

Freeing Text from the Tyranny of Meaning

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MFA Performance Practice as Research

June 2020

FOREWARNING

My project is applying process-relational philosophy to play texts as a means of freeing myself from the tyranny that meaning has held over my practice as a director. In service of which, I ought to start by refraining from summarising this project to avoid the pretence that whatever I may write would be authoritative – or meaningful. Even now, as I encounter it again by reading, this text no longer means what I thought it meant when I wrote it, and this is, in part, what my work attempts to address. To recap this work with a formal abstract of 300 words or less would be to deprive you of encountering it from your own chosen entry points.

Though I am not inclined to decide for you what this work is about, nor what it may mean, I will list some things that will prepare you for what the text asks of you when you read it.

1. Print it out. This paper was intended to be read on paper.
2. If you can't print it, don't worry about it.
3. Read it somewhere you can speak out loud without embarrassment.
4. You'll need a pen or pencil, something to write with by hand.
5. Have a device nearby that can record your voice and play it back.
6. Post-it notes or scraps of paper you can write on will be useful.
7. Don't feel any pressure to read it all in one sitting.
8. There's no need to read it in any particular order.
9. You don't have to understand what everything means in this paper.
10. Nothing on this list is crucial.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Culminating two years of thinking, this work was finished to fulfil a degree requirement – even though it is not finished nor is it undertaken just to fulfil a degree. In ways large and small, this paper is in co-authorship with you who read it, and also with:

Experience Bryon
Rachel Cockburn
Clio Unger
Ruthie Osterman
Luis Campos
Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca

Parke Fech
Kyle Nudo
Ariel Sobel
Caitlin Stegemoller

Tanya Beyeler
El Conde de Torriefiel
Bush Moukarzel
Dead Centre
Annie Dorsen
Thomas Ostermeier

Daniel Hall-Flavin

and many others on post-graduate courses at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, especially the students, tutors, lecturers, mentors, workshop leaders, and alumni from the Performance Practice as Research course.

Thank you.

DECLARATION

What follows is free of plagiarism.

I understand the School definition of plagiarism and hereby declare that all sources drawn on have been formally acknowledged.


Signed

18 June 2020
Date

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The first text in my paper

You probably read the previous page silently to yourself, which is expected. It may sound obvious, but from now on when you see text printed plainly in this typeface, you are meant to read it silently to yourself.

Now, please say the following sentence aloud:

This is the first text in my paper.

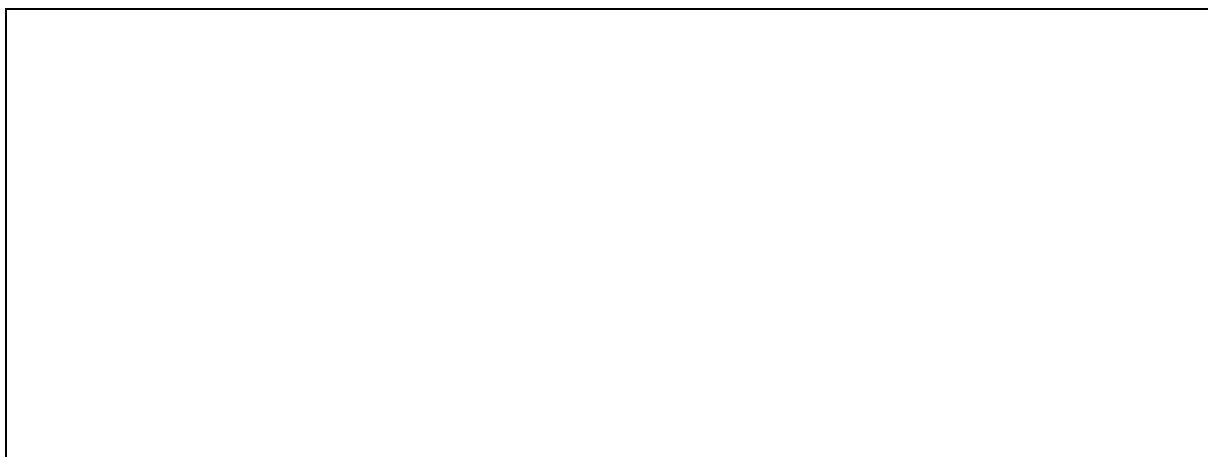
Thank you. Now take a moment to think about how speaking aloud was different than reading silently.

From now on, whenever you see words inverted in a black background **like this**, you are meant to speak them aloud. Don't worry, I'll remind you when the time comes.

If you could not speak the words aloud for some reason (perhaps you're in a public place?), I would suggest that you find a time to read this paper when you are able to speak out loud, write things down, and play recordings from your own recording device. I would also suggest that you read from a printed paper copy, but if you only have access to an electronic PDF version, I urge you to read it on a device that has a keyboard.

