Shakespeare, the Middle Ages, and Contemporary Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice

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¹ The straight lines inserted above words in the original manuscript indicate missing letters. Throughout this thesis I have modernised any use of the letter thorn (Þ, þ) to the digraph ‘th’. I retain the original spelling in all other cases, providing modern translations in brackets where the word is particularly obscure.
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E.C.
23rd September 2017
Abstract

This thesis explores the notion that the emergent language of theatre, and more generally of modern culture, has links to much earlier forms of storytelling and an ancient worldview, and raises questions as to how theatre practitioners might best understand and utilise early modes of entertainment and ideologies in the creation of performance work today. It examines the emergence and history of theatrical performance in Britain, with particular focus on how medieval ideologies and theatrical forms were absorbed into the practices of the first professional theatres in the early modern age, using Shakespeare’s work as a core example. Further, it uncovers and interrogates, through practice, links between performance approaches today and the ritual roots of native theatrical tradition: links which have been largely lost in Britain and much of the Western world, but which still exist in certain other cultures.

The thesis includes analysis of how Shakespeare’s medieval inheritance shaped the drama he created, and demonstrates (through practice-based research) how a practical, psychosomatic understanding of residual as well as emergent modes in the plays can not only benefit practitioners seeking to stage Shakespeare’s work for today’s audiences, but also provide inspiration for the creation of new work. This research has practice as its core: drawing directly on my own theatre work, and exploring an alternative kind of ‘knowing’ through the body. It relates current trends in modern theatre practice (the immersive, the psychosomatic, the multisensory, the site-specific and so on) to the ritual, amalgamative, communal and visceral modes of early performance, interrogating particular elements such as mankind’s position in the universe, time and space, language and the body, universality versus specificity, and ritual behaviour in performance.

The work concludes that the ritual, embodied, hierophanic and communal mode of medieval performance is not only what practitioners today are searching for in their experimental practice and in the intercultural engagement with other (ritualised) cultures, but also presents a way of understanding and dealing with the traumas and anxieties of society that is efficacious and malleable to any period in human history, and is especially relevant to times of great change and upheaval, such as both the early modern age of Shakespeare and our own time.

E.C.
23rd September 2017
Introduction and Research Methodologies

This thesis explores the fragmented state of our native theatrical and cultural inheritance in the theatre capital of the world. British theatrical tradition has widespread international cultural influence, particularly through the enduring legacy of William Shakespeare and early modern theatre. However, there is a sense that we have largely lost touch with the earliest of our theatrical roots in a quest always to be reinventing, innovating, and pioneering. The storytelling instinct in all cultures is born from ritual, communal and archetypal forms, and the importance of these forms has been clear not only to theatre practitioners and writers including Jerzy Grotowski, Henrik Ibsen, Antonin Artaud and Tadashi Suzuki, but also to philosophers, psychoanalysts, anthropologists, and cognitive scientists.²

It is this tension between old and new that the following chapters will explore. In approaching this subject, a useful model is provided by Raymond Williams’ account of culture. Williams argues that there are dominant, residual and emergent parts to any culture, explaining in depth the functioning of the residual and the emergent. Residual culture (which Williams clearly distinguishes from the ‘archaic’) consists of ancient practices which still have an active influence on cultural processes ‘as an effective element of the present’.³ Emergent culture occurs where ‘new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created’.⁴ Williams offers a dynamic view of culture as a complex construction, full of tension between old and new ideas and structures, with meanings and practices continually jostling for influence. This can also be likened to Clifford Geertz’ semiotic view of culture:

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² For example, anthropologist Clifford Geertz, mythologist Joseph Campbell, and psychoanalyst Carl Jung.
⁴ Williams, p. 123.
Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expression on their surface enigmatical.\(^5\)

In both Williams’ and Geertz’ view, culture is regarded as a moving target, constantly evolving and building on what has gone before: in need of continual interpretation and reinterpretation, rather than a fixed definition. The webs of significance that Geertz mentions are not spun by man singular, but by man plural: built over centuries of social evolution and formed of residual as well as emergent ideas. Taking this attitude, it is possible to unpick ways in which our native dominant culture (the aspect of culture that we are most aware of) jostles with ideas, practices and approaches which necessarily engage in some way with the paradigms of residual or emergent, and to search for meaning in the webs of significance in which the modern theatre practitioner, actor, and audience member find themselves suspended.

The core theme of my research is the exploration of underlying links (or threads of Geertz’ web) between contemporary performance practice and the ritual roots of our native theatrical tradition in Britain. The interrogation of these ideas is best fulfilled through practice-based research methods, using psychosomatic and embodied approaches. As any theatre artist will comprehend, in honing one’s craft there is a kind of understanding that cannot be readily achieved through intellectual processes but is accessed more directly through the body. John J. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

In this book, Geertz also recommends that to understand, for example, a cathedral, you have to understand not only the generic properties of a cathedral and its materials, but also ‘the specific concepts of the relations among God, man, and architecture that, since they have governed its creation, it consequently embodies’ (p. 51). Similarly, I believe that understanding the ritual roots of theatre practice, which governed the creation of theatrical performance, is important to understanding what it is that theatre in its various forms means to us.
Schranz speaks of the ‘unique “knowing”, which we call “embodiment”’: a type of understanding of action that cannot be cognised or put into words, but which is known somatically. This type of understanding is especially relevant to an exploration of links between early forms of theatre and today’s approaches and techniques, since such connections are not necessarily readily apparent or understood intellectually but – as I will attempt to demonstrate – do (almost subconsciously) underscore creative attempts to make new work.

This research emerged from my interest as a theatre practitioner in looking to the past to provide inspiration, engaging practically with tensions between residual and emergent forms. The approach aims to uncover, explore, and interrogate the existence of a fundamental storytelling instinct that underscores contemporary practice: an instinct which is strongly linked to communal identity, the idea of self in relation to the whole, and a sense of the sacred (in terms of human experience of the world and the self). Communal identity is here taken to mean a shared sense of identity and meaning or purpose between any group of people, and could also be described as ‘shared cultural identity’. Of course, in a globalised and multicultural society this is never simple or straightforward: how might we construct communal identity in a society shared by people of different ethnicities and from other countries with different cultural practices? The difficulties of the concept of identity in modern society is a question tackled by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay in their edited collection of essays titled *Questions of Cultural Identity.* A multicultural melting pot provides both challenges and opportunities for building shared identity: while there are differences between people of different cultural backgrounds which can form barriers to inclusion, by discovering universal ideas, tropes, experiences, and modes of communicating, it is possible to build a strong sense of communal identity in a mixed ethnic or culturally disparate group of people. At the same time, communal identity can also function in an exclusive way: creating shared understanding and a sense of ‘belonging’ by ‘othering’ the

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outsider. The value of heritage in building a communal identity is key: building up the shared ‘webs of significance’ which form culture relies on what has gone before. Communal identity is of course multi-layered and complex, relating the individual experience of the self to the universal experience of the whole. This thesis focuses on the communal identity or ‘shared cultural identity’ that is nurtured and encouraged through a style of storytelling that constantly relates the self to the whole.

I have coined the term ‘historically-responsive’ practice to describe my approach, and have sought to apply it from different perspectives and in different contexts through my professional practice and pedagogy: in workshops, productions, and rehearsals. This thesis suggests that contemporary actors, teachers, and directors could more purposefully integrate ‘historically-responsive’ psychophysical training in their preparation and approaches to creating work, as a counterbalance to approaches through character, psychoanalysis, and intellectual research. As Paul C. Castagno has pointed out in New Playwriting Strategies: Language and Media in the 21st Century, new work is no longer reliably driven by naturalistic characters and realistic plots; actors and practitioners thus need to focus on other structures and approaches. I suggest that rich material for inspiration can be found in recognising the recent repetition of trends in contemporary storytelling that originate from the very roots of theatrical performance, including the non-linear, the psychosomatic, the communal and the symbolic.

The idea of modern practitioners engaging with classical theatre in order to hone their craft is of course a long-standing one: the renowned director Peter Brook, for example, encourages his readers to see Elizabethan theatre as the best example of what practitioners should be striving for today. He writes that Elizabethan drama was able ‘to bring the pattern of events in the outside world, the inner events of complex men isolated as individuals, the vast tug of their fears and aspirations into open conflict’. What Brook does not point out is that this combination of inner and outer, pattern and isolation, individual and general, is symptomatic of an era poised between older medieval modes of thinking and emergent ideas about

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the individual, and that a deeper understanding of this position may practically
benefit theatre practitioners seeking to implement his recommendation of looking
to Elizabethan drama as the golden age of theatre in practice. We could arguably
employ a historically-responsive approach with more awareness and
understanding of the expanse of our theatrical inheritance, looking further back
than the early modern age and viewing medieval dramatic tradition as an
important part of this heritage.

The period of history this research is dealing with is admittedly vast, and the
medieval era is a lengthy and complex period in which hugely substantial changes
and developments occurred. It is important to avoid reductionism, but as this
thesis seeks to demonstrate, there was throughout the early, high, and late Middle
Ages (and into the early modern era) a surprising longevity of certain core ideas
(such as the influence of the Biblical mode and of communal folk traditions), so
much so that the periodisation seems unhelpful at best, and rather misleading at
worst. The language of storytelling that this thesis explores – that which goes
beyond the specific without reducing the particular – is heavily related to the
flexibility of these core ideas to amalgamate the residual and the emergent so
successfully for such a long period of time.

The approach is important to modern actors, too. In most British actor-training
centres there has recently been a renewed focus on holistic and embodied
approaches, on working in different spaces other than the proscenium, on breaking
down barriers between performer and audience member, and on engaging with
narrative through types (such as Lee Strasberg’s animal work, Rudolf Laban’s
system of movement types, known as ‘Efforts’, or work using the four elements as
used by movement teacher Glynn McDonald at the Globe as well as in drama
schools including Oxford School of Speech and Drama). All of these trends reflect
a full-circle movement in British theatrical tradition, returning to a style of
storytelling popular in early theatre.

The connecting thread between the emergence and development of early theatrical
forms in the Middle Ages and the situation of current theatre practice, by which I
seek to better understand potential ways of engaging with both residual and
emergent forms, is the theatre of William Shakespeare. Not only is Shakespeare
arguably the most famous example of a dramatist the popularity of whose work
has had remarkable longevity and an intercultural, cross-continental reach, but the
period in which he wrote is remarkable in itself for the clash of old and new
ideologies.\footnote{Not all playwrights made quite the same use of this: they can provide a useful point of
comparison to the historically-responsive modes of Shakespeare. Ben Jonson’s work, for
example, is, like that of Shakespeare, often seen as intrinsically English, but does not
have the same sense of simultaneous universality. While Jonson utilised early historical
(classical, rather than native medieval) forms a great deal in his work, he was also very
much rooted in the early modern, Elizabethan domestic worldview as well as in his own
book-learning. Jonson’s work is not historically-responsive to the spirit of previous and
emergent ages in the way that Shakespeare’s is. We could view his work in much the
same way that Erich Auerbach has viewed the poetry of Homer in his book \textit{Mimeses: the
Representation of Reality in Western Literature}: as placing the domestic and the
intellectual at the forefront, leaving little room for mystery and universality (in contrast to
the Biblical style of storytelling which influenced the medieval theatre and, in turn, the
work of Shakespeare). Christopher Marlowe, who has often been compared to
Shakespeare, made use of inherited medieval Biblical forms, such as in his inverted
morality play \textit{The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus} (first performed 1592), but
Shakespeare’s attitude was arguably by far the most flexible, proficient, and resourceful in
his blending of residual and emergent and his inventiveness with both these aspects of
culture, producing work which has enjoyed an incredible popularity, simultaneously held
to be intrinsically English while being perceived as powerfully universal.
Erich Auerbach, \textit{Mimeses: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature}, trans.
2003),}

Existing at the point of a tumultuous transition between pre- and
post-Reformation England, the period known as ‘early modern’ moved from a
shared catholic worldview, which had by this point become ingrained in the very
fabric of communal life, to a more fragmented world where different ideas and
influences fought for dominance. The early modern age saw a catalogue of new
developments which have altered the culture and societal structure of this country
forever: including the invention of the printing press, the growth of world travel,
the emergence of a merchant class, and the development of the first professional
theatres (as will be explored in Chapter 1).

As a writer poised between the hierarchical and communal worldview of the
Middle Ages on the one hand, and emergent ideas about humanism and the
individual on the other, Shakespeare presents us with a valuable point of contact between tradition and innovation. He holds an iconic place in our own cultural history, and is seen by many as a mirror for our own time. Because of this, it is often the case that Shakespeare is viewed as a genius inventor, focused on what was ‘emergent’ in the early modern age: whose works are entirely forward-thinking, transcending the time and place in which they were written and speaking directly to the modern mind. However, when taking the dynamic view of culture that Williams provides, the picture becomes more complex. David Wiles and others have pointed out that Elizabethan theatre was itself on the point of transition; it is thus much more accurate (and more useful) to understand Shakespeare as an expert in combining old with new, engaging with earlier ideologies and dramatic traditions to create theatre which speaks beyond the specific and still engages us so powerfully today.

Artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company Michael Boyd, after directing Shakespeare’s *Henry VI Parts 1, 2, and 3* and *Richard III* as a ‘Wars of the Roses tetralogy’ in 2007, spoke of the way that Shakespeare used ‘a last great medieval masterpiece’ (the Henry VI plays) as a ‘mirrored prism’ to disguise a narrative of his own time. Boyd pointed out that while Ben Jonson first called Shakespeare’s work universal, recognising it as ‘not of an age, but for all time’, Shakespeare’s values were simultaneously, like any other author’s, specific to a time and place, a moment in history (in this case exploring the torn nature of the country and of


Theatre director Michael Boyd spoke of the damage done by the image of Shakespeare as the first great modern in his keynote on ‘Shakespeare’s Different Histories’ at *All Together Now? British Theatre After Multiculturalism*, conference at the British Theatre Consortium (2009, University Of Warwick).


individual faith and identity in an era moving abruptly away from unity with Catholic Europe). Shakespeare gives a vivid vision of ideas ‘bashing against’ one another.\textsuperscript{14} The antithesis and jostling of ideas, old and new, create a ‘national narrative’.\textsuperscript{15} As Boyd acknowledges, this is something very different to the linear, logical, rational tradition of Bernard Shaw, for example, and on a professional level Shakespeare is still a shining example for contemporary British theatre \textit{because} and not in spite of the fact that he engages with the medieval, and does not resolve the antithesis between residual and emergent.

\section*{Shakespeare and the Middle Ages}

The physical structure of the Elizabethan stage demonstrates a sense of accord between the early modern and the residual medieval worldviews: ‘surrounded by gallants on the stage and groundlings in the pit, the actor took his stand between the painted heavens and an equally palpable and mediaeval hell’.\textsuperscript{16} There was still a sense of hierarchical ordering and interrelation of macrocosm and microcosm (explored below in Chapter 1):\textsuperscript{17} ‘the early modern mind […] was habitually

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Boyd (2009). Michael Patterson has also pointed out that ‘suspended between the superstitions of the Middle Ages and the impending rationalism of Western Europe, the Elizabethan age contained within it a mass of fruitful contradictions, and its greatest playwright embraced these totally. Thus it is that Shakespeare seems at once so relevant and accessible and as the same time so mysterious and metaphysical’. Patterson, \textit{Peter Stein: Germany’s Leading Theatre Director} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 132.
\item Boyd (2009).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
disposed to conceive of human power in direct relation to divine power’, perceiving causal connections between the human and the celestial. Numerous plays by Shakespeare and others evidence these ideological links: *The Tempest, Julius Caesar, King Lear,* and *Macbeth,* for example, all draw upon the idea that human actions are intrinsically linked with larger phenomena such as storms, and suggest that a divine or supernatural power is involved in earthly events.

The early modern understanding of the physical make-up of the human body itself was similarly influenced by residual ideas. From 1330 onwards, ‘disease’ referred to humoural imbalance. Galen (c. 129-216 AD), drawing on the writings of Hippocrates (c. 460-370 BC) and his son-in-law and student Polybus of Cos (c. 400 BC), famously developed the physiological theory of the four humours: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The system became hugely popular and through translations of Galen’s Greek medical texts into Arabic and, later, Latin, continued to influence medicine until the mid 1700s. Jennifer Vaught points out that ‘the period division between the Middle Ages and early modernity with respect to their overlapping rhetorics of the body is artificial and even misleading’. The continuing influence of Galen’s theory provided a shared rhetoric that is utilised throughout early modern drama and is key to how *dramatis personae* were understood. When approaching early modern characters today, there can be a tendency to view them through our post-Freudian, post-Stanislavskian lens without acknowledging the original driving forces behind the characters. As Caitlin Fahey argues, while critics label Shakespeare’s characters using modern psychological terms (for example, describing Macbeth as

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22 The term ‘character’ is itself, of course, a modern one.
schizophrenic or Hamlet as bipolar), many figures in Shakespeare’s canon display a range of humoural traits. In cases where characters show an overabundance of a particular humour, this aligns them with a particular type of personality, which Elizabethans would have recognised in reference to humoural theory. Therefore, by examining humours we may better comprehend and access in practice the driving forces behind Shakespeare’s characters as well as the early modern understanding of human narratives and experience (a notion explored in depth in Chapter 1).

A recent strand of research in various disciplines has focused on embodied approaches to the phenomenology of perception: including anthropology, performance studies, and psychology. The notion of the phenomenal body, and the challenges in accessing this type of experience, is of great significance to theatre practice and to this thesis. Chapter 3 will examine in more detail the relationship between language, emotion, spirituality and somatic experience in medieval thought, and in relation to subsequent ideologies. Although in medieval drama there is a ‘clearer separation between soul and body, the former being by implication what is real about human life’, both early modern and medieval views ‘incorporate a tension between the attempt to validate the quality of humanity through distancing it from the physical or animal […] and a recognition of the hard reality of human existence as being grounded in the corporeal’. The conflict undergone in striving for an ideal remains throughout the medieval and early modern ages and, although there is arguably a movement towards presenting this in humanistic rather than theocratic terms, there remains an implicit acknowledgement that ‘corporeal existence reduces man to far less’ than a dual


24 For more on how the crossover between cognitive science and phenomenology affects approaches to acting, see Philip Zarilli, A Phenomenology of Acting (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016).

25 Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton, ‘Introduction’ in Grantley and Taunton, pp. 1-10 (p. 4).
spiritual-somatic existence. How this idea has influenced European performance history is unpacked in Chapter 3.

Another shared rhetoric inherited from the Middle Ages, frequently used by early modern dramatists, is that of traditional archetypal figures such as the Everyman, the Hero, the Monarch and the Vice, explored in depth in Chapter 4. Christopher Marlowe makes perhaps the most overt use of this typically morality-play feature in Doctor Faustus, but archetypes appear frequently throughout Renaissance drama. This mode provides a widely understood structure which can then be utilised to a variety of different effects: Marlowe, for example, inverts the morality-play archetype of a sinner who is saved, damning his protagonist at the end of his play. Shakespeare similarly makes particularly effective use of the tradition of archetype. C. L. Barber writes that ‘Shakespeare, in creating characters whom we feel as individuals, does not drop the meaning of the type’. The characters thus work on multiple levels simultaneously: both universal and specific in an instant.

Erich Auerbach has argued that the ideology of an interdependent cosmos and the creatural view of man, evident in Shakespeare’s works, not only stems from the medieval but also, prior to that, from a Biblical rather than a classical style of

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26 Grantley and Taunton, p. 4.


28 See also Ralph Berry, Shakespeare and the Awareness of the Audience (London: Macmillan, 1985) regarding characters who self-consciously assume the role of the Vice: ‘the psychology of the role adapts easily to the dualism of the tradition’ and ‘it seems likely that the development of dramatic style was able to assimilate the traditional Vice’: i.e. by having a character self-consciously modelling his or herself on ‘a stereotype of conduct’ (p. 21). One might think of such gleefully-evil Shakespearean villains as Aaron from Titus Andronicus, Iago from Othello or Richard of Gloucester from Richard III.
However, in Elizabethan drama, ‘the superstructure of the whole has been lost’ and drama now has ‘a specific human action at its centre, [and] derives its unity from that center’. There has thus been a development in the pattern inherited from the medieval era, but, far from this meaning that the influence is lost, the movement demonstrates that it is still of enough consequence to provide a living, changing stimulus. New facets bring a fresh urgency and relevance to the subjects, themes and priorities inherited from the Middle Ages: ‘the dissolution of medieval Christianity […] brings about a dynamic need for self-orientation, a will to trace the secret forces of life. Through this need and will, magic and science, the elemental sphere and the moral and human sphere, become mutually related. An immense system of sympathy seems to pervade the universe’. As Anne Righter explains: ‘like its Elizabethan successor, the mediaeval [sic] stage was a mirror, but it was a glass held up towards the Absolute, reflecting the “age and body of the time” only incidentally’. In this way the Elizabethan dramatists may be said to have built on pre-existing themes and styles, finding new significance in the structures and questions of medieval drama.

Despite the move towards more individualised questioning and away from questions focused on the divine, the traditions and the drama of Christianity remained more influential in the early modern era than other sources of dramatic material. Christianity conceived the problems of humanity in the scriptures in a

Auerbach’s separation of classical from Biblical tradition is useful – as well as potentially misleading. While it is very helpful to consider the Biblical tradition as a powerful influence over medieval and later storytelling in its own right (since it has often been overlooked in favour of discussing the influence of Greek and Roman works), it is also important to acknowledge the huge influence that classical writings and ideas had over the literature and artistic traditions of the Middle Ages in Britain and Europe. However, the integral influence of the Biblical is often missed, and is worth drawing attention to. Chapter 1 (below) discusses in depth the amalgamation of Christian/Biblical and Greek/Classical in medieval ideology.

Auerbach, p. 323.

Auerbach, p. 324.

more exciting and antithetical way than (for example) antiquity, enabling the 
aforementioned perpetual re-rendering of this narrative style. Auerbach describes 
the ways in which the Biblical style of storytelling outweighed the classical in 
terms of influence over medieval and early modern drama, making a case for the 
inmate appeal of the Biblical over the Homeric. Auerbach’s simplified explanation of Biblical versus Homeric gives us a useful 
way of understanding and appreciating the importance of the Christian tradition 
over early storytelling. It also demonstrates the way in which the Biblical style has 
the ability to be reworked, re-rendered, and repositioned in ways which have 
previously not been acknowledged. It is easy for a modern secular society to 
dismiss the Biblical tradition as no longer relevant, without understanding the 
deepth of its influence over early modern as well as modern ways of thinking.

It is important to consider how medieval people initially accessed Biblical 
material: while the Bible wasn’t widely read by laymen it was widely preached, 
albeit quoted in Latin; St Jerome’s fourth-century Latin translation was the most 
widely used version of the Bible, eclipsing the Vetus Latina; by the thirteenth 
century, it was known as the versio vulgata (and today as the Vulgate Bible), the 
‘version commonly-used’. Philosophical works by writers including the early 
Christian theologian Augustine and, in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas 
had a great influence over the development of Christianity in the medieval 
Western world and although the common people (not being able to read or to 
understand Latin, apart from perhaps a smattering of prayers learned by heart) 
would not have had direct access to manuscript tradition, there would be a bleed-
down effect as the iconography and performance traditions of the church were 
affected by current theological debate. Studying the works of contemporary 
philosophers thus gives an insight into the ideologies of medieval culture due to 
the vast influence of the church over the lives and perceptions of medieval people.

33 See Auerbach, pp. 322-24.
Many rituals of the Catholic Church, based around Biblical events, were also inherently dramatic: Baptism, for example, symbolically reflects the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, the Mass re-enacts the Last Supper, and the earliest known instance of liturgical drama, the tenth-century *Quem Quaeritis* trope, shows the enactment of the medieval Easter liturgy by the clergy for the congregation and not only involves ecclesiastics speaking in character but also taking on the physicality of the given role. The dramatic nature of religious ritual is observable in all cultures, not least the Greco-Roman tradition which utilised dramatic performance in their religious festivities. Medieval storytelling (much of it very performative through the oral tradition) also retained influences and tropes from the classical as well as the Biblical: chivalric literature, chronicles, histories, and legends owe much to both traditions.

There was a tension that long remained between the classical/pagan, the English folk/pagan and the Biblical, which gave rise to an amalgamative and contemplative culture. The church absorbed local pagan activities and beliefs, amalgamating them with Christian ideas: belief in an earth mother, for example,

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34 The instructions, for example, include the description of approaching the sepulchre ‘stepping delicately as those who seek something’. See A. M. Nagler, *A Source Book in Theatrical History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), pp. 39-41. Today we would view this description as a stage direction; while this concept did not exist in the same way during the tenth century, it seems clear that the text is giving some form of instruction to the performers in regard to how to enact the story in the most effective and truthful way possible.

35 For example, the classical influences present in the fourteenth-century chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and Æ Grene Knyȝt* are explored in E. L. Risden (ed.), *Sir Gawain and the Classical Tradition: Essays on the Ancient Antecedents* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006). *Sir Gawain and Æ Grene Knyȝt* combines pagan folklore with a Christian message: one example is the Green Knight himself, who is reminiscent of the pagan Green Man, symbol of rebirth, but also can be interpreted as an allusion to Christ. The function of the Green Knight in the narrative is to deal out judgement but also to forgive, and his dual Supernatural/Human status has been likened to the Divine/Human duality of Christ’s nature. See also: Lawrence Besserman, ‘The Idea of the Green Knight’, *ELH*, 53.2 (1986), 219–239.
was easily transitioned into the worship of the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{36} Over time the many festivals in the native calendar became events in the church year, which in turn became an annual drama re-enacting the life of Christ: drawing upon ancient native ideological structures rooted in shared ancestral memory. Other entertainments, such as the Roman games, came to a halt through a clash with Christian ideals. According to the writings of fifth-century bishop Theodoret of Cyrus, an ascetic monk named Telemachus visited Rome and was upset by the cruelty of the gladiatorial games, and so ran into the arena and tried to stop the fighting. The spectators were enraged and stoned the monk to death. Theodoret writes that as a result of this tragic event Emperor Honorius canonised Telemachus and banned the ‘iniquitous spectacles’.\textsuperscript{37} The gradual process of censorship and amalgamation contributed to the survival of the Biblical style of storytelling in a more active way than Auerbach describes: not only was the Biblical style arguably more exciting and appealing to the common people, particularly as the church sought to align Christian festivals with native pagan tradition, but it was also purposefully endorsed by the early Roman Church and later by the medieval Catholic Church.

This process of hegemonic change (discussed further in Chapter 1) is important to the understanding of how ancient rituals, traditions, and ideologies may continue

\textsuperscript{36} Gradual conversion to Christianity occurred in other countries too: ‘archaeologists have identified several finds which support this view of a ‘gradual’ conversion, including a smith’s mould from Trend in Jutland with spaces for the fashioning of a Thor’s hammer amulet alongside two Christian crosses. A number of hammers featuring Christian ornamentation have also been discovered. Most remarkably in Iceland, around the year 1000 AD, mass Christianisation took place as the result of a vote held by the chieftains at the national meeting place, the Althing.’ Brian McMahon, ‘The Vikings: Myths and Misconceptions’, Leszek Gardeła and Carolyne Larrington (eds), Viking Myths and Rituals on the Isle of Man (Nottingham: Centre for the Study of the Viking Age, University of Nottingham, 2014), pp. 12-15 (p. 13).

to have influence long beyond the official disintegration of the religion or belief-
system that first gave rise to them. The early pagan Roman empire as well as the
later Christian Roman church sought to influence the native residents of Britain
and other countries through an amalgamative, all-embracing style of conquering.
The early Roman empire adopted many elements from other cultures, most
notably the gods and religious traditions of the Greeks, and the long-term survival
of the classical Greco-Roman influence is arguably due to this amalgamative
attitude and demonstrated transferability of the ideals of one culture to another.
Although there was a clear ‘othering’ of barbaric states, who were encouraged to
become Roman citizens and embrace a separate state embodying a new,
progressive movement towards civilisation, in practice the Romans were very
tolerant of native religious practices and beliefs in other countries, including
Britain. Similarly, while the Christian tradition also cast heathen peoples as
‘other’, it was successful in integrating native pagan tradition and belief systems
through an organic process of change: Christianising familiar symbols.38 Reading
a range of literary works from the Arthurian tradition, for example, or studying
Anglo-Saxon poetry, can reveal a gradual process of Christianisation which

38 Celtic mythology mentions many cauldron-like artifacts that are almost identical in
properties to the Holy Grail, such as the Pair Dadeni (the Cauldron of Rebirth, of Welsh
origin, first mentioned in Branwen ferch Llŷr, found in the Mabinogion collection) and
the Coire D’Dadga (a sacred cauldron of Irish mythology, one of the four treasures of the
Tuatha De Danann). The first known reference to the Christian Grail was the Tale of the
Fisher King (in Chretien de Troyes’ late-twelfth-century poem Perceval), which seems to
derive from the tale of Bran the Blessed in the Mabinogion. The Mabinogion are a
collection of prose tales from the Welsh early medieval and pre-Christian oral tradition.
The two main source manuscripts are the White Book of Rhydderch (c. 1375) and the Red
Book of Hergest (c. 1400). See The Mabinogion [c. 1300s], trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2008).
seemed to assimilate the old or residual with the new and emerging. It was perhaps even more successful than the Greco-Roman cross-cultural style of conquering.

The amalgamative, all-embracing style of Christianity retained its influence through the centuries and still held force in the age of Shakespeare, whose work is permeated with the ‘ethical wealth’ of the Biblical style. While his characters achieve completion on earth they are still connected to the work of a mysterious ‘Cosmic Poet’. The narratives accommodate both the earthly and the divine, the historical and the supernatural.

As Geraldine Heng points out, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*) shows how ‘in a resourcefully accommodating cultural medium, historical phenomena and fantasy may collide and vanish, each into the other, without explanation or apology, at the precise locations where both can be readily mined to best advantage’. This style of writing, which incorporates chronicle and fantasy, is evident in earlier writings – the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, for example, speaks of *fyrenne dracan* (fiery

39 Towards the end of the twelfth century Arthurian legends focused more on the quest for the Holy Grail, framing the knights as soldiers of Christ. The grail is mentioned first by Chretien de Troyes in his unfinished Arthurian poem *Perceval*, and soon afterwards is given a Christian backstory by French poet Robert de Boron. He describes the grail as the chalice used both at the Last Supper, as well as when Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ at the Crucifixion. His writings influenced later incarnations of the grail story such as the Vulgate Cycle or Lancelot-Grail Cycle and the work of Thomas Malory.

40 Auerbach, p. 324.

41 Auerbach, p. 327.


dragons) terrorising Northumbria in the year 793 – as well as in later examples of British documents similarly focused on depicting the contemporary world: medieval cartographers occasionally illustrated spaces with winged serpents and dragons (such as in the Hereford Mappa Mundi, c.1300). Throughout the lengthy period known as the Middle Ages, the dominant native style of communication demonstrates a vastly ‘accommodating’ attitude, and this is not only in terms of the combination of the historical with the fantastical that Heng describes, but also in the combination of other polar opposites such as high and low, comedy and tragedy: unconstrained by specific conventions of genre unlike the drama stemming from ancient Dionysian rites in Greece, which was bound by the classical unities (as described by Aristotle). Medieval cycle plays demonstrate a great freedom of style: representing the whole history of the world along with prophetic depictions of the future, combining the divine and the human, the high and the low, the tragic and the comical.  

Early modern drama was similarly all-encompassing: ‘accustomed for centuries to a drama of cosmic proportions, to the representation of all time and all space upon the bare boards of the pageant cars, the Elizabethans refused to content themselves with imitations of the shallow, neatly delineated stage of Seneca and Plautus’.

Many of Shakespeare’s plays challenge classical rules of genre, and several (such as A Winter’s Tale and Pericles) utilise time and space in a manner reflecting medieval influence: with narratives spanning decades and a variety of locations. Shakespeare’s powerful combination of the supernatural with the historical or the material features in plays as wide-ranging in theme as Richard III, Pericles, King Lear and Macbeth, often making it difficult for an audience to decide ‘between a

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45 The York crucifixion pageant, for example, powerfully contrasts the comedy of the bumbling executioners with the tragedy and pain of Christ’s sacrifice.

46 Righter, p. 57.
supernatural or human interpretation of events’. In *Macbeth*, characters frequently call upon supernatural forces. Mentally, the play invokes the Christian cosmos, but it ‘can be interpreted either in a Christian mode or in terms of power politics’. To return to the idea of the macrocosm, Shakespeare – by relating the specific (the historical or the human) to the whole (the macrocosm, the Divine or the supernatural) – creates plays that are multi-layered, containing multiple meanings and possibilities of interpretation and understanding. Barber explains: ‘historically, Shakespeare’s drama can be seen as part of the process by which our culture has moved from absolutist modes of thought towards a historical and psychological view of man. But though the Renaissance moment made the tension between a magical and an empirical view of man particularly acute, this pull is of course always present: it is the tension between the heart and the world’. The exploration of this tension arguably gives the dramatic events in early modern plays particular resonance.

This pull of the ‘heart’ is also evident in the way in which early modern culture appropriated certain elements, events and narratives from the Middle Ages and held up a pseudo-medieval picture as an ideal by which to measure their own achievements. This was ‘a period when Englishmen made the strongest attempt […] to realize the impact of a national past on their own life and thought’. As well as there being a sense of the worldview of the Middle Ages permeating early modern thought and creativity, during the Elizabethan era in particular there was a conscious neo-medievalism especially with regard to official, royal and civic occasions. Chivalric events (such as Elizabeth's Accession Day Tilts or the celebrations at Kenilworth for the queen’s visit) in post-Reformation England appealed to people as a replacement for the festivities of the Catholic Church. The pageantry and splendour drew upon the Arthurian ideal: mixing legend, romance,


49 Barber, p. 221.

and classical myth. There was an identification of the Elizabethan golden age with the age of King Arthur. Chivalric idealism also influenced the exploration and conquest of the Americas.\textsuperscript{51} This attitude towards medieval history is apparent in much of the drama of the time, with historical events, characters and themes being utilised for purposes of propaganda and national unification, as evidenced in Shakespeare’s history play tetralogies:\textsuperscript{52} perhaps the most obvious example being the vilification of King Richard III in order to glorify the Tudor household and endorse Queen Elizabeth’s ancestral bloodline. In a time when people made such effort to connect with their national past it is evident that there was a sense of immediacy to be discovered in the presentation and exploration of history. As Phyllis Rackin says in reference to Shakespeare’s \textit{Richard II}, although the play has a ‘formal, ritualistic quality’, it also presents history ‘as current action, a living process that directly involves and implicates the audience’.\textsuperscript{53} She points out the immediacy of the themes for original audiences as evidenced by ‘Queen Elizabeth’s often-quoted comment, “I am Richard II, know ye not that?”; the suppression of the deposition scene during her lifetime [and] the fact that Essex’s followers saw fit to sponsor a performance of \textit{Richard II} on the afternoon before their rebellion’.\textsuperscript{54}

Historical themes were a key source of inspiration for writers of drama throughout the medieval and early modern eras. There was a trend for adopting stories and histories (whether medieval in the early modern period, or Biblical in the Middle

\textsuperscript{51} See Edelman, pp. 43-48.

\textsuperscript{52} Which, although they were not written in chronological order, are often performed as such.


\textsuperscript{54} Rackin, p. 262.

Ages), capturing their spirit without paying particular regard to historical authenticity. Anachronisms were of no concern to the medieval mind, which would visualise events as part of an interconnected and overlapping pattern rather than a linear chronological timeline: in the Mystery Cycles, Biblical characters frequently reference contemporary medieval events. The thirteenth-century medieval picturebook, the Maciejowski Bible, similarly casts Biblical scenes in a contemporary light: showing characters from the Old Testament dressed in medieval clothing and using medieval tools and objects to undertake tasks described in the scriptures. Unlike later paintings, which freeze one moment in life and seek to present it in realistic style, medieval artwork is not only often anachronistic but also polyscenic, depicting a whole life or narrative in one painting, church carving or decoration. Telling stories where the whole narrative is present and interconnected was something that medieval people could decode: a prime example is the powerful medieval sense of Christ’s passion as an eternal sacrifice which is ever-present. This medieval way of storytelling is repetitive and iconographic, allowing thematic links to be made between events: an audience member wandering around York and watching the Mystery Cycles in the various street locations is unlikely to see every pageant presented in chronological order, but this would not matter due to the medieval habit of making links and connections across time: viewing narrative in a thematic and associative rather


The Multiple Stage illustration for the Mystere de la Passion at Valenciennes (1547), for example, shows Jerusalem, Paradise, Limbo, Pilate's Palace, Hell and other times and locations simultaneously: in a polyscnic depiction of Christian chronology. See Nagler, p. 48. The famous Bayeux tapestry (likely commissioned by Bishop Odo and made in England in the 1070s) similarly presents an incredibly complicated and lengthy narrative. Classical Greco-Roman art also employed polyscenic methods of communication, such as the Roman sculpture of Trajan’s Column (first century), as did ancient Buddhist art, such as many sculptures in The Great Stupa at Amaravati, a large Buddhist monument built in south-eastern India between the second century B.C. and the third century A.D. Many early cultures seem to have favoured non-linear modes, particularly in relation to communicating historical and/or religious narratives.
than linear way. Similarly, Shakespeare’s history tetralogies are full of prophecy creation and fulfilment, condensed events, parallel moments across time, and repeating patterns. He mines the powerful themes and issues of the past but does not shy away from anachronistic references or non-historical elements when creating stories and characters (one example being the anachronistically-named character of Pistol in the *Henry IV* plays).

Anachronism is a modern concept, a ‘post-Renaissance understanding of history, of the chronological process of cause and effect’. It was not a concept relevant to medieval dramatists who saw a pattern of divine unity behind the apparent material differences of time and place. This pattern is evidently still influential in the golden age of drama and language development, the renaissance, and both its staying power as a dominant and overarching worldview, as well as the way in which it provides Shakespeare and others with ‘the dynamic throbbing of elemental forces’ and an intricate structure of patterns and associations still present in ancestral memory to work with, suggest that there is huge value in understanding the medieval worldview better. As Hurrell suggests, perhaps ‘we ought to pause and consider whether it is not, rather, our own view of the nature of history which is naïve and theirs sophisticated’.

**Full-Circle: the Re-Emergence of Early Forms**

Scholarship has come a long way from the initial distaste with which the so-called ‘primitive’ theatre of the Middle Ages has been handled to today’s interest in and

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58 Auerbach, p. 328.

59 Hurrell, p. 603.
appreciation of its forms. Over the last century or so, several scholars have noted the previously disregarded links between the theatre of Shakespeare and the theatre of the Middle Ages. This line of scholarship started with E. K. Chambers in the early 1900s and enjoyed a rapid surge of popularity in the mid-to-late-twentieth century with writers including Auerbach, Ralph Berry, Anne Righter, and Glynne Wickham. The attention these writers drew to Shakespeare’s own heritage, rather than the age-old analysis of Shakespeare-as-our-heritage, has been picked up again more recently and explored further by scholars including Helen Cooper in *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*, while the medieval theatre has been explored further in its own right by academics including Philip Butterworth, whose *Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre* came out just as I began this thesis. While these works are each of great interest and use, neither tackles the practical questions that I am primarily interested in. Cooper’s incredibly detailed work deals mainly with literary aspects of medieval plays and literature from which Shakespeare drew influence, such as narrative content and plot devices, while Butterworth writes primarily on the original practices and staging conditions of pre-Shakespearean theatre. He deals with practical questions such as the nature of ‘stage directions’ (so-called today) in medieval manuscripts and the question of whether medieval actors addressed each other (in dialogue) or addressed the audience. My research, in contrast, focuses on ideologies, concepts, narrative forms, and re-capturing a lost style of storytelling, rather than on understanding or recreating medieval performance (or Shakespearean performance, à la the Globe) in the precise way it was originally presented.


E. M. W. Tillyard also famously highlighted the medieval undercurrents of early modern thought in *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Macmillan, 1942).

Over time, scholarship has moved from viewing medieval theatre as a primitive, embryonic version of Renaissance drama (a viewpoint put forward by E.K. Chambers)\(^63\) to appreciating the performance of the Middle Ages in its own right, as well as more positively in relation to Shakespeare and early modern commercial theatre. However, despite this interest in Shakespeare’s medieval heritage, there has been little analysis of the ways in which this language of storytelling, and elements of the worldview that inspired it, have re-emerged much more recently in the performance and understanding of theatrical narrative and, more widely, as a way of processing ideas about the world. Enthusiastic exploration of the relevance of ancient and symbolic forms to life today can be found in the work of literary critics such as Maud Bodkin and Northrop Frye, psychiatrists such as Carl Jung, anthropologists including Felicitas Goodman and Clifford Geertz, and mythologists such as Joseph Campbell, who explores the long survival of archetypal forms and the concept of monomyth – a single form underlying all stories – in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.\(^64\) Drawing on ancient ideas in a similar manner, journalist Christopher Booker has written a book titled *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*, a Jungian-style work demonstrating repeated archetypal patterns in storytelling throughout the ages, and analysing what these patterns might tell us about human psychology.\(^65\) However, much archetypal criticism as employed by scholars like Frye, as well as the Jungian philosophy, have been criticised for – among other things – over-simplification and essentialism. Furthermore, there is a lack of scholarship looking at specific periods and locations in order to understand the origins of storytelling, and how a sense of native storytelling heritage functions in the modern day context in the Western world. For this reason my thesis cites several authors who look at overarching and recurrent patterns in theatre history (spanning beyond the last few centuries), as well as drawing on a plethora of more recent work in a variety of


\(^{65}\) Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (New York: Continuum, 2004).
fields (such as work on psychophysical acting and connections with ancient dramas of other cultures, as well as recent research in the fields of neuroscience and anthropology exploring patterns of human behaviour in relation to ritual, community, narrative and meaning), and seeks to join the dots between these seemingly divergent threads of research.

In looking for an example that demonstrates the renewed tendencies and relevance of early (medieval) ways of thinking, we can turn to Heng’s discussion in *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy*, in which she points out how in the recent aftershock of 11 September 2001 (9/11) new definitions of race have emerged as well as ‘fantasy definitions’ with similarities to the medieval perspective. Before this, the medieval period was seen as ‘pre-political infancy, innocent of racial thinking […] because the master discourse ordering difference’ was religion. Now, however, race is again understood as ‘a thing that can be conferred on an individual by virtue of religious status, or membership in a community of culture, as much as by phenotype’. These modes of thinking – of connecting inner spiritual or cultural influences with external behaviour, and of creating ‘fantasy definitions’ beyond the material, physical or scientific – have been assumed in the recent past to be infantile, and to distance the human mind from the truth and full meaning of an event or concept through simplification.

In viewing medieval ideologies from this standpoint, we would dismiss much of the worldview of the Middle Ages as simplistic and limited. Engaging with historical, political and social events through the archetypal lens of Biblical stories or allegorical romance, for example, might appear to be primitive in understanding compared to our modern viewpoint, but as Heng argues, ‘cultural fantasy does not evade but confronts history’; it ‘engages with lived event, crises and trauma, and conditions of exigency in ways that render intelligible to humans


the incalculable and the incommensurate’. In other words, it gives people an alternate language with which to speak of the unspeakable: whether this be the fiery dragons representing the fear of Viking invasion in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, or the cultural rescue that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s material exemplifies in the aftermath of the First Crusade and the cannibalistic acts in Syria in 1098, or the way in which medieval mystery plays sought to make the invisible visible. Boyd makes a similar point regarding those plays of Shakespeare’s which tackle the period now known as the Wars of the Roses: Shakespeare addresses the problems of a broken post-Reformation nation indirectly yet powerfully through his history plays. Through this technique, Boyd suggests, there emerges a longing for an embodied version of Englishness, a retrieval of our embodied culture: full human presence, communal identity, and the skills of civil discourse and shared behaviour, to address the failure to achieve consensus now. We also feel this longing in the modern age: Shakespeare may be depicting his own broken society trying to move forward, but this is an eternally relevant theme. Whether by creating a ‘national narrative’ through utilising historical material as Shakespeare does here, or doing as Geoffrey of Monmouth and other writers have done and utilising fantastical modes to engage with trauma, the language of storytelling that utilises multiple modes or prisms (such as the antithetical, the fantastical, and the allegorical) in order to engage with the unspeakable and most difficult aspects of human life could thus be seen as one which adds meaning, offering new understanding about a given event or topic.

As in the example given above regarding definitions of race, modes of storytelling (including theatrical performance) can be seen to be coming full-circle in recent years. Even in the medium of film, which generally seeks to employ a certain level of naturalism, ways of storytelling that override the naturalistic seem to be growing in popularity. Films including *Avatar* (2009), *Star Wars* (1977), and *The Lord of the Rings* (2001) go beyond the specific, drawing on larger tropes and

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69 Boyd (2009).
ancient narrative patterns. In the theatre, companies including immersive-theatre company Punchdrunk are producing shows which present free-roaming audiences with narrative patterns and loops of human activity: their 2014 London production, *The Drowned Man*, even presents two parallel stories (virtually identical aside from character gender and location). Their structure is not naturalistic, but allows audiences to find more layers of meaning and understanding within the narrative. Furthermore, while Punchdrunk’s productions create a high level of realism in aspects such as the design of the set, the performance style that they employ is predominantly physical, influenced by archetype: it demonstrates a way of communicating that allows promenade audiences to hook into a storyline midway through, thanks to a non-linear and thematic language of performance. In this way, current theatre trends (particularly regarding companies that are ‘pushing the boundaries’ of traditional theatre practice) bear intriguing similarities to medieval dramatic entertainment. The Mystery Cycles of medieval England, for example, presented wide-ranging storylines to audiences gathering in the streets of cities in ways that drew connections between past and present, communicating on a macrocosmic level rather than just the specific. As much medieval art demonstrates, the medieval

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70 Tolkien, for example, was notably influenced by Icelandic Sagas and by *Beowulf* in writing his books, and combined this epic mode with the local and native context of English rural life. Like in the work of Shakespeare, the combination of native/specific with the universal provides material for a powerful mode of storytelling.

mind understood narrative in a thematic and interconnected manner, rather than a linear and strictly chronological fashion.\textsuperscript{72}

There are even, on occasion, more direct adaptations or reworkings of early material from the Biblical tradition which engage simultaneously with current events. Regarding his cycle of Biblical plays, Steven Berkoff writes that ‘there is something so vital and dynamic about our wonderful Biblical stories, myths or parables that they lend themselves so easily to a modern interpretation. Of course their passion speaks directly to all of us and few of us are immune from the same problems and obsessions’.\textsuperscript{73} In these plays, Berkoff utilises ancient Biblical structures and archetypes to explore particular issues in modern times, specifically inspired by the Israel-Gaza conflict.\textsuperscript{74} More recently, the National Theatre has staged a new version of the medieval morality play \textit{Everyman}, adapted by poet Carol Ann Duffy and starring Chiwetel Ejiofor in the title role.\textsuperscript{75} The production skilfully turned the original play (which warned against a life of sin and immorality in specifically Christian terms) into a moral lesson on the blinkered materialism and individualism of today, a lesson of environmental concern, and a reminder of our own mortality. Both the National and the Globe have each staged

\textsuperscript{72} Some early examples of this polyscenic artistic style can be found in the so-called Augustine Gospels (Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS286), an Italian manuscript of the sixth century, on folio 125r and in the author-portrait of St Luke on folio 129v. Stuart Whatling points out the ‘various ontologies’ and ‘shifting levels of reality’ present for the viewers to decode. Later, ‘in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, manuscript illuminators often used structured groupings of {picture} frames as templates or schemata, by means of which the viewer could short-circuit the task of decoding what realities the various parts of the page belonged to and how they might interrelate’: an example of this style can be found in the Gospels of Henry the Lion (of the Ottonian tradition, made around 1185). Stuart Whatling, \textit{Narrative art in northern Europe, c.1140-1300: A narratological re-appraisal}, PhD Thesis, The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London (March 2010), online at <http://www.medievalart.org.uk/PhD/3_Ontology_of_frames.html> [accessed 4 August 2017].


\textsuperscript{74} See Berkoff, Press Release for \textit{Biblical Tales}, <http://www.stevenberkoff.com/resources_biblical_tales.html> [accessed 1 August 2017].

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Everyman}, dir. Rufus Norris, National Theatre (April 2015).
adaptations of medieval cycle plays, demonstrating that large-scale commercial theatre still sees reason to stage plays drawing on Biblical style and tropes. In cities like York and Coventry, community groups stage large-scale amateur adaptations of the historical Mystery Cycles, drawing large crowds in a communal celebration of their medieval heritage, showing that within communities there is still appreciation of the Biblical style of storytelling: although in the case of the community cycle plays they are presented more as enjoyable, celebratory heritage revivals than as performance exploring contemporary themes through the clash of tradition and innovation (as in Berkoff and the National’s use of Judeo-Christian material).

Despite this full-circle movement, for the most part there remains a lack of conscious engagement with the native tradition from whence these forms originate. While Brook writes about the golden age of theatre and our disconnection with the holy roots of theatrical performance, he avoids delving further back into history than the Elizabethan age for sources of inspiration. He has, however, like many other influential and successful practitioners, taken inspiration from ancient traditions of other cultures: such as in his work on the ancient Indian Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata* and his project in the Sahara desert journeying around remote African villages. Artaud and Grotowski similarly found inspiration within the ritual roots of other cultures’ performance traditions including, for example, Balinese practices. There is a general leaning towards

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the exploration of the oriental when dealing with antique forms, and there has been very little interest in the ancient traditions of occidental cultures. Yet it is important to remember that across cultures, storytelling that arose from ritual practices demonstrates a fundamental sense of connection with both divine and human life and a drive to tackle big questions, dealing with the unspeakable and the invisible.79 Since these ways of thinking go hand-in-hand with the earliest forms of ritual and spiritual behaviour, they are thus pre-organised religion and pre-theatrical performance and in many ways are not, at their most basic level, subject to cultural difference. It has to be noted that every belief-system has its peculiarities unique to that system: ‘any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular’.80 Yet the language of each religion stems from the same root structure. In Britain, these forms of thinking became intrinsic to the rise of theatrical performance through Christian forms, as well as feeding into the rise of performance in other cultures and locations.

While this thesis will touch upon and explore, where relevant, selected examples taken from the traditions of other cultures, these explorations will be focused on making comparison with the experiences of communities that have retained links with their native past, which we in the Western world have largely lost, in order to throw light upon the situation in Britain. As Geertz points out, by pursuing ‘the enlargement of human discourse’ and ‘understanding a people’s culture [this] exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity’.81 There is huge variation in the traditions of different cultures around the world, yet there are potentially valuable lessons to learn from examining practices in countries where there are more connections with early thought, and more of a continued thread of lineage with regard to performance practices. In Britain there is more confusion and disruption: various movements and schisms in history have severed many of the connections with earlier ideologies. Disruption allows innovation and

79 The topic of ritual is explored in more depth in Chapter 5, below.


creativity, but also has resulted in a disconnection: disallowing direct interactions between emergent and residual forms in the way in which some other cultures experience.

Despite this, the myriad of connections that can be found between ‘now’ and ‘then’ suggests that there is a continued relevance of heritage despite the existence of colossal breaks with tradition which we find in the history of this country. How can an understanding of pre-Shakespearean entertainment, as well as of Shakespeare as an expert in combining tradition and innovation, open up potential in the staging of early modern texts, as well as in developing new pieces of work influenced by both residual techniques of storytelling and the modern worldview?

Methodologies: Negotiating a Balance through Practice

Theory is at once a schema that explains practice and something that is embedded in the practice itself... Theory and practice coalesce into praxis... practice informed by theory, theory informed by practice.82

My methodology is interdisciplinary, not only involving a combination of theoretical performance studies and practice-as-research, but also drawing on theories and approaches from the fields of anthropology, philosophy, and historical and cognitive phenomenology. Developments in the field of neuroscience are also relevant; as Victor Jacono points out, ‘exchange with cognitive neuroscience […] throws light upon the complexity of human knowing’: an awareness integral to the living process of actor training and theatre practice.83 Although the term ‘interdisciplinary’ is probably the most apt to describe the methods I have used, with multiple peripheral modes informing the central theatre practice-based research, there are also elements of a transdisciplinary approach, in

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that I seek to alter field-specific approaches by integrating disciplines. The structure of my thesis is non-traditional in the integration of multi-media and the use of a plural, polynarrative structure. I have aimed for a multi-sensory, cross-modal and non-linear form of working, in order to find new ways of framing a phenomenal understanding which is a combination of the intellectual, the subconscious, and the somatic.

The reasoning behind utilising practice-as-research (PaR) methods is my aim to access a somatic knowledge that is not cerebrocentric, asking what can be learned through the body that cannot be fully understood intellectually. In *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor points out that performance is ‘not simply an object of analysis’ but ‘functions as an episteme, a way of knowing’ and transmitting ‘cultural memory and identity’, while asking how we can think about performance in historical terms, how we can access information about this way of knowing, when live performance cannot be captured by archive? The concept of repertoire – of embodied information passed on through patterns of gesture and performance – gives access to performative, phenomenal, and somatic information rather than the discursive information provided by textual archive. This not only expands our view of what ‘knowledge’ is, but also gives the opportunity for a more intimate kind of understanding: by understanding something through our own bodies, phenomenally, subconsciously, psychosomatically, we are arguably closer to this experience or concept than if we hold it up to the light and view it at a distance, intellectually. Taking part in an experience is very different from reading a description of one.

**Practice-as-Research Projects**

As a theatre practitioner working professionally I have a vested interest in how the theories explored here might provide new ways of thinking about professional theatre production. However, since medieval drama was performed by untrained...

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players,\textsuperscript{85} in a manner which we might today term ‘amateur’, it is key that my research engages with theatre on a variety of levels. It is also important to be aware that the boundary between ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ theatre remains blurred. By engaging with performance of various styles and scales I have aimed to find new perspectives on how the interplay between tradition and innovation and the language of theatre is developing in all areas of performance and theatrical entertainment. This section acts as an introduction to the different practical projects and fieldwork I have undertaken which feed into the body of my thesis in varying ways. While I have undertaken focused workshops exploring specific elements of my thesis argument (detailed below), the historically-responsive approach has informed my practice across a range of projects, which will be brought in to the argument where appropriate.

**Professional productions**

My ongoing work as a theatre director has provided opportunities for the exploration of some of the ideas in my thesis. Directing Peter Brook’s *The Man Who* gave opportunity to engage with a fragmentary, non-linear style of narrative.\textsuperscript{86} My ongoing project *Ergo Sum*, which involves immersive multisensory technology, has raised questions about work which prioritises somaticism and accesses emotions and states of being through the body.\textsuperscript{87}

The professional production that is most relevant to this thesis, however, was the *Medieval May Festival*, funded by Arts Council England’s Grants for the Arts and performed at the National Trust’s Brockhampton Estate.\textsuperscript{88} The project involved creating various performances to be shown alongside the activities of re-enactment group Sir John Savile’s Household and musicians The Ledbury Waytes. The festival presented free-roaming audiences with a variety of entertainment

\textsuperscript{85} And often still is, for example in the city of York for their quadrennial Mystery Cycle.

\textsuperscript{86} *The Man Who*, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, the Tristan Bates Theatre (March 2015), Canada Water Culture Centre (April 2014), the Albany Theatre (March 2014).

\textsuperscript{87} For more information see the Ergo Sum project webpage, Pervasive Media Studio, Watershed website \texttt{<http://www.watershed.co.uk/studio/projects/ergo-sum-1> [accessed 14 August 2017].}

\textsuperscript{88} *Medieval May Festival*, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, Brockhampton Estate (May 2014).
drawing on the tradition of medieval May Games and festivities. Barber suggests that the May Games involved ‘the composition of experience in ways which literature and drama could take over’, highlighting their importance in theatrical history. Our rehearsal and performance process explored the relationship between outdoor folk entertainment tradition and the emergence of indoor performance, and through site-specific production aimed to gain a practical and useful insight not merely into the way in which early players may have engaged with their audiences in these settings, but more significantly how modern actors can engage with today’s audiences through this early style of storytelling. I gathered feedback from audiences, participants and collaborators through questionnaires.

One of the key challenges was finding, researching, selecting and recreating material. We presented a range of dramatic entertainments using material from the early medieval to the Tudor periods, exploring the transition from outdoor to indoor playing. In the Middle Ages, Robin Hood was the dominating figure in the May holiday festivities. As well as ballads there was a widespread play and game tradition involving the hero, and a few short play texts survive that probably derive from this style of performance. In our event we used three of these surviving play-texts to create performances including the traditional competition element: *Robin Hood and the Friar*, *Robin Hood and the Potter* (both appended by printer William Copland’s to his edition of *A Mery Geste of Robyn Hoode and of Hys Lyfe*, dated somewhere between 1549 and 1569), and *Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Notyngham* (the earliest extant play text, a twenty-one line dramatic fragment from East Anglia from the late 1400s).

We also included a St George’s pageant: the character’s popularity in the Middle

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89 Barber, p. 18.

90 During my research productions and workshops I obtained permissions from participants to gather feedback and use it in my thesis.

Ages was largely due to crusaders in the Holy Land adopting George as a saint.\textsuperscript{92} Civic pageants ceremoniously employed the Saint George figure, reinforcing social status and hierarchy through processions involving guild members, priests, aldermen, and the city mayor all dressed in their official livery. The pageants would be full of extravagant spectacle and Saint George was commonly depicted fighting a dragon and killing it with a ceremonial sword. Our performance of St George and the Dragon aimed to emulate both the popular stories of George as a military hero as well as the spectacle of the medieval civic pageantry, and included a fire-breathing dragon puppet.

Other outdoor entertainments included displays of chivalry in an Arthurian tournament, May-pole dancing and medieval games. In the banqueting hall we presented the Tudor interlude \textit{Fulgens and Lucre}s by Henry Medwall: the earliest surviving secular play in English, probably first performed at Lambeth Palace in 1497. Courtly performance, while often related to and influenced by the popular performance tradition I am following in this thesis, overlapping with it in many ways, should be acknowledged as a tradition in its own right. From the Tudor interlude to the Elizabethan court masque, elite entertainments arguably maintained more in common with classical modes (\textit{Fulgens and Lucre}s is set in ancient Rome). Courtly entertainments of the medieval and early modern ages are, of course, an important part of the picture; there is undoubtedly a wealth of material related to the historically-responsive to be discovered in studying the courtly entertainments, and my practice and research methodology could easily be

\textsuperscript{92} This adoption of George as saint was not exclusive to England, and was not a straightforward transition. During the fourth century, the veneration of George spread from Syria Palaestina through Lebanon to the rest of the Byzantine Empire. By the fifth century, the veneration of St George had reached the Christian Western Roman Empire and in 494, George was canonised. In England, he was mentioned among the martyrs by Bede in the eighth century, and the \textit{Georgslied}, a version of his legend in Old High German, was written in the late ninth century. The earliest known English dedication to St George is a church at Fordington, Dorset that is mentioned in the will of Alfred the Great [see Samantha Riches, \textit{St. George: Hero, Martyr and Myth} (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), p. 19]. Saint George did not rise to the position of patron saint of England until the 14th century, and he was somewhat obscured by Edward the Confessor, the traditional patron saint of England, for some time.
applied to the courtly tradition. In this thesis, however, elite tradition is discussed only where it is particularly relevant to the popular tradition: where my focus lies. In *Fulgens and Lucre*, Medwall utilises Biblical tradition (such as the Vice figure of earlier morality plays) within a secular story, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, below.

One key learning-process of the May festival project was finding ways of understanding and negotiating the difference between the objectives of re-enactment societies like the group we worked alongside at the Medieval May Festival, and the aims of my research and of my theatre company, Elysium Theatre. Re-enactors place emphasis on historical authenticity and seek to recreate as closely as possible the clothing, crafts, and weapons of a particular era. They generally present a preserved version of history, while Elysium’s work is not seeking to show how things were in the medieval period as exactly and materially as possible, but aims to engage with the spirit of the era, capturing something of

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93 Furthermore, the influence of the court filtered down into popular tradition through mechanisms such as the royal progresses, and the fact that there was intense control and censorship of dramas in the early modern era. Shakespeare, along with other early modern writers, would have had access to court entertainments, as a member of the Chamberlain’s Men, and later, the King’s Men and a regular performer at both Elizabeth’s and (in particular) James I’s court.
the zeitgeist of the time through performance.\textsuperscript{94} This, of course, can only be achieved well if the history itself is understood: it is the difference between aiming for an ‘authentic’ reconstruction of an earlier historical period, versus taking an early text and responding in a historically-informed manner. The latter may allow some freedoms and anachronisms in order to truly engage with a modern audience through the material: emotionally as well as mentally (this can

\textsuperscript{94} It is worth making a note here regarding gender and authenticity. Certain productions from Mark Rylance at the new Globe theatre in London as well as all-male companies such as Propeller theatre have cited authenticity as the reasoning behind male-only casting of Shakespearean drama (despite the fact that lead female roles were played by young boys and not middle-aged men on the early modern stage). Both early modern and medieval drama were predominated by men. Wickham has pointed out that on the medieval stage this was not due to issues of shame but rather opportunity: the transition from liturgical music to Corpus Christi drama took place within the male hierarchy of the church, and trained choristers would have had the best performing voices and stage presence (Wickham, pp. 92-3). Katie Normington has argued that Wickham’s view is incomplete (in her essay ‘Giving Voice to Women: Teaching Feminist Approaches to the Mystery Plays’, \textit{College Literature}, 28.2 (2001), 130-154), but his short discussion of the issue nonetheless does remind us that women were not excluded for reasons beyond the circumstantial (and as Normington points out, they often had unseen input in backstage roles). Women did in fact occasionally take part in performances including \textit{Le Mystere des Trois Doms} in France in 1509, and in the Assumption of the Virgin play at Chester (according to the pre-Reformation Banns). In the early modern age, Puritanical ideas gave a sense of shame to performance which effected the female performer ban on the public stage, but women did perform in private court masques (the first recorded appearance of Anne Boleyn at the Tudor Court was performing in a masque in 1522). Furthermore, Shakespeare wrote such complex and sympathetic female roles, and for most of his career was living and working under the rule of a powerful Queen; there is little doubt that representing and acknowledging the female viewpoint was an important part of his art. In accessing the spirit of early performance today, there seems little excuse to emulate the gender imbalance which was due less to the language of the storytelling and more to lack of opportunity in the medieval era, a continuance of tradition within a patriarchal system, and an emergent sense of shame and control in the early modern age. My practice takes a gender-blind (and colour-blind) approach since it is primarily the powerful universality and paradoxical flexibility of the medieval (and Shakespearean) storytelling style that interests me, not the ‘authentic’ specifics of reconstructing early performance.
also be related to Williams’ description, mentioned above, of the inactive ‘archaic’ versus the active influence of the ‘residual’ in cultural processes).

The exploration of emotion and perception – and the relationship of the objective to the subjective – is thus key to my research. There has recently been an increase in scholarship examining emotions in medieval history, such as the pioneering edited collection *Anger’s Past: the Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*. As Erin Sullivan points out, Friedrich Nietzsche’s nineteenth-century ‘call for a more vivid, probing, and emotional form of history-making’ has prompted in more recent years ‘a great rush finally to tackle Nietzsche’s question head-on, to write a wide-ranging history of emotions’. This field of academic and historical interpretation of emotion (which is itself still relatively new) is still separate to the practical expression and exploration of the medieval mindset: my research will seek to move beyond both the academic attempts to reconstruct medieval experience (through examinations of social structure, ritual, etc.) as well as the material reconstruction of medieval history by utilising each to inform the other. By combining these fields and taking a multifaceted approach, incorporating phenomenological and cultural materialist perspectives, I will explore the

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phenomenal character (and quality or nature, i.e. *qualia*) of medieval, early modern and modern experiences of storytelling.\(^7\)

The difference between the static nature of reconstruction versus the living phenomenal character of the historically-responsive can also be related to traditional versus recent views of ritual practice. As scholars including Margaret Drewal have pointed out, while ritual has previously been viewed as rigid, stereotypic, and unchangeable, living ritual is in fact progressive, transformative, reflexive and fluid.\(^8\) This perception of ritual (as a flexible, amalgamative form drawing on both residual and emergent ideas and structures) is integral to my thesis: while a dead ritual process or theatrical tradition merely reconstructs what is past, a living one utilises the power of inherited forms while being responsive to the current climate. This will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

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\(^7\) It is important to note that modern actors obviously cannot nullify their (or indeed the audience’s) historicity. Brook points out in *The Empty Space* that ‘every work has its own style […] every period has its own style. The moment we try to pinpoint this style we are lost’ (p. 15). In undertaking practice-based research for this thesis it has been important to bear in mind that the aim is not to pinpoint a style of the past (as in historical re-enactment groups, as well as some of the early work of the new Globe in London, whose historical reconstruction of space and staging technique began as an academic exercise), but to engage with the *zeitgeist* or phenomenal quality (as noted above) and relate this to our own experience today, exploring tensions and parallels. Furthermore, as noted by Sarah Peverley in her blog on staging the Chester Noah Play for a modern audience with her group the Liverpool Players, the staging of early material in a flexible style without emphasis on academic reconstruction can nevertheless reveal a lot about ‘the power and appeal of the medieval drama’: she writes that ‘our production was never intended to be an academic exercise to gain insights into early stagecraft, but using the original script and stage directions, and performing outdoors to an audience who were free to move around in close proximity to the actors, nevertheless taught us a great deal’. Elysium’s activities at Brockhampton worked in much the same way. Sarah Peverley, ‘The Chester Noah Play: Directing Silence and Rain’ <https://sarahpeverley.com/2013/05/26/the-chester-noah-play-directing-silence-and-rain/> [accessed 12 August 2017].

Residencies and Fieldwork in Britain and Europe

As well as my own projects, field trips to see the work of other artists and companies has informed my thinking. Material relating to these experiences is woven into the narrative of the thesis where relevant. In 2014 I visited York to witness the modern revival of the medieval mystery plays and see first-hand the way in which the community still engages with this early material. There was a sense that the spectacle of the cycle has diminished since the original performances: while the community effort to organise the event was obvious in the modern recreation, without the pyrotechnics and elaborate displays described in contemporary accounts and the high level of skill that medieval design would most likely have had, the modern revival was missing an integral sense of extravaganza. The sense of shared celebration was diminished by this and also, of course, by the loss of a sense of overarching truth and shared belief in the

99 The original pageants would have displayed the remarkable skill of the guild members involved, demonstrating their extensive training in a specific craft. See Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles: Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 31-33.
Christian message. While the revival of the York cycle is still appreciated and enjoyed by many, the enacting of the material itself (i.e. the scripts) is perhaps not as useful as a source of inspiration for professional practitioners as a deep (somatic, emotional) understanding of the driving forces behind the creation of the cycles.

In May 2016 I took part in a physical theatre residency led by theatre and dance practitioner Sergei Ostrenko, which involved working in a group of 17 international participants for 6 days on a retreat at a monastery in Tuscany, Italy. The course ran from 7.30am until 7pm each day, and involved a mixture of traditional and contemporary techniques and ideas, including Thai Chi (Chuan Chen style), the physical action of Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold’s Biomechanics, and Contact and Structural Improvisation. There were also influences, links, or overlap with Mak Yong, Butoh, Qi Gong, Alexander

100 In watching the 2014 York Mystery Cycle (dir. Deborah Pakkar-Hull) I found that while effort was made towards a serious and doctrinal tone in certain scenes, the lack of spectacle and excellence undermined the potential experience of the sacred/ritual, or a deeper sense of meaning or emotion. Of course, the original cycles were presented by what we would now term ‘amateur’ performers (before the concept of a professional actor existed) and we cannot, as Butterworth has pointed out in his Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre, easily assess the quality or style of the acting in the originals. However, a decree issued by the York authorities in 1476 notes the importance of selecting actors with ‘sufficient’ ‘personne and connyng to the honour of the citie and worship of the saide craftes’, giving instruction to those who would be selecting the actors to avoid ‘insufficiant personnes either in connyng, voice, or personne’. This indicates that some level of skill was expected from those performing (REED: York I, p. 109). Furthermore, there is no doubt that a high level of skill was present in the crafts displayed by the guilds who fashioned the pageant wagons for performance around the medieval city. Spectacle was key to the performances: from the fire and brimstone of doomsday, to the blood effects for the crucifixion, to the mechanisms for raising and lowering divine beings to and from the heavens. The event was not only celebratory but also presented an opportunity for the various guilds to advertise their skills and expertise. Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), Records of Early English Drama: York I (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979).

