could to Rabelais' particular style of comedy which, as we know, centres on the body and on the belly as well as on the world of the tavern and of the carnivalesque celebration of life'.[13] Laroque invokes Bruegel's 'The Battle of Carnival and Lent', a depiction of a festival taking place in a Netherlands market square, to describe the forces that shape the *Henry IV* plays. He notes the balancing, push-and-pull effects of the imagery associated with Falstaff and with Hal throughout the progress of the story and argues that 'Hal, who plays the part of Falstaff's adoptive son… uses the carnivalesque as a mask or as a cloud to hide his 'sun-like majesty' before he can rise in the full light of his glory and surprise the world with his sudden reformation in *Henry V*'.[14]

Laroque concludes the essay with the observation that 'the battle of Carnival and Lent serves as a comic duplication of the opposition between the worlds of court and battle on the one hand, and of the festive life of the tavern itself' and suggests that this opposition appears here in the pitting of 'the fat against the lean in a series of comic verbal assaults'. The dominating action of the plays is represented by 'the size of Falstaff's body', which 'stands for the triumph of life at the expense of tragic sacrifice'.[15] Hal's decision to turn away from Falstaff is a choice to move towards the private, official domain of kingship and the responsibility he must assume. If Falstaff stands for the carnivalesque associated with grotesque realism, Hal must in effect reject the positive universal that Bakhtin says is signified by this bodily element. As we move through the *Henry IV* plays and into *Henry V*, Hal becomes more and more solitary. In *Henry IV Part One*, he had boasted himself 'sworn brother to a leash of drawers' and claimed that, as king, he would 'command all the good lads

[13] François Laroque, 'Shakespeare's 'Battle of Carnival and Lent': The Falstaff Scenes Reconsidered (*1&2 Henry IV*)' in *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, ed. Ronald Knowles (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 83.
[14] Laroque, 'Shakespeare's 'Battle of Carnival and Lent'', p. 90.
[15] Laroque, 'Shakespeare's 'Battle of Carnival and Lent'', p. 95.

in Eastcheap'.[16] In Act Three of *Henry V*, Henry is forced to have Bardolph executed for robbing a church, removing the last remaining festive tavern companion that he still retained from the earlier plays.

Falstaff remains the best example in the Shakespeare canon of Bakhtinian grotesque realism. Other plays use the body in similar figurative ways, but without the grotesquery or ambivalence that characterise the imagery of *Henry IV*. In *Coriolanus*, for example, Menenius gives an extended speech which casts the body as the Roman state, with the senators as the belly and the citizens 'mutinous members'.[17] The metaphor is aptly chosen because the play places such emphasis on the signifying power of the body: it is Coriolanus' refusal to display his scars to the citizens of Rome that ultimately prompts them to drive him from the city. The body here is not the festive, celebratory entity that Falstaff's bulk represents in the *Henry IV* plays, however, but something more visceral and purposeful. In *Measure for Measure*, meanwhile, there is pervasive tension between the earthly and the spiritual. Claudio's betrothed, Juliet, shows signs of the desire which exists between her and Claudio through her pregnancy, although the couple are not yet married, and Angelo struggles with his attraction to Isabella and his heretofore strict piety. The corporeal in this play is darker, and demonstrably dangerous should one succumb to unlawful lust. *Measure for Measure*'s ambivalent conclusion leaves the audience in a state of confusion: the ending is formally comic, with several unions being forged in the final scene, but they are unanticipated and, in the case of the Duke's proposal to Isabella, perhaps unwanted.

[16] William Shakespeare, *The History of Henry the Fourth*, ed. Anna Pruitt in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), II. 5. 6-12.
[17] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, ed. Francis X. Connor in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), I. 1. 131.

While grotesque realism appears sporadically in its fully Bakhtinian form in Shakespeare's plays, there are several examples of the cosmic topography which Bakhtin discusses in the *Rabelais* revision notes. These examples tend to draw attention metatheatrically to the structure of the playhouse around the characters. In *Hamlet*, for example, the prince describes the universe around him in such terms when talking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He points out 'this goodly frame, the earth… this most excellent canopy, the air… this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire', and then condemns them as 'a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours'.[18] Hamlet is drawing attention to the theatre in which the action takes place: as Johannes de Witt's 1596 sketch of the Swan Theatre shows, contemporary early modern playhouses had a platform on which the action took place, as well as a roof that came out over part of this stage. Hamlet's dismissal of the earth brings to mind Prospero's description of the masque he conjures for Miranda and Ferdinand at the end of *The Tempest*. He refers to the masquers as 'our actors' and says that they 'were all spirits and/ Are melted into air', as will 'the great globe itself' eventually.[19] Prospero comments on the ephemerality not only of life but also of performance, bringing the theatre and the world together in a single cosmic image.

Kristen Poole opens her book *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* with Hamlet's iconic discussion of 'this goodly frame the earth'.[20] Her study takes as its subjects religion and the spatial imagination and the changes both of these concepts underwent in the early modern period. She draws attention to the significance of Hamlet's comments by musing upon what such observations might have meant to the early modern audience: 'this [the earth, heaven, and hell] might well have been

[18] *Hamlet*, 7. 252-255.
[19] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Rory Loughnane in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), IV. 1. 147-153.
[20] Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 1.

the map that most concerned Shakespeare's audience'. The geography to which she is pointing is that of the ''undiscovered country' of death and afterlife', as opposed to the cartography of the New World which was being discovered contemporaneously. Like Bakhtin, then, Poole is preoccupied not only with the material nature of Shakespeare's stage, but also with the significance of that materiality for playgoers. She writes that 'On stage, an actor stands below the heavens and above hell – the visual map is simple'. The confusion Hamlet expresses in his dismissal of the physical world/stage as 'a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours' represents, Poole asserts, a 'crisis of cosmic geography'. The actor playing Hamlet delivering such lines or, as Bakhtin says, gesturing in the cosmically topographical playhouse, takes on a fully embodied meaning. The architecture of the early modern theatre lends complex universal significance to every action undertaken within its walls.

Modern productions of the plays I have mentioned here do not usually cut these references to the playhouse, even though the spaces in which such shows are produced share few of the architectural elements about which Shakespeare has his characters speak. If we return, for example, to the iterations of the Roman plays, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III* that I discussed in my previous chapters, it becomes clear that modern stagings of Shakespeare lose the cosmic significance that Bakhtin discusses because of the developments made in theatre architecture. *Roman Tragedies* was staged at the Barbican, a Brutalist building opened in 1982, *Hamlet* at the Young Vic in a setting deliberately designed to evoke a psychological institution, and *Richard III* in a space to which Ostermeier and his creative team added elements in order to configure something more like the original Globe. As I note above, Bakhtin complains about 'our stage' in the *Rabelais* revision notes, comparing the early modern stage with that of the theatre contemporary to him, which he condemns as 'an empty crate'. In his introduction to the notes, Sergeiy Sandler suggests that 'the topographic gesture

thus binds together into one focal point Bakhtin's work on carnival… and on the chronotope… while retaining his early philosophical commitment to concrete human experience and action'.[21] In the next section of this chapter, I will explore the effect that the theatre space has on embodiment and the action taking place within it.

As Sandler also notes in his introduction to 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', topographic gesture locates the speaker 'in the cosmos… complete with heaven above and hell below, both tangibly present as levels on the medieval and Renaissance theatre stage'.[22] Several critics have explored the links between medieval and Renaissance drama recently, including Helen Cooper, Kurt Schreyer, and John Cox and David Kastan. In *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, Cooper positions Shakespeare as a playwright strongly influenced by medieval precedent. She asserts that 'the Middle Ages shaped Shakespeare and his work just as they shaped the market town where he was born, the roads he walked along and the city where he worked, the language he spoke and the stagecraft he exploited'.[23] For my purposes, Cooper's observation that both the Corpus Christi plays and *Henry V* 'share the conviction that the proper subject of the theatre is the whole cosmos, and that anything can be staged' is significant. As she points out, the Chorus' invocation in Shakespeare's play of the 'Muse of fire' calls attention to the wide-ranging action that the players are about to stage. The detailed cartographic instructions which the Chorus issues to the audience throughout the play, at the opening of each act, make clear the location of the scene that is about to unfold, but also communicate that the spectators must involve themselves in the show too. As Cooper says, Shakespeare is involved in a process that 'co-opt[s] the imagination of the audience… in a process that is less suspension of disbelief than active make-believe'.[24]

[21] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 523.
[22] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p, 523.
[23] Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 3.
[24] Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, p. 42.

Kurt A. Schreyer makes a still more detailed case for Shakespeare's debt to English biblical drama. In *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft,* he shows that 'one important yet overlooked aspect of Shakespeare's playwright joinery was the fusion of pieces from the 'old' mystery plays to his theatrical works', in such a way that 'Shakespeare's stage paradoxically distinguishes itself from the mysteries precisely through its transformative incorporation of elements of that dramatic tradition'. Schreyer, in other words, calls into question the perceived contrast between the medieval and early modern stage much as Cooper does.[25] Exploring the representation of Purgatory in *Hamlet*, Schreyer elaborates upon 'the carryover of the three-tiered cosmography of medieval drama to the public theatres' to investigate 'how Shakespeare profited by the Reformation's prohibition of the theatrical, rather than the theological space of Purgatory'.[26] Schreyer's consideration of the theatrical space of Purgatory relies upon the common understanding of the cosmic topography of the theatre, whether this theatre is a medieval cart or seventeenth-century playhouse. He notes that these spaces are inextricably linked, but that theological epistemology had undergone significant changes during the Reformation, rendering Shakespeare's task as an early modern dramatist more complex.[27] It is important, then, to consider Bakhtin's comments on cosmic topography without restricting this analysis solely to Shakespeare's stage, but as part of the development of English dramaturgy through time.

Shakespeare makes use of diverse locations despite the lack of scenery pieces employed on the early modern stage, situating the action of his plays within a cosmic

[25] Kurt A. Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft: Remnants of the Mysteries on the London Stage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 2-3. Other recent examples of work exploring Shakespeare and biblical drama include Hannibal Hamlin's *The Bible in Shakespeare* (2013) and Patrick Gray's 'Caesar as Comic Antichrist: Shakespeare's Julius Caesar and the Medieval Stage Tyrant', *Comparative Drama* 50:1 (2016).
[26] Schreyer, *Shakespeare's Medieval Craft*, p. 107.
[27] For further discussion of purgatory and religious change in the sixteenth century, see Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) as well as Brian Cummings' 2012 response to its first edition in his British Academy Shakespeare Lecture (2012), https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2500/Cummings-Shakespeare-Lecture-2012.pdf [accessed 14 April 2021].

framework. Often, these spaces are wild or somewhat 'othered', usually presented in contrast to a city or more civilised settings. Anne Barton's *The Shakespearean Forest*, for example, explores 'forest symbolism', which she describes as 'ideas of the forest a sentient being, capable of listening and even responding to some of the things humans do and say in it', as well as 'the relationship, sometimes harmonious, more often troubled, between the forest and its neighbour and opposite, the city'.[28] In Shakespeare's plays, once the action moves to a forest or wood, we expect a marked difference in events. This difference may be hard to pin down, but it is perhaps best described by considering Bakhtin's chronotope. Time spent in the space of the forest is unlike time spent in other locales. Barton suggests that 'forests tend to be places where (sometimes for better, often for worse) events occur that would be surprising, or even impossible, in the cities where people normally congregate'.[29] In *As You Like It*, for example, as Shakespeare concludes the romantic plots of the play, we learn that Duke Frederick, who was established as the villain of the piece in the first act, came 'to the skirts of this wild wood', where he is promptly converted by 'an old religious man' and gives up his title.

In this instance, it seems as though merely moving within the bounds of the forest effects a dramatic change upon the previously wicked Duke, in addition to the other transformative powers that the Forest of Arden is shown to possess during the play. In *Shakespeare's Storms*, Gwilym Jones investigates the dramatist's use of another natural element throughout his canon. He observes that 'if the storm in Shakespearean drama is to be thought of as functional, then its primary function is to separate characters', noting as well that 'most obviously, this separation is achieved with a shipwreck'.[30] Just as, then, a movement into the forest signals an upcoming change in the action of a play, so a storm

[28] Anne Barton, *The Shakespearean Forest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 20.
[29] Barton, *The Shakespearean Forest*, p. 95.
[30] Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 2.

indicates to the audience that there may be a divergence in the journey of the characters. Jones explores methods of representing the storm onstage later in his book, but once again this dramatic device may be interpreted as a chronotopic means to an end. While fireworks and sound effects were used to signify certain aspects of the storm, early modern dramaturgy was limited in its technological capabilities. Rather than physically representing the storm itself, Shakespeare was able to employ its effects in changing his plays via character and action. Later in the chapter, when I consider Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More*, I will explore the ways in which theatremakers are able to use theatrical spaces in order to prepare their audience for different experiences in theatregoing – not dissimilar to Shakespeare's use of forests and storms to signal a change in the drama that the audience is about to see.

Robert Weimann considers location in some of the groundwork for his *locus* and *platea* concept, which I will explore more fully in my analysis of Shakespeare's Globe's 2016 *Taming of the Shrew*. He links the early modern stage to medieval modes of performance, citing Richard Hosley's discussion of 'a 'focused' or a 'dispersed' mode of production', and the importance of the distinction between areas which house one kind of production.[31] Weimann claims that the *locus* 'could assume an illusionary character', while the *platea* 'provided an entirely nonrepresentational and unlocalised setting', the latter fulfilling a function as 'the broad and general acting area in which the communal festivities were conducted'.[32] Actors moving from one part of the stage to another, or performing in only one part, therefore carry meaning just as characters moving from one location to another do, for example, for a royal court or city into a forest. Weimann's formulation is complex but nonetheless helpful in its analysis of the different kinds of action and character type that occupy the different parts of the stage. The variation in theatre spaces that has built up over

[31] Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 73.
[32] Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, p. 79

time means that these kinds of meaning have become less significant, as Bakhtin observes in the *Rabelais* revision notes. This loss of significance does not render these movements onstage meaningless, however, and I will investigate the importance of this kind of embodiment as I move through this chapter.

As highlighted above, Bakhtin's colleague Voloshinov claims that 'the concrete utterance (as opposed to the linguistic abstraction) is born, lives and dies in the process of the social interaction of the participants in the utterance'.[33] He also insists that '*the word is oriented toward an addressee*' and most importantly 'toward *who* that addressee might be'.[34] Looking at Act Two Scene Four of *The Tragedy of Henry the Fourth*, for example, where Hal and Falstaff perform the 'play extempore', there are various layers of social interaction taking place and several presumed addressees.[35] At first, the subject matter of their improvisation is meant to be Falstaff's 'running away', but the arrival of Sir John Bracy from the king returns the group's attention to the rebels who are massing their forces. Hal and Falstaff therefore decide to take on the roles of the prince and his father, alternating their parts to enact King Henry's chastising of his son. This exchange becomes reality later in Act Three Scene Two, but in Hal and Falstaff's rendering of it the scene takes on another subtext, that of Hal's friendship with Falstaff and his eventual casting off of the older knight. In the text of the play extempore, then, Hal and Falstaff's words have multiple addressees; each other, Hal's father, the crowd in the Boar's Head, and the audience of Shakespeare's play.

Although the scenario played out in Hal and Falstaff's exchange is imaginary, and might seem, therefore, to belong to the category Voloshinov calls 'linguistic abstraction', one of Hal's more famous lines demonstrates precisely the concrete nature of utterance. Once the

[33] Voloshinov, 'Discourse in Life and in Poetry', p. 17.
[34] Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, p. 85.
[35] *The Tragedy of Henry the Fourth*, II. 4. 230.

pair have swapped roles – Hal playing the King, Falstaff Hal – Falstaff speaks passionately on his own behalf, ending his speech by imploring

> For sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and there more valiant being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff: banish not him thy Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.[36]

Just before there is more commotion at the door, Hal responds, 'I do; I will'. These two short phrases can be interpreted in a number of ways, but I would suggest that they mark a transition from king to prince, as it were. In character as his father, Hal replies 'I do', and then, as himself, replies 'I will'. The latter declaration could be played almost as if he is speaking to himself, as a reminder or premonition of his dismissal of Falstaff at the conclusion of the play.[37] As 'king', Hal is able to operate in totally concretised language; declaring something so makes it so, as discussed by J.L. Austin.[38] If he were king at this point, not play-acting, he would be able to rid himself of Falstaff with the phrase 'I do'. As it is, he reveals the decision at which he seems to have already arrived, that he will banish Falstaff when he accedes to the crown.

This scene, then, acts out a number of complex ideas. In it, both Hal and Falstaff embody themselves as well as Hal's father, helped by the chair, dagger, and cushion which Falstaff employs as throne, sceptre, and crown. Their dialogue is addressed not only to each other but also to the audience of customers and employees in the Boar's Head, as well as the spectators offstage. There is no trace of the 'man unto himself', as Voloshinov puts it. We

[36] *The Tragedy of Henry the Fourth*, II. 4. 389-393.
[37] In the BBC's 2012 *Hollow Crown* adaptations of the history plays, some of the soliloquies were presented as voiceovers rather than dialogue spoken in camera by the actors, including Tom Hiddleston's rendition of 'I know you all' and Simon Russell Beale's Falstaff's discussion of 'ceremony' (Act Five, Scene One).
[38] In *How to Do Things With Words* (1975), pp. 6-7, Austin defines the performative utterance: 'the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something'.

might condemn Hal's dismissal of his former Eastcheap friends, as he moves into his lonely kingship, but in reality this role is one of the most 'outwardly objectified for others', as Shakespeare indicates in *Henry V*, with the importance of Henry's speeches exhorting his subjects onwards. By recreating a theatre onstage, Shakespeare makes clear the social nature of the utterance, as well as the multiple subtexts that lie behind a seemingly silly piece of playacting. Hal's 'I do; I will', which concludes the play extempore, places an emphasis on the concretised nature of his speech in particular as the heir apparent. As crown prince and future king, his words carry an extraordinary power that is often overlooked, given his activities in this play. His speech in Act One Scene Two, which lays bare his intentions in consorting with Falstaff and his friends, draws attention to the power which exists latent within him, and which he will put to work in *Henry IV Part Two* and *Henry V*. Moments such as this demonstrate the power that embodied speech possesses on the early modern stage, as Bakhtin emphasises in the *Rabelais* revision notes and discusses more generally elsewhere in his literary criticism.

Punchdrunk Theatre's *Sleep No More*

In 2003, Punchdrunk Theatre premiered *Sleep No More*, a piece of immersive theatre based on *Macbeth* and located in the Beaufoy Building, a former Victorian school in London. The production's American incarnation is in its ninth year at the fictional McKittrick Hotel (a warehouse in Chelsea) in New York. *Sleep No More* has been widely discussed by Shakespeare critics and drama scholars as both an adaptation of *Macbeth* and a commercially successful work of experimental theatre, and is an intriguing test case for investigating Bakhtin's ideas about embodiment, given the physical language it employs and the way it uses space in its dramaturgy. First of all, it bears asking whether Punchdrunk's practice is truly immersive, in keeping with the claims that the company makes for the distinctive kind of work that they produce. Josephine Machon articulates the complexity of the term

'immersive': she states that 'I am now certain that 'immersive theatre' is impossible to define as a genre, with fixed and determinate codes and conventions, because it is *not one*.'[39] She goes on to suggest, however, that 'immersivity in performance does expose qualities, features and forms that enable us to know what 'it' is when we are experiencing it'. Immersivity, for her, means being 'totally submerged in it [the event] for the length of the time that the work lasts, aware of nothing other than that event itself and only actions, feelings (both emotion and sensation) and thoughts related to that event are of consequence in that time'.