Please use the space below to type the sentence or, preferably, write it down in your own handwriting. It's OK if someone else has already written it; go ahead and add yours:

This is the first text in my paper.



Thank you. Now take a moment to think about the ways in which writing was different from speaking aloud and reading silently.

Hereafter, when you see words printed *in this typeface*, you are meant to type them or write them in your own handwriting.

Now, take a moment to record yourself speaking these words on your phone or other recording device:

• • • ***This is the first text in my paper.*** • • •

Now play the recording and listen to yourself speaking.

Thank you. Take a moment to remember the sensation of listening, and how that is different from writing, speaking, and reading.

From now on when you see bold text with three dots (• • •) before and after, you are meant to record those words and play them back to yourself. I'll remind you.

You've now encountered the same collection of words in four different modes: reading, speaking, writing, and listening. These encounters form a footing from which to peer into the complex relationships between text and meaning in performance. Here it's important to clarify that my investigation into text extends only as far as theatrical production or performance, though the principles I aim to describe could apply elsewhere, in contexts wherever words appear.

You've taken some time to think about the four ways you encountered the same text: the differences between them, and the experience of encountering text in each way. So now take a moment to think about the *meaning* of the text you encountered. Do you know what I meant when I first wrote it down? And now, having read it, do you think it still means the same thing as I intended it to mean? Do you agree with it? Why or why not? How would you convey that meaning to someone else? This rabbit-hole of questions appeared for me every time I direct a play in search of meaning. But recently I've redirected my practice in such a way that allows me to approach text free from these questions.

Gilles Deleuze in a 1987 lecture on Alfred North Whitehead proclaims, '*Il n'y a pas de choses, il n'y a que des événements, tout est événement*' (Faber and Stephenson 2011: 11). In English: There are no things, there are only events, all is event.

Now say that out loud: **all is event.**

And now, type or (preferably) write this down in your own handwriting:

if all is event, what becomes of text?



Thank you.

Reframing text as an event in process freed me from 25 years of performing a particular kind of text analysis that, for me, had run its course. As a director of classic plays, I had been trained in techniques to convey the *meaning* contained in the text to an audience; which first requires finding out what the author's meaning is and how to interpret it. Therein lies the problem this work aims to address: who's meaning is it, and, if the text conveys the author's meaning, why stage performances of 400-year-old meaning – or even 40-year-old meaning? If it is the original author's meaning on stage, then representing the intentions of a long-dead author is a weighty responsibility and a daunting task. But, if meaning is an *event*, as opposed to a *thing* the author fixes in place, that would change my task as a theatre director. So, with an inkling of how a simple shift in thinking could lead to a complete retooling of my praxis, I undertook a practice as research (PaR) inquiry applying philosophical concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988) to my work, which then led me to intersect strands of process-relational philosophy, sociology, mathematics, and metaphysics over the course of nine months. I have assembled these concepts as a lens through which I examine my own intermedial¹ studio work, the work I see as an audience member, and the performance practices of two European theatre companies, in order to find ways of reframing *text as event* within a performance philosophy of becoming.

¹ My understanding of 'intermedial' is informed by Robin Nelson (2010), summarised by Luis Campos as 'a triad of performative interactions between performers, spectators and the media itself at the moment of the performance encounter' (Campos 2014: 15).

READ FROM THE MIDDLE

A quick exercise:

1. Mark this page: hold it with your finger or note the page number
2. Flip or scroll through this paper and choose any page randomly
3. Read some of that random page until you have a good idea of what it means
4. Come back to this page after having read from the middle and continue:

Part Three explores more fully the reason I asked you to do what you just did, but in short, reading from the middle is a simple way to illustrate my practice. The idea you got from the text-event on the page in the middle of this paper informs the ideas you are getting from the text-event you are having right now by reading this page. No text in this paper is more or less important than any other. Take sentences, for example: if I were to change or delete this sentence, it would have an effect on the whole paper in the same way as if I changed or deleted a sentence that you just read on the page you chose at random from the middle. Furthermore, what this very sentence means in and of itself is different than what it means in relationship to what you've already read (including when you skipped ahead to the middle).

Right now, this sentence is becoming a sentence. Also, one sentence is made up of infinite sentences: ideas, concepts, and prehensions² that you are constantly assembling and reassembling from others that came before or after this moment, and also from somewhere in your head, in the room you're in, internal arguments you may be having with what I am saying, your phone that just sent a notification, words and phrases that are not even in this paper. In this sense, thinking of text as an event from the start equalises your process of meaning-making with mine who "wrote" this paper, making us co-authors. The same co-authorship applies to performance texts that generate multiplicities of meaning when performed in a room full of co-authors such as yourself.