101 Arts Oasis Residency, dir. Sergei Ostrenko, Monastero Santa Croce (May 2016).
technique, Pilates, Suzuki, Kinetic Environment, Viewpoints, and the work of practitioners Eugenio Barba, Grotowski and Laban. The experience of being at Arts Oasis 2016 related in various ways to my interests exploring the ritual roots of theatre performance across cultures through psychosomatic and embodied approaches. It allowed opportunity to explore ideas surrounding the tension and interplay between residual and emergent ideas (tradition vs. innovation), the relationship between body and mind, and the role of narrative in human cognition through Ostrenko’s method of training.

In December 2016 I was invited to assist on another of Ostrenko’s theatre labs in Styria, Austria, and to present at the annual conference ‘Theatre Between Tradition and Contemporaneity’. This gave opportunity to have dialogue with artists from all over the world including Europe, America, Canada, Mauritius, Egypt and many other places. Presenting some of my thesis’s practical and theoretical material in a part-presentation, part-workshop session to an international, intercultural audience was very useful in exploring the universal and bodily aspects of the work, and revealing cross-cultural links.

Cross-cultural (Eastern) parallels: Bali Research Trip

In seeking a mode of performance that reconnects with the body, speaks universally, and affects us on all levels, not just the intellectual, many European

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102 Utilising Ritual and Archetype in Modern Theatre Practice workshop, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, IUGTE conference Theatre Between Tradition and Contemporaneity, Retzhof Castle, Styria, Austria (December 2016).
practitioners have turned to other cultures for inspiration. Artaud was inspired by Balinese dance when a group of performers visited the Paris Colonial Exposition in 1931, Bertolt Brecht was interested in China’s theatrical traditions, Grotowski drew upon a variety of rituals from cultures including Haitian and Balinese, and his student Eugenio Barba now runs the International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA), an international and multi-cultural laboratory of theatre. With rich experience of various cultures, Grotowski, Barba, Brook and others have worked towards integrating multi-cultural influences to achieve universality of performance. As well as the drive towards universality, twentieth-century experiments reveal the clear fascination of European theatre practitioners with the East. What is this driven by? Beyond a fascination with the exotic, what do rituals and traditions from oriental cultures have to offer European theatre? And if practitioners seek universality, does this elide the sense of exoticism and ‘other’? How does the tension between universal and specific play out in intercultural practice as a potential model for historically-responsive practice?

Work that seeks to cross and transcend cultural divides will run into challenges as well as new possibilities. There is increasing interest in theatre practice in the exploration of what makes different cultures unique, as well as what unites us as human beings. While remaining aware of both the value and the pitfalls of the approach of inter-cultural universality, it seems clear that many Eastern cultures arguably have stronger roots to their practice, utilising tradition in much more overt ways, and that by placing the drive towards engaging with Eastern culture within the context of historically-responsive theatre practice, there may be something to learn in relation to better understanding our own native ritual

103 The cross-cultural aspect is an important part of my thesis in the exploration of shared roots, universality and the possibility that we can have some level of common experience between different cultures (such as Eastern versus Western) and therefore different eras (such as the Middle Ages versus today). In August 2016, invited by an actor I met in Bali (see below), I travelled to Denmark to see a preview of Odin Teatret’s production *The Tree*. Directed by Eugenio Barba, the work brings together performers from across the globe and mixes a variety of languages, styles of performance, and ritualesque traditions. It is an exploration of universality, brought about by a melting pot of interculturality, and sparked some interesting material for discussion in my chapter on archetype (Chapter 4).
heritage and the modern practitioner’s continued search for something beyond the specific. How can an engagement with Balinese, Indian, or Japanese theatrical practice, for example, help European practitioners to understand the spiritual and ritual roots we have lost? And why is it that many practitioners look to a different cultural past than our own for inspiration?

In discussing interculturality, the question of what *humankind* is and what *human culture* is – what unites us, and what makes us unique and different from one another – deserves consideration. Geertz, in ‘The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man’, describes how the uniformitarian view of man declined as the idea of differentiation and the concept of culture grew.104 He cites Dr. Samuel Johnson’s view of Shakespeare, which was that:

> His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world: by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity […]. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.105

While Shakespeare’s characters may indeed speak to us on a universal level, it is undoubtedly the case that his plays also have a particularly English feel to them. No work of art can be detached entirely from its cultural context. Clearly the discussion of humankind versus human culture is not as simple as an ‘either / or’ divide (that is, either humankind are all basically the same, or human nature is a fallacy and every person is simply what their physical and cultural environment

104 Geertz, p. 35.

makes them). Rather, we need to be aware of the complexities and paradoxes involved in relating humanity across divides of time, geography, and/or culture: whether in intercultural artistic projects, in historically-responsive theatre practice, or in anthropological study. Geertz points out how, in modern anthropology, it is difficult to determine what is natural, universal and constant in humankind and what is local, variable, and specific to a particular culture, time period, or geographical location. Of course, ‘almost all complex human behavior is […] the interactive, nonadditive outcome of the two. Our capacity to speak is surely innate; our capacity to speak English is surely cultural’.106

The interaction between universal/innate and specific/cultural is intrinsic to the way we function, so of course is also important to the way we tell stories. Nevertheless, while the two are intertwined they are not interchangeable, and in working interculturally, as the above practitioners have experimented with, one is negotiating these factors continuously: navigating what will or will not be communicable across cultures, always questioning what will work universally, and what is too specific and will be lost in translation. Will a secular English audience connect with the spirituality of Balinese artforms? Will an American audience appreciate the precise tradition of Japanese Noh? Will a Singaporean audience enjoy contemporary British immersive theatre? It is a similar process as that of the historically-responsive approach that I am interested in: the continual negotiation of universal versus specific, and exploration of how the tensions between universal and specific, tradition and innovation provide kindling for inspiring storytelling.

It can be tempting to try to erode differences rather than celebrate and utilise them, embracing tension. Despite our sense of individualism, there is an apparent innate drive towards inclusive universality not only in work of theatre practitioners like Barba and Brook, but also in recent societal and cultural trends. Paul Heelas has described a movement towards an inclusivity of faith and belief, where ‘perennial’ spirituality means that religious exclusivism has become spiritual inclusivism. As Heelas puts it, differentiation has led to ‘dedifferentiation’: religious differences may remain, but are now ‘de-regulated and un-policied’ so that autonomous individuals ‘raid the world, drawing on

106 Geertz, p. 50.
whatever is felt desirable: the religions (perhaps shamanism and Christianity); the religious and the non-religious (perhaps yoga and champagne’).\(^{107}\)

Although the increased prevalence of this kind of activity is apparent to anyone who has noticed the popularity of yoga as a fitness activity, divorced from its spiritual context, the argument that Heelas posits is nonetheless in some ways problematic and not sufficiently developed to neatly fit the argument of this thesis. It is not true, for example, that religions are generally dedifferentiated, de-regulated or unpolicied. Christianity and Islam are still often posited against one another in popular media discourse, and framing Muslim immigrants as ‘other’ is so often done as to become an internationally renowned and deplored rhetorical device. As mentioned in the general Introduction, race has in recent years once again become ‘a thing that can be conferred on an individual by virtue of religious status, or membership in a community of culture, as much as by phenotype’.\(^{108}\) This highlights the way in which racial, spiritual and societal identity are interrelated and are still differentiated, regulated and policied. Any theatrical work engaged across multiple cultures and viewpoints must necessarily negotiate these extreme tensions still existing in our modern world between differentiation and universality.

In June 2016 I travelled to the island of Bali, Indonesia, for a thirty-day research trip. The booming nature of the cultural tourism industry in Bali provides testament to the interest of the West in this particular island. This popularity is arguably not only to do with the exotic colours and sounds of Balinese culture, but also the highly communal nature of society on Bali island. Unlike in some Eastern countries, the Balinese are comparatively very open and inviting when it comes to allowing non-Hindus to take part in rituals, ceremonies and religious events such as blessings, cremation ceremonies, and learning ritual dances. There is a strong sense of social engagement not only within local society but also in relation to the ‘guests’ (how the locals refer to tourists) that visit the island. The town of Ubud, in the uplands, known as a centre for traditional arts and crafts, is a mixture of locals, tourists, travellers, and ex-pats, and despite this, the continuing importance


of the religion to the locals, as well as the thriving of cultural tourism thanks to the visitors, means that most of the traditional Balinese ritual and ceremonies activities are still in full swing. Anthropologist Geertz uses Bali as a case study in his analysis of the social nature of thought, since the Balinese have particularly well-developed ideas in the area of human thinking as social activity. He points out that the connections that Balinese people draw attention to between individual, community, and the process of time are ones which are important to the understanding not only of Balinese society but of human society at large. To me, Bali offers an insight into the functioning of storytelling, the creative arts, and theatrical performance within human culture and society more widely, by providing a modern-day version of how performance used to function in historical Europe.

Bali’s culture remains in touch with spirituality and ritual traditions in a way which, in my view, strongly parallels the situation in England in the medieval era.

109 Geertz, pp. 360-411.

110 It should be noted that sociological criticism has attempted to find ways to distinguish the difference between the concepts of society and of culture, in order to better understand both the organisation and structure of society as well as the ideas (the culture) inhabiting and animating it, and the relationship between the two. Geertz points out that culture has been less-analysed than society, since ideas are harder to examine scientifically (Geertz, p. 362), and there are a huge number of cultural patterns in any given society (p. 364). This thesis is interested in the ways in which society reflects and interacts with culture and vice versa. See also: T. Parsons and E. Shils (eds), Toward a General Theory of Action (Cambridge, Mass., 1959); and T. Parsons, The Social System [1951] (London: Routledge, 1991).

111 Anthropology has noted the way in which an observation of Bali today may be useful to understanding religious changes which have already taken place historically in other cultures: ‘today in Bali some of the same social and intellectual processes which gave rise to the fundamental religious transformations of world history seem to be at least well begun, and whatever their vicissitudes or eventual outcome, their career can hardly help but be an instructive one. By looking closely at what happens on this peculiar little island over the next several decades we may gain insights into the dynamics of religious change of a specificity and an immediacy that history, having already happened, can never give us’ (Geertz, p. 189).
Balinese performance today is similarly born of celebratory, spiritual, and communal urges. Within this type of tradition, with no large-scale ‘professional’ performance in existence,\(^\text{112}\) the whole community gets involved in the effort to create a performance event. Just as the guilds all contributed to the medieval pageant plays, in Bali many skilled craftsmen with a long lineage of a particular trade in their family will specialise in a particular part of creating a ceremonial performance: from the making of the hair of the Barong, for example, to the carving and painting of the mask, to the crafting of the gold filigree attachments, to the building of the body of the huge creature, and the final attachment of mask to body in a midnight ceremony on an auspicious date, many people are involved in the creation of this one element of performance (and these examples are from the efforts made before the costume is even worn in a show). As well as community involvement, a religious outlook is key to both the medieval European and the modern Balinese traditions: Medieval English performance was inspired primarily by Biblical stories, universal and archetypal in nature; Bali’s performance tradition is similarly inspired by the ancient Hindu stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The Balinese Hindu religion is integral to the way people live in Bali: ceremonies and ritual activities (such as the daily offerings distributed around buildings and streets to ward off evil spirits) are performed with commitment and give structure to daily life.

Bali’s theatrical practice functions on a balancing point between tradition and innovation, residual and emergent, which is interesting and inspiring in a similar way to the work of Shakespeare. While Shakespeare engaged with old stories and styles (utilising a Biblical style of narrative combined with classical characters, English historical events, or ancient legends) in order to create new material, embracing anachronism and the combination of old with new, the Balinese similarly engage with the ancient epic *Mahabharata* while simultaneously inserting material that engages with contemporary affairs and concerns. Whether with a modern joke in English for the tourists, inserted into the Sanskrit text,\(^\text{113}\) or

\(^{112}\) Possible exceptions might be some of the more famous performance groups built around cultural tourism, but all of these nonetheless have their roots in tradition and community.

\(^{113}\) Sekeha Swara Buana Shadow Puppet Play, Oka Kartini Art Gallery, Ubud.
a new instrument or piece added into the traditional Gamelan (orchestra), the Balinese style brings old and new together in a variety of different ways, creating a highly dynamic, living tradition. While it works very specifically in the context of this particular Indonesian island, in a community that connects with these traditions on a deep level, it nevertheless can provide a source of inspiration in its expert combination of residual and emergent, much like the work of Shakespeare.

During the trip my aim was to understand first-hand more about the ways in which Balinese art and performance flourishes through combining ritual tradition with creativity and innovation. I attended multiple rehearsals and performances (including seeing shadow puppets and the dance styles of Legong, Kecak, Baris, Monkey Dance, Topeng, and Gambuh), witnessed several ritual ceremonies (including an ancestor worship ritual and a cremation ceremony), interviewed artists (several dancers, a puppeteer, and a mask-carver), took lessons in Legong Dance, and lived for several weeks in Puri Kaleran, a Balinese palace complex in Peliatan, Ubud.

The Bali case study will feature in this thesis as a point of comparison and source of potential inspiration for modern practitioners seeking ways to engage with a universal, psychophysical style and the roots of performance. The Balinese example might teach us something in relation to historically-responsive approaches and the potential for accessing our native roots in more helpful ways.

Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice: workshops series

In 2014-15 I conducted workshops on a year-long taught module with a group of undergraduate students at the University of Warwick, focusing on plays, playing places and performances of the Middle Ages. The workshops covered moralities, such as in the Semara Ratih ‘The Spirit of Bali’ performance, at Pura Desa Kutuh. The troupe combines traditional pieces and new creations, and has became renowned in Bali for their innovation as well as the dramatic and musical variety of the performances. Their philosophy is that ‘it is important both to conserve the unique traditional performing arts of Bali in their diverse forms and to keep the arts vital by actively creating new works that extend the traditional repertoire. Semara Ratih webpage, <http://www.semararatih.org/> [accessed 15 July 2017].
mummings, mysteries, Tudor interludes, and chronicle plays: moving through the medieval into the early modern period and the beginnings of professional theatre. The students’ response to the early texts and performance traditions informed my approach to conducting further practice-based research with both students and professionals, particularly the Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice workshop series which I undertook in late 2016, and a follow-up workshop to this series which solidified ideas further in 2017.\(^{115}\)

This intensive series of workshops was conducted with seven trained actors; the sessions consisted of focused practical experiments engaging with specific elements of a medieval inheritance. Each workshop took a particular theme or focus (generally modelled after a chapter in my thesis) and included extracts from a selection of Shakespeare’s writing,\(^ {116}\) aiming to use these texts as a way into understanding how the early modern mind functioned in relation to tradition and earlier ideologies, and as an example of the expert combination of old and new.

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\(^{116}\) I used both First Folio and modern editions of Shakespeare’s texts in the workshops I conducted, and found that aside from some actors finding modern spelling easier to understand, there was little practical difference: the historically-responsive approach through psychosomaticism (as opposed to a text-based approach) works in much the same way regardless of which textual edition one is using. After all, the experience of language in the body in performance, rather than intellectually or on the page, is the focus of many of the workshop activities. In this thesis I will use the First Folio edition throughout for the sake of continuity, and to give the reader a closer glimpse of what the words may have looked like on the page in Shakespeare’s day. Line and page numbers are derived from The Norton Fascimile: the First Folio of Shakespeare, ed. Charlton Hinman. It should be noted that Hinman uses through line numbering (TLN) rather than scene-by-scene. I retain the original spelling and punctuation in order to minimise editorial intrusion, however I have standardised the use of the long ‘s’ and the use of ‘u’, ‘v’, ‘i’, and ‘j’ where appropriate. I use standardised (modern) versions of the play titles in the main text and general notes, with the original First Folio titles given in footnote references where I have quoted from the play.
The workshops also engaged with the creation of new work through contemporary monologues as well as devising activities. The rationale behind these workshops was to test in practice some of the specificities of a historically-responsive approach: with each workshop themed on one of my thesis chapters, the process as a whole allowed me to experiment with particular ideas related to reconnecting with the heritage of early English theatre, ritual, and storytelling.\(^{117}\)

In the Objective Drama Project, Grotowski ‘never described the meaning of or idea behind any exercise’;\(^{118}\) ritual often works this way too – *Nak mule keto*, ‘that is the way it has been done’, is the only reason needed – and early church practices were much the same since most people did not understand Latin, read or write. But – as Objective Drama participant I Wayan Lendra points out in relation to his native Balinese ceremony: a ritual is efficacious because of the feeling of wellbeing that follows for the participant. Although in my workshops series I gathered written and verbal feedback, I also aimed to observe types of efficacy that are not intellectual or measured through dialogue and explanation, but rather are felt: psychosomatically, emotionally, or spiritually. At the end of each workshop, I gave the participants a theme for open reflection in a non-linear feedback session before they left the studio. This was designed to allow free expression without having to intellectually answer specific questions. I also sent the actors a few focused questions at the end of each day. The actors then sent me their answers that evening or the next morning before the subsequent workshop. This meant that their answers were fresh, but they had had some time to process the day’s events.

Grotowski ‘discouraged learning through verbal explanation, perhaps because the brain does not record the emotional quality of an action when learned through a mental process only’.\(^{119}\) Lendra describes how Grotowski

\(^{117}\) While the practice-based material feeds into and informs the theoretical discussion throughout, the appendices to this thesis provide more in-depth descriptions of the activities undertaken in these workshops, and in my thesis conclusion I use case studies to demonstrate how a historically-responsive approach can be usefully applied to two rather obscure Shakespeare scenes.

\(^{118}\) Lendra, p. 123.

\(^{119}\) Lendra, p. 124.
did not intend to give the meaning or the intended result of the exercises. He did not wish the participants to start working with an “idea.” He thought that to work on a physical exercise with an idea would be misleading and deceiving because the mind would be consciously searching for the result of the idea. The action would not be organic and the physical impulses would be blocked.\textsuperscript{120}

This approach must have discouraged cerebral learning, and encouraged somatic or kinesthetic learning (a feature which also is integral to Balinese training, as I have learned through taking lessons in Legong Dance while in Ubud). By having the brain be occupied with challenging physical action, the inner mind (subconsciousness or inner consciousness), is free to emerge without the brain interfering cerebrally. Sergei Ostrenko similarly utilised complex physical activities in his training process in order to distract and free the mind. Physical exercises also ‘help the body generate innate physical power’;\textsuperscript{121} like that to which the Hindu tradition refers as \textit{kundalini} (sleeping energy). Artists in Bali who ‘have spiritual knowledge and the ability to invoke this innate energy […] are] considered to have \textit{tasku}, an ultimate spiritual energy that helps the performer project the essence of his or her art’.\textsuperscript{122}

With this type of training (examples including the Ostrenko method, Grotowski’s work, the work of his student Barba with Odin Teatret, and Balinese training), the exhaustion of the physical body and the high-level of focus of the mind is key to moving beyond intellectualisation into a combination of muscle memory and instinctive responses. The instinct is freed up by the distraction of the intellect, while extensive physical work increases the somatic range or repertoire of the performer, allowing the body to express the spontaneity and freedom of the instinct, with a paradoxical combination of openness/freedom and focus/control. I ran the workshops in lengthy sessions of three hours, followed by a break, and then another three hours. The sessions involved physical exercises requiring focus, followed by improvisatory or text-based work putting the ideas explored into practice. This work had to take place once a level of energy and focus (which

\textsuperscript{120} Lendra, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{121} Lendra, p. 126.

\textsuperscript{122} Lendra, p. 127.
could be termed *kundalini, taksu, ‘getting in the zone’, or ‘gelling as an ensemble’*) had been found by the group.

While intercultural examples are very useful for better understanding the universality of ritual forms, and exercises in the workshops drew on a range of techniques from yoga, to Sufi dance, to modern vocal and physical exercises, for example, the primary aim of the workshops was to use these tools as a means to access the English medieval worldview, and get in touch with this particular tradition. It was interesting to see where the most affinity was felt, and whether a sense of accord and inspiration can be found with ancient English traditions of performance, which are much less utilised and appreciated today than ancient Eastern forms, for example. The workshops asked the question of whether the rediscovery of occidental tradition, particularly that which developed in England, could open as many new doors and result in as much inspiration for practitioners as the ‘discovery’ of the beauty of ancient Eastern traditions has for Western theatre-makers such as Barba, Grotowski, and Artaud.

The building of trust and establishing of a shared language in the workshops was very important: I used physical exercises involving tactile communication like leading a blind partner around the space, weight sharing exercises and so on, in order to build this atmosphere of trust and a safe or ‘sacred’ space which would allow the ensemble to feel at ease with exploring some challenging exercises and approaches. Each session began with at least thirty minutes of warming up with trust and ensemble building exercises. This built in the end towards an idea or feeling of a ‘sacred space’ where the group felt safe, focused, and in tune with each other.

The workshops were of great value to my research and allowed the practical implementation of the core ideas I have been exploring. Throughout the thesis I attempt to articulate what the participants thought as well as my own reactions, since this thesis proposes a new way of thinking about historically-responsive approaches to performing, as well as directing. Hearing the actors’ subjective experience is thus integral to evaluating the effectiveness of such approaches. At the end of the final workshop I asked for some brief comments on the whole experience. Participant Rachel began by saying:
What I’ve found interesting, this whole week, is that I naturally with acting go: psychological first, physical second [and] very separate, or would let my physicality be governed by whatever I’ve decided that I’m thinking or feeling, whereas to do it the other way around and find that striking a pose naturally brings on a totally different attitude is really freeing because so many more opportunities are being opened up […] and its amazing how one posture or another can affect you immediately.123

Others agreed with the value of psychosomatic work and the reminder of the continued value of ancient and universal themes, tropes, and ideas. Jenna said she was ‘so excited to apply this to Shakespeare’ in particular.124 She said that in creating a powerful inner life for character, physical work through types provides a useful way in: ‘having that universal aspect as your inner life’ remains ‘in your muscle memory’ and ‘is going to help your audience naturally as well’.125 Alex similarly commented on some of the physicalisation activities we did with Shakespeare speeches and valued ‘that idea of having done the work and when you drop it there’s the imprint of it’.126

Others suggested that perhaps a reminder of the power of the body as an acting tool had been very useful. Adam said that creating the archetype poses was ‘fascinating’: the whole process of ‘using your body but being very clear’ rather than voice, which we often focus on for clarity, was ‘like diction in body and movement’.127 Rachel said it is good to remind oneself that ‘it’s all connected: your brain is part of your body’.128

The building of ensemble, a community, and a shared knowledge was also valued. Alex said that ‘in creating [archetypal] gestures [we then had] a shared language’,

123 Rachel Hudson, Experiments.

124 Jenna Fincken, Experiments.

125 Ibid.

126 Alex Prescott, Experiments.

127 Adam Courting, Experiments.

128 Rachel, Experiments.
and that ‘doing that sort of work can both aid a piece but also help the cast and build ensemble, which will then make a better performance’.  

**Practice Informed by Theory, and Theory Informed by Practice**

In seeking to understand how my theories may link with current theatre practice, and even potentially benefit theatre practitioners through new actor-training methods or rehearsal approaches, practice informed by theory, and theory informed by practice is an integral balance which I have endeavoured to negotiate. Stephen Purcell’s book *Popular Shakespeare: Simulation and Subversion on the Modern Stage* provides an interesting and helpful model for the writing up of scholarly argument alongside practical experiences. His book is ‘concerned throughout with the conflicting registers of performance which often exist unreconciled within the same theatrical event, and with the tension between identification and critical detachment that this instills within its audience’. He explains that:

> It seems logical that form should echo content, and as such I have woven in between the more conventionally ‘scholarly’ chapters a thread of unashamedly subjective narratives, largely untheorised, and employing a wider range of writing registers. I am unapologetic that I have made no attempt to make these disparate elements cohere; they will, I hope, bring at least a measure of theatre’s plurality of meaning to the book itself.

My thesis utilises a similar structure, while taking this approach a step further in my belief that there is more potential for theory and practice to cohere. Rather than the dualised mode described above, I plan to employ a pluralised yet

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129 Alex, *Experiments*.


131 Purcell, p. vii.
integrated method: whereby each approach constantly informs the other, as practice-based case studies are presented within the main body of the text, but delineated through indentation and the use of a different font, as shown here.

This will clearly demarcate the practice-based and the traditional research elements of my work, while continually relating the practical content to my theoretical argument. The thesis also includes appendices integral to the theory, giving details of practical exercises which would interrupt the flow of my argument but which are necessary to an understanding of my approach through practice.

In this way, practice will be woven into the argument throughout. As will become clear, there are elements of practice-led, as well as practice-based, research, since on occasion new questions were generated through the practical experiments I undertook, particularly in relation to ritual postures (as discussed in Chapter 5).

Chapter 1 explores the idea of the macrocosm and the microcosm, delving into the inheritance of the Christian and pre-Christian narrative in order to rediscover the roots of storytelling and theatre practice. My practice in Workshop 1 (Appendices 2-5) explored how we can engage practically with these ideas with performers, using exercises focused on imaginative visualisation of planes of existence (Heaven, Earth and Hell), centres of the passions within the body, as well as elements and the four humours.

Chapter 2 examines concepts of time and space in relation to storytelling and performance modes, exploring the overlaps between how time and space are treated in modern or postmodern experimental theatre practice today and ancient concepts of non-linear time and malleable space. Practical experiments in Workshop 2 (Appendices 7-9) engaged with flexible, non-linear time, and with imaginative space (how we read meaning in and through space) as well as the idea of creating a hierophanic or sacred space.

Building on ideas surrounding the sacred nature of space discussed in the previous chapter, Chapter 3 engages with the hierophanic body and the idea of the body-as-
text. Workshop 3 (Appendices 10 and 11) experimented with bodily engagement with early text and language, and explored exercises to prevent over-intellectualisation in performance.

Chapter 4 discusses the power of the archetype, exploring tensions between the universal-general, and the historical-specific. Workshop 4 (Appendices 12 and 13) involved psychosomatic exploration of archetypal modes in performance and character-creation.

Chapter 5 explores ritual and the collective, interrogating cognitive responses to ritual behaviour and ritual paradigms in performance. Workshop 5 of the series and the responding Experiments II workshop (Appendix 14) focused on practical experiments with meditative activities, ritual postures, and ritual behaviour as tools in actor-training and performance creation.

The thesis ends with a conclusion followed by the Appendices. The brief conclusion focuses primarily on the final experiment undertaken in my practice-as-research workshops (Appendix 15), which combined all of the tools explored thus far to explore some particularly challenging scenes from Shakespeare’s Henry VI Part 1. This example is used as a way to tie together the various threads explored in previous chapters and workshops, and to demonstrate the overall approach of the historically-responsive method.

Traces of Our Heritage

As human beings, ‘we are shapes with stories, always changing but always carrying traces of what we were before’.132 Through a multi-layered process of interrogation and exploration my research seeks to engage with the traces of our heritage, drawing more than just academic connections between the culture of the Middle Ages, that of the age of Shakespeare, and our own modern perspective. I aim to demonstrate how today’s practitioners and performers might practically employ psychophysical, historically-responsive techniques in order to open up a way of simultaneously engaging with the old and the new, embracing the resulting

tensions as fuel for their creative energies: akin to Shakespeare’s approach to storytelling.

Lisi Oliver and Maria Mahoney, in ‘Episcopal Anatomies of the Early Middle Ages’, compare the views of St Ambrose (whose works span the transition from antique to early medieval Europe) with the views of Hrabanus Maurus (who was writing a few centuries later). They point out that ‘these two bishops approach [their subject of] the body, physical and spiritual, from opposite directions which ultimately converge on the same truth’. The approach of my thesis works in a similar manner: the aim is to incorporate historically-responsive technique influenced by early worldviews, alongside a modern perspective on current viewpoints and contemporary theatre practice, in order to converge on a shared understanding of the language of storytelling.

133 Lisi Oliver and Maria Mahoney, ‘Episcopal Anatomies of the Early Middle Ages’, in Vaught, pp. 25-42 (p. 25).
Chapter 1
The Cosmos and Mankind: from Macrocosm to Microcosm

I’m not particularly in favor of doctrine or creed […]. What I do favor is the attempt to make sense of things by living within a story. The Christian story, for good or ill, is my inheritance.134

Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew

The medieval worldview was one of intricate patterns and connections. Men and women sought to understand their place in the world and devised complex theories to explain the natural and the supernatural forces with which they found themselves surrounded.135 This way of thinking was not neoteric but was built on centuries of complex philosophical and cosmological ideas that existed prior to the birth of Christianity: ideas which sought to relate the physical natural world to the inner workings of the human soul and the notion of deific existence. From the ancestor worship of pre-3000 BC Britain to the composite pantheon of gods venerated by the Anglo-Saxons, spiritual and ritual practice formed the backbone of many developing societies in Britain and beyond.

In the early medieval period (c.500-1100), the main influence on medieval cosmological thought was Plato’s *Timaeus*.136 This dialogue, written around 360BC and translated into Latin by Cicero, and again by Calcidius (c.321AD),


135 An imaginative description of the three-tiered medieval worldview is described in William Langland’s fourteenth-century allegorical poem *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. In the poem, a man named Will falls asleep and has a dream-vision of a *tour* (tower) up high on a hill (symbolising Heaven), a *dungeon* (fortress) in a deep valley (representing Hell), and a ‘fair feeld ful of folk’ (Prologue, l. 17) in between, symbolising the world of humankind. William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman* (c. 1370-90), ed. A V C Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995).

speculated on the physical world – which changes and dies, and thus is the object of opinion and sensation – and the eternal world – which does not change and is ruled by reason. The work also suggested that whoever made the physical universe must have used the eternal world as a template, creating order out of chaos by imitating an unchanging model. Christian philosophers in the twelfth century, such as Thierry of Chartres and William of Conches, interpreted the *creatio ex nihilo* concept of the *Timaeus* (the idea that creation came from nothingness) in the light of the Christian faith.\(^{137}\)

Following this, Aristotelianism, a movement inspired by the works of Aristotle and various Greek and Arabic commentaries on these,\(^{138}\) as well as other schools of thought inherited from the ancient Greeks (Plato, Ptolemy, and others), had a significant influence on high and late medieval cosmological and philosophical thought. During the twelfth century many Greek and Arabic scientific and philosophical texts were translated into Latin, giving medieval scholars access to complex, fascinating ideas. These were adapted and reconciled with Christian teaching. The range of influences meant that conflicting theories often existed side-by-side: ideas regarding materiality, for example. While the Platonic line of thought gave rise to the concept that God exists outside of time, and that the material world is just a shadow of true reality (and thus of lesser importance and power), Thomas Aquinas reconciled Aristotelian teachings with those of Christianity and upheld the concept of twin authorities: the temporal/material and the eternal/spiritual, bifurcating value, power and importance into both planes.

\(^{137}\) It is important to note that the majority of the medieval British population could not read, much less study, the works of Plato and Aristotle. Despite this, as noted in the Introduction to this thesis, there was ‘a bleed-down effect as the iconography and performance traditions of the church were affected by current theological debate’ (Introduction, p. 12). Since medieval cosmology was intrinsically linked with the Christian belief system, understanding of the physical nature of the world was caught up in theological and philosophical matters. For more on medieval cosmology, and the complicated debates of medieval scholars on the physical structure of the cosmos and how it interrelated with spiritual and Judeo-Christian concerns, see Grant, ‘The Medieval Cosmos: its Structure and Operation’.

Questions surrounding materiality and the relationship of body to soul consumed much debate. The way in which theologians of the Middle Ages engaged with different (often pagan) worldviews and adapted ideas to their thinking, allowing contradictory concepts to exist alongside each other, reflects the amalgamative attitude of the time. As noted in my Introduction, the general outlook of the medieval period was resourceful and accommodating: integrating what might on the surface appear to be competing or opposing ideologies with ingenuity and imaginative flexibility.\footnote{Grant, ‘Aristotelianism and the Longevity of the Medieval World View’, \textit{passim}.}

Traditional views of the medieval period have painted it as an era of closed-mindedness, with the word ‘medieval’ in today’s vocabulary connoting not only an out-dated mode of being but also a narrow-minded one, and yet the medieval era saw one of the most successful and long-lasting \textit{weltanschauungen} or ideologies (Western Christianity) established through the adaptation and absorption of the ancient pagan calendar, ideas, themes and concerns into the new Christian way of thinking – not the explicit rejection of these. Edward Grant argues that the main problem with the Aristotelian movement was that it had ‘too great a flexibility, too great a readiness to accept ideas and concepts that did not fit well’\footnote{Grant, p. 103.}. He posits that since medieval philosophers and thinkers were overly acceptant of Aristotelian thinking, without being critical enough to interrogate paradoxical ideas, this was the key reason why Aristotelianism lasted so long without critique. Applications of ancient, pagan views of the world ranged hugely, and there was a multiplication of opinions during the Middle Ages. But the combination of ancient Greek pagan philosophy (particularly Aristotelianism) and contemporary medieval Christian thinking formed the backbone of cosmological and philosophical understanding. The period was a melting pot of ideas which sought to connect and relate the specific to the whole, the microcosm to the macrocosm: understanding human life in relation to the superseding and overarching divine plan of God.

Perhaps the most significant element of the medieval worldview (and a key difference between that and our own viewpoint) is the fact that the Middle Ages acted almost entirely on a generally-held assumption that humankind’s life on
earth was a journey towards an everlasting existence, in close communion with
the divine nature of a creator God. The sense of the supernatural,\textsuperscript{141} and the
immortality of the soul, meant that human narrative was always understood in the
context of a divine narrative. This, in turn, meant that a figural interpretation of
the world was the dominant view.\textsuperscript{142} Constant associative meaning-making not
only held potential for deeper understanding, but also had much higher stakes and
significance, as men and women sought to relate their microcosmic existence to
the macrocosm of the cosmos: seeking ways to gain closeness to God.

**Harmony and Chaos**

Elaborately thought-out concepts of harmony and chaos were an intrinsic part of
the medieval view of the cosmos. Plato’s *Timaeus* argued that the world was
harmonised in proportion by the creator: balanced with the four elements of fire,
water, earth and air, made in the perfect spherical shape of a globe, and turning in
a circular manner, described as the most uniform of movements. The Platonic idea
of the equivalence of the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of
humankind was put into poetic form in Bernadus Silvestris’ *Cosmographia*
(1147)\textsuperscript{143} which influenced many medieval allegories including Alan of Lille’s
satire on the vices of humanity, *De planctu Naturae*,\textsuperscript{144} and contributed to the
general understanding of harmony between macrocosm and microcosm
throughout the later Middle Ages.

The disruption of this harmony and the relationship between macrocosm and
microcosm is explored in medieval drama, particularly in the cycle dramas, which
depicts the Biblical story of human history. In the York pageant *The Creation of
the Angels and the Fall of Lucifer*, God reflects on the fall of the ‘foles for thaire

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} In medieval Latin *supernaturalis*: ‘above or beyond nature, divine’.
\item \textsuperscript{142} For more on this see Hurrell, p. 602.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Bernardus Silvestris, *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris* [1147], trans.
Winthrop Wetherbee (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{144} Alain of Lille [Aalanus de Insulis], *The complaint of nature [De planctu naturae*, c.
and Co., 1908).
\end{itemize}
fayrehede’ and declares that ‘syn than ther mighte es for-marryde that mente all omys’ he will now continue with his creation, making mankind in his own image. All was amiss during the angels rebellion, since the order and harmony of the heavens was disturbed. Similarly in The Fall pageant, Lucifer speaks of the ‘degree [order] / That [God] had wrought’ placing humankind on the level of angels, which is later thrown into disarray through his temptation of Eve and the subsequent fall of man.

The story of Noah provides another example of clear interaction between the two cosmic orders: the sins of mankind are so great that God invokes a natural disaster to cleanse the earth. In the Wakefield cycle Noah calls to his wife as the storms begin:

Behold to the heuen
the cateractes all,
That are open full euen
grete and small,
And the planettis seuen
left has thare stall [places],
Thise thoners and levyn [thunder and lightning]
downe gar [make] fall
ffull stout, [very fiercely]
Both halles and bowers,
Castels and towres;
ffull sharp [violent] ar thise showers,
that renys aboute [run everywhere];

145 ‘fools for their beauty’; ’since their might is entirely destroyed that meant all amiss’.

Therfor, wife, haue done!
Com into ship fast!\textsuperscript{147}

The planets and heavens are pictured here as complicit in the destruction of human edifices such as towers, castles and halls. The seven planets are described as being out of place: the disruption runs throughout the cosmos.

In the Wakefield pageant Noah is depicted as thoroughly human with many faults, and is himself a source of disorder in his frequent arguments with his wife, which seem to build alongside the stormy weather. As the storm calms, so does Noah’s temper, and he says:

\textit{We will do as ye bid vs}
\textit{we will no more be wroth,}
\textit{Dere barnes! [dear children!]}\textsuperscript{148}
\textit{Now to the helme will I hent,}
\textit{And to my ship tent [tend].}\textsuperscript{149}

As he returns to his task, his wife immediately declares ‘I se on the firmament, / Me thynk, the seven starnes’,\textsuperscript{149} indicating that the planets have now returned to their places as harmony returns on all levels: on the domestic level in familial relationships, on the natural level in God’s creation, and on the supernatural level in the cosmos.

Another example of disorder in popular medieval tellings of this story (including the Wakefield pageant) is the raven. Noah sends the raven out to discover land, but in several versions of the story the raven is not trustworthy, and is more interested in carrion than his task:

\textit{He is without any reson,}
\textit{And he fynd any caryon,}


\textsuperscript{148} ‘The Play of Noah’, ll. 417-21.

\textsuperscript{149} ‘The Play of Noah’, ll. 422-23.
As peraventure may be fon [be found],
he will not away.\footnote{150} 

The flood may have swept away much of the sinfulness of mankind but both human and animal folly remain in a fallen world, creating chaos within God’s harmony, and will do so until the end of time.

Since harmonious patterns represented the work of God, including all heavenly and celestial beings and forces, while chaos represented the works of the devil and the disorder brought about by the Fall of the Angels and the Fall of Man, this influenced not only the themes presented in the drama but also the presentation, including the type of musical accompaniment used in the plays.\footnote{151} In the pageants there is strong evidence that the guilds used choral music for the angels and heavenly beings, and chaotic percussive sounds for the devils.\footnote{152}

Theories of music were intrinsically linked to theories of harmony and chaos in the medieval period. Influenced by such popular classical theorists as Pythagoras and Ptolemy, people of the Middle Ages saw ‘music as applied mathematics’,\footnote{153} and a view developed that music and number harmonies guided both the human soul and the heavenly spheres.\footnote{154} Pythagoras’ theory of harmony was seen as the universal standard of musical composition and was applied also to other aspects of ‘The Play of Noah’, ll. 501-04.

\footnote{150} Richard Rastall suggests that since music was understood ‘as order, and ultimately as the order of the cosmos […] Music in the plays is intended as more than a symbol of God’s order: it is a \textit{representation} of it in the fullest sense.’ Rastall, \textit{Heaven Singing: Music in Early English Religious Drama}, 2 vols (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), vol.1, p. 183.

\footnote{151} In Chester’s \textit{Harrowing of Hell}, a stage direction indicates that noise accompanies the devils, and the Coventry Cappers bought a rattle, which may have been used in a similar way for their \textit{Harrowing of Hell} performance. See Rastall, pp. 207-08. See also Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, David Mills (eds), \textit{Records of Early English Drama: Cheshire (Including Chester)} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 167.

\footnote{152} Mary Devlin, \textit{Medieval Music, Magical Minds} (Indiana: iUniverse, 2001), p. 89.

\footnote{153} In 1434 composer Giorgio Anselmi rejected Aristotle’s view that the planets made no sounds, writing ‘at length on the effect of music on the world around us, and […] the power of music on the human soul’ (Devlin, p. 93).
life, particularly architectural design. In the Middle Ages, the ancient theory of harmony was Christianised and developed with Judeo-Christian symbols, while maintaining the idea that mathematical harmony was an integral part of the structure of cosmos, nature, and human soul.

In 1202 mathematician Leonardo Pisano (known more widely as Fibonacci) published *Liber Abaci* in which he described a number sequence where each number is the sum of the previous two numbers (0 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34…). The Fibonacci sequence influenced construction methods in the quest for harmonic buildings (such as minsters and cathedrals). The connection between musical, mathematical and architectural harmony still held sway centuries later, with each practice providing inspiration for the other. For example, analogies have been identified between the dimensions of the Florentine cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore and the numeric structure of Guillaume Dufay’s motet *Nuper rosarum*.

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155 In ancient Greek as well as Chinese and Egyptian culture, music and architecture had a close affinity: musical harmony and architectural proportion both being founded on order structures or numeric relationships. Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollo even advocated knowledge of music being part of an architect’s education.

flores (1436), which was performed on the occasion of the cathedral’s consecration.\textsuperscript{157}

The Fibonacci sequence was not only applicable to music and architecture but also found in other elements of creation: the ratios can (still) be perceived throughout nature, in patterns of shells, seed growth, petal numbers, branch formation, root systems, spiral galaxies, hurricanes, and anatomical ratios, for example. In the sixteenth century, the golden ratio was explored in Luca Pacioli’s book (illustrated by Leonardo da Vinci) \textit{De divina proportione},\textsuperscript{158} and shortly afterward Johannes Kepler proved that the golden ratio is related to Fibonacci’s sequence (being the limit of the ratio of consecutive numbers).\textsuperscript{159} Mathematical, biological, and cosmological patterns and connections found in the natural world fascinated people throughout the ancient, medieval and early modern worlds and were generally linked to ideas about the divine.

In the late-medieval treatise \textit{Musica Practica}, Spanish mathematician and musical theorist Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareia also related the bodily humours (thought to

\textsuperscript{157} See Charles W. Warren, ‘Brunelleschi’s Dome and Dufay’s Motet’, \textit{The Musical Quarterly}, 59.1 (1973), 92-105, and Marvin Trachtenberg, ‘Architecture and music reunited: A new reading of Dufay’s \textit{Nuper Rosarum Flores} and the Cathedral of Florence’, \textit{Renaissance Quarterly}, 54.3 (2001), 740-75. Warren’s original hypothesis detailing the links between the dome and the motet was contested in the 1990s by Craig Wright, who argued that Warren’s reading of the architecture is deeply flawed, and suggested that Dufay’s score was informed ‘instead by a numerological and symbolic nexus sited in biblical and exegetical descriptions of Solomon’s Temple and in Marian lore’ (Marvin Trachtenberg, p. 742). Trachtenberg posits another possibility: that what is being dealt with ‘is not two independent binary relationships - music to building, and music to biblical/exegetical text - but a triadic nexus in which all three factors are densely interrelated: the Cathedral directly related, in its morphogenesis, to Wright’s textual model, as well as retroactively to the motet, which itself refers to both text and (real and Biblical) image’ (p. 742).


affect health and temperament) to the planets through their shared musical relationships.\(^{160}\) Mary Devlin suggests that it was Ramos de Pareia who, through connecting the astrological effects of the planets with music, shifted ‘contemplation of planetary harmonies from the physical to the metaphysical plane’.\(^{161}\) However, as the physical and metaphysical were so closely intertwined in medieval European thought, this was not so much a groundbreaking theory as a logical step in the developing set of theories about the connections between the natural-physical and supernatural-metaphysical worlds as evidenced by the mathematical (and musical) harmony of God’s creation.

With harmony a key concept within the divine superstructure of Christian belief in medieval England, natural and societal order were evidently a major concern for people in the Middle Ages. The way in which society was structured is naturally of interest to anyone looking into theatrical traditions of the period since the societal framework is a primary factor in motivating the use of certain styles of storytelling. As will be discussed, performance was communal in nature, and simultaneously upheld as well as subverted traditional social forms. It is important to be aware of the pervading structures which existed, since they affected so strongly the way in which people viewed themselves: how they related to one another, to the natural world, and to the divine. The amalgamative style of the period is again significant. The ideology, drawing on classical philosophy as well as Christian teaching, included a general awareness of the Chain of Being. Also known as the *scala naturae* (‘ladder/stair-way of nature’), or Divine Order, this was a concept derived from Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Proclus and was absorbed, via Neoplatonism and the rise of Christianity, into medieval Christian thought, and was therefore intrinsic to the way people viewed themselves, society, and the wider world.


\(^{161}\) Devlin, pp. 95-6.
The Chain of Being demonstrates the way in which the medieval person viewed him- or her-self as part of an intricately interconnected universe. The central concept of the chain is that the entire cosmos fits into a hierarchical structure, giving order and meaning. God, existing in spirit form and the highest form of perfection, sits at the top, in unchanging and infallible divinity, then angels (ranked with archangels at the top). Stars and planets follow, and then human life, since mankind is both mortal flesh (like animals) and spirit (like celestial beings). Humanity is ordered in societal structures with kings first (given the Divine Right to rule), then princes, nobles, and finally common people. Animal life comes next, possessing motion, appetite and life: wild animals were seen as superior to domestic since they defied rule. Subdivisions ordered all creatures: lions were high in the chain, while useful creatures like dogs and horses were higher than sheep. Creatures of the air (birds) were higher than creatures of water (fish), since air inclines upwards. Useful (bees and spiders) or attractive (butterflies and dragonflies) insects came before flies and beetles. Snakes were at the very bottom of the animal kingdom, due to their association with the temptation in the Garden of Eden. Plants were next, possessing life but not sense: trees were first, then other plants, and after plant-life came rocks and minerals (with precious metals at the top), possessing only the quality of existence and not life. With all of nature and the invisible world of the spirits being related, the medieval person would have been more acutely aware of his/her place in the world, and would see nature, the planets and stars, and invisible spiritual forces as having a measurable effect on daily life.

The structure of society was organised and understood according to this awareness of a spiritual plane, and therefore those on the margins of society, such as the sick and infirm (particularly lepers), criminals, prostitutes, players and minstrels, were believed to be positioned in a liminal space due to moral ambiguity. Criminals had clearly broken with both earthly and divine law; prostitutes were often associated with criminals, and their profession raised moral concerns.

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Players and minstrels were associated with prostitution and a vagabond lifestyle.\footnote{164} For the sick or disabled, marginalisation was due to the association of infirmity with destitution. Leprosy – being so contagious – is perhaps the most obvious example of a disease that led to the sufferer being totally outcast from society. Those struck with leprosy even underwent a special ceremony somewhat like a funeral march to accompany them to a new location outside of the civic area. The disease meant that they looked ‘other’, and they also were obliged to warn of their presence by shaking a rattle. However, lepers and other infirm persons allowed the enactment of one of the most important tenets of the church: charity. In this way, sick beggars were in some respects integral to society. The fact that lepers’ status was so ritualised – with the ceremonial transferral to a designated space, and signifiers of difference such as the rattle – and that the sick or crippled in general were officially given the right to live by begging (by becoming a lymytour or licensed beggar), means that their marginalisation was somewhat complex.\footnote{165}

Despite the seemingly organised and hierarchical structure of the medieval worldview, heterogeneity, marginalisation and liminality of this kind was also integral. The Christocentric influence was vastly accommodating and allowed for juxtapositions and paradoxes. The primacy of acts of charity and forgiveness in the teachings of the Bible meant that marginal figures like the poor and the sick were not only accepted but were a necessary part of the fabric and structure of society: allowing others more fortunate to demonstrate beneficence. Similarly, the very essence of the story of Jesus – King of Kings born in the most humble of circumstances, to a carpenter and his wife in a stable among the animals, who went on to befriend ‘unsavoury’ characters such as tax collectors and prostitutes – flipped hierarchy on its head, and this idea was widely applicable. As one well-

\footnote{164} Although this applies mainly to wandering players and not so much the professional entertainers found at civic or court festivities.

\footnote{165} Corruption was also a problem, increasing ambivalence towards beggars. Chaucer’s Friar is one of these ‘lymytours’, licensed to beg in a particular location. The Friar is shown to be morally corrupt: more familiar with innkeepers and barmaids than the poor and sick (‘a lazar or a beggestere’, l. 242) on whose behalf he is meant to be soliciting. See Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The General Prologue’, \textit{The Canterbury Tales} in Larry D. Benson (ed.), \textit{The Riverside Chaucer}, (London: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), ll. 240 ff.
known Bible verse puts it: ‘whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted’. The turning upside-down of traditional hierarchy was also a popular notion within folk tradition and communal celebration, as will be explored below.

The concepts described above, which were all so intrinsic to earliest forms of storytelling and the birth of theatrical performance, seem on first glance quite difficult for a contemporary mind to connect with (other than on an intellectual and theoretical level, removed from our actual experience). Through practice, I have aimed to prove that it is not only possible to connect on a psychophysical, emotional, imaginative level with these early ideologies and structures, but also that such an approach can be very useful in providing a surprisingly versatile and relevant language in the modern theatre rehearsal room. Practice-based research sessions with both student actors (at Warwick University) and professional actors have allowed me to undertake these experiments.

On the first day of the Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice workshops, we focused on an imaginative visualisation of the early English (medieval) worldview with an exercise influenced by Kristin Linklater’s cosmos visualisation. The actors found a space

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166 Matthew 23:12, King James Version.

167 The idea of turning hierarchical social structures upside down also formed the root of classical comedy. In the plays of Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 254-184 BC), the servant is often cleverer than their master and comically outwits their superior. In his book Roman Laughter (New York: Harvard University Press, 1968), Erich Segal points out the ways in which society’s hierarchy only survives due to the comic inversion of it as a safety valve. Classical drama was taught in Elizabethan schools, and would certainly have provided another source of inspiration for Shakespeare’s pen, fitting in well with the medieval tradition of festivities which inverted social structures, such as the annual Feast of Fools where high and low offices would exchange places and a mock bishop or pope was elected. Such festivities were likely adapted from Saturnalian celebrations.

168 Experiments. See Appendix 2.

and closed their eyes before focusing on the earth, what is beneath the earth, their own body (visualising instincts like lust, rage, desire in the pelvis, feelings of hunger, passion, courage in the stomach, love and compassion in the heart, and reason and intellect in the head), and finally visualising the cosmos, planets and heavens above them. After this, we used exercises that involved moving around the space, exploring whether the actors’ awareness or perception had altered.

The approach was more effective than I expected. One actor noted afterwards that the culmination of the exercises created a feeling of being high or euphoric. In watching the final exercise, which involved an extended movement-journey improvisation to music, I also found it interesting to see how naturally, without any words and in semi-darkness, the actors reacted instinctively and bodily to the music and clearly embodied and explored the planes of existence we were working with. During the chaotic, hellish sections, everyone was mostly disconnected, disjointed, and separate in the space. When the more harmonious, choral music began, everyone came together in a circle, reached out for each other, inclining their heads and energy towards the sky. This communal urge was felt at a particular point by everybody. One participant, Marian, noted that when she was ‘in Hell’ she did not want to connect with anyone, but when in the heavenly state she ‘really wanted to share’ this with other people.

The main benefits of the exercise which were apparent to me through observation and through listening to the actors’ feedback were as follows:

Firstly, an ability to access an intense state of concentration:

simultaneously instinctive/relaxed/open as well as energised/

170 Tom Cuthbertson, *Experiments*.

171 Marian Elizabeth, *Experiments*. 
powerful/focused. One actor described the state as ‘freeing’, and another said he experienced a kind of ‘peace on stage’ where ‘true perfection lies’ in performance and acknowledged the dichotomy of being in this ‘extreme and intense existence’, while at the same time feeling peaceful and serene.

Secondly, the ‘feeling of choice’ between the upwards, heavenly plane of existence and the downwards, hellish plane, which gave potential for an ongoing tension or struggle. This clearly stretched the actors and helped them to move beyond their normal range of movement and imagination.

Thirdly, the exercise encouraged the actors to move away from intellectualisation and towards physicalisation and imagination.

Finally, the exercise gave them a bodily and imaginative sense of the medieval worldview’s dual understanding of their place in the world as a human being:

> I felt like a tiny molecule in the universe, but also that to me it was the most important thing in the world and I was caught between these almighty forces, which I found really interesting.

This somatic understanding enables all of the above effects. Theoretical understanding may be useful for designing the above activities but for performers the most important aspect is of course how one accesses these ideas, which are at the root of storytelling, in the body.

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172 Rachel, *Experiments*.

173 Jamie Littlewood, *Experiments*.

174 Hudson, *Experiments*.

175 Alex Prescott, *Experiments*.
Following the physical exercises described above, the group explored Macbeth’s ‘if twere done’ soliloquy,\textsuperscript{176} physicalising the upwards and downwards movements within the speech: the aspects that aspire to Heaven (Duncan’s meekness, the cherubim, compassion), the earthly aspects (like earthly ambition, courage, success), and those that lean towards Hell (‘deep damnation’, murder).

One performer declared that this approach completely changed her interpretation of the speech.\textsuperscript{177} Another said they were ‘constantly going up and down and it shows how tormented it [the speech] actually is’.\textsuperscript{178} One actor noted that modern productions of Shakespeare, in seeking a new relevance, often make the easy mistake of ignoring the macrocosmic elements and thus diminish the stakes.\textsuperscript{179}

I have run this exercise several times with various groups of drama students and professional actors, and every time I have noted the same effect: the stakes are immediately raised and the speech is given a whole new injection of energy that I have not seen actors reach through intellectual or psychological approaches. Their range immediately expands with almost no effort: the physicalisation of the residual worldview that Shakespeare was dealing with does the work for them.

In this first session it was already very clear that, firstly, Western actors still are able to engage with these early ideologies, and secondly, these approaches do open up interesting and useful potentials in the modern actor’s body and mind. Achieving a dichotomic state, not only in the imaginative visualisation of different planes of existence, and the


\textsuperscript{177} Hudson, \textit{Experiments}.

\textsuperscript{178} Jenna Fincken, \textit{Experiments}.

\textsuperscript{179} Cuthbertson, \textit{Experiments}.
Soul versus Body

In the medieval era, the dichotomic state of being both mortal flesh and possessing an immortal soul meant that the choices and struggles of life necessarily became moralised. In this worldview, the way of the spirit is higher, more noble, bringing the person closer to God, while the desires of the flesh move him/her away from God. The conception of mankind as both physical and spiritual being, both rooted in corporeality and in possession of an incorporeal spirit, was especially typical of twelfth-century thinking and continued to be prominent throughout the medieval and early modern period. Many theologians explored the relationship between physical life and spiritual life: the mystic Hugh of St Victor was particularly ‘forceful in his transference of an awareness of the physical life of man to the province of philosophy [which] seeks to restore the connection between the human soul and Divine Wisdom’, directly relating the theoretical sciences, practical arts and mechanical arts to ways to combat the ignorance, vice and physical weakness caused by the Fall.180 In this way, Hugh was influenced by Augustine’s idea that, after the catastrophe of the Fall, human life is a progress towards the divine nature of God, with education being an essential ingredient in this process.181

Knowledge and education were held as potential means of connecting with the divine. In Plato’s Timaeus the eternal is apprehended by reason, and throughout the Middle Ages it was typical to attribute feelings and mental states to a physical location in the body. In a worldview built on hierarchical patterning, reason was located in the head, love and compassion in the heart, and baser passions lower down: hunger, lust, ambition, and desire, for example, in the stomach and pelvis. While love and intellect incline upwards, towards the heavens, the baser passions


181 Whitney, p. 90.
pull down toward the earth and material concerns such as wealth, sustenance, and physical pleasure. Although reason was highly valued, this did not utterly negate the value of sensation or the somatic. The Middle Ages had a fascination with the body and the physical-creational which was paradoxical and ambiguous in nature; the prevalence of self-flagellation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,\textsuperscript{182} and the integrality of ritual gestures in Roman Catholicism demonstrate both the rejection and the centrality of the bodily in spiritual practices.\textsuperscript{183} Also, as noted above, some theologians such as Hugh of St Victor included practical and mechanical arts (such as martial arts, cooking, agriculture and sometimes theatrical arts, medicine, and navigation) as well as theoretical sciences in discussions of ways to combat sin and weakness.\textsuperscript{184} He somewhat elevated the artes mechanicae from their antiquitous state of vulgarity and baseness for the improvement of humankind: a growing trend in later medieval thought and typical of the Biblical mode which often combined domestic and divine (unlike classical modes which separated these planes of existence more thoroughly).\textsuperscript{185}

In December 2017 I led a workshop exploring Historically-Responsive techniques with a group of approximately 30 international participants.

\textsuperscript{182} The practice of physical penance went on well into the sixteenth century in Catholic Europe: the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius de Loyola (c. 1522-38, revised version approved by Pope Paul III in 1548), for example, recommends ‘chastis[ing] the body by inflicting actual pain’. Ignatius de Loyola, Spiritual Exercises (c. 1522-38), trans. T. Corbishley, in David Englander, Diana Norman, Rosemary O’Day and W. R. Owens, Culture and Belief in Europe 1450-1600: An Anthology of Sources (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 237-43 (p. 238). In post-Reformation England, there was a similar preoccupation with the body in certain Puritan punishments; for examples, see C. H. Williams (ed.), English Historical Documents, 1485-1558 (London: Routledge, 1967), pp. 967-8, 986.

\textsuperscript{183} The paradoxically dichotomous yet intertwined nature of body and soul, physical and spiritual in medieval thought is discussed further in Chapter 3.


\textsuperscript{185} See Auerbach.
from a range of artistic and academic backgrounds.\textsuperscript{186} One of the exercises I led began with an imaginative visualisation of the cosmos (see above), locating passions within the body, and then moved on to explore these centres of energy: moving around the room being led by the chest/heart, for example, while focusing on what that centre represents (love, compassion, mercy), or led by the pelvis (lust, desire), stomach (appetite, anger), gut (instinct, ambition), or head (reason, intellect). I encouraged the participants to let their whole movement, stance, gait and mood be affected by the choice of passion/center, and finally to walk around the space with awareness of all of these centres of emotional energy.

The activity was designed to help participants experience different feelings somatically rather than intellectually. Some, however, found it difficult to disconnect from the intellect in such a short workshop: one performer said afterwards that he still was thinking about the particular quality/emotion rather than feeling it. A considerable time is needed before performers are able to function primarily on a psychophysical rather than intellectual level. I had more success with these types of approaches in my Experiments workshops in London, where the actors had time to adjust to the psychophysical, historically-responsive approach.

**Residual Medieval Ideologies in the Early Modern Age**

Between the medieval and early modern ages in England, a colossal shift (which we now term the Reformation) took place in the country’s faith and hegemonic

\textsuperscript{186} Utilising Ritual and Archetype in Modern Theatre Practice workshop. See Appendix 3.
structures that shook the nation’s identity to the core. In 1517, drawing upon a long history of dissension, Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, challenged the authority of the Pope, attacking various teachings of the Catholic Church, which he held to be corrupt. England at first resisted the Reformation, and Henry VIII (supported by the Catholic Chancellor Thomas More) wrote a scathing attack on the character of Luther, earning Henry the title ‘Defender of the Faith’. Translations of the scriptures into English were seized and burned, and many Protestants were arrested, put on trial, and burned at the stake. Famously, a sudden change came when King Henry sought a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry Anne Boleyn, who herself favoured reform and assisted the spread of Protestantism in England. In 1534 the English Church denounced Papal authority and split with Rome, and the Act of Supremacy was passed, declaring that Henry was the ‘Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England’. Then followed many years of turmoil: Edward VI, the child-king, reigned for sixteen years and under his rule the country saw many Protestant reforms which were then reversed by his successor (after the nine day queen, Lady Jane Grey) and half-sister Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon. When Anne Boleyn’s daughter, Elizabeth, succeeded her half-sister in 1558 she restored Protestantism as the official religion, while allowing recusants to practise the Catholic religion: as long as it presented no threat to her rule or to peace in the realm.

There were several features of the new religion which significantly altered ways in which early modern people understood themselves and the world. In the new worldview, Christians could no longer be saved by following the ritual practices

fostered by the Catholic Church (such as fasting, reciting ancient Latin prayers, endowing chantries and paying priests to say prayers for the dead), but could be redeemed by faith alone. This shifted the emphasis in the Christian faith from the communal to the individual: people no longer needed a priest to hear confession, but could confess their sins directly to God and gain forgiveness. They no longer only had access to the Bible in Latin, supplemented by the interpretations of a priest, but could hear or read it in their own language and thus make, and debate, their own interpretations. The teachings of the French theologian John Calvin were especially influential in England: he taught that governments were obligated to implement and enforce the will of God in the world, thus elevating the work of mankind in the divine plan.\textsuperscript{188} As the Reformation gathered momentum it resulted in the sacking of the monasteries, the turning out of monks and nuns from their cloisters, and the destruction of ‘idolatrous’ art works (statues, stained glass windows, reliquaries, and ornate altar-pieces) in cathedrals and churches across Europe. The ritual of the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper became commemoration rather than miracle, and the doctrine of transubstantiation was debated and finally abandoned, as was the idea of purgatory.\textsuperscript{189} This had a profound effect on the way people dealt with death: with no chance to save the souls of departed loved ones through prayer and donations to the church, people must have felt as if power over their fate had been taken from them. However, the overriding attitude of the Protestant reform was that the individual had more power and agency than previously: encouraging each person to communicate directly with God must have been a very powerful shift, breaking down the strict sense of hierarchy that had long held sway within the spirituality of the age.

Huge shifts were taking place in science too. The dominant model of the universe from the fourth century BC until the seventeenth century AD was the geocentric model (see Figure 1.): the Earth sat at the centre of the universe with the sun,

\textsuperscript{188} John Calvin’s seminal work of Protestant systematic theology, \textit{Institutio Christianae Religionis [Institutes of the Christian Religion]} was first published in Latin in 1536 by Thomam Platteru and Balthasarem Lasium.

\textsuperscript{189} Transubstantiation: the belief that the bread and wine literally transform into the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the sacred act of communion.

Purgatory: a place or state of suffering inhabited by souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before ascending to Heaven.
stars, and other planets circling around it. With the development of the heliocentric model by Nicolaus Copernicus in the sixteenth century, the generally-held view shifted to place the sun at the center of the Universe, with the planets (including Earth) and stars orbiting it. Moving from literal centre of the cosmos to being just part of a much larger structure must have challenged notions of the significance of humankind in the universe.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries were writing at a time when the communal worldview had undergone huge shifts, but as Raymond Williams’ model of culture emphasises, it is almost impossible to extinguish a tradition. It is important to remember that in England many of the key tenets of the Reformation were not new: such ideas had already been raised and explored by the teachings of theologian John Wycliffe in the fourteenth century. In his new book on the Reformation in England, Peter Marshall points out that the Reformation, while ‘profoundly destabilizing’, ‘was neither a detached and unheralded post-medieval arrival, nor simply a reaction against the religious culture of the Middle Ages. It was itself a flowering of late medieval developments, seeded and germinated in the political, cultural and religious soil of the decades around 1500’. Marshall’s study shows how the developments of the Reformation are explicable, since pre-

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Reformation religion was not not static or fixed, but ‘remarkably dynamic and diverse’. ¹⁹¹

There was still a huge sense of change, yet in the early modern age residual medieval ideologies still held considerable power. Despite the official Protestant stance of the Elizabethan era, there were still many plots to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with her Catholic cousin, Mary Queen of Scots: demonstrating the continued appeal of the old ways. In this environment, old and new modes of thinking were braided together, in spite of the huge schism of the Reformation. Indeed, the depth and violence of this schism perhaps intensify the braiding of residual with emergent: the speed at which the faith altered, coupled with the fact that trade and exploration grew exponentially — giving rise to a new merchant class, new exotic foods and cultural influences — and the growth of linguistic nuance (brought about via the translation of the Bible into English and the invention of the printing press) all contributed to an extreme tension between old and new ideas. In this environment the residual was still too recent, too ingrained, and too powerful to simply give way to the emergent.

The pervasive worldview of macrocosm and microcosm, and ideas surrounding God’s order, still had influence over Elizabethan society. The 1547 *Book of Homilies* describes the Chain of Being worldview:

> Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters, in a most excellent and perfect order. In Heaven, he hath appointed distinct and several orders and states of Archangels and Angels. In earth he hath assigned and appointed Kings, Princes, with other governors under them, in all good and necessary order. […] all


The early-fifteenth century radical group known as the Taborites, part of the following of the Bohemian religious reformer John Hus, provide a fairly extreme example of early dissent: they held all church buildings to be ‘place[s] of idolatry’, recommending people to flee to the mountains, and foresaw a time when Mass would be in the vernacular and all rich vestments and ornamented objects associated with the church would be destroyed. ‘Articles of Tabor’ (c. 1420), in Daniel Wiley, *Later Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1957).

¹⁹² A collection of sermons read aloud on Sundays.
manner of Beasts keep themselves in order: all the parts of the whole year, as Winter, Summer, Months, Nights and Days, continue in their order: [...] man himself also hath all his parts both within and without, as soul, heart, mind, memory, understanding, reason, speech, with all and singular corporal members of his body in a profitable, necessary, and pleasant order: every degree of people in their vocation, calling and office, hath appointed to them their duty and order: [...] and every one have need of other, so that in all things is to be lauded and praised the goodly order of God, without the which no house, no City, no Commonwealth can continue and endure, or last. For where there is no right order, there reigneth all abuse, carnal liberty, enormity, sin, and Babylonicall confusion.193

In my Introduction I cited Auerbach, who wrote that in Elizabethan drama, ‘the superstructure of the whole has been lost’ and drama now has ‘a specific human action at its centre, [and] derives its unity from that center’.194 It may be the case that the centre of human narrative has shifted, however, I would suggest that the superstructure is not totally lost but is finding new emphasis. As seen from the above homily, this superstructure still pervades the teachings of the church, and while the Reformation brought about huge changes it did not negate all that went before. Macrocosm, (superstructure), is still related to the microcosm (specific human action). Whether the former or the latter is emphasised, there continues to be a dual awareness of the two planes of existence, and the view of order in the world is thus much the same as in the medieval period: all things are still seen as interdependent, and harmony is sought after.

As discussed above, medieval drama engaged with ideas of order and disorder, and many similarities can be seen in that way that Shakespeare deals with similar themes, both on the macrocosmic and microcosmic level, in his plays. Many have noted the way in which the storm in *King Lear* functions both as literal bad


194 Auerbach, p. 323.
weather and as metaphor: both for the state of Lear’s mind and of the kingdom. In the early modern age, the concept of dividing these two aspects would be quite alien: just as the plagues of the sixteenth century were seen as divine punishment on a sinful people, reflecting the immorality of the age, natural disasters such as storms were also understood to be linked to the state of a kingdom and, in the case of Lear’s storm, the state of its ruler. Reinforcing the sense of something supernatural, beyond the norm, Kent confesses that he has never seen a storm so terrible:

[…] Since I was man,  
Such sheets of Fire, such bursts of horrid Thunder,  
Such groanes of roaring Winde, and Raine, I never  
Remember to have heard. Mans Nature cannot carry  
Th’affliction, nor the feare.  

Similarly in Macbeth, Lenox brings news in Act 2 Scene 3 that there has been a dreadful storm:

The Night ha’s been unruly:  
Where we lay, our Chimneys were blowne downe,  
And (as they say) lamentings heard i’th’Ayre;  
Strange Schreemes of Death,  
And Prophecying, with Accents terrible,  
Of dyre Combustion, and confus’d Events  
New hatch’d toth’ woeful time.  
The obscure Bird clamor’d the live-long Night.  
Some say, the Earth was feverous,

195 Quoting from the book of Samuel in the Bible, theological author Henoch Clapham wrote in his plague tract of 1603: ‘famine, sword and pestilence, are a trinitie of punishments prepared of the Lord, for consuming a people that have sinned against him’. Clapham, Henoch, An epistle discoursing upon the pestilence, 2d ed. (London, 1603), sig. B1v.