Machon's definitional work here places the audience member at the forefront of immersive theatre. Adam Alston, similarly, foregrounds the spectator in his discussion of the genre: 'immersive theatre centres on the production of thrilling, enchanting or challenging experiences, which feature as an important part of an immersive theatre 'artwork' that audiences co-produce by doing more than watching, or by augmenting the productivity of watching as a prospectively participating spectator'.[40] Machon uses Robert Nozick's term 'experience machine' to consider what drama of this kind does to its audience:

> Experience machines are enclosed and other-worldly spaces in which all the various cogs and pulleys of performance – scenography, choreography, dramaturgy, and so on – coalesce around a central aim: to place audience members in a thematically cohesive environment that resources their sensuous, imaginative and explorative capabilities as productive and involving aspects of a theatre aesthetic.

While the construction of such a space is markedly different to that of the original Globe, the distinctive 'wooden O' Shakespeare refers to in the coercive choric interludes of *Henry V,* there is nonetheless a similarity in the Chorus' exhortation of the audience to add their own

[39] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. xvi.
[40] Adam Alston, *Beyond Immersive Theatre: Aesthetic, Politics and Productive Participation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 3.

contribution to the work being made. A dialogic relationship emerges between spectators and performers such that each group informs the other's sense of self. As Alston says, Shakespeare 'resources' the audience's 'sensuous, imaginative and explorative capabilities' to make 'productive and involving aspects of a theatre aesthetic'.

Machon also suggests that 'immersive theatres attract an alternative audience; those who would not necessarily consider themselves theatregoers'.[41] She maintains that 'people feel involved, invited or even do not perceive the work to be 'theatre''. In this way, I would argue that this genre of performance displays similarities to Bakhtin's carnivalesque, in which, as he says, 'everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people'. Bakhtin draws an explicit contrast between carnival and the theatre of his day: 'carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators'.[42] Here, we might juxtapose the more codified nature of proscenium arch theatre with that of immersive theatre: the lack of footlights in immersive work, like in Bakhtin's carnival, encourages spectators to move beyond the separation between actor and performer and lose themselves instead in the experience of the work. In her discussion of immersive performance advertising, Machon notes that 'what is evident with such strategies is that the immersive experience begins the moment you first hear about it', so that 'at every stage… the work is responsive to the actions of its audience, moulding them as co-authors of their experience'. Like Bakhtin's carnival, immersive performance seeks to reach beyond the usual boundaries of theatre, transforming it into an all-encompassing experience.

In Mike Pearson's *Site-Specific Performance*, he compares work made for an auditorium with work made at a site, defining the term 'site-specific' through this

[41] Machon, *Immersive Theatres*, p. 23.
[42] *Rabelais and His World*, p. 7.

comparison.[43] He acknowledges that definitions of site-specific work as '"undertaken in non-theatrical spaces"' are 'now barely adequate' but suggests that 'the auditorium might yet provide a *control,* an abstracted set of conditions, against which to extrapolate the particularities of site work'. Some of the comparisons he sets up include the auditorium as 'cloistered' and 'dark and quiet', while 'at site, bounds and perimeters may be extant or installed' and it is 'only dark or quiet if chosen for such qualities or rendered so'. In the auditorium, Pearson explains, 'the audience is cast as audience: purposefully assembled, expectant, disposed, potentially appreciative', whereas 'at site, the audience may be incidental – those present in the same place and the same time – and obdurate'. 'Artifice is disguised' in the auditorium, whereas 'at site, performance is in plain view unless masked'. Pearson's insights intersect with some of the Bakhtinian analysis I have been doing so far: the conclusion that 'in the auditorium one thing of singular importance is happening', whereas 'at site, many things may be happening: performance may need to establish and proclaim its own presence' recalls the distinctions between monological and dialogical literature that I explored earlier. Pearson's conception of the auditorium as 'designed to facilitate repetition' whereas 'at site there may be no recourse, no second chance' looks ahead to Bakhtin's concept of eventness, which I will discuss more fully in my final chapter.

Punchdrunk Theatre prefer 'site-sympathetic', however, to Pearson's 'site-specific'. Felix Barrett, the artistic director of Punchdrunk, comments that 'site-specific, to me, was about having to fit the work to the building and its history', whereas site-sympathetic 'is an impressionistic response; drawing on similar impulses but creating a dream world within the space rather than a practical, literal retelling of the building'.[44] In *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia,* Machon further clarifies this usage: site-sympathetic 'defines the activity of

[43] Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 16-17.
[44] Josephine Machon, *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 251.

responding to the *feeling* as much as the aesthetic of an uninhabited found space'. Barrett's practice with Punchdrunk chimes very closely with Machon's definition of 'immersive', insofar as it places the focus on feeling. For Machon, 'experience should be understood in its fullest sense, to feel *feelingly* – to undergo'.[45] In Punchdrunk's case, 'feeling' is prioritised by the makers of the work at the beginning of the artistic process, as Machon details in the *Encyclopedia*: 'design is led by a building and the creative team's immediate response to it'.[46] In this way, 'dancers may create a concentrate of the choreographic language in a studio-space, but it is only when onsite that the movement vocabulary is opened up, nuanced and further inspired through a sympathetic duet with the surfaces, textures and temperatures of the site'. Dialogic exchanges take place between the theatremakers and the very space in which they work.

The company present various resources on their website that explore their practice and detail some of their productions as case studies. In *Punchdrunk: A Guide for Students and Teachers*, they offer a document 'compiled to support students, teachers and learners with their own investigation of Punchdrunk's and approaches to creating performance work in non-traditional theatre settings'.[47] In their own words, the company describe their work as 'a game changing form of theatre in which roaming audiences experience epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds'. In a manner reminiscent of Shakespeare's use of forests and storms, whereby an audience expects a significant difference in the action of a play whenever it moves into a forest or a storm occurs, Punchdrunk prime their audiences to expect a different mode of performance. Like Machon, they claim that 'the company's infectious format rejects the passive obedience usually expected of audiences'. Maintaining this

[45] Machon, *Immersive Theatres*, p. 22.
[46] Machon, *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia*, p. 251.
[47] Punchdrunk Theatre, 'Punchdrunk: A Guide for Students and Teachers', < https://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/10/Punchdrunk-Teacher-Resource-Pack-v7.pdf> [accessed 3 May 2021].

emphasis on experiential and spectator-focused work, they explain that their name comes from 'the company's ongoing ambition to make their audiences feel 'punch drunk'', which they say 'represents feeling alive, alert, emotionally and viscerally impacted', with 'all your senses firing and tapping into the core human instinct of fight or flight'. Interviewed by Machon for the *Encyclopedia*, Barrett defines the term 'immersive' as 'the creation of parallel theatrical universes within which audiences forget that they're an audience, and thus their status within the work shifts.'[48] In order to construct these kind of universes, he emphasises 'the fusion of all the disciplines [e.g. light, sound, design of the space] and the belief that no one discipline is more important than another', as well as the importance of detail, with 'the promise of more to discover'.

Sleep No More, the show on which I will focus in this chapter, is what Punchdrunk term a 'mask show', meaning a 'large scale production[s] where the audience experience a world constructed within a vast building, through a looping narrative', and during which 'each audience member wears a mask'. Barrett claims that 'the mask is a critical device – it can remove the audience from the picture, shifting their status and making them ghostlike'.[49] He also observes that audience members 'become part of the scenography and sometimes actually create walls to frame the action'. This enhanced scenographic design, consciously incorporating the audience into the stage (or site) pictures created by the show, recalls *Roman Tragedies,* but the key difference is that Barrett is much more explicit about the effects he hopes to create with this use of the audience than van Hove. Gareth White, exploring the effects of the masks in Punchdrunk productions, suggests that the anonymity the expressionless masks produce means that 'a crowd does not form to the same degree' as it might in another promenade performance and indeed does in the limited space of the *Roman*

[48] Barrett interviewed by Machon, 'Immersive theatres – intimacy, immediacy, imagination' in *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia*, p. 159.
[49] Machon, *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia*, p. 178.

Tragedies stage, but instead that 'faceless strangers mill around, each having very individual experiences'. A group identity is both granted to spectators and taken away. The mask becomes an identifier, a signifier of status as audience member, an aesthetic object in terms of its scenographic qualities, but also a device that separates each person in the crowd from the others.

Punchdrunk write that '*Sleep No More* tells Shakespeare's classic tragedy Macbeth through a darkly cinematic lens', allowing audiences to 'move freely through the epic story of Macbeth, creating their own journeys through a film noir world'.[50] Much of the story is told through movement: Punchdrunk state that 'by freeing the narrative away from the spoken text the audience are allowed to explore their own journey, often encountering scenes half way through and leaving before they have ended'.[51] Peter Higgin, Punchdrunk's Director of Enrichment, notes that the company uses classic texts in order to 'root audiences in a narrative they might be familiar with already, which is important when in an unfamiliar environment and an unfamiliar form'.[52] Punchdrunk thus both move away from text and also use it to underpin their work at the most basic level. *Sleep No More* is their most well-known piece and can also be seen in Shanghai in a reworked adaptation which includes Chinese folk myths alongside the *Macbeth* story, in order to generate the same kind of underlying comprehensible references for a Chinese audience as opposed to a British or American one.

The lack of Shakespeare's text in *Sleep No More* poses complex questions as to how we might go about identifying the work. W. B. Worthen wrestles with this issue early on in *Shakespeare Performance Studies*. Responding to Ben Brantley's criticism that the production offers 'little insight into *Macbeth*', Worthen comments that '*Sleep No More*

[50] Punchdrunk Theatre, '*Sleep No More*', < https://www.punchdrunk.com/project/sleep-no-more/> [accessed 22 January 2022].
[51] Punchdrunk Theatre, 'Punchdrunk: A Guide for Students and Teachers'.
[52] Machon, *The Punchdrunk Encyclopedia*, p. 272.

appears to work in a different direction, to invoke *Macbeth* as a means to creating a distinctive event, one that clearly depends on *Macbeth* but that exceeds, displaces, or avoids reduction to Shakespeare and his words', coming to the conclusion that 'it is and is not *Macbeth*'.[53] Brantley for his part juxtaposes *Sleep No More* and *Gatz*, a lengthy interpretation of *The Great Gatsby* produced by Elevator Repair Service, in which principal actor Scott Shepherd reads every word of Fitzgerald's novel. *Gatz* requires little interaction from its audience but for Brantley 'was the most transporting, travelling to an ineffable place that theater is not expected to inhabit: the corridor between written words and a reader's perception of them'.[54] *Sleep No More*, by contrast, was 'quite ravishing to look at, though the thrill factor wears off after the first of the three hours you're allowed to participate in this movable, homicidal feast.'

There are different journeys taking place in both productions, then. Brantley eschews the physicality of *Sleep No More* for the extensively wordy *Gatz*. Worthen identifies the 'different direction' which the former takes: rather than turning inwards, excavating the source text of *Macbeth*, he suggests that Punchdrunk seek instead to turn Shakespeare's play outwards, with the event created one which 'exceeds, displaces, or avoids reduction to Shakespeare and his words'. The two productions treat their texts differently and their contrasting staging emphasises these divergent treatments. *Sleep No More* and *Gatz* might fit the paradigm which Bakhtin sets up in the *Rabelais* revision notes. Bakhtin's early modern stage is cosmic, physicalised: bodies in that space take on meaning precisely because of the environment in which they operate. 'Our stage', by contrast, turns in on itself to prioritise 'expressive, psychological, individual gesture'.[55] *Sleep No More* uses a large cast and does

[53] W. B. Worthen, ''The written troubles of the brain': writing, character, and the cognition of performance: Punchdrunk Theatre, *Sleep No More*' in *Shakespeare Performance Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 86.
[54] Ben Brantley, 'A Novel Gatsby: Stamina Required', *New York Times*, 4 February 2010, Section C, p. 1.
[55] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 533.

away with text to produce meaning, turning to movement instead, while *Gatz* takes the audience inside the head of Nick, the central character, centring his psychological exchange with Fitzgerald's novel. While *Sleep No More* does not have the cosmic framework that Bakhtin writes of in the notes, meaning that it cannot map gesture in space as in the early modern playhouse, it is nonetheless fascinated by the collective meanings that can be wrought via embodiment and by performers and audience sharing a space together.

Sleep No More draws on other texts to create mood via allusion. Deidre O'Leary suggests that 'Punchdrunk's heteroglossic text evokes not just the theories of Bakhtin's dialogism, but also the layered, allusion-heavy productions of The Wooster Group'.[56] O'Leary is interested in how this heteroglossia 'challenges' the Punchdrunk audience 'to be active participants in the story being told'. If presented in a more traditional proscenium arch staging, this use of various other texts might overwhelm its audience. O'Leary notes, however, that the combination of 'set detail and limited amount of narrative explanation or exposition' leaves the viewer 'both overstimulated and metaphorically in the dark'. Alice Dailey provides an example in her account of her experience at *Sleep No More*, describing what she calls a 'hermeneutic failure' as she fails to understand a reference to Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* that informs part of the show.[57] Returning, having familiarised herself with du Maurier in addition to her pre-existing familiarity with the films of Hitchcock, she is still unable to access what she believes is at the heart of *Sleep No More*.

Dailey eventually concludes that *Sleep No More* is 'an invitation to enter not into specific stories, characters, moods, or even psychological states but into an epistemological mode – a way of seeing more than we expect but less than all that's there'. Shakespeare's

[56] Deirdre O'Leary, 'Ghosted Dramaturgy: Mapping the Haunted Space in Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*', *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 12 (2013), p. 64.
[57] Alice Dailey, 'Last Night I Dreamt I Went to *Sleep No More* Again: Intertextuality and Interdeterminacy at Punchdrunk's McKittrick Hotel', *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 7 (2013), p. 2.

own dramaturgical work in plays that feature magic or the supernatural is brought to mind here, for example in *Macbeth*, in which characters seek to unpick the truth of the supernatural beings with whom they come into contact. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, too, the various aristocrats who find themselves in the forest outside Athens or on Prospero's island do not try to work out what exactly is happening to them in these locations – or are not given the chance to do so onstage. The lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* experience a complex night in the forest but wake with Puck's mischief rectified and return happily to Athens to marry each other. Stephano and Trinculo, who have the most direct contract with the non-human inhabitants of the island, in the shape of Caliban, are quite happy to accept him as a companion. Magic and the supernatural, in Shakespeare's hands, are an epistemological or chronotopic mode which defamiliarises the situations in which characters find themselves but which is ultimately best enjoyed rather than unravelled.

Sleep No More expects, it seems, active engagement from the audience both physically and psychologically. As Worthen, O'Leary, and Dailey note, even as the audience makes physical decisions as to where to direct their steps, they are provided with multiple textual stimuli that may or may not enhance their experience of the production. As Dailey demonstrates, different audience members bring their own textual history and knowledge to *Sleep No More*, which allows the show's creators to play upon these other pieces of the cultural canon in order to construct atmosphere in the story they are trying to tell. *Sleep No More* functions in a direction entirely opposed to that of *Gatz*: *Gatz* brings its audience closer to its central concerns, allowing them to travel within the confines of Fitzgerald's original. *Sleep No More*, by contrast, moves spectators outside of *Macbeth*, considering other texts alongside that of Shakespeare to form what O'Leary defines as a 'heteroglossic text'. Just before her reference to Bakhtinian dialogism, O'Leary suggests that Punchdrunk owe a debt

to ‘practitioners committed to blurring the line between spectator and actor’.[58] The blurring of this line acknowledges the part that the audience play in the making of meaning during *Sleep No More*. The audience’s interpretations of the various other texts at work in the production, alongside *Macbeth*, must function as key dialogic viewpoints in this show.

Marvin Carlson tracks the development of performance space in his 2016 article ‘Whose Space is It, Anyway?’, moving from the classical Greek stage to twenty-first-century immersive theatre. In keeping with the conclusions of Bert O. States, he contends that ‘theatre has today added space to its objects of consumption’.[59] States’ argument in *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* addresses theatre’s consumption of the real, claiming that ‘man, his language, his rooms and cities, his weapons and tools, his others, animals fire and water – even, finally theatre itself’ is ingested by drama.[60] Carlson seeks to add space to this taxonomy of the real. Having been restricted in confined environments for hundreds of years, Carlson sees modern practice such as that of Punchdrunk as a claiming of ‘any space the earth provides, natural and artificial, city and country, as potentially part of its domain’.[61] He acknowledges the importance of audience cooperation, as I, too, have been exploring, noting that ‘theatre only began to exist when a performer stood before a group of fellow humans and asked them to see him as something else, as fictional being, given a new reality by their willingness to look at him in a different way, as a character’.

Elsewhere, drawing on Jacques Rancière’s concept of the Emancipated Spectator, Carlson comments on the nuances of so-called ‘immersive’ theatre, including van Hove’s *Roman Tragedies* alongside *Sleep No More*. As I discuss in Chapter Three, *Roman Tragedies* offers not the emancipation of the spectator but rather an illusion of choice. Carlson describes

[58] O’Leary, ‘Ghosted Dramaturgy’, p. 64.
[59] Marvin Carlson, ‘Keynote Address: Whose Space is It, Anyway?’, *Theatre Symposium* 24 (2016), p. 17.
[60] Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 40.
[61] Carlson, ‘Whose Space is It, Anyway?’, p. 17.

Roman Tragedies as 'a texted, mimetic performance' which 'takes place in one or several more or less contiguous locations', with the audience 'free to move about and observe or not observe the ongoing performance as they wish'.[62] *Sleep No More*, meanwhile, is 'a collection of decorated spaces through which the audience is free to wander as they choose'. Carlson pays attention to the one-on-one experiences which form part of the show, where actors choose an audience member to pull aside from the main group and perform to exclusively, noting that those that are chosen 'can neither initiate the experience nor change it', with the actor remaining in complete control. While both productions present a different kind of audience experience, changing the ways in which spectators interact with the spaces colonised by the performance, this experience is not fully emancipated. As Carlson points out, the creative team and the performers who make the production remain in control, for the most part: *Roman Tragedies* and *Sleep No More* are not traditional proscenium arch shows, but equally their spectators are allowed only limited freedom as the productions take place. This spectatorial experience, while lacking the footlights that Bakhtin says must be present for theatre, is still not entirely like that of his carnivalesque, where rules are broken down in order to release the carnival crowd.

Carlson's analysis of the changing uses of space in performance in his 2016 article resonates with Bakhtin's work in the *Rabelais* notes and indeed in *Rabelais and His World* more generally. Bakhtin is interested in creating or observing some kind of continuity in the way that performance locations change: he is preoccupied in the notes with topographic gesture and how this coded movement onstage has been elided and transformed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Towards the end of Sandler's translation of the Shakespeare section of the notes, Bakhtin examines 'the birth and formation of our

[62] Marvin Carlson, 'Postdramatic Theatre and Postdramatic Performance', *Brazilian Journal on Presence Studies* 5 (2015), p. 587.

expressive, psychological, individual gesture', which he claims 'developed as the topographic coordinates of action and gesture became blurred and effaced', turning into 'conventional clichés'.[63] Bakhtin suggests that 'in the lowest strata of familiar social interaction, the topographic gestures that belong to the nether regions of the body are still alive and clear', but that 'their high ambivalent complements, however, remain only in the impoverished and reduced form of clichés in formal speech'. Bakhtin links these developments spatially, asserting that 'now the gesture is read intensively, i.e., only in relation to one point – the speaker himself', so that 'this point itself – the soul speaking by means of the gesture – cannot be localised in the *whole* of the world for there are no (axial) coordinates to localise it'. The result of this change is that 'the place of the speaker himself in the *ultimate* whole of the world is not *immediately, visibly* determined by the gesture'.

