SUBWAYS AND SUBTEXTS:

CONNECTING TRAINS OF THOUGHT FOR THE THEATER IN ENGLAND

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In this theatre journal, rather than doing a play-by-play analysis at the time on the trip, I retrospectively move across plays in my discussion of various themes and topics that I saw as points of connection. Therefore, most of the twenty-one productions I saw appear within multiple sections to allow for various links during my casual conversations with myself. As with most journals, these are fragmentary, inelegant and ineloquent reflections rather than fully-worked-out argumentative essays. Nevertheless, I do bring in quotations from the playscripts or background information in relation to both the topics of my critical responses to the plays and my experiences in London, namely: storytelling; intersecting space-time; the narrativization of history; race, nation, roots, gender, sexuality and their representation; cinematic techniques and projection; adaptation and re-writing; re-staging Shakespeare; language and audience interpellation; music and dance; and props and lighting.

so I suppose this trip is a return to The Mother Land. Many describe the town I come from, Victoria (the capital of the province of British Columbia) as a ‘miniature London,’ named after Queen Victoria. Victoria is a tourist, education and government town, with Wax Museums, places for high tea, a world famous flower garden (Butchart Gardens), Shakespeare festivals, double-decker buses, and various echoes of Empire. We even have a pub called the Bengal Lounge that mimics the feel of colonial India, where one can sip cranberry martinis next to a large hyperreal Bengal tiger with Indian sitar music playing the background. My theatre trip in England, howev echoes o(Indian sitar m)Tj12 0 0 12 490.58epas

After my own journey on the plane and through various security gates, when I first emerged from the labyrinthine tunnels of London's underground network at the Russell Square tub stop, I ended up turning left rather than going forward. This minor mistake sent m

ambiance. As Katie reads the book in the schoolroom for a sympathetic janitor who likewise becomes engrossed in Anne Shirley's story, the novel becomes acted out for Katie in her imagination as she reads—made present to the mind and the spectators of the play.

Instead of a Brechtian alienation effect, though, the childlike unreality of the set potentially elicits an imaginative response of identification from the audience akin to Katie's reading and storytelling in relation to Anne Shirley. For instance, the actors move desks and sit upon them for a horse-drawn carriage when Anne first comes to Avonlea in Prince Edward Island and narrates her response to the local trees and scenes of nature. The audience is asked to imagine the scene along with Katie, who stands-in as an embodiment of the spectator-reader upon the stage. As Katie reads the story to the janitor, they both imagine Anne imagining th

split shown by the splitting of the tree and bench, yet the space is both different and the same. The intersection of space-times without contact occurs in the number of plays that we saw in London, though each play uses this device for different connections between the use of space on the stage and various themes running through the productions.

Intersecting zones of Space-Time

In *His Dark Materials*' Land of the Dead, souls from all of the parallel universes come together in one space—a dynamic acted out in a way that uses the space of the audience seats. 'Ghosts' of children from multiple universes talk to actors on the stage as they climb down from parts of the theatre and make their way towards them. In contrast, the structure of the 'conversation' between Will and Lyra in Oxford's Botanical Gardens, only heard in its fullness by the audience, is an overlapping space-time where, poignantly, their two parallel universes do not quite meet. Will and Lyra cross-over into each others' worlds and cannot be together physically at the end of the play because, as Will reminds Lyra of what his father said: "We can only survive in the world we're born in" (II ii). There is thus a tragic unrequited quality to Will and Lyra's burgeoning love and desire, though as the two agree to 'meet' in the gardens every Midsummer Night at midnight, they forge a bond across time and space as the two accept a life philosophy where "you must be where you are" and "where you are is the place that matters most of all" because "it's the only place where you can make. . .where you can build. . .where you can share. . .what you've been looking for all along. . .The Republic of Heaven" (II ii).

This overlapping dialogue between Will and Lyra connects to other intersections of time and space in plays we saw in London, such as *Anne of Green Gables, Grand Hotel, Festen, Sweeney Todd* and *The History Boys*. In *Anne of Green Gables*, the childlike set does not only elicit an imaginative response to the picture-book setting, but the lack of walls or borders in the set generates an overlap of various time-spaces, such as the classroom set, which doubles as both the present moment of Katie's engagement with the story and the schoolroom in Avonlea. At several points, Katie walks around and through the set, unseen by the characters though standing behind the mirror as Anne looks at herself in the Cuthbert home. The Donmar Warehouse's production of *Grand Hotel*, directed by Michael Grandage, stages an even more radical juxtaposition of space-times, as the set is for the most part a bare stage that stands-in for any room in the hotel. The opening scenes establish the narrative threads as characters move upon the stage in various intersections of their rooms and dialogues, which, akin to the Botanical Gardens scenes in *His Dark Materials*, can only be apprehended by the audience. The minimalistic set and its lack of physical walls downplays the solidity and semi-permanence of the hotel's structure in favor of the transitory stories and characters passing through it**.**

The hotel is not a site of permanent residence but a meeting place that brings into relation and throws into fl

order has broken down. Certain men such as the Baron only have a residual social status, exemplified by Kringlein's instant admiration of him, but no place within the capitalist regime of the *nouveau riche*. Paradoxically, he is a thief but no one would suspect him of this due to his status, which they assume comes with money. At the same time, the *nouveau riche* bourgeois classes do not seem to be faring any better. The business tycoon, Herman Preysing (Martyn Ellis) has respect because many see him as wealthy and powerful, but he, too, is scrambling to make merger deals because his company is in jeopardy. He

after the events of the play. The imminent presence of both death and misfortune haunt the celebrations of life in the hotel: *memento mori*. Nevertheless, there is hope in the birth of concierge's child and Flaemmchen, too, is pregnant—a motif that implies a cycle of birth and death, hope and disillusionment that the hotel represents.

The rooms of the inn within the performance of *Festen* at the Lyric Theatre also stage various intersections of space-times. The bed, for instance, rises onto the stage to act as the bed in multiple rooms as various dialogues between characters occur simultaneously on the stage in an overlapping manner that invites comparisons between the narrative threads and thematizes communication and non-communication. While there are no literal walls between each of the character-pairs on the stage, the audience imagines each of their separate time-spaces and walls—both literal and figurative. All across the backdrop of the set, there is a high brick wall, in front of which the action of play occurs. The imposing presence of this rough-hewn brick wall foregrounds both the absence of physical walls around the bed on stage and the figurative psychological blockages within and between characters. Thus, while the staging of the scene removes

not be invited to the birthday party, Michael is highly concerned he will make a bad impression on his father: “I can’t go down to my dad in socks, can I?” (I iii). While he has been officially banned from the festivities, he nevertheless still values family, and he takes offense at Mette’s comment that “it’s your bloody fault we had to come up here to see your stupid family!” Michael asserts, in return, “It’s my dad’s birthday. It’s my father’s birthday! You listen—you don’t tell me anything!” (I iii). At the same time, Michael does not hear his wife’s pleas that she is left with the burden of domestic duties, such as packing, yet Michael still insists “everything goes perfectly” (I iii). While the three overlapping scenes around the bed thematize communication and non-communication, literally hearing but not really understanding each other, Michael and Mette resolve their dispute and connect with passionately hostile love-making.