And did shake.\(^{197}\)
Immediately after this, King Duncan is found murdered. The horror of the act of regicide is echoed by the elements themselves in the ‘lamentings’, ‘clamor’ and ‘Strange Schreemes of Death’.

Shakespeare draws specific attention to the idea of degree through the words of Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*, linking the balance of the planets with the ordering of human life:

\begin{quote}
The Heavens themselves, the Planets, and this Centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
[...] But when the Planets
In evill mixture to disorder wander,
What Plagues and what portents, what mutiny?
What raging of the Sea? Shaking of Earth?
[...] Take but Degree away, untune that string,
And hearke what Discord follows: \(^{198}\)
\end{quote}

In Shakespeare’s comedies, too, ‘order’ is significant. The inversion of nature in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example, caused by the ongoing dissension between the fairy king and queen,\(^{199}\) results in the disruption of seasons, failed harvests, and humans becoming sick with ‘Rheumatick diseases’.*\(^{200}\) Twelfth Night* similarly begins with nature in turmoil and a shipwreck brought about by a storm.\(^{201}\) We also witness disorder and the inversion of social hierarchy in the duping of Malvolio and the gender reversal of Viola.

Both of these plays also draw upon details of the ecclesiastical calendar inherited from the Middle Ages, which incorporated a series of ‘safety valves’ or periods of

\(^{197}\) *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, ll. 802-11.


\(^{199}\) Oberon and Titania.


\(^{201}\) The link between human trouble (in this case, betrayal and revenge) and stormy weather is also explored in *The Tempest*. 
license where the reversal of the usually strict social order was encouraged for a brief period. Festivals including Shrove Tuesday, Misrule (Christmas – especially Twelfth Night), May Day, and Midsummer games often involved an invasion of the local churchyard with music, dancing, bawdy jokes, games, role-play and extravagant (or silly) costumes. As in the plays, this results in fun, games, and chaos, until the inversion is righted.202

Man as Microcosm

Man is a microcosm, or a little world, because he is an extract from all the stars and planets of the whole firmament, from the earth and the elements; and so he is their quintessence.

Paracelsus 203

As noted above, a concept central to the medieval worldview, and inherited by the early modern performer, was that of a human being as a microcosm: in an interconnected universe, men and women understood themselves as reflecting the order of the Chain of Being and the composition of the elements in miniature.204 Celestial bodies and astrological signs were thought to influence the body and its health: doctors and barber-surgeons would consult astrological medical charts to determine, for example, whether it was safe to bleed a patient at a particular

202 Traditions of the communal calendar will be explored in more detail below.

203 Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus, Archidoxies (c.1525), quoted in George Seldes, The Great Thoughts, Revised and Updated: From Abelard to Zola, from Ancient Greece to Contemporary America, the Ideas That Have Shaped the History of the World (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2011).

204 Andrzej Piotrowski also points out that the Church itself represented an image of the cosmos, depicting the places of Christ’s life, the calendar of the liturgical year and so on; the medieval mind was accustomed to thinking in terms of macrocosmic and microcosmic parallel.

time. In his *De vita libri tres (Three Books on Life)* Italian Platonist Marsilio Ficino (in the fifteenth century) made recommendations for health based upon the notion that the universe and all life is in unity. He further suggested that humans could potentially affect the influence of plants and stars over their health and wellbeing through the use of magic chants. Diagrams of the Zodiac Man – showing what parts of the body related to which zodiac sign – are common in medical treatises of the Middle Ages [see Figures 2 and 3].

As noted in my Introduction, the ideas of Galen regarding the four humours developed into a far reaching theory, and the term ‘disease’ referred to humoural imbalance from 1330 until the mid 1700s. Even before the fourteenth century

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**Figure 2.** *(above, left)* Zodiac Man, labelled ‘Homo signorum’, in *The Guild Book of the Barber Surgeons*, c. 1486.

**Figure 3.** *(above, right)* Zodiac Man, in John of Arderne, *Mirror of Phlebotomy and Practice of Surgery*, c. 1425-50.

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206 Marsilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres (Three Books on Life)* [1489], held at the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence.

the four humours were incorporated into the Christian worldview and linked to the idea that man represents the world in micro form: with each humour being analogous to a worldly element. Italian physician Shabbethai Donnolo in his tenth-century commentary *Sefer Hakhmoni*, writes on the popular view that man’s body resembles the material universe, and his soul resembles God.208 The four elements (air, water, fire, earth) correspond to four humours in the body: blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Based on this theory, people found causal connections between celestial bodies and human life in terms of physical health, as well as fortune, emotional wellbeing, and mental state.

This understanding of man as microcosm continued well into the early modern period and theatrical works of the time reflect this. As noted above, many of Shakespeare’s plays link the wider natural world with the inner turmoil of the characters. Humoural theory was also still prevalent: Thomas Nabbes’ masque, *Microcosmus*,209 depicts man being created with the four humours and a soul personified as Bellanima. In Shakespeare’s plays, tendencies towards a certain humoural imbalance are often linked with emotional states: in *Henry VI* Part II, Eleanor asks the chiding Duke of Gloucester ‘what, my Lord? Are you so chollericke / With Elianor, for telling but her dreame?’,210 and in *Julius Caesar* Brutus, arguing with Cassius, asks ‘Must I give way and roome to your rash Choller? […] Go shew your Slaves how Chollericke you are, / And make your Bondmen tremble’.211 Looking at the wider picture, however, we can see how it is possible to not only mark certain emotional upsets in terms of their humoural imbalances, but also to categorise the characters’ personalities by humoural traits. In her essay ‘Altogether governed by humours: The four ancient temperaments in


Shakespeare’, Caitlin Fahey discusses some examples: Hamlet, the Melancholy Prince; Sir John Falstaff, the Phlegmatic Knight; Lady Macbeth, the Choleric Villainess; and Viola, the Sanguine Heroine. 212

In the afternoon session of the first *Experiments* workshop we started to investigate the microcosm in more detail, starting with the four elements. 213 With a sequence of physical poses, 214 I asked the actors to explore Galenic medical theories psychophysically. Each of the four poses corresponded to an element and I therefore applied them to the four humours in the following way:

**Earth Pose (Melancholy, Saturn)** – this pose induces a lead-like heaviness that seems to easily correspond to a melancholic disposition.

**Water Pose (Phlegmatic, Venus/Moon)** – this pose links with the phlegmatic personality well, encouraging the sensation of passively flowing from one thought or action to the next.

**Fire Pose (Choleric, Mars)** – fire pose requires expending a lot of effort. This is for the choleric personality: full of passion, anger, and energy.

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213 See Appendix 5.

Air Pose (Sanguine, Jupiter) – this pose is breathy, light, and airy: corresponding to the carefree sanguine disposition.

After demonstrating these poses, I gave the performers speeches from four Shakespearean characters to explore from a humoral approach, using the elemental sequence. By using the corresponding pose as a preparatory exercise prior to speaking the text, the actors could try to access a somatic idea of a humoral state of imbalance before trying a speech. The exercise involves practicing the pose for long enough to feel the psychophysical effects, then launching into the speech while trying to maintain this feeling (e.g. the heaviness of the earth pose for Hamlet, or the energy of the fire pose for Hotspur).

I have used this exercise in several workshops before, with good feedback. There are, however, a couple of pitfalls to avoid. Firstly, it is possible for the modern actor to perceive this approach as simplifying and limiting. I found it important to encourage continued engagement with the dual perspective of macrocosm/general and microcosm/specific. Some actors find this more instinctive than others.215

Secondly, there is the possibility of feeling that this approach is only applicable to works such as those of Shakespeare, since he wrote with this medical ideology of the four humours in mind. After trying this for each of the poses/character-types, we also tried applying the technique to contemporary monologues which the actors had brought in. I asked them to choose a pose to try as a somatic ‘springboard’ into the speech, and then to try an opposing one. I also asked them to remember the planes of existence (Earth/Heaven/

215 See Appendix 5.
Hell) and the pull of these opposing forces that we had previously explored.

In sharing the results of the exercise some interesting character choices arose: sometimes what appeared to be the most obvious element to use for a character was not the most effective. Jamie’s character (the angry Jimmy Porter from John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger*),\(^{216}\) for example, seemed to him to be obviously choleric and fiery, but when he showed us the phlegmatic, water version we found this to be much more sinister, terrifying, and powerful. This foray into contemporary texts with the elements demonstrated that the exercise is easily applicable to modern texts as a tool in rehearsal, and whether or not a writer or practitioner understands the background to the concept of the four humours, the parallel concept of the four elements still provides a basic language drawing on the natural world that we can all relate to.

Whether using elements in approaching classical or modern texts, one key potential that this approach opens up is the opportunity for actors to escape their usual pattern of energy and move beyond their own physicality. For those who are usually, say, of an earth disposition, an element such as fire may be challenging and help them to expand their range.\(^{217}\)


\(^{217}\) The elements can be used in a similar way to the work of Rudolf Laban, who devised the movement language of the Basic Efforts to describe and practise the different ways that people can move: see Dick McCaw (ed.), *The Laban Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2011).

Indeed, some drama schools do employ the use of elements in various ways in modern actor training, often through movement rather than a sequence of stationary poses. I have not yet experimented with which is more effective but this could be an interesting area of further study.
Actor Jamie noted that since performers might have natural affiliations themselves with a particular element, it could be useful to be aware of these not only in terms of expanding one’s range but also in terms of learning what one may need to work on to become a more well-rounded performer.\textsuperscript{218} For example, a choleric / fire-type of person might be able to lose rationality more quickly, and be spontaneous onstage, but also liable to lose control, whereas an air-type might be more ‘heady’ and find it harder to let go and trust the body. A particularly interesting thought was that practising the poses with this awareness might enable the actor to work on achieving more balance in their own selves. Such overlapping of professional and personal, to me, in some way echoes early approaches to storytelling, where medieval pageant plays were taken on by guilds according to the relevance of the story to their trade and skillset, and where early modern actors had roles written for their ‘type’. Today, however, a key requirement of the actor is versatility, and so the awareness of one’s type becomes useful in a different way: to move beyond it, rather than embrace it, in order to effectively embody a character and tell a story onstage.\textsuperscript{219}

\textbf{Approaches to Movement through Iconography and Early Dance}

The standard personification of angels, saints, and heavenly beings as standing upright and tall and of miserable, sinful people as heavy and downcast is part of the iconography of medievalism, inherited by following ages. It is still a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{218} Littlewood, \textit{Experiments}.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{219} It is also possible to use elements as a means of actioning or finding beats in a text: moving from one imbalance to another to find the quality of energy needed in a particular moment. This becomes more complex and there is the potential for over-intellectualising such an application; however, a continued return to physicalisation of the elements should combat this.
\end{flushright}
recognisable symbolic language to us today and can potentially feed into movement exercises for modern performers.

When exploring early drama in a workshop with undergraduate students in the Theatre Department at Warwick University, I asked the students to move around the room with a neutral stance and gait. I then invited them to embody the following (one at a time, in the following order):

- Human
- Vice
- Demon/Devil
- Human
- Virtue
- Angel

Interestingly, embodying human movement was the most challenging. A clear idea of virtue and vice, and an even clearer idea of angel and devil, emerged in the student’s posture, gait, and appearance. The majority chose an upward posture and energy with the virtuous characters and a heavy, downwards energy for the demonic figures (although not all). All, however, had a serenity and smoothness to their movement with the virtuous figures, slowing down; similarly all of the devil-like characters were spiky, angular, and unpredictable in their movement.

There was not any discussion before this exercise nor any examination of medieval iconography. The students were acting instinctively and imaginatively to very simple and stripped down concepts, and a clear language of movement emerged. It raised the

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question for me of what can be learned from early iconography about forms of movement that are potentially ingrained in our culture’s communal psyche?

As can be seen in the examples below (Figures 4-8), devils are generally depicted as lower than angels. They often have squat-like stances, are heavy-set and dark in colour, whereas the angels and saintly figures are often upright, bright, and inclining their faces towards the sky.

The devils are also often depicted in chaotic, angular positions, while angels and saints have more poise, grace, and softness to their stances. There is a link between these ideas and Renaissance dance theory and the movements of the court masque. There were two main types of dance in the early Renaissance: the Basse Danse, which was grounded, slow, and serene, with the feet never leaving the ground, and the Haute Danse, which was lively, including jumps, kicks, hops, and leaps.\textsuperscript{221} The latter was often associated with the entrance of demons or furies in French tradition, with the chaotic nature of the movement lending itself to the traditional forms associated with the demonic. In Elizabethan England we have La Volta, a risqué type of Haute Danse which involved the man vaulting his lady partner into the air with his thigh on her behind. There is a painting of Queen Elizabeth dancing La Volta with the Earl of Leicester, but nonetheless the dance was considered vulgar. The early Basse Dance form evolved into the Pavane, a dignified processional dance which displayed the elite lords and ladies in their finery. The movements of the dance are slow, stately, and majestic, although the music may have added a sense of celebration and joyousness: Melusine Wood points out that the early pavanes in England were written in a jolly galliard rhythm.\textsuperscript{222}

There was undoubtedly a shared bodily understanding across the gamut of society that allowed for expression in movement of the kind of iconography that is seen in medieval and early modern artwork. This is also expressed in the style of music


\textsuperscript{222} Melusine Wood, \emph{Historical Dances (Twelfth to Nineteenth Century)} (Binsted: Dance Books Ltd, 2000, first published 1952) pp. 40-41.
used to represent or announce devils and angels in the medieval pageant plays (as discussed above). Similar ways of expressing the devilish versus the divine can also be seen with the classical tradition: for example in comparing the satyr plays which were filled with bawdy humour, chaotic pranks, and drunken merriment, with the tragedies which were solemn, dignified, and high in style. This tradition, mixed with (and then dominated by) early Christian iconography, had a strong

Figure 4 (top left). Lucifer being judged by Christ in majesty, *Livre de la Vigne nostre Seigneur*, France, c. 1450-1470.
**Figure 5 (top right).** Devils perched on beast’s snout, detail of part of the Wenhamston Doom painting, St Peter’s Church Wenhamston, England, c. 1500-1520.
**Figure 6 (centre right).** Devil (detail) from ‘Heaven and Hell’, Italy, c. 1432.
**Figure 7 (bottom left).** Archangel (detail), apse half-dome of the Basilica of Sant’Angelo.
Figure 8 (bottom right). Detail of praying angel, oil painting, Bavarian National Museum, Germany, c.1330.
influence over the popular tradition going forward, particularly in the communal celebration of holy festivals out of which emerged the Biblical theatrical tradition.

**Communal Rhythm**

The communal rhythm of both elite and base within society’s spectrum, in both the medieval and early modern eras, was replete with holidays – holy days – where the whole community would enjoy feasts and a variety of sports and entertainments. Theatrical tradition emerged out of these celebrations in the medieval age, and retained much of the communal rhythm and spirit that characterised holiday activities, as well as the hodge-podge of different influences involved. Many such festivities were Christianised versions of ancient pagan rituals, utilising some of the same traditions and sacred places within communities. In the adoption of pagan systems, buildings and traditions into the Christian movement there was an allowance for different ideas and viewpoints: an ‘interplay of perspectives in arriving at “narrative truth”’. 223

Whether it was theological, literary, or social narrative, narrative accrual was a key feature of Biblical style in the medieval era. Jerome Bruner in ‘Narrative Construction of Reality’ puts forward a general view of narrative (throughout human history) as cumulative, with new stories always building on older ones, negotiating various versions, and building harmony out of chaos. The Christian narrative of the medieval period functioned in this way. Rather than the overarching truth of the Christian macrocosm somehow limiting narrative or ritual potential, it instead made harmony out of disparate and conflicting viewpoints, allowing interchange between and integration of different perspectives. Pope Gregory I wrote a letter to Bishop Mellitus in the sixth century, suggesting that ‘he should be [sic] no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather […] convert [them] from the worship of demons to the service of the true God. Thus, seeing that their places of worship are not destroyed, the people will […] come to places

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familiar and dear to them in acknowledgement and worship of the true God’. Barber points out that the medieval churchyard ‘was certainly a center for merrymaking, partly because the church had taken the place of the pagan fane which dances once honoured, partly because the churchyard was in any case the parish meeting place’. Churches were often built upon the sites of wells and springs, since in pagan ideology the veneration of life-giving water sources was a deep-set tradition, and archaeological evidence shows that churches were often built upon older pagan worship sites such as stone circles or Roman temples.

It was not only locations that were newly consecrated but traditional and ritual actions were absorbed and adapted as well. Pagan fertility rites designed to bring about good harvests bear striking similarity to the church blessing of land, boats and ploughs and the thanksgiving for the harvest bounty. The ancient Celtic and Anglo-Saxon practice of tree-dressing – leaving offerings to tree spirits – may have translated into Christmas tree decorating. Pagans also used fir tree branches to decorate homes during the Winter Solstice, and a similar practice was performed by the Romans for the corresponding festival of Saturnalia. The Beating the Bounds ceremony was adopted by Christianity and traditionally held during Rogationtide. Townsfolk, led by men of the church, would walk the parish boundary to bless the lands and share knowledge of where the boundary lay. The festival may have originated with Terminalia, a May-time Roman festival.

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225 Barber, pp. 29-30.

226 In Teignmouth, Devon, the church of St Michael’s is one such example. Similarly in Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear, the fourteenth-century church of St Michael and All Angels has a Saxon doorway – all that remains of the original Christian building – and the main floor sits upon large whinstone boulders that may have formed part of a Neolithic stone circle or burial cairn. Under the tower lie some very large Roman stones, possibly originally part of a temple. See ‘Our History’, St Michael and All Angels Church website <http://www.stmichaels-hls.org.uk/visit-us/our-history> [accessed 7 March 2017].

227 The fifth week after Easter, which includes Rogation Sunday and the three days before Ascension Day.
honouring Terminus, god of boundaries. Some argue that many Hallowe’en traditions similarly evolved from the Celtic festival Saimhain, meaning ‘summer’s end’, and it has been suggested that pagan fertility rites of springtime were adapted into the Easter festival, maintaining harmless symbolisms such as the egg. In the 8th-century work De Temporum Ratione (The Reckoning of Time), Bede states that during Eosturmōnath (the equivalent of April), pagan Anglo-Saxons used to hold feasts in honour of goddess Ėostre, but that by his time this ancient tradition had been replaced by the Christian Paschal month, celebrating the resurrection of Christ. In Italy, the shrine to Phrygian goddess Cybele was situated on today’s Vatican Hill, and the cult celebrations in spring commemorated the lover of Cybele, Attis, who was born of a virgin, died and was reborn annually. This rival three day festival caused conflict between pagan and Christian at first, but eventually the popular resurrected god myth (like many others) was absorbed by that of Jesus Christ and the shrine was closed.

May celebrations continued to be important for medieval communities as the Roman festival of Flora (celebrating Flora, goddess of flowers and fertility), the Gaelic festival of Beltaine, and other early-spring festivals were integrated into the liturgical calendar with the celebration of Whitsun or Pentecost. The

228 The Roman festivities included punishments of beatings and sacrifices, which endured in the later ritual in the form of hitting landmarks with birch, and sometimes also with striking young boys and girls to imprint locations on successive generations.

229 The date of Easter is also governed by the phases of the moon: a typically pagan feature.


231 The Romans identified Cybele with the Greek Rhea, mother of gods, daughter of Gaia (Mother Earth): calling Cybele Magna Mater, the Great Mother. From examples like this it is clear that religious beliefs continuously undergo some level of appropriation and adjustment as they move across cultures, and that archetypal modes and figures can speak to a variety of peoples.

232 Following measures taken by the emperor Theodosius against such cults in 391 and 392.

233 There was also the pagan Welsh version of the May festival, Calen Mai.
medieval worker enjoyed three weeks of holiday, and the May-time festivities were by all accounts rowdy and colourful affairs: wrestling matches, games, the planting of May bushes, competitions, plays, songs, dancing and processions were all included in a lively celebration of the coming of Spring. The significance of the Whitsun occasions is depicted in medieval Arthurian literature, such as the works of Chrétien de Troyes, and the Welsh tale of Geraint. Pentecost is also mentioned in Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte D'Arthur* as a time where the knights took their yearly chivalric oaths at the high feast. The change of season encouraged the renewal of vows as well as the anticipation of fertility and growth. The earlier Gaelic festivities similarly involved strong elements of change and transition: *Beltaine*, like *Samhain* six months before, was a liminal border-day when the spirits were closer than usual and change could be affected through spells and rituals.

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235 Anon. ‘Geraint and Enid’, *The White Book of Rhydderch* (c. 1350), the National Library of Wales, Peniarth MS 4.

236 ‘The king stablished all his knights, and them that were of lands not rich he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousity nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no mean to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy […]. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost’. Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur* [1485], ed. John Matthews (London: Cassell & Co., 2000), Book 3, Chapter 15, p. 98.

The experience and exploration of liminality was a key part of rituals and festivals. In medieval May festivities, the feast of fools was a highly popular folk tradition which involved a reversal of the traditional hierarchy in the crowning of a commoner as a Lord of Misrule. This activity is described in detail in the sixteenth-century *Anatomie of Abuses* by English pamphleteer Philip Stubbs:

The wild heads of the parish flocking together, choose them a grand captain of mischief, whom they ennoble with the title of Lord of Misrule; and him they crown with great solemnity, and adopt for their king. This king anointed chooseth forth twenty, forty, threescore or an hundred lusty guts, like to himself, to wait upon his lordly majesty, and to guard his noble person... Thus all things set in order, then have they their hobby horses, their dragons, and other antiques, together with their bawdy pipers, and thundering drummers, to strike up the devil’s dance withall. Then march this heathen company towards the church, their pipers piping, their drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, their bells jangling, their handkerchiefs fluttering about their heads like mad men, their hobby horses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the throng [...]. Then the foolish people they look, they stare, they laugh, they flee, and mount upon the forms and pews to see these goodly pageants solemnized [...] and so forth onto the church yard, where they have commonly their summer-halls, their bowers, arbours, and banqueting-houses set up, wherein they feast, banquet, and dance all that day, and paradventure all that night too.

By this time, Puritan ideas had emerged and such raucous merrymaking attracted disapproval. The Lord of Misrule had also been a staple part of courtly Christmas entertainments – responsible for organising masques and banquets – but the tradition ceased after the death of Edward VI in 1553. The crowning of the Lord of Misrule was another tradition extending back into ancient times, being a feature of Roman Saturnalia. Early records (such as second century writer Lucian’s

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238 See also Chapter 5.
Saturnalia) suggest that the merry reign of the king of the revels ended with human sacrifice on the altar of Saturn. In the Middle Ages, the sacrificial elements were either removed or replaced with the more moderate practice of burning an effigy. Despite the changes, the festivals and holy days were part of the ancestral consciousness of the community harking to an era pre-Christianisation, and part of the continuing rhythm of the community. As the accommodating early Christian movement absorbed communal cultural patterns into a new overarching ideology, residual and emergent ideas seemingly sat well together rather than causing significant friction or disruption.

The resultant concoction of pagan and Christian rites and traditions was still an important part of post-medieval life: as E. K. Chambers writes, ‘Tudor kings and queens came and went about their public affairs in a constant atmosphere of make-believe, with a sybil lurking in every courtyard and gateway’. Royal progresses through the realm were occasions for extravagant displays of pageantry, filled with hagiography, allegory and fairytale. For Elizabeth I’s visit to Kenilworth Castle, Earl of Leicester Robert Dudley put on a programme of hunting, banquets, fireworks and theatrical amusements including the Lady of the Lake emerging to offer the queen a sword symbolising Excalibur, as well as a water pageant involving a figure of Triton riding an eighteen foot long mermaid


As previously noted, even within Christian theology itself there was much debate and difference of opinion which was widely tolerated. Grant asks why ecclesiastical authorities did not insist on a uniform interpretation of the account of creation in the Book of Genesis, for example, answering that (as Saint Augustine himself realised), it would be dangerous to the faith to uphold any one answer so rigidly that even if scientific arguments found it to be false, the church would be loath to abandon its position. Up until the time of Galileo in the seventeenth century this approach was taken seriously, and commentators such as Thomas of Aquinas usually included a variety of opinion (see Grant, The Medieval Cosmos, p. 149).

and nymphs on a moving island. Barber points out the way in which ‘the whole conception of gathering in the powers reigning in the countryside to yield them to Elizabeth, and of Elizabeth vivifying the countryside by her magic presence, has affinities with the traditional lustral visit of mummery lord and lady, and dedicates a chapter in his book *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* to discussing the ways in which Elizabethan comedy had the tendency ‘to be a saturnalia, rather than to represent saturnalian experience’. In the Elizabethan age, there was still a sense of true celebration, participation and involvement to the saturnalian and other ritual traditional aspects of the plays. This is because of their theatrical heritage, and because ‘distinctions between life and art, the stage and to the world, which are obvious for our epoch were not altogether settled for Elizabethans’. Shakespeare keeps many of the magical elements of ritual while simultaneously bringing out the human aspect of a given event or circumstance, demonstrating that there is no necessity to make a choice between ritual versus human, magical versus realistic, archetypal versus psychological. Shakespeare rather communicates on more than one level by utilising and developing the forms inherited from the celebratory, holidaying, traditional rituals of the medieval Christian and pre-Christian heritage, giving a sense of true ceremony and festivity, rather than a false depiction of this style.

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243 Barber, p. 32. Barber’s book traces the movement in theatrical tradition from social into artistic form and the emergence of the professional theatre of Shakespeare from the amateur holiday-making theatre of the Middle Ages: ‘modifying a ceremonial, ritualistic conception of human life to create a historical, psychological conception’ (p. 15).

244 Barber, p. 36. Saturnalia was an ancient Roman festival in honour of deity Saturn, held on 17 December of the Julian calendar and later expanded with festivities through to 23 December.

245 Barber goes on to note that ‘such distinctions are not settled for us either in areas where new circumstances are leading to the development of new artistic forms, notably in the case of television’ (p. 36).
The Medieval May Festival I directed at Brockhampton Estate in May 2014 embraced the coming together of old and new, residual and emergent, and sought to create a celebratory, participatory, and Saturnalian experience. The outdoor elements of the festival were particularly geared towards this. Robin Hood plays and games, a St George pageant, and a Knights of the Round Table combat display drew on a shared understanding and sense of Englishness. The theatrical activities were inclusive, universal, suitable for all ages, and the boundary between player and spectator was blurred: performers invited visitors to take part in games, try on armour, march in the St George procession and to get involved verbally with the Robin Hood competitions, cheering on their hero and deriding the villain.

Despite the fact that the hierarchical structure of medieval society no longer exists, disallowing this type of inversion of authority that would have been a part of original May-time festivities, the spirit of community was strong, and a breaking down of authority existed in some way in the sense that there was not a strict divide between audience and performer, and in the way in which children were allowed as much (perhaps more) input than adults into the games and activities.

It became evident through staging the Medieval May Festival that there is a strong shared affection for the stories of Robin Hood, the Knights of the Round Table, and St George and the Dragon that has remained part of English national identity since the medieval era. The first two examples in particular have had extraordinary longevity in their popularity. Each story embodies a powerful archetype: the resistance of a corrupt authority in Robin Hood, the building of a utopian future and pursuit of an ideal in Arthurian Legend, and the

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246 Medieval May Festival (2014).
fight of good against evil, light against darkness and rescue of the innocent in St George and the Dragon. As Stephen Knight and Thomas Ohlgren write of Robin Hood:

six hundred years is a long time for a hero to endure…. Only King Arthur of the medieval heroes has had such longevity, but there are striking differences. One is that where Arthur represents authority under some serious and ultimately tragic form of pressure, the Robin Hood tradition always presents, in many varied forms, resistance to authority … [Furthermore], where the noble adventures of the Round Table have often been enshrined in monumental prose and verse in many a prestigious genre, the stories of Robin Hood have always been more ephemeral — songs, short plays, proverbs, and place names…

In terms of the symbolism of rebellion and the ephemeral nature of the stories, as well as the historical tradition of linking May-time festivities with the character of Robin, the tradition of Robin Hood is undoubtedly more suited to the May festivities than the Arthurian legends. Nonetheless, the recognisable nature and much-loved status of both traditions meant that today’s audiences readily engaged with these centuries-old traditions. We maintained the participatory, game-like elements of the Robin Hood plays and added these also to our King Arthur-themed entertainments through using the structure of a competitive tournament, and there was a true sense of communal celebration in the active participation of the audience. While the outdoors, the medieval theme, and the festival atmosphere undoubtedly all contributed to the audience’s ability to engage in this way, I think that there are elements of this active, communal,

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celebratory environment experienced here that can still be drawn on in modern theatre practice generally: whether through breaking the fourth wall, employing recognisable archetypes, using participatory or immersive approaches, or building on older structures of saturnalia and celebration in creating new narratives.

The Residual Medieval in the Modern World

There are undoubtedly elements of an earlier style of storytelling and worldview with which we can still connect today, and it seems useful to remind ourselves of some of the unexpected links that we share with our medieval ancestors in the wider world and reflected in theatre and the arts. The imaginative medieval ideas about the harmony of the universe and the ways in which this manifests have often been ridiculed in the modern age. However, there are some concepts which have recently been given new and unexpected credibility. For example, the music of the spheres concept has been revisited:

recent research with radiotelescopes revealed that stars and planets produced their own unique tones. So do the electrons in an atom and the long strings of nucleic acid in DNA. All relate to each other in the same harmonic proportions once laid out by Pythagoras in days long before radio astronomy, the Hubble telescope or computers. In short, the entire Universe makes music.²⁴⁸

Similarly, links have been drawn between recent science and the cosmology of Dante Alighieri. His fourteenth-century work, the Divine Comedy, reflected current cosmological ideas, marked by an Aristotelian influence, and yet Dante paints a remarkably modern picture of a four-dimensional world as the unconscious result of trying to reconcile Aristotelian cosmology with the Christian vision: visible and invisible, matter and spirit, temporality and eternity. In an article entitled ‘Dante e Einstein nella tre-sfera’, theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli has posited that the universe Dante describes prefigures the theories of

²⁴⁸ Devlin, p. 102.
Albert Einstein, in that it is described as a ‘three-sphere’ or hypersphere, that is, a sphere inserted within four-dimensional space.\textsuperscript{249}

An understanding of the human body as more than the sum of its parts also has roots in ancient practice and is resurfacing today in the medical field, where the popularity of alternative holistic therapies has been growing. The idea that ancient practices such as Chinese medicine are primitive is subsiding somewhat, and the notion that ancient wisdom is valuable is becoming more widespread in the Western world. Practices such as Chinese medicine which use terminology of the elements, imbalance and balance, astrological inferences, and natural approaches to healing are more common in the West now, as more holistic approaches are gaining popularity.

In terms of ritual festivities and communal events we have lost a great deal. But some ritual festivals are still celebrated, and some are making a comeback, such as the festival of Beltaine and Candlemas processions,\textsuperscript{250} suggesting an ongoing need for communal celebration and connecting with each other, with nature, and with a sense of something greater than us. As anthropologist Pauline Bambry points out:

\begin{quote}
[Beltaine] marked [ancient people’s] connection not just to nature but to each other. That need to belong to something or someone hasn’t changed. We can be just as isolated living in the city or in a town as the ancient Britons were in their round houses.\textsuperscript{251}
\end{quote}

Despite the fact that we have largely lost touch with the power of storytelling that emerges from the integrated belief system of the macrocosm/microcosm worldview, which permeated society, there does remain some residual power. Furthermore, there is new power to be found in the interplay between old and


\textsuperscript{250} Beltaine has been making a comeback in various places across the United Kingdom, with the biggest revival taking place in Edinburgh; Candelmas processions have become popular again in churches since the mid-twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{251} Pauline Bambry, quoted in Victoria Lambert, ‘Beltane: Britain’s ancient festival is making a comeback’, \textit{The Telegraph}, 27 April 2012.
new, residual and emergent. For example, in the medieval era the Christian figural view of human life blunted tragic climaxes on earth, since the spiritual life was so apparent and real, and held more importance than earthly life. However, this schema lost its certainty in the sixteenth century due to the schism in the church. As narratives shifted slightly to become a little more focused on man’s earthly existence, the uncertainty that followed this change meant the potential for more drama, more powerful tragedy, and higher-stakes narratives. In this time, the ideologies of the medieval period still held some sway, and the tensions between the old worldview and the new uncertainties created brilliant drama onstage as well as generating creativity in other areas: from language growth, to global exploration, to the visual arts and beyond.

Today, in a secular, multi-faith, multi-cultural and global world we have even more uncertainty and jostling views: thanks to increased geographical fluidity, as well as mass-media and the internet we are receivers of a multitude of influences and viewpoints. While moving forward with rapid development of technologies, art forms, scientific discoveries, social structures and so on we are simultaneously in our culture exhibiting trends that go full-circle. In relation to his concept of narrative accrual, Bruner points out that ‘it is with a sense of belonging to this canonical past that permits us to form our own narratives of deviation while maintaining complicity with the canon’. It seems to me that we are largely unaware, perhaps even ashamed, of our complicity with our ancient and medieval canonical past, and that understanding more about it may highlight to us not only where we have come from (artistically, socially, and philosophically), but also reveal something about where we are heading. Embracing and exploring the tensions between residual and emergent seems key both to the creation of dynamic new work in theatre, as well as to better understanding the world around us. Observing the flexible, amalgamative, dichotomous style of early theatre and employing similar approaches in practice today may help practitioners to better achieve a multi-faceted style, where residual and emergent, sublime and ordinary, universal and specific can exist simultaneously, sparking great drama full of

252 See Auerbach, p. 317.
253 Auerbach, p. 318.
254 Bruner, p. 20.
possibilities. The element of flexibility and dichotomy is key: as shall be explored further in relation to time and space in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2

Time and Space: Hierophany and Imaginative Flexibility

Time is a tatter and it is sporadic. It solidifies like a crystal or vanishes like a vapor. It is an unintegrable multiplicity, endowed, here and there, with unities.

Michel Serres.\textsuperscript{255}

Time and space in dramatic performance have been negotiated in a myriad of different ways. In the ancient Greek theatre, practitioners tried to reconcile physical time and space with dramatic time and space by using the Unities of Time, Place and Action.\textsuperscript{256} In this convention, the stage usually signified a single place and the plot tended to cover the events of one day, simplifying the relationship between actual and dramatic space and time. In other traditions, dramatists have employed techniques to create a fluidity of time and place in order to widen the scope of their narratives. A huge variety of staging systems have been created to support their approaches: from the pageant wagons of medieval cycle dramas, to the revolving \textit{periaktoi} (used most consistently by sixteenth-century Italian and the Baroque theatre); from perspective scenery of Inigo Jones and the seventeenth century, to the evolution of technical elements such as lighting, sound design and multi-media techniques.

One of the best examples of flexible time and space in drama, however, comes from the bare boards of the early modern stage and the plays of Shakespeare. Granville Barker points out that Shakespeare ‘required a fluid stage where space


\textsuperscript{256} Interestingly, the Greek drama as analysed in Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics} originally only called for a Unity of Plot: Aristotle mentions the Unity of Time quite briefly as a tendency rather than as a rule. The Unity of Space is not mentioned. It was much later, during the Renaissance, that the ideal of the Three Unities as providing perfect dramatic structure flourished, and this was then upheld more strictly during the neoclassical period of the late-seventeenth and the eighteenth century, becoming part of the move towards realism onstage. See also: Manfred Pfister, \textit{The Theory and Analysis of Drama} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 249ff.
and time changed freely and quickly’, enjoying a freedom ‘that the stage of visual illusion has inevitably lost’. In a theatre where illusion was created with imagination, a quest for the realistic or picturesque (such as that which characterised most nineteenth-century theatre) did not limit elements of space and time in the action. The resurgence of a more symbolic and stylised mode of storytelling in Europe in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries with practitioners and designers such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, Adolphe Appia, and Antonin Artaud again embraced the ideal of Shakespeare’s flexible space and time. More recently, the development of film and television has created a sense of fluid drama where spatial and temporal elements can change as quickly as necessary for the storyline. Modern audiences are thus very accustomed to changing spaces, as well as to time which jumps, bends, goes in reverse, or breaks with chronology through ‘flash-backs’ and ‘flash-forwards’. There are even parallels in recent science: for example, the theories of Albert Einstein introduced to the modern scientific world the idea of relativity: the theory that spacetime is not absolute. In this way, our sense of time and space has again become more flexible and fluid: bearing similarities to earlier ideologies which favoured narrative and thematic approaches over linear, geographical and chronological ideas of time and space.

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258 Einstein’s work offers an excellent example of recent theory that unconsciously reflects ancient ideas. In his theory of relativity, temporal duration is dependant on the observer and thus simultaneity is a relative concept. This concept is called time dilation. A similar concept also exists in terms of space: length contraction. The theory that time and space can change depending on perspective has parallels with the (pre-)Christian idea that it is possible to exist, as God does, outside earthly time. While the two ideas are not directly related, they each reflect a flexible attitude towards time and space, promoting the notion that one’s individual experience is not the only way of understanding temporal duration and spatiality.
**Time: Non-Linear, Polyscenic, and Eternal**

When negotiating such an unwieldy concept as time, it is useful to consider some distinguishing binary terms. Michel Serres has pointed out several time-orientated binaries: episodic versus linear, momentary versus everlasting, discontinuous versus continuous. While he notes that binary options like these are reductive and do not fully account for time’s complexities, they can serve as useful terms in the study of how dramatists utilise and manipulate time in their plays. Interestingly, much of Shakespeare’s work tends towards an engagement with all of these binaries in a multitude of (often contradictory) ways to achieve a variety of effects: an approach inherited from the medieval tradition. The Mystery Cycle plays of the Middle Ages use episodic storytelling arranged in chronological order, telling a story with eternal implications. A sixteenth-century description of the Whitsun cycle pageant wagons at Chester by Archdeacon Robert Rogers shows the way in which they employed a simultaneous, polyscenic style in a city-wide performance:

> Every company had his pagiant […] a high scaffold with two rowmes, a higher and a lower, upon four wheeles […] They begane first at the abay gates, and when the first pagiante was played it was wheeled to the highe crosse before the mayor, and so to every streete; and soe every streete had a pagiant playinge before them at one time, till all the pagiantes for the daye apppoynted weare played: and when one pagiant was neere ended, worde was broughte from streete to streete, that soe they mighte come in place thereof excedinge orderlye, and all the streetes have theire pagientes afore them all at one time playeinge togeather.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ This has been discussed by Jennifer Pacenza in the chapter ““None do Slacken, None Can Die”: Puns and Embodied Time in Donne and Shakespeare”, in Judith H. Anderson and Jennifer C. Vaught (eds), *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 61-84 (p. 65).

Within the plays, time is frequently presented in a thematic manner: linking past and present. Jesus’ sacrifice and redemption of humankind, for example, is eternal and thus, in some respects, the moment of his crucifixion is everlasting. In medieval church art, Jesus usually appears at the Last Judgement with still-bleeding wounds (see Figure 9). Linking past, present and future occurs in the Biblical storytelling tradition and thus is an important feature of the medieval theatre born of this inheritance. Events across time are linked through symbolism, archetype and parallels,\(^{261}\) and prophetic foretelling of events are fulfilled in later Gospel narratives. In exploring themes and ideas related to the divine plan, medieval dramatic narrative typically spans huge periods, depicted either literally (as in the cycle plays, which show the history of the world from Creation to Doomsday), or imaginatively, as in morality plays which draw attention to Creation or to the Crucifixion, setting the events of an individual’s life in the larger context of God’s plan.\(^{262}\)

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\(^{261}\) Such as Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his only son Isaac as a foreshadowing of God the Father’s sacrifice of Jesus.

\(^{262}\) At the opening of *Mankynde*, Mercy introduces the protagonist in the context of the divine plan while also reminding the audience of their own redeemed state in saying: ‘yt may be seyde and veryfyede, mankynde was dere bought / By the pytuose deth of Jhesu he hade hys remedye’. ‘Mankynde’, in Greg Walker (ed.) *Medieval Drama: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), pp. 258-79, ll. 9-10.
As noted in Chapter 1, the Christian worldview incorporates the material and the spiritual; the divine aspect allows interaction and dialogue across material differences such as time and location, creating a depth of meaning that a linear understanding of the world does not allow. The duality of Divine God-Time and Historical Human-Time is not unique to the Christian worldview but also exists in other ancient theatrical traditions, including Greek drama and many oriental traditions, where immortal gods are believed to exist alongside humans. Within British theatrical heritage there is of course a major influence from the ancient Greeks, combined with the Judeo-Christian inheritance to create an amalgamative storytelling tradition that is multi-faceted and complex. However, the Judeo-Christian takes over from the Greek and has several additional elements. While the gods of ancient Greece largely inhabit the same universe or dimension as humans, living on Mount Olympus and frequently getting involved in human affairs, the God of the Biblical tradition resides almost completely outside of Historical Human-Time, only intervening in very specific and significant ways. Auerbach describes the way in which the action of classical writers such as Homer happens all on a horizontal plane (with time, even for supernatural figures, being experienced by-and-large on a human scale and often with no connection of events), while the Biblical style presents meaning as being bestowed by a supra-historical creator being. \(^{263}\) There is a driving sense of purpose in the Biblical tradition which the ancient Greek pantheistic religion lacks: with an omniscient and omnibenevolent Judeo-Christian God, Divine God-Time becomes the primary way of understanding the world, while Historical Human-Time is merely a temporary illusion.

Visual art of the period also demonstrates a non-linear attitude to storytelling: polyscenic image narratives show, for example, the life of man in a series of panels, or depicting (as in church art) Creation alongside other past Biblical events and images prefiguring Judgement Day. By drawing associations across time and space in such a clear manner, this style of visual storytelling allows for a complexity of thought that we have in some ways lost.

\(^{263}\) Auerbach, pp. 3-23.
It was this flexibility towards time that Shakespeare inherited, employing various uses of and approaches to time in his work.\textsuperscript{264} These techniques include:

**Jumping or skipping through time (synoptic mode):** for example, in *The Winter’s Tale*, Time features as a character that enters in the middle of the play and gives a speech announcing the passing of sixteen years. The figure asks that the audience

\begin{quote}
Impute it not a crime
To me, or my swift passage, that I slide
Ore sixteen yeeres and leave the growth untride
Of that wide gap, since it is in my powre
To orethrow Law, and in one selfe-borne howre
To plant, and ore-whelme Custome.\textsuperscript{265}
\end{quote}

**Compression and conflation:** Shakespeare’s chronicle plays cover generations of wars and other events, compressing them into action-packed sequences.

**Non-linear or non-realistic timeframes:** in Shakespeare’s writing, the creation of an effective dramatic structure sometimes comes at the expense of a realistic depiction of time passing. The paradoxical nature of time in the play *Othello*, for

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{264} It is also interesting to compare Shakespeare’s approach with other playwrights of the era: for example, the plays of university-educated Ben Jonson are more of the classical tradition, while another university graduate Christopher Marlowe finds inspiration in the Biblical tradition with his inverted medieval morality play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (first performed c.1592), depicting the events of the adult life of the title character, spanning twenty-four years.

example, has been discussed at length by many critics; similarly, time in  
*Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice* and various other plays can also appear distorted  
and compressed. Such studies led to John Wilson and N.J. Halpin publishing  
theories of Shakespeare’s use of ‘Double Time’ (the counting of time on two  
clocks: that of historic time and that of dramatic time). This theory can also be  

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266 In 1850 John Wilson (writing under the pseudonym Christopher North) argued that the 
contradictory use of time in *Othello* demonstrated skill rather than carelessness in the 
writing. One hundred years later, however, critics like Albert Frederick Sproule were still 
trying to find a way of reconciling the contradictions in the time scheme of *Othello*. 
Albert Frederick Sproule, ‘A Time Scheme for Othello’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7.2  
Practitioners today still uphold this idea of ‘Double Time’ in *Othello* being used to 
condense events for dramatic effect. The actor Che Walker, in his blog about the 2007 
Globe production of *Othello*, in which he played a senator, wrote about Shakespeare’s use 
of ‘double time in the second half of the play to accelerate the events and to bring 
everything to such a horrible boil’. Che Walker, ‘Rehearsal Notes 1’, Shakespeare’s 
archive/senators-cyprus-soldiers-played-by-che-walker/rehearsal-notes-1> [accessed 1  
March 2017].  
For a contrasting view to the purposeful Double Time theory, see Ned B. Allen, ‘The Two  
Parts of *Othello*’, in Kenneth Muir (ed.), *Aspects of Othello* (Cambridge: Cambridge  
University Press, 1977), pp. 75-91 (see p. 79 ff). Allen argues that the different uses of 
time are not by design, but that it is unlikely that the imaginative processes of either  
Shakespeare or his audiences found the shifting timeframes to be a problem, unlike the  
intellectual processes of literary critics. It is not only literary critics who tend more  
toward the intellectual than the imaginative, but also modern audiences and practitioners:  
yet there is a movement away from intellect and ‘back’ towards a more embodied  
approach, championed by practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski and, more recently,  
Phillip Zarilli. Perhaps these embodied approaches need also to take into account a  
potential shift in attitude towards time and space, as well as towards the actor’s own body  
and mind.  

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267 Wilson wrote about ‘Double Time’ in *Othello* in three articles published in  
*Blackwood’s Magazine* (November 1849, April 1850 and May 1850). In N. J. Halpin’s  
work, *The Dramatic Unities in Shakespeare* (Dublin: Hodges & Smith, 1849), he  
announced that his theory was identical to Wilson’s and proceeded to apply it to *The  
Merchant of Venice*. 

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linked to Shakespeare’s use of compression, as noted above in reference to his history plays. Another reading could be that human time is not the same as literal or clock time: a human view of time is necessarily diachronic: ‘it is time whose significance is given by the meaning assigned to events within its compass’. Human experience and memory of events can become distorted through perspective, emotional content and personal significance of a given event.

**Symbolic ideas:** symbolism and allegory are modes that communicate universal or eternal ideas, across time and place, and Shakespeare makes use of these modes in order to simultaneously negate as well as reinforce the effects of time passing. In his sonnets, for example, ‘Shakespeare compresses the present, embodied within the Young Man, and the future, represented by the child. Through this imagery [of rebirth] he invokes both linear time, through succession, and nonlinear time, through compression, in order to manipulate both kinds of time’, denying ‘time’s destructive scythe’. In his history plays, the symbol of the crown passing from ruler to ruler works in much the same way: reminding the audience of the never-ending turn of Fortune’s Wheel and the continual reprisal of the role of king. The plays also draw attention to this through speeches which both look back to previous events and look forward through prophecy. In *Richard II*, for example, the deposition and later murder of the king is seen in context of later events. As Bolingbroke brings arms against him, King Richard predicts that

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ere the Crowne he lookes for, live in peace,
Ten thousand bloody crownes of Mothers Sonnes
Shall ill become the flower of Englands face,
Change the complexion of her Maid-pale Peace
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268 Bruner, p. 6.

269 Pacenza, p. 78.

270 The crown acts as a physical representation of the immortality of kingship, passed on from person to person. This is intertwined with the concept of the king’s two bodies or double identity: the individual, ephemeral nature of the person himself, and the eternal nature of kingship, as expressed in the traditional proclamation ‘the king is dead. Long live the king’. The crown thus acts as an object that makes visible the invisible immortality of monarchy.
To Scarlet Indignation, and bedew
Her Pastors Grasse with faithful English Blood.\(^{271}\)

These events are depicted in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* plays, which had been performed for the first time a few years prior to *Richard II*. In a similar manner to the medieval Mystery Cycles, in the tradition of a Biblical style of storytelling,\(^{272}\) Shakespeare’s history cycle draws an epic picture of events with an awareness of connections across chronological time, drawing non-linear thematic and associative as well as causal links. The use of prophecy-making and fulfilment, as well as the invocation of ghosts and divine figures,\(^{273}\) demonstrates an understanding of past, present and future being in some sense co-existent.

In the Experiments series’ workshop on time we examined prophecy and fulfilment in Macbeth, a play which makes particularly emphatic use of the simultaneity of past/present/future, as is neatly summed up by Lady Macbeth, when she declares excitedly to her husband, ‘Thy letters have transported me beyond / This ignorant present; and I feel now / The future in the instant’.\(^{274}\) This workshop explored the possible responses to the prophecy elements, and ways that directors and actors today may

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\(^{272}\) Richard even uses Biblical language in this speech, reinforcing the sense of prophecy, saying that Henry ‘is come to ope / The purple Testament of bleeding Warre’ (ll. 1680-1).

\(^{273}\) For example, Bedford invokes the ghost of Henry V in the opening scene of *Henry VI Part I*. In *Richard III*, ghosts appear by the king’s bedside to condemn Richard and commend his enemy the night before the Battle of Bosworth. In *Julius Caesar*, the ghost of the murdered Caesar appears in similar circumstances: to chide the guilty Brutus and warn of events to come. These events demonstrate the continuing power of the past over the future but also give the sense that figures of the past are still active agents in current and future events, due to the eternal nature of man’s soul and the simultaneity of past, present, and future.

\(^{274}\) *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, ll. 408-10.
interpret and depict this simultaneity of time. We staged the witches scene (where Macbeth and Banquo first hear the prophecy foretelling Macbeth’s future kingship) in several different ways, centring around the question of how seriously Macbeth takes the prophecy that is foretold, and whether there is a problematic discrepancy between how a modern actor and audience react to this idea, versus an early modern player or spectator. Can a modern actor connect with ideas about the simultaneity or multi-layered nature of time?

I first asked the actors to try the scene with Banquo believing the witches’ prophecy and Macbeth as feeling cynical. At first this did not work as the actor playing Macbeth (Tom) was worried about coming across as sarcastic so did not manage to portray cynicism. Upon further discussion and experimenting with particular sections of the text, we found that Tom was in fact colouring his performance with his knowledge of the play and what happens next. We discovered that by simply playing what is in the lines, it makes sense that Macbeth shows disbelief at first which later changes to belief when the first prophecy (that he will become Thane of Cawdor) is fulfilled. This was an important lesson to

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275 *Experiments*, Day 3.
always play the moment, without colouring one’s depiction with what is to come next.\textsuperscript{276}

If the actor can avoid colouring his performance with his knowledge of what is to come, i.e. ‘playing the moment’, then not only does the attitude of the character clearly emerge (disbelief which turns to belief when the Thane of Cawdor part of the prophecy comes true), but also we can experience a double view of time, a dual perspective where time is both non-linear with events being interconnected via repetition, prophecy and fulfilment (Divine God-Time), as well as being experienced in-the-moment (Historical Human-Time). In this case, this works because it is what Shakespeare has written in his text.\textsuperscript{277}

As discussed in Chapter 1, the influential thirteenth-century Italian philosopher Thomas Aquinas gave value and importance to both the temporal/material and the eternal/spiritual planes. However, in the medieval Christian tradition, any temporal or historical distinctions which are only literal (material) are seen as

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\textsuperscript{276} Brook has addressed the issue of preconceptions in his discussion of ‘Deadly Theatre’, describing when he asked someone who did not know \textit{King Lear} to read Goneril’s first speech, where she professes love for her father, Lear. The performer took Goneril’s love for her father at face-value and ‘the speech itself emerged full of eloquence and charm’. When asked to try the speech ‘reading every word for hypocrisy’ the delivery became unnatural and laboured. As Brook explains, ‘if Goneril in her first appearance does not play a “monster,” but merely what her given words suggest, then all the balance of the play changes — and in the subsequent scenes her villainy and Lear’s martyrdom are neither as crude nor as simplified as they might appear [… Goneril becomes] both complex and compelling’. He recommends putting discoveries continually to the test in rehearsal of ‘living theatre’, since it is the ‘Deadly Theatre’ which approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done’ (Brook, \textit{The Empty Space}, pp. 13-4).

\textsuperscript{277} Whether time-as-multi-layered is a useful concept to devising new work today is explored later in this chapter.
superficial in comparison to the spiritual significance of linked events, since a typological or allegorical interpretation reveals more truth and meaning than a chronological view. As Tom Artin puts it in his essay ‘The Allegory of Adventure: Reading Chretien’s “Eric” and “Yvain”’, ‘typology reveals the underlying equivalence among seemingly disparate events scattered throughout history’. Artin argues that this undermines the significance of time. However, while it may undermine the significance of a chronological understanding of time (and therefore our modern definition of time), I would suggest that a typological or allegorical approach to history simply reveals an alternative way of viewing time’s significance: through repetition and cycles, the overlap or linking of events, and through an awareness of heterotemporality or plural times.

Cyclical Time and Spirituality in Other Cultures

The Christian view of time is similar to the ancient Eastern philosophies of time: both view time in a non-linear manner, as moving in cycles, loops or patterns, and the significance of this non-linear understanding is linked in all cases to a spiritual awareness of the divine. By observing current cultures that still incorporate these views of time via a spiritual understanding of the universe and human life, this may enable further understanding of the way in which spirituality, views of time, and performance interact in disparate times and cultures: thus opening doors for exploration of these themes with modern Western actors.

A useful point of comparison is provided in Balinese culture. The Balinese conceive time as cyclical: their complex calendar of ceremonies and auspicious


279 The term ‘heterotemporality’ was coined by Kimberly Hutchings in her book Time and World Politics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008). Behind the idea of heterotemporality is a desire to ‘undermine the idea that we can theorise world-political time in homogeneous or unified terms’ (Hutchings, p. 155). It is used here as a term to describe plurality of time: an understanding of time which simultaneously is aware of times past, times present and times future.
days involves multiple cycles occurring at once, giving a strong sense of multiplicitous time. One element that is missing from Christian tradition but which is key to the Balinese Hindu belief system is the concept of reincarnation, which reinforces the idea of cyclical time. The three main deities of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva represent, respectively, creation, preservation, and destruction. Shiva’s task is to destroy in order to allow rebirth: reincarnation. The protagonists of both the Ramayana (Rāma) and the Mahabharata (Krishnu) are incarnations of the god Vishnu. The Balinese believe that after death a person will be reincarnated (a process called punarbhawa) and live life again in another body. They are thus continually aware of how the past, present, and future are intertwined and overlapping, with past lives and experiences playing a role in the present moment. This awareness ‘of time-present, time-past and time-cyclic’ encourages ‘a basic attitude where the past is re-presented as a recyclable model for the present’; an attitude reflected in the style of their performance tradition. The repeated performance of fragments of the epics is not seen as stale or static, but as a continual rediscovery, reinvention, and reincarnation of archetypal and universal forms. Phillip Zarilli has pointed out that ‘from the outsider’s perspective, conventionalized systems of training and acting mistakenly appear rigid, but they are not. There is a tremendous amount of individual variation among actors performing specific roles, and there is a great deal of freedom within certain aspects […] of a performance’. He points out that in Japanese Noh / Nō theatre, there is normally only a single rehearsal, so the performances have a degree of

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280 During my 2016 research trip to Bali island, several Balinese acquaintances spoke about having more than one birthday to celebrate each year: the annual Western birthday, and the Balinese birthday of the Odalan ceremony, which falls on different dates according to the continuing cycle of 210 day intervals (the Pawukon calendar, said to originate from rice-growing cycles).


‘spontaneity and difference’. But while Japanese traditional theatre is based on a very formal system, where the actor must know a role so well as to perform it perfectly and unthinkingly (therefore becoming one with the role), the Balinese tradition arguably has more malleability and room for creativity. At Oka Kartini in Ubud I saw a shadow puppet (Wayang Kulit) performance by the Sekeha Swara Buana group: while the majority of the play was in Sanskrit, some lines in English were added for the tourist audience, making jokes about modern-day tourism. A visit to see the Semara Ratih group perform Legong and Baris dances similarly showed a drive for innovation within traditional forms. Their philosophy is that ‘it is important both to conserve the unique traditional performing arts of Bali in their diverse forms and to keep the arts vital by actively creating new works that extend the traditional repertoire’. The artists do not see any paradox with having as their mission the dual goal of simultaneously preserving the traditions as handed-down to them and pushing forward creatively with new compositions and choreography.

Geertz has pointed out that in this situation, where the dominant viewpoint simultaneously looks backwards and forwards, the effort is not towards reversing or celebrating time, but towards nullifying it. Geertz argues that, due to their attitude towards time, Balinese narrative lacks climax as it exists in ‘a motionless present, a vectorless now’; he gives the example of the Ranga-Barong fight (the witch versus the lion-like king of spirits) in traditional performances: the fight is exciting but nothing decisive ever happens. In this respect, the modern Balinese


284 Puppet Show, Sekeha Swara Buana, Oka Kartini, Ubud (June 2016).

285 Formed in 1989 as a collective of top musicians, composers, dancers, and choreographers from southern Bali, including many graduates of the National Academy of the Arts in Denpasar, the renowned Semara Ratih troupe combines traditional and new work. Gamelan Semara Ratih performance, led by Anak Agung Gede Anom ‘Baris’ Putra, Jaba Pura Desa Kutuh, Ubud (June 2016).


287 Geertz, p. 334.

288 Geertz, pp. 402-03.
attitude towards time differs from that of medieval England: the Christian worldview undoubtedly encourages climactic theatricality. The performance of Doomsday provides a dramatic climax to the pageant plays, for example, as does the last-minute redemption of souls in morality drama. While the Judeo-Christian outlook does connect past and future through prophecy and fulfilment, it does not include the process of reincarnation as Hinduism does, therefore there is a greater sense of culmination and ending built into this philosophy.

The effect of both worldviews, however, is to understand the past, present, and future of our earthly existence as essentially the same thing: intertwined and overlapping experiences which cannot be separated cleanly into linear periods. In these philosophies, anachronism is irrelevant as a concept, and ancient stories are eternally applicable to contemporary human experience. Benedict Anderson neatly describes the way in which Christian narrative modes naturally move across time and place, seamlessly integrating without regard for what we would now judge as anachronistic or ‘historically inaccurate’ details:

Christendom assumed its universal form through a myriad of specificities and particularities: this relief, that window, this sermon, that tale, this morality play, that relic [...]. This juxtaposition of the cosmic-universal and the mundane-particular meant that however vast Christendom might be, and was sensed to be, it manifested itself variously to particular Swabian or Andalusian communities as replications of themselves. Figuring the Virgin Mary with ‘Semitic’ features or ‘first-century’ costumes in the restoring spirit of the modern museum was unimaginable because the mediaeval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present.289

Auerbach also writes about the way that an allegorical understanding involves no earthly (horizontal) linking of time and place but instead makes use of a vertical linking to a divine plan.290 While we can describe a particular past event as


290 Auerbach, p. 64.
prefiguring or foreshadowing a future event, in the medieval worldview the understanding of past and present would mean that the conception of shadowing or echoing would just as easily work in the opposite direction: we can compare St. Augustine’s description of the Old Testament as ‘the shadow of the future’ as an example.\(^{291}\) As Anderson points out, the description suggests that the Old Testament, as the shadow of the future, is cast backwards by future events: a concept only possible within a non-chronological, flexible understanding of time which is alien to us, and which relies upon a second spiritual plane of existence: something beyond the material.\(^{292}\)

The psychological and emotional effects of this viewpoint are also something which appear to now be largely beyond our grasp. As Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe points out, in relation to practices in India:\(^{293}\)

> if a form of theatre forces the human mind to engage in the experience of simultaneity, it trains it in functioning from that deep level. Repeated exposure to such theatre stimuli may serve in parallel to repeated exposure to pure consciousness in meditative techniques. Theatre, understood and practised in this way, may thus well serve as a means of developing higher states of consciousness.\(^{294}\)

European theatre was born in the Middle Ages of ritual, meditative processes and worship, and thus once functioned at this deep level: being concerned with all of human history including past, present and future. Whether a coexistence of past, present and future in dramatic treatment of time might induce higher states of


\(^{292}\) Anderson, p. 23.

\(^{293}\) The Indian notion of time is very similar to the medieval Christian understanding of time: it is ‘eternal, of dimensions beyond immediate intellectual comprehension, but open to direct conscious experience: the state of pure consciousness […] implies a coexistence of past, presence and future’. Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe, ‘Staging Consciousness: Updating Demastes’, *Consciousness, Literature and the Arts* (July, 2003) available at <http://www.dmd27.org/dmddemastes.html> [accessed 12 August 2017].

\(^{294}\) Meyer-Dinkgräfe.
consciousness in theatre today is a difficult question. Since we have lost the sense of the spiritual, the understanding and practice of theatre as a pseudo-meditative technique (through the experience of simultaneity and accompanying sense of eternity) will of course present more difficulties today than in the medieval era.

**New Ways of Understanding Time**

Although we have lost the sense of that spiritual plane which opens up the possibility of perceiving time’s multiplicities via association with a divine plan, modern scientific study has recently begun to understand time in a way which reflects the early ideology of past/present/future simultaneity. The way in which modern physics understands time is not as a linear movement, but as something much more flexible which is merely *experienced* in a linear manner. Paul Davies points out that ‘nothing in known physics corresponds to the passage of time. Indeed, physicists insist that time doesn’t flow at all; it merely *is*’.\(^{295}\) Physics does not tell us which events are occurring at this moment in time: as Craig Callender puts it, it is ‘like a map without the “you are here” symbol’.\(^{296}\) Davies writes that ‘physicists prefer to think of time as laid out in its entirety – a timescape, analogous to a landscape – with all past and future events located there together. It is a notion sometimes referred to as block time’.\(^{297}\) The idea of block time is not dissimilar to the medieval notion of time: the only major difference is the religiosity of the timescape in the medieval view.

Lately more and more storytelling has emerged which features and utilises a non-linear understanding of time. Stories that engage with modern physics emulate the idea of block time: the 2014 film *Interstellar*,\(^{298}\) for example, explores the theory of relativity and tells a story that spans both several generations and the space of a


\(^{296}\) Craig Callender, ‘Is Time an Illusion?’, *Scientific American* (June 2010), 43-47 (p. 43).

\(^{297}\) Davies, p. 42.

\(^{298}\) *Interstellar*, dir. Christopher Nolan (Legendary Pictures, 2014).
few weeks simultaneously. Recent performance work – both experimental and commercial – has utilised dramatic time in fragmented and flexible ways and some playwrights and practitioners have tried to achieve simultaneity of time in their work. Immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, for example, present multiple narratives on loop, performed throughout a series of rooms. In *The Drowned Man*, based on Georg Büchner’s incomplete play *Woyzeck* (1979) two parallel storylines ran simultaneously in different areas of a large warehouse, set up like the grounds of a Hollywood film studio. In a phrase reminiscent of Auerbach’s concept of vertical linking, director Felix Barrett has said that ‘the show goes vertically as well as horizontally. You can follow the story of Woyzeck or you can go vertically down, lift away the topsoil and get to the other, hidden narrative underneath’. Like the work of film director David Lynch, whose surrealist style has influenced Punchdrunk’s approaches, *The Drowned Man* utilises temporal distortion: fragmenting time, using non-linear narrative modes, and looped storylines.

Authors of ‘mainstream’ theatre are also exploring similar ideas of simultaneity in space and time: in Alan Ayckbourn’s *House and Garden*, staged at the Royal National Theatre in 2000, the same fictional time span was presented simultaneously in two spaces (the Olivier and the Lyttelton) by the same cast.

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300 Quoted in Siobhan Murphy, ‘Punchdrunk’s ambitious *The Drowned Man* takes their immersive theatre to a new level’, *Metro* (20 June 2013).


showing indoor and outdoor perspectives. The work is a diptych of plays and the audience could attend the two pieces *House* and *Garden* in either order. Other dramatists have explored non-linear time, using flashbacks and jumps in chronology: *The Nether* by Jennifer Haley,\(^{303}\) for example, not only jumps between virtual reality and the real world, but also skips backwards and forwards in time to tell an intricate tale that explores ethics and relative realities. Harold Pinter’s play *Old Times* explores the instability of observable reality in an even more direct way,\(^{304}\) by having different characters’ reminiscences clash and compete: it is impossible to tell what really happened in the past and the play’s present becomes ambiguous also. The play encourages viewers to ask whether one or all of the characters are, in fact, dead and in some kind of purgatory.

In experimental theatre practice, Brook’s Theatre of Cruelty season in the 1960s built on the work of early-twentieth-century French practitioner Artaud, and experimented with styles of theatrical storytelling using some historically-responsive techniques including repetition, polyscenic narrative, and multiple layers of meaning. In Peter Weiss’ *Marat/Sade* which Brook staged with the RSC in 1964,\(^{305}\) multiple layers of meaning are created by the play-within-a-play structure.\(^{306}\) The play only works as long as the audience is not passive but has some awareness of French Revolution history as well as of how the mentally ill were treated in asylums. This is an historically-aware space, and much like the Mystery Cycles of the Middle Ages it relies upon a shared understanding in order to function. This shared understanding allows skipping back and forth in time, as the audience can make links and draw parallel meaning: an associational form of meaning-

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\(^{306}\) The inmates at an asylum stage a performance, led by the Marquis de Sade, about the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat.
making which utilises polyscenic and non-linear, flexible space and time.

I was interested to find out how modern performers – so exposed to the non-linear techniques of television and film – might engage with flexible time in the creation of new theatre work. We used some exercises to restructure well-known stories using non-linear techniques, then moved on to devise new narratives, utilising techniques such as conflation, polyscenic storytelling and allegory, to depict a huge expanse of time.

This approach was aimed at expanding imaginative scope when creating new work. Often, devising companies will limit their storytelling to a single time or place; this exercise encouraged the actors to think outside the box and expand their scope, inspired by the universal, huge timeframe involved in medieval pageant plays, which span from creation to doomsday. The group created a story about Shakespeare’s Globe theatre in three different time periods (influenced in some part by Tom Stoppard’s *Arcadia*).

The key benefits of the approach were:

1. An increased sense of freedom and widening of scope in devising. The actors commented on this in particular: devising without limitation is difficult, but freeing.
2. An ability to create more connections and associations without undermining the value of the specific moment.
3. An opening up of perspectives: the ability to present more than one viewpoint.
4. An increased sense of satisfaction, related to the above. There was possibility to generate suspense or add more layers of meaning, or present several ways to understand a theme.
While our experiments with time had the effect of new creative freedom, as well as increasing awareness and meaning-making through allowing more associational links to be drawn, in the workshop we did not discover a meditative, ‘pure consciousness’ effect (as Meyer-Dinkgräfe describes). Perhaps this aspect is only possible within a sacred theatre: one which engages with a specifically eternal, divine timescale.

**Time in a Secular, Capitalist World**

One element that all of these recent theatrical and filmic experiments with time do not share with early theatre is the dual awareness of Historical Human-Time and Divine God-Time time brought about by Christian thinking. Individual stories in both the medieval and early modern theatre were given a meaning and purpose beyond the specific time and place, because of the religious context of eternity. Influenced by the Biblical style, Shakespeare created protagonists who are hyper-aware of past and future as well as their present. As Tom F. Driver points out, ‘in moments of crisis and decision the Shakespearean hero reminds himself and his audience of his history – past, present and anticipated future – because that is the only way he has of seeing the meaning of his act’. Furthermore, ‘the moments when the present is most keenly felt are like the “historical present” of Biblical thought […] compounds of memory and expectation’. In this way, the past is integral to defining the present moment, as it is in the Greek plays: but while in classical drama the past dominates the present, in Shakespearean drama the future is open as it is in the Bible: full of promise and potential, making the narrative more dynamic.

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307 As the London workshop participants and I explored in practice, using scenes from *Macbeth*.


309 *Ibid*.

310 *Ibid*. 
The philosopher and writer Walter Benjamin applies similar thinking to real-world problems in his controversial 1940’s work Über den Begriff der Geschichte, emphasising the power of the past and advocating an alternative approach to history: one which does not depict the past as linear, focusing on how things were in actuality (i.e. reconstruction), but rather seeks to identify cyclical and ruptural moments (such as history repeating itself through significant events) and reignite sparks of change from the past. Benjamin contrasts ‘messianic time’ (which can be equated to the medieval Biblical attitude to time, as well as to other cultural attitudes which embrace the non-linear) with ‘homogeneous empty time’, measured by clocks and chronology. The former is qualitative, immediate, emotionally intense, ruptural and significant, the stuff of ritual; the latter is quantitative, numbing, meaningless, continuous, and linear. Homogeneous empty time is associated specifically with capitalist effects on experiences of time. Non-capitalist social groups experience time differently: as natural cycles rather than interchangeable instants. Ceremonies, festivals, and memorial days would create connections between moments through time in the past, and continue to function in this way in non-capitalist societies today.