Carlson goes on to emphasise the way in which performance spaces tend to be 'set apart from the normal world of human activity, a space that serves as a site of imagination subject to certain rules'. He identifies the Renaissance as the 'movement of theatre indoors', but then explores the world of site-specific theatre that began to grow in the art world in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction against 'the exclusivity and commodification of 'museum' art'.[64] For Carlson, immersive uses of space in performance are, as we might expect, bound up with the relationship between the audience and the work produced, wherein the audience sustains an interpretive frame 'simply by agreeing to view a space, even one they inhabit, in theatrical terms'. Bakhtin's topographic gesture is similarly contingent on the interpretive capabilities of the audience: for Shakespeare's imagery and for gestures made on the Shakespearean stage to be meaningful, the audience must bring their understanding of the framework in which Shakespeare is operating to the performance. As companies like

[63] Sandler, 'Bakhtin on Shakespeare', p. 533.
[64] Carlson, 'Whose Space is It Anyway?', p. 15.

Punchdrunk expand our understanding of the locations in which Shakespeare may be presented, considering their work via Bakhtin becomes increasingly productive.

Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* and National Theatre of Scotland's *Macbeth*

In 1995, Canadian theatremaker Robert Lepage premiered *Elsinore*, a one-man adaptation of *Hamlet* that used complex stage machinery to explore Shakespeare's play. *Elsinore* was an early production in the life of Lepage's company Ex Machina, which he created in 1994 with the aim of bringing together artists from across the performing arts spectrum. A key element of Ex Machina's practice is the intermingling of live and recorded work, and Lepage and his collaborators have worked on opera and ballet as well as straight plays. Discussing the company's ethos in *Ex Machina: Creating for the Stage*, Patrick Caux writes, in a strikingly Bakhtinian formulation, that 'each piece created by Ex Machina contains in its artistic approach a reaching out to the other, a search for the other, a desire to encounter others'.[65] The company are based at the Caserne, a former fire station in Quebec City, which in a similar vein 'has been designed to encourage exchange and interaction', thanks to its layout which 'forces encounters among the various component elements of the company'; routes around the space mean that, for example, 'technicians must go through the administrative offices'.[66] In his early years, Lepage was heavily influenced by Ariane Mnouchkine and this emphasis on the ensemble nature of Ex Machina echoes her commitment to an overwhelmingly collective approach to theatremaking.[67]

[65] Patrick Caux and Bernard Gilbert, *Ex Machina: Creating for the Stage* (Canada: Talonbooks, 2009), p. 10.
[66] Caux and Gilbert, *Ex Machina*, p. 19.
[67] Mnouchkine founded the Théâtre du Soleil in 1964 and is regarded as one of the most influential theatre directors in the world. Amongst their work, Théâtre du Soleil staged *Richard II*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Henry IV* from 1981-84. The company works collaboratively, using Western and non-Western dramatic forms, and seeks to break down boundaries between performers and their audience, making the actors' preparation visible (dressing and make-up) and sharing food at the interval. For more, see Adrian Kiernander's *Ariane Mnouchkine and the Théâtre du Soleil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Like Punchdrunk, Lepage works on a large scale with a keen eye for the visual effects of his work on the audience. His marathon piece *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* returned to the National Theatre in London in 2020, marking 75 years since the bombing of Hiroshima. Both *Elsinore* and *The Seven Streams of the River Ota* were beset by technical difficulties as they premiered in Edinburgh, in 1996 and 1994 respectively, resulting in *Telegraph* theatre critic Charles Spencer criticising Lepage's ambitious stagecraft.[68] When the latter returned to the National in 1996, Spencer was happy to take back his earlier condemnation; 'I… found the first version of this show incoherent and self-indulgent… but this amazing production, radically revised and extended over the past two years, lays such doubts to rest'. In *887*, Lepage explores the concept of the memory palace, wherein one creates a physical location in the mind in order to 'store' memories in images. Performing solo, Lepage builds and demolishes locations in his own life to work through an autobiography of himself, his city, and his country. He is clearly preoccupied with space on both a macro and micro scale, and the ways in which it can be manipulated and made to produce meaning.

In 2012, the National Theatre of Scotland presented a solo production of *Macbeth*, directed by John Tiffany and Andrew Goldberg, with Alan Cumming taking on all the roles in Shakespeare's play. In *Elsinore*, much of the attention falls on the machine that Lepage created to move between scenes and characters, whereas in this *Macbeth*, the focus falls on Cumming's portrayal of each role in the piece. Cumming was by this point well known for his film and television work, but he also had numerous stage roles to his name, including Hamlet for English Touring Theatre and the Master of Ceremonies in Sam Mendes' 1993 revival of *Cabaret*, a part to which he has returned several times. John Tiffany became known as a director of new writing in Scotland, at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh from

[68] Charles Spencer, 'When the machinery stops the show', *The Telegraph*, 17 August 1996.

1997-2001 and in his role as Associate Director of New Work at the National Theatre of Scotland from 2004. More recently, Tiffany has worked on Broadway and in the West End, directing the musical *Once* in 2011, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* in 2013, and *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* in 2016. Tiffany and Cumming had worked together before, with Cumming playing Dionysus in *The Bacchae* at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2007.

Macbeth explores mental illness in a manner reminiscent of Ian Rickson's *Hamlet* with Michael Sheen: the only performers to appear other than Cumming play orderlies in some kind of psychiatric institution, and it becomes apparent that Cumming is a patient acting out *Macbeth* as part of a psychotic episode. Indeed, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* were staged within a year of each other in the UK, although *Macbeth* went on to Lincoln Center in New York in 2012 and Broadway in 2013. *Macbeth* is not particularly unusual in its use of space, in contrast with most of the productions I discuss in this chapter: rather, the interest lies in what Bakhtin might have to say about this kind of dramaturgical approach in terms of Cumming's embodiment of multiple voices, several of which work against each other at various points in the play. How might an audience read Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's arguments as they plot Duncan's murder if the two parties arguing are embodied by the same actor? How does Macbeth's complex sense of self operate if both his soliloquies and his dialogue with other characters come from the same place? Tiffany and Goldberg's conception of this one-man piece displays very different concerns to those of Lepage in *Elsinore*.

Lepage and Tiffany's production concepts are not new: one-person or reduced numbers casting of Shakespeare is long established, and we may see many more productions following this pattern as theatre attempts to rebuild itself under COVID-19 restrictions. It is common for well-known actors to perform one-person recital shows, where they explore various roles and deliver speeches by several different characters. In the latter stages of her

career, Ellen Terry toured the UK and the US with a 'Shakespearean Recital With Illustrative Acting, On Some of the Heroines from Shakespeare's Plays', in which she discussed and performed some of the major female parts in Shakespeare. More recently Ian McKellen embarked on a similar tour of the UK in celebration of his eightieth birthday, in which he discussed his life and work with a particular emphasis on Shakespeare. These showcase performances, though, do not involve the actor truly taking on the characters whose speeches they perform: Terry and McKellen might embody them momentarily, but these productions are not like the sustained work needed in full length renderings of the plays. How might an actor move, then, between different roles in the same play in the same evening, and how might an audience receive this kind of performance?

In *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, Kathryn Prince compares and contrasts intimate and epic theatre, touching on *Sleep No More*, *Elsinore*, and the NTS *Macbeth*. The latter, she says, surpasses other solo shows she has seen: after *Elsinore*, she felt that 'I had spent the evening in an intimate engagement with a talented actor, without feeling this intimacy attached to the character he played', but observes that Cumming managed to harness 'both of these intimacies, the actor depicting virtually all of the play's characters but also opening space for empathy by framing these depictions as one man's psychotic break'.[69] She notes that 'there are traces of radical empathy in Cumming's *Macbeth*', with 'his performance oscillating between these two kinds of intimacy because of the framing device'. This framing device, she suggests, makes sense of his embodiment of multiple characters, rendering them 'symptomatic of a psychotic break that has erased the boundaries between the self and other'. Without this device, it might be more difficult to stomach this kind of performance, as Prince suggests: this framing generates one over-arching character even as

[69] Kathryn Prince, 'Intimate and Epic *Macbeths* in Contemporary Performance' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 255.

Cumming plays all of those in *Macbeth*, lessening the impact of the splintering of his embodied identity. Prince comments that he 'takes on the persona of victim, villain, witness, and collaborator', so that 'his psychological breakdown, his psychological torture, is to know what it is to be a Macbeth and also a Malcolm, to be a Lady Macbeth and also a Lady Macduff.'

Jeffrey R. Wilson explores Shakespeare's links to criminology using *Macbeth* and this production as a focal point, arguing that 'Shakespeare was doing an early version of what we now call 'criminology' – understood as the formal study of crime, criminals, criminal law, criminal justice, and social ills that could or should be criminalised'.[70] Wilson suggests allusions in the NTS production to the Andrea Yates case of 2001, where a mother was at first convicted of murder for drowning her children in a bathtub, and then found not guilty by reason of insanity at a later appeal. He offers two readings of the production: as an 'act[s] of discovery (of Shakespeare's early-modern anticipation of modern medical concepts) or acts of projection (of modern ideas into an early-modern text that does not call for them)', and notes that 'Shakespearean performance… allows for and even glories in the use of modern concepts and events to fill in the famous gaps of Shakespeare's texts'.[71] Gone here is the cosmic topography that Bakhtin identifies on the early modern stage, replaced instead with specific references to twenty-first-century events. These allusions, too, are less immediately legible than the gestures that Bakhtin says are always universally situated in Shakespeare's plays. Spectators familiar with the Yates case might be able to read the NTS production in ways that audience members unfamiliar with it are not. The relationship between performer and spectator becomes more diffuse thanks to the application of this concept, before we even begin to think about the actor embodying multiple characters over the course of the evening.

[70] Jeffrey R. Wilson, '*Macbeth* and Criminology', *College Literature* 46:2 (2019), p. 453.
[71] Wilson, '*Macbeth* and Criminology', pp. 478-9.

These one-person performances seem to intensify a quality that is already present in Shakespeare in the soliloquy, where differing points of view compete in the body and voice of one actor. Patrick Gray comments that 'in Shakespeare's tragedies, as in those of Seneca, the two sides of the ethical dilemma at the heart of each play tend to be presented, not as opposing characters, but instead within the psyche of the 'tragic hero'.[72] Soliloquies, for Gray, 'show him [the tragic hero] deciding between irreconcilable courses of action'. Gray is interested in the transitions which he suggests Shakespeare observes taking place, 'from pagan antiquity to the Christian present', with 'Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet, and Lear find[ing] themselves caught between the claims of two incongruent value systems: one Roman, medieval, and aristocratic; the other modern, Christian, and democratic'. Other critics in this book are concerned with the soliloquy as self-deception, which I touched on in my first chapter in discussion of Richard III in particular. James Hirsh, for example, suggests that 'one of the most profound functions of soliloquies in English Renaissance drama was precisely to depict characters engaged in self-deception'.[73]

Like Gray, Daniel Spector, a drama teacher at Tisch School of the Arts, identifies 'change' as 'fundamental to Shakespeare's plays and their performance'.[74] Change for Spector is not located necessarily in the soliloquy but in all interactions that characters undergo: 'at any given moment in a Shakespeare play, the speaker believes she can change the mind of the person she's talking to through forms of argument and persuasion, while, in the meantime, she herself is always susceptible to change and self-contradiction'. He suggests that 'perhaps they think this way about the changeability of others because they intuitively understand that they are themselves highly changeable thanks to their author's apparently

[72] Gray, 'Choosing Between Shame and Guilt', p. 105.
[73] James Hirsh, 'Dialogic Self-Address in Shakespeare's Plays', *Shakespeare* 8:3 (2012), p. 324.
[74] Daniel Spector, 'What It's Like to Teach Shakespeare to Liberal American College Students These Days and Why It Might Be Like That', <https://tisch.nyu.edu/content/dam/tisch/CreativeResearch/deans-grants/daniel-spector.pdf> [accessed 15 May 2021].

complete lack of interest in nailing them down to a stable or linear, coherent psychology'. As ever, this analysis feels strikingly Bakhtinian, relying as it does on high-stakes engagement and unfinalisability. Spector notes as well that when students arrive in his class, 'they have already intensively trained in techniques associated with 20th-century American psychological realism', which he decries as 'a set of discourses and methodologies that tend to reinforce notions of cinematic naturalism that I find to be utterly unhelpful for the expressive demands of Shakespeare'. Shakespeare, Spector says, requires 'a great deal of social dexterity', such that 'an actor needs to be able to engage their scene partner with a degree of attentiveness, confidence, and tenacity that is only possible through a process of de-self-centering'.

What then, for productions like Lepage's *Hamlet* and the NTS *Macbeth*? How is it possible for one actor to engage in this kind of de-self-centering when they are playing all the characters in one play? We might ally our concerns with embodiment here with those with which we began our consideration of Bakhtin's work: monologism and dialogism. Bakhtin notes that monologism is illusory and self-deceiving: emphasising one dominant voice is not how human interaction and the world more generally works. Although Spector is discussing partner work, we can bring Gray in again to conceive of the soliloquy as a dialectical interaction, even though this interaction is taking place within one consciousness. The soliloquy then, perhaps the most obvious example one might choose if one were to attempt to find evidence for Bakhtin's claims that drama as a genre is monologic, does not in fact function as a monologue; at least, not in Shakespeare's plays. In the major tragedies, Shakespeare seems to be writing against this kind of inward-facing promotion of the self above all else; if a character seeks to achieve power to the detriment of their relationships with others, their family in particular, then they often meet an unpleasant end. Shakespeare by and large avoids overt moralising, in a Keatsian negatively capable sense, but we can

nevertheless look at the conclusions of the plays I explored in my first chapter to examine the protagonists' fates. Richard III, for example, whom I put forward as perhaps the most monologic of Shakespeare's characters, ends his play abandoned by all of his former allies, with his own mother turned against him and not even the horse for which he calls so desperately.

What about the actor playing multiple roles, some of whom soliloquise? Alan Cumming notes that he 'originally imagined a production in which he and his costar would swap the two lead roles each night', citing Freud's 'vision of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as two sides of the same coin'.[75] In a manner reminiscent of Ian Rickson's thoughts on *Hamlet*, influenced by R. D. Laing, Cumming says that he sees 'Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as two parts of the same person', with his 'reason for wanting to do this play…based on the way the women are always chiding the men about their masculinity'. To prepare, he performed vocal exercises exploring masculine and feminine voices, claiming that 'certain lines of Lady Macbeth are most effective in a masculine voice, and then other lines by Macbeth or other characters are done in a feminine voice'. For Cumming, then, the Macbeths form part of the same consciousness, or act as separate consciousnesses that are each vitally important in shaping the other's sense of self. He is able to think about the two characters in a productive way while incorporating the unusual embodiment principle that underlies the production. He finds dialogism within the Macbeths as a couple even as he considers them a unit, melding them together whilst also separating out certain distinctive aspects.

Lepage's approach to *Hamlet* is very different, and, as mentioned, the technical difficulties with which *Elsinore* was beset were met with hostility by critics. Carole Woddis

[75] Quoted in Mark Fisher, 'Interview: Alan Cumming on Staging a One-Man *Macbeth*', *The List*, <https://list.co.uk/news/20929/interview-alan-cumming-on-staging-a-one-man-macbeth> [accessed 1 May 2021].

suggests, however, that Lepage 'appears, uniquely among directors, to use critical feedback as a constructive tool… seeing it as an essential ingredient in the 'dialogue' (a favourite word) between artist and public'.[76] In contrast to Cumming's *Macbeth*, though, Lepage states that 'the character of Hamlet never really interested me', citing his approach not as an actor 'but as a story-teller or as a director'.[77] Instead, he says 'I was more interested in Elsinore and its environment, which is why actually I called the piece Elsinore'. This environment-building comes about through complex technological effects, which for Lepage mirror the 'vocabulary' that audience members are used to in their homes – 'zapping, surfing, switching TV channels'. He was criticised for placing 'a piece of machinery between [your] actor and [your] audience', but he responds to this comment by asking 'why are there cell-phones beeping whilst I'm delivering 'To be or not to be'? For Lepage, 'it's something that deserves to be questioned and explored: how can we echo today's video, recording and sound devices in the theatre? How do we find Hamlet in that?'

Perhaps most interesting for my purposes is Lepage's focus on the polyphonic nature of contemporary entertainment consumption, as reflected in the polyphonic elements he uses to build his production. His comments were made in 2011, and if anything the media landscape has only expanded in this multi-voiced direction, particularly with the advent of streaming services. Alongside the proliferation of mobile devices, choosing and remaining focused on a particular piece of media is becoming more and more difficult. For Lepage, technological effects need not come between the audience and the play: instead, they can be brought into the production as part of a whole, mirroring twenty-first-century culture. This environment-building approach holds some similarities with Bakhtin's analysis of the Shakespearean stage. Just as each piece of Shakespeare's stage holds topographic meaning,

[76] Carole Woddis, 'Now you see it…', *The Independent*, 23 October 2011, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/now-you-see-it-1353232.html> [accessed 1 May 2021].
[77] Quoted in Woddis, 'Now you see it'.

so, too, does each aspect of Lepage's production. Hamlet as a character becomes meaningful within his environment, as Bakhtin explains in his analysis of the significance of gesture in the early modern playhouse. Every movement within this landscape has implications and can be read by the audience. In my final chapter, I will discuss the RSC's 2016 production of *The Tempest,* for which they collaborated with Intel to present Ariel via a motion capture avatar. Pascale Aebischer discusses the technological glitches that occurred during the production's run and argues that these glitches did not necessarily disrupt the play but rather added to it as polyphonic elements, like the beeping of the cell phones that Lepage identifies during Hamlet's soliloquy.

Marcus Nordlund adds nuance to James Hirsh's analysis of the soliloquy, which I discussed in my first chapter. He comments that 'as James Hirsh has demonstrated convincingly, this point of view probably never took the form of interior monologue in Shakespeare's plays', but rather that 'the most frequent mode of delivery for soliloquies was probably self-address rather than direct address to the audience'.[78] 'A Shakespearean soliloquy', Nordlund says, 'need not be more truthful or dependable than ordinary dialogue or self-talk'. Instead, 'the character may be self-deluded, testing out ideas, cheering himself up, or perhaps even manipulating himself, as Iago appears to do at times in *Othello*'. Nordlund also considers, however, the reception of the soliloquy: 'when a Shakespearean character speaks in solitude, the audience listens with special attention because the words have not been accommodated to the interests or expectations of other characters'. The audience, he says, 'are being let in on a secret to inside information on the *external* level'. Here, then, the shaping Bakhtinian other is stripped away – although Nordlund's analysis here is complicated by scenes such as Brutus in the orchard in *Julius Caesar*, where the

[78] Marcus Nordlund, *The Shakespearean Inside: A Study of the Complete Soliloquies and Solo Asides* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p. 2.

wavering conspirator delivers a soliloquy that is primarily concerned with the thoughts and feelings of various others, including the citizens of Rome and the conspirators. Shakespeare in fact has Brutus constantly interrupted, first by his servant Lucius, then by the letter planted by the conspirators urging Brutus to take action against Caesar, and finally by the conspirators in person.