² Alfred North Whitehead defines *prehension* as 'uncognitive apprehension' (Whitehead 1925: 69) which 'refines and develops the kinds and layers of relational connections between people and the surrounding world. As the "uncognitive" in the above is intended to show, these relations are not always or exclusively knowledge based, yet they are a form of "grasping" of aspects of the world. Our connection to the world begins with a "pre-epistemic" prehension of it, from which the process of abstraction is able to distill valid knowledge of the world' (Herstein 2019).

ABOUT TEXT – AND THIS TEXT

Text is a word that encompasses many concepts, especially in performance contexts; it's an imprecise word; like *love*, it can mean many things. My present work refers to classic Western play texts. As such, for me the word *text* can mean an entire play or any portion thereof – a scene, a sentence, a word, as long as it is written down so that it can be read by someone else. This definition follows Richard Schechner's distinction between 'script' and 'text' where the latter is a written document (Schechner 1988: 68). I would add, however, that text can also be spoken speech, as long as it's recorded or remembered so that someone may hear it or encounter it in the future. But to be clear, my use of the term *text* can also refer to any pre-determined, written form of language that represents an indication of what happens in a theatrical performance: dialogue, stage direction, choreography, design choices, and the like. In this way, my usage of *text* is closely aligned with Experience Bryon's definition that 'includes all types of material that are *prescribed* (pre-scribed, written beforehand)' (Bryon 2014: 193, original emphasis).

Bryon positions *text* in the philosophies of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes where text is a process, and usage of it is an event (Bryon 2014: 41-43). My notion of text as event aligns well with deconstructionist literary theories such as Derrida's 'iterability' (Derrida 1988: 7), Barthes' 'methodological field' (Barthes 1986: 57), or JL Austin's 'locutionary act' (Austin 1975: 100), but these theories necessarily treat text as a thing – an object – to be deconstructed. There is a difference between the *usage* of text being an event and text *itself* as an event. I am interested in the latter. So, rather than looking through the lens of literary theory, I make my argument based on process-relational philosophers through a performance philosophy of *becoming*, where text is event.

There is a footnote you may or may not want to read.³

Part One of this paper explores how thinking through the lens of 'becoming' (Faber and Stephenson 2011: 7-10) sidesteps the problems of deconstructionist thought, placing text into a non-hierarchical 'assemblage' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 148) – a one-and-many relationship – where it can live as a pure event in flux, in which the boundaries of authorship are permeable and multiplicities of meaning are produced rhizomatically, as opposed to text *containing* meaning that is transmitted in a straight line from author to audience, as in prevailing approaches to text analysis.

³ I can't control the way in which you encounter the text in this paper, but it is written in parts, in a particular order that (at the time I wrote it) made sense to me. You may want to read it in a different order, or skip around if you get antsy, which is perfectly fine. Howsoever you choose, I do hope that you will take the time to follow through on the prompts for speaking aloud, writing, and listening, in addition to reading silently.

Part Two offers alternatives to traditional text analysis by introducing and defining key philosophical concepts applied to text: immanence, representation, assemblage theory, (re)territorialisation, flux, and temporality. These terms will be used throughout other parts of the paper. Text is redefined once it's freed from the transcendent linearity of meaning: we need no longer ask what text *is*, but what text *does*; what it becomes. And, since performance has its own kind of thinking (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 3), here I offer a performance philosophy that I call the *text event*.

Part Three explores the effects of mediatisation of the text-event in practice – as with the four modes in which you encountered text at the beginning of this paper. Each mode reassembles the text through a different medium, each having qualitative differences that affect the assemblage of meaning. You may very well start with this section, which asks questions about how electronic interactions with text may affect contemporary theatre practitioners, and how performance informs the differences between modes of text encounter, and vice-versa. Specifically, I delve into my own rhizomatic practice and the ways mediation of text in a mediatised world has become a central pillar of my research. In addition, I examine the works of Annie Dorsen, Thomas Ostermeier, and Simon McBurney, as a means of understanding simultaneity and aleatory: two key concepts in the assembly process of continuous co-authorship.

Part Four delves into the silent text encounter of reading in performance through Barcelona-based El Conde de Torrefiel's production of *La Plaza*, in which there is no speaking. In their text-forward praxis, phrases appear on a screen while various stage images are formed by faceless actors. The spectator, therefore, is left to form a narrative based on the juxtaposition of unspoken words and unrelated images. The lead "actor" is the text event, and the primary "voice" is that of the spectator reading silently to herself. Her relationship is therefore not with the actors, but with the auto-affective self. I apply concepts from Deleuze's essay on non-representational theatre, *One Less Manifesto* (Murray 1997) to better understand how a praxis of subtraction and juxtaposition create a platform for rhizomatic text events. Meaning in *La Plaza* – like in the mediatised spaces we occupy in the world – is beyond the control of the writer-director-performer, it is assembled by the spectator-participant in multiplicity.