A new book by Roman Krznaric called Carpe Diem: The Vanishing Art of Seizing the Day discusses the possibility of reclaiming ‘the natural human capacity for free, unscripted and unscheduled living [which has] been stolen from under our noses’ by the pressures of capitalist society. Krznaric writes about the carnivalesque festivities, ‘spontaneous, seize-the-day living’ and ‘pulses of free-wheeling exuberance’ of the Middle Ages which was damaged by Puritan thinking during the Reformation, and later vanished completely thanks to the Industrial Revolution’s factory clock and the ‘digital info bomb’ that has taken over our lives in the modern age. Our culture now ‘worships productivity and efficiency’, and


313 Krznaric, ‘How to take the plunge’.
Krznaric urges us to ‘remember our dance-crazy medieval forebears’. To return to the example of modern Bali, there is the concept of *Jam karet* (Indonesian for ‘rubber-time’): an attitude that waits upon any appointed event in time in a patient and expectant manner, seeing time as something to be flexible and elastic with, rather than rigidly adhered to. The Balinese are of course not indifferent to time-keeping (as discussed above, they have many calendars, including Gregorian, the Lunar *Saka* system, the *Pawukon* system which is associated to rice cultivation, and more), and are a hard-working people, and so it is not that rubber-time is entirely opposed to productivity. The concept is rather more to do with their attitude to the world, to life, and to each other, and intertwined with their spirituality.

To return to Benjamin, his focus is revolution, the effects of capitalism, and social change, and it is significant that he sees revolutionary movement (and an associated change in our attitude toward time) as necessarily having an element of the spiritual. He believes that in every revolutionary event, every class struggle (even when based on material needs) the spiritual is always present in the drive towards redemption. Today’s revolutions are in some respect a continuation of the spirit of past revolutions: there is a non-linear connection between them. Benjamin writes that every generation is endowed with a weak inherited messianic power, because every past generation hoped for redemption in the future: a present revolution is always potentially the ‘messiah’ which past revolutionary movements were waiting for. If not, there is still potential for redemption in the future, and thus the cycle continues, with the actions of any activist coloured by the actions of past activists and of activists to come. The position of Benjamin’s activists very similar to the position of Shakespeare’s heroes, and of protagonists in medieval and Biblical narratives. The significance of the present moment goes beyond the present in both directions: into the past, and into the future.

In the Introduction I mentioned the approaches of Heelas, whose work, with Linda Woodhead, discusses the theory of the ‘subjective turn’. Heelas and Woodhead


posit that in the movement away from the self-as-individual back towards the self-in-relation-to-the-whole, inner experience, memories, and history have been given more importance in the West today. As Western traditions of the past became stale, they were (especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) largely broken with and rejected, meaning concepts of time became very linear, focusing on the evolutionary: a continued move forwards, negating the importance of the past in many areas of culture and society. As individualistic ideas have matured, some of what was once exclusive and specific has become more inclusive. The understanding of ourselves as connected through experience, emotion, and moral sentiment means that our understanding of time is again turning towards something flexible and non-linear, bringing together the significance of past, present and future. The growing inclusivity of modern ideologies also means a connecting of ideas which were not previously connected, as well as a renewed significance of the residual and traditional as people connect with older ideologies in new ways. Our relationship with the past has changed, and associational meaning has again attained great importance as people seek to connect ideas and influences: both emergent and residual (that is, across time). To relate this to Benjamin’s theories regarding capitalist societies, as global modernity allows different cultures to interact so much more readily than in the past, ideas of homogeneous empty time now come into contact with more ancient and non-capitalist ways of experiencing time. Globalisation and the ‘subjective turn’ are thus giving access to alternative ways of thinking which are rooted in early traditions that parallel those native attitudes we have largely lost touch with.

Despite this access, the Western (capitalist) worldview still holds considerable power. Anderson argues that our modern conception of simultaneity ‘has been a long time in the making’ and takes the place of the medieval conception of ‘simultaneity-along-time’ with simultaneity that is ‘transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by

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Anderson relates understanding of the concept of ‘nation’ to changing conceptions of time, which coincide with the decline of religious communities and dynastic realms. Borrowing from the ideas of Benjamin, Anderson argues that moving from the medieval simultaneous conception of past/present/future to linear time means that simultaneity can now be understood as being across-time, marked by temporal coincidence. Therefore the nation can be understood as a unit, moving through time (Anderson, pp. 22-4).
In relation to spirituality and consciousness, this means that since randomness takes the place of truth, and coincidence takes the place of meaning, it seems virtually impossible to access the experience of meaningful simultaneity that medieval and early modern people enjoyed.

It is clear from the above examples of modern plays utilising non-linear time that a fragmented, flexible understanding of time that takes into account the potential for simultaneity of past, present, and future events is not something that modern audiences struggle with simply because a religious or spiritual context is no longer generally apparent or hegemonically reinforced. However, the lack of religious influence suggests that the ritual and meditative nature of early performance through the contemplation of eternal and malleable time (as Meyer-Dinkgräfe describes) is no longer easily accessible. The classical Indian theatre of which Meyer-Dinkgräfe speaks strove to obtain a higher state of consciousness through ritual performance. This style of theatre had a significant influence on the work of Polish theatre practitioner Grotowski, and both his theatre and classical Indian theatre arguably require a specially trained and aware audience to be effective in their techniques. Grotowski, while inspired by Indian theatre, understood that the means they used to achieve the desired state of altered consciousness would not work in the same way for a Western actor, so he endeavoured to find another route to achieve this meditative, sacred effect through ritual practices and rigorous actor training, inspired by ancient ideologies but with an awareness of modern Western trends. It may be possible to access a meditative state through modern theatre which is influenced by residual techniques but reactive to emergent ideas, and the treatment of time may be a significant element of an historically-responsive approach such as this.

Benjamin’s idea of messianism (in the context of revolution or social change) provides a real-world parallel to this theatrical meditative, hyper-conscious state. He argues that the messianic state can only be experienced by turning away from the affairs of the world, from the ‘here-and-now’. This is similar to the monastic withdrawal of the Middle Ages: the action of removing oneself from the world in order to gain closeness to God and to the eternal nature of time and the soul. Benjamin’s recommended withdrawal is an active one: he is calling for the

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messianic moment to be experienced and used to transform the world. He is not clear on the realisability of this idea, but it is interesting that even without the element of religious belief, the idea of a messianic revolutionary (political or social) experience still involves a similar path to that of medieval Christianity: a perception of time as non-linear, a separation from (or dual awareness of) the affairs of the world as contrasted with messianism, and (paradoxically) a simultaneously active engagement with the world in order to transform or redeem it. In storytelling and performance perhaps the key aspect to take note of here is the duality of this approach: both engaged with the world and outside it, giving awareness to both the specifics and universality of any given event. This seems to be key to accessing a heightened state of awareness: that which Meyer-Dinkgräfe calls meditative and Benjamin terms messianic. In modern theatre practice we might call it something else.

One example of modern theatre that I think is particularly useful in relation to exploring the different states of consciousness that can be brought about through duality and simultaneity is the aforementioned Punchdrunk show, *The Drowned Man*. A heightened state seems to have been experienced by many of the attending audience members: one critic wrote for the *Telegraph* that the piece ‘resembles both a vivid dream and a startling LSD trip’. The surrealist style, in particular the elements of duality and simultaneity, are intrinsic to this effect. The show evokes the idea – through subplots, loops, legends, surrealism, thematic echoes, and parallel narratives – that many different worlds exist at the same time. The different locations spread across the 130-odd rooms of the building evoke this idea in a more literal fashion: the world of 1960’s Hollywood with all of its decaying glamour and the impoverished world outside the studio gates (the earthly realm of the play), the seedy underworld of the studio bosses (in the basement, with a chequered floor like a chess board, a dead horse, and models of the two murdered characters’ bodies, likened to Hell by many critics and fans), and the surreal and unearthly world of the Dust Witch (a huge expanse of sand on

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319 As is the multi-sensory immersive environment, which will be explored further in Chapter 3.
the top floor with only a few remnants of an old hotel and a few shrines and
effigies, reminiscent of Heaven). However, it is the constant interplay of different
perceptions within these locations that really gives the idea of plural realities and
simultaneity. For example, the voice of Leyland Stanford (the big producer at the
play’s Temple Studios) comes booming over a tanoy at various points to ‘direct’
the characters. This is sometimes in-keeping with what is happening in the world
of the play: such as during a film shoot in the studio itself. However, when the
character of Wendy murders her boyfriend Marshall in the woods we again hear
Stanford praising her performance. There are various suggestions throughout that
Wendy has been manipulated into giving the ‘performance of a lifetime’ and
questions are raised as to what is real, and what is fiction, constructed for the
cameras that we never actually see.

The production constantly evokes the theme of duality. There are the parallel
narratives of William and Mary / Wendy and Marshall, following the structure of
the Woyzeck character’s descent into madness and murder of his unfaithful
girlfriend. At one point, before they are killed, the characters of Mary and
Marshall (one outside the gates, one inside) glimpse each other through a two-way
mirror for a moment. Other design elements that emphasise the theme of duality
include the recurring appearance of Rorschach tests, the frequent use of
chessboards and mirrored images, and one perfectly symmetrical office which
even includes clocks that move backwards on one side of the room. The symmetry
and duality in the play creates a feeling of strangeness or the uncanny. Freud’s
theory of the uncanny suggested that the feeling (brought about by doubles,
repetition, dolls, puppets, Doppelgangers, etc) brings about ‘cognitive
dissonance’: we are simultaneously attracted and repulsed.

320 Ink blots on a folded piece of paper, creating a symmetric pattern used in
psychological testing.

321 The feeling of the uncanny bears similarities to the experience of an ecstatic, ‘sacred’,
or heightened state, the key being a certain paradoxical duality. The ecstatic is
simultaneously energised and relaxed. The uncanny is simultaneously familiar and
unfamiliar. Both are paradoxical and dual in nature.

322 See Lambert M. Surhone, Miriam T. Timpledon and Susan F. Marseken, Uncanny:
Sigmund Freud, Uncanny Valley, Cognitive Dissonance, Id, Ego, and Super-ego, Oedipus
Complex (Saarbrücken: Betascript Publishing, 2010).
Other than notions of time, another key element of theatrical performance which can explore these ideas is the use of space. Space in the theatre can morph and change: it can provide different angles and perspectives, it can be two things simultaneously. Every place or location in the medieval period was seen as being rich with meaning, and as time was seen in a thematic rather than chronological manner, place was similarly read in a symbolic rather than geographical way.

**Place / Locus: Reading Meaning into Spatial Configurations**

Michael Camille points out how space (that is, disembodied and abstract space) is an anachronistic notion to apply to medieval studies, since people thought in terms of place or locus. To the medieval mind, ‘space carried meanings’ from the political meaning of the King’s Peace (originally a term designating the area around his person, but later expanded to mean his entire realm) to the gendered reading of internal and external space (the house, seen as a woman’s realm, versus the street, a man’s territory), to the enforcement of social structure through utilising space as punishment in the form of exile, pilgrimage or excommunication.

Architecture of the medieval period (especially that of such buildings as churches and cathedrals) was not purely functional but held great symbolic and narrative meaning. In some churches, tableaux, reliefs, engravings, or pictures known as The Stations of the Cross (or *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross) displayed key moments in the crucifixion of Christ. These stations allowed Christians to perform their own pilgrimage, following the footsteps of Jesus: praying and meditating at each station. The church architecture and decoration encouraged an active engagement from churchgoers: one can see the influence of this attitude when

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thinking of the way that medieval pageant performances functioned, with people
given the opportunity to actively follow the story of the Bible from place to place if they wished.

The idea of configurations of space as having the ability to display meaning and
tell a story still held sway within the first professional theatres of the early modern age: the use of painted ceilings to signify the heavens, trapdoors through which
ghosts appeared to denote Hell or purgatory, balconies to present important or
divine figures, and recesses to reveal hidden objects or characters were elements
drawn from the structure of pageant wagons and from church buildings. These
were conventions that were utilised according to shared expectations built up over
a long period of Christian influence. In Richard II, for example, when the king
enters on the walls of Flint Castle, the actor would have ascended to the gallery,
near the heavens, drawing a visual and symbolic association between the figure of
Richard and his divine status as God’s anointed king. When the king is then asked
to come down, his visual and literal descent can also be read figuratively as a
descent from his divine position, prefiguring his overthrow by Henry
Bolingbroke.327 Similar spatial associations are used in Hamlet, for example in
Act 1 Scene 5, when the ghost of the prince’s father exhorts an oath from his son
from beneath the stage:328 the positioning of the ghost throws the fate of Old
Hamlet into ambiguity, since it is an area generally associated with Hell.329 Later
in the play, the trapdoor becomes the access to the grave being dug for Ophelia:
the staging is practical, showing a physical representation of the grave and

327 The king laments his literal descent to the court, prefiguring his descent in status,
saying: ‘Downe, downe I come, like glist’ring Phaeton, / Wanting the manage of unruly
Jades. / In the base Court? base Court, where Kings grow base’ (ll. 1766-8).

328 The stage direction reads ‘Ghost cries under the Stage’. Shakespeare, The Tragedie of
Hamlet, in the Norton Fascimile, pp. 760-90 (l. 845).

329 In Hamlet, the area beneath the trapdoor seems to evoke purgatorial punishments, as
the ghost says he has been ‘Cut off even in the Blossomes of my Sinne, / Unhouzzled,
disappointed, unnaneld, / No reckoning made, but sent to my account / With all my
imperfections on my head’ (ll. 761-4). He laments that he has not been ‘houseled’, i.e.
received the Eucharist, he is unprepared for the journey, and he has not been given
extreme unction (the final anointing given in Roman Catholicism to the dying). The
worldview of the play thus appears to be Catholic rather than Protestant.
allowing the diggers to throw up skulls as described in the stage directions, but it is also a reminder to early modern audiences that since Ophelia reportedly died by committing suicide, by traditional Christian teaching she is likely to go to Hell.330

Day two of the Experiments series of workshops concentrated on exploring space and place.331 One of the key research questions of the day was about the interpretation of space: what do we instinctively read from a space? While the medieval or early modern mind might configure space symbolically and thematically, the modern mind is not trained to do this through religious or secular iconography. However, in one exercise that asked actors to explore the meaning of the space through questions such as ‘where in the space feels safe?’, ‘where feels powerful?’, ‘where feels sacred?’ we found that spatial configurations still hold a great deal of meaning. The exercise explored what comes first – the idea, or the experience – and drew attention to the ways in which space shapes perception, and perception shapes space.

In terms of reading a space, it is interesting to note that since Westerners are used to reading text from left to right, this will affect the way that a space is perceived. It has been proven that reading habits play a role in cultural differences in visuo-spatial perception, with left-to-right readers showing a slight visuo-spatial bias to the left side of space. Neda Rashidi-Ranjbar et al. have shown that left-to-right readers automatically associate small numbers to the left and larger numbers to

330 While the First Folio version of the play does not give any specific stage directions regarding the grave, the First Quarto, published in 1603 (and likely a pirate copy made from memory by one of the cast members) gives the direction ‘Hamlet leapes in after Leartes’. Shakespeare, The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmark, First Quarto (London: N.L. and John Trundell, 1603), in The Three-Text Hamlet, ed. Paul Bertram and Bernice Kliman (New York: AMS Press, 1991), ll. 3446 (TLN). For more on the First Quarto, see George Ian Duthie, The Bad Quarto of Hamlet: a critical study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1941).

331 See Appendix 8.
the right side of space, for example. In theatre practice, the effect of this is that any figure moving across the stage from the audience’s left (stage right) to their right (stage left) is naturally spurred on by this bias in the minds of the spectators, and any figure moving the opposite way, against the grain as it were, will be met with a subconscious resistance and a natural, subtle slowing effect. This can also be taken into account when considering character dynamics: how, for example, might it affect a character’s sense of power or vulnerability to have their path blocked by another character from the right rather than the left? In the medieval period devils would traditionally enter from the left and heavenly characters from the right; this convention continued into the early modern period with evil and good characters. While modern Western theatre does not retain the religious symbolism of left and right, the fact that our minds have a left/right bias could be utilised in a similar manner: for example, threatening characters entering from the left (i.e. more noticeably and seemingly faster) and safe characters from the right, perhaps. While the difference may seem negligible on an intellectual level, on a subconscious level there is a bias in reading of information (whether numerical, textual, or spatial) which affects literal perception of the world. It is interesting to consider ways to utilise this theatrically.

In the workshop on space, I was keen to explore the question of whether medieval performance configurations are useful as sources of inspiration for stage set-ups in rehearsal or performance today. Using contemporary monologues, we experimented with using a variety of set-ups inspired by early performance, including standing, in-the-round, a banqueting-hall, and use of levels.

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333 In Balinese puppet shows, left and right entrances are also used in a similar manner, to immediately distinguish good from bad.

334 *Experiments*, Day 2.
In this activity we found that while not all medieval playing spaces are easily applicable to modern-day pieces, they are useful in rehearsal exercises to encourage actors to distribute energy, send it beyond the performance space to the audience, find shifts or new aspects of the character or speech. For example: in Rachel’s piece (from *A Delicate Balance* by Edward Albee): this one worked well in a banquet-type setting, with rowdy guests as it uses direct address and the tone is fun and excitable. By trying this set-up and others we discovered new facets regarding the asides and direct address possibilities, many of which could be transferred into performance in another type of space.

It was interesting to me how by totally freeing up the use of space in a rehearsal or workshop, and trying different configurations that did not put strict boundaries between a performer and their audience, so many new discoveries could be made about texts which the actors knew so well and had performed in auditions, performances or workshops many times before. Even when transferring the piece to a different configuration, the discoveries remain in the physical memory of the

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Similarly, Tom’s piece (Christopher from the theatrical adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*) was a very different style and tone but similarly by trying various configurations, some that worked well and some that did not, we discovered new potentials in asides and direct address. Simon Stephens, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* [based on the novel by Mark Haddon], (London: Methuen Drama, 2013).

Marian’s piece (the character of Sherley from devised show *Paper Wings*) involved a mixture of narrative and letter-reading. This initially restricted Marian’s performance energy. When trying direct address in a crowd of people, she then found shifts which hugely lifted the energy of speech and the potential for audience engagement. *Paper Wings*, dir. Helen Tennison, Beehive Theatre Company, Southwark Playhouse (April 2014).
actor and continue to affect their performance.\textsuperscript{337} Space has such a strong effect on perspectives, instincts and emotions, both for the actor and the audience member, that it seems to me it should figure as a subject of exploration and a source of inspiration more often.

As Barbara Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka point out, buildings themselves do not make arguments, but they do ‘structure experiences in order to imply thoughts in viewers’.\textsuperscript{338} In both medieval and early modern theatre practice this was not only understood but utilised to great effect. In modern theatre practice, there has been a movement towards understanding architecture of spaces in a similar manner, celebrating diversity of performance space rather than seeking to emulate the proscenium arch traditions of previous centuries, where the requirements for a successful performance space were based mostly on sight-lines and comfortable seats for the enjoyment of a more passive mode of spectatorship. Non-traditional (in the sense of breaking with nineteenth-century tradition) performance spaces are becoming more popular in professional theatre practice.\textsuperscript{339} ‘Site-specific’ or ‘site-responsive’ work draws inspiration directly from buildings and performance spaces, structuring a narrative or experience around the space. Work by companies such as Offstage combines found spaces with verbatim stories to find inspiration for exciting new performances. \textit{Boat Play},\textsuperscript{340} for example, took place aboard a boat which sailed down the river Thames during the show, while \textit{Home} was

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Physical memory is explored further in Chapter 3 and Appendix 11.
\item Hanawalt and Kobialka ‘Introduction’, p. xiii.
\item The trend is also reflected in actor-training approaches. Viewpoints training, for example, seeks to expand actors’ kinesthetic awareness, helping them to become more physically responsive through experiments with space and time exploring (among other aspects) architecture and space through movement. The six viewpoints were originally devised by choreographer Mary Overlie but were later used by theatre practitioners Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (who expanded Overlie’s original six into nine physical viewpoints for actor training purposes). Importance is placed upon how actors react to the shape and architecture of the space they are in and utilise the relationship between the space and the body. See Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, \textit{The Viewpoints Book} (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005).
\item \textit{Boat Play}, dir. Cressida Brown, site-specific, the Thames (2014).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
inspired by interviews with residents of a tower block in Leyton, performed in the
tower block site.341

The construction of spaces specifically for performance of a particular production
has become a popular way to immerse audiences in the ideas, themes and world of
the play. Greenwich Jetty on the south bank of the Thames hosts productions in
temporary, tailored spaces built out of shipping containers.342 The idea that the
physical construction of the space links so intrinsically with the storytelling is a
notion rooted in early performance tradition, where Biblical storytelling naturally
took place within – and grew out of – the symbolically constructed space of the
church building. Unlike traditional nineteenth-century theatre, and much of
modern commercial theatre in London’s West End, where images are presented on
a distant stage for the entertainment of the relatively passive audience, spaces
whose construction is linked inextricably with the narrative encourage audiences
to engage with the space, and therefore with the story itself. This is also in line
with the way that outdoor and street theatre functions. In an outdoor environment
there is often more of an air of community, of carnival and of freedom than within
a building: this is as true today as it was in the medieval period.343 With the
creation of church drama came the growth and development of outdoor plays and
festivities which explored Biblical narratives in a community setting. Out in the
public spaces of the streets and squares, people came together to share stories
about human nature, history and relationships through the framework of the Bible.
At events like the Mystery Cycles in cities including York, Chester and Coventry,
and the May-time festivals of medieval towns and villages, spaces that were


342 Such as *The Boy Who Climbed out of His Face*, dir. Nigel Barrett and Louise Mari,
Shunt, The Jetty, Greenwich Peninsula (August 2014), and *Heartbreak Hotel*, dir. Sam
Curtis Lindsay, Zebedee Productions, The Jetty, Greenwich Peninsula (June 2015).

343 We can also compare the groundlings’ experience at the open-air Globe: both in the
eyear modern period (where there would have been a rowdier crowd as well as food
sellers and suchlike) and in the new Shakespeare’s Globe on London’s Southbank (where
there are stricter rules thanks to Health and Safety regulations, but still an air of freedom
in comparison to being seated inside).
generally seen to be under the control of city or town officials were taken over by
the people, who took part in staging stories for the rest of the community.

There is a very similar trend in recent years towards the idea of ‘claiming spaces’ – both indoor and outdoor, private and public – for theatrical performance: this often ties in with a sense of community ownership, taking back corporatised spaces that were once communal through the shared power of storytelling. It is part of the drive in current Western art practice to break down barriers and create art that is more inclusive.\textsuperscript{344} While in the medieval era it was generally civic space that was claimed for theatrical performance, today we find that spaces including abandoned buildings are being claimed to very similar effect. Companies such as Theatre Delicatessen, based in London and Sheffield, UK, seek to create communities of artists through taking over empty spaces.\textsuperscript{345} They collaborate with property developers and move into empty buildings, utilising these empty spaces that are often full of reminiscences of their old official functions,\textsuperscript{346} contrasting with the bohemian and communal feel brought by the current artistic inhabitants. The artistic and the corporate exist uneasily side-by-side in this arrangement: somewhat similarly to the growing uneasiness of the arrangement between artists and the (increasingly Puritan) Church and state through the Tudor and early modern periods.\textsuperscript{347} Verbatim drama taking place in relevant spaces, including the aforementioned \textit{Home} by Offstage, is another example of a powerful act of claiming space through communal storytelling approaches. In \textit{Home}, this claiming of the tower block was particularly poignant since the building was condemned, and the stories explored the memories of the families who lived there. In much the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{344} For example, in Australia the Brisbane Festival organisers express a wish ‘to show that public and private space can be newly shared’ thus breaking down physical barriers to experiencing artistic works. Brisbane Festival, About, \texttt{<http://www.brisbanefestival.com.au/about>} [accessed 26 May 2017].

\textsuperscript{345} See Theatre Delicatessen, About, \texttt{<http://theatredelicatessen.co.uk/about/>} [accessed 26 May 2017].

\textsuperscript{346} For example, they recently occupied the old \textit{Guardian} building on Farringdon Road in London.

\textsuperscript{347} Theatre has long existed in this kind of liminal space: somewhere between respectable/sacred and unrespectable/profane, as discussed in Chapter 1, and further explored later in this chapter.}
same way as medieval festival and communal performance, companies like Theatre Delicatessen and Offstage utilise space in a manner that reinforces the communal nature of public space: creating a new sense of place or locus within that shared space through storytelling that is, if not consciously historically-responsive, at least responsive to its environment and the history of the space it is positioned within.

Multidimensional and Imaginative Space

Although communal theatrical performance in the Middle Ages strongly related meaning and storytelling to the particular places they were performed in, it is important to note that the medieval understanding of space corresponded with the medieval view of time: emphasising theme and associational meaning over literality. This resulted in a double or multi-layered vision, where metaphorical and imaginative meaning were at least as powerful as literal, realistic or material depictions. This is true not just in terms of theatrical performance, but also in terms of the way in which the medieval mind constructed meaning and narrative about place or space in general. For example, verbal description and mental pictures were used more than maps to identify places, suggesting a preference for associative and imaginative, rather than literal and pragmatic, relationships with and experiences of place. When maps were used, they divided space in a thematic

Figure 10. The Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, c.1300.
rather than geographical way. The Hereford Mappa Mundi is a good example of the collapsing of time and space as well as all spheres of knowledge into a single depiction (see Figure 10).

As Simon Garfield describes,

the map is frantic – alive with activity and achievement […]. There are approximately eleven hundred place-names, figurative drawings and inscriptions, sourced from biblical, classical and Christian texts […]. In its distillation of geographical, historical and religious knowledge the mappa [sic] serves as an itinerary, a gazetteer, a parable, a bestiary and an educational aid. Indeed, all history is here, happening at the same time: the Tower of Babel; Noah’s Ark as it comes to rest on dry land; the Golden Fleece; the Labyrinth in Crete where the Minotaur lived. […] it seems closer to Hieronymus Bosch than to the scientific Greek cartographers.348

Garfield’s description of the way in which the Hereford Mappa Mundi functions (he describes it as ‘mind-expanding’ in the title of his book) provides a picture of the way in which narrative was structured in relation to space on a variety of levels beyond the literal or geographical. In much the same way, medieval dramatic tradition organised theatrical space imaginatively rather than naturalistically, allowing a fluidity of place. In the early modern theatres too, an empty stage could become any location that a play required simply through the imagination and complicity of the spectators. This did not negate the meaning drawn from the actual physical architecture or structure of the space, as described above, but rather added additional layers of meaning and understanding through association and imaginative complicity of performer and spectator.

Theatre historian Donalee Dox points out that ‘thinking of a performance space as fluid, active, saturated with meanings, and always constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing an imagined reality has become accepted practice in late

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twentieth century theatre criticism’. Medieval understanding of space within drama was not limited to one approach but demonstrated ‘a sophisticated multidimensionality to medieval theatrical performance that resonates with modernist and postmodernist experimentation with theatrical space’. Dox describes three possible readings of the use of space in medieval plays, giving a useful insight into how medieval drama utilised space in ways which are now thought of as modern or postmodern. Reading space as ‘Theatrical Space’ allows an interpretation in accordance with twentieth-century emphasis on realism. This may seem an anachronistic approach, yet there are elements of medieval drama which are surprisingly realistic in their approach. In the Croxton play, for example, real fire is used, rather than representing fire metaphorically, and the depiction of the Host is very graphic; Dox argues that these techniques could be read as ‘striving for a realistic interpretation of bodies and objects in space as a way of conveying meaning’. The play also ends with the audience and performers all joining together to sing Te Deum, ending in a ritual communal space with a real liturgical devotion. Read in this way, another example of realism in the medieval pageant plays might be Jesus’ bleeding wounds, which in many cycles including that of York, Chester and Coventry, seems to have been depicted with animal blood or fake blood made with vermillion, used on a pale leather costume, which represented nudity. In the York play Christ has a ‘sirke [shirt] wounded’ and displays his injuries, declaring ‘here may yoe see my

350 Dox, p. 182.
351 Dox, p. 172.
352 The first example of liturgical drama, the Quem Quaeritis trope, similarly appears in one tenth-century manuscript as occurring before the hymn Te Deum Laudamus. In another manuscript it appears as part of the Collecta ceremony: involving participants assembling for a collect before processing to the church building. See also T. J. McGee, ‘The Liturgical Placements of the Quem quaeritis Dialogue’, Journal of the American Musicological Society, 29.1 (1976) 1-29 (pp. 5-6).
353 ‘vermelen’ was used at New Romney. See James M. Gibson (ed.), Records of Early English Drama: diocese of Kent (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 791.
woundes wide’, and the Coventry guild records describe the ‘wasshyng of the whyttawyers albas’ as one of their expenses, suggesting that they may have needed to clean blood from the garment between performances. Reading these elements as realistic, however, is perhaps beside the point: the aim of the real fire, special effects with blood, and communal singing is not realism so much as spectacle, and is perhaps more to do with the traditions of ritual practice involving singing, processions, natural elements (fire and water), and animal blood than a desire to naturalistically depict events on stage. The effect is something beyond the modern understanding of realism, beyond Dox’s concept of ‘Theatrical Space’. In this alternative reading, theatrical space becomes synonymous with ritual or sacred space: an idea that I will elaborate upon later in this chapter.

The second alternative suggested by Dox is to read medieval drama in terms of ‘Mutable Space’: as flexible and constantly changing, ‘in keeping with medieval performance practices’ and allowing for ‘fluidity between the material world and the nonmaterial world of Christian religious belief’. Dox points out that Wassily Kandinsky, Antonin Artaud, Jaques Copeau and other twentieth-century artists operate on a parallel ‘conceptual domain’, similarly seeking to represent space as multidimensional. Indeed, both Artaud and Kandinsky were influenced by mythological tradition and universal ideas: another similarity shared with medieval drama.

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356 Dox, p. 170.

357 Dox, p. 176.

358 Kandinsky drew upon Biblical stories and Russian folktales in his paintings. Artaud advocated the use of myth in relation to the worldview of the primitive man: who understood events and experiences as having additional significance to the literal meaning, and who assimilated external experience so that it became inner understanding. Artaud sought to create an Occidental theatre drawing upon oriental tradition, where the ‘inner eye’ or inner understanding was operative and truth resided within.
The final option Dox offers is ‘Space of Imagination’: a view of space defined not by bodies and material objects but by imaginative powers (particularly in relation to Christian theology in the medieval context). In postmodernist theatre theory, the understanding of space as an active participant in performance has become prominent. Theatre technology advances, as well as the development of film and television, have contributed to this way of thinking: even when using realistic elements of staging it is possible to have scenes that quickly shift in the style of a filmic dissolve.

It is worth noting the difference, however, between the filmic polyscenic and the physical or live polyscenic (that is, the polyscenic as experienced in theatre or being physically present with a work of art). The medieval pageants, the Bayeux tapestry, or Trajan’s column, for example, are all difficult to view in complete simultaneity due to their extensive spatial requirements. They are also limited to time and place in a way that films or digital images are not. Photographic or filmic reproductions allow the works to be viewed remotely, although the impact and the participatory aspect of experiencing a performance, fresco or sculpture in person cannot be captured through film or photography. Yet, film has undoubtedly contributed to a renewed understanding of, and fascination with, a polyscenic and simultaneous style of dealing with time in storytelling.

Dox’s notions of Mutable Space and Space of Imagination are very useful but can, I think, be collapsed into the idea of imaginative space: space which can change, is fuelled by imagination and shared association, and which can hold multiple meanings beyond that of theatrical realism. This also potentially contains the concept of Theatrical Space and realism versus surrealism since within imaginative space (which is flexible) paradoxes and polarities can be explored and employed. The powerful fluidity of imaginative space is explored and pushed to new limits in modern productions such as those by experimental practitioner David Rosenberg in his collaborations with writer Glenn Neath and sound artists Ben and Max Ringham. In productions including Ring, Fiction, Monument, and

359 As is most modern immersive theatre.
Séance, their audiences use headphones to experience a three-dimensional soundscape that transports them into another world. Ring, Fiction and Séance are all experienced entirely in the dark, meaning that the imagination is given total power over the visualisation of the storyline and location. Monument took place mainly in Trafalgar Square, with performers positioned among the public, miming seamlessly along to the recorded voices, as if they were speaking live, transforming their experience of the space. At other points, audiences would experience a whisper in their ear, only to turn and find nobody behind them. All three pieces gave audiences the feeling of reality and altered the space they were in through the power of imagination and aural illusion. In Ring, for example, the sounds of (what seems to be) other audience members moving their chairs around, getting up, and discussing a character that turns out to be you, produced the effect of a physically changing space for the audience: when the lights go down everyone is sitting in rows, but during the recorded piece it is as though everyone around you has dragged their chairs into a circle, thus entirely rearranging the space inside each audience member’s own mind. The safe space that a modern audience member may be accustomed to (and expect) is disrupted and turned into a space of danger as violent events happen around the listener during the play. Without a clear boundary between fiction and reality, the role of audience member blurs with that of character, and play-space melds with personal-space.

A theatre project I am currently working on, Ergo Sum, combines technology and live performance to explore neurological and psychiatric conditions: immersing audiences in the mindset of another human being through the use of headphones and 3D binaural sound design. Like Rosenberg’s work, sound design in this production is

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361 Ergo Sum is a multi-sensory theatre project under development at Watershed Pervasive Media Studio (Bristol) and Theatre Delicatessen (London), funded by Arts Council England and others. Ergo Sum, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, Theatre Delicatessen (December 2015, May 2017).
integral to the construction of imaginative space and place through location mapping: the brain has the ability to unconsciously pick up on acoustical information in a binaural, three-dimensional soundscape, transporting the listener to another place. The Ergo Sum Research and Development process is experimenting with the potential uses of technology within a theatrical approach which promotes a fluidity of time and place.

Repetition and patterns are central to this approach. Ergo Sum explores associational, polyscenic and symbolic storytelling in a similar manner to Brook’s experiments in the Theatre of Cruelty season at the RSC, experimenting with ‘repetitive patterns, seeing how it is possible to present more meaning, more swiftly than by a logical unfolding of events’.

A key aim of the project is to explore the cognitive effects and potential applications of binaural technology within a performance context in relation to the question of utilising immersive theatre as a tool to reduce stigma and promote empathy: improving upon and developing scientific simulation exercises into three-dimensional, truthful experiences, thus rendering them more effective in their aims to reduce stigma and encourage prosocial behaviour. In trying to achieve this the space of imagination is key: allowing audiences to

362 Brook, p. 52.

experience other perspectives. Meyer-Dinkgräfe’s theory of simultaneity and meditative processes in theatrical performance as means to achieve higher levels of consciousness (and, by extension, understanding) is also relevant: by simultaneously watching a character live and experiencing their perspective through an immersive soundscape (e.g. yourself hearing the auditory hallucinations of a schizophrenic character as you watch the story of their daily life) can the audience gain a greater understanding and heightened consciousness? This set-up creates two spaces that exist simultaneously: the space of the observer / observed, and the space inside the character’s head. The audience are given two perspectives on the situation, and two perspectives on reality. This could be compared to the dual understanding of time and space in traditions such as the medieval, where spiritual and material planes co-exist and interact. It seems possible to create a dual understanding of space for modern audiences in a secular setting through concepts utilising imaginative, malleable space.

Brook’s use of the power of the observed actor’s body in space as the key to creating theatre has been highly influential in modern theatre practice. He advocates engagement with what he terms the empty space, an approach to theatre which does not rely upon physical and visual trappings but upon the relationship between actor and audience and their shared imaginative powers in order to function; ‘I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged’. 364 French director Ariane Mnouchkine built on this idea, declaring that theatrical space is supported and defined by the actor’s imagination but that an empty space does not have to be a poor one. In a similar vein to Brook’s approaches, Mnouchkine’s vision was to create a theatrical experience with past and present intertwined, transporting her spectators to another conception of reality. Her concept of mise-en-scène was like a historical construction-site; she created immersive productions where the audience member,

364 Brook, The Empty Space, p. 7.
as they arrived in the foyer, would be immediately submerged in the world and the history of the play’s narrative. For example, in her 1991 production of *The Oresteia* in a chain of warehouses in Paris,65 Mnouchkine used various set pieces such as a map of the ancient Mediterranean world, books and picture displays of ancient Greek life, and points where spectators could buy Greek food in order to immerse audiences in the historical and dramatic space of the play. Both Brook and Mnouchkine, like Rosenberg (Fuel), Brown (Offstage), and other experimental artists, utilise what we could term empty, found or non-conventional spaces and advocate a responsive approach to these spaces,66 emphasising imaginative power and the power of the performer. Their work explores the ways in which physical and imaginative space interact and interrelate: in a similar way to the processional performances in the medieval church which utilised symbolic and associational overlap between the physical space of the church building and the imaginative space of the narrative, in order to tell the story more effectively.67

Malleable, empty space and the power of the actor-body were aspects we explored during the third *Experiments* workshop by engaging with the idea of topography:68 moving around the space with different constraints or different ‘topographies’, and adding given circumstances such as ‘it is raining’ or ‘you are covered in treacle’. The idea of the exercise was to demonstrate in a straightforward and simple way how


66 Actor Jean-Claude Carrière, who worked with Brook’s Centre International de Créations Théâtrales, wrote that ‘one must listen to the demands of the space. It imposes a certain kind of speech, a certain kind of acting, a certain kind of *mise-en-scène* which are in harmony with the place’. Jean-Claude Carrière, quoted in Christopher Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development and Transformation of Scenography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 172.

67 Or medieval banquet-hall performances, where social hierarchy was reinforced by the physical arrangement of the table; or the rich empty space of the Globe Theatre with its painted heavens and zodiac signs.

68 See Appendix 9.
the body reflects the given circumstances of the space, not just the
internal given circumstances often used by intellectualised approaches
or approaches influenced by Stanislavski’s legacy.

In another exercise, working with classical paintings in groups to
create a set of 6-10 images or freeze frames, we explored spatial and
symbolic relationships. There was a tendency for the actors to
overthink the process and so I gave them some distraction techniques,
such as telling each other their favourite story while moving through
the poses sequence, and then singing it in operatic style. This exercise
is a powerful way to explore dynamic poses and expand the
performer’s physical range, as well as demonstrating the way that we
read narrative without any text. Based purely on the images created
and performed, those watching reported complex stories and
relationships that they observed in the moments between the
performers.

We also considered Shakespeare’s malleable or changing space, and the
idea that all you need to portray a wide range of locations in a play is
the actor’s body. Given a list of scene locations taken from Othello, the
actors devised ways of changing the sense of place using physical
reactions to the space. Interestingly, they experienced difficulty with
sticking to the methodology of just using their own bodies (as in the
previous given circumstances exercise), and kept tending towards
‘becoming’ objects like trees, animals or furniture in order to portray
different places. I had to remind them of the aim of reacting to the
location with their bodies, as performers and as human beings, without
resorting to miming objects. It would appear that further training
exploring the power of the body as signifier (rather than signified) is
useful for modern actors who are perhaps more used to relying on set
or technology to portray place and time.
I then used an exercise to enable the actors to access a more instinctive way of portraying different places or locations as performers with no set, props, or technical aspects. I asked them to move around the space with me calling out descriptions of different locations influenced by the Biblical story or the medieval pageant plays. The actors were asked to simply react with their bodies to the information I gave them.

This worked much better than the exercise with Othello. However, it became difficult for me not to give emotional information (with sentences like ‘you feel…’, ‘it feels like…’) as well as physical and environmental-sensory information regarding the location they were in. It became apparent through this exercise that in these Biblical settings it is virtually impossible to separate place from meaning or internal circumstance, setting from story. For example, the movement from the Garden of Eden to the desert involves banishment and falling from grace: the emotional content is linked to the physical journey. This is the same with Moses’ journeys, Noah’s ark, and many more examples. There is always a mission, a state of being, or a sense of one’s spiritual place in the macrocosm that feeds into the sense of physical place in Biblical narrative.

**Liminal Space**

Within early and historically-responsive styles of storytelling, liminality is a key concept. It is linked to the mysterious nature of this type of storytelling, which utilises the ambiguous and the contradictory, being on the edge, the border, or the transition between old and new, residual and emergent.369 Theatre itself exists in a liminal space, a marginal space and time, born of the mystery of the liturgy and before this of ritual transformations and anarchic festival celebrations (marking

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369 Liminality in societal structures was also important, as discussed in Chapter 1.
the liminal space at the point of change between the seasons).\textsuperscript{370} Even the early professional theatres were positioned outside the city walls of England’s capital. Early modern theatre goers would cross the liminal space of the river Thames, onto the Southbank, populated by taverns, brothels, bear baiting and theatres: carnivalesque areas; regulated, but largely outside the control of the increasingly Puritan-dominated city authorities who tried to segregate work from play.\textsuperscript{371}

Liminality is a key part of any ritual or religious event, since rites – like the theatrical tradition they gave rise to – require transformation and change. Liminal space exists in many Christian catholic concepts such as purgatory (where the dead undergo purification before being admitted into Heaven), the transitional states of rites such as baptism, and transubstantiation in the rite of communion.

One of the ways in which this transitional element emerges is in the liminal space between stage and audience resulting in a fluidity of space. Victor Turner has pointed out that unlike theatre, ritual does not distinguish between audience and performer,\textsuperscript{372} and Richard Schechner has declared that theatre is born when this separation is in place.\textsuperscript{373} However, it seems useful to acknowledge that there are degrees of separation: ranging from the ritualistic and participatory closeness of medieval liturgical performances or modern immersive theatre, to the less-participatory but nonetheless highly-active experiences of the Mystery Cycle plays, the early modern open-air playhouses, or Balinese ceremonial performance, …

\textsuperscript{370} Such as harvest festivals, summer and winter solstices, May festivities, celebrations of springtime and new life.


to the non-participatory, non-active distance created in cinema, or in proscenium arch auditoriums where actors stay on the stage and the audience sit in the dark. Performance spaces in the medieval and early modern eras had a malleable quality where boundaries between actor and audience, and between reality and fantasy, were blurred, changeable and sometimes done away with altogether. With the beginnings of theatrical performance, citizens would take up roles as Robin Hood in a folk play, or God in a Mystery Cycle, and people they knew would come to watch them in outdoor spaces where spectators were free to roam about, where actors would often cross from performance space to audience space, and where the location of the story could shift and change at the will of the audience and performers, rather than via a complex set change. In the early modern era, while seats were sold at performances there were also standing tickets for the ‘groundlings’ who had freedom to move about and enjoyed an intimate, up-close experience of the performance.

Crossing that liminal space between actor and audience, for example by actors positioned as pseudo-audience members (audience plants), is often considered a postmodern technique, breaking down previously impenetrable barriers between stage and auditorium. The technique appears in plays such as Tom Stoppard’s *The Real Inspector Hound*, where two theatre critics become embroiled in the action of a murder mystery onstage, blurring the distinction between spectator/actor and between the reality of the audience and the reality of the play-world. This exploration of liminal space and the crossing of boundaries appears also in early

374 The pageant vehicle would not have provided a very large performance space, and it is not surprising that some performances extended into the street. In Coventry’s Shearmen and Taylors’ play, for example, ‘the iij kyngis speyketh in þe strete’ (l.489sd.), and ‘Erod ragis in þe pagond and in the strete also’ (l.728sd.). The street is used as an extension of the stage, and could be used to represent a separate location to that of the pageant wagon: in this play, Herod’s palace appears to be represented by the wagon, while the street which the kings converse in stands for an external location, where they speak unheard by Herod. See Pamela King and Clifford Davidson (eds), ‘The Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors’, *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 83-111.

drama. In the late-fifteenth century interlude *Fulgens and Lucre*, characters A and B cross from audience into play-space. Appearing initially as two real-world servants ready to watch the play, these pseudo-spectators decide to get involved in the action, and completely dominate the main storyline for the entire performance. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (first performed 1607)\(^{377}\) employs a very similar structure where audience plants – a citizen, his wife, and his young apprentice Rafe – cross the boundary between audience space and performance space and become directly involved in the action.\(^{378}\) Although this technique is thought of as postmodern – breaking down boundaries and challenging convention – the only tradition that is being challenged is that of nineteenth-century theatre which set up a ‘fourth wall’ between performer and spectator. Prior to this, the line between performance space and audience was fluid and malleable.

\(^{376}\) The interlude was a popular genre in the Tudor period which emerged from the medieval morality play tradition. The terms ‘interlude’ and ‘morality’ are often treated as interchangeable as the genres are so strongly related, but the allegorical style where personified human qualities (virtues and vices) fight over the human soul gradually morphed into a new type of drama that utilised these types to explore more specific, secular, and domestic themes. In *Fulgens and Lucre*, the theme is the wooing of Lucre and the play is set in ancient Rome. It is the earliest surviving secular English play. Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucre*, first printed c.1512–16 by John Rastell. First recorded performance at Lambeth Palace, 1497.


\(^{378}\) It is important to note that *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* was originally performed by a boy company. The audience plants were therefore obvious in early productions, whereas in modern stagings there is seemingly a more blurred distinction. However, in the 2014 Globe production, the early modern costumes of the performers arguably had much the same effect as the age difference between audience and performers in the original: it was clear that there were actors sitting in the audience because of their outfits. In this way there is still some divide between actor and audience member: but the play nonetheless constantly seeks ways to challenge this through interaction and crossing boundaries between stage and auditorium. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, dir. Adele Thomas, Shakespeare’s Globe (December 2014).
In 2012 I staged Fulgens and Lucre as part of a Medieval May Festival in a medieval banquet hall.\textsuperscript{379} Since fluidity of space as well as increased use of audience-interaction is frequently employed in modern performance, one might expect that staging the play in a banquet-hall set up with audience free to come and go, sharing the space with the actors, would not be too challenging for professional performers. There were, however, some useful discoveries made through the process. The nature of the playing space, the meta-theatrical style of the play, and the freedoms and close proximity of the audience opened up a great deal of room for comedic interactions. One example came at a moment where B is collecting some brooms from under a table. In the second performance a couple of audience members chose this moment to wander across the playing area and out of the door. The actor playing B spontaneously swept them out with the broom he was holding, eliciting laughter from the spectators. In another scene, the (male) actor playing Joan the maid found moments to ask the audience’s input on her rather unimpressive options for suitors. There were many such moments of unplanned interaction which doubtless increased the enjoyment of the play on both sides, and were brought about by the style and shape of the playing space and a shared awareness of the malleable threshold between play and reality.

It is interesting to consider the ways in which the experience of staging Fulgens and Lucre might have differed in a hall where the traditional social structures still applied. The obvious coding of these structures was displayed in every area from the seating arrangements to the clothing people would be wearing.\textsuperscript{380} The characters of A and B disrupt the social hierarchy which existed at the time of the play, and in a modern staging this is a missing element that it is impossible to exactly recreate. At the time of the original performances, the blatant crossing

\textsuperscript{379} Fulgens and Lucre, part of the Medieval May Festival (2014).

\textsuperscript{380} Due to sumptuary laws dictating appropriate dress.
of liminal space in both metatheatrical and societal terms would have been hugely powerful: now, the metatheatrical element is all that remains (bar some potential real-world social awkwardness from reticent participants). This production demonstrated that a sensitive, historically-aware reading (and staging) produces interesting and effective results, while an attempt at an exact reconstruction of original performance conditions is clearly not plausible since society has changed so much.

Another way in which liminality appears in medieval and early modern drama is the crossing of boundaries and thresholds within the narrative itself, where characters or places undergo change and transformation. This often appears in carnival and folk traditions, and quite often relates to the turning of social hierarchy on its head, with the crowning of a false king or queen for a day, for example.\(^\text{381}\) It also appears in cycles of death and rebirth, whether literal, as in the story of Christ, or metaphorical, as in the supposed death of Hermione in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*. Presumed dead after being mistreated by her husband Leontes, who believes her unfaithful, Hermione lives in secret for many years, and when her penitent husband goes to view a new statue of his exonerated wife it is ‘brought to life’ – that is, revealed to be the real Hermione – by friend and servant Paulina. This moment of apparent regeneration or transformation of a living person from a statue also echoes the rebirth of Leontes’ love, the couple’s relationship, and forms a happy ending in their reconcilement with each other as well as their long lost daughter.

The themes of regeneration, transformation and rebirth are frequently explored in theatre practice that engages with this style of storytelling. Punchdrunk’s looped narratives in *The Drowned Man* show an illusory, magician style disappearance of the murdered main characters, as they vanish into the ground through a concealed trapdoor. They are then mysteriously regenerated to begin the story again. Since characters are stuck in loops they therefore exist in a liminal space: they are all

\(^{381}\) As discussed in Chapter 1.
undergoing a transition of some kind. The characters all loop their stories three times, and so go through two transitions between loops: for example, after Wendy murders Marshall with a pair of scissors, she goes to get changed in the dressing room and begins her story again… and again. The scissors are washed by the evil studio executive Alice Estee before she puts them in a place where Wendy can re-find them, along with orchestrating various other events to tip her into a state of jealous frenzy at the command of Stanford. The character of Romola wakes from a violent car accident to find herself covered in blood, which is dismissed as ‘just make up’, and later is reapplied by the seamstress. The design of the set itself suggests liminality: we get the sense that we are all – characters and audience – existing on the borderline between Heaven and Hell, on the studio gates, full of crossroads, motels and borders. The play is set at night, between midnight and twilight: the ‘twilight zone’. There are frequent references to the events in the play being just a dream, as well as a strong suggestion that the characters are stuck in purgatory or some intermediate world as in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, before their next reincarnation. Some reviewers have suggested that the four floors represent different levels of consciousness or stages of sleep, with the top floor closest to waking: much like in the film *Inception*, where as we go deeper into different levels of dreaming things get more chaotic, surreal, and uncontrollable.

Other plays explore the idea of transformation, liminality, and the crossing of boundaries through a multi-layered structure: in Weiss’ *Marat/Sade*, as mentioned earlier, the sense of movement between now, the ‘then’ of the play with Sade, and the ‘before-then’ of the play-within-a-play about Marat, means that the various narratives and layers of the story compete for the audience’s attention in their claims of accuracy and truth, creating multiple points of view and possible interpretations of events and characters.

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382 The studio diva, for example, is being discarded in favour of a younger star, the protagonists William and Wendy (both based on the character of Woyzeck) are undergoing a loss of trust in their partners and subsequent mental breakdown, and the young actor Frankie undergoes a violent initiation into the world of the film studio, selling his soul in the process.

383 Stanford keeps repeating the line ‘we live inside a dream’.

384 *Inception*, dir. Christopher Nolan (Legendary Pictures, 2010).
By defying categorisation, moving away from specific genres and approaches, theatre performance today is moving full-circle, echoing an ancient native style that is mysterious, ambiguous, full of transition and change. Today, the temporality and liveness of performance is perhaps highlighted and valued even more in contrast to the fixedness of film, television, published work and so on. Devised and improvisational work has again become popular, with extensively-rehearsed productions and intricately-blocked styles of directing rapidly going out of fashion.

Modern productions are also frequently exploring polyscenic styles, metatheatricality and multiple levels of reality. For example, the staging of dreamthinkspeak’s adaptation of *Hamlet*, entitled *Who Goes There*, functioned in such a way that it was like ‘seeing the play from several different angles, and with different mindsets, simultaneously’. The same company’s later adaptation of *Hamlet (The Rest is Silence)* had ‘the action happening on four sides, behind windows that double as video screens and mirrors[:] the audience are bound in a kaleidoscopic nutshell’. As Bella Todd wrote in her review of the production, ‘perhaps Hamlet has a unique advantage as a candidate for remixing. The realm is already “dismantled”. Time is already “disjoint and out of frame”. We are already in a hinterland between heaven and hell, right and wrong, two courtly regimes’. Shakespeare’s play itself is dramatically situated in a liminal space, and playing with the polyscenic and the simultaneity of multiple viewpoints in a modern adaptation fits well with the original dramatic vocabulary.

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387 *The Rest is Silence*, dir. Tristan Sharps, DreamThinkSpeak, Brighton Festival (May 2012).


The Construction of Sacred Space

As mentioned above as an alternative to Dox’s theory of realism and ‘Theatrical Space’, the creation of sacred space is an integral part of medieval dramatic tradition, and arguably something that we have lost sight of today. This seems evident in the way in which Dox reads the theatrical spectacles in medieval drama as evidence of realism in medieval theatre practice, rather than recognising these elements as part of a living ritual tradition. Constructing sacred space in performance today can be compared to the idea of accessing a notion of time that allows for the meditative process that Meyer-Dinkgräfe describes: something that appears to rely upon a religious context. However, as pointed out in relation to simultaneous time or (to borrow from Benjamin) messianic time, possibly there are elements of sacred space that are still accessible even without a religious context.

Mircea Eliade says that the religious space manifests an interruption or break in the ordinary order of things. The hierophany – that is, the revelation of the sacred – demonstrates the ‘non homogeneity of space:’ a rupture that ‘allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation’. This moment reveals that which is different to the non-reality of the world: we see ‘absolute reality’. As both Eliade and, more recently, Pete Ward suggest, in any hierophany there is a paradox: in hierophany objects become something new yet also remain themselves. This is the same with space – in the revealing of the sacred the space takes on new meaning yet continues to remain materially and quantitatively the same. It is qualitatively different. While in profane experience, space is ‘homogeneous and neutral’, sacred space requires an orientation. The former has no qualitative differences or

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391 Eliade, p. 21.


393 Eliade, p. 22.
ruptures in order to define it, while the latter requires this in order to maintain a fixed point to give meaning within the chaos of life. Medieval and early modern minds were habitually disposed to understand human life in relation to divinity, and the understanding of space was necessarily influenced by this worldview. Stephen Clucas points out the bodily evocation of sacred forms in order to orientate oneself within a sacred space: such as kneeling to pray, or forming the sign of the cross.

Eliade suggests that even in desacralised societies we still retain a sense of the mythic and the sacred disguised, for example, in movie culture and celebrity worship. Gordon Lynch meanwhile argues that the sacred and the profane are collapsed in popular culture and, for him, the sacred is characterised by intense focus and feelings towards an object (or idea), and this intense orientation propagates communal relationships and shared identities. Celebrity worship is arguably an uncomfortable fit for a sense of the sacred, and the argument that sacred and profane are collapsed is problematic in a similar manner to Heelas’ theory of dedifferentiation: despite secularisation there is still a strong awareness that these terms are not collapsible but are directly opposed. However, there is value in the idea that we still engage with the mythic and are able to attribute shared meaning and intense focus to certain objects, situations, and stories.

This can also apply to space, and in particular, theatricalised space, in that storytelling heightens our drive to read meaning. Furthermore, the growing popularity of utilising found spaces and different stage configurations in order to break down boundaries between performer and audience member, narrative and


396 See Ward, p. 67-8.

397 As discussed in the Introduction.
real-world experience similarly encourages intense orientation and the reading of meaning on multiple levels.

The main point that I took away from running the workshop on space and place was that a focus on sacred space is actually a very useful tool for contemporary actors. Rachel commented that the workshop had reminded her that she used to treat the stage or performance space with an intense sense of orientation and respect, like a sacred space: it reminded me about the importance of respect for your space. In drama school if I did a show, every time I would enter that space I would be in character [...] and I had this relationship with the space, which definitely added to the performance [...]. The space is alive for the audience so I wouldn’t go in there as someone who doesn’t belong there.

The idea of creating a sacred space seemed a difficult task, but by the end of the week of workshops it became clear that building trust between an ensemble, and discovering a shared language to work with, are key to creating and maintaining a respect for the space you share together. This in turn creates a particular sense of orientation and an understanding of the space as sacred: that is, something to be respected, honoured, and treated with difference to the outside world. The difference is qualitative, not quantitative, but it allows for creativity and understanding to flourish.

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398 *Experiments*, Day 3.

399 The idea of a qualitatively different state and a transitional moment between being ‘off’ and ‘on’ as a performer is also embodied in the sacred act of putting on clown face, as described in Eli Simon, *The Art of Clowning: More Paths to Your Inner Clown* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 110.
In medieval and early modern thought, both space and time are not absolute but are flexible, malleable and affected by both divine and human imaginative power. We might use the term tesseract, invented by Madeline L’Engle in her book *A Wrinkle in Time*,\(^{400}\) to describe the way in which early thinking collapses time and space. The notion of tesseracts suggests that while we might travel from A to B along a piece of string, if we fold it in half we can instantly travel to a new time, place and state without transition.\(^{401}\) The concept is not completely alien to the modern mind: recently, scholars have begun to recognise that our minds do not work in a linear fashion. In Gestalt theory, and later in Piaget theory and American learning theory,\(^{402}\) accounts are given ‘of mental development as proceeding in some more or less linear and uniform fashion’.\(^{403}\) However, as Bruner points out, ‘the growth of knowledge of “reality” or of the mental powers that enable this growth to occur, the critics argue, is neither unilinear, strictly derivational in a logical sense, nor is it, as it were, “across the board”’.\(^{404}\) It is no wonder, then, that despite the move in British (and general Western culture) away from spirituality and religion and towards secularism, we still feel a sense of connection with the non-linear and the malleability of imaginative space.

Western theatre has recently begun to reflect ancient approaches to space and time, and is unconsciously rooted in historical perspectives in its thinking about


\(^{401}\) See Bogart and Landau, pp. 184-85. Bogart and Landau discuss the idea of tesseracts in relation to character state, suggesting that ‘that in simply going from A to G, in simply putting it in our bodies, in simply doing it, there is a kind of understanding that emerges, an understanding beyond reason and psychology’ (p. 185). I have explored a similar idea and process which is detailed in Chapter 3 and Appendix 11.

\(^{402}\) The former two examples are both from the classic rationalist tradition, and the latter from an empiricist school of thought.

\(^{403}\) Bruner, p. 1.

\(^{404}\) Bruner, p. 2.
these concepts.\footnote{As noted, a potential source of comparison and inspiration is provided by examples from Eastern theatre, where artists are readily aware of their roots and their traditions and continue to be actively engaged with them.} As Dox points out, ‘as profoundly as postmodern theater pieces expose space and time as modes of thinking or collapse space and time into a single concept, medieval drama represented “past and future” in the instant of performance’, which ‘presented no logical problem’ for their audiences.\footnote{Dox, p. 188.} This way of thinking about time and space, like the medieval worldview in general, embraces duality and malleability. We have seen how this stems from a flexible and amalgamative worldview and belief-system. In Chapter 3, we will observe how this way of thinking manifests in relation to the body and the self, the somatic and the cerebral.
Chapter 3

The Sacred Body-as-Text: Language, Corporeality, and Emotion

Bodied spatiality is at the heart of dramatic presentation, for it is through the actor’s corporeal presence under the spectators’ gaze that the dramatic text actualizes itself in the field of performance.

Stanton Garner.407

Chapter 2 discussed how in the moment of a manifestation of the sacred – a hierophanic event – both objects and space/place become something new yet simultaneously remain themselves. This thinking can also be applied to the body. When a body is sanctified or experienced as sacred, it becomes qualitatively different. The medieval experience of the human body was both the same as the modern experience, in that it is quantitatively the same human organism, and yet very different, in that their pervasive sense of the sacred as a significant force within their lives would mean that their bodily experience was qualitatively unique. This has been explored to some extent in Chapter 1, with regard to the experience of mankind as microcosm, embodying in miniature the whole universe. But there is more to the exploration of the medieval body: the balance of physical and spiritual, bodily and emotional, somatic and cerebral was understood and negotiated in a different way during the Middle Ages, due to the Christian worldview. This chapter explores the ways in which the medieval mind linked the verbal with the physical, the emotional with the intellectual, and internal self with external self, and analyses where our modern worldview potentially intersects with the medieval (consciously or unconsciously), and how actors might usefully access the qualities of the medieval body in order to open up new potentials in their work.

The discussion of emotional response and human experience necessitates a phenomenological approach to history. It is important to acknowledge the difficulties in trying to capture phenomenological historical experience. An example of such difficulties is given by Barbara Rosenwein in her guidance notes

for historians studying emotion, in which she discusses emotion-words and
descriptions of emotion in the 1400s. During a rebellion in 1436-38, two sets of
norms in the expression of emotion are evident in the source material, one very
overt and the other internalised. Rosenwein asks which depiction is true, or
whether they are both true, advising that ‘the historian must keep in mind that the
emotions depicted in the sources are unlikely to be windows onto an objective
reality, but they do help to reveal the subjective reality of the writer of the
source’. The subjective (or plural) realities of playwright, performer, and
spectator are the focus of this chapter’s analysis of communicative and
performative practices, and indeed the thesis as a whole; I am not hoping to locate
an objective, externalised or replicable style of performance (as I would be if I
were adopting the approach of the historical re-enactor or reconstructionist), but a
discovery of medieval, early modern and modern subjective realities regarding
experiences of emotion, communication, and the body, and an analysis of how
these realities may overlap and interplay.

The Semantic and the Somatic in Ritualistic Drama

Since the native theatrical tradition was born of ritualistic practices, it is useful to
compare theories about semantic and somatic communication in religious
ceremony when seeking to understand the ways in which early drama
communicated ideas and emotions to its audiences. Harvey Whitehouse describes
two different modes of religiosity, each born of the chief kind of ritual within a

408 The Duke and his entourage are said to feel painful emotions in their hearts, not
expressing them outwardly, while the Brugeois physicalise their feelings: falling to their
knees, groaning, and weeping.

Jan Dumolyn and Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin, ‘Propagande et sensibilité: La fibre
émotionnelle au cœur des luttes politiques et sociales dans les villes des anciens Pays-Bas
bourguignons. L’exemple de la révolte brugeoise de 1436–1438’, in Emotions in the
Heart of the City (14th–16th century), ed. Elodie Lecuppre-Desjardin and Anne-Laure

409 Barbara Rosenwein, ‘Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions’, Passions in
particular tradition. The Imagistic Mode presents dramatic, often violent forms of ritual full of emotional intensity and imprinting on the memory, serving ‘as the basis for spontaneous, personal exegesis of the ritual that is often experienced as revelation’. The Doctrinal Mode (which, Whitehouse argues, includes medieval monasticism) is focused on ceremonial ritual, relying on verbal communication, without involving particular emotional impact or input. This mode is registered in semantic memory rather than the ‘episodic or flashbulb memory’ of the Imagistic, ‘which fixes a dramatic moment of personal experience’. Mary Carruthers, meanwhile, sees medieval monasticism as an orthopraxis: a craft painstakingly learned. While her theory seems in agreement with Whitehouse in placing the emphasis on a mode of ritual practice that focuses on repeated knowledge-transference, it also conversely suggests that ‘no knowledge was nonemotional; emotion itself was not distinct from “data”. The mind full of mental representations, or the inventory full of emotionally charged pictures, was the tool with which the monk or nun invented new ideas’. Thus, in the practices of prayer and meditation, words become stimulants and induce individual creativity. Ritual ceremonies are not merely bodily representations of beliefs taken as fact – intellectual demonstrations – but are charged with emotion and creative energy. The physical and the metaphysical are intertwined.

Whitehouse’s view of medieval religious practices, if extended to include church drama, would imply a didactic mode of performance: focused on the external, on knowledge and on verbal expression to convey static meaning, with little room for


412 Clark, p. 174.


414 Clark, p. 176.
growth and personal engagement. His Modes theory suggests that medieval religious practice involved the creation of a vacuum for doctrine to be passively received, yet a vacuum would suggest a lack of participation or shared creativity, which was essential to medieval dramatic practice and, arguably, to the religious rituals from which this drama emerged. In the 1100s the Benedictine visionary Elizabeth of Schönau became renowned for her ecstatic visions of Christ, the Virgin Mary and various Biblical events and, rather than demonstrating a passive reception of these visions, her writings show participation and innovation: Elizabeth sees herself having interactions and conversations with Biblical figures, including emotional experiences such as being tormented by the devil, physical experiences such as being beaten by an angel for concealing the word of God, and intellectual experiences, coming to new understanding through the process. The accounts demonstrate a fusion of external bodily performance, applicable to general Christian experience, with internal, personal meaning-making.

There are many other examples of somatic-spiritual experiences in the accounts of medieval female mystics. Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416) and German nun Margareta Ebner (1291-1351) both demonstrate the concept of physical illness as a divine blessing improving mystical receptivity. We learn from her autobiographical account that Margaret also had the compulsion to press a crucifix to her chest until it hurt and left a physical mark on her flesh. Some mystics had visions of physical experiences with Jesus Christ: Angela of Foligno envisioned lying beside Christ and kissing him, and in another vision she drinks Christ’s blood from his side. She explains that Christ’s intention by this blood-drinking act was to make her understand that, by his blood, she could be cleansed: the physical sensation is depicted as leading to a spiritual understanding. Catherine of Siena experienced visions of a mystical marriage to Christ, a mystical death and an


exchange of hearts. According to her spiritual mentor Raymond of Capua, Catherine saw Jesus appear to her ‘holding in his holy hands a human heart, bright red and shining’, before opening her side and placing the heart within her, saying ‘dearest daughter, as I took your heart away from you the other day, now, you see, I am giving you mine, so that you can go on living with it for ever’. The tale of Catherine of Siena also relates that in 1375 in a church in Pisa she was gazing at the crucifix, when suddenly five blood-red rays pierced her hands, feet and heart. The wounds remained as stigmata, visible to herself alone during her life – but, as legend has it, they became visible after her death.

The mystics’ accounts and Carruther’s view of monastic practices suggest that medieval Christian ideologies and rituals were not merely performed bodily or recited verbally as an outward exercise of knowledge distribution. Rather, those who engaged with the material utilised memory, tradition, and shared associations to produce an emotional as well as bodily response: encouraging a creative energy and growth of understanding. The role that memory and ideological heritage played in ritualistic and dramatic practices meant that the external somatic and semantic demonstrations of ceremonial or theatrical action were necessarily internalised as well: and that knowledge was essentially emotional, linking mind, body and spirit. Roy Battenhouse describes a similar idea with reference to Shakespeare’s plays, arguing that ‘it goes hand in hand with the temporal nature of the Shakespearean action that it should be in some degree internalized’ since it


419 For further information on the bodily and spiritual experiences of medieval female mystics, see Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

St Teresa of Avila is a later example (a French Catholic woman living 1515-82) of a female mystic who experienced visions: she provides a powerful description of bodily and spiritual ‘ecstasy’, saying that the effects of rapture ‘are both inward and outward […], it comes as a quick and violent shock; you see and feel this cloud […] sometimes it has affected my whole body, which has been lifted from the ground’. St Teresa of Avila, Life, in Englander, Norman, O’Day and Owens, pp. 243-55 (pp. 246-7).
is ‘compounded of memory and anticipation’.420 While Christianity was the
dominant ideology in Europe, history and the view of the world was infused with
the eternal heritage of Christ’s passion, and therefore with emotion and an
internalised significance relating every word, deed and event to the journey of the
soul. Influenced by this inheritance, Shakespeare fuses inner with outer, resulting
in a ‘close interdependence of character and action’: revealing interior character
thought processes and fostering the audience’s ‘sense of involvement’.421

The ideological linking of body/material and soul/emotional seems to have
strengthened through the medieval period: Hrabanus Maurus, a Benedictine monk
writing in the ninth century, sees the human body as ‘a sketched blueprint for
wide-ranging Christian exegesis’,422 while earlier Episcopal writers such as St
Ambrose endeavour to partially separate body from soul in their view of the
Christian experience. The section of Carruthers’ theory arguing that the ritualistic
mode of communication – as used within monastic practices – is a craft that has to
be carefully and deliberately learned by those in religious orders becomes
somewhat complex when we see the way in which (although early theologians
were concerned with the analysis of physiological and metaphysical anatomies)
data is consistently seen as emotional and the mind/soul/body connection is
frequently explored and validated by those in all walks of life. The ritualistic was
a psychophysical experience, the type of which all medieval people understood,
and so the ritualistic mode of communication was not exclusively reserved for the
studious clerical elite. Theatre was one of the tools by which the layperson could
practice this mode of communication.