Nordlund continues his discussion to consider 'the modern emphasis among scholars, actors, and directors on direct address to the audience'.[79] As he points out, Hirsh's approach discusses the way in which soliloquies were conceptualised in the early modern period, rather than taking into consideration the way that these speeches are delivered and read by modern audiences. Nordlund concludes, then, that 'the modern acting profession seems squarely rooted in a consensus that the recent collapse of the dramatic 'fourth wall' and the reintegration of the audience as an active participant in the drama has liberated Shakespeare from the shackles of modern realism, returning him to his post-medieval roots'. Bridget Escolme, meanwhile, brings the discussion back around to the embodied reality of the early modern playhouse, noting that the reconstructed Globe 'with its visible audience – partly mobile and potentially restless, partly seated at eye-level with the actor – clearly demonstrates that talking to oneself is an improbable way of engaging and securing the attention of the spectator'.[80] Both critics consider the relationship between performer and spectator and place emphasis upon the geography of the playhouse to do so: Nordlund on the existence or not of the fourth wall, and Escolme on the visible audience at the Globe. Productions like those of Lepage and NTS still require the participation of the audience to unpack the complex embodiment model that they both use and to think about the frameworks in which they both take place.

[79] Nordlund, *The Shakespearean Inside*, p. 16.
[80] Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience: Shakespeare, Performance, Self* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 64.

Lepage's *Hamlet* and the NTS' *Macbeth* explore embodiment very differently from not only *Sleep No More* but also the Globe's recent *Taming of the Shrew*. Lepage and the NTS discard the cosmic topography of the early modern stage but nonetheless emphasise the framework within which they take place. For Lepage, the environment of his show is extremely important: as he states outright, he is more interested in Elsinore as a place than in Hamlet as a character. The NTS, meanwhile, use an overarching concept to justify Cumming's solo performance, so that his work is legible for the audience once they understand the institutional setting. This setting resembles that of Ian Rickson's *Hamlet* but Rickson, I would say, leaves more for his audience to decipher, whereas the NTS uses the production's concept as background for Cumming's technical virtuosity. Even though neither show possesses the universal signifiers that Bakhtin identifies on the Shakespearean stage, they are nonetheless interested in the dialogic exchange between performer, creative team and spectator, and the ways in which meaning is read into production choices. They move the dialogic relationships between characters into the body of one actor, but this kind of embodiment does not remove the underlying reciprocity of such relationships which allows characters to shape one another as they move through the world.

Shakespeare's Globe's *The Taming of the Shrew*

In 1997, Shakespeare's Globe opened on the south bank of the River Thames in London. In the Globe's first season, under the artistic directorship of Mark Rylance, the company staged *Henry V, The Winter's Tale*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy,* and Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. The building and its work is a culmination of actor Sam Wanamaker's project begun in 1970, when he established the Globe Playhouse Trust.[81] In his foreword to *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment,* Andrew Gurr, one of the original

[81] Peggy Phelan, 'Reconstructing Love: *King Lear* and Theatre Architecture' in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, eds. Barbara Hodgdon and W. B. Worthen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), p. 14.

team of scholars brought together to advise on the building of the theatre, notes that they 'did sometimes discuss whether the end-product of our labours would work as a modern theatre', with the conclusion that 'none of us seriously believed that it might attract big crowds'.[82] The Globe has however become one of the premier tourist attractions in London and continues to garner enthusiastic reviews from UK theatre critics.

In 1988, a draft artistic policy was drawn up with eight stipulations or constraints set out for the practice that was to take place at the Globe. These constraints include a declaration of 'the purpose of the project': 'to present the plays of Shakespeare in the building for which he wrote many of them'.[83] The policy goes on to suggest that 'at least one play each season should be presented as authentically as possible', that 'the repertoire should include plays by other writers and of other periods', and that 'the audience-actor relationship created by these sixteenth-century conditions should be explored'. Importantly, too, the authors of the policy – the Theatre Committee at the time, it seems – stipulate that 'no production should alter or damage the fabric of the building', 'natural light should be the rule' such that 'artificial light, if needed at night, should be general enough to cover both players and spectators', and finally that 'no modern sound amplification should be used'. In the 1997 opening season, Rylance programmed work that followed this policy, including less frequently performed plays by Beaumont and Fletcher and by Middleton. In 2020, by contrast, the plays selected for the main space by current artistic director Michelle Terry were *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.

For my purposes, the stipulation that 'the audience-actor relationship created by these sixteenth-century conditions should be explored' is most interesting.[84] In *Shakespeare and*

[82] Andrew Gurr, 'Foreword', *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, eds. Christie Carson and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. xvii.
[83] *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, p. 236.
[84] *Shakespeare's Globe: A Theatrical Experiment*, p. 236.

the Force of Modern Performance, W. B. Worthen suggests that the construction of the Globe functions as 'testimony to the desire to frame theatrical performativity as a field of historical recovery'.[85] He writes that 'the new Globe's performances claim to be *of* Shakespeare in new ways, because they restore the means by which Shakespeare's plays had their original force'. Staging Shakespeare at the Globe is not like staging Shakespeare at other venues. The architecture of the theatre, as well as its location near the site of the original Globe, gives the performance space meaning that is not replicated in the other productions I discuss in this chapter. Worthen claims that 'the Globe can only be a complex *contemporary* undertaking' because it 'evinces an understanding of the working of history that is fully our own, that shares our ways of understanding and performing the past'. As Bakhtin says of the literary artistic chronotope, 'time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible' and 'similarly, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history'.[86] In the Globe, time and space are brought together through the venue's efforts to recapture the early modern period.

Farah Karim-Cooper, the Head of Higher Education and Research at the Globe, makes clear that the venue is more than a commercial playhouse. She states that 'the identity of Shakespeare's Globe can be understood to be divided in four parts: artistic, pedagogic, academic and commercial', and, interestingly, observes that 'these differing facets of the organisational identity are frequently and fundamentally in productive tension with one another', a strikingly dialogic formulation.[87] This 'productive tension' is most keenly felt, she says, between 'the 'artistic Globe' and the 'pedagogic Globe'' which 'often run counter to the organisation's commercial Shakespeare-centricity'. These emphases have changed over time,

[85] W. B. Worthen, 'Globe performativity' in *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 81.
[86] Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 84.
[87] Farah Karim-Cooper, 'The performance of early modern drama at Shakespeare's Globe' in *Performing Early Modern Drama Today*, eds. Pascale Aebischer and Kathryn Prince (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 55.

with the arrival of Dominic Dromgoole as artistic director in 2006 marking 'a distinct shift in his artistic policy, largely due to the overwhelming success of the Globe'. Part of this artistic policy is a move away from Rylance's ''original practices' work and productions of plays by early modern playwrights other than Shakespeare'. The production that I discuss in this section, Caroline Byrne's 2016 *Taming of the Shrew*, falls under the artistic directorship of Emma Rice, who held the position for only two summer seasons before leaving in April 2018. The issues around Rice's artistic directorship, which I will examine, seem to lie with several of the purported objectives of the Globe I have considered so far but in particular those to do with her alterations of the material conditions of the Globe.

Rice was appointed as the new artistic director in January 2016. Reactions to her arrival were positive but somewhat cautious, with her work as artistic director of Kneehigh Theatre optimistically invoked as something new and innovative which she might bring to the Globe too. Lyn Gardner commented that her appointment was 'a bold move' that could be 'a marriage made in heaven', complimenting the Globe's willingness to test out new approaches: 'the Globe has shown itself to be that all too rare theatre institution: one that doesn't simply just try through its appointments to replicate what success it has already got'.[88] Rice had only directed one play by Shakespeare before her artistic directorship, *Cymbeline*, which Gardner had complimented as 'funny and moving', noting that 'what she brings to every production is an ability to make a play speak directly to its audience'. Michael Billington, also writing for *The Guardian*, was more overtly critical. He characterised the choice of Rice as 'a big surprise', and said of her *Cymbeline*, 'I cordially disliked its relentless jokiness and its failure to address the problems posed by a difficult play'.[89]

[88] Lyn Gardner, 'Emma Rice will have them swinging from the chandeliers at Shakespeare's Globe', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/may/01/emma-rice-shakespeares-globe> [accessed 20 May 2021].
[89] Michael Billington, 'At Shakespeare's Globe, Emma Rice must both respect and deconstruct the classics', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2015/may/01/shakespeares-globe-emma-rice-kneehigh-respect-deconstruct-the-classics> [accessed 20 May 2021].

Billington admits his own more general reservations about the Globe as a performance space and in particular its engagement with spectators, warning that 'the ever-present danger at the Globe, on which I've often commented, is of allowing the audience not merely to participate but to dictate the tempo of a production'.

Unfortunately for Billington, in an interview previewing her upcoming debut season, Rice declared that 'the audience is at the heart of everything the Globe does' and that 'that dialogue between the stage and the audience is what attracted me to the job… the audience carry shows here like heroes and I'm moved and excited by it every time'.[90] She joined Kneehigh Theatre in 1994 as a performer and developed her artistic practice with the company, making her directorial debut with *The Red Shoes* in 2003. Kneehigh tour their work internationally and are known for their multi-disciplinary and populist work. Based in Cornwall, they describe their work as 'vigorous, popular and challenging theatre' that they 'perform with joyful anarchy'.[91] Rice is now artistic director of Wise Children, a new company that also makes touring work. Interviewed by David Sanderson for *The Times* before taking on the Globe directorship, she acknowledged that her process does not treat the text first, as many directors of Shakespeare and other classical works do. 'I always start with big brushstrokes then work down into detail', she says, with the caveat that 'it might mean you crash and burn now and again but the plays are pretty robust'.[92] Ultimately, she reassures the reader, 'I am not here to destroy anything, I am here to build and grow and nurture'.

Ray Schultz compared Rice's inaugural production, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with that of Erica Whyman for the Royal Shakespeare Company, suggesting that 'both

[90] Lyn Gardner, ''It's time for a big adventure': Emma Rice on her opening Globe production', *The Guardian*, 11 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/apr/11/emma-rice-interview-shakespeares-globe-theatre-wonder-season-midsummer-nights-dream> [accessed 20 May 2021].
[91] Kneehigh Theatre, <https://www.kneehigh.co.uk/about> [accessed 20 May 2021].
[92] David Sanderson, 'Shakespeare for beginners – meet the new boss of the Globe', *The Times*, 4 May 2016, [accessed 20 May 2021].

productions rooted their approaches in tradition, even as they often sought to recast or revise those traditions in a contemporary light'.[93] Rice, he says, 'made the RSC production appear almost staid in comparison' thanks to her 'free-wheeling inventiveness and sometimes cavalier attitude toward the text'. Schultz noted the 'highly theatrical, almost ritualised manner' in which Rice used the playing space of the Globe, 'with Puck drawing a large chalk circle around which the lovers subsequently trudged before falling asleep'. He draws attention to Rice's programme notes which claimed this production as her 'love letter to Shakespeare and the Globe', in its celebration of 'the glorious clash of the modern and Elizabethan worlds', reminiscent of Worthen's discussion regarding the combining of past and present that cannot help but take place at the Globe. Schultz, along with other reviewers, was not wholly convinced by Rice's incorporation of contemporary elements: 'other attempts to inject modern sensibilities into the production felt strained'. There were several references in Rice's *Dream* to previous regimes at the Globe, including an early exclamation from one of the Mechanicals that the tambourine she was clutching fiercely had been given to her by Mark Rylance. The spirit in which these comic interjections were presented did not seem entirely generous, supporting Schultz's concluding analysis that Rice's production challenged the traditions of the venue, rather than embracing it as Whyman did at the RSC.

The challenges embodied onstage in Rice's *Dream* were apparently taken seriously offstage too, and her departure as artistic director was announced in October 2016, the playhouse having barely fallen silent after her debut season. The news was extremely controversial and became the subject of various opinion pieces by cultural critics. Lyn Gardner condemned the move, asking 'why appoint Rice, best known for her internationally renowned work with Kneehigh, if you are not going to back her?' and describing the Globe

[93] Ray Schultz, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare (review)', *Theatre Journal* 69:2 (2017), p. 259.

as ‘an organisation that is deeply divided about its purpose, and now has egg on its face’. [94] Chief executive Neil Constable wrote that ‘the Globe was reconstructed as a radical experiment to explore the conditions within which Shakespeare and his contemporaries work, and we believe this should continue to be the central tenet of our work’. Gardner’s summation of this approach, cited in her article, is scathing: ‘Who wants to work in a theatre that in turning its back on Rice – who told me in April that she had ideas for at least four seasons – has made it clear that it would rather potter around in an artistic cul-de-sac than embrace a wider theatrical world?’

As Gardner notes too, the Globe’s decision to have Rice step down seemed doubly strange because of her ‘critically acclaimed first season that delivered exceptionally strong box-office returns’. It is on one of the productions in Rice’s debut season that I will now focus, and a particular moment that brings together the technological additions introduced at the Globe under Rice’s stewardship with Robert Weimann’s *locus* and *platea* concept. Alongside *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Rice programmed *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Imogen* (a renamed *Cymbeline*), and had Jonathan Munby’s 2015 *The Merchant of Venice* return after playing elsewhere in the UK and at Lincoln Center in New York. Caroline Byrne’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, the production with which I am concerned, set the play in Ireland in 1916, contemporaneous with the Easter Rising, and examined the contribution of women to the fight for independence. Byrne eschewed the induction featuring Christopher Sly that takes place in Shakespeare’s original, replacing it with a ballad which recurs throughout the show, sung by Katherine. The production also used lighting and amplified sound to particularly arresting affect in the second half of the play, when Kate and Petruchio’s relationship takes a turn into darkness and abuse. Byrne’s control of the tone of

[94] Lyn Gardner, ‘As Emma Rice departs, the Globe has egg on its face – and no vision’, *The Guardian*, 25 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2016/oct/25/shakespeares-globe-emma-rice-department-comment> [accessed 15 March 2021].

the play was extremely impressive, considering the Globe audience's natural inclination towards laughter and the need for actors to play more broadly in its open performance space.

The production was extremely critically successful: Sarah Crompton declared it 'quite the best *Shrew* I have ever seen', remarking that it 'intelligently embraces the contradictions of the play, turning it into a thrilling hybrid of comedy and tragedy'.[95] Alexandra Coghlan commented 'the joy of Caroline Byrne's new production for the Globe is precisely its ease', with the result 'a show that's half comedy and half tragedy – a play that should be at odds with itself, but whose honesty and energy somehow make a coherent and thought-provoking whole of it'.[96] Mark Lawson noted the contrasting halves of the piece too, suggesting that 'a first half invoking Wilde – grotesque relatives and young men conniving in disguise – gives way to a second that is darkly indebted to Beckett'.[97] Brendan Macdonald tracks the shifting dynamics of the production, pointing out that Byrne has Katherine speak first, with Aoife Duffin's performances of the songs displaying 'a level of interiority and intimacy that are simultaneously affective and rebellious', and noting that the Widow whom Hortensio woos is present throughout much of the action, seemingly taking on the role of Katherine and Bianca's absent mother.

Byrne's production made careful use of lighting, designed by Natasha Chivers. This deployment of technology was precisely what was decried when Rice came to step down as artistic director: in a perceptive article for *Exeunt*, Rosemary Waugh explored the concept of 'shared light' and what that means at the Globe. She refers to the statement attributed to CEO

[95] Sarah Crompton, '*The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare's Globe)', *Whatsonstage*, 5 June 2016, <https://www.whatsonstage.com/west-end-theatre/reviews/the-taming-of-the-shrew-shakespeares-globe_40789.html> [accessed 15 March 2021].
[96] Alexandra Coghlan, '*The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare's Globe', *theartsdesk.com*, 4 June 2016, <https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/taming-shrew-shakespeares-globe-0> [accessed 15 March 2021].
[97] Mark Lawson, '*The Taming of the Shrew* review – a lovable take on a dislikeable play', *The Guardian*, 6 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/jun/06/the-taming-of-the-shrew-review-shakespeares-globe-london-feminism> [accessed 15 March 2021].

Neil Constable, which describes shared light as 'the historical theatrical practice of having actors and audience illuminated in either natural light, or electric lighting mimicking such, so they can 'see each other'', and goes on to quote an Editors' Note which further clarifies that ''shared light' is able to provide an atmosphere wherein the people onstage are playing 'with' rather than 'to' or 'at' those in the audience.[98] Waugh infers from this note that 'Rice's productions do not talk 'with' the audience, but 'to' or 'at' instead'. In Byrne's *Shrew*, however, lighting was used intelligently to compartmentalise the stage, transforming it once Katherine has made the journey to Verona as Petruchio's wife. As Mark Lawson notes in his review, the evocation of the newly married couple's home was dark and disturbing, 'an iron bedstead atop a slagheap', placed in the centre of the stage. When Petruchio gives his soliloquy in Act Four Scene One, declaring 'He that knows better how to tame a shrew,/ Now let him speak: 'tis charity to show', Edward MacLiam played this moment not with bravado but with real anxiety; caught in a spotlight downstage, close to the spectating crowd, he appears to plead with the audience, as if he cannot believe the actions he finds himself carrying out.[99]

Returning to the *locus* and *platea* concept which he first explored in 1978, Robert Weimann's analysis of the spaces of the early modern stage are of course readily applicable at the Globe but particularly so in the case of Byrne's production. More recently, Erika T. Lin and Bridget Escolme have expanded on his work: Lin notes that early modern theatre had evolved a more conceptual distinction between *locus* and *platea*, as compared to late medieval theatre, and Escolme discusses more modern modes of acting which do not always map onto the clear signalling provided by understanding of the *locus* and *platea*

[98] Rosemary Waugh, 'Shared Light', *Exeunt*, 26 October 2016, <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/shared-light/> [accessed 15 March 2021].
[99] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Anna Pruitt in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 9. 179-180.

differentiation.[100] Weimann writes that 'theatrical uses of space – being far from unified – allowed for, and were positively kept alive by, more than one purpose of performance', intending to develop his distinction between *locus* as 'a fairly specific imaginary locale or self-contained space in the world of the play' and *platea* as 'an opening in *mise-en-scène*', the latter allowing for a more metatheatrical style of presentation.[101] The *locus*, he says, 'implicated the establishment of a topographically fixed locality' and 'insulated performers in their represented roles', helping to 'separate them from what, in the medieval theatre, was a much more undifferentiated space inhabited by a universally believing community of actors and spectators'. In Byrne's *Shrew* at the Globe, for example, Katherine and Petruchio's bed is situated in the *locus*. As spectators, we can only look on as Petruchio attempts to tame his new wife, insulated from the audience. The *platea*, by contrast, 'tended to preclude closure', allowing for 'a gradation or change through a series of stages from the definitely localised to the unlocalised, but a recurring, more immediate overlapping or oscillation of player's role and player's self'.[102]

In these two different spaces on stage, then, the actor is able to shift the sense of their connection with the audience. Upstage, in the locus, they are observed but not contactable. In the platea, downstage, they move into a place with more malleable boundaries, where they are able to comment on their performance and on the nature of theatre. In Byrne's *Shrew*, MacLiam as Petruchio moves squarely into the *platea* in order to speak to the audience and reflect on his actions so far: 'Thus have I politicly begun my reign,/ And 'tis my hope to end successfully… This is a way to kill a wife with kindness'.[103] During this moment of direct

[100] Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and Bridget Escolme, *Talking to the Audience*. Pascale Aebischer provides helpful analysis of Weimann, Lin, and Escolme in *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[101] Robert Weimann, 'Space (in)dividable: *locus* and *platea* revisited' in *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 181.
[102] Weimann, 'Space (in)dividable', pp. 192-193.
[103] *The Taming of the Shrew*, 9. 157-158.

address, the *locus* is cast into shadow by a lighting change, and the *platea* is brightly illuminated. Unlike the usual lighting conditions of the Globe, where all of the stage and the audience are equally lit, Chivers' lighting design here achieves a threatening harshness, thanks to its sparseness and the predominant blue colours she uses. It seems as though MacLiam is pushed towards the audience to reckon with our judgement of his actions, and his delivery of the speech lacks the boastfulness we might expect from the text as it is on the page. He displays a real uncertainty in the concluding lines 'He that knows better how to tame a shrew,/ Now let him speak', with the result that, in the performance I saw, one of the audience members positioned close to the stage responded to him, suggesting that he 'be more gentle'.