Conversely, in another ‘room,’ Christian is unresponsive to both Pia’s sexual advances and her attempts to genuinely connect with him. Pia asks Christian to borrow his bath, though the implication is that she is entering into his personal space in order to re-connect with her former lover. Christian sits stationary on the bed while Pia walks around him—a reversal of her self-imagination of a static life and imagination of Christian and the other siblings as more physically and socially mobile. For instance, Pia explains to Christian that she has remained at the inn after having missed various opportunities to ‘move on’ to larger centers such as Copenhagen (after Bettina H. move in with her love interest instead): “So I stayed here. It’s beenlleen

subtext of her self-narrativization of her somewhat hollow, lonely and alienated life after failed romances and missed opportunities—a situation she (wrongly) imagines is unlike Christian's: "I'm the last one who's still here. You're all jet-setting off to Paris and everything. You're all important" (I iii).

Despite his outward signs of success, though, Christian is unable to 'move on' psychologically from the death of his sister, which triggered a re-visitation for him of their shared sexual abuse by their father and incest between Chri

Christian. The stage is both a literal and a psychological space where Christian is both estranged from and ultimately returns to himself. Christian's apparent lack desire for Pia during the 'bed scene' juxtaposes the passionately out-of-control, boisterous and highly visible sexual activities of Michael and Mette as they resolve their dispute. Pia, in fact, wonders aloud what is wrong with Christian, who used to the "out-of-control one—you always got in fights. Now it's Michael. What happened, Christian?" (I iii). Christian's rediscovery of his 'fighting spirit' will take central stage in his confrontation with his father later in climactic scenes of the play. This question of "what happened" also takes on multiple resonances within the play—what happened to Christian in his adulthood that has made him loose his out-of-control passion for Pia and fighting spirit; what happened in Christian and Linda's childhood; and what happened around Linda's suicide.

In the third 'room' acted out around the bed on stage, with the help of Lars, the concierge who shows her to the room, Helene

between Linda and Helene there is another exploration of communication and eventual acknowledgment of its import. Helene finds the note and reads it, saying to Lars that "It doesn't say anything" (I iii). Yet, she remarks to Lars that "There have always been ghosts in this house" and decides to stay in the room, even though it is haunted by the presence of her sister's death. At the same time, though, she does not want to confront the implications of meaning of what the suicide note says until she reads it aloud at the party, prompted by Christian.

The New Ambassador's production of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, directed by John Doyle, also blurs the line between the living and the dead as well as between actors and musical accompaniment. Because Sweeney is lowered into and emerges out of a coffin during the first song, "The Ballad of Sweeney Todd," there is an implication that all onstage are ghosts. A limited set of actors perform not only multiple roles in the production but also play the musical instruments. The orchestra 'pit' shifts to onstage, much as how the actions of the play transport the gutter of historical gossip to the apotheosis of late twentieth-century musical theatre. For instance, after Sweeney Todd kills various characters, such as the Judge (Colin Wakefield) or Mrs. Lovett (Karen Mann), those actors return to the musical band scattered around the stage. Along with the mixture of actors and musicians onstage, the overlapping space-times of the story came into view upon the single set and required an imaginative leap by the audience to translate to the literal settings. The elicitation of an imaginative leap was not the childlike storytelling of *Anne of Green Gables*, however, but the horrific narrativization of history within these overlapping spatiotemporal realities. Even to a greater extent, the single plank board set of *Sweeney Todd* is suggestive of

many ‘real life’ environments—such as a bakery, a ship, an attic barbershop or a mental asylum—and allows for these various spaces to come into fluid relationships with each other. Rather than a simulacrum of a historical environment, like the dugout in *Journey’s End*, *Sweeney Todd*’s set im

> **Posner** Yes. He doesn't think it's surprising. Though Dakin likes girls basically.
>
> **Irwin** I sympathised, though not so much as to suggest that I might be in the same boat.
>
> **Mrs. Lintott** With Dakin?
>
> **Irwin** With anybody.

There is thus not only the uncertainty of Irwin's sexual orientation brought to light via his discussion of Posner, but an overlapping set of conversations involving Posner, Dakin and Irwin as well as Lintott's envy of Irwin's connection with the students. The performance stages questions of 'sympathy' as the characters inhabit the same physical space on stage in a way that mimics the blending of personal, psychological space with that of the social world to a point where the two are indi4 556tej12 0 0 12 381.TlM205 419m/AMCIDediscuss

in the war : “We still don’t like to admit the war was even partly our fault because so many of our people died. A photograph on every mantelpiece. And this mourning has veiled the truth. It’s not so much lest we forget, as lest we remember” (I).

Mourning and commemoration become ways to gain distance from historical events, reducing the dead to a manageable set of images that elides political complicity or an et cetera—“mere verbal abbreviation,” as Hector remarks. While Posner’s uncle strikes him for commenting during a visit home that “the Holocaust was a historical fact like other historical facts,” the examiners later praise Posner for attaining the critical distance of the historian—his “sense of detachment,” which is the “foundation of writing history” (II). As Irwin tells the boys, “this is history. Distance yourselves. Our perspective on the past alters” and “one of the historian’s job is to anticipate what our perspective of that period [of the recent past] will be. . .even on the Holocaust” (II). Thus, metaphors of space collapse into formulations of historical distance, but the intersecting zones of time-spaces in the play suggests that the past, both personal and collective history, continuously infiltrates understandings of the ‘here and now’ and the impossible purity of the present.

In conjunction with comments made by Dr. Peck in the seminar on *Sleeping Beauty*, my visit to Warwick castle helped me to reflect on issues of history in relation to storytelling, class, ideology and the organization of space with the plays. In both *Fix-Up* and *Sleeping Beauty*, for instance, there were three levels of staging. In *Fix-Up*, the basement, the main floor and the attic suggested motifs of social mobility. Kwesi’s capitalist enterprises, which will eventually take over the main floor’s attention to heritage and tradition, were planned in the attic while the main drama occurred on the

main stage. Both ascending the tall bookshelves on the main floor and climbing the stairs to the attic imply the motif of 'racial uplift' or 'social progress.' However, the main floor's intellectual and activist traditions are not enough. The hair products business is what will be more popular than the bookstore and will take over the main floor. The basement served as a holding place for newly-arrived and less popular books, it seemed—perhaps an indication of that which has not yet arrived or has disappeared from the public's awareness. The levels in *Sleeping Beauty* more closely aligned with class, as the castle in the sky embodied the aristocratic sphere while the main stage was the site for the main 'bourgeois' or 'domestic' action of the play, the 'nuclear family unit,' and the basement was the underworld, the place of slaves, rose bush people and earthiness. The basement was also the kitchen and where the slaughtering of substitute sacrifices for the Ogre mother instead of Beauty's children took place: a goat, a donkey, a cat, and so forth. The chaotic mixture of people from various 'levels' of society is a nod to 'upstairs-downstairs' comedies of the British tradition—perfected in Robert Altman's film *Gosford Park*. The basement in *Sleeping Beauty* also resonates with the underground kitchen in *Festen*, which is literally where the cooks work but also represents lower levels of the psyche perhaps, where Christian must go to unearth his hidden traumas and muster the courage, epitomized by his chef friend Kim, to continue to challenge his father with the truth of their shared personal histories. Because the same young actress played Linda and Mette's little girl, the scene where she assists the cook in bringing up dishes of food for the table implies a certain movement from the depths of repressed memory and trauma to the space of confrontation and storytelling—the place of the banquet table.