As in monastic practice, the intellectual purpose of medieval drama was not
separable from its deep-set emotional and spiritual impact. Indeed, the very reason
why the earliest forms of performance in the church context emerged was due
primarily to emotional motivation. A good example is the Quem Quaeritis (‘whom

420 Roy Battenhouse (ed.), Shakespeare's Christian Dimension: An Anthology of
421 Battenhouse, p. 38.
422 Lisi Oliver and Maria Mahoney, ‘Episcopal Anatomies of the Early Middle Ages’, in
Vaught, pp. 25-42, (p. 41).
do you seek’), the first recorded dramatic embellishment of the liturgy, which consisted of four lines of medieval Easter sacrament also known as *Visitatio sepulchri* (‘visit to the tomb’). It was introduced into the service in the tenth century, as a new genre of liturgical ceremony, and in *Regularis Concordia* Bishop Ethelwold recorded the stage directions for the clergy to enact:

When the third lesson of the matins is chanted, let four brethren dress themselves; of whom let one, wearing an alb, enter as if to take part in the service; and let him without being observed approach the place of the sepulcher, where, holding a palm in his hand, let him sit quietly. While the third responsory is being sung, let the remaining three brethren follow, all of them wearing copes and carrying censors filled with incense. Then slowly, in the manner of seeking something, let them move toward the place of the sepulcher.

These things are to be performed in imitation of the Angel seated in the tomb, and of the women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore the seated angel shall see the three women, as if straying about and looking for something, approach him, let him begin to sing in a dulcet voice of medium pitch…

The directions show the way in which theatrical performance had become a part of the rite. The clergy are given instruction to act in a way that we would now call ‘in character’: moving ‘in the manner of seeking something’, ‘in imitation of the Angel […] and the women’, ‘straying about and looking for something’, before singing their lines to each other and to the choir. This event took place within the context of the monasteries, and although laypeople may have attended major Holy Day ceremonies, it appears that the *Quem Quaeritis* had no didactic or educational purpose but was born of a desire to celebrate the Resurrection. The experience is somatic and visceral rather than cerebral: with ‘censors filled with incense’, the performance was an immersive experience for the participants and viewers.

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singing of the angel, and the ringing of the bells, the effect is multi-sensory and immersive. The intensity of ritual clearly built up to the extent that people needed a deeper sense of release or fulfillment: a climactic ritual event, giving a visible form to the spiritual and emotional state they were in at Easter.

Although the tradition began with the clergy, with plays performed in Latin, by the thirteenth century many plays were being performed in the vernacular and staged by guilds in various cities and towns in various countries. It is important to understand that the origins of this drama came from a desire to bodily enact an emotional and spiritual state and to celebrate, not simply to transfer knowledge in didactic style. This does not mean that the plays did not also have an educational function, but today assumptions are often made that medieval theatre is devoid of relevance due to its (assumed) didactic religious function. In fact, the fusion of the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical in medieval dramas meant that they were likely charged with a communal energy which I think is still of great interest and value now, and which undoubtedly influenced the first professional theatres in the early modern age.

**Somatic Language: Body-as-Text in the Medieval and Early Modern Worldviews**

The ideological interlinking of spiritual/emotional with physical/external was intricate and evidently affected the process of communication through language in various modes, including the written word as well as oral and performance traditions. Marlene Hennessy writes of the ‘ardent image magic’ in medieval text, describing the process of reading as ‘a nearly alchemical transformation of spirit into flesh, as words and images are invested with life’. Medieval manuscripts often use visual strategies demonstrating the sense of a psychophysical relationship with language: Hennesssey describes the way in which

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425 Hennessy, p. 188.
the MS Additional 37049 manuscript depicts the fusion of Christ’s body with text, showing the word becoming flesh, pointing out that ‘this striking literalization is typical of the highly textualized spirituality prevalent during the period’ (Figure 11 shows the particular image Hennessey is referring to; Figures 12-13 show some
similar examples from the manuscript).\textsuperscript{426} Not only was spirituality highly textualised, text was also highly physicalised and emotionalised. This can be seen in the relationship between picture and text: ‘rather than being seen as separate, competing, or even contradictory, image and text achieve a simultaneous register here; not only are they thoroughly integrated [...], but they also share equally in a degree of divine authority’, engaging all senses.\textsuperscript{427} The way that medieval manuscripts such as this one combine the imagistic and the semantic undermines Whitehouse’s Modes theory, suggesting that the Imagistic and Doctrinal were intertwined and inseparable. His theory, however, does present us with a useful way of understanding not only the modern perception of ritual, but the contemporary worldview in general: the modern mind endeavours to categorise and separate in order to analyse and improve understanding of a given topic. The Imagistic and the Doctrinal Modes exist to us as two differing entities, much like image and text, or internal and external: however, this perception of these concepts as straightforwardly polar opposites would have been alien to the medieval mind, which saw the universe as a harmonious network of interlinking forces. Furthermore, in an age where few had the ability to read, the image was the word for the illiterate. With no access to language in a written form, paintings and images were an important means of communication: the separation of image and word is thus a false one.

Diana Taylor has pointed out that the Aztecs, Mayans and Incas all practised some form of writing, sometimes pictorial and image-based, but the spoken word was never replaced by the written text.\textsuperscript{428} In ancient civilisations like these, both the spoken and the written word held special power, and while the spoken word was often related to material objects and deeds, the written word was conversely linked to the ineffable, such as magic and ritual. In pre-medieval England, an *âp* or oath was seemingly treasured at least as much as valuable material

\textsuperscript{426} Hennessy, p. 186. See *A Carthusian miscellany* (c. 1460-1500), MS Additional 37049, British Library, digitised at <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_37049> [accessed 4 August 2017].

\textsuperscript{427} Hennessy, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{428} Taylor, p. 17.
possessions, and in the *comitatus* code, which was ‘part of the very fabric of Anglo-Saxon warrior culture’, words and deeds were co-dependent. Thanes had to vow their loyal service, and the lord was obligated to provide treasure – in the form of *beagas* [rings] – as well as food and a mead-hall. Between the fifth and ninth centuries, runes were also widely used and embodied the magic of the written word: they were utilised for divination, amulets and charms, rituals and spells, inscriptions and epitaphs, and each single rune held a range of meanings both literal and symbolic. The word rune comes from the Old Norse *runa*, meaning secret or mystery. Carving runes into objects was an action seen as having a literal magic power. Language, both written and verbal, was thus seen as being a powerful expression of the intentions and actions of a person (through oath), as well as having actual physical influence over the human body and human life (through chant, rune divination, and spells). A kindred attitude, which similarly united action and word, somatic and semantic, continued into the medieval Christian era through the ideology of body-as-text and Christ as *Logos*: the corporal and the semantic were still intertwined in various ways.

The key to the ideology of body-as-text or signifier lies in the religious belief (as explored in Chapter 1) that the human body was part of a cosmic struggle: the body was therefore moralised and conceptualised within this context; many theorists of the Middle Ages perceived bodily problems and afflictions as external

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429 In the Old English poem ‘The Battle of Maldon’, Vikings offer their promise of peace in exchange for treasures. The pact is met with angry opposition, as if what they suggest is dishonourable. This suggests that a peace pledge should be valued, dignified, and never be seen to be sold or bartered for, as the Vikings attempt to do. Anon., ‘The Battle of Maldon’, in C. T. Onions (ed.), *Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader*, 10th edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946) pp. 111-20, l. 29 ff.


431 In Anglo-Saxon poetry, these details are reflected in compound words (kennings) for ‘lord’: *hlaford* [loaf-giver] or *beahgifan* [ring-giver] serve as reminders of the payment required in return for a vow. In the poem *The Wanderer*, the lord is called *goldwine* [gold-friend], and his throne is named *giefstolas* [gift-seat]. See Anon., ‘The Wanderer’, in Onions, pp. 148-51, l. 43.
exhibitions of the condition of a person’s character and spiritual condition. Disease was seen as a physical manifestation of internal corruption, as was deformity. Leprosy, in particular, was feared and reviled as it was read as a sign of a diseased soul. Although some argue that the medieval worldview separated soul and body, with the spiritual life constituting true reality, it often placed the body in the same context as the soul. In its role as the earthly vessel in which the human spirit is housed, the body is, like the soul, part of the universal chain of being and affected by forces of cosmic proportions. There was, of course, an element of conflict between the material and the spiritual in this ideology, in that the fate of the soul could be threatened by the material concerns of an earth-bound body. But as discussed in Chapter 1, for the medieval mind the existence of conflict or contradiction did not necessarily mean that a separation or categorisation of differing viewpoints must follow, in the way that the modern worldview might advocate. The paradox in this case was that despite anti-carnal

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433 The early modern inheritance of this type of ideology is demonstrated in Shakespeare’s depiction of the hunchback Richard III: his twisted mind is linked to his twisted spine. The question of how they are related is explored throughout Richard III and in parts of the Henry VI trilogy. Richard declares ‘Why I (in this weak piping time of Peace) / Have no delight to passe away the time, / Unlesse to see my Shadow in the Sunne, / And descant on mine owne Deformity. / And therefore, since I cannot prove a Lover […] I am determined to prove a Villaine’. Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Richard the Third: with the Landing of Earle Richmond, and the Battell at Bosworth Field, in The Norton Fascimile, pp. 527-58 (ll. 26-32). Later in the play, old Queen Margaret suggests that Richard was evil from birth when she says to his mother ‘From forth the kennell of thy wombe hath crept / A Hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death: / That Dogge, that had his teeth before his eyes’ (ll. 2818-20).
discourses frequently appearing in early theocratic as well as other writings,\textsuperscript{434} materiality and the body were still seen as having an important role.\textsuperscript{435} As discussed above, the body’s condition was seen as tied in some way to the state of the soul. As humanism emerged and ‘propelled the contemplation of the human body to the centre stage of early modern culture’,\textsuperscript{436} the paradox between striving for an ideal ‘whether in theocratic or humanist terms’ (i.e. moving beyond mere materialism) and an implicit acknowledgement that ‘corporeal existence reduces man to far less’ continued to be explored.\textsuperscript{437}

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, as questions about the meaning of the body were being interrogated in the context of high-stakes concepts about spiritual existence, the body was thus understood as a complex collection of signifiers: a text to be read. Just as the body had significance as text, language had significance in the flesh in the concept of the Word of God: Origen, the pioneering third century Biblical scholar, wrote about Christ as \textit{Logos}. This is defined as the Word of God but also meant something more complex, closer to

\textsuperscript{434} The highly influential early Christian theologian Augustine, for example, discusses his confessional struggle with his own carnality and considers Adam’s struggle in Genesis in Book 8 of his ‘Confessions’, casting his own difficulties as stemming from a conflict of two wills: one of the body and one of the soul. See Augustine, \textit{Confessions}, ed. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), Book 8, Part 5, p. 168.

The legendary twelfth-century love letters between theologian and philosopher Pierre Abelard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil are also of interest in terms of the struggle between body and spirit, carnality and divinity. In one letter Abelard writes ‘how miserable am I! I find myself much more guilty in my thoughts of you, even amidst my tears, than in possessing you when I was in full liberty’ (p. 44), and much of their writings express distress at being torn between their desire for each other and their love of God (Abelard being now a monk at the Monastery of St Denis near Paris, and Héloïse a nun in Argenteuil). Abelard and Heloise, \textit{The Love Letters of Abelard and Heloise}, ed. Israel Gollancz and Honnor Morten, trans. Betty Radice (1901), Kindle Edition (Santa Cruz: Evinity Publishing Inc, 2009).


\textsuperscript{436} Grantley and Taunton, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{437} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
‘concept’ or ‘theory’. This joining of word and image to ideas and concepts linked intellectual with physical, verbal with visual, internal with external in order to reach a multi-layered and complex understanding of the world.

The connection of spirit, body and word gave language at this time an inherent power, and this was a residual force that retained much effect during the Elizabethan era when – with the advent of the printing press allowing texts to be more readily available to the masses, a strengthening sense of national identity, a new flexibility in social structure, and discoveries in science and scholarship which needed new terms to be described – the English language paradoxically both exploded with creativity and coinings, retaining much of its elasticity and its regional variations, while people were simultaneously trying to find a way of improving and regulating grammar, spelling and definitions. William Caxton, the first printer in England, described a confusion over a merchant who wished to buy eggs (egges or eyren) but could not be understood and was mistaken for a Frenchman: ‘loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte egges or eyren, certynly it is harde to playse euery man by cause of dyuersitie & chauge of langage’.438 Interaction of old/residual with new/emergent is reflected in the way that language was used, and during this tumultuous period people’s relationship with language must have been a very visceral and psychophysical one. Influenced by the residual medieval experience of language as living in the body, Elizabethans (as actor Alan Howard muses) ‘probably used words much more sensually, almost eating words’.439

Brook lamented in the 1960s that in the modern age the word did not seem to be the same tool for dramatists that it once was, commenting that ‘writers seem unable to make ideas and images collide through word with Elizabethan force’. He asks whether we are now living in an age of images;440 in the age of technology this question has much resonance. Stanton B. Garner draws attention to the modern obsession with the visual in our televisual culture as well as to ‘the phenomenological problems and dynamics that characterize the performance field


440 Brook, p. 48.
in the contemporary theater’ with regard to the body. He argues that these ‘have their roots in a set of specifically theatrical problems that stretches back through the fervor of our own century well into the nineteenth’. These problems, I would suggest, centre around the search for a sense of the sacred both semantically and somatically, which has manifested itself through different emphases being placed variously on the physical/the body or on language/the poetic.

The Search for a Sense of the Sacred in Avant-Garde Theatre

Symbolist Theatre: the Poetic and the Sacred

In looking back at the theatrical problems that were explored during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth it becomes apparent that these arose from the search for some emulation of the sacred in a time when religion had lost its power. The symbolist movement (originating in France, Russia and Belgium) represented a crucial turning point in European Theatre, and sought a replacement for belief in God through a new connection between poetry and the emblematic. Symbolist dramatist Pierre Quillard wrote that ‘the whole of drama is above all a synthesis: Prometheus, Orestes, Oedipus, Hamlet, Don Juan are creatures of a general humanity […] The poet has breathed supernatural life into them; he created them by force of language’. Language was seen as the key to tap into this shared sense of a ‘general humanity’, a primal and fundamental ‘synthesis’ that we can term the sacred in the sense that it searches for something beyond the specific. Built on poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé, and influenced by Charles Baudelaire’s translations of Edgar Allen Poe (which featured many tropes and stock figures), the symbolist movement emerged out of love of the chivalric, and the holy, at a time when all of this was being cast aside.

441 Garner, pp. 10-11.

Narratives in symbolist theatre were obscure with religious overtones: Quillard’s *The Girl with Severed Hands* presented a medieval verse fantasy about a girl mutilated by her father, who escapes to a mystical land where she is healed and bid by angels to accept the love of a Poet-King. The aesthetics highlighted the elusive and mysterious nature of these poetic stories: at the Théâtre d’Art, a thin gauze separated the audience from the stage; upstage was a gold backcloth adorned with paintings of angels kneeling in prayer. A narrator intoned the stage directions while the poetic dialogue was recited without expression by the actors behind the gauze. The gauze and lack of movement drew attention to the words, and removed detail in order to encourage a symbolic and allegorical view of the figures onstage. The work of writers Maurice Maeterlinck and Paul-Napoléon Roinard similarly drew upon medieval fairy tale, mysticism and employed colour, sound, music, light and dark, and even smells and incense in a multi-sensory exploration of the poetic soul. But the emphasis was always on the poetry. Quillard advocated simple sets that exposed the beauty of the words; he wrote that ‘the word creates the set and everything else as well’.

There is a clear influence of medieval and early modern drama in this approach: drama where the whole universe could be represented on a bare wooden platform, through the power of language and oral storytelling.

The symbolists’ style was an intrinsic part of the general movement of theatre practice and modes of storytelling in its exploration of the sacred, and influenced the work of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, who has been heralded as a ‘profound poetic dramatist – the best since Shakespeare’. Although Ibsen in his later work moved away from symbolism to become heralded as the ‘Father of Realism’, he nonetheless shared the symbolist’s mission to explore the workings of the human soul, and shared their emphasis on poetry.

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444 Quillard, trans. Rebellato, p. 163.

The symbolists, in their efforts to emphasise the word and the poetry of the soul, moved away from the somatic and the physical. While dance was employed by some practitioners, many cut off a visceral connection to the audience through the use of gauze and dim lighting, for example. Despite this, the movement did emerge from the wish to create something that was a complete whole, a total work of art. This aim was described by German composer and theatre director Richard Wagner, who believed that contemporary opera had become empty – flashy arias linked by phony narrative – and advocated opera with emotion, with a storyline somehow owned by the audience. The total work of art ideally requires shared ownership and a general understanding (a key element of the sense of the sacred) which becomes possible when drawing on elements that trigger a cultural memory of national folk myth: much like Ibsen’s use of Norwegian folk tales with the stories behind Peer Gynt and The Vikings at Helgeland.446 In this way, Wagner and the symbolists shared the common approach of trying to draw on something that still mattered fundamentally to audiences, at a time when religion no longer filled the void.

Wagner’s own emphasis on language came from his belief that in opera you cannot separate music from language – music captures the emotion, and language carries the sense. In creating the leit motif (a pattern of music that alters with the character’s state of mind) he combined emotion and intellect: a combination that was heavily influenced by Shakespeare, who turned to music in his last plays, and by Beethoven, who felt compelled to use words in his ninth symphony. It is also significant that Wagner and the symbolists’ search for spiritual release resulted in a return to such medieval techniques as narration, ritualistic patterns, the combination of music and language, plainsong-type recitation, multi-sensory storytelling, and even religious symbolism, despite the lack of shared religious belief.

The power of language (and more specifically the use of patterns, poetry and ritualistic recitation) has a great significance in relation to the European theatre that was born of religious tradition. In the medieval period ‘ritual, incantatory repetition […] was believed to spur the devout to greater and greater heights of

446 Peer Gynt and The Vikings at Helgeland were both premiered at the Christiania Norske Theater in Oslo in 1876 and 1858 respectively.
union with Christ (in a way similar to the function of a Buddhist mantra in which sound awakens a flame of devotion within the body)’ and was seen as ‘an anchor for upward ascent’. It is worth noting that the use of mantra and ritualistic expression, affecting body and spirit through sound, bears many similarities to vocal exercises used to awaken certain emotions and free the actor in training in modern drama-school training. Clare Wright points out that:

unlike visual objects that appear to remain outside ourselves […],
sound seems to penetrate our awareness to become a part of our psychological experience. Furthermore, hearing is somatic; it affects us internally, physically, corporeally. Take, for example, the common physical reaction to finger nails being scraped down a chalkboard […].

While we may be in many ways ideologically and culturally removed from early dramatic texts, we can connect on a basic emotional and physical level with words and phonemes through the shared human experience of sound. However, this early psychophysical connection with words has become fractured in the modern age of technology where we are, as a nation, highly literate visually but less sensitive aurally. In Shakespeare’s theatre, oral tradition was still strong, but now ‘the experience of thought and language has moved from the body into the head’, and ‘thinking’ and “feeling” have become largely separated’. It seems that if we can reawaken this natural psychosomatic experience of language to a greater extent, then some of the poetic techniques advocated by symbolist theatre, for example, would affect audiences somatically as well as emotionally and

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447 Hennessy, p. 183.


449 Linklater, p. 4, p. 32.
intellectually: and indeed awaken emotion through a somatic engagement with the language.\textsuperscript{450}

On the fourth day of the \textit{Experiments} workshop series, using Kristin Linklater’s Vowel Tree (a vocal exercise which locates the physical resonances of different vowels in areas of the body),\textsuperscript{451} I asked the actors to apply the approach to Shakespearean texts by finding the placement of key words on the Tree.\textsuperscript{452} By finding where the words resonate in the body, the exercise encouraged the actors to engage psychosomatically and sensorially with the words via the voice.\textsuperscript{453}

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\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{450} It is also interesting to compare the use of chant in yoga practice, such as the use of the mantra \textit{Om}. Physiological and psychological effects of meditation chants have been widely studied. One article notes that while heart rate, mental alertness, respiration and autonomic responses were effected by chanting either ‘\textit{Om}’ or ‘One’ in one study, the chanting of ‘\textit{Om}’ also changed skin resistance, which suggests a shift in mental and autonomic state since skin conductance can be a measure of emotional and sympathetic responses. Sanjay Kumar, HR Nagendra, NK Manjunath, KV Naveen, and Shirley Telles, ‘Meditation on OM: Relevance from ancient texts and contemporary science’, \textit{International Journal of Yoga}, 3.1 (Jan-Jun 2010), 2–5.

An article in the \textit{British Medical Journal} (\textit{The BMJ}) compared yoga mantra with rosary prayer (the recitation of the \textit{Ave Maria} in Latin), finding that both activities, when combined with regulated breathing, resulted in powerful, synchronous increases in cardiovascular rhythms and baroreflex sensitivity. L. Bernardi, P. Sleight P, G. Bandinelli, S. Cencetti, L. Fattorini, J. Wdowczyc-Szulc, A. Lagi, ‘Effect of rosary prayer and yoga mantras on autonomic cardiovascular rhythms: comparative study’, \textit{The BMJ} (Dec 2001), 1446-9.

\item\textsuperscript{451} Linklater, p. 25, see also pp. 26-7 for an example of the Vowel Tree in use. For a diagram of Linklater’s Vowel Tree, see Appendix 10.

\item\textsuperscript{452} For example, the word ‘through’ would have a pelvic resonance (Linklater’s ‘zoo’ on the Vowel Tree) the word ‘no’ would have a belly resonance (‘woe’), etc.

\item\textsuperscript{453} This psychophysical approach to language has also been championed by RSC voice coach Cicely Berry. See her book, \textit{Voice and the Actor} [1973] (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991).
\end{itemize}
Feedback on this exercise was interestingly mixed. While there was a general consensus that exploring resonance in the body is useful for finding the emotional content of a speech and exploring its nuances, and taps into an instinctual way of reacting to sound, there were also some difficulties with the process. Some found the consonants in Linklater’s model distracting, and others noted that some common vowel sounds are missing (‘pey’, for example, is a diphthong and yet other diphthongs such as ‘ow’, ‘oi’, or ‘air’ are not included).

The exercise raised the interesting question of whether a new or adapted vowel tree could be more useful: one without consonants which includes all vowel phonemes found in English.\textsuperscript{454} It could be used in combination with an exercise that I created in a previous workshop with a group of student actors,\textsuperscript{455} using Anglo-Saxon words to explore an instinctive language rooted in onomatopoeia and the body/resonance. While directing a production of \textit{Beowulf} which used both the original poem as well as modern translation, I needed to help the actors connect with the Anglo-Saxon text. I asked the actors to undertake various stages of an exercise which physicalised an oral piece of an Old English riddle (read aloud for them) with no clues as to its meaning. After the exploratory session I gave the actors a copy of a translation and asked for their reactions. They were surprised by how familiar the narrative seemed after their explorations on a somatic and emotional level: without having to intellectually engage they had got a strong sense of the picture.

\textsuperscript{454} French symbolist director Paul-Napoléon Roinard explored the effects of vowel sounds in his \textit{Song of Songs}: a multi-sensory, synesthetic experience where in each tableau the performers emphasised particular vowel sounds along with movement, music, colours, and scents. \textit{Song of Songs}, dir. Paul-Napoléon Roinard, the Théâtre d’Art (December 1891).

\textsuperscript{455} \textit{Beowulf} workshop, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, University of Exeter (December 2011).
created by those words. If this exercise was used in combination with the above approach to text, it could allow the actors to disengage from intellect before then applying their somatic work to Shakespearean or more modern texts after rediscovering the word-in-the-body.

In his efforts to access the depth of poetry and emotion that he finds in Elizabethan playwriting, Brook has raised questions about a language beyond words, asking ‘is there another language [...] a language of actions, a language of sounds – a language of word-as-part-of movement, of word-as-lie, word-as-parody, of word-as-rubbish, of word-as-contradiction, of word-shock or word-cry?’ His Theatre of Cruelty (discussed further below) experimented with nonsense language and a language of actions and sounds. In my practice, I have found that the earthy, primal, onomatopoeic nature of early languages can provide a useful point of access to exploring this without the potential intellectualisation that can go with an instruction to ‘invent’ a nonsense language. Emotion is more readily engaged with via the body and senses than the intellect. And since language resides in the body through the power of the voice, what better way to access the emotional quality of the words being spoken than via their physical resonance? In my training in Linklater technique, I have noted the deep emotional power of psychophysical exploration of words and resonance, particularly of vowels, which are said to hold emotion while consonants carry meaning. Approaching words through the body rather than the mind, as modern performers are wont to do, allows a connection with the subconscious. It is felt and

456 Brook, *The Empty Space*, p. 49.

457 I trained in Linklater technique in a series of workshops with Bryce Lease at the University of Exeter (2012). The primary effect of the workshops for the group as a whole was the deep emotional release that came from a psychophysical exploration of Shakespeare’s language through the body. Despite the fact that we worked with Shakespearean texts, and were focused on performance, every experience was highly personalised and efficacious. It was powerful, and felt like a ritual process of transformation: we came together as a group, felt a true sense of community built through the workshops, and every person felt a deep change in themselves, a subconscious shift, as an unexpected result of the practical explorations we undertook together.
experienced organically, rather than considered and produced, and therefore is more truthful and more powerful.

One could argue that the aim of the symbolists was much the same as the aim of the medieval theatre: they both looked towards a theatre which directly connects with human experience and the soul, allowing words to effect the audience bodily, mentally and emotionally. Yet the symbolist theatre arguably did not fully achieve its aim: in attempting to create ritual without locating a true sense of the sacred, and without a full commitment to the psychosomatic (distancing audiences from the body of the actor and the physicality of theatre, despite certain sensory experiments with the power of words and sounds, such as Roinard’s Song of Songs), it appeared as something like a shadow of medieval theatre practice.

Surrealist and Physical Theatre: the Body and the Sacred

There is a mind in the flesh, but a mind as quick as lightning. And yet the agitation of the flesh partakes of the mind’s higher matter.

Antonin Artaud.458

For Nietzsche art is ‘an organic function’ which ‘exercises the power of suggestion over the muscles and senses’ to reinvigorate mind as body, where one ‘hears with one’s muscles, one even reads with one’s muscles’.

Josephine Machon.459

Brook describes the search for the sacred in theatre practice in The Empty Space, terming the aimed-for style ‘Holy Theatre’. He describes it as the type of theatre where the invisible is made visible, and where drama is born of the need to

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celebrate. He points out that today we have lost the sense of how to celebrate: no modern audience shares the same sense of religious homogeneity that native English drama was born out of. The Holy Theatre that Brook describes is the very theatre that was alive and full of power during the medieval era: when a sense of holiness and the sacred was not only within reach but palpable in every aspect of human life. As Brook points out, some of the intensity can be witnessed in modern events such as sports matches: events that are visceral and physical in nature, rather than poetic.

Brook is one of the latest practitioners searching for what we might term a sense of the sacred or holy in his productions, and as we have seen he belongs to a rich heritage of theatrical experimentation related to this lost sense of the sacred. His work with the RSC for the Theatre of Cruelty season (1964) explored the ideas of Antonin Artaud, and searched for new forms of expression through a ritualised approach to theatre performance. Artaud’s early twentieth-century approaches are often seen as a break with traditional Western theatre (as staged in the proscenium arch, stage-picture-style theatre of the nineteenth century): aiming to assault the audience’s senses, allowing them to experience hidden, subconscious emotion.

As an early Surrealist, Artaud rejected the majority of Western theatre as a perversion of its original intent, which he felt should be a mystical, metaphysical experience (i.e., sacred). His work moved away from semantics and rational discourse, as to him such cerebral communication was false and untrue. Theorising a new theatrical form that would be immediate and direct, bringing together performers and spectators unconsciously in a ritual event, Artaud created the Theatre of Cruelty. Emotions, ideas, and the metaphysical were expressed not through language but physically, creating a mythological, archetypal, allegorical and dreamlike vision. He wrote that ‘theatre is the only place where the mind can be reached through the organs and [...] understanding can only be awakened

See Brook, pp. 42-5.

Russian theatre practitioner Sergei Ostrenko also speaks of making the invisible visible, through embodied approaches: ‘the main purpose of physical exploration is to make the actor learn how to speak through a movement so the audience can fully see and feel what actor is addressing to them. Make the invisible visible’.

Sergei Ostrenko, Interview, Eleanor Chadwick (October 2016).
through our senses’. The liveness of theatre also gives it a viscerality and a bodiliness that cannot be created through film or literature: the senses play a particularly significant part in this form of storytelling.

Other pioneers of a physical approach to theatre in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have similarly explored the question of reaching a higher level of understanding, or sense of the sacred, through the somatic. The innovative Polish director Grotowski theorised in the mid-twentieth century about art being a ‘vehicle’ as well as exploring ideas about theatre as ritual. Brook wrote ‘that Grotowski is showing us something which existed in the past but has been forgotten over the centuries; that is that one of the vehicles which allows man to have access to another level of perception is to be found in the art of performance’. Grotowski’s approaches often took influence from ancient narratives including using extracts from the Bible and from Greek myth, and to convey these stories effectively he placed the emphasis in performance on the actors’ physical presence, promoting a visceral response in his audiences. His production of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* in 1964 did not use props but had the actors’ bodies representing different objects. He also broke down the physical boundaries between actors and spectators that still existed in the traditional theatre by seating audience members as the guests at Faust’s last supper. In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski wrote of the significance of physical experiences in relation to human experience and understanding:

461 Artaud, pp. 182–3.


463 The Introduction touched on the way in which theatre practitioner Grotowski even discouraged verbal explanations in his workshops, preferring a physical, non-verbal approach, in order to move towards deeper exploration (see Lendra, p. 124). Brook writes in his Preface to Grotowski, ‘to verbalise is to complicate and even to destroy exercises that are clear and simple when indicated by a gesture and when executed by the mind and body as one’.


‘memories are always physical reactions. It is our skin which has not forgotten, our eyes which have not forgotten’.\textsuperscript{465}

The development of both Surrealist and physical theatre has demonstrated a clear partiality for somaticism. Yet even in popular British theatre practice stemming from the Stanislavski tradition, there has been a recent movement towards understanding the body as the key tool to access emotion, rather than the text. English theatre director Katie Mitchell in \textit{The Director’s Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre} discusses the physical nature of emotion, making reference to the work of nineteenth-century philosopher William James:\textsuperscript{466}

> James had made a crucial observation about emotions: when we are in a life-threatening situation we react physically first and then become conscious of the meaning of that physical reaction […] Before James it was believed that if you saw a bear, you would feel frightened and then run away. James […] noticed that we see the bear and we turn and run; only then do we realise that we are afraid.\textsuperscript{467}

Mitchell believes that this presented a huge development for theatre-makers, writing that ‘here is a way of looking at emotions that separates off the physical response from consciousness and the mental processes that follow this moment of consciousness. It points to a way of working on emotions through recreating their physical shape or circumstances’\textsuperscript{468}. Her \textit{Handbook for the Theatre} advocates focusing on physiology over psychology, recommending the approach of replicating an emotion clinically and externally, through physicality, as an alternative to internally (for example, using emotion memory).\textsuperscript{469}

\textsuperscript{465} Grotowski, ed. Barba, p. 226.

\textsuperscript{466} William James, ‘What is an Emotion?’, \textit{Mind}, 9.34 (1884), 188-205.


\textsuperscript{468} Mitchell, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{469} Stanislavski himself turned more towards the physical later in his career.
techniques are used by Shakespeare’s Globe movement teacher MacDonald, who encourages a bodily method for accessing different emotions, characters, and states (influenced by Alexander Technique). One exercise, for example, uses directions to change an actor’s energy. Embodying Up, Forward and Wide produces very different effects to Down, Back and Narrow.\textsuperscript{470} Such activities (producing inner states by focusing entirely on bodily poses or physical energy) are very useful to discourage the performer from overthinking, which is a common problem for the modern actor. However, while it is important to move away from the intellectual in this way, an entirely mechanistic or externalised approach is not the answer to the key problem our theatre practice today faces: the loss of the sense of the sacred, or the ability to experience hierophany: the qualitatively different body. For this, we need to engage with mind and body holistically, and embrace duality of experience.

While the symbolists explored the sense of the sacred through semantic approaches, including a reduced emphasis on the body and the use of heightened linguistic devices, the somatic is something that has clearly been coming to the forefront again in more recent theatre practice as we start to come full-circle in modes of storytelling. It is interesting that this movement back towards the somatic within storytelling styles also parallels critical trends: Keir Elam has spoken about the reaction against the ‘linguistic turn’ in medieval and early modern studies, and the move towards the ‘corporeal turn, which has shifted attention from the word to the flesh, from the semantic to the somatic’.\textsuperscript{471} And more recently, ‘poststructuralism […] has sent critics down paths which merge the semiotic with the somatic. Incorporating the principles of semiology as a means of interpreting varieties of discourses around the body’.\textsuperscript{472}

I believe that the shift beyond a simple emphasis on the somatic, towards combining the semantic, semiotic and somatic, is key to achieving a sense of the

\textsuperscript{470} When I tried this exercise at the a Globe Education workshop run by Glynn McDonald for Exeter University MA students, focusing on the backwards direction made me feel suddenly and intensely emotional. This demonstrated to me the power of bodily approaches minus language or text. McDonald (February 2012).


sacred in modern theatre practice. An approach exclusively through the body such as that which Mitchell advocates is undoubtedly an important part of the picture: as discussed, the modern mind tends toward the cerebral, and our need to re-engage with the somatic may necessitate an over-emphasis of the body to start with. However, the medieval and the early modern theatres demonstrate what happens when there is synergy between the imagination, the intellect, the body, and emotions. Brook recognises this power in Elizabethan theatre, and has led a search for ‘another language […] a language of actions, a language of sounds – a language of word-as-part-of movement…’

Before Brook, Russian practitioner Michael Chekhov took a holistic view, believing in the mind-body connection marrying the psychological approach to physical gesture to create his technique ‘the Psychological Gesture’. He warned against a singular emphasis on the body, in case the actor becomes ‘puppet-like’ or mechanistic.

The recent drive to find the psychosomatic in theatre practice: a way of experiencing the semantic somatically, unknowingly returns to an approach that was second-nature in the Elizabethan and medieval eras.

In the afternoon session of the fourth Experiments workshop I guided the group through various exercises using somatic approaches to free up the delivery of a Shakespearean text, by preventing the actor from over-intellectualising (a common problem with Shakespearean performance). We also tried some somatic memory exercises influenced by Chekhov’s Psychophysical Gesture and inspired by my work with practitioner Ostrenko. Ostrenko’s exercises focus on the idea of a physical memory which is created by using bodily gesture along with repeated phrases, in order to root in the body a particular feeling. Later, when the gestures are removed, the feeling remains in

473 Brook, The Empty Space, p. 49.

474 Reportedly used by many contemporary screen actors including Jonny Depp, Jack Nicholson and Anthony Hopkins.

the delivery of the actor’s line. This is similar to Zarilli’s concept of ‘residual awareness’: ‘the trace, resonance, and/or feel of one’s kinesthetic/energetic relationship to each specific form in action’.  

A similar technique is also employed by the RSC: I first came across it in one of their workshops. These various exercises can arguably all be traced back to the influence of Chekhov’s Psychological Gesture technique: ‘through the gesture, you penetrate and stimulate the depths of your own psychology’.  

Drawing on this idea of creating resonance through physical or kinesthetic action, we also worked on Shakespearean monologues. The actors spent time designing clear, symbolic gestures individually and in pairs for small sections of the text. They practised the speeches with these gestures. Then, we shared the speeches without the gestures.

The idea of physical memory or Psychological Gesture is that once the gestures are dropped, the somatic memory (muscle memory) remains – continuing to influence the way that the actor delivers the speech. The approach created clarity of emotion and a clearer journey through the speeches. Rachel also pointed out that to experience an emotion just in the mind is not as effective as feeling it throughout the whole body.

Upon reflection, the activity seemed to work most effectively for speeches with strong emotional rather than descriptive content (for example, it worked excellently for York’s speech to Margaret and Clifford about the murder of his son in Henry VI Part 3, but less well

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477 Chekhov, p. 65.

478 See Appendix 11.
for Clarence’s speech describing his dream in Richard III). In physicalising emotional gestures from York’s speech, the actor is accessing something within the character, whereas with Clarence’s speech, much of the gestural work was physicalising things outside of the character: that is, things Clarence saw in his dream. There is less of an emotional connection to objects, and more possibility for a resonance or physical memory to be created through an active gesture based around action, such as the emotive verbs in York’s lines ‘Bid’st thou me rage? […] Would’st have me wepe?’ In the workshop discussion, Jamie also pointed out the difference between ‘connected gesture’ and gesture that is just for the sake of it: this exercise can be helpful for encouraging a more truthful connection between body and thought/word.

By analysing the aims behind the various emphases on the semantic versus the somatic it becomes clear that the work of practitioners through the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries is generally centered around an attempt to find a sense of the sacred, making the invisible visible again, and locating a shared knowledge of something that goes beyond (without negating) the specific to tap into a communal energy. Although Brook does not make the link in his discussion of the search for a Holy Theatre, this in-built longing for the sacred in storytelling harkens back to an era when drama was born of a need to celebrate a shared belief, and when the Word – *Logos* – was a powerful, holy force that affected people externally and internally: in body, mind and soul.

**Searching for the Sacred in Current Theatre Trends**

One thing that I’m always looking for and that connects all the texts that we’ve used is something about the human condition.

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480 Shakespeare, *The third Part of King Henry the Sixt*, ll. 609-10.
From the work of immersive theatre companies such as Secret Cinema, Punchdrunk and Shunt – combining various artforms and media to connect with audiences on new psychophysical (rather than purely cerebral) levels – to the innovations made by dance-based companies such as Akram Khan and Gecko who combine word and dance, text and the body in interesting ways, it appears that theatre practice is still wrestling with the questions that the surrealists and the symbolists wrestled with, and which Brook raised in his discussion of Holy Theatre in *The Empty Space*.  

The approaches of British theatre company Punchdrunk, who pioneer a form of immersive storytelling, demonstrate a very visceral and physiological way of communicating with audience members which combines physical approaches (the performances are dance-based with little dialogue) with complex narratives and highly detailed back-stories represented in the art installation-esque set design. The company name originates from the violent sport of boxing where repeated punches to the head leave the recipient feeling dazed and confused. Artistic director Barrett wants to make the audience member feel utterly present: ‘so that all their senses are heightened and their synapses are firing as quickly as possible – so that the experience becomes more potent’.  

He draws attention to the importance of the body in this process: ‘when you’re sat in an auditorium, the primary thing that is accessed is your mind and you respond cerebrally.’

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483 Akram Khan, the dancer who formed the company of the same name, was cast in Brook’s *Mahabarata* at age 13.

Punchdrunk resists that by allowing the body to become empowered because the audience have to make physical decisions and choices [...] They’re physically involved with the piece and therefore it becomes visceral’. The physicalised performances of the actor-dancers within the imaginative, intricate, touchable sets hook audiences into a chthonic, primal and emotional exchange. The patterns and associative trails of meaning in the sensorial, detailed play-world, can also be discovered and appreciated both somatically and intellectually. In The Drowned Man, for example, details discovered in the space such as piled-up cans of peas would be insignificant to some, but those familiar with the source material (Büchner’s Woyzeck) would find this an imaginative link to the original protagonist who underwent various medical experiments, including being prescribed a diet composed entirely of peas. Moments later, the audience member can have all of their physiological senses engaged in this same element of the narrative: stumbling across the doctor’s surgery, hit by the smell of antiseptic as they watch the body of the lead character be examined, and compared to a diagram of the Vitruvian man, while a soaring and eerie soundtrack vibrates around them. The effect is something that goes beyond the linguistic to create a feeling of knowing: a sense of truth in the midst of fiction. Daniel Schulze discusses Punchdrunk’s work in his paper ‘Fake Acting – Real Experience: Theatre as A Form of New Authenticity’, in which he explores the complex relationship of fiction with truthfulness, and the human ability to take real, truthful experience from fake environments, providing there is an attention paid to detail in the creation of the fake world.

The nature of ‘true fiction’ and the chthonic experience is such that it goes beyond words and becomes somewhat indescribable. Purcell notes that the ‘intensely embodied effect’ of going to a Punchdrunk performance is hard to relate, resulting...
in little critical attention being paid to the company.\textsuperscript{487} While some have tried to review their experiences, such as WB Worthen’s essay on \textit{Sleep no More}, the accounts are personalised, past-tense narratives. Worthen’s essay ‘indicates by its very structure that the phenomenological experience of a performance is just as important to an understanding of its effects as a textual “reading” might be’.\textsuperscript{488} This indicates a shift in the understanding of phenomenological and bodied experience versus intellectual or textual analysis. The studies of practitioner-academics like Machon and Purcell, and the work of companies such as Punchdrunk and DreamThinkSpeak (whose 2001 adaptation of \textit{Hamlet}, entitled \textit{Who Goes There}, rearranged the text in various configurations, amalgamating verbal communication and visual symbolism) all demonstrate a coming-together of the chthonic, instinctive or sensual (or, to adapt Whitehouse’s term to my own use, the Imagistic) with the semantic, verbal or intellectual (or the Doctrinal). It is a balance that is negotiated with varying degrees of success or bias. The work of artists and companies such as Punchdrunk, Rosenberg (described at greater length in Chapter 2), and Kate Bond and Morgan Lloyd (who designed the interactive immersive show \textit{You Me Bum Bum Train}),\textsuperscript{489} for example, all seem to favour the sensorial and the visceral over narrative.

**Phenomenology and a Sense of the Sacred: Cognitive Approaches**

In thinking about phenomenological experience, it is important to raise the issue of how far human experience is comparative between historical eras and how far we can understand the medieval mind as distinct from, yet similar to, our own. Cognitive science provides approaches that can prove very useful to phenomenological study. In the field of history, there has recently been a drive for

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{487} Purcell, \textit{Shakespeare and Audience in Practice}, p. 140.

\textsuperscript{488} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{489} In \textit{You Me Bum Bum Train}, participants enter one at a time to go on an interactive adventure through a series of ‘highly detailed, absurd real life scenarios following one another on a nonsense high-paced narrative’. Hanna Hanra, ‘We Took a Ride on the You Me Bum Bum Train’, review for \textit{Vice} (June 2014). Available at <https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/you-me-bum-bum-train-378> [accessed 20 March 2017].

\end{footnotesize}
collaboration between historians, anthropologists and cognitive scientists: as Clark points out, ‘with the cognitivist’s claim that the mind they observe is the same mind that inhabited […] the Middle Ages, cognitive theory may indeed offer a bridge to that past.\textsuperscript{490} Another way of looking at this approach is the idea that human beings share a corporeal or cultural memory: ‘an intuitive knowledge that refers human perception back to its own primordial, or \textit{chthonic} (from the Greek, “of, or to, the earth”) impulse’.\textsuperscript{491} Various scholars in the fields of epigenetics and psychology have explored theories that we are born with some sort of ‘factory setting’ in our brain for certain types of knowledge, or that we have innate knowledge and memories inherited from our ancestors encoded within our DNA:

\textsuperscript{490} Clark, p. 171.

\textsuperscript{491} Machon, p. 5
a theory known as genetic memory or transgenerational epigenetic inheritance. Some researchers have claimed (although so far these claims are largely unsubstantiated) that there may be keys that unlock our genetic material, revealing experiences of generations of our relatives who lived long before our present time. Like the theory that the human mind is much the same now as many hundreds of

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Transgenerational epigenetics have also been explored in relation to health: M.E. Pembrey and L. O. Bygren write about how epigenetic marks that impact human health are not necessarily (as previously assumed) wiped clear between generations, but might actually be passed down for multiple generations along with genes. M.E. Pembrey, L.O. Bygren, G. Kaati, S. Edvinsson, K. Northstone, M. Sjöström and J. Golding, ‘Sex-specific, male-line transgenerational responses in humans’, European Journal of Human Genetics, 14.2 (February, 2006), 159-66.

Whitehouse points out that scholars from the cognitivist school of thinking ‘look to universal biases in cognitive systems as a way of accounting for patterns of cultural recurrence […] and] have argued that humans are predisposed to organize a range of cultural data in ways at least partly dictated by genetically prespecified mechanisms’. While he does not specifically mention epigenetics or genetic memory, the thinking here is similar. Whitehouse, p. 18.

The phenomenon of transgenerational epigenetic inheritance has long been observed in other species, such as in birds that inherit the instinct to fly long distances every year. It has been definitively demonstrated in some animals, for example certain species of bird that retain the ability to sing particular calls even when deafened or raised in isolated captivity. See F. Nottebohm and M.E. Nottebohm, ‘Vocalisations and breeding behaviour of surgically deafened Ring Doves (Streptopelia risoria)’, Animal Behaviour, 19 (1971), 313–27, and D.E. Kroodsma, ‘Songs of the Alder Flycatcher (Empidonax alnorum) and Willow Flycatcher (Empidonax traillii) are innate’, Auk, 101 (1984), 3–24.

A study recorded by Brian G. Dias and Kerry J. Ressler in 2014 showed that rodents can pass on memory of maze navigation to the next generation through fear conditioning using the olfactory sense. See ‘Parental olfactory experience influences behavior and neural structure in subsequent generations’, Nature Neuroscience, 17.1 (2014), 89-99.
years ago, the theory of ancestral memory being physically rooted in the human body and brain suggests that there is a great potential for tapping into a shared ancestral phenomenological experience through the historically-responsive performance of ancient stories.\footnote{This idea of ancestral memory is explored in recent fiction. In the 1988 film \textit{Altered States} a research scientist relives ancient experiences of his ancestors, which changes him on a biological level. The film based on the research of physician John C. Lilly who used a combination of isolation tanks, meditation and mind-altering drugs to explore the limits of human consciousness. See John C. Lilly, \textit{The Deep Self: Profound Relaxation and the Tank Isolation Technique} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977). \textit{Altered States}, dir. Ken Russell (Columbia Pictures / Warner Bros, 1980). Similarly in the video game series \textit{Assassin's Creed}, recently adapted into a film of the same name, a modern character named Desmond uses a machine called the Animus which taps into ancestral memories and allows him to live the experiences of various ancestors in different time periods. \textit{Assassin's Creed}, dir. Patrice Désilets (Ubisoft: 2007).}

In seeking to answer questions about how human beings understand behaviour, Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman suggest that we ‘adopt an evolutionary frame of reference, both in phylogenetical and ontogenetical terms, envisaging ‘mind-reading’ capacities (i.e. the ability to understand other people) as rooted in antecedent, more ‘ancient’ and simple mechanisms’ and argue that ‘humans’ mind-reading abilities rely on the capacity to adopt a simulation routine’;\footnote{Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman, ‘Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-reading’, \textit{Trends in Cognitive Sciences}, 2.12 (1998), 493-501 (p. 493).} a capacity that may have developed through an ‘action execution/observation matching system whose neural correlate is represented by a class of neurons recently discovered in the macaque monkey premotor cortex: mirror neurons (MNs)’.\footnote{Gallese and Goldman, p. 493.} While Gallese and Goldman are primarily concerned with macro-evolutionary implications, this idea is relevant to the micro-evolutionary study of the way in which ‘ancient and simple mechanisms’ in the human mind have always prompted the use of performance and observation in order to develop understanding of human behaviour and the world around us. As actor James
McAvoy said in an interview for the 2013 Olivier Awards, theatre ‘is part of our DNA. We’ve been telling stories since the dawn of time’.496

The MNs discovery that Gallese and Goldman describe is a scientific theory that observing an action may not be different from performing an action oneself in cognitive terms. Watching someone perform an action onstage thus may be firing almost identical neurological pathways in the brain as if the spectator were performing the action themselves. Although they existence of MNs in the human brain can only be indirectly inferred from the observance of mirror-like systems,497 the theory is interesting in relation to idea of the body-as-text and a shared psychophysical experience.498 Could the theory further imply that hearing about an action verbally may produce similar connections being made in the brain?499 Either way, the theory has the potential to prove just how far the observation of theatre and performance is a bodily and visceral experience, with connections constantly being made between the narrative and the body, the performer and the spectator. The existence of MNs would suggest that there is


497 In the premotor cortex, the supplementary motor area, the primary somatosensory cortex and the inferior parietal cortex.

498 This recent study of epileptic patients about to go into neurosurgery claims to have found the first direct evidence of the existence of Mirror Neurons in the human brain: Roy Mukamel, Arne D. Ekstrom, Jonas Kaplan, Marco Iacoboni and Itzhak Fried, ‘Single-Neuron Responses in Humans during Execution and Observation of Actions’, Current Biology, 20 (2010), 750-756.

499 The above study also raises the question of whether words and images have the same effect on mirror neurons, albeit in a discussion of visual rather than aural stimuli: ‘it may also be argued that the neurons with mirroring properties respond in an invariant manner to different visual stimuli sharing the same concept, e.g., a picture of a smiling face and the execution cue word “smile”’. Indeed we found six neurons that responded to observation, to execution, and also to the control condition of a specific action’ (Mukamel, Ekstrom, Kaplan, Iacoboni and Fried, p. 754). Although the evidence is limited there is some suggestion that verbal-visual cues have a very similar effect on neurological responses to physical-visual cues: the human mind thus may still have the propensity to link word with image in a neo-medieval manner.
even more of a psychophysical connection between audience member (the observer) and actor (the observed) than we might have supposed possible. When combined with cognitive science’s theory that the functioning of the human brain as a mechanism has not really changed over hundreds of years, and the theory of a cultural and corporeal memory that we share with our ancestors (possibly genetic, encoded in our DNA), this approach suggests that the primordial connection of bodies and minds through stories, demonstrations, or performance, retains its power and is an intrinsic part of how we function as human beings.

As the cognitive linguist Mark Turner points out, ‘most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organized as stories’. This does not mean a separation of the intellectual from the bodily: the human mind naturally uses narrative as a means to help organise and understand one’s own experience through observing others, and this includes in the flesh. Josephine Machon argues that audiences experience the language of the performing body through the traces of this language in our own flesh; both the external tactile flesh and the internal viscera. This ‘internal’ encompasses the emotional and the physiological or sensational capabilities of the physical body. Work invested with such a quality has the potential to appeal to an equivalent chthonic sensibility within audience reception that allows for the slippage between the human faculties of intellectual and instinctual perception.

Machon has identified a style of work that is multifaceted, primordial and visceral, which relies on the body, and reclaims the verbal as visceral, experiential, and sensual. This type of performance results in feelings of transcendence and new perspectives, and is challenging, exciting, and unsettling. She describes the ways that this style simultaneously pushes boundaries while drawing on the ‘unique power’ of ancient ritual. Machon traces this language of performance through the rituals of Noh, Kathakali, through Shakespeare, and the avant garde, but she


501 Machon, p. 5.

502 Machon, pp. 1-2.
does not mention the pre-Shakespearean drama of the Middle Ages: a particularly useful example, I would argue. The value of this type of work – work that connects internal/external and verbal/bodily – is that it communicates universally. Any slippages between intellect and instinct are accounted for because the work appeals to audiences on a variety of levels. The psychophysical, the body-as-text, and the combination of internal with external is what allows this.

Machon coins a useful term for this type of theatre, calling it ‘(syn)aesthetic’, after the condition synesthesia, a neurological phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary sensations in another (for example, perceiving letters as having particular colours or sounds). It has been suggested in recent cognitive theory that synesthesia is something which may be present in all humans from birth; while the majority grow out of this innate ability to fuse the senses, a small minority retain this. This theory points to a human mind which naturally and primally seeks to amalgamate different senses and perceptions to find new layers of meaning in a given situation. The neurologist Richard Cytowic points out that the condition is an emotional one:

The experience is accompanied by a sense of certitude (the ‘this is it’ feeling) and a conviction that what synesthetes perceive is real and valid. This accompaniment brings to mind that transitory change in self-awareness that is known as ecstasy. Ecstasy is any passion by which the thoughts are absorbed and in which the mind is for a time lost. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James spoke of ecstasy’s four qualities of ineffability, passivity, noesis, and transience. These same qualities are shared by synesthesia.503

This experience of ecstasy is much like that which I have thus far termed ‘a sense of the sacred’: constituted, as James describes, of ineffability, passivity

(acceptance), noesis (direct, chthonic knowledge and a feeling of truth)\textsuperscript{504} and transience (this ephemerality is clearly a key element in live arts that grew out of living ritual). It is significant that synesthesia shares these qualities: it is the combination and amalgamation of senses or perceptions that brings about the same sense of the sacred, the ecstatic experience, that religious belief can trigger. Thus, this would imply that it is through emulating a synesthetic (or, to use Machon’s coining, incorporating the idea of a set of artistic principles, a [syn]aesthetic) style of storytelling and performance that we might hope to tap into the same sense of the sacred, holy and ecstatic that the native ritual drama of the Middle Ages (and, in its inheritance of this, the drama of the early modern era) was able to achieve.\textsuperscript{505} Just as synesthesia involves the combining of the senses, the body-as-text (or word-as-flesh) and the psychosomatic nature of communication and perception is the key to rediscovering what Brook terms a ‘Holy Theatre’.

\textsuperscript{504} ‘Noetic’ comes from the Greek \textit{nous} (intellect or understanding) and is the origin of the word ‘knowledge’; it means ‘knowledge that is experienced directly, an illumination that is accompanied by a feeling of certitude’. Richard E. Cytowic and Jonathan Cole, \textit{The Man Who Tasted Shapes} (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008), p. 78. William James writes that ‘although [they are] so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.’ William James, ‘Mysticism’, in Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea (eds), \textit{Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology}, pp. 319-415 (p. 400).

\textsuperscript{505} This is much of the argument that Machon puts forward in the suggestion that ‘there is the potential for each of us to retain a synesthetic memory and an ability to relocate this fused perceptual awareness with a given trigger, such as that offered by certain types of artwork. Following this, in (syn)aesthetic appreciation of experiential performance work individual audience members are enabled to reconnect with a (latent) synesthetic potential’ (Machon, pp. 15-6). Yet, although she acknowledges ritual as important in tracing this performance style (briefly suggesting a path through Noh theatre, Greek tragedy, early modern theatre etc), she does not fully make the link between the synesthetic and the sacred, ecstatic, or holy, or fully discuss the spiritual and ritualistic qualities of the performance style she seeks to describe.
During the Arts Oasis residency with Ostrenko in Italy, a key part of the process was the idea of gaining new knowledge and understanding through the body, by using physical exercises with minimal verbal communication or text. This kind of understanding, which cannot be readily achieved through intellectual processes, is accessed more directly through the body. During the residency, participants had ample opportunity to explore this kind of ‘knowing’: the emphasis was upon physical and tactile exploration, experimentation and understanding. It was a powerful experience which left me convinced that embodied approaches are incredibly valuable to the contemporary performer.

In discussing transitions between physical and emotional states, Ostrenko spoke about the symbol of Yin and Yang. Within Yin, there is a small amount of Yang, and in Yang there is a dot of Yin. In transitioning from one state to another, each does not stand alone but has some colour of the next within it, like Yin and Yang. This is an image which I feel is also applicable to relationship between language and the body in theatre practice and in general: the seemingly contrary forces of Yin / Yang, or of intellect / physical sensation, are in fact complementary, interconnected, even interdependent, giving rise to each other. Within somatic work, the mind is always necessarily partially involved, and within intellectual or semantic work, you cannot reach true understanding without taking bodily experience into account: for example, the resonance of the voice, or the emotional power of physical memory.

The relationship between tradition and contemporaneity can also be seen in this way: they are not separate but each informs the other: we view traditional forms with our contemporary lens, and we experience new ideas while always informed by what has gone before.
In the exercise of physical memory, the body contributes emotion via physical action to the intellectual action of verbally communicating with another person, thereby making it more effective. Richard Schechner points out in relation to ritual that ‘the narrative-cognitive stimulus works from the cerebral cortex down while the movement-sonic stimulus works from the lower brain up. Performing a ritual, or a ritualized theatre piece or exercise, is both narrative (cognitive) and affective. These work together to form the experience of ritualizing’. The Arts Oasis residency, through emphasising embodiment and physical expression, was a process which helped cognition and somaticism work together, creating a feeling of balance and connectedness which led to a heightened experience.

The Yin and Yang symbol of course comes from Chinese philosophy: the culture of China is arguably one which still embraces holistic ideologies in a way Western culture does not. Zarilli has noted how ‘Western approaches to acting tend to (over) emphasise “action” without due consideration of how the actor can enter a state of open sensory/perceptual receptivity in the moment’. The focus on head-work and analysis often neglects ‘sensorial dimensions of training and performance’. This trend can be linked to the development of medicine: over time, Western medicine came to regard the body mechanistically, as a physical object distinct from spirit or mind, conducting autopsies to learn more about how to treat diseases. Whereas in China, Japan, India, and Indonesia, autopsies have not been as central to the development of their medical systems; instead, these cultures have developed medical practices which are holistic, focusing on the ‘whole mind-body complex’. However, things are changing in the West both in the rising popularity of ‘alternative’ therapies, as well as slowly changing views

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within the realm of conventional medicine itself.\textsuperscript{510} The discovery of the enteric nervous system, also nicknamed the ‘second brain’ or ‘abdominal brain’ has also overturned conventional Western hierarchies: this discovery that the gut possesses more neurons than the spinal cord, and is ‘capable of integrative functions independent of the central nervous system’,\textsuperscript{511} de-emphasises cerebrocentric approaches.

Another theory which changes the way we think about thinking comes from the controversial and groundbreaking work of Bruce H. Lipton. This cell biologist (who is known for marrying the scientific with the spiritual) has run a variety of experiments to examine the mechanisms by which cells receive and process information, positing that DNA (instead of controlling our biology as hitherto assumed) is controlled by signals from outside the cell, including the energetic messages emanating from our positive and negative thoughts. In his book \textit{The Biology of Belief}, Lipton demonstrates how the new science of Epigenetics is changing our understanding of how mind and matter interrelate.

The discovery of the ‘abdominal brain’ and Lipton’s theories about the physical nature of belief are examples of modern perspectives which bear interesting similarities to medieval ideas. Chapter 1 explored the way in which medieval thought placed particular feelings and appetites in different areas of the body: this understanding of the human body meant that the brain was not given primacy, but the gut and other areas were seen as just as, if not more, important to mental and emotional wellbeing. I also discussed the medieval idea that the inner or spiritual state of a person was often reflected in their physical, outer state. The biology of belief was thus a widely accepted theory: spiritual and emotional wellbeing was seen as intrinsic to physical health in early medicine. Now that we have in some ways returned to more holistic, less cerebrocentric ways of thinking about being human, this figures a change in the way we tell stories too.

\textsuperscript{510} For example, mental health has increasingly come to be regarded as linked to physical health and vice versa. Brain imaging has shown physical differences in the minds of patients with conditions such as ADHD, autism, schizophrenia, bi-polar and depression.

In the theatre world today, the move towards psychophysical training developing what Zarilli calls non-dualistic consciousness (that is, being aware, focused, and attentive without ‘thinking’) has gone hand-in-hand not only with changing scientific theory but also with the increasing global interchange of approaches and forms. In this climate, examples and experiences of highly embodied approaches, and of approaches which turn Western hierarchies of mind and body, or of the senses, upside down (such as Rasic Theatre, the Asiatic alternative model of aesthetic experience which emphasises bhava [emotion], and rasa [taste] over visual and auditory senses), provide inspiration. The holistic, embodied approach of Balinese performance tradition has provided another source of stimulation in recent decades for Western artists seeking to move away from the over-intellectualised traditions of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries towards a more sensate, psychosomatic understanding of performance. The trend towards interculturality is useful as a ‘way in’ to connecting with ancient, chthonic, ritual ways of thinking, performing, and telling stories, but also as a gauge of what our own practice is missing and what we are endeavouring to return to. To my mind, there could be better recognition that in turning to these forms in other cultures we are in some ways mourning a loss of deep connection with our

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512 See Zarilli, ‘Introduction’, p. 44.

513 Senses other than the visual and the aural are becoming more highly valued in contemporary British experimental theatre performances. Also, while the visual is usually given precedence practitioners are experimenting with putting other senses in primary position, for example the aural in the work of Rosenberg (see Chapter 2), or the sense of touch in the work of immersive theatre company Anagram. Their play Door into the Dark takes each individual audience member on a journey through darkness using touch and sound. See Anagram, ‘About Door Into the Dark’ [http://weareanagram.co.uk/project/door-into-the-dark/] [accessed 19 May 2017]. It is also interesting to note that medieval dramas utilised multi-sensory techniques. Quem Quaeritis, as discussed above, involved song, movement, and scents. Similarly, in the Anglo-Norman Jeu d’Adam, played in France in front of a church façade in the twelfth century, has stage notes saying ‘let Paradise be set up in a somewhat lofty place; let there be put about it curtains and silken hangings […]; let there be planted sweet-smelling flowers and foliage […], so that it may seem a most delectable place’. From ‘Jeu d’Adam’ in Nagler (ed.), p. 45.
own early forms of performance – the pagan, the Christian, and the folk traditions of early England and Europe that we have lost touch with.

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What the explorations of the Symbolists, the Surrealists, and other experimental movements of the last century or so all have in common is the pursuit of the possibility of a somatic hierophany: experiencing the body as qualitatively different. This has been described in different ways, but generally seems to require a heightened yet relaxed state of being: focused, yet not over-thinking. While Zarilli calls this state ‘non-dualistic consciousness’, I would lean towards the opposite terminology: ‘dualistic consciousness’. That is: consciousness which is simultaneously psychological and somatic, inner and outer, spiritual/emotional and physical. As discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the spiritual and material planes of existence, dualistic modes of thinking were key to both medieval and early modern worldviews, and had a powerful effect over the language of theatrical performance. Despite the secular nature of our culture, there is undoubtedly a trend towards searching for a lost sense of the sacred, as well as some quite successful attempts to engage with a ‘synaesthetic’ mode and create ecstatic experiences. By combining embodied approaches with a respect for the interrelatedness of mind and body, the modern actor or director can arguably access the qualitatively different body, and engage with a sense of the sacred or ecstatic in modern theatre practice. In the next chapter, I will explore the ways in which embracing psychophysical, embodied approaches and dualistic modes of thinking opens up potentials in relation to employing archetypal modes in performance, and vice versa: analysing ways that the search for a sense of the sacred and a universal-general connection manifest themselves not only in the exploration of body and text, but also in the reconnection with allegorical ways of thinking.
Chapter 4
The Power of Archetype: Universal-General and Historical-Specific

Symbols, although their interpretation may be disputed, nevertheless possess a life of their own by virtue of their archetypal character.

Carl Jung

The attachment of people or events to a general, universal context in the manner of Biblical narrative is an intrinsic part of any language of storytelling that utilises allegory, archetype and symbol. It allows for a widening of understanding about particular events or figures and ties in with a dual understanding of the world as explored in earlier chapters, which was the primary mode of perceiving reality in the Middle Ages and into the Tudor and Jacobean periods.

While theatrical approaches today are less connected to a universal context, many still utilise ‘types’ as a way of exploring character and narrative. As a reaction against more cerebral methods, current actor-training techniques often include the use of types via physical exercises. Some drama schools utilise Elements work (embodying Earth, Fire, Water, Air: as explored in Chapter 1 in relation to Shakespearean roles and Galenic theory), and many teach actors the Laban Efforts system. This approach was founded by dancer and choreographer Rudolf Laban, who originated the discipline of dance analysis, known as choreology, as well as inventing a system of dance notation known as Labanotation or Kinetography Laban. Laban’s way of categorising movement for dancers using components such as direction, weight, and speed was adopted for actor technique in the 1980s and 1990s, and provides a physical way into character which draws on types of movement and physicality to access different states, instead of accessing character via psychology. For example, a character who is a ‘Float’ (indirect, light, sustained) is different physically, mentally, and emotionally to a ‘Slash’ (indirect, heavy, sudden) or a ‘Dab’ (direct, sudden, light).

Even the father of Method acting, Lee Strasberg, used animal types as a way to encourage actors to explore different kinds of physical movement. A gorilla type (the animal Marlon Brando used as inspiration for his role in *A Streetcar Named Desire*) produces a different style of movement energy to a crab (Robert DeNiro in *Taxi Driver*). As acting coach Jane Marla Robbins points out:

> Our bodies usually react more quickly to being given an image than to being given a verbal command. Images are the language of the body and our right brain. Words are the language of the mind and left brain. Images often translate themselves, almost immediately, into spontaneous, even unconscious behavior.\(^{515}\)

In recent critical theory and psychiatry, several schools of thought have emerged regarding how the human mind works in relation to types and symbols. Sigmund Freud explored the idea of universality in symbols, particularly in relation to dreams, but was very cautious about symbolic meaning. He argued that most symbols are personal rather than universal, since a person cannot interpret what the manifest content of a dream symbolises without knowing about the particular circumstances of the dreamer. Jung later provided a counterbalance to Freud’s individualism and anti-spiritualism in the development of his system of ritual,

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symbols and objects. He analysed trends spanning across cultures and wrote about an ‘unconscious process of symbolization which continues through the ages and which, as the primordial manifestation of the human spirit, will continue to be the root of all creation in the future’. While the influence of Freudian thinking has waned, Jung’s theories have risen in popularity more recently, as society has regained an interest in spiritualism and the idea of being part of an interconnected whole. This perhaps also relates to the different types of approach taken by each psychologist, as well as the different ideas they proposed: Freud had some very particular ideas which have been overtaken by new developments in psychology,

516 Other theorists who have explored the idea of symbol and archetype include Nietzsche (who theorised that dream carries one back into an earlier state of human culture, affording us better understanding of humanity), Adolf Bastian (who came up with the theory of the ethnic ‘Elementary Ideas’ or *Elementargedanken*), Franz Boas (who posited that man’s mental characteristics are universally the same), James G. Frazer (who argued that the similarities between Eastern and Western religious tropes are evidence of the similar constitution of the human mind across cultural borders), and Campbell (who outlined universal motifs and explored the mythic pattern of world creation/destruction, termed the Cosmogonic Cycle). See: Klaus-Peter Kopping, *Adolf Bastian and the Psychic Unity of Mankind: The Foundations of Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2005); Franz Boas, *Anthropology and Modern Life* [1928] (New York: Dover Publications, 2003); Boas, *Race, Language and Culture* [1910] (London: Forgotten Books, 2012); James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* [1890] (London: Macmillan, 1974).

517 Jung, p. 77.

518 It is important to note that we have also moved beyond Jung in many ways. His theory of the collective unconscious has been criticised of circularity: its basis is said to be repeated human experience, yet patterns of human experience is the very phenomenon that the theory attempts to explain. Furthermore, Jung’s citation of genetic and evolutionary causes is often inconsistent, and his presentation of evidence from personal experience appears incomplete: unconvincingly contextualised as being inexplicable unless we adopt his theories. However, the surge in popularity of Jungian ways of thinking indicates an interesting trend towards the holistic as well as an increasing willingness to see the world in symbolic and archetypal terms. For more on criticisms of Jung, see A. Neher, ‘Jung’s theory of archetypes: a critique’, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 36* (1996) 61-91 (pp. 71-74).
while Jung’s work, because it deals with universal themes such as human as symbol, is more timeless.

In this climate of both a new interest in the spiritual, the holistic, and the symbolic in psychology, and a simultaneous renewed theatrical interest in understanding character and storytelling through type, via the body, the tropes of medieval storytelling could be useful and relevant in today’s theatre practice. Some authors have explored the potential benefits of using archetype in imaginative and physical exercises for performers, such as Janet B. Rodgers and Frankie Armstrong in their book *Acting and Singing with Archetypes*. The trend towards this type of thinking is already underway. This chapter explores how medieval inheritance is useful to these approaches: how it influenced early modern use of archetype and allegory in storytelling, and what is left of this inheritance today.