This moment in *The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates an intersection, then, between various concepts that I have explored so far in the thesis. As Weimann suggests, the delineation of the *locus* and *platea* created by Natasha Chivers' lighting design allows for a return to a more medieval style of playing, with distinctly drawn boundaries. It is usual for actors to move downstage during soliloquies such as this, but ironically the lack of "shared light" in this production serves to emphasise this sequence. Chivers' lighting spills from the *platea* off the Globe stage, illuminating both performer and audience and marking a particular kind of interaction that does not take place during much of the rest of the play. Bakhtin's comment that carnival exists without footlights, as opposed to theatre, proves subject in practice to complex qualifications. Under the shared light conditions of the Globe before and after Emma Rice, theatre takes place without footlights, actors and the watching crowd coming together and always aware of each other in the same space. In Byrne's *Taming of the Shrew,* footlights are quite evidently present, but her use of technology means that she is able to move between what Bakhtin might define as theatrical and carnivalesque modes with great control, using light to aid her dramaturgical aims and vary the audience experience. I would

suggest, ultimately, that using extra lighting at the Globe adds to the toolkit that directors making work in the space have at their fingertips: it would be eminently possible for shared light productions to be programmed alongside shows that use the added technology that Rice added to the venue.

This production, then, moves between several different Bakhtinian ideas about embodiment. Staged in the recreated Globe, we might expect it to adhere to the cosmic topography that Bakhtin discusses in the *Rabelais* revision notes, and indeed it cannot avoid that framing, as Worthen explains in his chronotopic analysis of the collision between time and space that takes place whenever work is presented at the Globe. The use of technology that moves the production away from original practices staging might seem to work against that topography, inserting the footlights that Bakhtin insists that theatre must have while carnival cannot, but, as I have shown, lighting need not divide performers and audience but can instead, when carefully used, bring them together. More importantly, it is possible for lighting to be used in order to manipulate these instances of performers and audience coming together and then being divided again, literally highlighting *locus* and *platea* areas on the stage to facilitate different kinds of relationships between actors and spectators at different points during the performance. Byrne's production interrogates the unique performer-audience relationship that is present at the Globe and carefully plays with physical space to think through some of the most complex moments of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Chapter Five

Eventness

Eventness, finally, brings together dialogism and embodiment to produce a vision of human experience that is brilliantly exemplified in drama. Bakhtin focuses on the ephemerality of each moment that we live through and the way in which these moments are always directed towards others and concretised, occurring in a specific place and set of circumstances, never to be repeated. In this chapter, I review Bakhtin's comments on eventness and consider 'liveness' in Shakespeare and performance studies more widely, beginning with Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander and bringing in Shakespeare's own portrayal of eventness on his stage. I look at the RSC's *The Tempest* (2016), the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, and conclude with a more general discussion of broadcast and streamed theatre in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. These productions approach eventness very differently, working with and against it to make meaning in their respective spaces, real and virtual. Eventness intrudes on the work the RSC are trying to accomplish while the Wooster Group make it the very stuff of their *Hamlet*, actors and creative team working in productive opposition to emphasise the live nature of their show. I finish the chapter by reflecting on the state of flux in which collective, live experience finds itself with the advent of broadcast and streaming technology as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bakhtinian eventness proves key here in marshalling the ways we might think about performance now and in the future.

Bakhtin and Eventness

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin describes the 'once-occurrent event of Being'.[1] For Bakhtin, and for all of us, 'every thought of mine, along with its content, is an act or deed that I perform', so that 'every particular act and lived-experience is a constituent moment of

[1] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 2.

my life – of the continuous performing of acts'.[2] Each person's life is a string of these once-occurrent events, every act performed one after another to form human experience, and crucially each one is unrepeatable. Bakhtin states that theory must be brought into communion with these once-occurrent events: life means nothing if it is conceived of in the abstract rather than experienced. He insists 'I cannot include my actual self and my life (*qua* moment) in the world constituted by the constructions of theoretical consciousness in abstraction from the answerable and individual historical act'. The importance of embodiment is made clear as he goes on to state that the event 'cannot be thought of, it can only be participatively experienced or lived through'.

As I noted in Chapter Two, like Shakespeare's Henry V in his St. Crispin's Day speech, Bakhtin stresses the importance of the specificity and the concrete locatedness of the person experiencing an event. He claims that 'the ongoing event can be clear and distinct, in all its constituent moments, to a participant in the act or deed he himself performs'.[3] It is not, Bakhtin says, 'that what is clear to him are only the universal moments and relations transcribed in the form of concepts', but rather that 'he sees clearly *these* individual, unique persons whom he loves, *this* sky and *this* earth and *these* trees'. So, too, Henry V draws attention to the meaningfulness of being physically present at Agincourt: 'gentlemen in England now abed / Shall think themselves accursed they were not here'.[4] The once-occurrent event of Being brings together several moments at once, including 'the actual and ought-to-be sense of the interrelationship between himself and these person and objects' and 'the actual, concrete ought conditioned by his unique place in the given context of the ongoing event.[5] Bakhtin combines dialogic relationships with concretised deeds, so that

[2] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 3.
[3] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 30.
[4] Shakespeare, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, 4.3.64-65.
[5] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 30.

eventness combines dialogism and embodiment, underpinning all of Bakhtin's theoretical work to produce his key model for human behaviour.

Each act must be oriented towards another, as well as being concretely located. Everyone is located in their own subjectivity, but in order for that subjectivity to be fully formed, it must include interaction with another outside of one's own self. Bakhtin says that 'each one is right in his own place, and he is right answerably, not subjectively', so that 'from my own unique place only-I-for-myself constitute an *I*, whereas all others are *others* for me'.[6] Every person experiences their life as this string of once-occurrent events, and we are surrounded by other people undergoing the same experience, which crucially shapes our own perspective too. There is then a sense of responsibility towards others, an ought: every act that we perform, indeed our entire existence, goes some way towards influencing others around us. Bakhtin places extreme importance upon each event and those who participate in it, the performer of the event and the other outside it too. Again, this model fits drama perfectly, acknowledging its ephemerality and the importance of its audience, in whatever form they exist.

As Bakhtin explains, eventness cannot be established on the terms of only one object or relation on its own. Instead, everything 'is always given in conjunction with another given that is connected with those objects and relations'.[7] Bakhtin uses this idea of conjunction/connection to argue against finalisation, too: 'an object that is absolutely indifferent, totally finished, cannot be something one becomes actually conscious of, something one experiences actually'. Experiencing an object means that the subject carries out something in relation to it, so that 'the object enters into relation with that which is to-be-achieved, grows in it – within my relationship to that object'. For Bakhtin, 'insofar as I am

[6] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 46.
[7] *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 32.

actually experiencing an object, even if I do so by thinking of it, it becomes a changing moment in the ongoing event of my experiencing (thinking) it'. Unfinalisability, then, is added to the mix in Bakhtin's discussion of eventness: life is made up of once-occurrent events, but they change and develop in relation to the people experiencing them all the time. Later in this chapter, I will look at the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, which takes as its starting point Richard Burton's 1964 *Hamlet* film, and considers the Group's relationship to the film as a piece of theatre history, neatly underscoring Bakhtin's concept of unfinalisability and the relationships we develop to events or objects as time passes.

Shakespeare and Eventness

Over the last twenty-five years, scholars of Shakespearean performance have drawn on wider performance theory to think through 'liveness' – a concept not unlike Bakhtin's eventness. Two key texts in this area are Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* and Philip Auslander's *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatised Culture*, to which I will return in this chapter. Alongside Phelan and Auslander, Erin Sullivan draws on Bakhtin's eventness in her chapter on social media and theatre broadcasts in *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*: 'For Bakhtin', she comments, ''event-ness' is about individuality and potentiality coming together to produce a radical form of presence and present-ness'.[8] Sullivan is interested in this chapter in 'how geographically dispersed audiences bring broadcast theatre to life by sharing their experiences of it with one another on social media'.[9] Rather than 'liveness', she uses the term 'aliveness', which she suggests might mean 'animated with a sense of shared occasion, affect and absorption'. For the productions she discusses, 'aliveness' takes the form of a collective audience practice rooted in the appreciation, celebration and discussion of an artistic event'. Sullivan's emphasis here is on a

[8] Erin Sullivan, 'The Audience is Present: Aliveness, Social Media and the Theatre Broadcast Experience' in *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Theatre Broadcast Experience*, eds. Pascale Aebischer, Susanne Greenhalgh and Laurie E. Osborne (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018), p. 61.
[9] Sullivan, 'The Audience is Present', p. 60.

sense of togetherness created via this artistic event, bringing to mind the focus on interpersonal connection that Bakhtin foregrounds in so much of his work.

In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatised Culture*, Auslander suggests that when he wrote the book, the 'relationship between live performance and its present mediatised environment' was conceptualised as 'a reductive binary opposition of the live and the mediatised'.[10] In his preface to its second edition, which was published in 2008, he remarks on his aim to 'make the book more responsive to a highly volatile cultural scene', noting that '*Liveness* is a book about performance but it is also about media, and media do not stand still'.[11] Auslander insists that liveness is 'a historical, rather than ontological condition', describing it as 'a moving target, a historically contingent concept whose meaning changes over time and is keyed to technological development'. By now, the second edition of *Liveness* is twelve years old; as the productions I will analyse in this chapter show, in the last decade performance technology has progressed dramatically, complicating our notion of liveness even further. Auslander's emphasis on historical contingency brings his liveness close to Bakhtin's eventness. The former writes very specifically about performance in the twenty-first century, while the latter aims to articulate a more general conception of Being, but both attribute great importance to the concrete, historically significant nature of 'liveness' or 'eventness'.

Auslander develops his thinking in reference – and at points, opposition – to Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, taking issue with her claim that performance's 'only life is in the present'.[12] Phelan asserts that 'performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations', arguing that 'once it does, it becomes something other than performance'.

[10] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatised Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 3.
[11] Auslander, *Liveness*, p. xii.
[12] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 146.

For Phelan, 'performance's being… becomes itself through disappearance'. Pre-empting Auslander's engagement with what he calls the 'mediatised culture', Phelan notes that 'the pressures brought to bear on performance to succumb to the laws of the reproductive economy are enormous', because 'only rarely in this culture is the 'now' to which performance addresses its deepest questions valued'. She emphasises the ephemeral nature of performance and insists that 'performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated': 'it can be performed again, but this repetition itself marks it as 'different''. In my analysis of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* and the Wooster Group's *Hamlet,* I will discuss issues of repeated performance and what repetition means to both companies: the Wooster Group seek to draw attention to this element of performance, whereas the RSC do so unwittingly, thanks to technical issues at play in their production.

Shakespeare himself shows his characters thinking about performance, usually with a view to the ways in which their actions might be remembered and commemorated in the future. As I noted earlier, in *Henry V* one of Henry's key rhetorical strategies as he emphasises the importance of the current moment is his claim that 'Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by, / From this day to the ending of the world, / But we in it shall be rememberèd'.[13] The battle becomes important on account of its ephemerality: 'gentlemen in England now a-bed/ Shall think themselves accursed they were not here'. In *Julius Caesar*, just after the assassination, Brutus and Cassius celebrate their work by imagining that their 'lofty scene' shall be 'acted over' in the future, 'many ages hence… In states unborn and accents yet unknown'.[14] Brutus even asks 'How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport', envisioning a number of performances where their actions are repeatedly represented. Henry anticipates Auslander's concept of liveness, drawing attention to the historically situated contingency of

[13] Shakespeare, *The Life of Henry the Fifth*, IV. 3. 57-59.
[14] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar,* III. 1. 113-115.

his men's deeds at Agincourt, while Brutus and Cassius anticipate Phelan's interest in repetition, noting differences that each performance might possess such as location and accent. Whereas Phelan argues against recording performances, claiming that such a record becomes something other than performance, Shakespeare has his characters think of performance as a record, allowing them to look back on events they themselves have carried out.

In his essay 'It's All a Bit of a Risk': Reformulating Liveness in Twenty-First Century Performances of Shakespeare', Stephen Purcell considers the 'blind spots' of Auslander's approach to liveness.[15] Purcell expands on Auslander to discuss liveness in live broadcasting of theatre and immersive theatre, as well as work at the rebuilt Globe. 'Since 1999', he claims, 'a new paradigm has begun to emerge in which cinema… has been able to recolonise liveness', refuting Auslander's earlier statement that it was television, rather than film, which was able to 'colonise liveness'. Purcell suggests that live theatre screenings, such as those of National Theatre Live, where a production is filmed live and transmitted to cinemas around the UK and the world, 'are in the process of constructing a new genre of live performance which is neither theatre nor cinema, but a hybrid of the two'.[16] I will consider such screenings in the last section of this chapter: for now, however, it is worth noting that Purcell discusses the 1964 film version of John Gielgud's *Hamlet*, which had been performed on Broadway, as an antecedent to live broadcast theatre. The Wooster Group's 2006 *Hamlet* makes use of the Gielgud film to ask questions about legacy and liveness.

Like Sullivan, John Wyver, whom Purcell also quotes, is interested in the formation of communities around live streaming, although his insistence on physical gathering is at odds with Sullivan's observations. For Wyver, community is generated 'when one is

[15] Stephen Purcell, ''It's All a Bit of a Risk': Reformulating 'Liveness' in Twenty-First-Century Performances of Shakespeare' in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 284.
[16] Purcell, ''It's All a Bit of a Risk'', p. 287.

watching a live event with other people gathered together in a space, irrespective of whether the event is embodied in front of you or shown on a screen and irrespective of whether that space is a theatre or cinema'.[17] Wyver's role as producer of the RSC's live broadcasts places him in a unique position to comment. In practice, different organisations give theatre directors different levels of involvement in the broadcast that is shown: at the RSC, for example, the theatre director collaborates with the broadcast director on shot selection and other more technical aspects of the broadcast. Discussing television adaptations of Shakespeare, Wyver identifies 'a tension between what are characterised as the *theatrical* elements of a broadcast and what are understood as the *televisual* and the *cinematic* elements': that is, 'components specific to the presentation on a stage' as opposed to 'multiple camera shots framed tightly on individuals and small groups and the editing between these'.[18] Broadcasts seem to be a new genre, a hybrid of theatre and cinema that engenders unique concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought questions about the value of liveness to the forefront of discussions about theatre. During the first UK lockdown, organisations including the National Theatre and the RSC made productions from their archives available to watch, and as the year progressed, many companies began to put out work online or via streaming, both live and recorded. Yet the current situation seems to have produced a set of circumstances where theatrical performance of any kind is valued and even cherished. Alice Saville has questioned liveness very recently, asking in *Exeunt,* 'Does online theatre really need to be live?' Saville explores different kinds of performance being made at the moment, where in each case theatremakers must 'grapple with questions of liveness – what it means, how you capture it – while taking on the responsibility for convincing audiences (and

[17] Wyver quoted in Purcell, ''It's All a Bit of a Risk': Reformulating 'Liveness' in Twenty-First-Century Performances of Shakespeare', p. 287.
[18] John Wyver, ''All the Trimmings?': The Transfer of Theatre to Television in Adaptations of Shakespeare Stagings', *Adaptation* 7:2 (2014), p. 105.

themselves) that what they're making sits under the umbrella of 'theatre'.[19] Saville ends the article by noting that 'the value we place on liveness will be critical to what happens next in online theatre' and suggesting that 'maybe what we need is to be both open-minded about what can constitute liveness – and crystal clear in our thinking about what audiences are getting, how it's been made, and whether it's being distributed with an eye to accessibility, as well as theatrical tradition'.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* (2016)

In 2016, the Royal Shakespeare Company presented a version of *The Tempest* created in collaboration with Intel and in association with The Imaginarium Studios.[20] The production starred Simon Russell Beale as Prospero and Mark Quartley as Ariel, the latter a role Russell Beale had previously played for the company in 1993. Gregory Doran, the Artistic Director of the RSC and director of this production, began the partnership with Intel and Imaginarium by posing a challenge to the three organisations: 'how could this *Tempest* be different and spectacular for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and make use of the latest technology in a way that was relevant and appropriate for this particular play?'[21] *The Tempest* became the first theatre production to feature live performance capture, with Quartley wearing a motion capture suit onstage to produce animated versions of Ariel alongside his physical self, incorporating facial tracking technology which allowed him to control the facial expressions of the Ariel avatars.[22] The motion capture technology was integrated with the lighting desk in the theatre so that Ariel's colour and position onstage could be controlled in

[19] Alice Saville, 'Does online theatre really need to be live?', *Exeunt*, <http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/theatre-online-liveness-livestream/> [accessed 15 March 2021].
[20] Royal Shakespeare Company, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-tempest/gregory-doran-2016-production> [accessed 17 March 2021].
[21] Ceri Gorton, *Space to Play: Making Arts and Technology Collaborations Work* (2017), < https://issuu.com/the_rsc/docs/b7061_tempest_impact_report_v10> [accessed 17 March 2021], p. 8
[22] Gorton, *Space to Play*, p. 9.

real time. The production transferred to the Barbican and was therefore configured for staging in both the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford and the Barbican auditorium.

In keeping with Doran's emphasis on the use of technology 'in a way that was relevant and appropriate for this particular play', he focussed on four 'key elements' or sequences in *The Tempest*: Ariel himself, the harpy, the hounds, and the masque that Prospero creates for Miranda and Ferdinand. The technology had to be resilient: 'the project was not R&D [research and development] to develop the most technologically advanced idea… the project focused on developing a technologically advanced idea that was robust enough to be delivered night after night, week after week, during the play's initial run in Stratford'.[23] Concentrating the Intel and Imaginarium work in certain parts of the production meant that Pete Griffin, the production manager, felt that he always had 'a show under it all', despite the possibility for the technology to go wrong in performance. In fact, for several critics, the show under it all, anchored by Simon Russell Beale's Prospero, was what they clung to amidst a disdain for the motion capture elements. Michael Billington opened his *Guardian* review with the complaint that 'Simon Russell Beale's return to the Royal Shakespeare Company after 20 years has been overshadowed by excitement about the production's use of digital technology', before claiming that 'the kaleidoscopic visual spectacle pales beside the show's human values and its moving affirmation of forgiveness'.[24]

Gregory Doran's programme note describes masque in the early modern theatre as 'the multimedia event of their day, using innovative technology from the continent to produce astonishing effects, with moving lights, and stage machinery that could make people fly, and descend from the clouds'.[25] Pascale Aebischer is interested not in the liveness or otherwise of

[23] Gorton, *Space to Play*, p. 27.
[24] Michael Billington, '*The Tempest* review – Beale's superb Prospero haunts hi-tech spectacle', *The Guardian*, 18 November 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2016/nov/18/the-tempest-review-simon-russell-beale-rsc> [accessed 15 March 2021].
[25] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 121.

such a moment or sequence but in its politics, or rather its lack thereof. For her, this *Tempest* is what Roland Barthes might call a '*texte de plaisir*': 'a pleasurable text that offers contentment and fulfilment, one that offers the reassuring experience of cultural continuity'.[26] Aebischer draws attention to 'socially and financially privileged model spectators' sitting in the best seats at the RST and thereby gaining the best access to the spectacle created by Doran, Intel, and Imaginarium. Linking twenty-first-century performance with the early modern, Aebischer notes that in court masques, 'cutting-edge technology was inserted in a perspectival setup that produced an ideological spectacle of a hierarchically organised world that mirrored the ideal relationship between the King and his subjects in the commonwealth'. Aebischer's conclusion that 'heightened technological means were used solely to organise theatrical space and action into orderly displays of artistry to be marvelled at rather than engaged or taken issue with' suggests that the production fell prey in the end to what Bakhtin calls monologism: *The Tempest* becomes a closed-off, finalised work which offers none of the dialogic possibilities that I have been trying to claim for theatre.