Warwick castle also suggested certain relationships between intersecting time-spaces and the performance of history. While billed as a medieval castle, the tour consultant I spoke with noted that the castle contains many re-workings and additions over the centuries, partially due to a fire that occurred and mainly to accord with the tastes of the series of owners. One main room was built and furnished in the eighteenth century and remains that way, while others were re-modeled in the Victorian era and up to the present day. The castle is thus an intersection of various preserved times-spaces and acts as a kind of living museum as costum

Renaissance, even though very few of the buildings actually date from the period.

Nevertheless, like Warwick cas

In *Journey's End* (1929), staged at the Duke of York theatre and directed by David Grindley, spectators are situated as the 'fourth wall' of a war bunker in W.W.I. The set positions itself 'authentic' in its attention to minute, rough details—theatre as the 'presence of the past.' As we discussed in the seminar, the performance was a 'living monument' to those who died in the war. The curtain call, with the ghosts of soldiers standing in front of a wall of names (a scene not in the original play) produced a strong emotional response in many of the students, including myself. The static, claustrophobic quality of the stage design connotes the trap within which the soldiers existed—caught in circumstances beyond their control. The sounds of battle offstage also imply the spectatorship of history as always one-step-removed. In one scene, Raleigh and Osbourne prepare for the battle in which Osborne will die and Raleigh will be traumatized by the naked horrors of war. The conversation between the two men distracts them from the situation they are about to face and dramatizes the presence of death always hovering around any person in history, just slightly off stage:

> **Osborne**: Now we're off! Quick, let's talk about pigs! Black pigs or white pigs?
>
> **Raleigh**: Black pigs. In the New Forest you find them quite wile.
>
> **Osborne**: You know about the New Forest?
>
> **Raleigh**: Rather! My home's down there. A little place called Allum Green, just outside Lyndhurst.
>
> **Osborne**: I know Lyndhurst well.
>
> **Raleigh**: It's rather nice down there.
>
> **Osborne**: I like it more than any place I know.

> **Raleigh**: I think I do too. Of course, it's different when you've always lived in a place.
>
> **Osborne**: You like it in a different way.
>
> **Raleigh**: Yes. Just behind our house there's a stream called the Highland; it runs for miles—right thought the middle of the forest. Dennis and I followed it once as far as we could.

This conversation also circles around notions of place and the imagination of home within a confrontation of time between the present moment and the past. Raleigh reminisces of a time when he and Dennis (now Captain Stanhope) were schoolboys, before the massive trauma of war Stanhope has experienced and Raleigh is just about to experience in a few minutes. This scene is an example of how *Journey's End* pays attention to the details of day-to-day life in a dugout in the British trenches before St. Quentin for four days (the evening of Monday March 18, 1918 to Thursday March 21, 1918) rather than the large scale history of military campaigns and their grand 'theatre of operations.'

Along with questions of history and the details day-to-day human experience, Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* engages more explicitly than *Journey's End* does with modes of historiography and its theatrical dramatization. While Lockwood mentions a catchphrase by Mrs. Lintott, "This is history, not histrionics," Mr. Irwin encourages the dramatic and the anecdotal, even journalistic, mode of historiography. Irwin mentions, for instance, "At the time of the Reformation there were fourteen foreskins of Christ preserved, but it was thought that the church of St. John Lateran in Rome had the authentic prepuce" (Act I). Irwin's attention to history is as a kind of rhetorical performance. Scripps, for instance, mentions that "When Irwin became well known as an historian it was for finding his way to the wrong end of seesaws, settling on some hitherto

unquestioned assumption and then proving the opposite" (I). The boys learn from Irwin to question received wisdom; yet the question of historical veracity becomes less important perhaps than the effective use of the "gobbets" they learn from Hector to impress the examiners. According to Mrs. Lintott, history is "story-telling so much of it, which is what men do naturally. My ex, for instance. He told stories" (I). Lintott thus connects personal stories or lies told to others to the project of history as a form of narrativization, storytelling and fiction-making.

The performance of history is most evident in the mini 'TV spots,' which show Irwin moving about in ruins in his power wheelchair. As he moves in and about the ruins of the Rievaulx Abbey, one such TV spot shows Irwin attempting to draw viewers into a sympathetic connection with monastic life: "The monastic life only comes alive when contemplating its toilet arrangements" (II). Irwin claims that "what fires the popular imagination is stuff from the reredorter plopping twenty feet into the drains. God is dead. Shit lives" (II). This rhetorical performance of history through anecdote mimics not only early methodology of New Historicism, an imagined sympathetic relationship to the past through the accumulation of details and the contemplation of a historical anecdote, but also a journalistic mode. The performance of re-shoots and editing of the TV spot's scene not only evokes the construction of history through television but also any historiography as careful re-shooting and editing to form a seemingly fluid historical narrative from disparate fragments and documents as other elements are left on the cutting room floor.

In the seminar, Dr. Peck listed various ways in which the play engages in history and historiography: as performance, allusion, testimony, examination, character and so

forth. The play also takes Irwin's journalistic mode and uses it as a means to engage with questions of how spectators of history imagine their relationship to the past through various narrative modes. When discussing tactics for the boys to take their examinations, Irwin comments that "truth is no more at issue in an examination than thirst at a wine-tasting or fashion at a striptease" (I). Dr. Peck also read Hector's groping of the boys on motorcycle rides as an emblem of 'reaching back' to touch the past while speeding forward, and this motif seems to embody an inversion of the angel of history, who always looks back but whose wings rush to the future. As the Headmaster comments on Hector's actions with the boys on the motorcycle, when "He, as it were, cradled them," there is a subtext of the historian's critical relationship to the past via historical distance: "To be fair I think it was more appreciative than investigatory but it is inexcusable nevertheless. Think of the *gulf of years*. And the speed! One knows that road well" (II, my emphasis). Geoff raised concerns that the humor involved in the fondling of the boys and an attention to the metaphoricity of the actions downplays too much the ethical and moral implications of fondling. However, the relationship to the past *is* a kind of ethical relationship that involves one's position as victor or victim in the narrative struggles to document and interpret history. This ethical conundrum plays out as Irwin discusses how one should approach the Holocaust with a certain critical distance, a distance made problematic by Posner's Jewish heritage. There is a tension in historiography between sympathetic identification, appreciation, and critical distance during an investigatory process that is "beyond lamentation" (II). Historiography is a sampling from the vast speed at which history moves and this 'reaching back' invokes a certain blindness. a kind oe

I also think that Hector's name is not accidental, being the character in the *Iliad* whom Achilles defeats and whose corpse he parades around. There is the cliché about history being written by the victors as part of their spoils, but there is also the intimation that the culture of the defeated party nevertheless becomes incorporated into the dominant culture throughout history. One may argue that Irwin is the congratulated pedagogical victor who obtains the desired exam results for the boys. At the same time, however, Hector's teaching gives the boys the rounded perspectives that allow Irwin's methods to succeed, akin to the transmission of Greek culture and philosophy by the conquering Roman Empire. Timms notes to Irwin that "Mr. Hector's stuff's not meant for the exam, sir. It's to make us more rounded human beings" (I). The production of 'rounded human beings,' historical characters formed from bits of texts and images, is the method of many schools of historiography. While the Headmaster sees Hector's "old-fashioned faith in the redemptive power of words" and finds the results of his method "unpredictable and unquantifiable," Irwin remarks that Hector's teachings might prove useful during the upcoming examinations. Along with the connections between pedagogy and historiography, I also wondered if Hector's 'appreciative' relationship to the boys also invokes Greek philosophers and their catamite boys—simultaneously taught by the elder man and involved in a sexual relationship of some sort with him. Geoff disagreed with me in our frequent discussions in our room, citing the lack of allusions to this philosophical pedagogy in the play.