Part Five introduces problems in working with classical play-texts in performance that rely on historically calcified, inherited dogma controlled by the false idea of directorial and textual authority. I approach these issues through the practice of the Dublin-based theatre company Dead Centre who provide ideal examples of how text-event thinking can transform classic play-texts from tracings of historical expectations into consciousness-raising experiences that are relevant to a technologically connected world. They do so by foregrounding the author's and director's intentions, neither of which can control the

performance. By disrupting the notion that textual authority is not fixed, they create new pieces of theatre through texts by Chekhov and Shakespeare, positioning text as a map, whereby rhizomatic connections between past and present, intention and chance, expose a network of co-authorships between the playwright, director, actors, designers, technicians, and spectators.

Though most of this paper is spent defining, positioning, and clarifying the methodological lens of the text event as it applies to performance practices, it's important to remember what is driving this inquiry... *freedom*. In order to better understand freedom, I also spend a good deal of time talking about authorial control, especially in Parts Three, Four, and Five. Once freed from a hierarchical transcendence of authorship, the practitioner gains an entirely new kind of control over their craft: one that acknowledges and works within a world of flux – the constant movement of events. Awareness of meaning as multiplicity opens up one's performance practice to a wider connectome, which I think is essential if performance is to remain relevant in a mediatised world.

With that in mind, the bulk of this paper attempts to explain not why, but *how* to free yourself from the tyranny of meaning. It's simple, really, though it may sound complicated. Within the DeluzoGuattarian context of becoming, text-event thinking repositions words as assemblages in performance, where meaning is multiplicity: a shared authorship between the writer and all who are present. While this may indeed be said to some degree of any performance (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 146-7), text-event thinking gives theatre directors in an increasingly mediatised world a way to completely rethink how authorship occurs in performance, freeing the director from the transcendent control of an outside force. I have experienced that freedom as a reader, in the rehearsal studio, and with an audience. Text has traditionally been analysed as an object in the theatre, a thing to be described, understood, decoded. As such, meaning is seen as the key to unlock how a performance will be staged, and thereby meaning controls the work of the practitioner as would an outside sovereign, an author-god. But process philosophy teaches us that the author's original meaning doesn't exist as a constant: it can't persist unchanged in a world of flux. Therefore reframing text as an event frees the practitioner from the tyranny of meaning.

This is the core of my argument, so take a moment to record those words right now, so you can play them back to yourself later:

**• • • Reframing text as an event
frees the practitioner from the tyranny of meaning • • •**

Part One: This is not what you think

Say these sentences aloud:

This is not literary theory.

This is not text analysis.

This is not what I think it is.

In fact, this is not an *is* at all. It is *becoming*.

'Into the same rivers we step and do not step; we are and are not' reads an ancient Greek fragment attributed to Heraclitus (Curd & Graham 2008: 173). Plato paraphrased Heraclitus as saying that 'all things pass and nothing stays' and that 'you could not step into the same river twice' (Ibid.). And yet it's safe to assume you know to call the thing you stepped into a river, for that's what it is; and you know enough to know that you are you, because that is your being in the world. But the water that makes up the flowing river is changing even as you step into it, just as you are changing as you read this paper; the river and you are always in flux. This tension between permanence and change, being and becoming, has fuelled philosophical debate for millennia, where, 'by and large, unchanging Being has taken priority in Western philosophy' (Mesle 2008: 8). This paper prioritises becoming, as understood by process-relational philosophers Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and Deleuze and Guattari, whose work examines and extends a world in which 'the central feature of reality is becoming or process' (Robinson 2009: 16). Professor of Philosophy Dr. Keith Robinson connects these three process philosophers in the metaphysical ways they see reality:

The real is a fluid movement or creative force that expresses itself as a process of occasions (Whitehead), a flow of duration (Bergson) or an activity of differentiation (Deleuze). On this view reality is never complete since each moment gives something new (Robinson 2009: 16).

Becoming is defined as an ongoing dynamic process in 'constant change that never "is" but insists in between the "no longer" and the "not yet", pulling in both past and future directions at once' (Robinson 2009: 221). In this way, a *performance* can be easily understood as *becoming* because of its temporality, somewhere between past and future; and I propose that the same goes for performance text.

From here, I will problematise some approaches to text and briefly define important terminology. I do this in separate bursts, so that you are free make connections or refer back to these positionings in whatever ways are most helpful to you throughout the paper.

THE PROBLEM WITH LITERARY THEORY

Since language makes up a large part of my work as a theatre director, it would be an easy leap to look at the topic of text through the lens of literary theory. In fact, my work shares common ground with prominent theorists like Roland Barthes (1986), Jacques Derrida (1988), and JL Austin (1985), however, the more I operate from a basis of process-relational philosophy to encounter text, the more problematic literary and linguistic theories become.