The nature of live theatre, however, inevitably shies away from such stabilised monologism. Griffin notes that 'theatre is a much rougher magic [than film]', and indeed this roughness made itself felt a number of times in performance, when the complex technology the RSC was trying to utilise went wrong. The harpy scene in particular proved difficult to manage, with any dislocation of the motion capture sensors in the suit resulting in bizarre effects where the avatar's head might be looking in the wrong direction, as well as other disconcerting manipulations of the harpy creature. Aebischer notes the difficult relationship between Quartley and the avatar system: 'there was an inescapable sense of the performer's entrapment by the technology that problematised any suggestion that the human performer was directing the movements of the technology rather than being himself subjected to the

[26] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 122.

control of that technology.' The very production of the Ariel avatar was tightly controlled, with the image projected onto a moving cylinder filled with smoke that was then moved around the stage. Although impressive at times, if allowed to progress smoothly, and if seen from the right places in the auditorium, the technological wizardry brought to bear in this production proved surprisingly limited in the effects it could produce. As Billington suggested in his review, human interaction rather than digital spectacle proved the most compelling feature of the production.

We might argue, too, that corporate rather than artistic concerns drove *The Tempest*. Ceri Gorton's impact report, which I cited above, is interested in the development of collaborative working and pays little attention to the aesthetic outcomes of the production. Amy Borsuk suggests that the production 'works to legitimise the RSC's status as a participant in the wider digital economy'. [27] As she explains, UK arts policy introduces extrinsic pressure upon organisations such as the RSC to demonstrate innovative practice, whether or not such practice is artistically successful. Borsuk notes that 'from a business standpoint, *The Tempest* demonstrates the RSC's capabilities as an ideal arts-technology collaborator within the wider UK and global cultural industry, given its intersecting expertise in Shakespearean performance and digital innovation'. The RSC feels a need to demonstrate such capabilities because 'the language for assessing culture has shifted into that of market value', with the result that the public is framed 'as a consumer of a product rather than an artistic critic or participant'.

In 2012, the RSC was the subject of protests thanks to its partnership with BP, one of the sponsors for the 2012 World Shakespeare Festival that took place. As Susan Bennett notes, in the aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, 'BP was in dire need of some

[27] Amy Borsuk, 'Innovating Shakespeare: The Politics of Technological Partnership in the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Tempest* (2016)', *Humanities* 8 (2019), p. 2.

new messaging in service of its brand image', and 'Bard Branding, in the form of the World Shakespeare Festival' was 'an occasion tailor-made for celebration of what the author and the company apparently shared – national identity – and what the author had and the company desired – a high level of positive brand recognition'.[28] The Reclaim Shakespeare Company, a 'protest-oriented alliance', interrupted a performance of *The Tempest* on 23rd April 2012 with a speech that drew on Shakespeare to criticise BP and their poor environmental record. Although the 2016 *Tempest* received no such attention in the wake of the RSC's partnership with Intel, it provides another example of the company entering into major partnerships that provide extra funding without necessarily possessing a clear artistic focus. The partnership with Intel seemed to come first, and the creative implications for the production second.

The RSC's position as a major cultural institution in the UK exposes it to complex and often competing concerns. Colin Chambers describes his time spent at the company as literary manager 'trying to resolve the inevitable tension between creativity and the institution', which he characterises as 'a tension that exists throughout all the processes required to find organisational forms for artistic expression… that persists because the impulse to challenge, to push the boundaries, to refuse the constraints of the institution is endemic in any creative project'.[29] As well as the innate difficulties that come with running a large artistic organisation, the RSC's remit is more complex than most. In 2016, it opened The Other Place, a smaller theatre over the road from the main building which houses the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Swan Theatre. The company describes The Other Place as 'our home for new writing, intimate performances and family events'.[30] It also houses rehearsal space and was set up in collaboration with the University of Birmingham, so that

[28] Susan Bennett, 'Sponsoring Shakespeare' in *Shakespeare's Cultural Capital: His Economic Impact From the Sixteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Dominic Shellard and Siobhan Keenan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 166.
[29] Colin Chambers, *Inside the Royal Shakespeare Company: Creativity and the Institution* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. x.
[30] RSC, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/your-visit/the-other-place> [accessed 17 March 2021].

artists and academics could come together in ‘a unique hub for rehearsal, training, learning and creativity’. The Other Place’s emphasis on new writing, as opposed to the early modern canon usually staged in the main houses at the RSC, introduces a divide in the company’s practice in terms of both work produced and the physical space in which that work is housed.

The RSC is unique amongst the companies and organisations I have considered so far because of the balances it must strike: commercial versus artistic success, staging Shakespeare versus staging new writing; tradition versus innovation. We might describe these differences as internal versus external: that is, more internal, artistic concerns versus external pressures, whether financial or motivated by the status and history of the company. Eventness, whilst at the heart of theatre and live performance, thus becomes highly charged. Achieving eventness, that is, real spontaneity and liveness onstage, comes at the end of a long process of production, subject to many extrinsic pressures. The 2016 *Tempest* brings these external factors onstage, with the RSC’s partnership with Intel directly figured in Ariel and his avatar. This *Tempest* is perhaps the clearest distillation, therefore, of the relationship between the RSC’s artistic practice and the outside pressures to which it is exposed. And although the technology used is indeed exciting and innovative, questions remain as to its effectiveness onstage. When I saw the production, I had purchased one of the £5 tickets the RSC offers for 16-25 year olds. These tickets can be placed anywhere in the house, and mine was in the first couple of rows of the RST, bringing me thrillingly close to the actors but at a disadvantage when it came to the avatar technology. My impressions of the production align, therefore, with those of Michael Billington: the spectacular masque effects were somewhat lost on me, but the organic, human experience of Simon Russell Beale’s final speech as Prospero was utterly absorbing.

Aebischer’s ruminations on the status of the spectator in Doran’s *Tempest* draw on Weimann’s *locus* and *platea* model to analyse spectator engagement. She suggests that ‘the

mode of viewing appropriate to performance in the *locus* is distant and quiet attention and admiration of artistry', while positioning in the *platea* is 'proximate, participatory, self-reflexive and sometimes combative'.[31] In Doran's *Tempest*, she characterises the Ariel avatar as part of 'a grandiose illusionist spectacle contained in the *locus*', with the result that 'Ariel seemed more a technological spectacle to be marvelled at than engaged with'.[32] The placement of the avatar in the *locus* space was a result of the technical constraints of the technology employed, but the spectatorial experience remains the same regardless of the artistic intention behind it. Abiding by Weimann's *locus* and *platea* model, it seems that the RSC expect their audience to remain distant and quietly attentive, admiring the artistry of their collaboration with Intel and Imaginarium Studios. Aebischer goes on to argue, however, that technological glitches and Quartley's physical presence onstage alongside the avatar 'countered' what she calls 'Doran's magic illusionism with a 'rough magic' that could trigger spectators' visceral empathy' as well as 'produce stomach-lurching disruptions of the *locus* figural positioning the production otherwise encouraged'.

Aebischer compares collaborative social media productions under the artistic directorship of Michael Boyd to the Doran *Tempest* in 2016, foregrounding the emphasis the two directors place upon the audience by examining 'how the RSC sought to create such an 'active and intimate relationship' with its audiences through digital performances in partnership with tech companies'.[33] In 2010, the company produced *Such Tweet Sorrow*, an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* that took place on Twitter, in collaboration with multimedia company Mudlark. Six actors took on the roles of Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio, Tybalt, the Nurse, and Friar Laurence, interacting with each other and audience members on Twitter over a five-week period. When Boyd became Artistic Director in 2002, he sought to return the company

[31] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 17.
[32] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 119.
[33] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 108.

to its ensemble roots, extending the principle beyond the acting company to encompass the Royal Shakespeare Company as a whole. In a statement on its 'Purpose and Values', the RSC under Boyd committed to 'create our work through the ensemble principles of collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. [34] In a speech at the New York Public Library in 2008, Boyd extended this principle of ensemble to the RSC's audiences, too, observing that 'the time might be ripe for theatre to offer a better, more honest, more active and intimate relationship also between the performer and the audience'.[35] He claimed that 'I sense a new contract being drawn up among young theatre-artists… and audiences that acknowledge the audience as part of this ensemble as well'.

Under Boyd's leadership, the RSC's physical spaces changed drastically too. The new Royal Shakespeare Theatre opened in 2011 with a thrust stage as opposed to the proscenium layout that had been in place for several decades. Audiences are thus literally closer to the action: the maximum distance between audience members and the stage was reduced from 27 to 15 metres.[36] In Hewison, Holden, and Jones' report, this physical transformation assumes great importance: 'the most fundamental decision was to alter and improve the physical relationship between audience and actors'.[37] They claim that 'the use of a thrust stage has produced a significant change in the relationship between players and the audience', and in addition complements Boyd's directorial style, 'in which he frequently asks actors to involve the audience, and in which characters either appear in or speak from different parts of the auditorium'. The 2016 *Tempest*, by contrast, seems to work against the auditorium as configured with a thrust stage. By confining the Ariel action onstage, even if this confinement were not the initial intention before the limitations of the technology were known, Doran's

[34] Quoted in *All Together: A Creative Approach to Organisational Change*, eds. Robert Hewison, John Holden, Samuel Jones (London: Demos, 2010), p. 45.
[35] Quoted in Hewison, Holden, Jones, *All Together: A Creative Approach to Organisational Change*, p. 54.
[36] Hewison, Holden, Jones, *All Together: A Creative Approach to Organisational Change*, p. 63.
[37] Hewison, Holden, Jones, *All Together: A Creative Approach to Organisational Change*, p. 66.

production closes off the possibilities for greater audience connection afforded by the thrust stage of the RST. Ironically, the proscenium layout of the Barbican may have suited *The Tempest* better, even though it was the home for ITA's *Roman Tragedies,* which I discussed in Chapter Three and which, apart from Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More,* offers the most audience interaction of the productions I consider in this thesis.

Positioning the audience as part of the ensemble, as Boyd set out to do throughout his artistic directorship, means that the audience becomes part of the drive to generate eventness. The increased proximity produced by the reconfiguration of the RST forges a sense of togetherness not found in proscenium arch theatres. Emphasising inclusion in this way returns the RST to an architectural model similar to that of the Globe, which breaks down the divide between performers and audience. It is unclear, however, whether these changes can promote eventness. Unlike *Sleep No More,* a fourth wall of a kind is still intact – as is also the case in *Roman Tragedies*, despite the novelty of allowing the audience to share the space with the actors. Without promoting audience interaction, conventions of audience behaviour tend to remain in place: eventness that might be generated by the unpredictable actions of audience members does not occur. *Roman Tragedies* is, in fact, one of the most tightly controlled productions that I discuss in this thesis; as I mentioned earlier, a timetable for the entire show was available for spectators, detailing the length of each scene almost minute-by-minute. Eventness or liveness, then, is created differently in *Roman Tragedies* and in the RSC's *Tempest*.

Despite the RSC's best efforts, the unpredictable nature of live theatre made itself felt during *The Tempest*. Numerous show reports detail problems with the avatar technology, thanks to the complexity of the motion capture suit Quartley wore. The 336 sensors on the suit, carefully calibrated, could glitch if they came in contact with a magnetic field, were knocked, or if Quartley simply stretched while wearing the suit. The stage management team

noted that 'We think Mr Quartley is stretching after he has been calibrated which is knocking his sensor pack out', and decided to 'try calibrating him later and ask[ing] him not to stretch after'.[38] As I noted above, Aebischer expresses an interest in the limiting nature of the avatar technology upon the performer, which she characterises as 'entrapment': Quartley is held in the constricting embrace of the motion capture suit just as Ariel is held in the cloven pine before he is freed by Prospero.[39] I am interested, however, in the effects of the technical problems upon the audience. When I saw this production, I found it visually spectacular but not particularly emotionally engaging. Aebischer's use of the term 'smooth' is apt here: when the technology functions as it should, the result is glossy but uninteresting. The glitches that the avatar undergoes produce something far more jagged and disruptive and, crucially, more live. As when an actor breaks character, the breakdown of the technology allows the audience to witness the recovery – or not – of the performance, as the issue is solved in real time.

In *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice: Critical Failures and Post-Digital Aesthetics*, Michael Betancourt develops a theory of critical media that uses the concept of the glitch as a case study in what goes into producing a twenty-first-century framework. Glitch art uses glitches in primarily visual pieces to question the production of art, with artists often manufacturing their own malfunctions. Betancourt for his part is interested in the materiality – or not – of the digital, claiming that 'the transition to digital capitalism is a dissolution of concerns with physicality and a denial of material basis'.[40] Glitches, he suggests, reveal 'the materiality of media', thereby 'offering the potential for a transition into a critique of digital capitalism' and 'a refusal of mystification'. 'Mystification' in this sense, as with Aebischer's 'smooth'ness, seems an apt term again for the RSC's collaboration with Intel and Imaginarium. When the avatar technology functions 'normally', it is capable of generating a

[38] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 132.
[39] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 131.
[40] Michael Betancourt, *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice: Critical Failures and Post-Digital Aesthetics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 8.

sense of mystery. When it glitches, however, producing ridiculous distorted versions of the harpy, it becomes darkly comic. *The Tempest* itself moves towards demystification, too. Early on, we see Prospero wielding considerable power over the other inhabitants of the island, including his own daughter. At the conclusion of the play, however, he divests himself of his abilities, breaking his staff and inviting the audience's indulgence in a poignant epilogue.

Betancourt's analysis of the glitch as a means to draw attention to materiality aligns well with Bakhtin's concept of eventness. A glitch in avatar technology is a vivid instance of the 'once-occurrent event of Being' Bakhtin singles out: 'something that *is*, something that is being actually and inescapably accomplished through me and others'.[41] Layered on top of the eventness of live theatre, a glitch becomes an easily identifiable once-occurrent event: the glitch is unique and non-repeatable, because it is produced by an error in the technology which the theatre company are attempting to avoid. The glitch as a moment in the production also follows Bakhtin's definition of 'something that is being actually and inescapably accomplished through me and others', thanks to its presence in the theatre event. The error comes about because of Quartley's interaction with the avatar technology, and is witnessed by the audience, as well as Quartley's fellow actors: in the harpy scene, Ariel is attempting to scare off Antonio and the other Milanese courtiers. When the glitch occurs, the performers bear witness to the technological issue, and must react accordingly, continuing the scene to maintain the performance. The glitch draws attention to the materiality and, crucially, the vulnerability of performance: it becomes clear that the illusion created by the company, with or without technology, is immensely fragile.

Prospero's epilogue lays bare this contract between audience and performer. In the speech, he asks to be set free from the island: 'As you from crimes would pardon'd be,/ Let

[41] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 12.

your indulgence set me free'.[42] He describes his situation now that he has given up his powers on the island, lamenting 'Now my charms are all o'erthrown,/ And what strength I have's mine own ,/ Which is most faint'. Unless the audience helps him at this critical juncture, 'my project fails,/ Which was to please'. This soliloquy is the only point in the play at which Prospero addresses himself directly to the spectators, and it is important that he does so in order to disclose his own vulnerability. Shakespeare draws attention, once again, to the collaboration needed from the audience: without them, he suggests, theatre does not exist. Mishaps such as the glitches that occurred during the RSC's *Tempest* break the spell woven by the company onstage, but the breaking of the spell draws attention to its magic. This magic is not like that of cinema and television: if a technical glitch were to take place during a film or television show, its effects would be nothing like that of a live mistake during a play. The film or show would simply be paused, to be easily resumed once the problem were rectified, or another take would be captured and used in the final edited piece. In the theatre, however, the error must be recovered from, bringing the audience and performers together in acknowledgement of the risky nature of live performance and foregrounding the indulgence it requires from both parties.

The Wooster Group's *Hamlet* (2007)

The Wooster Group was formed in 1975 by Elizabeth LeCompte. LeCompte joined Richard Schechner's Performance Group as an assistant director in 1970 but began developing an aesthetic that departed from Schechner's 'more ritualistic and psychologically based style', from which the Wooster Group emerged.[43] Her work looks to 'position the performer within a shifting array of frameworks in which autobiography, found materials, documentary and fictional texts, improvised and reconstructed action sat within what she has sometimes called

[42] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Epilogue. 18-19.
[43] Andrew Quick, *The Wooster Group Work Book* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), p. 9.

an overarching 'architectonic' structure'. The production of *Hamlet* I consider in this section has the Group's actors reproduce John Gielgud's 1964 film of the play starring Richard Burton. Gielgud's film recorded a live performance of the 1964 Broadway production, with seventeen cameras shooting from different angles. Billing itself as 'Theatrofilm', the result was screened for only two days in almost 1000 venues across the US, with the aim of producing a communal experience for viewers. The Wooster Group says that they attempt 'to reverse the process, reconstructing a hypothetical theatre piece from the fragmentary evidence of the edited film', channelling 'the ghost of the legendary 1964 performance' and 'descending into a kind of madness, intentionally replacing our own spirit with the spirit of another'.[44]

In 2006, the Group premiered *Hamlet* at Festival Grec in Barcelona, and the production made its North American debut at St Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn in 2007. In 2009, LeCompte, Kate Valk, and Ari Fliakos discussed the work at the Gdansk Festival. Maria Shvetsova, chairing the conversation, noted accurately that:

> it is difficult to speak of a definitive version of a Wooster Group production, since, for the company, it is always a matter of ongoing work, of work always in process – not in progress, but in process – and of always doing work that is being checked and balanced and re-examined, and constantly renewed.[45]

The technology used in the Wooster Group's *Hamlet* elevates a sense of 'process' to the forefront of the production. Shvetsova notes, for instance, a previous conversation with LeCompte, in which 'we talked about the way in which you used technology to keep the actors constantly alert and alive; the way in which there is a sense of risk and the risk of failing on the stage'. In this sense, the production stands in marked contrast to the RSC's

[44] The Wooster Group, <http://thewoostergroup.org/hamlet> [accessed 23 March 2021].
[45] Elizabeth LeCompte, Kate Valk, Ari Fliakos, and Maria Shvetsova, 'A Conversation on The Wooster Group's *Hamlet*', *New Theatre Quarterly* 29:2 (2013), p. 121.

Tempest. Problems with cutting-edge technology added to the sense of liveness in *The Tempest,* but only inadvertently, whereas the Wooster Group deliberately leans into the riskiness of incorporating extra technology onstage in order to expand upon and question the nature of liveness.

For LeCompte, 'the impulse to do the piece came originally from Scott [Shepherd] because he wanted to play Hamlet', with Valk adding that he 'had been memorising all the various Quartos and the Folio of *Hamlet* on his own'. Shepherd is no stranger to such feats of memorisation: in *Gatz,* which I discussed briefly in the previous chapter, he reads the entirety of *The Great Gatsby* in a marathon eight-hour performance. LeCompte gives various reasons for choosing to use the Gielgud *Hamlet* film, noting that Burton's involvement 'was probably the first time that a big movie star did a Broadway Shakespeare' and citing the production as having 'changed Broadway for us' as well as 'all of acting in America'. LeCompte's views on the filming of the production are complex: she maintains that 'this film… had nothing to do with what I remembered of the production', characterises film and theatre 'as two different mediums', and insists 'that it [the stage production] had been filmed in order to carry on the idea of the production was terrible for me'. Valk suggests that 'it's a third thing that's made when we imitate those performances from the past and we're in the present, and we're dealing with each other on stage'. The Wooster Group's concerns, then, are not necessarily to do with the crossover of film and theatre, as will be the case for some of the productions I discuss in the third section of this chapter, but rather with performance archives and liveness. LeCompte's feelings about the recording of the production she so loved bear comparison with Phelan's comments on performance becoming 'other' once it has been saved or documented: it no longer exists as true performance.