As Dr. Peck pointed out in the seminar, the 'history as allusion' model implies history as one way to organize our minds through memory and association, and the most successful boys are those who can navigate between or even synthesize the contrasting

teaching styles and allusions of Hector and Irwin. Hector has the students memorize poems by heart, for instance, and is not concerned with usefulness, while Irwin's style involves the collapse of information into a manageable rhetorical spin or 'cheat sheet' to obtain results on the exam. Irwin's perspective is wider than the Headmaster, however, who only looks at the bottom line of exam results. Mrs. Lintott seems to ask for some sort of reflection on the process or history-making and historiography, calling the Headmaster a "twat" (a slang for female genitalia) and questioning the validity of Hector's 'learning by heart' methods: "what's all this learning by heart for, except as some sort of insurance against the boys' ultimate failure?" (II). The three teachers and the Headmaster embody various perspectives on and about education, history and historiography in ways that bring in various voices. Lintott's voice self-consciously reflects on the question of marginalization, drawing a link between history and the play we are watching: "I have hitherto been allotted an inner voice, my role a patient and not unamused sufferance of the predilections and preoccupations of men" (II).

Gender, Race, Nation, Sexuality and Their Representation

This notion of marginalized and inner voices resonates between questions of gender and race that we saw in the plays reappearing at various points, such as *History Boys, Fix-Up, The Producers, Aladdin* and *Sleeping Beauty*. In relation to gender identity, Mrs. Lintott in *The History Boys*, the one female in the cast, calls attention to the masculine bias of historiography, particularly the marginalization of women's voices in a manner akin to the voices of slaves in *Fix-Up*, who finally speak in the slave narratives bought by Kiyi.

During the practice exam interviews, Dorothy forcefully yet playfully describes the role of women in history and historiography:

> History's not such a frolic for women as it is for men. Why should it be? They never get round the conference table. In 1919, for instance, they just arranged the flowers then gracefully retired. History is a commentary on the continuing incapabilities of men. What is history? History is women following behind with the bucket. And I'm not asking you to espouse this point of view but the occasional nod in its direction can do you no harm. (II)

Rudge defines history as "just one fucking thing after another" and this notion of historical 'events' plays up the seeming simplicity of history's translation into historiography, yet this translation is precisely what is at stake here: the complex and historically-contingent ways in which the narrativization of history and identity takes place.

In Kwane Kwei-Armah's *Fix Up* (2004), staged at the Cottesloe Theatre and directed by Angus Jackson, questions of vision, perspective and the marginalized voices of history become most explicit around the multi-volume book set of slave narratives that Brother Kiyi (Jeffrey Kisson) purchases. The set is a static bookshop for African and Black writing, filled with tall shelves that loom large over the actors: history as bibliography. When Alice (Nina Sosanyn6iK6eeads2 501.K12 naen Alis9.9998 212.25216nyn6iK6eeads2 5

'purity' are misguided concepts that do injustice to the entangled roots/routes by which modern Blackness has emerged as a category of identity.

The Producers, through parody, highlights the absurdity of holding the category of racial-national identity as 'authentic.' In "Springtime for Hitler," for instance, the parade of dancing girls brings out various emblems of German national identity worn as hats: beer, wienerschnizel, Wagnerian viking horns, the Nazi eagle, a pretzel, and so forth. By staging this as farce, the song points to the hyper-nationalism of Nazi Germany and its attempts to 'purify' itself to gain an authentic link to the glorified past. Instead, the song reveals racial-national identity as an anxiously-repeated performance that produces the illusion of a substance or core. The costumes and performance of Nazism, in particular, become part of the source of comedy as the history of fascist Germany becomes replayed as farce. Hitler becomes a buffoon tyrant played by an actor who plays out various stereotypes of homosexuality, the 'gayness' sought by the director. This goal of 'keeping it gay' not only parodies stereotypes of homosexuality but fosters a kind of satiric cheerful resilience in the face of the legacy of the horrors of Nazi Germany. As Roger sings, "No matter what you do on the stage/ Keep it light, keep it bright, keep it gay!/ Whether it's murder, mayhem or rage/ Don't complain, it's a pain/ Keep it gay!" Mel Brooks and Tom Meehan's 'cartoonization' of fascism allows for a certain trumping of horror that does not simply commemorate history but works through historical trauma through comedy-as-therapy.

In my play viewing, I thought about the role of stereotypes in various theatrical productions as a source of comedy within certain frameworks, since mu

that may, on one level, seem like racist stereotypes—a kind of Chinese minstrel show as white actors plays out a Chinese racial identity on the stage. Yet, the pantomime points towards the performative nature of all identity categories, much like drag points to gender as a repeated, mostly-unconscious performance. There is no actor or 'true' and 'essential' identity underneath these masks. I talked with some of the other students after the show, some who found the pantomime racist. We speculated about how American audiences might react to an African-American version of this minstrel-show type of performances. We also wondered if American audiences would be more sensitive to the casting of a Black actor (Nicholas Beveney) to play the Ogre in *Sleeping Beauty*. Instead of racial insensitivity or political incorrectness, I wondered if *Aladdin* and *Sleeping Beauty* displayed a less-fraught relationship to race and sexual orientation than there is in the United States, where political correctness dominates and blatant homophobia, for instance, becomes discussed through the language of religion and constitutional amendments. In the seminar, Ruth Peck mentioned the tradition of 'blind casting' in British Theater, and I wonder if something like that could ever emerge in the United States in a significant way. I was curious about how the politics of identity and representation 'plays out' in theatrical traditions around the world.

Cinematic Techniques and Projection

Written and directed by Rufus Norris and staged at the Young Vic (at the Barbican), *Sleeping Beauty* (2002) is based on the Charles Perrault story but perhaps cannot avoid foregrounding its differences from the animat

of sets that evoked cinema, and Brenna mentioned that there are, in fact, plans to the turn the play into a film.

More explicit use of cinematic techniques occurred in the staging of *The History Boys, The Woman in White*, *Solid Gold Cadillac*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Producers*. In *The History Boys*, along with the flashy history films narrated by Irwin, the staging at the Lyttelton Theatre made use of short video sequences in the style of rock videos of the

revolving stage and the projected, computer-generated graphics of the sets behind them. The juxtaposition blends the scope and richness of cinematic productions with the presence of live bodies in front of us on stage. While William Dudley's production and video design provides detailed backdrops for the actors, it also potentially elicits an imaginative response in spectators, who 'fill in the gaps' and create a fully-realized set in their minds. The cinematic techniques also create a more sweeping feel that is congruent with the music and the question of representation. As Walter takes Laura and Marian on a nature-painting expedition, for instance, the act of painting draws attention to the computer-generated backdrops, which would have been painted in the nineteenth century, and the relationship between drama and 'realistic' modes of representation. Indeed, the painting that Walter gives to Laura is not of the nature scenes around them but of her, though the prop is actually a computer-modified photograph made to resemble a painting. Both Collins' *Woman in White* novel and its musical adaptation continuously deal with doubles, similarities and deception, such as the similarity between the appearance of Ann and Laura. Cinematic techniques in the production thus do not merely provide lavish spectacle but invoke certain questions around what is real and what is simulated inherent in the original novel and its gothic aura.