Barthes, for example, positions text as a 'methodological field' (Barthes 1986: 57), and in many ways his propositions about text are in concert with my own: that it's non-hierarchical, and that the text is experienced only in an activity (Barthes 1986: 58, 61). In fact, Barthes set me on this journey, because he helped me conceive of the author as separate from the text:

The author is reputed to be the father and the owner of his work; literary science thus teaches us to *respect* the manuscript and the author's declared intentions... The Text, on the other hand, is read without the Father's inscription. ...the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*; if the Text expands, it is by the effect of a combinative operation... (Barthes 1986: 61).

However, even as Barthes likens text to a networking activity similar to what I will later define as a rhizomatic *assemblage*, he still positions the author as inscribed or contained somewhere *within* the text, and, if the text is a container for something, it is therefore being defined as an object. So, as much as I agree with the idea of text as network, Barthes' objectification of text is problematic. Furthermore, in laying out the difference between the work and the text, he repeatedly refers to text as an object (Barthes 1986: 58), and this is where I depart from Barthes.

To be clear, it is not my intent to remove meaning from words and utterances. In fact, it is only by studying and responding to Derrida's problems with 'literal meaning' (Derrida 1988: 2) and the indeterminability of 'context' (Ibid: 3), as well as Austin's reframing the power of words as 'performative utterances' (Austin 1962: 6) – that I am even able to articulate how I propose to approach words. As you and I performed together with the text in the introduction to this paper, process-relational philosophy claims that 'all is event', and therefore following this logic in my work, text cannot be considered a container or an object like Barthes, nor a sign or indeterminate conveyance like Derrida or Austin, but rather, a continual process.

EVENTS

Events ripple in time. Like Whitehead, for whom events are the building blocks of reality (Mesle 2008: 95), the *event* forms an important pillar of my work with text. My usage of the term has an ontological basis in process-relational philosophy, where 'events are relational and interlocking "movements" of activity out of which the actual makes itself' (Robinson 2009: 226). Unlike substance ontologies in which the world is made up of material objects that endure in space and time, in event ontology, events do not exist in the same way; they are fundamental, but not ever-present (Robinson 2009: 226). This is what I mean when I use the term. The *event* is temporal, an ever-changing intersection of multiplicities, intertwined with the concept of *becoming*, which I discuss further in Part Two.

CONCEPTS

Concepts are superpowers. 'We create concepts in order to transform life' according to Deleuze (Colebrook 2002: xxi). Concepts are therefore creations of immaterial events, and they have transformative powers – immaterial meaning *real*, but not actual. Whitehead says that 'concepts must "disclose the very meaning of things", but it is a conceptual disclosure that changes "the very meaning of things"' (Robinson 2009: 17). Professor Claire Colebrook explains it like this, which I find helpful:

At a material level the eye may watch one event following another, but the concept of 'cause' creates an immaterial event. We can now anticipate or expect events that are not given, or we can imagine what might happen, only because we have created a concept (of cause) that extends beyond the actual world we perceive to what we might expect or imagine. (Colebrook 2002: xxi)

Creating a table is to engage in a material event, but creating a concept is to engage in an immaterial event. It is on this real but immaterial plane⁴ I place meaning-making. To create meaning we need a concept: we go beyond the actual to what we *might* expect through an *imaginative speculation*, and that speculation is a primary process of text – which I will explore in practice in Parts Four and Five. I argue that *meaning* is created through an event in which text intersects with concepts. So, throughout this paper when I use the term *concepts*, I am referring to 'creations that testify to the positive power of thinking as an event of life' (Colebrook 2002: xxi), intrinsic to meaning-making, and not generalisations or labels used to describe the world.

⁴ This plane can also be thought of as *virtual*, as I discuss in Part Two: Assemblages. Text can be viewed materially, however, while materialism was a large strand of my initial research, it falls outside the scope of this paper. For more on materialism through a sociological lens, see Fox & Alldred 2017.

PERFORMANCE AS THINKING

In philosophical terms, a performance thinks differently than this paper. Process-relational philosophy ripples through my performance practice. But rather than thinking of performance as an *example* of that philosophy, I agree with professor Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca that performance *itself* is a unique kind of philosophy.

...what we might call *Performance-Philosophy*, beyond the tendency of both disciplines merely to *apply* philosophy to performance, to treat performance as the illustration of pre-existing philosophical thought, rather than as its own kind of thinking. ...However 'research' is only one way to construe how performance thinks; we need to keep our definition of research open, in order to include the new ways that performance finds to perform it (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 3, original emphasis).

This work of research, therefore, is more than one thing at the same time, it is research *about* a particular performance philosophy, it is a particular performance philosophy *as* research, it is thinking *through* performance practice, and, as I argue later in this paper, the text itself *is* performing. It's performing right now. In fact, this whole paper is a performance, where you the reader are also invited to become a speaker, writer, or listener, in shared co-authorship with the text you are encountering. In Part Three, I detail some ideas on co-authorship, which I mention here as an important performance philosophy concept through which the text-event thinks.