We began our workshop on allegorical and archetypal storytelling by using the archetypal poses/gestures I was taught by Glynn McDonald while on a residency at Shakespeare’s Globe in London. The poses, the King, the Warrior, the Magician, and the Lover, offer a physical way into embodying an archetypal figure. (For example, for the King the performer stands tall, hands pressing into either side of the head, like a ‘crown’. With elbows pushed back, the performer walks around the space, feeling the weight of this ‘crown’ and the effort of carrying it / maintaining the pose).

519 The advent of video games has also contributed to this trend: games where one can role-play as an avatar taps into the use of types or stock figures as well as fantastical environments to express oneself and one’s character: playing a warrior, a wizard or an elf, for example.


521 McDonald (2012).
After this exercise, we used Jung’s twelve archetypes as a basis for inventing a set of our own gestures/poses for a range of figures.\textsuperscript{522} McDonald’s King, Warrior, Magician and Lover corresponded to Jung’s Ruler, Hero, and two others of the same names (Magician and Lover). We created eight more poses of our own for the Innocent, the Everyman, the Teacher, the Inventor, the Caregiver, the Explorer, the Trickster, and the Rebel.\textsuperscript{523}

I gave the actors time to think of their own interpretation (i.e., a physical pose and/or gesture) of each type, guided by some descriptions of the archetype which I read aloud, before sharing their interpretation with everyone. We then devised a final version as a group. There was always a great deal of similarity and overlap in the interpretations, suggesting a universal language.\textsuperscript{524}

As several of the actors commented, extreme physical poses force one into a different headspace or energy type. They proved to be ‘great stepping stones into characters as they directly give a sense of who someone is in each given moment’.\textsuperscript{525} They give the audience as well as

\textsuperscript{522} Jung pointed out that there are numerous archetypes, and did not provide any kind of comprehensive list, but rather posited that an exhaustive list is impossible since archetypes can combine and interchange qualities. However, out of his work have developed the twelve common archetypes which are now widely used in psychoanalysis and business practice. See Carol S. Pearson, \textit{Awakening the Heroes Within: Twelve Archetypes to Help Us Find Ourselves and Transform Our World} [1991] (San Francisco: HarperElixir, 2015).

\textsuperscript{523} See Appendix 12 for diagrams and descriptions.

\textsuperscript{524} The only one that had multiple rather different interpretations was the Rebel: which perhaps says something about the nature of that archetype.

\textsuperscript{525} Rachel, \textit{Experiments}. 

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the actor ‘an instant hook into characters, so they have an immediate basis of assumed knowledge’. 526

We tried several different exercises using the archetypes we had created:

• a dynamic use of the archetypes: exploring how different types interact, how they relate, and how this changes the experience of the type;

• combinations of archetypes: moving from one to another in a Shakespearean monologue; finding the shifts in a speech by using archetypes. Richard of York, for example, might go from Warrior to Caregiver in his speech about the death of his son in Henry VI Part 3; 527

• utilising the seven deadly sins exercise (below) in combination with the archetypes.

Rachel made the point (regarding York’s final speech from Henry VI) that the use of changing archetypes helped to map the emotional journey of the piece and bring it to the forefront. In the version that she and Tom worked on, they moved through four types: the Warrior, Caregiver, Magician, and King, finding the movement of this tumultuously emotional speech with great clarity. Without this tool, the emotional shifts were not so clear. Rachel said that ‘it was a great way to immediately find the character’s intentions and where their passion lies […] York’s emotions are fast and definite so a clear choice of archetypes helps to feel and therefore communicate them’. Tom, who worked with her on the task, said that the exercise ‘prompted a couple of interesting discoveries, such as that (for me) he was at his “kingliest” towards the end of the speech, even though he is about to be

526 Alex, Experiments. I also ran a version of this exercise at the conference ‘Theatre Between Tradition and Contemporaneity’, with similar results.

527 The third Part of King Henry the Sixt, ll. 575-635.
humiliatingly decapitated, giving him some final dignity and perhaps even the moral high-ground.’

**Seven Deadly Sins**

This activity involved exploring the seven deadly sins (the classification of vices that was a central element of medieval Catholic teachings on morality) as another experiment with types. In the exercise it became clear very quickly how important it was to focus attention on *embodying* rather than *enacting* each sin, since some actors used greedy, angry, or lustful actions rather than exploring Greed, Wrath and Lust as stock characters.

Combining archetypes with sins allowed the actor to explore nuance within a type, being given an inner life or direction by the sin element, but a mode or structure to their character via the archetype. Some examples of this technique used for exploring Shakespeare characters might be: 528

- Othello could move from Hero/Warrior to being possessed by Envy (and perhaps Wrath).

- For Richard III one could combine or move between the archetypes of Jester and King while having the inner life of the character motivated by the sin of Pride.

- Hamlet could be Sloth, which embodies inaction, as well as Hero and Everyman.

**The Universal Archetype: Symbol, Allegory and Stock Figures in the Medieval Age**

528 I explored some of these ideas in practice in my most recent workshop, *Experiments II.*
The medieval tradition made use of traditional archetypal figures including the Everyman, the Prodigal Son, and the Vice. Through personification or *prosopopoeia*, players represented the roles of qualities and attributes (such as Lechery, Gluttony, Mercy) and of supernatural beings (Good Angel, Bad Angel, God). In the tradition of the Mystery Cycles players represented Biblical figures both human and divine. Medieval and Tudor morality plays (popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) presented a universal lesson through dramatic allegory: the protagonists were generally representative of all humankind and named appropriately (Mankynde, Everyman, *Humanum Genus*).

As the Tudor interlude developed, plays often employed a mixture of characters with specific names as well as stock figures. Dramatists also experimented with characters that developed the archetype and the stock figure: giving the character a specific name instead of a generalised one, or placing the figure within a more specific context. For example, in Henry Medwall’s fifteenth-century interlude *Fulgens and Lucres*, the servants A and B function like Vice-figures: liaising between audience and the rest of the players, causing chaos, and providing comedy and entertainment. The play centres around a domestic drama, but it is these pseudo-Vice-figures that provide the real entertainment. Their function is no longer to tempt an Everyman figure away from redemption as in earlier morality dramas, but these characters still draw upon the functions of the Vice archetype: being charming, lacking in morals, causing chaos and providing comedy and anarchic fun.\(^{530}\)

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\(^{530}\) When rehearsing *Fulgens and Lucres* for performance in the banqueting hall at Brockhampton Estate I discussed the idea of the Vice figure with the actors playing A & B. While one of the actors was able to immediately tap into this archetype to bring his character to life, the other took a little longer to adjust to the notion of playing a stock character, wanting to find a psychological justification for B’s actions. This proving difficult, he began to settle into playing B as a version of a Vice or clown-type figure, which made for a fun, much more effective and dynamic performance.
We might assume that a move away from the more straightforward-seeming allegory and personification of early morality drama towards an experimental use of archetype represents a development from a simplistic to more complex dramaturgy. On one level, as dramatists continued to innovate and experiment (as is the case in any artform) the idea that the drama was developing and gaining complexity and depth is true. However, the medieval perspective did not perceive reality in the same way as our modern perspective and the complexity of the tissue of metaphor employed by early dramatists is often overlooked. An archetype can function on a variety of levels: for example it is not always clear whether an outside agent (sent by God or the Devil) or an internal motive is being represented, and potentially both readings are possible for certain characters. In the medieval Mystery Cycles, the Biblical stories function on both a specific historical level as well as a universal level, which allows further associative links to be drawn: the character of Joseph, for example, is given another level of meaning to medieval audiences of the mystery plays by being widely depicted as a comical old fool racked by suspicion and jealousy. He becomes the archetypal cuckold figure with a twist (since his wife is the Virgin Mary): the cuckolded husband was a popular comic figure in medieval storytelling. The character of Herod is also understood as an archetypal tyrannical dictator figure, a typical villain, and the figures of Eve and Mary are not only understood as specific historical figures but also as female archetypes: respectively as the Fallen Woman or Temptress and the Holy Mother or Virginal Queen. Medieval art sometimes depicted Satan as a snake with a woman’s head, representing the female link (via Eve) with evil and the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. A sculpture on the tympanum (c. 1125-1150) over the doorway at the Sainte Marie Madeleine Church in Neuilly-en-Donjon, France, shows three archetypes of

531 Shakespeare makes repeated reference to the Herod of the mystery plays, for example in Hamlet’s line ‘it out-Herod’s Herod’ (The Tragedie of Hamlet, ll. 1861-2), or Mistress Page’s angry description of Falstaff as ‘a Herod of Jurie’ in Shakespeare, The Merry Wives of Windsor in The Norton Fascimile, pp. 57-78 (l. 568).  

532 If playing these characters onstage today, a psychophysical exploration in rehearsal could explore the Temptress and Virgin Queen, and/or could utilise the twelve common archetypes: Eve could be personified as Rebel (perhaps combined with Magician or Everyman) and Mary as a combination of Mother and Innocent.
women: Eve, Mary Magdalen (a reformed sinner), and the Virgin Mary. Eve is depicted in the bottom section tempting Adam with the forbidden fruit, Mary Magdalen is shown kneeling penitently and adoringly in front of Jesus, and above them, the main sculpture shows Jesus sitting on Mary’s lap, worshipped by Magi and honoured by angels (see Figure 14). Similarly another sculpture on the Prieuré Ste-Trinité in Anzy-le-Duc shows Mary, Jesus, and the Magi on one side and Eve tempting Adam on the other. Heaven is shown beneath the Virgin’s side, and Hell is shown beneath Eve (see Figure 15). In the Anzy-le-Duc sculpture, the Biblical stories of Mary and Eve are given universal resonance through the visual linking of Heaven with the Virgin archetype, and Hell with the Temptress archetype. In the Neuilly-en-Donjon sculpture, an additional element is provided by the inclusion of Mary Magdalen: the sinner who is reformed through the forgiveness of Jesus. The use of levels demonstrates the heavenly nature of the Virgin Mary and her redemptive power.

The above are just some examples of the ways in which specific figures from Biblical history were given universal, archetypal significance, but it was clearly
the dominant mode of communicating ideas in the medieval era. The tendency today is to dismiss symbolic and allegorical modes as simplistic or juvenile: the archetypes may feel outdated and stale, and we have become subconsciously accustomed to having this Biblical inheritance form the ancient backbone to our storytelling history, while consciously looking for ways to break the mould. Yet, as became clear through my practice-based research (detailed above), the mould of the archetype is both flexible and powerful. Jonathan Alexander posits the idea of reading medieval iconography in a similar way to modern advertising: as a system of visual representation aimed at both reflecting our lives as well as manipulating them. He usefully draws attention to the way in which iconographic, visual modes of communication simultaneously depend upon and actively construct particular ideologies: he describes medieval art as a ‘representational matrix that both codified and strengthened social values’. This is a helpful way of understanding not only iconography but allegorical and archetypal modes in other forms, including the theatrical. The combination of the universal-general with the historical-specific depends upon a shared understanding but at the same time constructs and reinforces this understanding. We can, then, understand allegory and archetype as a mode of communication which is necessarily directly linked to contemporary culture and society. If an association becomes stale, it is easily discarded, since the universal-general allows for new associative trails to form. The adoption of a symbol for a contemporary purpose only adds to its power: palimpsest-like, it is simultaneously infused with all that has gone before, the partially-understood remnants of past associations, while being active in-the-moment of the present usage. We can look to Tudor drama and to the early modern era for an example of ways in which Biblical and allegorical structures were adopted and adapted for a range of uses which were far from stale but were innovative and effective. Shakespeare and his contemporaries, in particular, were not afraid of borrowing ideas to challenge, subvert, and bend to their own uses.


534 Alexander, p. 6.
Early Modern Archetype: Political Propaganda and the Example of Shakespeare

Archetype and symbol were still recognised as powerful means of communicating ideas well into the early modern period. The archetype of the Virgin Mary was adopted by Queen Elizabeth I, utilising the ideal of the virgin queen as propaganda to encourage the public’s acceptance of her unmarried status. The political propaganda machine that romanticised and idealised Elizabeth’s reign and the rule of monarchs before her was fueled by an understanding of symbol, allegory, and type. The symbol of monarch in itself was given power through the understanding of the Divine Right of Kings, a medieval ideology which linked kingship with the divine plane of existence: the status of king was something beyond the human and the worldly. Symbolic forms of communication were used extensively in depictions of monarchs. There is a painting of Elizabeth known as the Pelican portrait (see Figure 16), where the Queen wears a ‘pelican in her piety’ pendant. The pelican was known in the medieval era as a symbol of Jesus’ sacrifice and feeding of his followers with his body and his blood, since, according to legend, a mother pelican would save her dying young by making herself bleed and feeding them with this blood. Regarding the portrait, an early modern viewer would recognise this reference as a symbol of Elizabeth’s selfless and motherly love for her people. In another portrait from around the same

535 As Christopher Hibbard points out, ‘her processions through the streets were stage-managed so that she appeared to be a goddess rather than an earthly monarch’, and the worship of Queen Elizabeth as ‘Gloriana […] the Virgin Queen, Astraea, the goddess who dwelt on earth […] became a cult almost in contention with that of the Virgin Mary’. Christopher Hibbard, The Virgin Queen (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1992). For more on the styling of Queen Elizabeth I, see Tracy Borman, The Private Lives of the Tudors: Uncovering the Secrets of Britain’s Greatest Dynasty (London: Hodder Paperbacks, 2017).

536 For a discussion of the historical problem posed by the body politic and the body natural of the King in the Middle Ages and early modern period, see Ernst Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
timeframe, Elizabeth wears a phoenix pendant. This mythical bird was linked to regeneration, sacrifice, and purity: the positive associations are with longevity, morality and uniqueness. Similarly in the 1598 portrait of Elizabeth (by this point in her sixties), she is still depicted as powerful, beautiful, almost mythical. In this painting she is shown with the cardinal and theological virtues (Figure 17). Other common symbols used in Elizabethan propaganda include the Tudor rose (symbolising her legitimacy), the globe (representing empire), and the moon (associating Elizabeth with Cynthia or Diana, goddess of the moon and a pure virgin). Sir Walter Ralegh likened Elizabeth to the moon in his poem  ‘The Ocean’s Love to Cynthia’).

Figure 16: The ‘Pelican’ portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, associated to Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1574-5.

The propaganda machine of Queen Elizabeth is just one example of the way in which symbols were utilised to construct an image and a story, but the sheer depth

537 These two portraits are attributed to the artist Nicholas Hilliard. For a study of Hilliard’s life, work, and the techniques he used to produce his miniatures, see Karen Hearn, Nicholas Hilliard (London: Unicorn Press, 2005).

and breadth of associational meaning-making that took place within the artwork of the period is immense. This style of communication could hold many layers of meaning for a viewer familiar with the mode of the narrative. It is universal and specific in an instant: Queen Elizabeth is Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII, yet she is also goddess of the moon, the phoenix and the self-sacrificing mother pelican. She is depicted as all of these things at once, and more.

Bruner points out that when a particularity is embedded in genre, it can become emblematic, and further meaning can then be decoded via the universal emblem. It is nonetheless important that there is a particular embodiment. Archetype and symbol function in this way: embedded in a universal context, embodied in a particular way, the person or event is seen as part of a pattern while simultaneously retaining their unique qualities.

As drama developed in the early modern age, with dramatists writing within a complex political and social context for a now established professional and commercial theatre, allegorical modes provided a widely understood structure which could be utilised to a variety of different effects. Marlowe, for example, in Doctor Faustus, inverts the morality play archetype of a sinner who is saved,

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539 Bruner, p. 7.
damning his protagonist at the end of his play and raising socially pertinent questions about the growth of humanism and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Shakespeare similarly makes effective use of the tradition of archetype. In *Richard II* the politics of the specific context in which Shakespeare wrote meant that great care had to be taken over the presentation of a royal deposition: Queen Elizabeth I is reported to have likened herself to this particular monarch, and the play was so politically-charged that it was performed as propaganda on the eve of Essex’s rebellion against his queen. The fact that the play could be utilised as anti-Elizabeth propaganda when Shakespeare presumably did not wish for it to be taken as such demonstrates the flexibility of the (Biblical) style that Shakespeare was working with. The archetype of a monarch is explored in the play in great depth, and yet the universality and archetypal nature of this exploration means that it is – like so many of Shakespeare’s works – left open to interpretation. As Rupert Goold’s 2012 television production of the play clearly highlighted through particular aesthetic choices, it is possible to read a messianic archetype in the character of Richard.540 It is also possible to see the character as an extremely flawed, self-centered and tyrannical monarch who cares nothing for his people. The combination of the universal with the specific allows for various levels to be perceived, and for a variety of discourses and readings to be possible.

The combination of the type with the individual occurs across Shakespeare’s work; as Shakespeare critic Barber writes:

> In creating figures like Falstaff and Sir Toby, Shakespeare started with an established role and rhetoric [...] But Shakespeare, in creating characters whom we feel as individuals, does not drop the meaning of the type [...] A measure of his genius, and of the fortunate juncture when he wrote, is that his plot and his circumstantial detail do not obscure the generic moment or type but instead make it more meaningful by finding it a place in social life and subjecting it to the ironies of social and biological vicissitudes

He moves [...] in a realistic direction. But the man he creates is not merely a man. He is an incarnation.\footnote{Barber, pp. 72-3.}

Archetype occurs in Shakespeare’s works not as a limiting archaic form which puts constraints on the author’s creativity, but as a powerful mode of communication that is deeply embedded in shared cultural consciousness, providing a source of inspiration as well as drawing on a widely understood system of signifiers with (or against) which Shakespeare can test and measure new ideas.

Iago, from \textit{Othello}, and Richard of Gloucester, from \textit{Richard III}, present us with good examples of how Shakespeare amalgamated residual dramatic patterns with newer individualistic and humanistic ideas. An exercise I have used in several workshops (at Exeter University, Warwick University and New River Studios for the \textit{Experiments} series) to explore this in practice is the Shakespearean Vice exercise. This asks actors to explore an Iago or Richard of Gloucester speech in two different ways: from a modern angle, focusing on the psychological reasoning behind the characters’ machinations, directly seeking justification for their evil nature within their personal history,\footnote{Some examples of modern approaches through character psychology might include: Richard is bitter and psychologically damaged by being deformed from birth; Richard is jealous of his brother, who rules the kingdom ineffectually; Richard grew up surrounded by the Wars of the Roses and is traumatised; Iago is jealous of Othello; Iago is convinced Othello has slept with Emilia; Iago is in love with Othello; Iago is racist and misogynistic.} and
then from the medieval perspective, as stock Vice figures.\textsuperscript{543} It becomes clear through this exercise that by consciously playing the Vice, the actor is able to play up the sardonic humour and connection with the audience (through direct address, asides, and the sharing of their plans) that is intrinsic to the way in which this archetypal role functioned. By emphasising the specific human aspects, on the other hand, the humour was undercut by our sense of a person suffering. The character’s charm is lost, and we do not engage so readily, in the way that we could with the Vice. Consequentially, the element of implicating the audience is lost or reduced. The more we are charmed by the character, the more agency we feel in colluding with his plans through the soliloquies, and the further we are pulled into the story.

In the \textit{Experiments} workshop series, Jenna pointed out that one of the most brilliant things about villains like Richard III is how likeable they are, and noted that the Vice exercise provides direct and easy access to that key character trait. Adam thought it would be interesting to play the ‘fun and games’ Vice character for the majority of the text and then have the seriousness and the danger come through at particular moments during the speech. When he described this to me he framed it as playing with the Vice character versus the psychological approach (i.e. you could play the Vice and then the bitterness or anger can come through at certain points). I pointed out that you can also think about this as the two sides of the Vice character, since this figure inherently has these two opposing elements, being charming as well as sinister.

\textsuperscript{543} Some key elements of the way Vice figures were understood (which could also apply to these Shakespearean villains) include: they are embodiments of pure evil, and as such have no need for complex motivation; they often take the audience into complicity by revealing their evil plans; they are humorous, witty and engaging; they use humour and charm, presenting the ugly and evil as a game or sport; they are manipulative. The word ‘vice’ is derived from Latin \textit{vitium} ‘defect, offence, blemish, imperfection’, in both physical and moral senses.
Another possible approach to playing Richard III involves moving from Vice-like at the beginning of the play towards a tragic anti-hero figure towards the end. Once he is king he rarely soliloquises, and when he speaks to the audience, instead of sharing his plots and schemes (like the Vice) he shares his fears. In this movement away from the fun-loving Vice Shakespeare allows the audience to start becoming alienated from Richard as soon as he achieves his aim of being crowned king. From here it is a downwards spiral, as the wheel of fortune turns and Richard falls.

Rachel found that playing the Vice elements helped her to access a type of character which she would never normally play, and this helped some of the psychological motivations to come through naturally anyway. Perhaps it is possible to reach the same point with the character by coming at it from either angle (from a medieval or modern perspective: via archetype/stock figure or via modern psychology). The Vice, however, allows you to get there quicker and more immediately, while with the psychological approach there are dangers of over-intellectualising, as well as of making the character ‘whiny’, ‘depressing’ or ‘boring’ as some of the participants said.

While Shakespeare is exploring a depth of psychology not seen in the medieval morality dramas in which Virtues and Vices battle over a lost soul like Everyman or Mankind, he nonetheless is able to employ a style which functions on the universal as well as specific level. In doing this, he allows multiple interpretations, readings, and approaches. It seems important that we take the universal/archetypal approach on board as practitioners, and that we do not simply focus on the specific/psychological plane at the expense of further exploration and understanding, simply because this is what we are more comfortable with.
The genius of Shakespeare, of course, is that we are not pushed to choose between residual and emergent forms, or between an allegorical reading and an individualised reading. But by employing residual motifs Shakespeare is able to utilise associational patterns, creating a depth of meaning and understanding that goes beyond the specific. In Richard III, the idea of Richard as Vice allows a variety of powerful imagistic and associational connections to be drawn for the spectators. The motif allows him, for example, to be positioned directly opposite Richmond (as representative of Virtue) in a traditional battle of good against evil: the RSC have made use of this association in various productions: a 1984 production depicted Hell and Heaven onstage for the scene in which Richard and Richmond each give their calls to battle.\(^544\)

Shakespeare is adept at combining recognisable motifs to powerful effect. Richard, as both protagonist and Vice, is given a powerful psychomachia-style speech towards the end of the drama. His double identity allows this speech to become a dialogue rather than a monologue.

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What? do I feare my Selfe? There’s none else by,
Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I.
Is there a Murtherer heere? No; Yes, I am:
Then flye; What from my Selfe? Great reason: why?
Lest I Revenge. What? My Selfe upon my Selfe?
Alacke, I love my Selfe. Wherefore? For any good
That I my Selfe have done unto my Selfe?
O, no. Alas, I rather hate my Selfe,
For hatefull Deeds committed by my Selfe.
I am a Villaine: yet I Lye, I am not.
Foole, of thy Selfe speake well: Foole, do not flatter.
My Conscience hath a thousand severall Tongues,
And every Tongue brings in a severall Tale,
And everie Tale condemnes me for a Villaine;\(^545\)
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\(^{545}\) The Life and Death of Richard the Third, ll. 3644-57.
By this point in the play Richard has utterly withdrawn from the direct address, games, and jokes with the audience that were so frequent and enticing at the beginning, and the originally strong motif of the Vice character has been challenged to the extent that the alienated audience are now able to become the ‘thousand severall Tongues’ that condemn the king as murderer. The motif of Richard as tragic protagonist has thus vied for dominance over the motif of Richard as Vice, and won in the end. A shared recognition of these patterns makes our delight in Shakespeare’s expert use of them all the more intense, and in theatre practice gives actors and directors more tools with which to effectively tell the story.

Allegory and Archetype in Modern Drama

The general viewpoint given to an audience through allegory can make sense of the human experience in a way that naturalistic drama, focused entirely on specific or domestic action, may not. We can turn to some modern examples in order to demonstrate this. In Lars von Trier’s 2003 film Dogville, for example, the character of Grace is abused mentally and physically beyond the point where in a naturalistic film we would reasonably expect a reaction from the protagonist. In the film’s ending, if the concept has not been guessed already, it becomes clear that Grace herself is the virtue of grace personified: through an allegorical lens we can not only understand and accept her continual submission and forgiveness of the abuse she has undergone, but also find new meaning in the narrative and new understanding of human behaviour: Lattek points out that ‘what the film eventually offers is a sense of seeing justice instead of blind justice, not blinded by the belief in ideal justice but one that contains its own realm by resolving itself between the parties involved’. Furthermore, ‘Dogville does not engage in a definition of universal justice. It calls attention to the impossibility of such a project’. In this way, allegorical modes do not necessarily mean the application


548 Ibid.
of a universal and simplified ideology, but rather utilise patterns and motifs to explore human behaviour in an in-depth and highly aware manner. The film highlights the allegorical mode through its set design (see Figure 18): chalk drawings of the town in a bare space allow the viewer to fill in details with their mind, and draw attention to the archetypal nature of this town and its inhabitants.

The growing trend of theatre games is interesting in relation to allegorical modes. For example, the recent immersive theatre game *Press Staat für Revolution* at Schauspielhaus Graz (Graz National Theatre, Austria) employed a similar use of space to Dogville, with chalked-out buildings and minimal props, and gave participants roles such as Polizei (‘police’), Friseur (‘hairdresser’), Doktor (‘doctor’), and Richter (‘magistrate’) within the game-world’s invented state ‘Libertalia’.\(^{549}\) I took part in a preview showing in December 2016 and witnessed the way in which the archetypal, universal structure allowed people to better apply themselves to their roles within the world created. The piece explored the build up of tensions between state and people in society, and the initiation, tackling, and final results of revolutionary action. When I played the game (as one of the Polizei) it ended in a successful overthrow of the state, with the police

\(^{549}\) *Press Staat für Revolution*, dir. Phillip J. Ehmann, Schauspielhaus Graz (December 2016).
surrendering to the revolutionaries, but the game can end however the participants decide, and the night before (we were informed) the rebellion was mercilessly crushed. The archetypal characters, universal structure and themes remain the same, but multiple variables are possible within the story’s detail.

The director and conceiver Phillip J. Ehmann informed me in an interview that in terms of story and world design (set, props and costumes) I tried to create almost an archetypal ‘blueprint’ place. The idea was that most oppressive forces in societies, especially in totalitarian regimes, use similar methods that are somewhat interchangeable. In order to look at tackling these pillars of power that these oppressive systems use, I researched and tried to create universally applicable general methods of resistance. Srdja Popovic describes many of these and while the specifics might be different for every state or situation, the general idea of most of these methods can be applied to many different situations. It was important to us, that oppression is seen as systematic and not to show one specific oppression of one specific regime. Consequently we never overtly referenced existing totalitarian leaders, but rather looked at what systems they use to stay in power and translated those to a ‘fantasy world’ regime. However, to then translate this to very personal experiences, we very much concentrated on the “Banalität des Bösen” (banality of evil) that Hannah Arendt describes.\footnote{See Hannah Arendt, \textit{The Origins of Totalitarianism} (Oxford: Benediction Books, 2009).} Meaning that these totalitarian systems can only work, because normal everyday people support it. The game aspects of the projects therefore concentrated on the relationships between the players and how that would influence their relationships to the regime in our story.\footnote{Philipp J. Ehmann, interview on universality and relatability in \textit{Press Staat für Revolution}, Eleanor Chadwick (March 2017).}

In his work, the universal and archetypal provided a gateway to exploring both general and specific ideas surrounding societal systems. The effect of the
archetypal set-up and the interactive game element was that participants felt incredibly involved and were able to map their own personal experience and worldviews on to the piece. This meant that, in a similar way to Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, the play/game could implicate the audience in the events that took place on a deeper level, drawing them in and encouraging them to become invested and involved. The archetypal character of Ehmann’s work also had a very practical application, allowing the investment and involvement to happen in the first place. As Ehmann pointed out, constructs such as theatre, games, and make-believe all rely heavily on recognisable tropes or archetypes that can be easily read and understood by the players (the audience). Especially with intrinsic rules that aren’t overtly stated, archetypes are important cultural references to show what the boundaries of the game are and to introduce universality and the ability to relate to the content of the story. Archetypes both let us deconstruct the situation, so we are better able to read it, and at the same time they let us take a step back and analyse the situation from afar. I think archetypes in games often come close to what Brecht might have called *Verfremdungseffekt*. We read them as archetypes and cultural references of something, rather than as the thing they might represent, therefore giving us the freedom to play with them, interpret, see what it’s like to be in the situation and role of your archetypal oppressor for example. Allowing us to clearly read this situation is extremely important for our freedom to play around with it.

In a post-show discussion, reactions were varied, passionate, and personalised. The archetypal approach not only allows this, but encourages it: it appeared that more people were able to identify (deeply and personally) with the events of fictional and universal state of Libertalia and its inhabitants than they would if the game had revolved around a specific historical revolutionary event and figures.

552 Myself included – despite needing to listen to a friend translate from the original German for most of the experience in order to understand what was happening.

553 Ehmann (2017).
Theatrical productions utilising universal modes often allow for a range of very specific and personal interpretations from the audience. In September 2016 I travelled to Denmark to meet Eugenio Barba and see an Odin Teatret production called *The Tree*. The piece presents the ‘tree of history’, a universal touchstone providing the central point to a myriad of stories from different times and places: that of two monks in Syria, a Nigerian mother, a European and an African warlord. It simultaneously drew upon universal themes as well as creating an exotic distancing, or differentiating effect through the encountering of various languages and cultures in the performance. My partner Aaron, who attended the show with me, and I each drew rather different meanings from the experience: while he was moved by the overarching themes of worldwide warmongering and found a moral lesson in the piece about the destruction of humanity, I was drawn to the personal moments of characters trying to build their lives around the tree and focused more on the devastation of families and of the natural world. He felt that the ending was very sombre, while I felt it held an uplifting message of hope through future generations. Also, he found a clearer through-line to the narrative, which I missed, instead focusing in on particular aspects of each story and feeling it was quite disjointed in style. Our varied experience reminded me of Heelas and Woodhead’s notion of the ‘subjective turn’ of religions: the idea that religious traditions still exist today but they are now experienced primarily in connection with the self-in-relation, where the individual picks and chooses the elements of rituals and beliefs that mean the most to them, creating new meaning from traditional forms. While watching *The Tree* – a melting pot of symbols, styles, and cultures – Aaron and I found meaning via the self-in-relation to the performance: drawing unique personal understanding from the collision between tradition and innovation, and the collision of different cultures. Simultaneously, the audience all shared in an experience that spoke on some level across boundaries of language, background and culture, bringing everyone together in a communal event. At one point, a sheet descended over us all and we pulled our heads through holes in it to watch the next scene: we were literally as well as figuratively connected to every other audience member through the performance.

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554 *The Tree*, dir. Eugenio Barba, Odin Teatret (December 2016).

Several other European companies utilise an intercultural and symbolic style to speak across boundaries. Amit Lahav, artistic director of Gecko Theatre, has spoken about the universality of their productions, created through the symbolic and universal elements of Gecko’s style. Gecko create an ‘imaginative world which is full of contrast’: they utilise different languages as well as symbolic visuals and a physical style of performance. Lahav describes the way that audience members often recall very different versions of the same story they have just watched together, as the visual and symbolic style allows a variety of personal responses to occur. Having seen both Missing and Institute, and had some detailed discussions with friends afterwards about each show, I can well understand that the openness of this style can leave people with all kinds of reactions, including the possibility of feeling a little lost by the nebulous style of the narrative.

As explored in previous chapters, medieval European theatre was no stranger to a hodgepodge, epic, symbolic style of performance. Medieval storytelling could draw upon a sense of overarching truth via the Christian belief system, giving a clear reference point to relate back to, while modern Western performance does not have this same benefit. As such, performances like that of Odin and Gecko have the propensity to seem vague for some audience members who do not have cultural backgrounds that allow them to tap into associative trails of meaning made possible by universal modes of storytelling.

Describe what the audience will see in a Gecko show? - Q&A with Gecko’s Amit Lahav, Gecko Theatre Company, found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJh4_uwl-yC> [accessed 12 May 2017].

Missing (‘unplugged’), dir. Amit Lahav, Southbank Centre (March 2015). This version of the play which I saw in 2015 was an ‘unplugged’ version with little set and technical elements (only sound). This performance followed a fire at Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) which destroyed all of Gecko’s props and set for the show, and was put on to raise donations for the company and awareness of the BAC fire. Even without the set, lighting, and most of the props it was still a very powerful performance and, if anything, made the universality of their style all the more apparent.

Institute, dir. Lahav, The Place (March 2016). I saw this production in 2016 with two friends, each of whom reacted very differently to the piece, demonstrating the personalised reactions that this style of work generates.

As Balinese theatre today still draws on Hinduism as its meta-structure.
As discussed in earlier chapters, there are ways that an experience of the sacred or the ecstatic can be achieved through theatre that engages the senses and the mind simultaneously. It appears that a similar effect can be achieved with the balance of the Universal-General with the Historical-Specific. The jostling of the two modes in Richard III, for example, has been found to be very useful to modern performers. Despite the fact that we no longer have that same spiritual association with Vice or Virtue characters, these types are nevertheless still actively used in storytelling today. The character of the Joker in Christopher Nolan’s 2008 film The Dark Knight, played by the late Heath Ledger, is a prime example of a Vice character on the modern screen: charming, twisted, and utterly evil, he entertains and frightens at the same time.\(^{559}\) The film is based on the Batman comics, and comic books are of course full of archetypal heroes, heroines, and villains, side-kicks and nemeses. They continue to be popular as modern readers still enjoy these tropes: their familiarity makes them able to be ‘played against’ or rehashed in innovative ways. Nolan’s Batman films, for example, are known as ‘reboots’ and called his seminal works as he grounded the films in realism while basing them on the original comic series. Just as Marlowe turned morality play allegorical structure on its head with Doctor Faustus, writers and directors continue to utilise allegory and archetype in this way today. The structures are still familiar: they can be repeatedly reinterpreted for new audiences. Elements of old and new, universal and individual can meet, collide, and create dramatic tension. Marlowe’s Faustus has been called a typical Renaissance man, pursuing knowledge and individual betterment, yet he resides in a medieval morality structure, creating drama as the tensions between the two perspectives become more and more pronounced throughout the play. Ledger’s Joker in The Dark Knight is given multiple personal back-stories, and we never find out which one is true. His power lies in the tension between the realism of the depiction combined with his archetypal vice-like villainy: he is mysterious, inexplicable, yet very much real, which makes him both terrifying and mesmerising.

Both Faustus and The Dark Knight are examples of historically-responsive storytelling which seeks to deal with change and trauma in the contemporary

\(^{559}\) The Dark Knight, dir. Nolan (Legendary Entertainment, 2008).
they are each of their particular moments, each representing a worldview at a point of crisis, where normality can no longer be assumed but is turned on its head. In *Faustus*, written when the Renaissance was exploring new ideas of the individual and the country was still reeling from the events of the Reformation,

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*This trend in reinterpretations of Batman precedes Nolan's film. For a discussion of the way in which the Batman renaissance in the 1980s was 'involved in the rather panicked search for heroes in 1980s culture' when there was 'a crying need' (pp. 34-5), and the way in which author Frank Miller’s interpretation offered 'a radical opponent to the status quo [...] an infinitely more three-dimensional' Batman than 'the type generally offered by the narrow moral universe of the comics industry' (p. 33) see Christopher Sharrett, ‘Batman and the Twilight of the Idols: an Interview with Frank Miller’*, in Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio (eds), *The Many Lives of the Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and his Media* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 33-46. As Miller points out: ‘the code through which most comics still pass insists on a benevolent world where authority is always right, policemen never take bribes, our elected officials always serve our best interests, and parents are always good and sound people. [...] The world we live in does not resemble the world of the censors. I simply put Batman, this unearthly force, into a world that’s closer to the one I know. And the world I know is terrifying’ (pp. 38-9).
the medieval Christian (Catholic) morality structure is inverted: at the end of
the play Faustus tries to repent of his sins but is nevertheless dragged away to Hell
by demonic forces. In *The Dark Knight*, similarly created in an unstable age
characterised by global disorder, the expected Hero-Villain patterns are

561 Some critics have even posited that in certain scenes the devils appear ‘above’ the
main stage, on the higher level traditionally associated with Heaven. Although this fits
with the general approach Marlowe takes of inverting traditional morality structures, the
textual evidence for this particular inversion is not especially strong. David Bevington
and Eric Rasmussen believe that Lucifer’s use of the word ‘ascend’ to describe his
passage from Hell is suggestive (David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, ‘Introduction’, in
Bevington and Rasmussen (eds), *Doctor Faustus* (Manchester: Manchester University
Press, 1962), pp. 1-102 (p. 45)). Bevington also writes in his essay on the A- and B-Texts
that when the devils enter in Act I scene iii the fact that they are silent and Faustus doesn’t
see them indicates that they enter ‘above’ (Bevington, ‘Staging the A- and B-Texts of
*Doctor Fausus*’ in Sara Munson Deats, Robert A. Logan (eds), *Marlowe’s
Empery: Expanding His Critical Contexts* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press,
2002), pp. 43-60 (p. 46)). These arguments are not particularly convincing: Lucifer’s use
of the word ‘ascend’ is more readily applicable to the vertical journey he has made to
Earth from Hell, and the fact that the silent devils go unnoticed by Faustus could be
because they are, to him, invisible (a theatrical feat requiring the audience’s imaginations,
as in Act III scene iii when Mephistopheles charms Faustus so that he is able to ‘walk
invisible to all’ (Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ‘The B-Text’ [1616] in *Marlowe: The Plays*,
Nevertheless, the critical tradition that Lucifer and his minions enter ‘above’ is so
pervasive that some mistakenly state that the play’s stage directions dictate this, such as
Mark Thornton Burnett in his essay ‘*Doctor Faustus*: dramaturgy and disturbance’:
misquoting the stage directions, he states that the devils’ appearance ‘above’ Faustus
‘places them in the role of puppet-masters’ (in Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan,*The
Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press: 2010), pp. 163-73 (p. 172)). The sense of upside-down that Marlowe
creates is pervasive.

562 With violence erupting in the Middle East and recessions in America and Europe, the
beginning of the new millennium has been fraught with uncertainty. In 2017, following a
chaotic British election, Brexit, the beginnings of an ongoing refugee crisis, and an
American election which shocked the world, we continue to be faced with seismic shifts,
doubt, and trauma.
similarly inverted. Batman continually fails to better the Joker and the heroine, Rachel Dawes, dies as Batman is too late to save her. Instead of following the usual convention of the superhero saving the day, the film closes on an unstable note: another villain has emerged (Harvey Dent, who turns from good to evil, becoming Two-Face), and Batman is mistakenly vilified while Dent is feted. In his final showdown with the Joker before turning him in to the authorities, Batman is told that the Joker’s plan was to engineer the fall of Dent, suggesting that while Batman may have won the fight, the Joker wins the war. Things are left in chaos, and (as with Faustus, when the protagonist is taken to Hell) we stare into the abyss.

Archetypes in Actor Training: Challenges and Potentials

Two criticisms often given by performers who are asked to use archetypes or stock figures is that they find them claustrophobically limiting, or frustratingly vague. The approach instigates such polar criticisms, since archetypes are simultaneously specific and universal. There are pros and cons to each end of the spectrum:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universality</th>
<th>Specificity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Negative: Vague, Generalised</td>
<td>Negative: Limiting, Restrictive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive: Open, Flexible</td>
<td>Positive: Detail, Clarity</td>
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However, this huge spectrum of functionality is arguably what makes them useful. An archetype is like a mould to fill: it can provide structure and inspiration while remaining open to individual interpretation. How specific a picture the actor wants to draw remains up to them: some companies such as Gecko prefer to keep their

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563 Building on trends established in Batman comics, which generally position Batman as a vigilante, driven into action against villains by a personal vendetta (the murder of his parents) in contrast to more traditional superheroes, such as Superman.
style on the universal end of the spectrum, to leave more for the audience to interpret. Similarly Odin Teatret employ a universal style in order to draw links between disparate cultures. On the other end of the spectrum, actors such as Heath Ledger or Marlon Brando utilise archetype to explore more specific ideas.

In the *Experiments* workshop on archetype, the challenge of universality (vagueness) and of specificity (limiting) was tackled successfully via the exercises described above, where we approached the archetypes as flexible structures that can be combined with each other or with another technique (such as the Seven Deadly Sins) to explore character and role.

Jenna found that the exercise utilising both sins and archetypes gave her a way to make the archetype concept work better for her: she found archetypes on their own somewhat limiting. She used the metaphor of ingredients in a cake: you don’t just put in eggs or flour (i.e. one technique, archetypes) but also add other things (such as the sins work) to create the final product. I then suggested the metaphor of a cake tin as being the archetype: providing the structure or base on which to build. It does not negate or contradict the potential addition of further ingredients but, rather, provides a structure to work with. I think that this is a common misconception that many modern performers and practitioners (and audience members) maintain with regard to utilising type in their work: that it is limiting oneself to a generic interpretation. In fact, I find the opposite to be true: the archetypal mode is both specific and universal and this is its strength. One can add specific detail while using the universal mould to great effect, and while the archetype mould gives guidance to the creation, it does not negate originality.

Jamie made an interesting point about the possibility of using archetype, like any physical approach (such as Laban’s Efforts) as a means in actor training to expand the performer’s range: by finding
one’s own type or types, one can recognise ones limitations, and by trying very different character types there is potential for expanding beyond these. Jenna also wondered if early actors would think of archetype or sins in storytelling in a similar way to how modern theatre performers use Laban: as a way to typify and explore character further, with both great simplicity and complexity.

As we discovered in the *Experiments* workshops series, a connection with the archetypal, universal or quintessential potentially expands the actor’s ability, releasing them from the limitations of their own personality and specific situation, whereas deeply psychological approaches cannot do this for the actor, and in fact encourages remaining stuck ‘in their head’. Russian practitioner Chekhov recommended going beyond the everyday through imagination and archetypal-thinking in order to find creative inspiration, rather than using emotion memory which he saw as problematic not only in terms of having the potential for the actor to get stuck, but also in terms of potentially encouraging mental imbalance and negativity. He said that the ‘certain personal colour’ of emotion memories ‘makes us a little smaller’, makes the audience suspicious, and makes the actor psychologically ill after a while.\(^{564}\) He advised going into the realm of the ‘Higher Self’, discovering the archetype of the character. In my practical workshops I have found this approach to be highly valuable, and when combined with inspiration from the medieval landscape of archetypes, as well as from Shakespeare’s dynamic approach to utilising archetype, there is much to draw upon from English folk and ritual heritage in actor training and rehearsal technique.

**Patterns and the Human Mind**

Our mind works through recognising, storing, and constantly referencing known patterns. One recent influential proposal that discusses brain-body-environment

dynamics is the Predictive Processing (PP) model.\textsuperscript{565} The PP model suggests that rather than the mind being a passive “sponge” absorbing information from the world, it is in fact a dynamic system constantly exchanging information and anticipating the next outcome through an understanding of patterns formed during our previous experiences. What we perceive is therefore the world itself combined with our own expectations about the world (subconscious or conscious). A useful metaphor for the way the mind shapes experiences is provided by Michael D. Kirchhoff:

The ceramist working at a potter’s wheel is involved in a genuinely dynamic process. If one focuses on the wet clay, it becomes apparent that it slowly morphs into shape, while spinning over fast enough timescales that its shape appears to be constantly coming into being and dissipating again. Moreover, the dynamic loops between the potter’s body, her hands, arms, eyes, and so on, and the wet clay itself seem so interwoven and fluid that the dynamic profile of the overall process is constantly forming and re-forming over short periods of time.\textsuperscript{566}

The repetition of behaviour is key to ritual’s efficacy, and to the idea of a collective mind. Psychological research has shown that repetition can influence reasoning about different behaviours through making information more psychologically available, recognisable, and attractive.\textsuperscript{567} The fact that the human mind responds to repetition, patterns and themes (in other words, to symbolic


representation) suggests that a collective unconscious does exist in the sense of a shared mind-structure: the way the human mind tends to work. This can be explained culturally as well as in cognitive or biological terms. A. Neher points out that some of Jung’s archetypes, such as the circle, which is a common shape in nature (planets, water drops, etc) as well as being easy to draw and aesthetically pleasing, as well as human archetypes like the wise old man or the maiden, are easily explained through their being part of the experience of any human culture. While this undermines the element of Jung’s theory which argues that the collective unconscious is born of something that goes beyond, rather than being born of, human experience, it supports the idea that there is a clear and universally-recognised system of collective universal archetypes shared across cultural and historical divides.

This view describes a dynamic and active relationship between experience and perception, outside world and internal mind. Repetition and patterns are not only essential to conscious learning (e.g. learning a new skill such as speech, walking, or playing the piano) but also to our subconscious and our perception of reality. Our mind builds upon these patterns: constantly adjusting, re-wiring and reorganising according to new experiences. In a similar way, actor technique and

\[568\] When I interviewed Russian practitioner Ostrenko on how he utilises ritual in his work and his teaching, he had an interesting point about the circle:

When you work with multicultural and multidisciplinary teams for a long time it is very important to follow the ritual. One ritual for us is the circle.

In many cultures, the circle is very symbolic […] an ideal form, as a symbol of harmony and embodiment of Cosmos. We know that everything moves in a circle, the Moon, the Earth, the Sun, the Milky Way, they are constantly moving in cycles, day and night, life and death. It inspired people in all times, it is the point where a person feels comfortable and where a person exists at this moment. The circle is a very meaningful symbol. Everyone feels himself important, secure, equal and strong in circle.

(Ostrenko, 2016).

\[569\] Neher, p. 79.
storytelling in the theatre today can usefully build upon the patterns of early narratives: drawing upon their associative meaning-making power while simultaneously adjusting and reforming to fit with our current experience of the world. The sense of an inherited cultural memory, a collective unconscious that goes beyond one’s own experience, is necessarily part of this process, and despite the modern disconnect with religious belief, the supernatural, and the sacred, these residual elements continue to impact the way human narrative is structured and understood. Chapter 5 will go on to explore more deeply the collective mind, the role of sacred ritual within human society, and the understanding of our theatrical heritage: born of ritual patterns and behaviour.
Chapter 5

Ritual and Holy Theatre: Embodied Approaches and the Collective Mind

All ritual is a reaching out to the unknowable and can be accomplished only by the noncognitive: evocation, allusion, metaphor, incantation—the tools of the poet.

Tony Hendra 570

Every race has its lumber-room of magical beliefs and practices, and many such survivals are gracious and beautiful and maintain the continuity of a civilization. It is to be hoped that modern materialist ideas will not obliterate them entirely.

Richard Winstedt 571

The Importance of the Sacred to Humankind

Recent archaeological discoveries have thrown a new light upon the role of ritual, religion and the sacred in human social history. The unearthing of Göbekli Tepe in Turkey, a temple predating Stonehenge by 6000 years, has overturned the conventional view of the rise of civilisation: as Charles C. Mann writes, ‘we used to think agriculture gave rise to cities and later to writing, art and religion. Now the world’s oldest temple suggests the urge to worship sparked civilization’. 572 He describes the modern-day reaction to the site:

After a moment of stunned quiet, tourists at the site busily snap pictures with cameras and cell phones. Eleven millennia ago nobody had digital imaging equipment, of course. Yet things have changed less than one might think. Most of the world’s great religious


centers, past and present, have been destinations for pilgrimages—think of the Vatican, Mecca, Jerusalem, Bodh Gaya (where Buddha was enlightened), or Cahokia (the enormous Native American complex near St. Louis). They are monuments for spiritual travelers, who often came great distances, to gawk at and be stirred by. Göbekli Tepe may be the first of all of them, the beginning of a pattern. What it suggests […] is that the human sense of the sacred – and the human love of a good spectacle – may have given rise to civilization itself.573

The discovery casts light upon the role of ritual within human society, and by extension the role of a theatrical tradition which stems from ritual and the sense of the sacred. Rather than ritual and religious practice being simply a response to a growing civilisation, caused by (and secondary to) the formation of an interconnected society, this new argument suggests that the sense of the sacred and the love of spectacle formed the bases of a relational, communal way of living. An inbuilt sense of the sacred, then, is arguably intrinsic to the understanding of society, human life, and relationships.574

How does this information relate to the understanding of our theatrical heritage in Britain, in particular the medieval performance tradition and the age of Shakespeare? Of course the medieval and early modern performance traditions are, as we have seen, deeply rooted in ancient ritual and spiritual celebration. But whether the event is religious or not, the key to both an efficacious ritual and an effective theatrical experience is the bringing together of people – usually a large

573 Mann, p. 40.
574 Whitehouse writes about the cognitive optimum position – ‘essentially a universal attractor position’ around which cultural concepts congregate. Some of the patterns he identifies include HAAD (hyper-active agent-detection: the way in which humans tend to see signs of intelligent agency in many situations) when it is focused on supernatural agents, and ritual action: both being ways of constructing meaning about the world through a sense of the supernatural or sacred. Whether these patterns of cultural innovation – appearing so widely across a variety of geographical locations throughout human history – are genetically transmitted (cognitive universal) or extragenetic is a question that anthropologists continue to wrestle with. Whitehouse, p. 29. See also p. 21.
and diverse group – for something extraordinary. Often, the place is outdoors (as with Stonehenge, the open-air Globe playhouse, the pageant wagons of medieval mystery plays, and so on), or if indoors the space is sacred or made special through communal use and meaning (such as a temple or church). We can relate the desires of the ancient people who built and used Göbekli Tepe, and what the discovery says about the in-built human urge to celebrate and worship through communal spectacle, to the inherent power in the medieval and Elizabethan theatrical tradition. Such events as these bring together the most diverse of people from all levels of society, in the same way that large-scale ancient religious ritual and worship did: people who do not know each other but come together in a living experience (which arguably has a particular power beyond that of the later forms of theatre designed for invited audiences, or aimed at particular echelons of society).575

Religion itself is built upon the idea of the communal and relational. In the Bible, the Ten Commandments given by God to the people, via Moses, embody the relationship between society and religion: the commandments all centre on relational bonds. The first five are about the relationship between mankind and God, and the remainder focus on relationships between humans. The primary urge behind any religion is to strengthen both the connection between human and divine – the word itself likely stemming from the Latin religio, ‘obligation, bond, reverence’, and possibly from religare ‘to bind’ – and the bonds among humankind, and if we go far back enough (as in the example of Göbekli Tepe) this appears to be what societal structures have been built on. As alien as it may seem to the secularised modern mind, society and religion (as in, a ‘religious’ sense of the sacred via a dual perspective of life) are intertwined. French sociologist Emile Durkheim wrote in the early-twentieth century about God and society as being

575 Of course, there is also the influential tradition of the ancient Greeks to consider. Their ritualistic and celebratory religious theatrical style similarly involved a huge and diverse audience in a large-scale space, a theatre that was also a temple, evoking spectacle through storytelling and elaborate costumes and masks to bring people together in ecstatic or sacred communal celebration.
one and the same thing, engaged with via rites and in the form of symbol or totem, seeing religion as, in essence, society divinised.\textsuperscript{576}

In using the terms ‘ritual’, ‘holy’, and ‘sacred’, it should be acknowledged that these are not necessarily concepts which find themselves always in alignment. As Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw have discussed, ‘much anthropological analysis simply equates religion and ritual, or regards them as forming some kind of indissoluble whole’, yet a search for the sacred – that is, a religious or spiritual attitude or experience – can often turn on ritual with distrust.\textsuperscript{577} It is important to note the potential for ritual to become disjointed from a sense of the holy: Brook points out that this is often the case in today’s society, with the old rites associated with Christmas, birthdays, and funerals having lost their power; he argues that this represents a serious problem for any attempted revival of what he terms a ‘Holy Theatre’.\textsuperscript{578} Groups of people may find themselves repeating ritual actions which once held meaning but no longer have the emotional impact they once did. Ritual without meaning, emotional engagement, or intention becomes opposed to a sense of the sacred: an empty practice, something dead rather than living, without inspiration or the ability to communicate ideas in the way that living ritual can.

As pointed out by Helen Gittos, while ritual provides us with a structural framework for examining history and relationships, diversity within common forms is key to ritual practices.\textsuperscript{579} Much as the development of theatre relies on the whims, wishes and demand created by its audiences, the development of ritualistic practice, being a communal group activity, is necessarily at the mercy of


\textsuperscript{578} Brook, \textit{The Empty Space}, p. 45.

the participants. In a living tradition, even ancient, long-repeated customs must continually change and grow in response to the needs of the group.

To take an example of living tradition that survives to this day we can look to Bali: in Balinese performance, the emphasis on traditional forms, reproduction and reincarnation does not negate creativity and innovation but gives room for unique variation. The arts are rooted in tradition, but nevertheless are not uniform or static but brimful of innovation. The renowned mask maker Ida Bagus Anom Suryawan told me of his desire to preserve the traditions of the culture while having the freedom to create and invent. He said that that one day he went to see a cock fight and was amazed by how many feathers there were lying everywhere afterwards. He began to collect and use them on his traditional masks. Anom explained that this was a new idea for traditional mask making, which has become very popular since, and shows how innovation can enhance an ancient form.\footnote{For further information about Anom’s work and approaches, see Balinese mask-maker Ida Bagus Anom Suryawan: Conversation about art & life, Eleanor Chadwick (June 2016), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJjAoX6F7Fk&feature=youtu.be> [accessed 26 August 2017]. This interview was conducted during my research trip to Bali.}

Similarly, as noted in Chapter 2, the Semara Ratih artistic collective expertly combines traditional pieces and new creations, and has become renowned in Bali for their innovation as well as the dramatic and musical variety of their performances. I also mentioned Japanese Noh in Chapter 2 in reference to tradition and innovation; this ritual performance is thought to bring peace, prosperity, and longevity of life, and is one of the world’s oldest continuously performed theatre traditions. Because of its traditional, ritual nature, Noh is often assumed to be a rigid, fixed form of performance. In 1647 the shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu decreed that no variations were to be permitted in Noh, and stage directions were written down, costumes and masks were defined and actors were given fixed positions. However, even within such a detailed and structured performance style, with such a heavy emphasis on tradition over innovation, there is still room for some creativity, at least in the performer’s interpretation.\footnote{For a discussion of change and innovation in Noh, see Mariko Anno and Judy Halebsky, ‘Innovation in Nō: Matsui Akira Continues a Tradition of Change’, Asian Theatre Journal, 31. 1 (2014), 126-51.} Noh
scholar Yokomichi Mario suggests that this is the reason why **Noh** continues to survive to this day:

> An image exists of noh as a rigid form that cannot be altered in even the minutest ways. However, noh can be changed in multiple and various ways to the performer’s creative disposition. With this freedom, the performer is able to imbue the performance with their individuality and emotionally connect with the audience. As a result noh has been able to survive for hundreds of years. Because of the freedom within the performance of noh, it continues even today to draw in audiences and speak to their hearts.\(^5^8^2\)

David E. R. George has pointed out that ‘performances are always – necessarily – a repetition, and yet always different; simultaneously reproduction and creation. […] what the Balinese have done is exploit this necessary element of unique variation, and value it – as a token of re-inspiration’.\(^5^8^3\) The role of an artist in this way is not dissimilar to the role of priest or spiritual shaman: guiding the rediscovery of ancient forms through new innovation. Michael Harner, expert in shamanic studies, points out that ‘the world of the shaman is one of cosmic unity and a sense of love. In shamanic ecstasy, tears of joy exist. It is the same world of the Christian mystics of the medieval times. It is the same world of the great Eastern saints’.\(^5^8^4\) It is the same world, also, of the artist. Art explores the ideal of unity, and was originally born of religiosity;\(^5^8^5\) from ancient cave paintings to the earliest forms of dramatic entertainment, spirituality was the driving force behind artistic expression. Shamanism and art, ritual and performance are intertwined across human cultures. As Schechner writes, ‘becoming an artist, even in the West, is not unlike learning to be a shaman. The techniques and ambivalent social

\(^{582}\) Yokomichi Mario, quoted in Mariko Anno and Judy Halebsky, p. 128.


status of artist and shaman approximate each other. In modern Western cultures it might be said that the impulses from which art is made […] originate in difficult confrontations between daily life and the unconscious’ which can manifest itself as gods, ancestors, demons, ghosts, and so on. Indeed, ‘difficult’ does seem the best word to describe modern Western confrontations with the invisible: without the structure of Balinese or medieval European artistic practice afforded by their own spiritual and religious hegemonies, the modern Western artist is faced with a black hole of possibility.

Although in Britain we have lost touch with our traditional forms, and only retain some of the outer shells of old traditions on particular holidays and events, this is not because they were originally without vitality. Recent research has shown that liturgical and other rites of the Middle Ages have much more variation than previously supposed. People had a degree of freedom in deciding how to celebrate, and since medieval liturgy was mainly oral in nature it was more fluid and less fixed than later written versions. The freedom for creativity is key to living ritual: while there is a universal structure, the individuality of the present moment is not lost in that structure, but is explored and illuminated through a universal mode. Understanding this is integral to finding ways to explore and utilise ritual in the modern age: exploring the balance of old and new, residual and emergent, universal and specific is a living and continually changing process.

Shared Cultural Memory: the Collective Experience

In putting forward my theory of historically-responsive modes of communication and storytelling, I suggest a concept of ritual which utilises the familiar and the universal through patterns and allegory in order to go beyond the specific, the visible, and the spoken to explore the general, the invisible and the unspoken. In this concept of ritual and the sacred, a key element is the process of tapping into a shared cultural or social memory: a historically-responsive approach to material, rather than a time-specific or location-limited approach which is fixed and unchanging. Ritual and sacred experience in this sense is related to emotional

engagement on a communal rather than individual level, and results in a dual perspective where the specific is related to the whole, the individual to the group.

Durkheim wrote of ‘collective effervescence’, the ecstatic ritual passion that cements social bonds and forms the basis of religion; in place of religion in a secular culture, he recommended recognising the power of this collective mind phenomenon to avoid the disintegration of society:

… the collective consciousness is the highest form of the psychic life, since it is the consciousness of the consciousnesses. Being placed outside of and above individual and local contingencies, it sees things only in their permanent and essential aspects, which it crystallizes into communicable ideas. At the same time that it sees from above, it sees farther; at every moment of time, it embraces all known reality; that is why it alone can furnish the mind with the moulds which are applicable to the totality of things and which make it possible to think of them. It does not create these moulds artificially; it finds them within itself; it does nothing but become conscious of them.587

The key points here are: firstly, that collective consciousness (via ritual) is what allows humankind to communicate ideas about the incommunicable and make the invisible visible (as discussed in Chapter 3 and, further, below), and secondly that this type of consciousness or knowing (which we might term ‘sacred’, and which is again traditionally accessed via ritualistic behaviour) is not something we can simply do without, ignore, or move beyond, as it is intertwined with the origins and nature of human society.

There have been various hypotheses which put forward the phenomenon of a ‘shared cultural memory’ not only as an intrinsic part of being human but also as important for the preservation of human nature and society itself, related to a

587 Durkheim, p. 445.
practical code of behaviour.\textsuperscript{588} Friedrich Nietzsche wrote that while animals are directed by genetic code to guarantee their survival, human beings depend upon a collective memory, kept alive through patterns of societal practice and ritualistic behaviour, in order to maintain their nature through the ages.\textsuperscript{589} Collective memories, and the rituals that keep them alive, are also engaged with for the purposes of growth, change, and healing within human society. Cristine H. Legare and André L. Souza express a similar idea: ‘although some have argued that rituals are expressions of inner states of feeling and emotion, symbolize theological ideas or social relations, or represent psychophysical states, conceptualizing ritual exclusively in this way neglects the fact that the use of rituals for protective, restorative, and instrumental purposes is a pervasive feature of human culture’.\textsuperscript{590} Ritual is at once emotional and practical, celebratory and educational, larger than and intrinsic to a society. Ritual utilises emotion and the sense of the sacred for the healing, teaching, and growth of a community.\textsuperscript{591}

\textsuperscript{588} See Chapter 3 (above) for a discussion of the idea of ancestral memory in relation to genetic development, emotion, and behavioural patterns, and the way in which studies involving animals have highlighted the existence of genetic predispositions unrelated to the specific scenario: for example, primates bred in captivity show a fear of snakes despite never having been exposed to them previously. See also Neher, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{589} See Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’ \textit{New German Critique}, 65, (Spring-Summer, 1995), 125-133 (p. 126).


\textsuperscript{591} As noted in Chapter 3 regarding the first recorded liturgical drama, \textit{Quem Quaeritis}, this dramatic style of worship was not born of the desire to educate or improve but to celebrate. In this earlier chapter I discussed the way in which educational and intellectual was intertwined with the emotional in liturgical drama in complex and deeply affecting ways. Yet theatrical practice, like ritual, emerges from emotive rather than practical urges, and thus emphasises feeling over cognition: something that may feel alien to the modern mind with its intellectual bias, but connects with us on a primal, base level. ‘Primal’ or ‘base’ may have become slightly pejorative terms in modern Western thought: used to delineate the savage or the uncouth in many nineteenth-century writings about the ritual activity of tribes around the globe, for example, but this is a misleading view. That which is primal or which exists as the basis of experience is what everything else is built upon, forming the roots from which we grow and change, but remain connected with.
humans, we are conscious of our relationship to others and the wider world via a
sense of something larger than just ourselves: something moralised, emotional,
and not simply logical. Historically this dual awareness is based on the urge to
connect, to celebrate communally, to form ties and bonds. As actor Simon
McBurney points out in his introductory speech in Complicite’s 2016 play The
Encounter, soldiers fight and die for something called the United Kingdom, and
lawyers defend people they do not know in support of justice and human rights,
but these things are merely fictions: ‘they don’t exist outside the collective
imagination, but they allow us to organise ourselves by forming narratives we can
all agree on wherever we are. They shape everything we see and believe in’. As
McBurney’s examples demonstrate, the collective imagination is something
ingrained in the way society and we as human beings function. The examples he
gives are, in Durkheim’s words, the ‘moulds’ created by the collective mind
‘which are applicable to the totality of things and which make it possible to think
of them’. In sacred ritual, the moulds that are found and explored relate not only
human being to fellow human being, but also to god and to the universe.

Images and symbol (acting like Durkheim’s ‘moulds’), and their repetition, form
the basis of ritualistic communication. When art historian Aby Warburg coined the
term ‘social memory’, in order to define a type of memory which encompasses the
shared cultural experience, much like the collective mind, he specialised in what
he termed Bildgeddchtnis (iconic memory), treating images as carriers of
memories that go beyond the individual. Symbol and archetypal imagery (as
discussed in Chapter 4) is key to the communication of shared cultural ideas
through visual meditation, which Durkheim also notes in his discussion of
Australian totem symbolism. This type of imagery is not static or fixed but alive
and full of creativity. The ritual mode, as discussed, is active: the process of
producing an Aboriginal totem, a devotional sculpture or reliquary in medieval
Europe, or a Balinese sacred mask (Topeng), for example, and the ritual and
symbolic purpose each serves, is more important than the item itself. Symbolic
imagery, drawing upon iconographical social memory, is what provides the mould
or structure to carry this active and living significance.

592 Complicite and Simon McBurney, The Encounter (London: Nick Hern Books, 2016),
p. 7.
The process of making the Barong mask (Topeng) in Bali provides an excellent example of this type of active significance. It begins with finding the right tree and the right carver. The carver’s lineage must be checked: how many generations of mask makers go before him in his family? The better the lineage, the better the skill, and the more likely that the spirit will come to reside in the mask. The wood for a Topeng is from a specific type of tree (the Pule tree), which is self-seeded and grows near to a cemetery or a temple. On an auspicious day, fixed by the priest, and after permission is asked from the spirit of the tree, a piece of wood is taken from the living wood of the tree’s trunk. The tree is not cut down but remains alive, as later the mask must be connected back to the spirit of the tree. A good day is found to begin and to end the carving process (usually on a full or new moon), and when the mask is complete a ceremony is held for the blessing and connecting of mask to Barong. In this ceremony (held at midnight in a cemetery, a liminal place where Shiva is present), the body and mask of the Barong are put together. Mask maker Ida Bagus Anom described this moment to me as having immense power, saying that when the two are connected, nobody can control themselves, and the people inside the Barong costume suddenly run with mad energy around the cemetery, as if possessed. After this, they return to the tree from which the mask was taken, the priest will chant to the spirit of the tree and show it the mask, thanking the tree for its gift. Once the mask is made, it is kept in the family temple, and always treated with care and respect.

The iconographical mode is found not only in carvings and paintings but also in forms of movement and dance: particular poses for meditation or worship have

593 For example, as Anom described, it is always passed with the right hand, never the left, and is never placed by the feet or on the floor.
been recorded in many cultures. In medieval England, this included kneeling, making the sign of the cross, the *Benedictio Latina* (a hand gesture of benediction from the Roman Catholic Church), the raising of the host in communion with hands together, the early Christian prayer position with upturned hands (*orans*) (perhaps the most universal and ancient position of prayer, developed from the pagan allegory of *pietas*), and hands together in prayer (a later form of gesture for prayer, appearing more frequently in medieval artwork after the thirteenth century as it became part of ecclesiastical ritual).

There have been some recent explorations made of potential practical applications of ancient ritualistic images for accessing a sense of the sacred today. Anthropologist Felicitas Goodman has undertaken practical experiments in relation to shamanic ritual and images of poses found in ancient art. Noticing a repetition of particular postures in a context of worship and ritual spanning across boundaries of geography and culture, Goodman conducted workshops where participants would assume the postures for extended lengths of time, accompanied by a steady drum and rattle beat to help induce trance-state. The participants reported a range of experiences of shamanic journeying, and Goodman records the patterns of these experiences, positing that each posture induced particular themes within the trance experiences reported by those who took part in her

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594 Such as Indian hand postures (Mudras), yoga poses, Buddhist meditative postures, Sufi whirling, and so on. A local Balinese man explained to me during my June 2016 trip that the movements of the dances and of tantric yoga in Bali are all based around ideas of harmony and balance in relation to god, nature, and each other. The positions include:

- **Prayer position**: connecting up to the gods and into the self; absorbing the power and inspiration of the gods (*Taksu*).
- **Open hands**: indicating an open heart; palms are out (as they are in all of the dances) to give power and inspiration to the audience.
- **One finger curled down, another up**: representing female and male, yin and yang. There must be both together, united, in order to create, as well as for balance.
- **Moving in the vertical plane and the horizontal plane**: this is seen as connecting with the gods (vertical) and with the world (horizontal).
workshops. Goodman’s view is that this was brought about through a genuine spiritual connection with another level of reality. Whatever the cause, the effect of the postures and the steady rattle beat was to induce a state of transcendent connection, potentially drawing on a collective mind, tapping into a subconscious and bodily understanding of a particular pose. Inspired by Goodman’s experiential research, I attempted some of these postures with participants in the final Experiments workshop to see what effect they might have on modern performers. The ability to induce a heightened state or even to go on a trance-journey as part of a workshop process certainly would have benefits in a theatrical context: giving fuel for the imagination, a better sense of focus, and strengthening the group or ensemble through a shared experience.

The inducing of a heightened state or shift in consciousness, let alone a shamanic journeying experience, proved more difficult in practice than Goodman’s descriptions suggest. Participants reported a difficulty in ‘switching off’ their minds and focusing on the steady drum beat played throughout. Others became distracted by the uncomfortable postures (although some noted that once they managed to move beyond the discomfort they did feel a sense of relaxation, ‘letting go’ of material concerns and achieving a more meditative state).

Intellectually, the performers could all easily tap into shared associations in relation to postures, pictures taken from classical art, and archetypes. The challenge came when they were asked to let go of thinking and instead try to experience, somatically and imaginatively, a posture, symbol or image. This appeared to be easier when they were given some creative freedom or input: for example, coming up with the archetypal postures as a group, or using particular postures and images in improvisational activities (as discussed in Chapter 4). The ‘letting go’ of intellectual analysis required of accessing a meditative state, heightened state, or any shift

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in consciousness is very difficult for the modern Westerner and seems to require either extensive practice, or a more active engagement than the process which Goodman describes.