There are moments in the Wooster Group *Hamlet* that appear to be errors on the part of the actors or technicians who edit the Burton film in real time as the performance

progresses. Shvetsova remarks on these apparent mistakes in her conversation with LeCompte, Valk, and Fliakos: 'last night I noticed that Scott Shepherd said 'Cut the Ophelia stuff' or 'Let's go to the book', or he would give the technicians a kind of instruction on how to fast-forward'.[46] LeCompte explains that this 'direction', as Shvetsova terms it, is not to do with the style of the show but rather is 'pragmatic, because, in making a piece, there are so many elements that have to come together in that moment that I have to depend on everybody being able to improvise off of one idea'. LeCompte also observes that some such moments have become part of the fabric of the production. For example, Shepherd now says 'Skip to the book' every night, so that the line becomes what she calls a 'vestigial direction'. Fliakos adds that this flexibility functions as 'an eject button for us, so, if we messed up and forgot a line, we could have the technicians rewind so that we could do it again'. The night before the discussion recorded in the article, LeCompte notes that the technicians made a mistake that resulted in some of Shepherd's favourite lines being skipped, so he had the technicians rewind the film so that he could deliver them.

The Wooster Group, then, have a much more organic relationship with the technology used in *Hamlet* than that of the RSC with the Ariel avatar in *The Tempest*. LeCompte accepts that 'mistakes are made and, when the mistakes are made, we like to use them as some kind of impulse towards something unexpected'. Nor are the actors in *Hamlet* always the driving force of these mistakes: Shvetsova observes that 'the technicians, to keep the actors alert and alive, quite often fast-forward or rewind a tape so that the actors are, in fact, taken off their guard and have to do something that they might not be expected to do'. This kind of process is more akin to Betancourt's description of glitch art, where the errors themselves are the point of the artistic production, than to the RSC's relationship to the motion capture technology in *The Tempest*. The Wooster Group look to generate liveness via mistakes, with

[46] LeCompte et al, 'A Conversation on The Wooster Group's *Hamlet*', p. 122.

the company working as a whole, actors and technicians together, to test each other and push the performance forward in the search for the live event and its risks. As Aebischer notes in her discussion of the RSC *Tempest*, the production appears to possess a smooth surface, with jagged gaps in this surface produced by the avatar errors. Transposing this description to the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, it seems that jaggedness is what the company are aiming for, because they understand and welcome the inherent interest of performance errors: such unpredictable mistakes draw attention to liveness.

The two companies' different approaches can be readily discerned in records of the communication in each case between performers and technicians. When I considered the RSC's difficulties with the *Tempest* avatar, I looked at the show reports that Aebischer quotes from in *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*. Show reports typically recount noteworthy incidents from a particular performance in the production's run, as well as what has been done to rectify any issues. In the descriptions of the physical deformities in the avatar produced when Quartley's motion capture suit glitched, the blame seems to be laid at the actor's feet: 'Mr Quartley [was]… moving/holding himself in a different way which isn't good for the Harpy avatar'.[47] Quartley and the avatar are characterised here as two separate entities, rather than one performer working with the aid of the technology to produce a single character – even if that character appears in different iterations onstage. Shepherd, by contrast, is in dialogue with the technicians during the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*. While he might tell them to 'Skip to the book' every performance or react to a technical mistake by instructing them to rewind the film so that he can deliver certain lines he particularly likes, they also, as Shvetsova comments, have the power to surprise the actors by fast forwarding or slowing down, with the aim of keeping the performers thinking on their feet in the moment. In *The Tempest*, Quartley finds himself

[47] Aebischer, *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*, p. 131.

hamstrung by the use of technology, in battle or competition with it. In *Hamlet*, Shepherd's relationship to the technology involved is far more reciprocal and dialogic.

Johan Callens suggests that the Wooster Group's approach to *Hamlet* is in keeping with the play's status as something 'spectral… that has been haunting Western culture for centuries.'[48] *Hamlet*, he says, possesses a cultural significance as 'a compulsive act of mourning', thanks to its memorialisation in both 'the artistic repertoire and scholarly archive'. 'Hamlet's inability to 'let be' is exemplary of art's ambiguous capacity to sublimate traumatic losses by creating 'figments' of those gone'. The Wooster Group's production, then, '*re*-members and *re*-embodies it [the film of Gielgud's *Hamlet*], while also staging the inevitable split between the copy and the ever-absent original'. I would argue that it is this split between copy and original that the production is interested in; not so much Shakespeare's play as the nature of theatre itself. As Callens points out, 'reconstruction, or reenactment, has been a standard practice for LeCompte', with the Wooster Group using this kind of practice in order 'to counter any psychological identification with their dramatic parts'. Liveness, then, means something very different for this company: they look to investigate performance as a mode rather than exploring the text they are working from, as we might expect at other organisations such as the RSC and the Globe for whom the playwright, Shakespeare, is of the utmost importance.

Callens notes briefly that 'all copies [of the Gielgud film] were meant to be destroyed after the nationwide showings on two consecutive nights', rendering viewings of the film more exclusive in an attempt to recreate the eventness of performance. Callens characterises this destruction as a conscription of 'the newer medium into the service of the older' and draws a comparison with Gielgud and Burton's relationship, as well as the latter's status in

[48] Johan Callens, 'The Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, According to the True, Original Copies', *Theatre Journal* 61:4 (2009), p. 539.

theatre and film. Gielgud's production can be seen to 'publicly transfer[red] the title of preeminent Hamlet performer from one generation to the next', inscribed in the production 'by Gielgud's playing the voice of Hamlet Senior to Burton's Hamlet'. For Callens, this establishment of performance genealogy was 'overdue', given that 'Burton's lucrative Hollywood commitments not only interfered with, but already remediated, any conception one may have had of his less remunerative theatre career'. Burton's Hamlet thus becomes not 'a means of 'maintaining' his craft', but of ''restoring' or recovering it from the onslaughts of the movie industry'. In this way, Callens observes various dynamics at work: that of recording and liveness, of actorly legacies, and of competing kinds of performance, on film and onstage. The Wooster Group engage with all of these dynamics, looking to recreate a recorded object that was supposedly destroyed in order to delete its non-liveness, with Scott Shepherd added to the pantheon of stage Hamlets, and with cinema and theatre brought together, albeit uneasily.

Callens quotes Heminges and Condell's assertion from the 1623 Folio that the plays contained within it are reproduced 'after the True, Originall Copies' in the title of his article. He suggests that Heminges and Condell 'should have known better', citing Joseph Roach on the actor in performance who 'surrogates', standing in 'for an elusive entity that it is not'. Roach maintains that performance must 'vainly aspire both to embody and to replace [the elusive entity that it is not].'[49] The Wooster Group's *Hamlet* does not exist in the same kind of space, however, as Heminges and Condell's folio and Roach's definition of performance. The Wooster Group reaches after reproduction of the Gielgud *Hamlet*, yes, but makes this reaching after explicit by playing the film onstage alongside the actors attempting to recreate it. There is no suggestion in the Wooster Group's performance that they are able to approach

[49] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 3.

the truth of Gielgud and Burton's *Hamlet*, or of *Hamlet* as a text in whatever form. They do not claim authenticity, as Heminges and Condell attempt to in their prefatory material, and they are very clear that they are offering what Roach describes 'a substitute for something else that preexists it'. Putting the film onstage alongside the actors lays bare the imperfect reproduction that is bodied forth onstage in every performance of the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*.

LeCompte herself describes the making of the production as 'a puzzle where I was putting together my memory and these little shards of something that I had seen', having experienced Gielgud's production on Broadway at the time.[50] She also discusses her excitement at seeing Elizabeth Taylor after the performance, 'wearing a beautiful pink hat', and notes that she 'identified immediately with her' because they shared a first name. Developed from Scott Shepherd's interest in performing *Hamlet* too, so much so that he began to rehearse parts of the play informally with other company members, we start to see the Wooster Group's production sharing similar concerns to those of Shakespeare's in *Hamlet* itself. These moments of genesis and personal preoccupations are not unlike the intense familial relationships that form the heart of the play, in particular those associated with memory and mourning. Ultimately, *Hamlet* forms a portrait of two families undergoing grieving processes: Old Hamlet's loss is keenly felt at the beginning of the play, and Polonius' absence begins to make itself felt in the latter half of the piece. As Callens indicates, the Wooster Group is interested in bridging moments, bringing together recording and live, film and theatre, Gielgud and Burton, and memory and archive. They look at the ways in which these seeming dichotomies are brought together but also at how they often rub up against each other and create something fascinating in between.

[50] LeCompte et al, p. 124.

Thomas Cartelli suggests that the Wooster Group 'doubly displaces the 1964 *Hamlet*…*making* ghosts of the actors it sets out to channel'.[51] He reads the production as 'structurally, if not designedly, parodic despite the reverential claims advanced about the performance in the programme notes'. In the notes, the Wooster Group present their work as 'an archaeological excursion into America's cultural past' in which they are 'reconstructing a hypothetical theatre piece from the fragmentary evidence of the edited film, like an archaeologist inferring an improbably temple from a collection of ruins'. They claim that in performance they 'descend[s] into a kind of madness, intentionally replacing its own [the Group's] own spirit with the spirit of another'. Cartelli notes the extent, however, to which the Group have manipulated their source text, citing a technical note from the programme which indicates that the film they show onstage 'has been 'digitally re-edited… so that the lines of verse, which were spoken freely in the 1964 production, are delivered according to the original poetic metre'. Cartelli positions this editing as giving the Group the opportunity 'to displace, enter into, colonise, speak over and re-inhabit' Colleran's film. LeCompte's company re-impose an adherence to Shakespeare's verse that does not exist in Burton's performance.

In Chapter Three, I discussed Ivo van Hove's use of manipulated video in his *Roman Tragedies*. Van Hove cuts together separate shots in order to misrepresent the proximity of the actors onstage, bringing Antony and Cleopatra close together onscreen when they are in fact at a distance onstage, for example. Unlike the Wooster Group, van Hove provides no explanation for his manipulation of the images: the audience, however, is able to see the difference between the actors onstage and the video projected on the screens onstage. If an audience member, by contrast, were to miss the technical note in the Wooster Group's

[51] Thomas Cartelli, 'Channelling the ghosts: The Wooster Group's remediation of the 1964 Electronovision *Hamlet*', *Shakespeare Survey* 61 (2008), p. 150.

programme, they would not know about the changes made to the Gielgud film to give a sense of the verse of *Hamlet*. In my discussion of *Roman Tragedies*, I questioned where the power lay in the production: with the director, van Hove, or with the actors, thanks to the seemingly improvisatory nature of certain sequences of the plays. As Cartelli notes above, a similar discussion of power can be undertaken with regard to the Wooster Group *Hamlet*. The Group claim to be possessed, as it were, by the spirit of the Burton production, but their interventionist approach to the film seems to suggest something else. And these interventions return us to the question of liveness, with which this chapter is preoccupied: if the Colleran film is re-edited and transformed in performance, is the Group's apparent recreation of it much more live than it might appear at first?

W. B. Worthen sees yet another relationship at work in the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*. His analysis draws on Diana Taylor's work in *The Archive and the Repertoire* regarding the ''constant state of interaction' between the cultural '*archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones),' and the *repertoire* of performance practices, 'embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing… those acts usually though of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge', as well as Hans-Thies Lehmann's juxtaposition of '*dramatic theatre* and *postdramatic theatre*'.[52] The proliferation of productions that use what Worthen calls 'live-recorded performance' alongside performers onstage necessitates, he suggests, 'an urgent contemporary inquiry into the stakes of performance 'presence'.'[53] He reads the Wooster Group's efforts in *Hamlet* as an exploration of 'the reciprocity of archive and repertoire, in part by exercising one of the foundational notions of contemporary performance theory, 'restored behaviour,' and applying it to the interrogation of dramatic performance in information culture'. Crucially for my analysis,

[52] W. B. Worthen, '*Hamlet* at Ground Zero: The Wooster Group and the Archive of Performance', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59:3 (2008), p. 305-6.
[53] It is worth noting that this article was published in 2008: since then, live and live-recorded performances have become even more prevalent, with directors such as van Hove achieving mainstream recognition.

Worthen characterises the Wooster Group's *Hamlet* as 'a complete performance, staging a live *Hamlet* in dialogue with the Burton film from beginning to end.'

Bakhtin's definition of eventness has dialogism at its heart. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin states that everything 'is always given in conjunction with another given that is connected with those objects and relations'.[54] By staging the interaction between their production and that of Gielgud and Burton, the Wooster Group make this relationship clear. As Cartelli has noted, each *Hamlet* performed becomes a mark in the performance record of the play, intimately connected with each production that has come before. Bakhtin's argument against finalisation can be invoked here: 'an object that is absolutely indifferent, totally finished, cannot be something one becomes actually conscious of, something one experiences actually'.[55] Using Gielgud's *Hamlet* film makes this concept of eventness clear. The Wooster Group *Hamlet* is always operating in dialogue with Gielgud and Burton, as well as myriad other spectral productions. As Bakhtin says, 'the object enters into relation with that which is to-be-achieved, grows in it – within my relationship to that object'. The Wooster Group's approach to their practice, editing the film live and encouraging actors and technicians to make adjustments in performance ensures that this kind of eventness is always promoted. Each performance of the production grows in relation to performances that have already been given, and the dialogue between the Group and the Colleran, Gielgud, and Burton film remains ongoing, impossible to finalise.

Streaming Shakespeare

In 2009, the National Theatre broadcast Nicholas Hytner's production of *Phèdre*, starring Helen Mirren, to more than fifty thousand people around the world. In 2015, Lyndsey

[54] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 32.
[55] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 32.

Turner's *Hamlet*, with Benedict Cumberbatch in the lead role, brought in a global audience of 225,000. Broadcast performance has undergone a boom in the last decade, and productions of Shakespeare are at the heart of that boom. The National's broadcasts, NT Live, are filmed live in front of a theatre audience and broadcast to cinemas in the UK, Europe, and North America, so that these cinemas can screen the footage, unedited, at a convenient time. They promise audiences 'the best seats in the house', where they are 'part of something much bigger', with 'thousands of other people all around the world watching along with you. Sharing every gasp, every laugh, every dramatic moment'.[56] Other theatres around the world have begun to follow the National's lead in broadcasting their work, and this trend shows no signs of stopping, particularly given the COVID-19 pandemic. As audiences return to theatres in person, questions about liveness or eventness abound, and the value we place upon live experiences is under discussion.

Within Shakespeare studies, work investigating live broadcasting is ongoing. Erin Sullivan provides a helpful summary in her article on 'Shakespeare and the Rise of the Live Broadcast', highlighting Martin Barker, John Wyver, and Alison Stone.[57] Barker's *Live to Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting* thinks about live broadcasts as a genre and their audiences, while Wyver discusses the more technical aspects of streaming Shakespeare to cinemas, and Stone compares productions by the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Since Sullivan's article, *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Broadcast Experience* and *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance* have both appeared in print, the former a collection of essays exploring liveness in broadcast Shakespeare, and the latter more concerned with the audience's experience of technology –

[56] National Theatre Live, <https://www.ntlive.com/about-us/> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[57] Erin Sullivan, ''The forms of things unknown': Shakespeare and the Rise of the Live Broadcast', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 35:4 (2017), p. 628. She cites Martin Barker's *Live to Your Local Cinema: The Remarkable Rise of Livecasting*, Stone's 'Not Making a Movie: The Livecasting of Shakespeare Stage Productions by the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company', and Wyver's ''All the Trimmings?: The Transfer of Theatre to Television in Adaptations of Shakespeare Stagings'.

including performance capture – in contemporary productions.[58] All of the above consider larger questions about liveness before narrowing their focus to examine particular performances, as well as providing an interesting overview of the different ways that streaming is approached by different organisations. They also think carefully about the relationship between the audience and the theatremakers at work, and the role of streaming technology in that relationship.

Martin Barker traces the development of livecasting to the New York Metropolitan Opera in 2006, with their stated aim to reach younger, more diverse audiences in order to revitalise the Opera's work.[59] The National Theatre was the first UK-based organisation to move into livecasting, with *All's Well That Ends Well* amongst its first season of offerings. Barker is interested in the impact livecasting might have on traditional cinema, as well as the cinematic – or less so – techniques that broadcasters use as they capture productions. Pascale Aebischer, amongst others, is useful here in her analysis of the development of directorial sophistication that we see in livecasts.[60] John Wyver, meanwhile, examines television productions of Shakespeare that have been adapted from theatre stagings, classifying them as 'doubled adaptations', an adaptation of an adaptation (the original production onstage).[61] He uses the history of television productions to illuminate livecasting, discussing National Theatre Live's work and RSC Live from Stratford-upon-Avon. Like Barker, he identifies a tension between 'the *theatrical* elements of a broadcast' and '*televisual* and […] *cinematic* elements'. Both critics set up theatre and cinema as disparate, and think about how

[58] *Shakespeare and the 'Live' Broadcast Experience*, eds. Pascale Aebischer, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Laurie Osborne (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018), and Aebischer's *Shakespeare, Spectatorship and the Technologies of Performance*.
[59] Barker, *Live to Your Local Cinema*, p. 3.
[60] Pascale Aebischer, 'Broadcasting a Sinister 'Jacobean' Aesthetic from the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse: Sightlines, Camerawork and Websterian Dramaturgy in Ian Russell's *The Duchess of Malfi* (BBC Four, 2014)', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 37:4 (2019), pp. 511-535.
[61] Wyver, ''All the Trimmings?': The Transfer of Theatre to Television in Adaptations of Shakespeare Stagings', *Adaptation* 7:2 (2014), p. 1.

livecasting exists in the space between the two media. Liveness in theatre and in cinema are different, and work differently upon their audiences. How does streamed Shakespeare in 2021 sit between them?

Shakespeare is often at the forefront of streamed offerings by major theatres. Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan suggest that there is a complex web of influence at the heart of this privileging of Shakespeare, noting that 'the very fact that these Shakespeare institutions [they discuss the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Shakespeare's Globe] exploring modes of digital engagement are all badged by either their national significance, their Shakespearean connection, or both, is telling about the anxiety over authority and hierarchy in a digital sphere that, as we have already shown, disperses authority and upends hierarchies'.[62] They note that 'the 'live' concept is a function of institutional investment', because 'capital investment qualifies the level of risk that can be taken, meaning that the traditional power centres of Shakespearean performance are the ones leading the way, and are doing so by drawing on the bankability of celebrities and Shakespeare'. Carson and Kirwan list the RSC's *Richard II* starring David Tennant, the National Theatre's use of 'stalwarts' including Michelle Terry, Rory Kinnear, Simon Russell Beale, and Adrian Lester, and the foregrounding of stars such as Derek Jacobi and Tom Hiddleston at smaller organisations such as the Donmar Warehouse. As more theatres open after the pandemic, the same pattern is repeated: a case in point might be the Almeida Theatre's recent *Macbeth,* starring Saoirse Ronan and James McArdle, which had a week of its performances livestreamed online around the world.

[62] Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan, 'Conclusion: Digital dreaming' in *Shakespeare and the Digital World: Redefining Scholarship and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 253.