Staged at the Garrick Theatre and directed by Ian Brown, *Solid Gold Cadillac* (1954) uses a video screen to create a sense of the 1950s aura of production and representation. The video inserts frame the story and parallel it to *Cinderella* in ways that mock capitalism, akin to *The Mandate*'s satires of various political-economic models: bourgeois enterprise merchants, communists, Tsarists, and proletariats. Much as the characters in *The Mandate* are caught in the social upheaval of the communist revolution,

rulers and ruled. Beginning with Julius Caesar, the face of each successive ruler appears on the television screen and many parts of the play are both staged before us and shown on the screen. This mediatized dynamic emphasizes power as working within warfare as an extension of the logic of politics, persuasion, representation and spectatorship. Shakespeare often calls attention to power as a kind of performance with recognizable symbols and props, such as the mock-crowning ceremony in Henry IV part one between Prince Hal and Falstaff. Indeed, Shakespearean metadramatic devices call attention to both the actor-leader and the 'real life' leader as performing in certain roles that both rely upon the staging of leadership. The use of the TV screen in this staging of *Julius Caesar* amplifies metadrama to include meta-media parallels between the dynamics of ancient Rome and modern day power struggles, where language, rhetoric, image and performance also dominate. Antony's infamous 'lend me your ears' speech and its biting irony about the 'honorable men,' namely Brutus and Cassius, who slew Caesar is a masterpiece of rhetoric that initially seems to praise the slayers and then condemns them. The implication is that modern media are an extension of the persuasive energy of rhetoric. Antony stirs the crowd to revenge, especially after they hear Caesar had provided money to be distributed to each citizen of Rome—a rhetorical device not unlike the political efficacy of staging tax breaks in the contemporary U.S.A. as media events.

Akin to *Sweeney Todd*, where musicians played in sight near the actors and acted out roles as well, the *Julius Caesar* production at the Swan blurs the line between offstage and on-stage as technicians operating behind the main stage, sitting at large mixing boards and operating audiovisual equipment, seem to provide both the technical apparatus of the play (sound effects, music, etc.) as well as play a part in the general

play is a 'version,' the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet* adds material and modifies the play in a way that could be called an 'original' work in the Shakespearean authorial mode: *Romeo and Juliet: Love is in the Air*. The link to cinema foregrounds issues of adaptation and 'translation' from plays and novels to film—whether the book is the 'master' text and the film is a 'translation' or if the film becomes an 'original' work on its own terms.

The connection to cinema in *The Producers* serves to work as an in-joke at several points in the performance. For one, along with Stormtrooper Rolf's line, "I was born in Dusseldorf und that is why they call me Rolf," the voice of Mel Brooks from the original film is dubbed into one of the lines during the song "Springtime for Hitler": "Don't be stupid, be a smarty, come and join the Nazi party!" This moment of obvious lip-synching by two actors during the song is a winking reference to film overdubbing of voices rather than the usually live performances of Broadway. Likewise, asked to 'fix up' the office, the cinematic joke in the second act is that the buxom secretary, Ulla (Leigh Zimmerman), paints the office all white, including the couches, the walls, the desk and so forth. The punch line comes as the newly-whitened office acts as a projector screen for multiple copies of Ulla's beautiful face as Leo dreams about her and then copies of the face of Leo (Lee Evans) as she dreams about him. The extra layer to the joke is that the projection upon the white backdrop alludes to film, for *The Producers* was adapted by Mel Brooks and Tom Meehan in 2001 from the 1968 film, which was written and directed by Brooks.

In my discussion of the performance of race, I wondered if comedy can involve a certain transgression of decorum. The carnivalesque mode of *The Producers*, for example, allows for a greater encounter with historical trauma in a safer psychological

space. In the original film version, for instance, the audience is walking out on the play in disgust after the opening number, "Springtime for Hitler," until the first acting scene, where a stoned-out hippie plays Hitler planning his military strategy with a blues song at the piano. The audience returns to their seats, taking the performance as farce and then laughs and enjoys the rest of the play. Hitler becomes a clueless buffoon within this framework and the play, despite the plans of Bailystock and Bloom, becomes a hit. While the original film had songs in it, it was not a musical per se, since all the songs occurred as part of the 'realistic' diegesis: during rehearsals, songs by the crazy Nazi playwright, or performances rather than characters suddenly breaking into songs to forward themes and narrative elements. The adaptation of the film to a Broadway musical increased the musical content considerably and continually draws attention to itself as a Broadway production.

Adaptation and Re-writing

Along with *The Producers*, many of the plays we saw in London were adaptations or re-writings of earlier works in other formats, such as *Festen*, *Grand Hotel*, *The Woman in White*, *His Dark Materials*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *By the Bog of Cats*, *Playboy of the West Indies* and Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*. The film version of *The Producers* curiously had only a modest success but a cult following while the Broadway version became a smash hit. The film version made in-jokes about Broadway as well as film. For instance, as Max and Leo are concocting their scheme by a fountain, Leo Bloom (Gene Wilder) says "I want everything I've ever seen in the movies." As opposed to a film about a Broadway production, however, *The Producers* (2001) is a Broadway-style musical about

Broadway-style musicalsyle m

psychologically as well, reflected in his drug addiction acted out in the production of the musical at the Donmar Warehouse and not, if barely, mentioned in the film. Likewise, the motif of paying back debts present in the Baron perhaps alludes to Germany's debts due to reparations and economic slump after the War. Seen from a post WW II vantage point the Jewish character of Kringlein also functions as a specter of death for the upcoming Nazi regime and the Holocaust. Hitler becomes chancellor in 1933, but the setting of the musical acts as a kind of pre-Nazi chaos embodied by the multiple lives and storylines at the hotel.

Grand Hotel is not merely despair and the artific

decides not to go through with it. However, in both cases, the Baron happens to be in the room to steal money from Preysing, who shoots the Baron in the musical in a skirmish while in the film Preysing beats him to death with a telephone in the heat of the moment. Thus, while both the film and the musical begin with switchboard operators and various calls going on by the character to establish their respective situations, the film more explicitly makes the telephone an instrument of death.