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This was the least-effective activity that we tried in the *Experiments* workshops, and I continued to ponder on it after the workshop series. In August 2017 I ran another workshop, *Experiments II*, to explore ritual postures further in relation to medieval iconography and ritual practices. I researched Catholic meditational/worship postures and created a series of poses to explore in a similar way to Goodman’s postures, as a meditational activity, but also to experiment with as a way into character (like the archetype and elements poses) and as an ensemble activity (similar to Grotowski’s ritual activity, described later in this chapter). The poses were:

**Blessing:** standing, with right arm lifted and forming the *Benedictio Latina* sign

**Receiving** [which can alternatively be termed *Conjuring* or, as suggested by one participant, *Inviting*, for a more active version]: standing with palms up, as in the *orans* posture of early prayer

**Contemplating:** kneeling with palms together, as in the later traditional posture for prayer

**Repenting:** lying face down, with arms out, resembling a cross, based on a penitential position: lying prostrate

The activity, detailed in Appendix 14, found these ritual postures to

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596 *Experiments II*, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, Newton Abbot (August 2017) [workshop]. See Appendix 14 for exercise instructions and photographs of the ritual postures.
be useful for all of the above: as an ensemble focusing activity, we practiced the postures in a circle in combination with humming through the moods (Blessing, Receiving/Conjuring, Contemplating, Repenting), in the style of Grotowski’s ritual activity (described below). As a meditational activity, the actors practiced the postures alone, to music, as in the style of Goodman’s shamanic journeying. As a tool to access characters’ emotional states, the participants used the postures as a psychophysical springboard in the way that we used the elements poses and the archetypes: practising a pose until absorbing its particular quality, and then delivering speeches with this energy. The qualities of poses could also be combined to find a particular character mood or switched between during speeches to find shifts in the speaker’s emotional journey.

The poses had some meaning for those participants who had Catholic backgrounds, and indeed, those performers surprisingly found it more difficult to engage with the activity at first. In each case, this was due to the mind (their own personal associations) getting in the way of the body (and the archetypal character of each ritual pose). Reacting instinctively became harder when there were particular associations. However, with time and practice in the group and alone, they were better able to disconnect from the mind and focus on experience-through-the-body, opening up new potentials as described above.

Engaging with the Irrational: Emotion in Ritual Practice

The Western ego and its propensity for rationality have created a divide between us and the ecstatic or sacred experience. Ritual is inherently emotive and psychosomatic: emotional and sensorial engagement is key to all efficacious ritual. As discussed in Chapter 3, while Christian ritual is often viewed as

597 As Chekhov points out, the ‘personal colour’ of our own memories ‘makes us a little smaller’. Chekhov, pp. 40-1.
intellectual, ceremonial, and non-emotive (what Whitehouse terms the Doctrinal Mode), perhaps due to our current post-Christian, secular, rational environment, medieval Christianity was in fact highly emotive, celebratory, and sensorial. From Machon’s idea of [syn]aesthetic theatre practice, to the rock festivals which Barbara Ehrenreich links to a Dionysian tradition of communal joy and energy, it is possible to recognise the inheritance of emotionally-impactful, communal ritual activity in modern culture. To separate this from native spiritual tradition is a mistake: heightened emotion in a spiritual communal context is what first gave rise to performance, and since there are still occasional outbursts of communal celebration in other forms today it seems possible to bridge the gap, and draw some inspiration from the spontaneity and passion of our medieval ancestors, at least in part.

The primacy of logic and rational thought in the modern Western worldview means that, as a whole, we face some difficulty in engaging with the irrational and emotional experience necessary in achieving a sense of the sacred through a living ritual practice. Ritual does have a practical purpose, as noted above, and yet approaching ritual via logic and rationality is only going to result in something distant and dead, rather than immediate and alive. There is a resistance in the modern Western mind to dispensing with logic and rationality in favour of spontaneity, feeling and passion, and in connecting with the whole instead of

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598 Even (perhaps especially) when directly trying to engage with historically-responsive modes of performance, rationality and the intellect can still get in the way. German director Peter Stein’s performance exhibition titled Shakespeare’s Memory (Schaubühne, 1976) provides an apt example. Four hours of processions, dancing, mummers plays and extracts from Shakespeare, the event drew influence from medieval folk tradition and included many elements spoken about in this thesis, such as free-wandering audiences and a non-linear style of presentation. However, the approach Stein took was primarily an intellectual one, which hindered the success of his project: ‘the academic bias of the collective’s study was to colour Stein’s treatment’ and ‘the very thorough research of the ensemble inhibited a spontaneous approach to Shakespeare’ (Patterson, p. 124, p. 133).
relying on the individual, but it is nonetheless still possible (if difficult) for ritual to effect us beyond words (and therefore beyond individual experience), through tapping into primal urges psychosomatically. If this happens, a cultural ‘outsider’ may be affected by the religious ritual of another group. Clinton Furness, a traveller to South Carolina in the 1920s, describes a time he found himself affected by a syncopated dancing ritual (the African American ring-shout):

> A rhythm was born [...] it seemed to take the place almost visibly [...] gradually informing the crowd and taking possession of every mind there, including my own… I felt as if some conscious plan or purpose were carrying us all along, call it mob-mind, communal composition, or what you will.  

If it is possible to be affected psychophysically by the ancient ritual practice of a different culture, this suggests that it is still possible to usefully employ a historically-responsive approach to ritual via native English forms to awaken a communal mind-set and a heightened state.

The ingrained resistance of the modern Western mind to the irrational and heightened states of body and consciousness experienced through ritualistic practices was one of the key challenges and points of interest that the participants and I encountered during the Experiments workshop series.

Throughout the week, there were three exercises in particular that seemed to encourage an emotional response and a strongly unifying effect on the group via ritualistic forms, the first involved the physicalisation of medieval symbolism through posture, the second involved chant and repetition, and the third involved heightened emotion in a communal setting:

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599 Ehrenreich writes, in relation to colonial visitors who witnessed tribal rituals and termed them savage or primitive, that ‘the essence of the Western mind […] was its ability to resist the contagious rhythm of the drums, to wall itself up in a fortress of ego and rationality against the seductive wildness of the world’. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy* (London: Granta Publications, 2008), p. 9.

600 Clinton Furness, quoted in Ehrenreich, p. 4.
Exercise 1: Medieval Cosmos Movement Improvisation

This was an exercise which we repeated in the first and last workshops. In the first, it drew only upon the ideas of planes of existence: Heaven, Hell, and Earth. In the second, it built on this by utilising archetype postures and energies of the seven deadly sins.\textsuperscript{601} With music, in a darkened space, the group improvised movement in relation to these ideas. Several of the participants reported accessing a heightened, ecstatic state during this 25-minute exercise. It appeared to unite the group, improve energy, and give an experience of narrative that functioned on both an individual and collective level. We tried this exercise in the dark and in the light, and interestingly the time in darkness was much more effective. By significantly reducing the primary sense, vision, other senses become heightened, giving a new perspective on the world. In this exercise the darkness appeared to help the participants to let go (to a degree) of ego, rationality, and the tendency to over-intellectualise, giving them a freedom to be expressive in new and spontaneous ways.

Exercise 2: Rhythmical Call-and-Response

This was a simple warm up which involved standing in a circle and keeping a steady beat with clapping and stamping while chanting nonsense words in a pattern, as a second call-and-response type chant is passed around the circle. The people on either side of the person who is giving the moving (second) chant at any one time also call a subsidiary (third) chant with an accompanying action. In this way the multiple chants are passed around the circle while everyone keeps the steady beat together. The game is to continue without breaking the

\textsuperscript{601} Exercises involving these ideas are described in Chapter 4 and Appendices 12-13.
rhythm for as long as possible. It inevitably becomes more frenzied as time goes on, picking up pace and energy.

I have used this warm up many times in rehearsals for various productions, and always thought of it as possessing a certain tribal, ancient, primal feel, but this was the first time I really noted the ritualistic quality of the game and understood its benefits. One participant noted that ‘there’s a real benefit to the cohesive, unifying effect of a frenzied ritualistic game like this’. The group must work together to pass the energy around the room, but unlike other modern drama games such as the oft-used ‘Zip Zap Boing’ or ‘Ninja’, which work on a similar premise of passing an action and a sound around a circle, in this game there is also the added communal beat which is maintained throughout by the ensemble, giving that ritualistic quality of communal energy and frenzy. While the chants themselves are without meaning, the process has some meaning to participants as a game, and in thinking of true ritual one can only imagine if the meaning was deeper (an emotional and spiritual engagement, drawing on cultural collective memory) how much more frenzied and powerful such a rhythmic activity could be.

Exercise 3: Grotowskian Group Ritual

I was introduced to this exercise by Ostrenko at the international ArtsOasis lab (2016). It is designed to access and explore heightened states of emotion in a safe and supported environment. I knew that this exercise would prove challenging for participants and has some risks involved (in that it pushes the participants towards extreme emotion) and so I was careful to work up to it by building towards the complete exercise in stages.

Cuthbertson, Experiments.
The activity involves breathing together, followed by humming as a group through the following moods: neutral, menacing, begging, praying and returning to neutral. After returning to the breathing, the participants then laugh for 10 minutes, followed by crying for 10 minutes, and finally they are silent together for 10 minutes. We practiced the exercise in stages throughout the workshop process, beginning the first time with just humming, then adding 5 minutes of laughter, and building towards a full exploration in the final workshop.

In the complete version of the exercise, the reactions were much stronger and more extreme. One participant began to cry particularly hard, and her breathing became panicked and out of control. I kept an eye on this and she was eventually able to calm herself down during the final 10 minutes of silence. Another participant was so exhausted by the exercise he fell asleep near the very end.

3 out of the 7 participants felt that they had a transformative experience during this exercise. Out of the 4 who did not, all of them felt that if they had been positioned differently they might have achieved the same feeling. In the original version of the exercise, the participants sat in a circle facing each other, with eyes closed for the humming and open for the rest of the activity. We had tried the exercise lying down with everyone putting their heads together in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, in order to better feel the vibrations during the humming and to have that physical connection to each other. However, it seems that eye-contact helps some to better feed off a communal energy and shared emotional experience. It would be interesting to try the exercise seated perhaps close enough for legs to be touching, in order to keep that tactile sense of being connected for the section where you have your eyes closed. In trying this exercise during a workshop with Ostrenko, I found that I felt some disconnect
with no physical sense of other people in the circle when my eyes were closed, only aural. In any case, the physical senses are clearly highly important in communal activity of connecting emotionally with one another, much more so than any mental effort or intellectual engagement. One participant pointed out that when she was genuinely crying she didn’t need to think of anything to make her sad, she was simply responding in the moment to the stimulus – the sounds of others crying – around her.

It is useful to compare this approach to emotional recall techniques. Some of the performers described negative experiences at drama school of having to use emotional recall, and tapping into some very traumatic memories. Some even said that they are still in therapy to get over these experiences. As mentioned in Chapter 4, practitioners such as Chekhov have noted the potential dangers of using emotional recall of one’s memories and experiences to access emotional states for performance. It is potentially very damaging. We discussed the way in which, instead, exercises such as this Grotowskian one perhaps provide a way to access extreme emotional states with the full support and help of your ensemble. One person commented that she didn’t think we would have got on with the exercise so well if it wasn’t for the sense of community and ensemble that the group all shared by this final workshop. Building an atmosphere of trust where everyone felt comfortable and safe was an integral part of making this exercise viable, let alone successful. It would be irresponsible to ask a group (or individual) to try accessing extreme emotions in this manner before they were ready.

The feelings post-activity were significant. In one of the early versions where we only did part of the exercise (humming followed by 5 minutes of laughter, then finishing), one of the actors had felt really upset afterwards, over-adrenalised and shakey. But this time she had no negative feelings afterwards. It is interesting to consider whether
this has to do with the balance of crying after the laughter. Having experienced a version of the exercise myself, I can testify that after laughing for so long, one can easily tip over into exhausted crying. Perhaps the crying session is in some way cathartic and is needed in order to achieve a peaceful feeling after the exercise? Generally, participants reported feeling a state of utter relaxation during the silence at the end. One commented that she felt ‘almost high’ at this point, and afterward that her mind felt very on-the-ball, firing on all cylinders. Another actor said he was ‘still buzzing’ from the experience.

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Each of these exercises worked in a slightly different way, all drawing on elements of ritual practice: the first utilised movement patterns combined with group exploration and spontaneity, the second used repetition building to a group frenzy, and the third encouraged the communal exploration of intense and extreme emotion. The key benefits of these rite-like activities were the building of ensemble (the actors experienced a kind of bonding process through all of the exercises), the expanding of imaginative capacity (particularly in the first exercise, which gave archetypal tools for storytelling on a cosmic stage thus expanding the realms of possibility for the actor), and the potential to access heightened states of emotion, consciousness, and focus, thus expanding the range of the performer and their storytelling.

Why is emotion so integral to the impact of ritual experience? Rather than being merely an irrational mode of expression, emotional intensity has a practical purpose in that it appears to be key to the efficacy of ritual, and recent research suggests that people best remember things with which they have an emotional and personal connection. In a study building on this theory, István Czachesz has generated the following hypotheses exploring the function of memorisation in
ritual. He posits that people are most likely to remember emotionally powerful details of an experience: whether the violent imagery of Christ in a medieval passion play or emotive music at a wedding. Emotionally-arousing sensory stimuli function as ‘attention magnets’,\(^{603}\) prompting people to remember them at the expense of other details and the overall context of the ritual. The more a person feels they are actively participating, the more likely that person is to remember the important aspects of the experience. Such rituals are more personally meaningful and connected to the self than rituals where people are passively observing. Stress (whether physical or emotional) functions as a ‘zoom’ mechanism, drawing people’s focus in on emotionally important details of a ritual: concentrating their resources on the details that appear most personally relevant.

In terms of theatre practice, these ideas about ritual are significant in that they may help us to understand what creates the most impactful experiences. From active participation in modern immersive theatre to the ‘shock tactic’ scenes of graphic sex and violence employed by popular television series, these all appear to stem from very similar approaches employed by religious rituals to engage people on a visceral level and create a lasting impression.

Czachesz’s hypotheses suggest that ritual functions on a variety of levels, fulfilling different purposes simultaneously with different emphases depending on context. For example, if the aim of a religious ritual is to alter the participants’ state of mind through emotionally powerful techniques, a stressful ritual with lots of imagery and sensory stimulation would be employed. But if the purpose is to help people remember specific theology, rituals that avoid stirring imagery and instead focus on reinforcing participants’ personal connection with the narratives and ideas of the tradition would be expected. It is not an either-or scenario, however; unlike Whitehouse’s Modes Theory,\(^{604}\) which suggests that ritual and religiosity is either Imagistic (sensory) or Doctrinal (semantic), such a perspective does not try to categorise in terms of polar opposites. As Goodman points out, ‘rites are not either elevating or manipulative, obligatory or optional, abstract or


\(^{604}\) See Chapter 3.
practical’ but are a complex combination of elements. Schechner similarly argues that ritualising is not one-way or simple after finding that the employment of rhythmic activity in workshops leads to ‘feelings of “identical opposites”: omnipotence/vulnerability, tranquillity/readiness’. The combination of emotion and orthopraxis in medieval religious ritual similarly balanced imagistic and semantic, sensorial and cerebral.

In some forms of ritual, high-intensity situations may involve violence and other tactics to shock the body into experiencing a heightened or altered state of consciousness within a communal context. In shamanism, for example, the use of drugs, extended periods of drumming, or dancing all night beyond the point of normal exhaustion are all methods utilised to obtain an experience of group ecstasy. Today we have a tendency to view Christian practice as a sedate, cerebral, and restrained practice, and perhaps it has, for many in the West, become this. However, the early Christian attitude was one of celebratory inclusiveness, originally of rebellion against the Roman authorities, and included joyous and ecstatic celebration in its ritual practices. Ehrenreich gathers the evidence for an understanding of early Christianity as engaging with celebratory somatic ritual practices including dancing, singing, sharing food together, and glossolalia (the speaking of tongues) in her book *Dancing in the Streets: a History of Collective Joy*. The Romans certainly reported problems with disruptive Christian celebrations. In the medieval era, there was undoubtedly some tension between the people and the authorities, who wished to impose rules upon the laity and prevent too much joyful carousing, but despite their consternation there are reports of ritual celebration, of dancing and frenzied celebration throughout the Middle Ages. In the early medieval period, this often seemed to take place in the

606 Schechner, p. 239.
607 See Chapter 3.
608 We can look to African and African-American styles of Christian worship for an alternative to the traditional style of the Church of England today, arguably having more in common with the very early Christian church.
609 Ehrenreich, pp. 64ff.
Dance was an integral part of religious ritual: the Bible itself commends dancing as a form of worship and celebration, and in the two earliest Christian liturgies that we have recorded in detail, dance is mentioned as part of the order of service: Justin Martyr in A.D. 150 and Hippolytus in A.D. 200 both describe celebratory circle dances. According to historian William H. McNeill, medieval churches were not set up with pews but with an open space in which to stand, mill around, and potentially dance, creating a very active dynamic. Early Christians also had a ritual practice of dancing on graves, evoking a liminal space between the world of the dead and the world of the living: believing that the dead and the angels came to dance among those left behind in the mortal realm.

An active dynamic was also found in the church dramas, which arose in church buildings through the need for a deeper connection with the material, and then in time moved to the streets. Promenade and street performances gave the audience an active and participatory role in the ritual enactment of religious events. The senses were engaged through music, visual displays from the local craft guilds, as well as pyrotechnics (such as the burning of the world in the Doomsday

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610 Ibid.

611 For example, see Psalm 149:3; 150:4.


613 Ehrenreich, p. 77.

Visually-arousing stimuli provided a constant source of visual ritual meditation through vivid and often gruesome church art. A violent type of somaticism associated with ancient ritual practice was also apparent in Church rites: the rite of communion, for example, involved the process of transubstantiation, where the bread and wine was believed to physically transform into the body and blood of Jesus Christ as the members of the congregation consumed it. The directly emotive and violent aspects of the rite, and the shamanistic power here acknowledged in being a Catholic priest, tap into a deep-set longing for an emotional and substantial, rather than purely intellectual, connection. The rite is not an empty gesture of commemoration, but an active mystical process. In the Tudor age, the rejection of the idea of transubstantiation deeply altered this rite for Protestants, and along with the overturning of the belief in confession via a priest, transferred the power of the clergy to the unseen power of God. Violence,

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615 The Coventry Doomsday play began with this spectacle of a model world being dissolved in flames. The worlds were set on fire by means of a ‘lynke’ (*REED: Coventry*, pp. 224, 230, 242), ‘a torch made of tow and pitch’ (*REED: Coventry*, p. 626), and appear to have been painted and placed on a pillar (perhaps for better visibility or for safety reasons) (*REED: Coventry*, pp. 474-75).

616 See Chapter 2.

617 Plays involving Hell often seem to have had impressive mechanisms for opening and closing Hell’s mouth (for example, the Coventry Draper’s Doomsday pageant used a windlass; see *REED: Coventry* pp. 217, 221, 224, 237, 476, 479). See King and Davidson (p. 36) for an explanation of the mechanical device as used in the Cappers’ Harrowing of Hell.

Pamela King and Clifford Davidson (eds), *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000). George and the Dragon themed performances and displays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries often used artificial or mechanical, semi-automatous models of dragons, sometimes with the ability to breathe fire. See Philip Butterworth, ‘Late Medieval Performing Dragons’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 43 (2013), 318-342.

618 The move away from confessing via a priest and the saints and instead speaking directly to God shifted the onus onto the individual and away from the communal.
however, was still a part of daily life during the Tudor period: from the defacing of churches to the burning of Catholic recusants at the stake, the birth of the Protestant religion was no less based in shock, violence, and stress. Furthermore, in replacing transubstantiation with consubstantiation (the idea that the body and blood of Christ are simultaneously present alongside the bread and wine), the act of taking communion became even stronger as a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice, and built upon a paradoxical duality of thought that had also characterised medieval theology.

As pointed out above, stress and violence feature in many ritualistic practices designed to have a long-term emotional and personal effect through the ‘zoom’ mechanism. Medieval and Tudor Christians were no strangers to violence and trauma in religious and social contexts: from the public burning of heretics in brutal demonstrations of societal piety to the self-inflicted pain of flagellation or other physical penance for sins. Saint Bartholomew of Farne in the twelfth century recommended inflicting one’s body with adversity to enable purity of soul. The basic tenets of the mendicant orders, founded in the 1200s, were grounded in asceticism and had an influence over the laity: promoting contempt of the world, and chastisement of the body, as well as the atonement for sins (both communal and individual). In rituals of various cultures the need for sensory stimulus and trauma in order to feel connected with the divine has given rise to some extreme rituals utilising sensory stimulation or deprivation, placing body and mind under severe stress. Sometimes effects are achieved through violence and fear (such as the burning of heretics in medieval Europe, or the human

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619 See Marshall, *Heretics and Believers.*

620 As mentioned in Chapter 4 in relation to Marlowe’s Elizabethan play *Doctor Faustus* and the Nolan’s recent film *The Dark Knight*, these moments of crises and seismic shifts in ideology force people to look into the abyss. David Edgar’s play, *Written on the Heart*, explores the violence and passion that surrounded the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. Despite not being a believer, Edgar captures the power of an ancient formula being fractured and changed. This is a concept and a feeling we can all identify with: the violence and trauma associated with the turning upside-down of established belief-systems and hegemonies.

sacrifices of early pagan ritual in ancient Gaul) through trials by ordeal/endurance (such as medieval flagellation, or the Maasai tribe’s bush trials to gain wisdom and courage), or combat (for example the medieval trial-by-combat judicial method, where the judgement of God was believed to intervene on the side of right, or such as Nguni stick-fighting to prove worth). In many cultures, placing the body and mind under severe stress was seen as a way to open the pathway to the experience of the divine or a higher level of being, as well as promoting communal cohesion and reinforcing societal structures through fear, pain, or tests of endurance and courage.

Extreme pain, fear and trauma were not features of theatrical practice, yet there were times when milder forms of stress were utilised within the theatre of the medieval and early modern Western world. The experience of standing for hours watching a performance (for example as a spectator of medieval street theatre, or as a groundling at the Globe) places the body under some stress, certainly in comparison with traditional modern theatre where the audience are comfortably seated. Today, such active physical engagement is not something that has remained in the majority of commercial Western theatre. It does appear in other contexts, however: the act of going to music gigs, raves, festivals and some sports events not only involves active engagement through standing, dancing, and walking around, but also these events often result in some experience of exhaustion which may place the body under stress and heighten the overall experience. It is also important to note that recent trends in entertainment are swinging back towards what we might see as ‘stressful’ theatrical experiences: from zombie experience days and escape-room challenges to the rising popularity of immersive theatre, modern audiences seem to be craving an adrenaline rush or ‘zoom’ function experience, or at least a more physically active engagement with live storytelling.622 Even in the tradition of distance created by the proscenium

622 The ‘zoom’ function that Czachesz describes can also be likened to a ‘flashbulb’ type of memory that Whitehouse and others have described in relation to high-intensity or traumatic situations. Flashbulb memory is a vivid, distinct, long-lasting and highly detailed memory of a shocking, emotional or traumatic event: somewhat like a snapshot of a moment in one’s life. The state of mind induced is tied to emotional arousal, involving the activation of the amygdala (centre of emotional activity in the brain) and is stronger in first-hand experiences than in second-hand ones.
arch theatre there was not a complete lack of drive towards a high-intensity experience. In the Victorian age, for example, magic shows and séances tapped into a fascination with the macabre (such as illusionists sawing people in half) and the thrill of the supernatural (making ‘ghosts’ appear onstage).\(^{623}\)

**Cognitive Effects of Ritual**

Recent research suggests that ritualised behaviour has a strong effect over cognitive processes, meaning that even without a belief in the divine it is possible to experience a sense of the sacred or ecstatic. Goodman has studied the biological effects of shamanistic ritual on volunteers with no particular shared religious faith. She discovered that rhythmic stimulation causes the brain to switch from beta waves (ordinary alertness) to theta waves (low frequency, high amplitude). Blood pressure drops and the pulse quickens, and content of the blood serum also alters: stress hormones like adrenaline, hydrocortisone and noradrenaline are reduced while the brain releases beta-endorphins, the body’s opiates, inducing feelings of rapture and euphoria.\(^{624}\) Goodman also notes how research has shown that people with temporal lobe epilepsy often have ecstatic or religious experiences and visions. She cites a 1997 experiment at the University of California which found that for these epileptics the hearing of religious words caused activity in the temporal lobe, linking brain chemistry with religiosity and that altered state of consciousness which we might term ecstatic or sacred.\(^{625}\)

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\(^{624}\) Goodman, *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternative Reality*, p. 8. Of course certain high-intensity situations would result in an ‘adrenaline rush’ rather than a drop in levels of adrenaline. The after-effects of this, however, are similar to what Goodman describes above: a drop in blood-pressure, a reduction of pain, and the release of endorphins. The aftermath of a rush of adrenaline also often produces an emotional response.

Theatre practice can have similar effects. Lendra describes a trance-like awareness brought about by the intensive work undertaken in Grotowski’s Objective Drama project:

The work affected my perceptions on many levels simultaneously. There was a change of consciousness and awareness, a change of physical impulses and behavior, and an intensity which developed throughout the work. Generally I felt my body was awake even though I was working long hours almost every day. I was very much connected with myself and certainly with my native culture, Bali. There seemed to be a close similarity with the trance situations I had seen in Bali, or the trance like quality of Balinese performing arts.626

The training process, built on exploring performance rituals, was highly disciplined, rigorous, isolated in an old building away from civilisation, and sometimes went on throughout the night. The intensity of the work – the long hours and tiring physical practice – may have pushed Lendra’s body and mind to their limits in a similar manner to the physical and mental stress of ancient or shamanic ritual. For Lendra this resulted not only in a change of consciousness and heightened focus, but also produced feelings of connection both with the self and with his culture.

We can also find examples of an altered state of consciousness within emotional life experiences outside ritual: offering insight into the universality of ecstatic experience outside a specific religious context, as well as drawing attention to the highly emotive nature of a sense of the sacred. Near Death Experiences (NDEs), for example, can have the effect not only of flashbulb memory but also of gaps in memory and a distorted sense of time and space. In The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience, Eugene d’Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg analyse NDEs as mystical phenomenon: exploring the biological and psychological effects as well as the spiritual inferences that can be experienced through a NDE. They ask whether the NDE is an archetypal complex, and find

626 Lendra, p. 115.
that there is a strong element of universality across cultures, races, and sexes: 627
‘thus, the NDE may be a programmed behaviour that has been in place since the
early evolution of the hominid line’. 628 Whether the person experiencing a NDE is
religious or not does not seem to have a particular effect on the nature of the
mystical experience. Eliade suggests that ‘the “irreligious” still behave
religiously’ without realising they are still conditioned by myths, rituals and
taboos from the ritual behaviour of other eras. 629 Whether or not the behaviour is
embedded in human cognitive functioning, or brought about by cultural
conditioning that contains elements which can be interpreted as universal and
archetypal, the effect is much the same: the prevalence of mystical themes in
NDEs and of the spirituality associated with altered states of consciousness
suggests that human beings – whether religious or irreligious – can all experience
a sense of the sacred through highly emotive experiences resulting in heightened
awareness. This in turn suggests that theatre which taps into ritual today can
harness some sense of the sacred or ecstatic whether or not the context is
religious. 630

Ritual and Collective Joy: Dealing with Group Trauma and Anxieties

Ritual (and theatre practice built on ritual) may often centre around inducing a
certain amount of stress on body and mind, but this does not mean that they are
merely painful, stressful experiences. As Lendra points out, in Bali religious ritual

627 Their analysis includes reports of NDEs from the Middle Ages. Although these are
generally far more terrifying and gruesome than modern NDEs, they do include many of
the same core elements including the archetype of transcendent integration (peace and
tranquility) which characterises most modern NDEs. Interestingly, classic Asian NDEs
share similarities to the horrifying Western medieval experiences. It should also be noted
that there may have been a conscious disposition toward recording NDEs inducing fear in
the Middle Ages, in order to maintain morality through terror. See Eugene G. d’Aquili
and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious
Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), pp. 133-34.

628 D’Aquili and Newberg, p. 134.

629 Eliade, p. 205.

630 See Chapter 2: discussion of duality, the uncanny, and a shift in cognitive processing.
is a necessity, ‘it’s like a need to breathe. It is rejuvenating, a renewal of energy – it becomes a way of life [...] To Balinese, a ritual activity is fun [...] a time for celebration’. Stress is not the only emotional content of ritual: like the Quem Quaeritis, rites are primarily born of joy and the urge to celebrate. Ehrenreich has written a book on collective joy as it is expressed throughout history in ritual festivities, and Schechner describes the way in which ritual stimulates the brain to release endorphins, resulting in ‘a relief from pain, a surfeit of pleasure’.

Despite the frequent instigation of some type of stress in many ritual practices, the relief from pain, anxiety, and trauma is also a fundamental aspect of ritual behaviour which feeds into the performance tradition. Medieval drama, art, and literature had the spiritual musings of religious liturgy as their roots, as well as being influenced by pagan rites honouring cycles of life and death, and thus were adept at dealing with anxiety and trauma surrounding these issues: from presenting questions of death and the afterlife in the Mystery Cycles, to exploring problems of the soul in morality plays, to providing visual meditation on anxieties about death in church art. Using imagistic and symbolic modes allows engagement with questions too huge for human contemplation, and with the invisible and unseen (such as the divine and the communal).

To return to Durkheim, the collective mind and the symbolic style of ritual ‘furnishes the mind with the moulds which are applicable to the totality of things and [makes] it possible to think of them’. It is not only ritual that can deal with trauma: any mode of storytelling that moves beyond the specific can provide the opportunity to see one’s suffering and fears in a universal context, and move beyond them. With reference to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century Historia Regum Britanniae and the popular late-medieval romance Richard Coer de Lyon, Heng (as noted in my Introduction) describes cultural fantasy as confronting heritage, engaging ‘with lived event, crises and trauma, and conditions of exigency in ways that render intelligible to humans the incalculable and the incommensurate’. She describes the ways in which these works both engage,

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631 Lendra, p. 120.


633 Durkheim, p. 445.

via fantasy and archetype, with the traumas of the crusades including the horrors of starvation leading to cannibalism. Both works share ritual’s aim of healing, and utilise many of the tools of ritual: tackling incalculable and inexpressible traumas and fears through emotion and creativity rather than logic and rationality, allowing people to construct new meaning and find ways of dealing with problems and questions too large to handle directly. Heng also points out that both the *Historia* and *Richard Coer de Lyon* have the additional function of nation-building: reaffirming society and a communal, national identity through ‘performing’ England.635 Here is another overlap with ritual practice: the affirmation of communal identity and connection of the self/specific with the whole. The fact that the collective, archetypal, universal mode of storytelling in literary form can achieve similar aims to a psychosomatic ritual process demonstrates that even without the specifics of a particular belief system or religious context, the universal, symbolic and imagistic mode is powerful in dealing with anxieties, pain, and trauma and encouraging group cohesion.

One example of a physical rite directly dealing with trauma in the High Middle Ages is the Clunai’s Death Ritual: the Benedictine abbey at Cluny had a liturgical rite of death and dying, where the monk’s journey from the land of the living to that of the dead was accompanied by chant, singing, and prayer. Frederick S. Paxton examines this in relation to using the Clunai’s ritual as a basis of inspiration for modern music-thanatology.636 This new medical field, founded by Therese Shroeder-Sheker, is a musical/clinical modality that unites music and medicine in end of life care, serving the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the dying and their loved ones with prescribed music. Paxton notes the medieval roots of the hospice movement, where, in the spirit of earlier modes of care, family, familiarity, and comfort are prioritised at end of life. In a similar manner he and Shroeder-Sheker sought to take inspiration from the medieval practice of singing to the dying in order to explore this new palliative medical modality. As Paxton points out, there are universal echoes of the larger ‘rites of passage’

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635 Heng, p. 113 ff.
archetype in the Clunaic Death Ritual. However, in applying the ritual to a contemporary context with his students, he found that there are elements of the ritual which are very difficult to connect with now, and that there is a tension between the universal aspects of the rite and its peculiarly medieval monastic tone, and between the secular context of the medical modality and the Christian medieval background of the rite. The psalms and prayers can be unsettling to contemporaries with their references to punishment and sin as well as grace and love: originally, metanoia from the Greek for ‘repentance’ or ‘change of heart’ was seen as a key part of music-thanatology, a concept which is difficult for some to grasp in a non-religious context. Paxton’s conclusion sums up the paradoxical nature of historically-responsive modes of making art: he notes that the association with the medieval past both complicates this mode of palliative care while being integral to its existence, leading to its eventual birth centuries after the monks chanted their rites.

So what is an efficacious form of ritual performance today? As noted above, the universal, symbolic and imagistic mode provides a powerful way to confront anxieties, pain, and trauma and encouraging group cohesion. Music and other sensory experiences do the same: it was the act of using music as a way to ease the transitional process between life and death, for both the dying and the ones who remain behind, and not the specific content of the psalms, which gave the rites at Cluny their inspirational power, resulting in the new modality of music-thanatology.

We can look to the early modern theatre for some exemplary material of ways in which ritual modes, or echoes of ritual, were utilised in innovative ways to deal with anxieties and solidify the collective: in an age where the Reformation had left the country torn, heretics burned, monasteries sacked, churches stripped of their reliquaries and imagery, people were struggling to deal with the trauma of this spiritual upheaval. There were also other significant contemporary questions to address: political nervousness about the Queen’s unmarried, female status and the country’s lack of male heir, for example, along with the continued anxiety over pagan magic and the practice of witchcraft. James VI of Scotland, later James I of England, thought that a coven of witches in league with the Devil was plotting to kill him using black magic, and in 1597 published a study of witchcraft titled Demonology. Shakespeare explores fears of witchcraft in Macbeth, and
explores political issues surrounding Elizabeth’s reign in Richard II. In the former, the interplay of pagan and Christian rituals and practices allows Shakespeare to explore these anxieties: his imagery is drawn from both realms. Of course, the successful evocation of these ideas relies upon a shared knowledge which we no longer have direct access to in modern reproductions of Shakespeare’s plays. However, in relation to Richard II, a play described as ‘strongly medieval in character, an extended ritual’, the RSC’s 1964 production of this play reflected the 1960s shift towards ‘the questioning of accepted world-views in the spirit of contemporary politics’, while also acknowledging the play’s strong medieval character. By evoking both the specific concerns of the modern age and the medieval ritualistic qualities of Richard II, the RSC perhaps enabled a universal mode that gave old rituals a contemporary relevance and power. In this context, contemporary concerns are explored on a medieval stage: new and old exist simultaneously here, and the one does not negate the other but rather gives something to play off or against. As Margaret Shewring notes, the production was ‘not so much a dramatisation of an old order as a seedbed of

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637 Shakespeare is also ambiguous regarding his own worldview and religious beliefs. For examples of criticism that finds a definite Catholic agenda in Shakespeare’s plays, see Peter Milward, Shakespeare’s Religious Background (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2004); Clare Asquith, Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005); John Waterfield, The Heart of his Mystery: Shakespeare and the Catholic Faith in England Under Elizabeth and James (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2009).

638 For example, Lady Macbeth’s conjuring speech draws on pagan imagery such as the ill-omen of the raven, which ‘croakes the fatall entrance of Duncan’, and the ambiguous ‘Spirits, / That tend on mortall thoughts’, but also uses Christian imagery, wanting to evoke ‘the dunnest smoake of Hell’ to prevent Heaven from peeping ‘through the Blanket of the darke / To cry, hold, hold’ (The Tragedie of Macbeth, ll. 390, 391-2, 402, 404-5). Macbeth later makes references to Biblical imagery tied to the devil, figuring his fears over Banquo and Fleance as the ‘growne serpent’ and the ‘worme’ (l.1289).


640 Shewring, p. 103.
potential violence’.\textsuperscript{641} The production used the old order to create new potential, new life. This demonstrates that it is possible to utilise old ritualistic theatrical forms and structures to explore something active and living. Shakespeare himself did this with medieval ritual, in order to explore contemporary politics through the guise of medieval history. Geoffrey of Monmouth used fantasy.

Ritual festivity is also a source of influence for many of Shakespeare’s plays, and festive celebration is perhaps something that we understand more readily today, despite our comparative lack of festive holidays in the modern age. Anca Vlasopolos points out the dual Christian/Pagan frame of reference maintained in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, informed by the ritual of Midsummer or Saint John’s Day, and argues against critics who have dismissed the relevance of the ritual element, or dismissed the pagan and folklore aspects of the play as insignificant in comparison to the Christian or classical allusions.\textsuperscript{642} This attitude certainly seems a narrow-sighted one, when folklore and pagan rites are explicitly referenced in the very title of the play. Vlasopolos’ essay gives a useful discussion of the elements of Christian and pagan rite in the play, and posits that ‘the Christian light [of Saint John’s Day after the Midsummer Night] does not dispel, but rather confirms, in terms of a higher reality, the accomplishments of the pagan night’, as Christian judgement and restoration of order follows the festive license of the night before.\textsuperscript{643} The necessity of festive license and the chaotic merriment brought about through celebratory ritual practices is explored in many of Shakespeare’s comedies (such as Twelfth Night and The Merry Wives of Windsor)\textsuperscript{644} and, as discussed in Chapter 1, these rites, and Shakespeare’s expression of them, draw upon combined pagan (both English folk and Greco-Roman) and Christian traditions. The duality provides further potential for interpretation and meaning, and the pattern of festive license and upturned hierarchy followed by resolution and restoration of structure is drawn from a pattern of ritual that spans across time.

\textsuperscript{641} Shewring, p. 104.


\textsuperscript{643} Vlasopolos, p. 28.

and place. This pattern is still relevant now, and (as demonstrated by Shakespeare as well as the reforming early Christians) is an example of an ancient idea or mould that can easily take on new specificities. Ecstatic ritualised behaviour may no longer be a regular feature of modern life, but in terms of patterns and structural moulds there is ongoing potential for us to engage with ritual and the universal in theatre practice today.

**Inspired by Ritual: Locating the Sacred and Ecstatic in Theatre Practice Today**

In creating theatre today we can usefully be more aware of what we inherit from our ritualised past. By thinking about the balance of imagistic and sensorial with semantics and narrative, for example, practitioners can perhaps create more effective experiences that come close to the sacred or ecstatic. Although the religiosity of the medieval dramatic tradition is lost to us, and we do not have the immediacy of this residual mode of thinking (which was still very much available for use by Shakespeare and his contemporaries), there are ways in which modern theatre practice utilises ritualistic modes in very active and creative ways. These fall into two categories: theatre practice which aims at something like the sacred or ecstatic experience, and theatre practice that deals with trauma and social, political, or cultural anxieties.

Particular modern examples that come to mind for the first category are the sensorial styles of practitioners such as Rosenberg and companies such as Punchdrunk: in giving precedence to the imagistic and sensory, their work leaves particularly lasting impressions on the minds of audience members and stimulates emotional rather than intellectual reactions. I mentioned in Chapter 2 the cognitive dissonance effect of the uncanny simultaneity in Punchdrunk’s *The Drowned*.

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645 As explored in Chapter 3, there has been a history of experimentation with regard to the balance between somatic/sensorial and semantic/narrative, with practitioners such as Antonin Artaud advocating extreme methods of placing the audience member under emotional and sensory stress. These ideas have their roots in ancient ritual practices, and by further understanding these roots practitioners might find more tools and ideas to experiment with, and better understand the urge towards communal heightened experiences.
Man, and in Rosenberg’s Ring the sensory deprivation (an hour spent in darkness listening to 3D soundscapes) had a similar effect. Although I did not measure my heart rate, noradrenaline levels, or suchlike, and although I would not quite describe the experiences as ecstatic, both could surely be likened to the heightened state of ritualistic practice. The shift in consciousness experienced is due to the sensorial immersion using techniques straight from the ritual mode: in Rosenberg’s work this is achieved through a mixture of deprivation and stimulation of different senses, while for Punchdrunk the use of repetition, symbol, imagery and duality is key. The reaction of audiences is emotive: regarding Rosenberg’s work, sometimes critics have argued that the sensorial immersion comes at the expense of narrative, and reviews of Punchdrunk productions are frequently marked by confusion. As one Time Out reviewer puts it, ‘I experience the peculiar sensation of being simultaneously overawed and a bit dissatisfied. […] I didn’t doubt that there was a plot. But it’s simply impossible to get one’s teeth into these cryptic, largely silent encounters, so atomised are they throughout the gargantuan structure’. Such theatrical experiences undoubtedly sit on the spectrum of ritualistic practice in their use of the sensorial, of repetition, and participation or immersion of audience members, but it seems that for some attendees they do not work as a truly efficacious ritual process might, which balances narrative and the sensorial. The cognitive processing of ritual’s dualised mode is usefully described by Schechner:

the narrative-cognitive stimulus works from the cerebral cortex
down while the movement-sonic stimulus works from the
lower brain up. Performing a ritual, or a ritualized theatre piece

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646 Lyn Gardner wrote in her review of Fiction (March 2015, Battersea Arts Centre) that ‘your senses, including that of smell, are constantly being manipulated and deceived. […] But it’s maddening, too, because its creators still seem more interested in the aural possibilities of the technology than in the narrative depth and emotional complexity of the theatrical experience they craft using it’. Lyn Gardner, ‘Fiction review – headphone drama plunges you into your darkest dreams’, The Guardian, 10 March 2015.

or exercise, is both narrative (cognitive) and affective. These work together to form the experience of ritualizing.648

Not all ritualistic experiences can be effective for all people, but by understanding the cognitive effects of particular ritualistic theatrical choices (such as degree of participation, levels of stress, and sensory stimulation) practitioners can arguably gain more creative control over the audience experience. While critics are divided, for Punchdrunk audiences familiar with the style and the material the company are working with, an ecstatic and unforgettable experience seems within reach.

Numerous online discussion groups testify to the almost cult-like following the company receive. Some testify to the enjoyment gained by exploring an individual experience within a larger whole: ‘The Drowned Man is very much like a scratch card – with every return, you scrape off a little more of the silver foil to reveal the bigger picture underneath’.649 Others report the intense emotional reactions stirred in audience members: ‘I was anxious for some reason, knots appeared that day in my stomach that still haven’t quite gone, a week on’; 650 ‘I didn’t know what I was getting myself into but I knew I was on the precipice of something BIG’; 651 ‘[high] levels of delirium […] pervaded every big scene […] The atmosphere was electric’.652 One repeat audience member even describes a personal transformation brought about by the experience:

> I have made close friends from all backgrounds on this strange and wonderful journey, and seen and experienced and felt things very few people will ever experience. One year ago, I was a stranger in a strange place, starting a new position in an unforgiving town. I’d long kept up prescriptions to keep me from a darkness that followed me around, the pills from which I’d begun to fear was making me into an emotionally dead

648 Schechner, pp. 239-40.

649 Gail Bishop, ‘If theatre be the food of love, play on…’ [blog], available at <www.gailebishop.wordpress.com> [accessed 26 April 2017].


651 Ibid.

652 Bishop, ‘If theatre be the food of love, play on…’.
person. But in the warm darkness of the show, I found I could stand on my own two feet and, gradually, I didn’t need the meds anymore. [Before…] I would have nightmares where I screamed into a room full of people and no one would hear me. In the show I realised I didn’t need to shout or even speak to be heard, not when I was open and amongst the empathetic.653

The overpowering sense of community created by the experience of this piece of theatre changed this person’s life in a way reminiscent of the power of sacred ritual: something beyond words. This fascinating effect, the exciting potentials of a communal, sensorial, shared experience like no other, is something that theatre built on ritual ultimately aspires to: the power of the transformative experience.

A great deal of contemporary storytelling engages with trauma through archetype, symbol, and fantasy: the tools of ritual. There is a significant influence drawn from African theatre (which itself shares many similarities with medieval theatre in its heavy use of symbolism and its ritualistic approach) within recent attempts in British and European theatre to re-establish a connection with ritual and the sacred and deal with pain and trauma. Brook, for example, staged Le Costume by South African writer Can Themba in 1999:654 a play with symbolistic roots where the wife’s infidelity is given physical representation in the form of her lover’s suit. To highlight her shame, her husband insists that the lover’s suit must be treated as an honoured guest in the house: dine with them, sleep with them and be looked after by his wife. The trauma of her crime is eternally present: much as Jesus’ death and redemption is eternally present in Biblical medieval storytelling.655 Le Costume, as is the case in most African and – indeed – medieval theatre, depicts trauma in a non-naturalistic way, through a visual and symbolic code. The object of the suit becomes invested with meaning in this tradition, and in order to overcome the trauma (in the case of Le Costume, the wife’s unfaithfulness and the resulting guilt and pain) the sufferer must become familiar with the object. Only

653 Anonymous, ‘At the gates guarded by horses’.

654 Le Costume, dir. Brook, Bouffes du Nord (December 1999).

655 In medieval images of Doomsday, Jesus’ crucifixion wounds are often depicted as still bleeding, representing the unending nature of his redemptive sacrifice.
then can the object be divested of its power and the trauma overcome. A similar idea is found in Oscar Wilde’s nineteenth-century philosophical novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which the protagonist’s portrait appears to age and reflect his sins, and eventually proves his downfall – while in J.R.R. Tolkien’s twentieth-century fantasy trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, the force of the dark lord Sauron is invested in a ring of power. Both of these literary works also deal with trauma: in *Dorian Gray* this is the trauma of shame and the pressures of society to be perfect, virtuous, and youthful forever, and in *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien explores the trauma of war and death indirectly, via fantasy: trauma which he faced first-hand in the Second World War. These novels show traces of the storytelling style which is prominent and in full force within both the African and the medieval English theatrical traditions. In this storytelling mode, nothing is accidental or without meaning; meaning is read both visually (symbolically) and through the power of words; and deviant wrong or evil is given a literal and physical presence: such as the suit, the portrait, the One Ring, or Hell’s Mouth.

Another significant playwright is Nigerian-born playwright Wole Soyinka. He understands ritual to be transformative, giving new awareness of both the individual and collective state (as described by Lendra). Soyinka envisages ritual performance forms to result in a communal awakening which can be the first step towards socio-political change, and so utilises them in his plays to deal with modern problems. In his work, the audience are a part of the conflict presented, and thus participate in the ritual, and are implicated in – and so forced to confront – the trauma and issues presented.

Another fascinating example of ritualistic theatre that deals with trauma is the work of South African theatre-maker Brett Bailey, which demonstrates a provocative way of interacting with traumatic cultural memories and of creating a ritualistic experience of unspoken atrocities through historically-responsive theatre that is archaeological in nature. Bailey has brought work to Europe from South Africa, which gives an insight into the differences in dealing with ritualistic

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modes of trauma recuperation in different locations and cultural spheres. His pieces entitled Exhibit A and Exhibit B recreated the ‘Human Zoos’ of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which positioned African tribes-people as ethnographic objects to be viewed in exhibition: on display as scientific studies. By encouraging the re-living of a racist and objectifying context, Bailey ritualises the process and draws connections between the views of the past and the present, showing the modern view to be simultaneously divergent and convergent with earlier views (for example, drawing parallels with the treatment of modern asylum seekers). The productions highlighted the trauma of the past as well as the continuation of racism in the present day.

The work received very different responses when staged in Grahamstown, South Africa compared with in Europe (in Berlin, Edinburgh and London). In South Africa as well as at the International Festival in Edinburgh the work was well regarded, while in Berlin and in London there was uproar and protest. This even resulted in the hurried cancellation of the show at the Barbican in London as there were fears for the safety of performers. Nathaneal M. Vlachos argues that the difference was due to a change in Bailey’s motives: suggesting that he moved from explorational in the first work (Exhibit A) to a condemnational attitude – actively seeking to shame audiences – in the second (Exhibit B). However, his

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659 A residual belief in magic still plays an active part in modern African culture: in 2016 football chiefs outlawed the use of witchcraft in football games out of fears that players may be using black magic to gain unfair advantages. In this way, modern African society is much closer to a medievalesque, magical understanding of ritual forms than we are in Britain, and thus has a more deep-rooted respect for ritual and the sacred or profane, which seems to translate directly into the theatrical outputs of many African artists. For more on the how the occult is viewed and dealt with in modern Africa, see Peter Geschiere and Janet Roitman, The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1997).


argument doesn’t take the successful Edinburgh showing of *Exhibit B* into account. It seems possible that the different reactions are in fact more closely related to the different contexts: in some places there is perhaps less willingness, currently, to engage with the trauma of racism and the slave-trade through the heavily emotive means that Bailey used. Hugh Muir of *The Guardian* wrote:

My friend saw Exhibit B in Edinburgh, where it was lauded by many visitors and the critics. But the Barbican is different. London is different, with 11% of its population of 8 million having origins in Africa or the Caribbean. Different worldview, different tradition of activism; altogether a different dynamic.

One of many factors: geography doomed Exhibit B.\(^{662}\)

Since Bailey’s approach through ritualised, historically-responsive modes is clearly heavily weighted towards the emotive, the sensory and the participatory (being immersive in nature), invoking high levels of stress in its audience, this – as Czachesz pointed out in relation to ritual in general – means that spectators will heavily personalise the experience, and take away very emotive memories of the show. The personalised and memory-intensive elements of the experience of seeing the production would reasonably result in emotional and – in some cases – fairly extreme reactions to the work. Thus, ritualised theatre clearly has powerful and varied applications today in a variety of geographical contexts – although, depending on the topic and the shared associations or cultural memory of the society involved, there will be no general guaranteed reaction.

In describing the reasons behind his recreation of the Human Zoo, Bailey uses archaeological metaphors: ‘denying that he made the work to shame others, he instead emphasizes an excavation of his own racial past, a study of the cultural soil that he grew in, and ultimately a dig down to the roots of his own racial formation’;\(^{663}\)

People say to me, did I make this work to shame people? And it’s like, no, not at all. I made this work to excavate. Another

\(^{662}\) Hugh Muir, ‘The *Exhibit B* slavery show has value - but who was it aimed at?’, *The Guardian*, 26 September 2014.

\(^{663}\) Vlachos, p. 3.
thing that’s in this work is that I’m a white South African. My family has been here since 1674, the one side of my family. They were probably slave owners; they were complicit in everything that’s happened here, really. My own society, my people have been immensely enriched by a lot of these atrocities here. […] So I can’t ignore that that is part of my cultural DNA, my intellectual DNA, it’s part of who I am, I can’t deny it. I was brought up with that, and it’s the soil that I absorbed as a kid. How do I unravel that? What were the roots of that? What was that all about? 664

In this way, Exhibit B is an efficacious ritual in that it produces a process of healing dealing with deep trauma: a process that goes beyond words, beyond language and logic, shared by spectator and performer. One actor in the production described it as:

an interactive experience that the descendants of black and white people communicate to each other and probably, more importantly, internally to themselves. It is a healing process that cannot be communicated with words, for no words can describe the horror and trauma that are transmitted from generation to generation.665

Bailey’s drive to explore the roots of a society built upon trauma and suffering and exorcise in some way the demons of the past is a pattern which can be seen in the arts throughout history, and which utilises the ritualistic, sacred and fantastical in order to deal with the unspeakable.

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Despite the move away from a shared religious worldview in the modern Western world, there is still a somewhat inexplicable power to ritual modes of

664 Brett Bailey interview, quoted in Vlachos, p. 3.

communication. This power is demonstrated by the extremity of reactions to ritualesque work such as Bailey’s *Exhibit B* and that of the theatre company Punchdrunk, as well as the continued influence of ancient rites over outputs as varied and diverse as music-thanotology and Goodman’s anthropological exploration of ecstatic experience.

The exploration of human ritual history – whether through the archaeological artistic process of a theatre-maker such as Bailey, or through the continual rediscovery and reinvention of traditional forms like in Bali, or through the use of the fantastical and the allegorical to explore past traumas and current anxieties – reveals a language of storytelling and a mode of celebration that reinforces societal bonds and helps us to understand our place in the wider context of the universe. While Africa, Bali, Japan, and many other countries have stronger links with their heritage, the UK nevertheless has a rich history of traditional and residual forms moving in interplay with new ideas. The overall argument of this thesis is that this rich history and the enigmatic interplay of residual and emergent still has relevance and power, still appears in modern storytelling in a variety of guises, and can be usefully employed in even more direct and dynamic ways in theatre practice.
Conclusion

A ‘Richer and More Varied Picture’

Tradition is not dead. Tradition means that a fire is burning and you add something to it. That is the theater of the future.

Thomas Langhoff 666

Throughout the ages people have looked to tradition or already-created pieces in order to find inspiration. Nowadays, in the performing arts field we can see such an approach more than ever, just look at Akram Khan Ballet or Sibi Larbi Cherkaoui.667 You can always follow the notes of tradition... In some sense it is the way where people find an understanding of life, of other cultures, of different people and, of course, themselves... It is important to know our ancient traditions in order to create our own. As Salvador Dali said, ‘begin by drawing and painting like the old masters. After that do as you see fit—you will always be respected’.

Sergei Ostrenko 668

As has been explored throughout this thesis, the Judeo-Christian-Pagan ritualistic inheritance of the Middle Ages provides an incredible backdrop of residual forms


667 Akram Khan and Sibi Larbi Cherkaoui are modern dance choreographers who draw on ancient myths and traditions in their work. For example, Khan’s Until the Lions (Sadler’s Wells, 2016) is inspired by poet Karthika Nair’s book Until the Lions: Echoes from the Mahabharata, a reworking of the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, and Cherkaoui’s Sutra (Sadler’s Wells, 2009) is inspired by the Buddhist Shaolin monks.

668 Ostrenko (interview, 2016).
and structures that we can access in a variety of practical ways as a springboard to explore new ideas. The structure of the earth (or stage), with its different planes of existence, the spectrum of archetypes and symbols, the sense of a sacred space, the possibility of qualitatively different experiences of the body, objects, space, and the self, the inversion of hierarchy represented by figures including the May-King, the Feast of Fools, and Robin Hood, and the ecstatic joy of Christian and pre-Christian religious celebration are not obsolete ideas but are structures which continue to appear in new guises in modern narratives.

Despite the evidence that our culture and our artistic outputs are beginning to move full-circle, there is still something missing, which many Western artists and writers bemoan: including, as previously noted, the English director Brook and the American author and political activist Ehrenreich. Ehrenreich argues that in trying to access collective joy again today we do not need a point or message, but just a ‘chance […] to acknowledge the miracle of our simultaneous existence with some sort of celebration’, and admittedly communal events such as rock gigs or sports and the rush of the immersive theatre experience do give us a taste of something that we are largely missing in a capitalist, secular society. However, we are not only missing the frequent ritual celebration and experience of the collective mind which used to pervade life before the advent of capitalism and move towards the individual, we are also cut off from our native ritual roots in a way that many cultures around the globe are not. Perhaps by not only understanding the integral nature of ritual release to human life, but also realising the extent and continued relevance of the native ritual and storytelling heritage in Britain, we can find more ways of attaining this ‘collective effervescence’ that we all seem, subconsciously, to seek. The sense of the sacred has been an integral part of human society and experience (dealing with societal trauma and making the invisible visible), as well as of the birth of theatre and performance, and is something that storytellers, practitioners and audiences still actively gravitate towards today through experimental practice, intercultural explorations and the revival of old forms. The sacred can be understood not only as something experienced within the context of an established religious belief in the supernatural or divine, but also in terms of the cognitive, physical, and emotional effects of this experience: a sense of being part of something larger than oneself, a

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669 Ehrenreich, p. 281.
sense of the communal, a feeling of synesthesia and connectedness, of greater understanding and ecstatic celebration. There are tensions inherent in both medieval and contemporary expressions of the sacred: between material reality and something ‘beyond’ reality, between the body and the spirit, between logic and imagination. But as this thesis has demonstrated, in embracing tensions and paradoxes (in true medieval style) new meaning, creative potential and understanding is generated.

Throughout this thesis I have drawn attention to the way in which British theatre is seeking that universal connection of which it has found itself lacking since the end of the early modern period. I have noted the way in which British (and European) artists and practitioners have looked to other cultures for an engagement with heritage but have failed, on the whole, to delve very deeply into their own. I noted the influence of oriental cultures, and discussed various African artists whose work has greatly influenced British theatre in the way it engages with the specific and the new via the archetypal and the ancient. I have also traced the undercurrent of medievalism running throughout current British culture. The focus of this work has been the tracing of a language of storytelling, a spirit of the theatre which stems from the medieval Christian and folk tradition, from the birth of theatrical performance out of ritual, and the repositioning of the theoretical knowledge that has been gained in this area in recent years in relation to practical understanding or somatic knowledge. My concept of storytelling includes not only the style, structure and techniques of narrative itself, but also the mode of transmission: the experience of, engagement with, and relationship to the narrative being presented. The scope of this research – from pre-medieval ritual, through early modern theatre, to modern experimental practice as well as postmodernist theory and cognitive science – by necessity excludes certain areas, such as in-depth discussion of the influence of the classical tradition, further research into the way in which the Reformation affected English society, or the original practices of the Elizabethan or medieval theatre in terms of understanding and recreating as closely as possible the acting style, costume-making technique and set-building methods. However, all of the above have been discussed at length by others, and original staging has been researched through practice before, particularly at the new Globe theatre in Southwark. This thesis aims to redress the balance of the way in which we approach our theatrical heritage, and the way in which we, as
academics and/or practitioners, might tackle practice both in relation to early texts and new work. The uniqueness of the historically-responsive approach lies in understanding and reconnecting with the spirit or zeitgeist of earlier eras, rather than reconstructing in the ‘authentic’ way that historical re-enactment societies, or some of the practitioners and scholars working at the new Globe, have aimed to do.

The issue of authenticity in practice is contentious in the latter institution, as has been evident in the recent debate surrounding Emma Rice’s artistic directorship. Her directorial vision included such modern techniques as lighting rigs and was not held to be in keeping with the Globe’s ethos of historical authenticity. Rice’s attitude towards storytelling is one of flexibility: she declares that to communicate the ‘truths’ of a narrative best with an audience, she has ‘always used whatever medium best tells that story’. The balance of artistic freedom with historical sensitivity at the Globe has always been a difficult line to tread, and the institution is itself somewhat of a paradox: founded upon the premise of authenticity, historical research and archaeological reconstruction, yet led by artists as a fully working commercial theatre. Historically-accurate performances are given for the modern audience member in a modern city where the sounds of aeroplanes, traffic and the need for modern facilities such as toilets and gift shops cannot be avoided.

Domenic Cavendish wrote for The Telegraph that the Globe is by necessity both authentic and inauthentic, but possessing a special ‘magic’ in its quest for an Elizabethan experience. The real ‘magic’ of the Globe arguably lies in features such as the proximity of actor and audience, the enjoyable sense of anachronism between old and new, and the emphasis on somaticism in the actor’s training (through the approaches of movement practitioner Glynn McDonald, for example), rather than absolute accuracy of original practice. As Tom Morris, director of the acclaimed theatre production War Horse, pointed out in relation to

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Rice’s leadership of the Globe, ‘there are lots of different ways you can measure authenticity’.\textsuperscript{672} Paying attention to the ideas and ideologies behind early work such as that of Shakespeare in a production that utilises modern costume or set is authentic in a different way than, for example, recreating the sewing techniques of early modern costume-makers. Thus the RSC – with their highly modernised and often heavily conceptualised productions – might nonetheless give a sense of ‘authenticity’ in the experience of seeing one of their plays. Many of the directors who have worked frequently at the RSC (such as John Barton, Trevor Nunn, Michael Boyd) have placed an emphasis on the text as the key: consulting the First Folio, noting the regularity or irregularity of stresses, the punctuation, and so on in an effort to glean some kind of genuine, ‘authentic’ connection with the bard’s intentions.

In approaching Shakespeare, as a playwright who lived and worked hundreds of years ago, there has always been the necessity to negotiate the balance between the historical and the contemporary: Andy Lavender in \textit{Hamlet in Pieces} discusses the work of Peter Brook, Robert Lepage and Robert Wilson, who have all taken liberties with Shakespeare’s text in their innovative productions of the tragedy.\textsuperscript{674}


Cultural commentator Peter York explores the idea that authenticity is an unhelpful concept in his recent book \textit{Authenticity is a Con} (London: Biteback Publishing, 2014). The choice of Rice’s successor, actor Michelle Terry, itself rings of authenticity in another way, since in Shakespeare’s era theatres were run by actors rather than directors. It also follows the example of actor Mark Rylance, who was the founding artistic director of the new Globe from 1995-2005.

\textsuperscript{673} Such as Rupert Goold’s production of \textit{The Merchant of Venice} set in modern Las Vegas (May 2011). Christopher Innes has termed the two styles and approaches towards Shakespeare as characterised by the RSC and the Globe as ‘Contemporaneous-Topical-Relevant’ and ‘Archaeological-Restorative-Prototypical’. Christopher Innes, ‘Rebuilding Shakespeare’s Globe’ <http://130.63.63.23/crc/resources/essays/pdf/rebuilding_globe.pdf> (November 30, 1999) [accessed 9 August 2017].

While some may see this approach as committing ‘textual heresy’, betraying the author’s original intent in favour of modern preoccupations, we can also view the approach as being (like Rice’s) evidential of a creative freedom much like that which Shakespeare himself possessed. As Lavender points out, by disrupting the usual twentieth-century emphasis on text, the attitude of the ‘text-slasher’ gives the primacy of concern to creating a piece that works for its audience. Similarly, in the highly collaborative environment of the Elizabethan theatre, texts were regularly plagiarised, continuously revised, and ‘were fluid, not fixed’. There are lessons we can learn from Shakespeare that we can also learn from modern experimental practitioners such as those of Brook, Lepage, Wilson, and Rice: firstly, that flexibility is key to great creativity in storytelling which connects with diverse and large audiences. Also, that within this flexible approach the residual and the emergent can exist side-by-side. Machon’s work on immersive theatre, Lavender’s work on Brook, Lepage, and Wilson, and Brook’s own writings in The Empty Space are some examples of critical reflection on current theatre practice which demonstrate the way that contemporary experimental theatre both consciously and unconsciously moves towards a preoccupation with the historically-responsive.

In terms of approaching Shakespeare, this thesis offers another approach than that of the Globe (focused mainly on original practices or ‘Archaeological-Restorative’ theatre) or the RSC (tending towards text-focused, academic approaches to

675 Lavender, pp. 10-11.
676 Lavender, pp. 13-14.
677 Rice’s work at the Globe enjoyed ‘queues for returns every day … drawing some of the most excited and engaged audiences the Globe has had’. Lauren Mooney, ‘Emma Rice tried to shake up the Globe. Sadly it’s chosen to cling to the past’, The Guardian, 26 October 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/26/emma-rice-globe-theatres-artistic-director> [accessed 11 August 2017].
678 For examples of this approach in action, see Playing Shakespeare, dir. John Carlaw (London: ITV, 1982), in which RSC actors try various text-based techniques, and John Barton’s book of the same name. See also Peter Hall’s instructional book Shakespeare’s Advice to the Players (London: Oberon Books, 2003).
connect with Shakespeare’s original intention in order to re-interpret it for a modern audience), and is more in-line with the flexible historically-responsive trends of contemporary experimental theatre practice. I have explored a training process that reminds actors and practitioners about the embers of tradition while remaining open to innovation, widening our modern perspective to include an understanding and appreciation of early forms. We can see a trend towards invoking the ancient in actor training already – from clowning to *commedia dell’arte*, and in embodied methods such as Laban’s Efforts and Chekhov’s Psychological Gesture – and, as pointed out, we can also observe the way in which many practitioners look to other cultures or to the idea of creating new ritual in order to relocate what has been lost. While activities such as clowning or particular ritual processes form part of the historically-responsive, and provide examples of ancient forms that still survive today in artistic processes or in other countries’ social procedures, the historically-responsive mode is not about learning a particular skillset or special approach, nor about the appropriation of ritual from a culture that still retains sacred practices, but rather is an attitude of mind which opens up the possibilities to be found in examining and embodying residual as well as emergent culture in practice. In some scenarios, historical clowning techniques, understanding Machiavellian tropes, or utilising types such as those offered by Laban’s techniques (Efforts) or Bogart’s methods (Viewpoints) may be the most relevant way to approach this, in others, Jungian archetypes or Galenic humoural theory may prove most relevant and useful. A new appreciation of medieval ideas, attitudes, and approaches sheds light not only upon Shakespeare’s position as an early modern artist poised between the residual-medieval and the emergent-modern but also upon the roots of storytelling in our culture, revealing a set of tools (including: psychophysical connection with, and deeper understanding of, residual ideas; the dynamic experience of dualistic consciousness and extreme dichotomous states; the availability of primal instinct and cultural memory as sources of creative energy, providing a useful alternative to intellect and lived, specific experience; and the expansion of the actor’s ability and range through archetype and symbol, giving a safer and more effective way to access emotion than via personal memory) with which the modern actor can usefully approach Shakespearean stories and characters as well as storytelling in general.
The approach applies equally to modern performance and other reproductions of early material as to Shakespearean theatre. Flexibility in storytelling was not just Shakespeare’s province, as discussed, but was the inheritance of the medieval and Biblical amalgamative style. Even for groups who focus primarily on the historical in their creation of live performance or other entertainment, the benefits of this flexible approach to storytelling (dispensing with the primacy of accuracy) are often clear. Television shows such as History Channel’s *Vikings* draw on early sources whilst embellishing and fleshing-out historical characters in their storytelling.  

Similarly, embellishment and artistic license features in the educational entertainment activities of York-based group Northern Forge, whose mission statement is to interpret and recreate ‘aspects of times gone by to […] hopefully create an interest in our shared past […]inspiring] the next generation of historians, archaeologists, and possibly actors’.  

Group leader Neil Tattersall explained in an interview that ‘all we are doing is taking a lead from the past in embellishing, exaggerating, and boasting within our tales - something that has always been done around any ancient campfire. A lot of what we do is taking the oral tradition from the Anglo-Saxon Scops, the Viking Skalds, and the Mediaeval [sic] Bard and entertaining people with daft or exciting stories’.  

The undercurrent of medievalism in modern culture, moreover, is a stronger force than we may at first realise. It is not only through the occasional direct adaptation of medieval or Biblical material that we witness the continued influence of Christian-themed allegory and archetype over Western storytelling practices. From the battle-of-good-versus-evil trope within fantasy series like *Star Wars*,

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679 As is explored in my forthcoming article: ‘Fantasising History: Anachronism, Creative License and the Re-emergence of an Early Language of Storytelling’ in Paul Hardwick (ed.), *Vikings and the Vikings: The Norse World(s) of the History Channel Series* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2018).


681 Interview with Neil Tattersall, Northern Forge (May 2015).
Harry Potter, Narnia and The Lord of the Rings,\textsuperscript{682} to films that employ the messianic archetype in a secular context (for example Neo in The Matrix trilogy, John Coffey in The Green Mile, Luke in Cool Hand Luke), Biblical tropes lend themselves to a variety of forms and contexts.\textsuperscript{683} The popularity of the pseudo-medieval novels and television series Game of Thrones (inspired by the history of The Wars of the Roses and combined, Geoffrey of Monmouth style, with fantastical creatures and events) also attests to the move towards an engagement with our medieval past in recent years.\textsuperscript{684} RSC director Nunn recently used the phrase ‘Shakespearean era’s Game of Thrones’ to market his production of the Henry VI trilogy at the Kingston Rose,\textsuperscript{685} writing that Shakespeare created the first ‘box set’ and positing that while the plays are most definitely of their era, and

\textsuperscript{682} The authors of the latter three all overtly profess strong Christian influences, while George Lucas, creator of Star Wars, is interested in comparative mythology and identifies as a Buddhist Methodist.


\textsuperscript{685} The Wars of the Roses, dir. Trevor Nunn, Kingston Rose Theatre (September 2015). One of the participants for the Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice workshops, Jenna, was in the cast for Nunn’s production. She noted the contrast of the approach in the historically-responsive workshops with the RSC approach, saying that Nunn preferred to focus almost entirely on the text, sometimes listening to rehearsals while following along in the script, rather than watching the performers.
cannot be separated from either their medieval or their Elizabethan roots, they are at the same time very relevant today.  