'Deleuze's definition of thought as creation allows us to suggest that *everything* thinks' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 4, original emphasis). Therefore, performance is a unique kind of thinking: the ineffable experience of participating in a performance as a spectator is a way of thinking, and everything immanent to that performance thinks as well, providing modes of thinking that cannot be achieved in any other way. Parts Four and Five of this paper attest to productions that, when encountered, synthesise dense simultaneities of thought, compressing and expanding concepts all at once in time and space. Only performance can create thought in that particular way.

THE PROBLEM WITH TEXT ANALYSIS

The prevailing wisdom I inherited as a director staging canonical Western plays goes something like this: the author writes a play that survives as a written text; the director analyses that text to decode its meaning, and then interprets that meaning through a production for an audience. If the audience doesn't understand the play *as intended*, the director has failed. In this way of thinking, meaning emanates in a straight line from the author, to whom all participants are in hierarchical service.

AUTHOR → Director → Production → Audience → MEANING

From now on I'll refer to this schematic as the **linear approach**. Though oversimplified, it summarises the school of thought in which I was taught. To be clear, this is not an ethical debate about theatre-making, and I am not arguing that there is anything wrong with the linear approach to creating a production. However, I would argue that linear approaches treat text as an *object* as opposed to a *process*, and thereby constrain meaning. To better understand how text analysis objectifies the text, here I offer a few prevailing analysis techniques proffered by leading theatre practitioners for comparison.

First, let's look at David Ball, who taught me how to read a play. Ball (1983) was the first literary director at the Guthrie Theater, and he formed my early approach to text analysis. That approach focuses on understanding the structure of cause-and-effect events in a play before concerning yourself with anything else such as Aristotelian character, thought, or plot, which Ball argues 'is a product of other elements' (Ball 1983: 5). He defines a play as a series of actions, and in order to understand a play, we must discover 'what happens that makes something else happen' (Ibid.: 10) in a sequential analysis, 'like dominoes toppling one onto the next' (Ibid.: 14). Reversing the sequence reveals the events that were required to topple the adjacent domino. In analysing a script, he first eschews the abstract, saving for later examination whatever is personally subjective such as character, image, and theme:

...character is drama's most subjective element, because we each perceive a particular character differently, depending on our own natures. The best reading approach is to discover the skeleton of character as revealed by action (Ball 1983: 67).

Images evoke and expand, rather than define and limit. They call up associations that are not precisely the same from audience member to audience member... (Ball 1983: 75)

Theme is not meaning; it is a topic in the play. Theme is a result; it emerges from a script's workings, so examine a play for theme after you are thoroughly familiar with the play's foundation elements (Ball 1983: 78).

What strikes me about Ball's 'technical manual for reading plays' is that it doesn't examine the act of reading. This is not to say his analytic techniques are faulty, quite the contrary, but what of the text itself? How does one first encounter the text of a play, and how does that process of encounter affect the practitioner? His approach in which chronological events are building blocks for all-important actions leaps right over the building blocks of those events: text. Reading is thereby taken for granted. Ball deals deftly at how to discover the structure of a play, but he ignores the process by which those structural ideas are revealed. In so doing, the text is objectified. That is to say, it's not a process: text is a means to an end. An athlete who eats food only for its energy bypasses its taste, its ability to satisfy hunger, or any number of aesthetic, emotional, sensual, or *subjective* things food may have to offer. In the same way Ball teaches the director to consume text only for the actions contained within it. Thereby, text is subjugated to something he deems more important than the event of *encountering* the text, in an effort to avoid subjectivity.

My work leads me to question Ball's subjugation of the text. The very subjectivity that Ball insists must wait until after cause-and-effect actions are defined may very well be the key to unlocking a play. The qualities of the initial encounter with the text may enrich—or disrupt—the director's understanding of the play, and what if that subjective encounter *is* the action of a play? I think this question is important enough to say out loud:

What if the subjective encounter with text IS the action of a play?

British theatre director Katie Mitchell lays out a process to 'extract information from the text' by 'imagining every character at every moment' in order to 'build an imaginary world...using ingredients from real life and circumstances suggested by the text...' so that the actor may 'slip inside the skin of a character and enact credible emotions, thoughts, and actions' (Mitchell 2009: 2-5). Her practical approach to analysing a play by a dead writer involves the director making detailed lists of facts and questions, creating exhaustive character biographies and back-histories, forming maps and geographies, and tracking circumstances and events, all in an organized chronology scene by scene (2009: 11-43). She then lays out ways to explore 'the big ideas of the play' by investigating the writer, the genre or style, and the 'ideas that underpin the text' (2009: 44-51). If a director were to complete all of the detailed analysis Mitchell suggests, the director's notes would generate more writing – more text – than the play itself. In this approach, a parallel authorship is created between the dead playwright and the director.