Also adapted from a novel, Andrew Lloyd Webber adapts Wilkie Collins' Victorian novel *Woman in White* in a manner of styled, larger-than-life spectacle that is appropriate to sensational atmosphere of the source material while *His Dark Materials* adapts Philip Pullman's novels with a keen attention to their mood and tone along with narrative and characterization. The addition of music to Collins' story plays up the emotional impact of the work, and akin to *Grand Hotel*, much of the characterization occurs through song. With lyrics by David Zippel, "All For Laura," for instance, illustrate the heartbreaking sacrifice of Marion's efforts to rescue Laura and reunite her with Walter, even though she herself loves him unrequitedly and romance may have blossomed between them in Laura's absence. "You Can Get Away with Anything" playfully illustrates Count Fosco's deviousness and collaboration with Sir Percival Glyde. I have not read the original novels by Philip Pullman, but the stage adaptation of *His Dark Materials* by Nicholas Wright specifically for the Olivier Theatre effectively uses spectacle and th

collaborative re-writing, whether it involves working with a production team or merely writing within the web of intertextuality. *His Dark Materials* creates not just a 'translation' of the novels. As Wright argues in the introduction of the playscript, Pullman's comforting advice that "books are one thing, and this is another" "has always led us closer towards a piece of theatre that stands up in its own right, not as a shadow of his stupendous novels." The play creates a mode of storytelling that is larger-than-life, which is typical of myth, epic, fantasy and the extended journeys of romance

Similarly, several of the other plays worked within the tradition of fairy tales. "Based on Charles Perrault's story about what happens after Beauty wakens into a perilous world with a husband who is half human and half ogre" (Peck, class syllabus), writer-director Rufus Norris updates and re-writes *Sleeping Beauty*. There are not only with the addition of flatulent fairies (a by-product of magic) but also a whole second act after the Prince awakens Sleeping Beauty. Rather than one 'master' text and its re-writing, however, this production at the Young Vic epitomizes the folk tale and fairy tale tradition of continual re-writing and adaptation. In many ways, *By the Bog of Cats* by Marina Carr also works within the fairy tale tradition, such as the motif of the missing mother, in the foggy, nebulous space that is physically within the bogs and figuratively within the liminal space between the traditions of myth and dramatic realism. The stylized child-like wooden cutouts that represented houses brings to mind the storytelling tradition of fairy tales and their focus on archetypes of home, mother, child, and death. Immediately in the first scene, for instance, as Hester Swane drags a dead swan across the stage, the encounter with the ghost fancier places her in a kind of predestination for death

or an intimation of her death wish. The link between Swane and Swan becomes apparent amidst the prophecies that Hester will live only one day longer than the swan.

Carr's play rewrites the story of Medea and adapts it for a modern Irish setting, yet like Matthew Bourne's reworking of Tschaikowsky's ballet *Swan Lake*, there is an interesting tension between modern life and the mythic space of the play. Characters take snapshots with digital in the Wyndham Theatre's production of *Bog of Cats* amidst the foggy mythical space where the time period is unclear and hazy. Matthew Bourne's version of *Swan Lake* uses Tschaikowsky's music but places the action in settings such as the nightclub 'Swank' and mixes traditional ballet movements with modern dance and even disco-stylized swan-like head-bobbing in the nightclub. In the original [illegible] *modern dance an*

decorum on the girlfriend’s part but stages a juxtaposition between tim

century Ireland in the peasant town of Mayo to August 1950 Trinidad, in the peasant town of Mayaro. When

village in my home island Trinidad because of the cultural similarities of the people of Colonial Ireland and Colonial Trinidad and the shared appreciation for the beauty and poetry of language. Even when discussing the merits of murdering your father."

The 1800 Act of Union had brought together England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland under one political entity, "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland," though a series of potato famines in the mid 1800s brought economic hardship upon rural

(Ireland: potatoes vs. Trinidad: sugar cane and tobacco for the export marker or fish for domestic consumption) who developed a unique parochial form of language drawn from the Standard English of the British Empire. Christopher Columbus, who discovered the island in 1498, bequeathed the island to Spain, which enslaved the native Caribs and Arawaks. Sugar plantations begun in the 17th century operated largely by imported African slaves. Spain later opened up the island in 1776 to Roman Catholic sugar planters from Eastern Caribbean islands to make Trinidad more profitable. After 300 years of Spanish rule, amidst raids by the Dutch and the French, the British, who were at war with Spain and France at the time, conquered the island. The British officially gained control of the island in 1802 under the Treaty of Amiens. After slavery was

the role of power in storytelling and history: who has the authority to tell the stories and who narrates one’s existence and history?

subvented various colonial enterprises, such as the ‘civilizing’ missions of colonial education of the locals. Colonial authorities set the terms by which history becomes record, and power becomes positioned as center or margin. The joke around Ken

language become means of camouflage from the gaze of the Imperial rulers through the various webs of criss-crossing Atlantic traffic patterns of the Middle Passage.

The Trinidadian dialect, for instance, becomes a means for locals to talk amongst themselves in a transmuted version of Standard English sometimes no longer recognizable to colonial authorities. Synge altered Standard English to give a sense of the local Mayo dialect, which re-defines language at the level of the local. The official language of Trinidad is English, but Matura shifts terms and illustrates through peasant dialect the inscription of local ways of seeing in language that 'organically' emerges. For instance, Synge's Widow Quin becomes Matura's Mama Benin. The language shift reflects local color and an analogous subversion of Standard English, which inscribes a certain dynamic of power relations and hegemonic ways of seeing. In Standard English, the last line in Act II, for example, might be something like "Well, if worse comes to worst, it will be very humorous to find that the only one who pities him [Christy/Ken] is a widow woman such as myself, who has buried her children and murdered her husband." In Synge, the line reads, "Well, if the worst come in the end of all, it'll be great game to see there's none to pity him but a widow woman, the like of me, has buried her children and destroyed her man" (II). In Matura, the line becomes, "Well, if de worst come ter de worst, it go be really funny ter see if all he have ter fall back on is me, a obeah woman who bury her children an get rid a she ole man" (II). The presence of Mama Benin as an obeah woman, one who practices folk religion, recontextualizes the play to draw attention to how local forms of knowledge subvert the colonial attention to scientific, empirical ways of seeing along with a (sometimes incompatible) Christian worldview. All three versions are understandable, but the shift by S

contrasts Stanley, Peggy's betrothed, whom Peggy calls disparagingly an "English gentleman" who is "too decent and ambitious

boys get left behind. I hear dey have plenty bones in de Institute, with a piece a jug an plate" (III). This project of collection, documentation and museumification of Trinidad's history links to a relationship of surveillance by colonial authorities, an impulse to understand that implies a relation of dominance. The motif of surveillance also resonates with Ken's storytelling, which forms an alternate version of historiography. As Ken talks to local girls about his exploits, Peggy warns Ken that oi0 0 0 12 324.52a 9991 570.9597 Ti(o)Tj12 0 0 121.6

the swans are ma

Along with the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet*, other Shakespeare productions rework the theatrical material in interesting ways. The production of *Julius Caesar* sets the action within a landscape of urban warfare and political strife, a dynamic which implicitly draws parallels between Shakespeare's play and modern wars, such as the Gulf War and the recent operations in Iraq, staged for the media by the US government. The staging thus brings to mind the ways in which wars and elections become constructed and presented as media events: politics as a scripted performance through various mediatized modes of representation and imagination of spatial-geopolitical relationships between spectators and actors in history. The various scenes of chorus members hanging from scaffolding also reminded me of the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet* and its use of space, such as the actor who performs the role of the singing, guitar-playing and pot-smoking crucifix in the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet*. In Stratford, we also saw a production of *Two Gentleman of Verona*. Directed by Fiona Buffini and designed by Liz Ashcroft, the Swan Theatre's production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* sets the action in 1930s New York. Dr. Peck argued in our seminar that the intersection of right angles found in the art deco aesthetic and city skyline of the set foregrounds the theme of things being at odds with each other, such as the urbanization of cultural values in Milan versus the small village of Verona, which is also the setting for *Romeo and Juliet*. In one scene, Si

productions also used the particularities of the theatrical space. The balcony, for instance, is literally one of the spectator boxes in The Swan. If *Julius Caesar* foregrounds the power of rhetoric, such as in Antony's incendiary speech, *Two Gentlemen* also deals with questions of language.