Whether or not Shakespeare created the first ‘box set’, in accessing the residual medieval and better understanding the way in which it can interact with the emergent Shakespeare remains an exemplary figure, whose work demonstrates the power of embracing a historically-responsive approach (and all its dualities and tensions) to create new work. Of course, history still provides barriers to engagement with early texts and ideas, and not all of Shakespeare’s plays have been seen as equally accessible. Stuart Hampton-Reeves and Carol Chillington Rutter’s book *The Henry VI Plays* discusses the perceived challenge of staging these plays today, exploring the interplay of tradition, politics and nationhood in productions of the trilogy. They point out the way in which the perceived Englishness of the plays, and their simultaneous universality, has given rise to some very politicised productions in the last few decades which at the same time as engaging with modern issues and the specific, also find it necessary to negotiate the past and the universal: ‘in Shakespeare’s order of things, history can be providential, mysterious: history is only one aspect of a reality that reaches well beyond the human into the religious and the supernatural’. While they see the presence of the medieval in these plays as being relevant and coherent only to the original Elizabethan spectator, and as being rather problematic, uncomfortable and anachronistic to modern audiences, their examples conversely demonstrate that the medieval can be effectively engaged with in modern productions of the plays, and has been utilised very effectively by several prominent Shakespearean directors since the 1980s. A prime example given is the presence of the supernatural in the plays: while earlier productions tended to cut references to

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687 Or, as often is the case, as placed in a tetralogy with *Richard III*.


689 Ibid., p. 8.
spirits or presenting the supernatural as a ruse or trick, later productions started to re-engage with these aspects. In Adrian Noble’s production (1988), the spirits were presented as real, and Hell seemed to be continuously present as smoke billowed from under stage. In 1994 Mitchell invented an additional spirit character (an angel of death who led away deceased souls) in her staging of Henry VI Part 3. Mitchell’s production was simultaneously one of the most political versions staged in recent years. Next, Boyd broke down conventions of space, and also continued the trend of embracing the supernatural by having ghostly figures crowding the stage. Boyd simultaneously ‘rejected the strait-jacket of history’ by casting David Oyelowo as Henry VI, the first black actor to play an English king at the RSC.

Productions like these successfully demonstrate the historically-responsive mode in action: by drawing on the full range of Shakespeare’s influences, embracing mystery, anachronism and the supernatural in the exploration of the political, the modern, and the emergent there is a power of performance unleashed that has similarities to the explorational, emotional and embodied performance of the Middle Ages with its mish-mash, anchronistic style.

To conclude this thesis, it seems appropriate to return to an example from my practice. As a final experiment, I ran a workshop looking at two scenes from the Folio edition of Henry VI Part 3 through the historically-responsive lens, utilising

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691 Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3, dir. Adrian Noble, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre (October 1988).

692 Hampton-Reeves and Chillington Rutter, p. 8.

693 Probably influenced by the approaches of Brook.

694 Hampton-Reeves and Chillington Rutter, p. 9.
the various tools discovered throughout the research process. As one of Shakespeare’s most medieval, as well as more challenging, plays, *Henry VI Part 3* provides an appropriate case study for demonstrating the historically-responsive approach in a nutshell, showing the way in which the approach can work not only on famous Shakespearean plays, but also (and perhaps most usefully) on those we have in part forgotten how to read and perform. As one of Shakespeare’s early plays, it was written around 1591, and puts medieval history on the Elizabethan stage in dramatic form. The play utilises many residual storytelling techniques such as non-chronological and elided time, archetypal modes, providential aspects, and ritual symbolism.

Following exercises to refresh and reconnect with the use of microcosm/macrocosm, elements/humours, archetypes, and medieval ritual postures, the actors were split into two small groups and each group given a scene. Group 1 were given a section from Act II scene V, set during one of the battles, where a father enters who has unknowingly killed his son, and a son enters who has unknowingly killed his father. The characters are unnamed and thus become representative of the many horrors of war. Their metonymic function, anonymous status, and the ‘unrealistic’, uncanny mirrored

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695 *Experiments II*, dir. Eleanor Chadwick, Newton Abbot (August 2017) [workshop].

696 After the original 1592 performances, the play seems to have been rarely on stage. The first recorded performance in England since the sixteenth century was in 1906 at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre. There have been a few UK productions since then: including Douglas Seale’s at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1952, and in 1977, Terry Hands presented all three Henry VI plays at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Recent RSC productions of the play include Katie Mitchell’s in 1994 at The Other Place theatre in Stratford, and Michael Boyd’s at the Swan Theatre in Stratford in 2000.

697 *Experiments II*. See Appendix 15 for details of this exercise. The use of flexible time and space (Chapter 2 and Appendices 7-9) and awareness of body-as-text (Chapter 3 and Appendices 10-11) were in this exercise taken as given. These aspects, while they also need training and practice, form a backdrop to more specific work that can be done within speeches and scenes through the poses and gestures described here.
nature of the father/son, son/father elegiac speeches (watched over by King Henry VI) present challenges to the modern performer.

Group 2 were given York’s death scene from Act I scene IV, where Queen Margaret gives a triumphant speech before the defeated York gives a heart-rending reply. The long speeches are soliloquy-like, and are ‘unrealistic’ in the sense that each is uninterrupted throughout their tirades of abuse. The characters are also ‘larger than life’: the power of Margaret’s vitriol, and the depths of York’s grief are difficult for a performer to access via psychological technique.

The actors were encouraged to select from a variety of techniques and tools to approach the staging of these scenes, including:

- Planes of existence, or the macrocosm (see Chapter 1 and Appendices 2 and 4)
- Centres of energy and the microcosm (see Chapter 1 and Appendices 3 and 4)
- Elements (see Chapter 1 and Appendix 5)
- Archetypes (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 12)
- Seven Deadly Sins (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 13)
- Ritual postures (see Chapter 5 and Appendix 14)

Beginning with one technique, and building to include many layers, the performers took their time with exploring the scenes psychophysically, through the body. They did need reminding of this (psychophysical) approach at points, still tending to want to sit and talk about the scenes, approaching them intellectually. However, once they had become aware of this, they embraced the psychophysical approach very successfully.

There are certain archetypes, elements and so on which appear quite obviously applicable to the characters in these scenes through a reading of the texts (see Appendix 15 for further detail): Caregiver for the father/son duos, for example, Ruler for Henry VI and also Innocent (since he is such a gentle-hearted king). York is also a
Caregiver, mourning the loss of his son, as well as Warrior, as is Margaret. Pride features in her speech, and the Repentance ritual posture is useful for the grief-stricken speeches of the father and the son who have killed their family members.

However, there were also new discoveries that arose through the practical research. Movement through the elements, for example, proved particularly useful for Margaret’s speech: the performer used the element of Air many times when listening, to access a state of aloof calm in the face of York’s anger, which changed to Fire later on. The Conjuring or Receiving posture also proved useful to access a state of power and energy. For the actors in Group 1 playing the Father and the Son, centres of energy (passion-centres) were a favoured technique: such as the feeling of guilt, in the stomach, for when the Father recognises his dead son, and the sin of Greed located in the pelvis for the Son’s contemplation of the financial gain made through killing in war. They also combined sins with elements to give energy to their choices. Greed, for example, was combined with Fire on the Father’s line ‘Gieue me thy Gold, if thou hast any Gold: / For I have bought it with an hundred blowes’. 698

In some sections, quick movement between different techniques gave the speeches life in moments of particularly heightened emotion: the interplay of Contemplating, Wrath, Earth, Fire, and Water, for example, giving a powerful energy and true emotional drive to York’s desperate outpouring of despair. Similarly, the Father’s combination of Rebel archetype, Repenting ritual posture, and Earth and Water elements gave his final lines the heaviness they require: ‘Ile beare thee hence, and let them fight that will, / For I have murthered where I should not kill’. 699

698 The third Part of King Henry the Sixt, ll. 1218-9.

699 The third Part of King Henry the Sixt, ll. 1259-60.
As a result of an historically-responsive approach, the performers could not only better understand the dynamics of the scenes but could embody them more directly and effectively in performance. It is, of course, one thing to see theories written on a page, and quite another to try things out in practice. This research project has focused on making more than just academic connections between the forms and ideas of the Middle Ages, that of the age of Shakespeare, and the modern British perspective. In my practical work I have demonstrated ways in which today’s practitioners and performers might employ psychophysical, historically-responsive techniques in order to open up a way of simultaneously engaging with the old and the new, embracing the resulting tensions (such as between their own perspective and an ancient perspective, and between the specific and the universal) as fuel for their creativity. As posited in my Introduction, the dual approach from a medieval and a modern perspective converges upon the same truth: that is, the power and universality of a language of storytelling which paradoxically engages with, yet also speaks beyond, the specific and the now. Scholars and practitioners alike have observed and analysed similar styles that still survive in other cultures; it should perhaps not come as so much of a surprise that this style is still a powerful and active undercurrent within our own.

It is important that we recognise these undercurrents, as they are the means to finding ways to better deal with issues on both a personal and a collective scale. As pointed out in chapters 4 and 5, the historically-responsive, flexible mode (of ritual, of theatre, of storytelling), which combines fantasy and history, residual and emergent, universal and individual, has since the dawn of storytelling provided human beings with a way of dealing with seismic change and unspeakable trauma. In the modern age, we are faced with change and trauma on a global scale, and the fissures of problems in other countries now extend to the entire world: visibly and obviously so, thanks to modern technology and the ability to communicate globally. As Pankaj Mishra points out in his article

\[700\] This approach could, in the future, be applied in many other ways: in the exploration of the courtly performance tradition, for example, or in a study focused primarily on modern audiences’ response to historically-responsive work. The techniques could be further developed into a style of training for use as a drama school module, or in residencies or retreats (I have, in part, already applied some of the techniques in setting up a new residency for international artists, exploring performance, spirituality and ritual practice in Bali).
‘Welcome to the age of anger’, in this era of massive uncertainty and fragmentation, many ‘have embraced nostalgic fantasies of vanished unity’ and turned to the past as an example of a better time. However, they do so in an ineffective way: wishing ‘that the present abolish itself, making way for a return to the past’: an impossible and unproductive fantasy indeed. As Mishra says, we require ‘a richer and more varied picture of human experience and needs than the prevailing image of Homo economicus’, otherwise our ‘sterile infatuation with rational motivations and outcomes’, which cannot process such an ‘explosion of uncontrolled forces’, will drag us into the abyss. This richer and more varied picture can be gained by widening our worldview to include appreciation of earlier ideologies which embraced paradox and irrationality, while maintaining a foothold in the here-and-now. The process is what Ehrenreich in her History of Collective Joy, Krznaric in his Carpe Diem Regained: The Vanishing Art of Seizing the Day, Benjamin in his theories on the active, revolutionary messianic withdrawal from the world, and many others have leaned towards: the active appreciation of, and living engagement with, historical forms and processes within the context of the present moment. The collision of these forces – the old with the new – without trying to erase or negate the one or the other, is what gives the opportunity for new perspectives, multi-layered comprehension, and a widening of understanding. The power of this mode of thinking is demonstrated in storytelling as diverse as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Balinese Wayang Kulit, films such as The Dark Knight, novels including The Lord of the Rings, and of course, the amalgamative, historically-responsive, living ritual of medieval theatre.


702 Ibid.

703 Ibid.
Appendices: Practice-as-Research Materials

Appendix 1

Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice workshop series:

General notes

- The participants were all professional actors, aged between 20 and 30 years. All had experience of Shakespearean performance, as well as new work and devising. All of the participants had formal training, some at drama school and some at university.

- The building of trust and establishing of a shared language was very important: I used physical exercises involving tactile communication like leading a partner whose eyes are closed around the space, weight sharing exercises and so on, in order to build this atmosphere of trust and a safe space which would allow the ensemble to feel at ease with exploring some challenging exercises and approaches. Each session began with at least 30 minutes of warming up with trust-building and ensemble-building exercises. This built in the end towards an idea or feeling of a ‘sacred space’ where the group felt safe, focused, and in tune with each other.

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704 As noted in the Conclusion, Jenna had worked for the RSC with Trevor Nunn as a cast member in his Wars of the Roses production (2015), which gave her an interesting perspective.

705 The institutions represented were:

- Oxford School of Speech and Drama (Jenna Fincken and Jamie Littlewood)
- Queen Margaret University (Rachel Hudson)
- Arts Educational School London (Tom Cuthbertson)
- Kingdom Drama School (Adam Courting)
- London Academy of Performing Arts (Marian Elizabeth)
• I had originally hoped to avoid discussion as a whole, but this proved difficult and counterproductive, since modern actors are so used to engaging intellectually. So, instead, I tried to maintain a balance between intellectual engagement and psychophysical exploration by allowing time for discussion and reflection but also using many exercises which involved no talking at all and were focused on exploring through the body and senses. I did have to call a halt to some discussions, as the actors had a tendency to want to be talking more than doing.

• I gathered verbal feedback at the end of each workshop session, based around a focus point. I also asked questions or brought up points that arose during the day. Every workshop was filmed and verbal feedback recorded: I then went through the footage and took notes on the most pertinent points. I also sent the actors 3-4 focused questions after each workshop. The actors then sent me their answers that evening or the next morning before the subsequent workshop. This meant that their answers were fresh, but they had had some time to process the day’s events.

• As pointed out in the thesis Introduction, I used both First Folio and modern editions of Shakespeare’s texts in the workshops. The feedback was mixed on which textual edition is more helpful: some found the modern spelling easier to understand, and some preferred having the access to textual ‘clues’ through using the Folio. In reality, there was little practical difference: an historically-responsive approach through the body (as opposed to a text-based approach) is
equally effective regardless of which textual edition one is using.706

- Where the exercises described below are taken from or influenced by another practitioner’s work, I have provided an acknowledgement in a footnote. All other exercises are of my own invention.

706 The only significant practice difference I noted in the running of workshops using Folio rather than modern Shakespeare was that the Folio text occasionally seemed to tempt actors into sitting and reading for longer than they should have before getting up to try activities (either because of the spelling or because they were engaging on an intellectual level with the ‘clues’ of the text). However, I did often need to prompt the participants to dispense with cerebral approaches and return to somatic exploration, so this was not a new problem, just a slightly exacerbated one.
Appendix 2

From *Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice*,

Workshop 1: Imaginative visualisation and visceral sense memory exercises

1. **Introduction:**
   
   Instructions:
   
   Move in the space.
   
   Become aware of your feet on the floor as you walk.
   
   Focus next on your breathing centre: deepen the breath, inhaling into your diaphragm.
   
   Visualise your spine lengthening upwards, the top of your head inclining towards the sky.
   
   As you walk, start to fill the empty spaces. Move actively, with purpose. Be aware of those around you.

2. **Warm Up 1: Sinking and Rising**

   Instructions:
   
   As you walk around the space, meet those you cross paths with and acknowledge them with eye contact.
   
   If you wish, you can place a hand on their shoulder, and guide them to lie on the floor.
   
   Lie down in a smooth and gentle movement, and wait to be revived by another passerby.
   
   To revive someone on the floor, place a hand on their chest. The revived person then stands and continues to walk in the space.
   
   Repeat as you navigate the space.

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707 Exercise by Sergei Ostrenko.
3. **Warm Up 2: Blind Following**

Instructions:
In partners, choose a follower and a leader. The follower closes their eyes and is gently led around the space through touch.
Start with the follower placing their hand on the leader’s shoulder.
As the leader moves through the space, they should always remain aware of their partner and sensitive to their state and needs. Gently lead, becoming more exploratory and adventurous as you gain their trust. Start to explore tempo, levels, and variety of movement. Take your partner on an adventure.

[Note to workshop facilitator: there are several variations of this exercise, with other points of contact such as back of hand (leader) and palm (follower), palm (leader) and forehead (follower), and palm (leader) and elbow (follower). Depending on time, you can move through them and also explore changing point of contact during the exercise itself. Remind leaders not to grab followers, but to allow followers time to adjust to each new change before removing the prior point of contact, and remind followers to give some weight to their partners in the forehead and elbow options, to maintain contact). It is helpful to start with leading through shoulder or hand as an easier option than head, elbow, or another point of contact. It is very important to allow sufficient time for initial instincts to subside and trust to develop between partners, and for the senses to adjust.]

4. **‘The Bubble’: awareness exercise**

Instructions:
Walk around the space, visualising a bubble around you. This is your aura or bubble of energy. Focus on this bubble.
As you walk around the space, brushing bubbles with others, let yourself be affected by their energy and become aware of how your energy affects them.

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708 Exercise by Sergei Ostrenko.
Your bubble starts to expand gradually in all directions: up, to the sides, forward, and back.

Breathe and continue to pay attention to your aura bubble. Be aware of your expanding energy and awareness.

(Guide the participants as the ‘bubbles’ expand gradually in the space, until they are filling the space with their awareness. Then guide them to expand the bubble beyond the room. Next, beyond the town/city they are in. Continue to expand to include the county, country, the globe, the solar system, the cosmos… and finally becoming aware of their position in the universe. Bring their awareness gradually back down the scale, through each step until they are focused on the room, on the bubble slowly shrinking back to themselves walking in the space with a focused energy.)

5. **Cosmos exercise:** an imaginative visualisation of the medieval / early modern worldview

Instructions:

Close your eyes and focus your attention on the solar plexus, breathing centre. As you breathe, send your mind’s eye down through your legs and imagine the earth beneath your feet. Travel down through the earth’s crust, until you see the fires of Hell where Satan sits with his demons attending on him. Breathe and travel up again to view all of life on earth. The mineral world, from a grain of sand to gold. The animal world. From the beetles crawling on the ground, to the majestic lion. The human world, from the beggar to royalty. The elemental world. From the sprite to the fairy king. The spiritual world, from the cherubim to god.

Focus your attention on your pelvis where the lower instincts reside: lust, rage, desire.

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Focus next on your stomach where the fires burn with courage, hunger, passion.
Move your mind’s eye to the region of your heart, where love resides and turns all that is below into divine reason, which lives in the head and aspires to Heaven.
Return your focus to your solar plexus breathing centre. Open your eyes.

6. Spatial Readjustment

Instructions:
Walk in the space again and notice how your awareness may have changed. Retain the imaginative visualisation of the medieval world structure and notice whether (and how) this affects your movement and your experience of the space.
Repeat the sinking and reviving exercise, this time with the imaginative visualisation of that belief-system. What does the downward motion signify now? What does the upward motion signify? How does it feel to you?
Repeat the blind follower exercise, again maintaining that imaginative visualisation of that belief-system. How does it affect the journey through the space?

7. Improvised Movement exercise

Instructions:
(This exercise is undertaken in the dark, using around 20-25 minutes of appropriate music. The music mix must have changes and a sense of progression: such as moving from deep, earthy tones to soaring ones, and no instructions are given or interruptions made after the exercise begins.)
In the darkness, explore the space physically. There are no rules as to how to move, only that your journey takes place in this medieval worldview we’ve so far explored and includes these three planes of existence: Hell, Earth,
Heaven. Whether you imagine this as a physical movement through these places or a mental journey is up to you; there are no limits to your exploration. You may interact with others through your journey (using movement; no voice).

Feedback:

I felt lifted into a more extreme and intense existence but ironically thus allowing me to achieve a sort of peace. A state of being or rather a circle of concentration. It reminded me of why I love being an actor - to achieve this peace on stage is where true perfection lies.
Jamie

[It was] freeing- it helped me physically centre and feel liked I owned the space I was in. It also added a constant feeling of 'choice'- the potential to fall or fly.
Rachel

[On the last exercise:] It felt almost euphoric.
Tom

I found it refreshing to think in physical/metaphysical terms that stretched me physically and conceptually.
Adam

The feeling of being pulled by the two powers made me feel there was occurring struggle. It made me feel there was a goal, always something I was trying to get to and either power would pull me down or up. This torn feeling helped me to this physically and to get myself out of my head.
Jenna

This was difficult to begin with, but it really gave you a sense of both how important and insignificant what we were doing was - I felt like a tiny molecule in the universe,
but also that to me it was the most important thing in the world and I was caught between these almighty forces, which I found really interesting.

Alex
Appendix 3

From a workshop given at the ‘Theatre Between Tradition and Contemporaneity’ conference: Macrocosm/Microcosm energy exercise

This exercise provides a possible extension to the work described above.

Instructions:

Begin with an imaginative visualisation of the cosmos based on Linklater (see above), locating the passions within the body.

Next, walk around the space, exploring these centres of energy while focusing on what each centre represents. Let your whole movement, stance, gait and mood be affected by the choice of passion/centre. You can practice the following in any order.

   Chest/heart, (focused on love, compassion, mercy).
   Pelvis (lust, desire).
   Stomach (appetite, anger).
   Gut (instinct, ambition).
   Head (reason, intellect).

Explore how each centre feels in isolation.

After some time for exploration of the above, walk around the space with an awareness of all of these centres of emotional energy. Notice how this awareness changes your perception of yourself and the world around you.
Appendix 4

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 1: Shakespearean text work and the medieval cosmos

Macrocosm/Microcosm exercise:

Instructions:
Read the text (out loud) and then mark up the aspects of the speech that aspire upwards or towards Heaven (for example: love, righteousness, compassion, generosity, intellect), the earthly aspects (such as ambition, glory, mortal life), and also those that are particularly heavy thoughts or that lean towards Hell (evil deeds, damnation, killing).

Next, try reading the speech again, this time overtly physicalising the upwards and downwards movements.

You can also place each feeling in a particular place in the body (refer back to the cosmos visualisation exercise): compassion in the heart, wisdom in the head, appetite and courage in the belly, lust and rage in the pelvis, for example. When reading the text you might place a hand on the centre of energy for each aspect.

Once you have physicalised these movements, read the speech again with the movements happening internally.

What does this awareness add to the speech? Is there a difference found by engaging with the context of a macrocosmic world structure?
Example text:

Macbeth’s soliloquy from *Macbeth* I.vii

Key:

*Heavenly* (underlined)

*Earthly* (italicised)

*Hellish* (in bold)

*Earthly, leaning heavenwards* (italics, underlined)

*Earthly, leaning hellwards* (italics, in bold)

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well,
It were done quickly: If th’Assassination
Could trammell up the *Consequence*, and catch
With his surcease, Succese: that but this *blow*
Might be the *be all*, and the *end all. Heere*,
But heere, upon this Banke and Schoole of time,
Wee’ld jumpe the *life to come*. But in these Cases,
We still haue judgement heere, that we but *teach*

**Bloody Instructions**, which being taught, returne
To plague th’Inventer, This even-handed *Justice*
Commends th’Ingredience of our *poyson’d Challice*
To *our owne lips*. Hee’s *heere* in double *trust*;
First, as I am his *Kinsman*, and his *Subject*,
Strong both against the *Deed*: Then, as *his Host*,
Who should against his *Murtherer* shut the doore,
Not beare the knife my selfe. Besides, this *Duncane*
Hath borne his Faculties so *meeke*; hath bin
So cleere in his *great Office*, that his *Vertues*
Will pleade like Angels, Trumpet-tongu’d against

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The **deepe damnation** of his taking off:
And Pitty, like a *naked New-borne-Babe*,
Striding the blast, or Heauens Cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightlesse Curriors of the Ayre,
Shall blow the **horrid deed** in euery eye,
That *teares* shall drowne *the winde*. I haue no Spurre
To pricke the sides of my intent, but onely
**Vaulting Ambition**, which ore-leapes it selfe,
And falles on th’other. 711

Note: while tackling this exercise in the workshop we discussed how various ideas and feelings all sit on a spectrum between lower instincts and higher feelings, as was introduced in the imaginative visualisation of the macrocosm. Many earthly terms lean either Heavenwards (such as the empathetic ‘teares’ and the king’s holy ‘great Office’) or Hellwards (for example the murderous ‘poyson’d Challice’ and ‘Macbeth’s ‘Vaulting Ambition’). This has been indicated in the above text by combining signifiers (such as bold and italics for the latter examples).

There is of course a certain amount of interpretation involved and no black-and-white answers. However, the emotional movement of the speech becomes very clear through undertaking this exercise and recognising the spiritual movement of the speech and the stakes involved in Macbeth’s tormented psyche. It is particularly effective if beginning with an imaginative visualisation (such as Linklater’s, see Appendix 1) of the macrocosm/microcosm in order to place feelings in the body and on a spectrum from low/Hellish to high/Heavenly:

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711 *The Tragedie of Macbeth*, ll. 475-502
Workshop Feedback:

That completely changed my interpretation of [the speech].

Rachel

It shows how tortured he is [...] even on 'bloody instructions' I had 'bloody' as down but 'instructions' as quite high [...] you're just constantly going up and down and it shows how tormented it actually is. It's really fascinating.

Jenna
He spends the whole play being afraid and trying to sort of find his place [...] and it all comes from this awareness of how small and insignificant he is.

Tom

In some productions trying to find a new relevance [...] it’s such an easy mistake to make to take away that [element], because everything [...] does all come from that awareness of those massive stakes, and it’s so steeped in that world.

Tom

It isn’t hard [to engage with now]: it’s something that, as we’ve seen from this [exercise] is clearly there. You take on the world of whatever you’re watching and I don’t think it’s alien. We are all still human and everyone, whether they have any sort of faith, we all have an idea of the situation [and can] understand what [Macbeth is] going through.

Rachel

[This exercise] gave me a deeper insight into the inner turmoil of the character and this is something I will use when looking at Shakespeare and classical texts again.

Marian
Appendix 5

From *Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice*,

Workshop 1: Humoural Theory as Acting Technique

Pose Instructions:\textsuperscript{712}

**Earth Pose (Melancholy, Saturn)** – in this pose, with legs wide, knees bent and arms out, you focus on feeling the heaviness of your bones. Hold the pose. This gradually induces a lead-like heaviness that seems to easily correspond to a melancholic disposition.

**Water Pose (Phlegmatic, Venus/Moon)** – in this position, hanging from the pelvis with neck, arms and hands relaxed, start to imagine that you are made of water: you are relaxed, but can also begin to feel the liquid rush of blood to the head. The sensation emulates the phlegmatic personality, making you feel like you are passively flowing from one thought or action to the next.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{712} Elemental poses from Glynn McDonald, Movement Workshop, Globe Education (February 2012).
  \item \textsuperscript{713} Photographs copyright of the author.
\end{itemize}
Fire Pose (Choleric, Mars) – for fire pose, stand up straight with feet together, placing your palms together above your head, and press your hands and your legs together with some force, feeling the nerves tingling with energy. The pose is energised, hard work, and involves expending a lot of effort. This is for the choleric personality: full of passion, anger, energy.

Air Pose (Sanguine, Jupiter) – after fire pose, turn your hands so that palms face away from each other, take a deep breath in, breathe out a sigh of relief and float your arms gently downwards, back to your sides. Repeat. Embrace the light and airy sensation: corresponding to the carefree sanguine disposition.
Exploring humoural approaches:

Instructions:
Assume the appropriate pose (for example, Earth/Melancholy Pose for Hamlet), and hold the posture until you feel that you have fully absorbed the quality of the pose and can maintain its energy. Release the pose and go straight into the speech, continuing to feel the quality of the element and humour and channel this energy into your delivery.

Try another speech and humoural pose, noting the differences in energy, tone and character.
Next, you can try combining humoural qualities or moving between them.

Speech/Character examples (as used in the original workshop):

Hamlet: ‘Oh that this too too solid Flesh, would melt…’

Melancholy, Earth, Saturn, Black Bile

Falstaff: ‘Marry then, sweet Wagge…’

Phlegmatic, Water, Moon, Phlegm

Hotspur: ‘Nay then I cannot blame his Cousin King’

Choleric, Fire, Mars, Yellow Bile

714 The Tragedie of Hamlet, ll. 313-43.


716 The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, ll. 481-510.
Exercise Feedback

That was really interesting, it gives you a power to start off with. I thought it might end up being on one note, but it didn’t, it just coloured where it was coming from […] it was energising.

Rachel

I did find because I didn’t know [the Hotspur speech] very well I was relying more on that same feeling [of the pose] and it did become a bit more on one note, but with the one I knew better [the Hamlet speech] it really did just give that push and gave an interesting starting point […] it’s a really nice tool to give it an energy.

Tom

The fact the poses gives you that sensation completely helped me to stay with that physical feeling and create a organic response.

Jenna

It really helped to have a catalyst to start a monologue, a place from which to depart. Sometimes it was difficult to sustain that feeling until the end of the monologue and it might seem on one note, but these are aspects I could develop in my own time I think.

Alex

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717 The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, ll. 296-328.
Appendix 6

Medieval May Festival, Brockhampton Estate:

General Information

List of Entertainments:

Performances of Tudor interlude *Fulgens and Lucre* by Henry Medwall, in the banqueting hall. The script was edited (by myself) to reduce the length, but the original language (spoken with modern pronunciation) was retained.

Performances of *Robin Hood and the Friar* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*, and *Robyn Hod and the Shryff off Notyngham*, based on original fifteenth- and sixteenth-century material, reconstructed in dramatic form by Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren.

St George and the Dragon: a play with pyrotechnics (a fire-breathing dragon puppet) followed by a procession. Both special effects (including fire) as well as lively processional celebrations were popular elements of St George’s Day celebrations in the medieval period. Philip Butterworth describes the ceremonies at Norwich, a town which had a dedicated Guild of Saint George and a skirted processional dragon

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that later became known as ‘Snap Snap’;\textsuperscript{719}

the procession was led by a man who carried a gilded wooden sword with a handle in the shape of a dragon’s head. He was immediately followed by priests, the City Waits, cantors from the cathedral, city and guild officials. George, on horseback and wearing a full coat of armour, was the centrepiece of the procession. […] the cavorting dragon was permitted to weave in and out of the procession, alternately creating fear and amusement.\textsuperscript{720}

Our fire-breathing dragon - a large puppet operated by an actor - similarly cavorted with the audience. We also used music and singing in our procession. For the play performance, we had no original material to work with like we did for our Robin Hood performances, since none from this period survives. Instead, I adapted our script from a seventeenth-century St George poem found in \textit{A Book of Roxburghe Ballads}, collected by Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1661–1724), and by John Ker, 3rd Duke of Roxburghe, and later collated by John Payne Collier.\textsuperscript{721}

Songs: including the Anonymous thirteenth-century song \textit{Miri It IsWhile Sumer Ilast}, and the oldest-known canon, attributed to John of Fornsete (? - 1239), \textit{Sumer Is Icumen In}. We also used some songs from John Fleagle’s 2004 album, \textit{World’s Bliss - Medieval Songs Of Love And Death}, which included Fleagle’s interpretations of various medieval ballads and folk songs such as \textit{Twa Corbies} and \textit{Nottamun Town}.\textsuperscript{722}

\textsuperscript{719} For more on the design and functions of this performing dragon, see Butterworth, ‘Late Medieval Performing Dragons’, p. 325. For more on its history, see also ‘Snap the Norwich Snapdragon’, available at <http://www.dragonglow.co.uk/snap.htm> [accessed 20 July 2017].

\textsuperscript{720} Butterworth, ‘Late Medieval Performing Dragons’, pp. 325-7.


Sword-fighting Tournament: with characters from Arthurian Legend. Games and tournaments were popular activities in traditional medieval May-time festivities.

Storytelling: Chaucerian stories told by actors around the grounds.

Dances: such as May-pole dancing, the Bromley Horn Dance - a medieval English folk dance, the Branle - a twelfth-century French chain dance adopted later by the English elite, and Sellinger’s Round - which despite not being written down until around 1670 is fairly typical of English country dancing from an earlier period.

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723 The first recorded reference to the horn dance is found in Robert Plot’s *Natural History of Staffordshire* (Oxford, 1686), but it seems likely that the dance predates this period. See Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: a History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

724 The steps for Sellinger’s Round are found in John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (London: Thomas Harper, 1651), with a variation on music by William Byrd (1609).
Appendix 7

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 2: Exploring Non-Linear Time

Text-based task

Instructions:
Using Michel Serres’ text (below) as a starting point, devise a performance of between two and five minutes, exploring non-linear, non-chronological time.
(Note: another text which explores time as multiplicitous and non-linear could be substituted for the Serres piece.)

Time (an extract from Serres’ book Genesis) \(^{725}\)

Time is a tatter and it is sporadic. It solidifies like a crystal or vanishes like a vapor. It is an unintegrable multiplicity, endowed, here and there, with unities, there and here deprived of snapshot moments. It is not a flux that can be differentiated into tiny little fluxions, although it can become one and then become fringed in differentials, it is, for the most part, a sumless aggregate, a bundle of dispersed fluctuations. It is not a set, although it can become one, it goes in bursts.

Narrative-based task

Instructions:

Working with a favourite story or monologue, take your protagonist and put them in a scenario where they experience non-linear time (this could be in a flashback, a thematic link, a vision of the future, and so on).

Find a way to restructure the narrative in a non-linear way that opens up new meaning or ideas within the original text/story.

Rehearse this and share it with the group, discussing the process and result, and analysing what this new attitude to time revealed or changed.

**Devising challenge**

Instructions:

Create a short performance of around 10 minutes with the aim of spanning as much of human history as you can. Focus on non-linear or cyclical time, and on drawing thematic links across time and geography. Be as ambitious as possible, and do not limit yourself with concerns about chronology or realistic timeframes.

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Note: in our workshop we began this exercise by reflecting on and discussing the huge span of time/human history in the medieval pageant plays, using the York play titles as an example. We also discussed the use of prophecy and fulfilment and the idea of the eternal.
Appendix 8

From *Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,*

**Workshop 3: Exploring Space (Environment)**

1. ‘The Bubble’: awareness exercise
   (As detailed in Appendix 1, but focusing this time only on the space that the participants are working in.)

2. **Shoal of Fish: group exploratory activity**
   Instructions:
   As a group, huddled closely together, start to explore the space. Like a shoal of fish, you remain close and in sync, responsive to each other’s movements, constantly moving together like one organism.

3. **Individual Sensory Exploration**
   Instructions:
   Moving individually around the space, start to explore again, this time focused entirely on your environment.
   Explore the perimeters, the size of the space.
   Explore its shapes.
   Explore levels.
   Textures.
   Smells.
   Explore light in the space.
   Explore darkness, shadows.
   Explore sounds: timbre, echo.
   Where feels safe in this space?
   Where dangerous?
   Where feels sacred?
   Where profane?
   Where feels powerful?
   Where feels vulnerable?
4. **Relational Space Activity**

Rest in the space. Begin to notice the group, the people around you.

As a group, create a dangerous space for (select individual participant).

Create a sacred space for . . . .

A safe space for . . . .

(And so on.)

Notice how space is read in relation to others, how space creates/affects relationships and vice versa.
Appendix 9

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,
Workshop 3: Exploring Space (Topography)

This exercise explores how we read, interpret and define bodies in space.\textsuperscript{727}

Instructions:
Move in the space.
Now you can only move forward and back. No turning, no looking around.
Now you can only move side-to-side.
Now you can move both side-to-side and forward-and-back.
Now you can only use diagonals.
Now, diagonals and side-to-side and forward-and-back. As if on a grid.

Next, travel in circles, spirals, and rounded patterns.
Imagine you have a tail of energy flowing behind you.
Now imagine you are leaving golden footprints wherever you travel.
Use levels in your travel, highs and lows.
Paint the room with your traveling energy.

Return to moving on the grid.
Begin to explore different topographies….
Try walking with your head facing the ground.
Try with your head up and out.
Try moving freely and unconstrained.
Try being more constricted as you travel.

\textsuperscript{727} This exercise, and the use of the term ‘topography’ in relation to performance space, has been influenced by the Viewpoints technique, as described by Bogart and Landau in The Viewpoints Book.
Try other types of topographies: perhaps slumped, perhaps with swagger, perhaps sensual…. 

Every time you change angle on the grid, try another topography.

Now, walk neutrally on the grid, with your own topography.
I am going to give you some given circumstances: change your topography accordingly. But stay on the grid, just change how you move along it.

1. You are outside. It is sunny. There is a pleasant breeze.
2. It’s swelteringly hot.
3. Now there are clouds overhead. A thunderstorm is brewing.
4. The storm hits. The rain is so heavy you are soaked through in seconds, through to your skin.
5. The rain is hot. Really hot. And sticky. It’s warm treacle!
6. You are covered in treacle and flies are buzzing around you. And wasps, lots of wasps…

(and so on)

The idea of the exercise: to demonstrate how the body onstage, even without set and technical aspects, reflects the given circumstances of the imagined space, not just internal given circumstances.
Appendix 10

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 4: Body-as-Text

Linklater’s Vowel Tree \(^{728}\)

\(^{728}\) Linklater, p. 25.
Appendix 11

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 4: Body-as-Text

Un-intellectualising exercises
These exercises provide a simple way to distract and help an actor move away from over-intellectualisation of any speech, and start to psychophysically embody it instead.

Instructions:

Embodied speaking
One actor recites their speech, while the rest of the group (facing away) physically embody the timbre, volume, and tone of the speech. The speaking actor can experiment with this control and dynamic, themselves reacting to the stimulus of seeing their speech pattern physically embodied before their eyes.

Herding Sheep
The actor reciting their speech ‘herds’ the rest of the group like sheep around the room as they speak. Encourage them to stay active, chasing the sheep down and trying to separate one from the group.

Out of Breath
The actor runs around the room until slightly out of breath before stopping to launch into their monologue. The increased effort should bring more energy and dynamism to the speech.

Push/Pull

729 From an exercise by voice coach Martin McKellan at Shakespeare’s Globe Education’s intensive course, 2012.
The speaking actor needs a partner in this exercise. The partner will create some sort of resistance (such as: pushing against the actor as they try to cross the stage; sitting opposite them on the floor and trying to pull them in an opposite direction by clasping arms; pushing them into a chair while the actor tries to stand) while the actor tries to deliver their speech.

Physical memory exercises
These exercises, some of which are based on Ostrenko’s work with Meyerhold’s Biomechanics, some of which are influenced by Michel Chekhov’s Psychological Gesture, are aimed at creating a sense of physical memory which then supports and underlies a more dynamic delivery of a line or speech.

Instructions:

**Come With Me / Go Away**

Walk around the space.
When you meet someone, take their hand and say ‘come with me’ and lead them a little distance before letting them go. If led, follow the impulse.

Now, when you meet someone, give them a gentle push on the shoulder and say ‘go away’. If pushed, follow the impulse.

**Text Work: Gesture**

In partners, choose a text and perform it to each other.

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730 From an Ostrenko exercise.
Take a short section each.

In your section, choose dynamic words and create a physical gesture for each word. For example, ‘strong’ might be flexing your arm, ‘kill’ might be thrusting an imagined dagger, ‘fall’ could be stumbling forward.

Practice these until you are happy with them.

Share your created gestures with your partner, repeating each gesture back to each other until you have learned them all.

Swap sections. Create some additional gestures for words that have not yet been explored in your partner’s section.

Again, share your gestures with each other. Practice them together.

Repeat these steps if there are more sections to the speech to explore through gesture. Make sure you each have a turn to invent some gestures for every section of the speech.

Next, each perform the speech for each other with the gestures. Discuss the effect on your feeling as a performer. If there are any you wish to hone or change to make them more effective, you can do so.

Practice the speech a few times, continuing to commit to the expressive gestures.

Once they are in your muscle memory, remove the gestures and perform the speech.

Discuss the differences between performing/watching this speech at the start and the end of this exercise, and what was discovered through gesture and physical memory, even when the gestures were dropped.
Appendix 12

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 5: Archetypes

The archetype poses can be used in a variety of ways to access character types and character changes. Shifts within a speech or in a character’s journey can be highlighted by noting a shift in role, e.g. from Teacher, to Caregiver/Father, to Ruler (Henry IV) or from Lover to Warrior (Othello). The poses can also be used as a general springboard to find a character before honing further detail, such as through elements, the seven deadly sins activity (see below) or another technique such as Laban’s Efforts. It is important to practice the archetypal pose until its *qualia* is fully absorbed and felt in the body. The posture/gesture can then be physically dropped with the muscle memory being maintained, thus effecting the delivery of the performance.\(^{731}\)

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\(^{731}\) Poses demonstrated here by workshop participants Jenna Fincken and Alex Prescott. Photographs copyright of the author. The Lover, Warrior, Ruler, and Magician poses are from workshops with movement teacher Glynn McDonald at Shakespeare’s Globe, 2011 and 2012. The other 8 poses were invented by myself in collaboration with workshop participants Fincken, Prescott, Hudson, Cuthbertson, Littlewood, Elizabeth and Courting. I have since trialled them in a workshop in Bali, Indonesia with a group of artists from Britain and America, and in a workshop in Devon, England solidifying some of my thesis ideas with a group of local actors.
The Magician (Sorcerer)
In this dynamic pose, the performer begins standing up and whirs his head downwards and around while turning. This action is repeated a few times, creating a feeling of whirling momentum and inducing dizziness.

The Lover
The Lover pose begins by moving around the space with heart protected (left-hand image). When meeting another person, the performer opens her arms to embrace them (right-hand image). After the embrace, she returns to the protective stance and moves on.

The Innocent
The Innocent traverses the space with eyes upraised, his arms and heart centre open and exposed.

The Explorer
The Explorer’s energy is forward, with her gaze following the direction of her pointing hand, which is constantly changing direction, finding something new.
The Everyman
The Everyman moves in the space with this thoughtful attitude. When meeting another person, she puts a friendly hand on their shoulder with a smile.

The Rebel
The Rebel moves in the space with hands constantly flexing: tensing into fists and untensing again into an open palm. He keeps his chin low, his gaze level.

The Inventor
The Inventor’s eyes are upon the creation he works on in his hands. He moves in the space transfixed by what he is making.

The Trickster
The Trickster (also known as Jester, and can be related to the Vice) moves with knees bent, keeping a low stance, and constantly moving her hands.

The Teacher
The Teacher (or Sage) moves thoughtfully around the space with one hand upraised (left hand image). When meeting another person, he extends his other hand as if to offer wisdom.
Feedback

Using an extreme physical pose immediately forces you into a different headspace and each one has a very distinctive attitude, which I found fascinating. The Archetypes are great stepping stones into characters as they directly give you a sense of who someone is in each given moment. Even trying out archetypes that I knew wouldn’t fit helped me to discover something new about a character.

Rachel

Most useful for me was probably the interchangeable use of the archetypal poses within the classical text, York's final speech. It prompted a couple of interesting discoveries, such as that (for me) he was at his 'kingliest' towards the end of the speech, even though he is about to be humiliatingly decapitated, giving him some final dignity and perhaps even the moral high-ground.

Tom

Archetypes allow both actor and audience to have an instant hook into characters, so they have an immediate basis of assumed knowledge.

Alex
It felt liberating to think a little less and ‘do’ more.

Adam

My favourite exercise was looking at the Vice character traits and discovering natural nuances and layers in Gloucester and Iago’s speeches, which otherwise would have taken longer to find and probably not have come as naturally. They were traits I usually find hard to play but fitted perfectly so I felt at ease portraying them.

Rachel

I am definitely intending on using the approaches we used towards Gloucester and Iago in my own work; approaching them firstly from a psychological/‘what motivates them’ angle and then from a more archetypal/morality play/performance based angle, and comparing and contrasting the two, with a view to combining them to create both an entertaining but emotionally engaged performance.

Alex
Appendix 13

From Experiments in Historically-Responsive Theatre Practice,

Workshop 5: Seven Deadly Sins

Instructions:

Move in the space freely. (Make sure you have warmed up first.)
As each sin is called out, try to express the physical embodiment of
that sin through your movement: your gait, pace, rhythm, centre of
energy, and posture. Do not express them through action (such as
shouting when you are being Wrath, or flirting when you are Lust, or
eating when you are Gluttony), but rather emanate the energy and
demeanour of the particular sin in the quality of your movement.

List of sins:

Gluttony
Greed
Wrath
Envy
Lust
Pride
Sloth

Next, try combining two different sins to create a new character (try
several different combinations).

After exploring combinations of sins, try combining an archetype
with a sin, such as Hero/Pride, Magician/Envy, Ruler/Sloth,
Explorer/Greed, and so on.

Finally, choose a piece of text to explore using the seven deadly sins
and archetypes.
Appendix 14
From *Experiments II: Ritual Postures*

This activity explores ritual postures as an ensemble-focusing activity, as a meditational activity (used to access a heightened state of consciousness) or as a tool to access characters’ emotional states.

**Ensemble Focus**

Instructions:

Start in a circle with eyes closed. Centre your breathing. As an ensemble, start to hum together. Beginning with a neutral humming sound, gradually move through the following moods: blessing; receiving; contemplating; repenting. Do not rush, but rather listen to the people around you, and let each change happen organically. Finally, return to neutral, and then to just breath.

Next, use the postures (see photos, below) as you work through each mood together with open eyes, humming along with enacting each posture. Again, do not rush, but seek a sense of unspoken connection between yourself and the group, finding the right moment to move into the next posture/mood naturally.

As a final step, return to humming with eyes closed and moving through the full ritual, finding each mood as you go. Allow plenty of time for this exercise and feel free to repeat steps as necessary, until the group feels calm, in sync and focused.
**As a Meditation**

Instructions:
In your own space, centre your breathing and, if you like, close your eyes.

Work through each of the postures in order, at your own pace. This should be done to music; preferably something with a steady rhythm, suitable for meditation. Try to channel the energy and embody the verb of each posture.

When you have finished, sit comfortably until the group has finished or the music stops.

You may wish to repeat the cycle more than once.

**Accessing Character States**

Instructions:
Read through your chosen text and choose an appropriate ritual posture.

Read the speech in this posture.

Practise the posture again until you feel you have absorbed its quality or energy.

Read the speech, trying to retain the quality of the pose without physically maintaining it.

You may like to try a different posture next, repeating the same steps above, to see what different qualities emerge.
You can also try combining postures, or moving from one to another during the speech to explore and heighten shifts and changes.

Remember to practise the speech with each posture, and to practise the postures at length without speaking, before finally dropping the pose while maintaining some of the quality or energy in your physical memory.732

732 Photographs copyright of the author.
Some examples of speeches from Shakespeare:

Richard II’s ‘Let’s talke of Graves’ speech: Repenting, or Contemplating

Lady Macbeth’s ‘Come you Spirits’ speech: Receiving/Inviting/Conjuring

Desdemona’s ‘What shall I do to win my Lord againe?’ speech: Contemplating, or Repenting

Polonius’ advice to Laertes: Blessing

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733 The life and death of Richard the Second, ll. 1504-37.

734 The Tragedie of Macbeth, ll. 391-405.

735 We began with using the verb ‘Receiving’ to refer to this posture, and then tried ‘Conjuring’ as a more active and dynamic alternative. Both worked well, in slightly different ways. One of the participants also suggested ‘Inviting’ as another possible alternative, saying that this felt like the right balance of inward energy and active engagement, based on her Catholic background. Actors can experiment with the words used to describe these postures, as long as the poses and the feelings they induce are the primary focus, since intellectual engagement is secondary to the somatic response.

736 Shakespeare, The Tragedie of Othello, the Moore of Venice, pp. 818-46 (ll. 2862-2878).

737 The Tragedie of Hamlet, ll. 520-46.

738 This ritual posture could also be combined with the Teacher archetype in this speech.
Appendix 15

From Experiments II: Historically-Responsive Approaches, Combining Exercises

This activity is designed to come after initial exploration of and training in the above techniques. It combines the various psychophysical exercises to explore scenes and characters in more depth.

Instructions:

This exercise combines the tools we have used previously to staging a scene.

In your groups, read through the scene.

Try each of the techniques (listed below) one by one, giving yourselves ample time for psychophysical exploration of each, before moving on to the next.

After you have explored each technique individually, try to combine the most useful things that you have discovered.

Continue to utilise the poses and gestures and practice the scene on its feet.

Finally, drop the gestures/poses while maintaining the energies and emotional qualities you have found. Perform the scene.

List of techniques:

Planes of existence:
the imaginative visualisation of Heaven above, Hell below, and of oneself being pulled between these extreme states or modes of being (see Appendix 2 and 4)

Passion Centres:
visualising the placement of feelings and emotions in the body (such as ambition in the belly or compassion in the heart) and allowing these centres to ‘lead’ and form one’s centre of energy when appropriate (see Appendix 3 and 4)

Elements (the Four Humours):
utilising postures to absorb the qualia or particular quality of a humoural imbalance (represented by an element such as Fire for Choler) and give this certain energy to a speech or line (see Appendix 5)
Archetypes:
utilising postures and gestures to access the character or quality of an archetype such as Hero, Lover, Teacher, or Magician (see Appendix 12)

Sins:
embodying the qualities of a particular choice from the traditional Seven Deadly Sins as a means to find new motivation, direction and energy for the character (see Appendix 13)

Ritual Postures:
utilising particular postures from medieval ritual tradition to access active emotional states and modes of being (see Appendix 14)

The texts used in the Experiments II workshop are shown below. In footnotes are general notes regarding historically-responsive elements in the scenes. Next to the text are suggestions for elements, ritual postures, archetypes, sins, and energy/passion-centres which the actor might use in rehearsal, as discovered and experimented-with in our workshop.

Key:

PC = Passion-centre
E = Element
A = Archetype
S = Sin
RP = Ritual Posture
P = Planes (of existence)

Scene for Group 1: the Father and the Son (ll. 1135-262)

_Alarum. Enter King Henry alone._

_Hen._ This battell fares like to the mornings Warre, \(^{739}\) A = Everyman, RP = Contemplating

When dying clouds contend, with growing light,

What time the Shepheard blowing of his nailes,

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\(^{739}\) The king’s speech likens human events to nature, linking the microcosm and the macrocosm, giving the events epic proportion.
Can neither call it perfect day, nor night.
Now swayes it this way, like a Mighty Sea,
Forc'd by the Tide, to combat with the Winde:
Now swayes it that way, like the selfe-same Sea,
Forc'd to retyre by furie of the Winde.
Sometime, the Flood prevails; and than the Winde:
Now, one the better: then, another best;
Both tugging to be Victors, brest to brest:
Yet neither Conqueror, nor Conquered.
So is the equall poise of this fell Warre.
Heere on this Mole-hill will I sit me downe,
To whom God will, there be the Victorie:
For Margaret my Queene, and Clifford too
Have chid me from the Battell: Swearing both,
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
Would I were dead, if Gods good will were so;
For what is in this world, but Greefe and Woe.
Oh God! me thinkes it were a happy life,
To be no better then a homely Swaine,
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out Dialls queintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the Minutes how they runne:
How many makes the Houre full compleate,
How many Houres brings about the Day,
How many Dayes will finish up the Yeare,
How many Yeares, a Mortall man may live.
When this is knowne, then to divide the Times:
So many Houres, must I tend my Flocke;
So many Houres, must I take my Rest:
So many Houres, must I Contemplate:
So many Houres, must I Sport my selfe:
So many Dayes, my Ewes haue bene with yong:
So many weekes, ere the poore Fooles will Eane:
So many yeares, ere I shall sheere the Fleece:
So Minutes, Houres, Dayes, Monthes, and Yeares,
Past ouer to the end they were created,
Would bring white haires, unto a Quiet grave.
Ah! what a life were this? How sweet? how lovely?
Gives not the Hawthorne bush a sweeter shade
To Shepheards, looking on their silly Sheepe,
Then doth a rich Imbroider’d Canopy
To Kings, that feare their Subjects treacherie?
Oh yes, it doth; a thousand fold it doth.
And to conclude, the Shepherds homely Curds,
His cold thinne drinke out of his Leather Bottle,
His wonted sleepe, under a fresh trees shade,
All which secure, and sweetly he enjoyes,
Is farre beyond a Princes Delicates:

S = Sloth, E = Earth
A = Innocent
S = Envy
A = Ruler
E = Earth
A = Everyman
S = Envy

King Henry relates himself through imagery to the figure of Christ, talking about being a shepherd and looking after his flock: a standard metaphor for Jesus. In the medieval view, a ruler should indeed be both shepherd and king, both humble and elevated, as is Christ. This can be explored in practice through the archetypes of Everyman and/or Innocent and Ruler.

The idea of kingship as being a thing bigger than the self is a very medieval idea. The idea of the universal weight of the crown and the larger-than-life element of kingship is something that a modern actor may have difficulty accessing. Through a physical exercise, however, this becomes possible: as described in Chapter 4, physically embodying the archetype of king through a simple but strong gesture can infuse the body and mind of an actor with a particular energy or essence that is very difficult to access via the intellect.
His Viands sparkling in a Golden Cup,                        A = Ruler
His bodie couched in a curious bed,                      E = Earth
When Care, Mistrust, and Treason waits on him.

Alarum. Enter a Sonne that hath kill’d his Father, at one doore: and a Father that hath kill’d his Sonne at another doore.742

Son. Ill blowes the winde that profits no body,       E = Air
This man whom hand to hand I slew in fight,              A = Warrior, Rebel
May be possessed with some store of Crownes,                S = Greed, PC = Pelvis
And I that (haply) take them from him now,                  A = Trickster
May yet (ere night) yeeld both my Life and them         RP = Contemplating
To some man else, as this dead man doth me.
Who’s this? Oh God! It is my Fathers face,               PC = Heart, Stomach
Whom in this Conflict, I (unwares) have kill’d:
Oh heavy times! begetting such Events.                   E = Earth
From London, by the King was I prest forth,               RP = Contemplating
My Father being the Earle of Warwicke’s man,
Came on the part of Yorke, prest by his Master:
And I, who at his hands receiv’d my life,
Have by my hands, of Life bereaved him.
Pardon me God, I knew not what I did:                    RP = Repenting, P = Up/Heaven
And pardon Father, for I knew not thee.                   PC = Heart

742 We are given no background or build up of psychology for the characters of the father or the son; they have no names, and no specificity. As types, they of course need no introduction, but this does not mean they are not relatable. How else can they be approached but via archetype? To approach via emotion memory is arguably too specific, and even (as Michael Chekhov has warned) potentially dangerous for accessing such extreme emotion and grief. To approach via psychological analysis involves inventing a background which simply is not there in Shakespeare’s text and thus, as many RSC practitioners would argue, unnecessary and unhelpful. To approach via archetype, through the psychophysical, however, is safer, more effective, and more direct (as is demonstrated in Chapter 4 with regard to archetype exercises).
My T eares shall wipe away these bloody markes:  
E = Water, Earth
And no more words, till they have flow’d their fill.

King. O pitteous spectacle! O bloody Times!  
E = Earth, P = Down/  
Hell
While Lyons Warre, and battaile for their Dennes,  
RP = Contemplating
Poore harmlesse Lambes abide their enmity.  
PC = Heart, Head
Weepe wretched man: Ile ayde thee Teare for Teare,  
E = Water
And let our hearts and eyes, like Ciuill Warre,
Be blinde with teares, and break ore-charg’d with grief  
PC = Heart

Enter Father, bearing of his Sonne.  

Fa. Thou that so stoutly hath resisted me,  
S = Greed, E = Fire
Giue me thy Gold, if thou hast any Gold:
For I have bought it with an hundred blowes.  
A = Warrior, S = Pride
But let me see: Is this our Foe-mans face?
Ah, no, no, no, it is mine onely Sonne.  
PC, Stomach, Heart
Ah Boy, if any life be left in thee,  
A = Caregiver
Throw up thine eye: see, see, what showres arise,  
E = Water
Blowne with the windie Tempest of my heart,
Upon thy wounds, that killes mine Eye, and Heart.
O pitty God, this miserable Age!  
P = move from Up/Heaven  
to Down/Hell
What Stragems? how fell? how Butcherly?  
S = Wrath
Erroneous, mutinous, and unnaturall,
This deadly quarrell daily doth beget?
O Boy! thy Father gave thee life too soone,

743 There is a strange and uncanny mirror-effect created through the symmetry of the  
father who killed his son, and son who killed his father duo. This is non-naturalistic, yet it  
speaks to us on some deep level, evoking pathos. The human mind engages with patterns,  
they are powerful tools, which Shakespeare here utilises to great effect, with no notion of  
problems with the ‘realism’ of the scene.
And hath bereft thee of thy life too late.  

King. Wo aboue wo: greefe, more the common greefe  

O that my death would stay these ruthfull deeds:  

O pitty, pitty, gentle heaven pitty:  

The Red Rose and the White are on his face,  

The fatall Colours of our striving Houses:  

The one, his purple Blood right well resembles,  

The other his pale Cheekes (me thinkes) presenteth:  

Wither one Rose, and let the other flourish:  

If you contend, a thousand lives must wither.  

Son. How will my Mother, for a Fathers death  

Take on with me, and ne’re be satisfi’d?  

Fa. How will my Wife, for slaughter of my Sonne,  

Shed seas of Tearus, and ne’re be satisfi’d?  

King. How will the Country, for these woful chances,  

Mis-thinke the King, and not be satisfied?  

Son. Was ever sonne, so rew’d a Fathers death?  

Fath. Was ever Father so bemoan’d his Sonne?  

Hen. Was ever King so greev’d for Subjects woe?  

Much is your sorrow; Mine, ten times so much.  

Son. Ile beare thee hence, where I may weepe my fill.  

Fath. These armes of mine shall be thy winding sheet:  

My heart (sweet Boy) shall be thy Sepulcher,  

For from my heart, thine Image ne’re shall go.  

My sighing brest, shall be thy Funerall bell;  

And so obsequious will thy Father be,  

Men for the losse of thee, having no more,  

As Priam was for all his Valiant Sonnes,
Ile beare thee hence, and let them fight that will,  
For I have murthered where I should not kill. Exit  
*Hen.* Sad-hearted-men, much overgone with Care;  
Heere sits a King, more woffull then you are.  

*ALARUMS. EXCURSIONS.*

**Scene for Group 2: York’s Death (ll. 531-650)**

*Queene.* Braue Warriors, *Clifford* and *Northumberland*,  
Come make him stand upon this Mole-hill here, That rauht at Mountaines with out-stretched Armes,  
Yet parted but the shadow with his Hand.  
What, was it you that would be Englands King?  
Was’t you that revell’d in our Parliament,  
And made a Preachment of your high Descent?  
Where are your Messe of Sonnes, to back you now?  
The wanton Edward, and the lustie George?  
And where’s that valiant Crook-back Prodigie.  
Dickie, your Boy, that with his grumbling voyce  
Was wont to cheare his Dad in Mutinies?  
Or with the rest, where is your Darling, Rutland?  

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744 The relating of the king to the common people again shows the way in which the same themes of grief and regret are reflected across levels of society. Henry sees the breakdown of the country under his rule and grieves for it, and the effects of war are depicted as unnatural, as the decisions of those involved result in unnatural horrors. Henry takes on the sorrow of his people and bears this as well as his own: again we see the role of the king as modelled on the perfect example of Christ. For an actor playing Henry, the awareness of this role model seems useful: it relates the specific figure to something larger than himself; the archetype of the humble king who grieves for his people.

745 This is a dramatic scene played for onlookers; a public death/execution, not private. This is typically medieval in fashion: a display of power; an enacting of a ritual.
Looke Yorke, I stayn’d this Napkin with the blood A = Trickster, P = Down/Hell
That valiant Clifford, with his Rapiers point,
Made issue from the Bosome of the Boy:
And if thine eyes can water for his death,
I give thee this to drie thy Cheekes withall.
Alas poore Yorke, but that I hate thee deadly, E = Air
I should lament thy miserable state.
I prythee grieve, to make me merry, Yorke. RP = Receiving/Conjuring
What, hath thy fierie heart so parcht thine entrayles,
That not a Teare can fall, for Rutlands death?
Why art thou patient, man? thou should’st be mad: E = Fire
And I, to make thee mad, doe mock thee thus. A = Magician
Stampe, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance.
Thou would’st be fee’d, I see, to make me sport:
Yorke cannot speake, unlesse he weare a Crowne. A = Trickster
A Crowne for Yorke; and Lords, bow lowe to him:
Hold you his hands, whilst I doe set it on.746
I marry Sir, now lookes he like a King:
I, this is he that tooke King Henries Chaire,
And this is he was his adopted Heire.
But how is it, that great Plantagenet
Is crown’d so soone, and broke his solemne Oath?
As I bethinke me, you should not be King, A = Teacher
Till our King Henry had shooke hands with Death.

746 The ritual symbolism of the paper crown, bloody handkerchief, the smearing of York with blood all have echoes of a sacrificial rite. There are also many Christ-like echoes: the crown of paper is reminiscent of Christ’s crown of thorns, and the jeering torments of York’s captors is similar to that of the Roman soldiers over Christ’s misfortune. There is also the trope of the death of an innocent son.
And will you pale your head in *Henries Glory*,    S = Wrath

And rob his Temples of the Diademe,

Now in his Life, against your holy Oath?

Oh 'tis a fault too too unpardonable.

Off with the Crowne; and with the Crowne, his Head,    A = Ruler

And whilst we breathe, take time to doe him dead.

*Clifford.* That is my Office, for my Fathers sake.    A = Warrior

*Queene.* Nay stay, let’s heare the Orizons hee makes.

*Yorke.* Shee-Wolfe of France,    A = Rebel, S = Wrath

But worse then Wolves of France,

Whose Tongue more poysons then the Adders Tooth:

How ill-beseeming is it in thy Sex,

To triumph like an Amazonian Trull,

Upon their Woes, whom Fortune captivates?747

But that thy Face is Vizard-like, unchanging,

Made impudent with use of evill deeds.

I would assay, proud Queene, to make thee blush.

_________________________

747 There are various clues here for the playing of Margaret. She is in many ways a female Warrior archetype: she is called Amazonian by York, an archetype of female power. She is also described as possessing a tiger’s heart wrapped in a woman’s hide, suggesting that she has feminine wiles but is evil beneath. The Magician (Sorceress or Witch) archetype may be useful, since Margaret is presented as a manipulative sorceress who can charm others. York also calls her a ‘Shee-Wolfe’ with a poison tongue worse than the adder. This animal imagery has specific symbolism. The snake, for example, is a symbol of sin and temptation, as in the Garden of Eden. There is an association here with the temptation of Eve as well as of the folly of Eve (who was largely blamed for the Fall in medieval tradition). Earlier in the play York tells his men to run like ‘Lambes pursu’d by hunger-starved Wolves’ (II. 462), suggesting that the innocent and gentle are pursued by the evil and dangerous.
To tell thee whence thou cam’st, of whom deriv’d, 
Were shame enough, to shame thee,
Wert thou not shamelesse.
Thy Father beares the type of King of Naples,
Of both the Sicils, and Jerusalem,
Yet not so wealthie as an English Yeoman.
Hath that poore Monarch taught thee to insult?
It needes not, nor it bootes thee not, proud Queene,
Unlesse the Adage must be verify’d,
That Beggars mounted, runne their Horse to death.
'Tis Beautie that doth oft make Women proud,
But God he knowes, thy share thereof is small.
'Tis Vertue, that doth make them most admir’d,
The contrary, doth make thee wondred at.
'Tis Gouernment that makes them seeme Diuine,
The want thereof, makes thee abhominable.
Thou art as opposite to every good,
As the Antipodes are unto us,
Or as the South to the Septentrion.
Oh Tygres Heart, wrapt in a Womans Hide,
How could’st thou drayne the Life-blood of the Child,
To bid the Father wipe his eyes withall,
And yet be seene to beare a Womans face?
Women are soft, milde, pittifull, and flexible;
Thou, sterne, obdurate, flintie, rough, remorselesse.
Bidst thou me rage? why now thou hast thy wish.
Would’st haue me weepe? why now thou hast thy will.
For raging Wind blowes up incessant showers,
And when the Rage allayes, the Raine begins.

A = Teacher, PC = Head
S = Pride
A = Trickster
P = Up/Heaven
P = Down/Hell
P = Up/Heaven
P = Down/Hell
P = Up/Heaven
P = Down/Hell
E = Earth, Fire
PC = Heart
A = Caregiver
P = Up/Heaven
P = Down/Hell
S = Wrath
E = Water, Earth
PC = Stomach
S = Wrath, E = Water
These Teares are my sweet Rutlands Obsequies,  
And every drop cries vengeance for his death,  
‘Gainst thee fell Clifford, and thee false French-woman.  
Northumb. Beshrew me, but his passions moves me so,

That hardly can I check my eyes from Teares.  
Yorke. That Face of his, The hungry Caniballs would not have toucht,

Would not have stayn’d with blood:

But you are more inhumane, more inexorable,

Oh, tenne times more then Tygers of Hyrcania.

See, ruthlesse Queene, a haplesse Fathers Teares:

This Cloth thou dipd’st in blood of my sweet Boy,

And I with Teares doe wash the blood away.

Keepe thou the Napkin, and goe boast of this,

And if thou tell’st the heavie storie right,

Upon my Soule, the hearers will shed Teares:

Yea, even my Foes will shed fast-falling Teares,

And say, Alas, it was a pittious deed.

There, take the Crowne, and with the Crowne, my Curse,

And in thy need, such comfort come to thee,

748 Northumberland’s moment of sorrow and change of heart echoes that of the Roman soldiers at Christ’s crucifixion, reinforcing the Christ-like imagery of York’s death.
As now I reape at thy too cruell hand.\textsuperscript{749}

Hard-hearted \textit{Clifford}, take me from the World,

My Soule to Heaven, my Blood upon your Heads. \hspace{0.5cm} A = \textit{Rebel}

\textit{Northumb}. Had he been slaughter-man to all my Kinne, \hspace{0.5cm} E = \textit{Earth}

I should not for my Life but weepe with him, \hspace{0.5cm} RP = \textit{Contemplating}

To see how inly Sorrow gripes his Soule.

\textit{Queen}. What, weeping ripe, my Lord \textit{Northumberland}? \hspace{0.5cm} E = \textit{Air}, A = \textit{Warrior}

Thinke but upon the wrong he did us all, \hspace{0.5cm} RP = \textit{Receiving}, S = \textit{Wrath}

And that will quickly drie thy melting Teares.\textsuperscript{750} \hspace{0.5cm} E = \textit{Fire}

\textit{Clifford}. Heere's for my Oath, heere's for my Fathers \hspace{0.5cm} PC = \textit{Head}, \textit{Heart}

Death. \hspace{0.5cm} S = \textit{Wrath}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{749} Moving swiftly from one archetype to another in York’s speech gives depth and an immediate sense of his tormented state. York’s grief is so huge that an actor cannot access this easily using psychological techniques. As stated above, this could potentially be dangerous, and perhaps for many impossible. But through the use of archetypes we can access something larger than ourselves (as Chekhov pointed out). The actor’s performance becomes bigger, larger-than-life, more powerful, and more identifiable through its universality and its emotive power.

\textsuperscript{750} The pursuit of power is integral to Margaret’s character and her strength. This does not mean, however, that in other scenes she is not a sympathetic figure (such as when her own son dies later in the play). The characters in this tradition can go from one extreme to the next, affecting us in different ways without convoluted psychological justifications. Human nature is, of course, very changeable, and therefore, looking for psychological justification in our modern fashion is possible but perhaps not the most productive approach. By playing Margaret here as the Amazon, as the temptress and the bloodthirsty she-wolf, and then, when her son dies, as the grieving mother archetype (the scene draws on the \textit{pietà}: where Mary Mother of God mourns the tragic death of her beloved son Jesus), an actor can access a wider range of emotions and explore the complex facets of her character without needing to delve into intellectual justification. The dramatic duality Shakespeare has created adds complexity to Margaret’s character. Later, she is also the Witch (or Sorceress), pronouncing curses on those who hurt her kin. By playing an archetype she is not reduced, because she is all of these things, and each emerges according to the moment, much like for the character of York.
\end{flushright}
Queene. And heere’s to right our gentle-hearted
King. S = Wrath

Yorke. Open thy Gate of Mercy, gracious God,
RP = Repenting, Receiving
My Soule flyes through these wounds, to seeke out thee.

Queene. Off with his Head, and set it on Yorke Gates, A = Warrior

So Yorke may over-looke the Towne of Yorke. 751 A = Trickster

Flourish. Exit.

751 The use of geographical nomenclature for characters who hold titles demonstrates how rooted that plays and characters are in the feudal traditions of England.
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