Unlike Ball, Mitchell doesn't ignore the act of reading. She brings it up right away and cautions against the feeling of 'falling in love' with the text; she sees excitement as a barrier to careful reading, where 'your eye slides and skids over the words, every now and again concentrating on a section you particularly like' (Mitchell 2009: 3). She also contends that 'affinity' – things you are drawn to in the play that relate to your own life – is an obstacle that can 'get in the way of your understanding of the text, much like the radio static that interferes with the reception of a programme you are listening to' (Mitchell 2009: 3). Rather, her practice of reading a play is a complex imaginative exercise:

Learning to hold the whole picture of what the audience will see in your head as you read the text is critical. Do this by running the action of the play in your head as if it were a slice of naturalistic cinema. Imagine what the audience will be looking at frame by frame (Mitchell 2009: 4-5).

While she exhibits respect for the text, Mitchell's approach asks the director to use the play-text as a means to write something else: a psychological timeline for everyone and everything in the play. The text's *underpinnings* as imagined by the director essentially replace the text itself as a means by which to approach the play in rehearsal, and thereby the encounter with the text is minimized in importance. It's as if she's asking the director to read *through* the text, like prying open a door that leads to another room. In that sense, the text is merely a means, a gateway.

My work challenges this line of thinking. Mitchell sees danger in a director being in love with the text, sliding and skidding through it, the relationship between text and reader formed in a non-linear, less chronological, uneven way, but I propose that the radio static of affinity may be essential in assembling meaning. Take a moment to say that out loud:

What if affinity with the text is essential in assembling meaning?

Unlike Mitchell and Ball, director and author Avra Sidiropoulou embraces the idea of affinity as essential to inspiration: a 'blessing and a necessity' that she describes as 'a sincere instinctual attachment ... which activates the imagination, generating a mood for reflection and a desire for expression and participation' (Sidiropoulou 2019: 5). She places importance on emotional engrossment with the text, and the

interaction of the context provided by the written words and the director's life experience. As a result, interpretation is negotiated as an inspiration-based encounter, where meaning is produced both individually, in the mind of the director, and jointly, in the dialogue between the director, the company, and the text (Sidiropoulou 2019: 7).

At first glance, this encounter-based thinking lends itself to framing text as event. Sidiropoulou comes closest to the philosophy this paper aims to define because she places the production of meaning within a nexus of shared authorship. She likens the relationship of director and text as a 'series of first dates with a prospective lover', which is in opposition to Mitchell's reticence to fall in love with the play. But then, Sidiropoulou describes text as 'encrypted', and 'when you analyse a text, you ultimately decode its performativity...' (Sidiropoulou 2009: 86). This act of decoding is 'an undertaking both analytical and synthetic' in which one gathers textual 'clues for grasping its complexity of meanings' (Ibid.: 87). So, as much as she values instinct, affinity, and text encounter, she too relies on a linear approach, where text is objectified as a kind of code, and the director is instructed to use that code to unlock a way of performing it.

Linear approaches to text analysis teach us that text is meant to be *used*, not *encountered*. As analysed by Ball, Mitchell, and Sidiropoulou, text is consumed by the director to expose the foundational structures of action, write co-occurring chronologies, or decode meanings to be transmitted to an audience in performance. My interest is in what happens when the director no longer treats text as a *thing* to be used for another purpose, but as a *process* in flux, where instinct, affinity, and associative thinking are valued from the start. Again, nothing about these approaches is wrong, but my aim is to develop a practice in which the director acknowledges that text acts on its own, and that the director is one node within a rhizomatic network of continuously co-authored text encounters. So, I must sidestep the notion that the director is the first stop in a hierarchical line emanating from a transcendent author, charged with the task of interpretation.

Part Two: A performance philosophy of the text event

It's a simple concept, text as event. In Part One I touched on a philosophy of becoming, where 'all is event' (Faber and Stephenson 2011), so perhaps the idea of text as event sounds understandable to you already. But my work is limited to text within the context of Western theatrical performance, so it's important to apply the 'all is event' thinking specifically to the production of plays.

AN ORIGIN STORY

One dark winter night, sitting alone in my studio trying to read a Shakespeare play, I discovered a long-simmering rebellion within me, fighting against the things I had been taught about the task of analysing text. Like being lost in a forest, Shakespeare's texts can sometimes be disorienting and impenetrable. To find my way through classical thickets of words toward meaning, I have often found it useful to read plays out loud. That night, without the pressure of a looming production, I wondered why. Why in my experience does speaking aloud help me better understand the words? What happens to the text and its meaning when I read the words out loud vs reading silently? What do these two different modes *do*? When I speak aloud, is it even still text? If text becomes something else when I speak it, then why not when I read it – or write it? Whilst speaking the text aloud, I wrote down one word from each line of the text on notecards. I didn't plan which words to write, nor did I think too hard about why I chose each word. My one-word notecards transformed the path toward meaning into a clearing in the woods. I was an *author* writing text of my own, and I was less concerned with finding the *original* meaning and more aware of the *relationships* between my own words and the author's. The in-betweenness of authorships gave rise to a practice of text encounter that was not linear.