Along with the play's constant verbal sparring and wordplay, Proteus's love letter that Julia both tears up and wants to read embodies what Dr. Peck describes as faultlines within the structures of love traditions—the unknown terrain where one simultaneously follows a cultural script for 'appropriate' gendered behavior and sees the limitations of those roles. Julia's cross-dressing allows her greater freedom of movement than traditional gender roles allow and provides a sense of discipline and restraint she had not known. Julia's shape-shifting is a more positive version than Proteus's betrayal of his friend valentine as Proteus decides to pursue Silvia.

Language and Audience Interpellation

The tension between appearances and character also appears in the clothes-stealing scenes, where class markers and social networks become stripped away to reveal perhaps a sense of an inner self that breaks through at certain moments, or perhaps there are only ever performances. The perform

adaptation, the role of language and audience interaction within the plays brought out interesting tensions between translation and understanding. At the start of the performance of the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet*, the chorus figure, given a strong role with added dialogue, began speaking Icelandic and then broke into English, joking with the audience and imagining their horror that the whole performance would be in Icelandic. The opening banter by the chorus figure (Peter, played by Vikingur Kristjansson), dressed in a union jack T-shirt and top hat, plays

This moment when Pavel is "absolutely serious" is a moment of absolute hilarity in the farcical context of the play. Yet, like the Producers, the comedy masks experiences of historical trauma within vast socio-political upheaval.

Working within the English pantomime tradition, the Old Vic's production of *Aladdin* used audience banter and interaction as an inherent part of the overall performance. Characters constantly addressed and interacted with the audience. There seemed to be a certain expectation of this by the audience from the very opening of the performance as children hissed at the 'bad guy,' Abbanazar (Roger Allam) the moment he walked out on stage. Aladdin continuously faced the audience and talked to them in an over-the-top 'Hi boys and girls, this is what's going to happen' kind of way. The production constantly called attention to itself as artifice and farce, with running jokes such as Dim Sum's (Maureen Lipman) questions about the lack of the Chinese language in the play even though the action is supposed to be taking place in China. Issues of language, accent and nationality also appeared in the character of Aladdin, who spoke with a Scottish accent and wore tartan pants. Again, the pantomime not only consistently drew attention to itself as artifice but implied that national identity is a kind of performance and costume-game as well as a linguistic set of codes and conventions. The use of music in the performance was part of the tradition of English pantomime as well, in this instance taking the form of Disney-style songs.

Many other productions I saw used music and dance in some form or another, from actual musicals like *Grand Hotel, The Woman in White* and *The Producers* to background music for dramatic action, such as *Fix-Up* and *His Dark Materials*. In particular, along with the powerful use of music in *Sweeney Todd* and *Festen*, I found the musical moments in the acrobatic *Romeo and Juliet* and the David Farr direction of *Julius Caesar* the most intriguing because they came as a pleasant surprise within these high caliber Shakespearean productions and engaged with some of the themes of the plays in interesting ways. I also enjoyed the music and dance sequences in Fiona Buffini's direction of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, where music set the tone for the 1920s and 30s, the "Jazz Age."

In *Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street,* the production used repetition of bits of the title track through the performance to convey a haunting recurrence of murder/pie-baking scenes as well as to invoke the repetition of gossip and history. The repetition of the lyrics mimicked the repetition from person to person of tales of sensational horror passed down from person to person across time and geography, the birth of legend and its distortions over time in the process of re-telling and transformation into forms of storytelling: history as gossip and minor key ballad folksong running counterpoint to the major narratives of history. Indeed, Sondheim's songs in *Sweeney* frequently make use of the moody, haunting qualities of minor modes such as Aeolian, Dorian and Lydian rather than the typical Broadway-style exuberance of the Ionian (major key) mode. In the haunting opening of the musical, "The Ballad of Sweeney Todd," one character steps forward to sing "Attend the tale of Sweeney

Todd/His skin was pale and his eye was odd./He shaved the faces of gentlemen/Who never thereafter were heard of again./He trod a path that few have trod,/Did Sweeney Todd,/The Demon Barber of Fleet Street." As a second actor continues the song with the next verse, there is a 'psst pass it on' type of quality here, the movement of tales through gossip and folk ballads: "He kept a shop in London town,/Of fancy clients and good renown/And what if all their souls were saved?/They went to their maker impeccably shaved/ By Sweeney Todd,/By Sweeney Todd,/The Demon Barber of Fleet Street." The repetition and variation of this song throughout the performance, with the titular hook line "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street," connotes the various ways in which history and legend meld into each other through repetition-with-a-difference and various modes of artistic and musical representation. In the opening song, various members step forward to sing the song and a chorus forms from various fictionalized historical actors associated with Sweeney Todd. Overall, the songs throughout the musical create an aestheticization of violence and horror, a stylized slice of history/legend mixture that cuts through time to bring spectators into a safe, mediated space of observation.

In *Festen*, the music serves as modes of cover-up and as the policing of zones of psychological safety amidst the surfacing of personal histories of trauma that link to larger histories of racism. For instance, when Gbatokai, Helene's African American boyfriend, appears at the party, .

Micheal's comments thus reflect a desire for clearly-delineated borders of inside/outside and public/private. At first, Michael can only conceive of this African American as a musician, patronizingly remarking "Hang on a minute, just a minute, we don't need any music. No band tonight, mate. You'll have to go home" (II ii). Music thus defines home and away/foreign, the familiar space of the family and threats to that space. When Gbatokai aligns himself sympathetically with Christian's plight and challenges Michael, Mette taps her glass and sings a peaceful song in Danish: "There is idyllic peace in the lonely woods/And the longing of the hear ceases here/Where peace and resting are/Hear the church bells ring in the evening calm/The robin's last chirps before he dozes off/By the lake a frog croaks loudly/As the go rolls over field and stream" (II ii). While a peaceful song, the reference to the forest resonates with Christian as he is later tied to a tree in the woods near the inn and beaten by Michael and some of the other guests—an attempt to keep him outside the space of the celebration, outside of conscious awareness.