Alison Stone uses James Steichen's term 'institutional dramaturgy' to consider the ways in which organisations place livecasting amongst their work.[63] Steichen defines his formulation as 'the techniques by which […] any institution […] stages itself for the public', going on to suggest that this staging may be conducted 'through the semiosis of marketing and public relations or by more literally engaging in self-documentary in the case of the framing features of the HD broadcasts'.[64] Stone uses the phrase 'announced liveness' to characterise that of the livecasted productions, making it clear that theatres promote the 'live' quality of the broadcasts because that is important or valuable to their audiences. That Shakespeare stands so prominently amongst major theatres' livecasting and streaming efforts indicates the value that is afforded his work, too: organisations understand that productions of Shakespeare plays will bring in an audience, doubly so if an acclaimed actor is featured in a leading role. Benedict Cumberbatch's *Hamlet*, for example, is frequently repeated as an 'Encore' production in NT Live, using the actor's fame from his roles in the BBC's *Sherlock* series and the Marvel film franchise to access a particular set of spectators. Cumberbatch and Tom Hiddleston's casting in the BBC's *Hollow Crown* series between 2012 and 2016 coincided with both actors' rise in popularity and with the advent of streaming: Hiddleston starred in the Donmar's *Coriolanus* which was also produced by NT Live.

National Theatre Live claims that it is 'always the best seat in the house'.[65] They record performances live and broadcast them to cinemas in the UK and around the world, 'with state-of-the-art filming techniques, tailored to every play'. On their website, they emphasise the range of shots they use, 'from close-ups that capture every flicker of emotion, to sweeping wide shots of the stage'. Each performance is shown to broadcast audiences 'as it

[63] Stone, 'The Livecasting of Shakespeare Stage Productions', p. 630.
[64] James Steichen, 'HD Opera: A Love/Hate Story', *The Opera Quarterly* 27:4 (2011), p. 446.
[65] National Theatre Live, <https://www.ntlive.com/about-us/> [accessed 30 March 2021].

happens, in all its glory', and, tellingly, they make a case for the communal aspect of NT Live:

> And you'll be part of something much bigger. There'll be thousands of other people all around the world watching along with you. Sharing every gasp, every laugh, every dramatic moment.
>
> This is theatre for everyone.

When NT Live began, Nicholas Hytner, the artistic director of the National at the time, stated that he encouraged the theatremakers involved in NT Live 'not to think about the broadcast', but to work as if it were any other performance of the production. Sullivan notes that RSC Live and Digital Theatre follow the National's lead, looking to create 'a facsimile of the live performance' as Hytner terms it.[66] Wyver observes too that the stage production has 'primacy' over the broadcast, so that the team working on the broadcast are in service of the stage director and the production itself.[67]

What then for liveness? NT Live productions are recorded live, once-occurrent and never to be repeated, as Bakhtin has it. They are usually recorded in front of an audience in the theatre, too, so the interaction between performer and spectator goes ahead as it would at a non-broadcast performance, but another audience is added to the mix: that at the live broadcast, and at any Encore broadcasts. NT Live exists, then, at a juncture between finalised and unfinalized: the production has been captured live, but its recording has frozen it in time. The broadcast performance is closed off, finalised, even though its run may continue for weeks after the NT Live evening. The relationship between theatremakers and spectators is complicated, too: while directors like Hytner might encourage their actors to perform as if the

[66] Sullivan, 'The form of things unknown', p. 631.
[67] John Wyver, 'Screening the RSC stage: the 2014 *Live from Stratford-upon-Avon* cinema broadcasts', *Shakespeare* 11:3 (2015), p. 293.

cameras are not there, some adjustments are often made, particularly by actors who work in film or television as well as theatre. Actors are then performing for the audience in the theatre as well as the audience around the world, creating a doubled dialogic relationship. At Encore broadcasts, subsequent audiences are confronted with the remnants of a live relationship, rather than being able to engage in a dialogic exchange of their own with the production. It is not the mediation of NT Live as it happens that modulates its liveness but rather the afterlives of the productions broadcast.

During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, several theatres including the National made some of their past productions available for free online, usually as recordings from NT Live or similar programmes. The Schaubühne, whose *Richard III* I discussed in my third chapter, streamed work every evening at first, from as far back in their history as the 1970s. These recordings were made available with subtitles where possible, and were available from 6.30pm German time until midnight, creating a window to watch. They used the video hosting site Vimeo which meant that viewers were able to pause, rewind, and rewatch elements of the productions should they wish. Filming techniques for the shows varied over time, and not all were performed at the Schaubühne itself: the *Hamlet* recording they made available was filmed at Avignon Festival in 2008. Unlike other organisations, including Internationaal Theater Amsterdam, the Schaubühne has not made its work available online following the major lockdowns of the pandemic. Various theatres are continuing to offer streaming tickets for a few performances of their shows, alongside the usual in-person offering. The Young Vic even offers viewers the opportunity to choose their own camera feed during the performance, from a variety of angles around the theatre, or to opt for a director's cut, with the former more closely replicating the fixed view that is offered in-person attendees from their particular seat in the auditorium.

The Schaubühne's lockdown streams bring to mind the Wooster Group's *Hamlet*, although here of course the archival recording of the show is not filtered through interpretation by another group of theatremakers. Instead, the online audience interacts with the material as presented to them online on the theatre's website, perhaps in discussion with other spectators online. Commentary took place on Twitter, for example, during some of the company's more well-known productions, including the *Richard III* starring Eidinger, as well as his earlier *Hamlet*. Again, the productions are finalised, suspended on the night of their recording and, for some of the earlier pieces, presumably without the knowledge that they would be shown again to larger audiences than those looking through the theatre's archive. The Avignon Festival recording of *Hamlet*, by contrast, was shown on the television channel *arte*, which is primarily available in Germany and France, so there would have been some kind of orientation towards a wider audience at this particular performance. In the recording, we see Eidinger make his way into the banked seating in front of the Palais des Papes, rummaging through spectators with a similarly antagonistic manner to that of *Richard III*, which I discussed earlier. The live exchange between actor and in-person audience was clearly at work in Avignon, but this sense of dialogism does not extend through the cameras to spectators at home.

Other theatre companies embraced the shift online during lockdowns and made new work using streaming technology. Creation Theatre adapted their production of *The Tempest*, which was staged in Oxford in summer 2019, to present it on Zoom. Spectators could keep their cameras on, creating a sense of the live audience, and were prompted to participate in certain parts of the show, providing sound effects and participating via the chat function on Zoom. Zoe Seaton, the director, commented on the choice of *The Tempest* for the company's foray into Zoom theatre: 'The best thing to try a new format with was something as robust as

Shakespeare and as strong in terms of narrative and characters'.[68] As at the National and the Schaubühne, Shakespeare is pushed to the forefront as a way to draw audiences in as they experience drama in new ways. Seaton also emphasised the importance of allowing spectators to see each other as well as the production itself, noting that it provided 'that sense of community, that sense that we're all part of the same thing'. At a time when many people were primarily socialising online, an online audience, co-present, seemed a natural extension.

This use of streaming, then, seems to be the closest to the models of liveness or eventness I have been exploring. Most importantly, it is fully live: it is once-occurrent and unrepeatable because of the exchange which takes place between performers and audience members and because it is not recorded. Miriam Gillinson commented on the 'technical glitches' which were present during the performance: 'the sound occasionally drops out, or the 'wrong' piece of action might be highlighted'.[69] These glitches bring to mind the RSC's *Tempest* that I discussed earlier in this chapter, with both productions at the mercy of the technology utilised, but in such a way that liveness becomes all the more apparent to the audience watching – and so that the actors must deal with these problems in the moment, changing and adapting their performances. By making the production fully interactive, which many more traditionally presented performances in theatre are not, Seaton strengthens the bond between performers and spectators, adding Bakhtin's sense of the ought, the responsibility of both parties involved in dialogic exchange, to the mix. Without the contributions of the audience on Zoom, the production would be less effective. Seaton shifts the emphasis of Creation Theatre's work towards, as Sullivan notes in her chapter on co-

[68] Alexis Soloski, 'Is This a Livestream I See Before Me?', *New York Times*, 13 May 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/theater/shakespeare-online.html> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[69] Miriam Gillinson, '*The Tempest* review – interactive online production goes down a storm', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/apr/12/the-tempest-review-interactive-online-zoom> [accessed 30 March 2021].

presence, 'a particular kind of phenomenological experience that foregrounds interactivity and a feeling of togetherness.'[70]

How, then, might theatre continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic? Venues are taking measures to keep attendees and workers safe, with differences across the world. New York's Public Theater require patrons to be fully vaccinated, provide proof of vaccination, and wear a face mask throughout their visit.[71] The Schaubühne similarly require proof of vaccination as well as a mask, use a one-way system around their building, and advertise their refurbished air conditioning and ventilation system.[72] The National Theatre require face masks and again draw attention to their ventilation throughout the venue.[73] All of these theatres are booking at full capacity again, after reopening offering seating with distancing between groups of audience members. None of these precautions put eventness at risk: they allow for the same once-occurrence to take place, and might in fact make audiences more aware of the ephemeral nature of their experiences in the theatre, given the extra care that now has to be put into attending a performance in person. Depending on the nature of the show, masks might put audience interaction in jeopardy, or lessen the sense of exchange that takes place between performer and spectator. Dialogism might become more complex if the company working on the show are required to limit their interactions with each other and the audience.

As I noted above, some theatres have embraced streaming alongside in-person performances. The Almeida broadcast five performances of its recent *Macbeth*, starring Saoirse Ronan and James McArdle, to its website, with viewers asked to spend what they usually would on a theatre ticket, ranging from £15-£40 over the run of performances. These

[70] Sullivan, 'The Audience is Present: Aliveness, Social Media, and the Theatre Broadcast Experience', p. 61.
[71] The Public, <https://info-faqpt.helpscoutdocs.com/article/405-safe-at-the-public> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[72] Schaubühne, <https://www.schaubuehne.de/en/pages/corona-guidelines.html> [accessed 30 March 2021].
[73] National Theatre, https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/welcoming-you-back-safely [accessed 30 March 2021].

streamed shows took place in the middle of the run, 27th-30th October, when the production was on 2nd October to 27th November. The stream was strikingly cinematic, with tight close-ups of the actors and whirling camera movements. So close was the camera to the actors, in fact, that at times it was difficult to tell that the production was taking place on a stage: the Almeida has an instantly recognisable setting, with a curved exposed brick wall at the back of the theatre, but the stream did not make any effort to locate the performance, as other venues sometimes do.[74] These choices lessened the sense of liveness, for me, because the stream seemed too cinematic and too slickly accomplished. Returning to Aebischer's work on the glitches in the RSC *Tempest*, it seems that evidence of human or technological error might be necessary to convince the audience of the once-occurrent event of the production. Placing the streamed performances in the middle of the run, too, necessitates a shift between modes of theatremaking that must have been complex.

Continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside developments in technology, place theatre in a fascinating position moving forward. Live broadcasting to cinemas, which I explored at the beginning of this section, may become obsolete, given the ease of at-home streaming and its proliferation in the last eighteen months. Cinemas provide a more collective experience, increasing audiences' sense of eventness thanks to the possibilities for dialogic exchange amongst spectators attending, but streaming to the home is less effortful for the viewer and, depending on the organisation providing the stream, less expensive. Livestreams allow for greater accessibility, too: I have been able to watch international productions that I would never have seen without companies' streaming initiatives, with subtitles in several languages usually available to be turned on and off as necessary. I suspect that a hybrid model, as provided by the Almeida for their *Macbeth*, may

[74] The National Theatre, for example, uses a helicopter shot that moves across the South Bank towards the theatre in its NT Live broadcasts, clearly locating the site of the production.

become more and more popular, with the majority of performances of a production in-person at the theatre, and some streamed towards the end of the run. Companies are then able to present the best of both worlds: the irreplaceable experience of live performance, taking place in the same room as a group of spectators, as well as live performance beamed to an audience around the world. Bakhtin's eventness is primary via both options: once-occurrent and dialogic.

Conclusion

This thesis proves the worth of Bakhtin as a close reader of Shakespeare and the value of his criticism for thinking about drama. While Bakhtin may have presented himself as a theatrophobe at times in his writing, his engagement with performance is nuanced, and deserves the attention that has been paid to it here. Bakhtin thinks carefully about Shakespeare as a dramatic writer and about theatre more generally, as shown by his consideration of the uses of space in performance and the relationships that are created between theatremakers and their audiences. His exploration of the major tragedies in the *Rabelais* revision notes is illuminating on its own terms as well as providing insight into the rest of his critical work, including his major preoccupations about cycles of human behaviour and the ways in which we relate to each other. The aesthetics of drama I produce in this thesis, incorporating these preoccupations alongside other Bakhtinian critical concepts, speaks to performance across time but more particularly to our current moment as we recover from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Bakhtinian eventness, combined with embodiment and dialogism, form the questions that we are concerned with now: how do we reckon with once-occurrence in a heavily mediated age? How do we create embodied meaning when we have been forced to isolate ourselves physically from each other? How might relationships between artists and their audiences evolve in the twentieth century? This thesis provides a starting point for these kinds of conversations and makes a case for Bakhtin's inclusion in them.

Bakhtin's analyses in the *Rabelais* revision notes encourage the reader to look for motivating patterns in the major tragedies, and to consider their protagonists' arcs as part of the larger fabric of the plays, and of the Shakespearean canon as a whole. Bakhtin's official/unofficial model and his focus on the revelatory moments that characters undergo enables us to compare and contrast Shakespeare's work in the tragedies, demonstrating an

impressive sense of the power conjured by these stories onstage. His understanding of the early modern stage and the comparisons he draws with theatre contemporary to him, while brief, are also important: his comments are unexpected and valuable in the way that they consider drama through time. Less successful in the revision notes is his insistence on readings which distort the plays, particularly *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. His Oedipal *Hamlet* in particular moves away from the characters as Shakespeare writes them and their motivations, but this distance might be interesting in that it demonstrates the way in which *Hamlet* is not like Shakespeare's other tragedies. The difficulties that Bakhtin encounters fitting *Hamlet* into the patterns he is identifying elsewhere teaches us something about the play as it stands in Shakespeare's body of work, avoiding the rise and fall arc which we see in others such as *Richard III* and offering something more complex.

Bakhtin's encounters with theatre in his own lifetime tell a different story from the dismissive comments about drama he produces elsewhere in his work. I hope that the Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama I create in this thesis will be useful to other scholars moving forward, who might consider Bakhtinian readings of performance on a larger scale, expanding and diversifying the work I do here. The areas I focus on provide a way of isolating key ideas in Bakhtin's criticism, and linking them together to prove their worth in performance analysis. Bakhtin's insistence on the omnipresence of dialogic relationships makes it clear that drama must be dialogic: it is in fact the most dialogic of genres, with complex relationships developed between playwrights, theatremakers, and their audiences. Bakhtin's interest in the way that bodies make meaning in space is particularly relevant to modern Shakespeare performance, whether productions make use of cosmic topography and Shakespeare's own chronotopic writing or not. Eventness, finally, weaves together dialogism and embodiment to think about the concretisation of every act we perform as human beings, and how we direct those acts towards other people. The twenty-first-century Shakespeare

productions I chose for the second half of the thesis are examples of the criticism that might be produced via this approach, looking at a range of companies and their explorations of Shakespeare through Bakhtin.

I used these productions of Shakespeare as my starting point because of Bakhtin's engagement with Shakespeare in the *Rabelais* revision notes, but a Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama could be applied much more widely to other playwrights being staged in other time periods. Bakhtin's ideas about author and hero come to the fore when we think about the relationships between playwrights, directors, performers, and their audiences, as made clear in my discussion of van Hove, Rickson, and Ostermeier's work: van Hove stands as the primary artist of *Roman Tragedies*, such is the force of his directorial voice; while Rickson takes an unusually dominant position in his *Hamlet* compared to his usual directorial stance when it comes to staging new writing; and Ostermeier crafts *Richard III* around his star, Lars Eidinger. Each production treats its relationship with the audience differently, with van Hove presenting a sense of dialogism that is at times illusory given his control over the work, Rickson leaving his *Hamlet* open to audience interpretation, and Ostermeier facilitating an antagonistic and explicitly dialogic relationship between Eidinger and his audience. None of these productions are monologic, as Bakhtin says drama can be, but they take different approaches to dialogism in the ways that they are made and performed.

Bakhtin takes a unique and valuable approach to embodiment onstage too: the brevity of his comments in the *Rabelais* revision notes belie their usefulness, and combined with his discussion of carnival environments in the main body of the book, prove extremely interesting for analysis of modern performance. *Sleep No More*, *Elsinore*, the NTS' *Macbeth* and the Globe's *Taming of the Shrew* (2016) were all staged in very different environments, with most discarding cosmic topography, as Bakhtin complains modern theatre does in the *Rabelais* notes. The theatremakers who produced each piece did however think carefully

about the meaning generated by bodies in the spaces they chose to use: Punchdrunk created a divide between performers and their audience through the use of masks, while Lepage and the NTS investigated what a lone actor playing multiple characters might convey. Caroline Byrne's *Shrew* at the Globe, meanwhile, added modern technology to the replica early modern playhouse to create its own topography, with startling and uncomfortable effects for spectators. These productions made a mockery of Bakhtin's claim that theatre must have footlights while carnival has none: they are all able to create collectively understood performance, with a range of uses of lighting. Each production is very clearly oriented towards its addressees, too, adhering to Voloshinov's sense of the concretised word.

Eventness, finally, stands as the key matter of theatre, and is where Bakhtin's work is perhaps most valuable. His distillation of the ephemerality of human existence is extraordinarily pertinent when we think about performance. The last few years have shown us that dialogism may be complicated by technological mediation, and that co-presence may be constructed without physical closeness, but eventness is impossible to replicate, and is the most valued of the three Bakhtinian concepts I explore in the second half of the thesis. The productions I discuss interact with eventness very differently: the RSC unwittingly draw attention to it thanks to the vagaries of the technology they used in their *Tempest*, while the Wooster Group think through its importance and the way that we relate to archival objects like Gielgud's film of Burton's *Hamlet*. The growth of broadcast theatre and streaming in the last two decades poses entirely new questions about the way we interact with performance. As we have grown more accustomed to consuming media while physically separate from each other, it seems that eventness is the final element on which we rely, and which gives that consumption value: sharing in a moment or a series of moments with other people, never to be repeated. Bakhtin may therefore grow in importance as theatre moves forward and reckons with streaming and hybrid performance.

My thesis is only an example of the ways in which scholars of drama and performance might engage with Bakhtin's work. The *Rabelais* revision notes merit further appraisal as a piece of Shakespeare criticism in their own right. The aesthetics of drama I create in my second chapter cannot encompass the entirety of Bakhtin's theoretical writing: I chose dialogism, embodiment, and eventness as useful concepts around which to organise my analysis, but there is room to think about Bakhtin's other ideas in relation to drama. Similarly, the second half of the thesis conducts itself via case studies: the productions I chose to write about make fascinating explorations of Bakhtin's concepts, consciously and unconsciously, but there are many more to which a similar analytical approach would be extremely productive. This analysis need not confine itself to Shakespeare or to the twenty-first century either. Bakhtin himself is fascinated by the way that literature develops over time and at points he approaches that kind of discussion for drama: a chronological study of theatre via Bakhtin, focused particularly on the way that performance spaces have changed over time, would be very valuable.

As live performance advances in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of this thesis will only become more helpful. It is clear that Bakhtin's concerns, formulated almost a century ago, are ours today, as we consider the ways in which we relate to each other and to the art that we make and take so much pleasure in experiencing. As we return from isolation, Bakhtin's ideas about the formation of individual and collective identity have never been more pertinent. The way that we express this identity, too, often via art including theatre, is at the forefront of critical conversations. How are we like each other? How are we different? How do we reckon with a sense of self that is formed by others and by the world around us, and our own answerability? How do we make use of each once-occurrent moment of our lives? A Bakhtinian aesthetics of drama is highly valuable as we move forward in the twenty-first century and continue to produce meaningful and complex dramatic art.

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