Later, when Gbatokai again aligns himself with Christian against Michael and the forces of repression, toasting "Here's to your brother," Michael taunts him to make a speech of his own and then the 'insider' family and friends loudly sing a blatantly racist song, reminiscent of the loudly-croaking frogs in the forest. Michael leads the group in loudly singing "*an old Danish children's song which is used as a racist tauntloudly singif 9Tm4heo is used*

language and misunderstanding of what one says, even if it is in one's native tongue, such as the rest of the party not at first understanding or acknowledging what Christian had to say. The racist song goes, "I've seen a little sambo man/With a face as black as a frying pan/He said so many funny thins/And in his nose was a great big ring/He laughed at me and said these words/And I didn't understand a single thing/Hullah hut hottentot/Hulla hopsa sambo man" (II ii). In the space after "said these words," Gbatokai interjects "fuck you" as a speaking back, as protest. While Helene explains "It's a fucking racist song," Gbatokai replies "I know what it is!" even though he may not understand all of the Danish words completely. T

This loud singing and dancing on the table tops, the second singing of the song in the play, tries to drown out the voice of Christian and his proclamation of truth at the table. The dancing on top of the table thus tries to dominate, overshadow and move above Christian's story. Thus, rather than the two levels of the underground kitchen and the main stage, a third level of space emerges here on the table tops, perhaps an embodiment

turning points in the plot, since they develop a relationship with the stockholders that ultimately gives her the power of their vote by proxy, allowing her to take control of the company. The letters also reflect a counterpoint to the often cold and distant relationships within cap

a central role in the play. As Krogstad blackmails Nora with exposure if she does not convince Torvald not to fire him at the bank (for forgery, it turns out), Nora becomes horrified that Torvald will leave her when the truth comes out. However, when Torvald does read the letter, he calls her a liar and hypocrite, she leaves him, even though Krogstad (now with Kristine) sends the promissory note along with another letter. The letter thus acts as a plot device that causes suspense through the play but also exposes in more naked form Nora's underlying doubts about her treatment as a doll by Torvald. Thus, the letter, akin to *Festen*, more definitively causes an acknowledgment of a situation that had been going on for years. The letters in *Festen* and *A Doll's House* act as a message delayed, a truth that takes circuitous routes to arrive at its final destination.

Props of a different sort play a central role in various jokes with *The Mandate*, although these prop-jokes function as part of playwright Nikolai Erdman's intricately-designed plot machinery. Quite appropriately, the production at the Cottesloe Theatre drew attention to props even before the opening scene. The performance began with a bare stage and then, to the accompaniment of zany, carnivalesque music, the actors came on stage with clownish mannerisms carrying various props and pieces of the set. The prop of the double-sided picture, with Karl Marx on one side and "Copenhagen Twilight" on the other, creates a humorous conversation between Pavel and his 'Mummy' about how one should appear under the new communist regime. The painting also links to the motif of double-sidedness amongst the characters in the play. For instance, Olymp Valerianovich Smetanich is a merchant who wants to make friends with communists for bureaucratic reasons while he secretly mourns for the return of the imperial order. Pavel pretends to be a communist of high standing so Olymp Valerianovich's son, Valerian,

with a sheet when guests arrive. Figuratively, the gun also connotes the tense political climate, where the old regime (symbolized by the dress of "Anastasia") is simply 'covered up' and citizens are unsure about actions that may 'set off' the new authorities. The dress, while playing a large role in the mistake of the maid/cook for a returned Anastasia, imperial royalty, also implies that authority and leadership are role-playing with costumes and scripts—roles which the maid/cook "Nastia" has learned to play from pulp fiction romances.

The prop of the "rather dangerous chest" perhaps invokes Nastia's bosom, which incites both Ivan's desire and, while she in the dress, inflames a desire for the old order. Meanwhile, the wooden chest serves various uses in the plot twists and comedy of the play, such as storing the infamous dress that belonged to the former Empress Alexandra Federovna. Tamara Leopoldovna asks Pavel's mother Nadejda Petrovna to look after the dress for her, claiming that "In this tiny chest lies all that remains of Russia in Russia" (I) Tamara asks, "whoever's going to save Russia these days, Nadejda Petrovna, if it isn't you or me?" (I). The chest, in which "Nastia" becomes locked wearing the dress, thus comes to symbolize a repository of nostalgia for the old order and the hopes for its recovery. As Olymp Valerianovich describes, "I saw it myself, with my own eyes. Just here. Right on this spot. I saw our dear beloved Motherland, our true and authentic Mother Russia rise like a phoenix, out of the chest" (III).

However, because it is only the maid/cook Nastia whom they are describing, and it is Ivan Ivanovich who is actually inside the chest at this point, the notion of a "true and authentic" identity or political system for the country comes into question. In some ways, though, Nastia *is* an 'authentic' member of the working class—one who cleans and cooks

but fantasizes of being an aristocrat, much like Pavel entertains dreams of being a high-ranking communist. Indeed, the play equally satirizes the notion of "true and authentic" proletarians as Pavel hires jobless, homeless street people to play the role of proletarian connections for him in exchange for liquor and appetizers. Ivan charges Pavel with being an "imposter," not a "true communist" (III). As Pavel's mandate turns out to be a forgery, Olymp Valerianovich laments that everything is unreal: "That's it! It's all over. It's all ruined. Everyone's a fake. She's a fake, he's a fake, maybe even we're fakes as well" (III). Along with self-re

production, or the raised platform upon which Sweeney Todd 'takes care' of his customers. The set takes the form of planks with striking red light and smoke underneath, implying Hell and damnation, and a bath of red light overhead as Sweeney Todd slits the throats of his victims. The play represents the act of killing as a slitting gesture, a whistle blown, red liquid (stage blood) poured into a bucket and the bath of blood red light. The straight razor prop, of course, takes on significance in the performance as both an agent of aesthetics, beauty, shaving and a device of death. Likewise, the cutlass in *Playboy of the West Indies* is both a tool of harvesting, cultivation, farming and productivity as well as a weapon of violence.

While the striking shock of the red light in *Sweeney Todd* linked thematically to blood , violence and death, the hanging fluorescent lights used in *Julius Caesar* and *The History Boys* created different kinds of moods. The flickering fluorescent lights in *Julius Caesar* coincided with the bursts of mechanical sounds and brought to mind the staging of modern warfare both on the battlefield and in the administrative offices of governments. In *The History Boys*, the rows upon rows of hanging fluorescent lights connoted an oppressive institutionality and bureaucratization of education as well as the cold, sterile atmospheres of hospitals. In *By the Boy of Cats*, the lighting was decidedly atmospheric and haunting, often mimicking moonlight—a mood that resonated well with the liminal space of the play between dramatic realism and pure myth. The moon also alluded perhaps to the changeability of fate and questions of constancy or inconstancy of character.

At the National Theatre, our tour allowed us access to the prop workshops, including a close-up look at the books from *Fix-Up* and a daemon from *His Dark*

Materials. We discovered that all of the books on the massive shelves of the *Fix-Up* set were simulated versions of ones appropriate to the shop, though often only simulated covers due to copyright laws. Iof

After my own attempts to navigate the physical space of London and the plays I saw during my short visit, the playscripts and syllabus serve as maps for both understanding and memory of my theatre trip. Reading live performances must take into account their text as well as all of the aspects of staging as they connect to topics, themes and motifs. By the time I left, I felt fairly comfortable with many of the 'tube' lines and connections and began some of the intersecting trains of thought that make up this informal journal. It is only in hindsight that many of these connections become apparent, and the various rough threads I have traced in this journal only follow through with some of the possibilities for reflection that will emerge in the subways of my imagination in the future. Before I start making any more corny analogies, I'd better stop here and thank you, Dr. Peck, for a wonderful time in London. I got along very well with my roommate, Geoff, and we had many interesting conversations in our room about the plays and life in general. I also enjoyed spending time with the undergraduates, the Master's student, Brenna. I was also thrilled to revisit London and see an old friend of mine who now lives there. Sincerely, I had a thoroughly enjoyable and educational trip. Given the chance, I would gladly do it again sometime.

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