By combining multiple simultaneous encounters with text, what emerged was a rhizomatic network of meanings – multiplicities – as opposed to a line of meanings passed down from the transcendent figure of a single author, increasingly degraded as tracings from its *original* meaning; nor was that network of meanings concerned with how the text fits within a chronology. That winter evening, I banished meaning from the room, and its tyrannical hold over my practice. That single act of banishment led to a year-long intermedial PaR inquiry imbued with theories of process philosophy to form an investigation into the relationships of words and meaning in performance. In so doing, I positioned the play-text as a multiplicity of authorships through which meaning is assembled in a live encounter. I explored new ways of encountering text and found – as you may have at the very beginning of this paper – that there was an important difference between the textual modes of reading and speaking, as well as writing and listening. Before going into greater detail of my work in exploring textual modes in Part Three, my present task is to position those modal differences within a larger performance philosophy, which is what Part Two attempts.

In a performance of a scripted play, the text is generally spoken aloud by the actors. Let us try to test whether performing a play aloud inherently reframes the written text as an event by speaking it. Speak these familiar words aloud, and do your best to make sense of them:

**To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them?** (Bate & Rasmussen 2008: 3.1.62-66)

Did speaking just then make the written text into an event? What happened just now when you spoke aloud? Did you already know the words? Were you remembering the words from a different time and place? Did they mean anything to you? Did you listen to yourself? Were you happy with how you spoke them? It's safe to say that certain things happened as you spoke that are not happening as you read this text silently. At minimum, the mode in which you were consuming the words on this piece of paper, changed: your encounter with the text went from the voice in your head to the voice you produce by speaking. What happened in that shift? What did your speaking actually do to the written text? Anything? Nothing?

Take a look at the text again, silently:

To be, or not to be, that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them?

Can words on a piece of paper or a screen be an event? Did reading the words silently to yourself have an effect on the text? Do you hear a voice in your head when you read silently? And what of the meaning, did that somehow change? Does it matter that the text is over 400 years old? Where is the meaning contained? If we could answer that question, who's meaning would it be? The author's? Shakespeare's? Yours? Your 10th grade English teacher's? What of my written text that you are reading at this very moment? How is its meaning derived? How many meanings might there be to these words? To Shakespeare's?

Before I approach this long, annoying string of questions about reading vs speaking (which I cover in Parts Four and Five through performance practice), it's important to understand a concept that may render these questions about meaning irrelevant: immanence.

IMMANENT THINKING

Immanence has no privileged external point of view. As a key aim of Deleuze's philosophy, Colebrook explains that

immanence has no outside and nothing other than itself. Instead of thinking a God who then creates a transcendent world, or a subject who then knows a transcendent world, Deleuze argues for the immanence of life. The power of creation does not lie outside the world like some separate and judging God; life itself is a process of creative power (Colebrook 2002: xxiv).

By applying this philosophy to the text of a play, suddenly the author-god disappears, and his creative power is subsumed within the creation itself: the text. Likewise, the director-subject and the reader-actor is not outside the creative process to analyse or decode it, they are within it. This distinction is essential in defining a performance philosophy where text is event.

One of the simplest ways I've found to shift your thinking toward immanence is through associative thinking. First, read the text below from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (Mahood 1987: 5.1.89-92), asking yourself this question...

...what does this text mean?

Portia	That light we see is burning in my hall. How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
Nerissa	When the moon shone we did not see the candle.

Take a minute to analyse it. What is it about? You could employ any number techniques from Part One (if you've read it), such as identifying actions, time, place, or circumstances, or decoding the text's performativity.

Now, here's the same text with a slightly different, immanent approach. When you are ready, read it again, but this time (though it may sound strange), close your eyes first and imagine yourself *inside* the text having never encountered it before, rather than looking at it from the outside. Then, instead of analysing it, ask yourself this question...

...what does this make me think of?

Portia	That light we see is burning in my hall. How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
Nerissa	When the moon shone we did not see the candle.

What do the words or phrases remind you of? What images does it conjure? Where do those images take you?

When I re-imagine my relationship to the text from within it, and once I stop using the text to perform an interpretive task, my point of view from inside the text is no longer a straight line emanating from the author, rather, it is now an evolving network of associations emerging around me from my encounter with the text, my experience in the world, and my understanding of the English language's utterances and effectuations. When I stop *decoding* from outside and think associatively from inside, Shakespeare's words and phrases begin to vibrate with 'continuous variation' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 109-110). For instance, the phrase 'good deed' appears simultaneously on a virtual continuum with every good deed I can conjure, and in every situation. Linguistically, it vibrates against and through its surroundings to form offshoots of meaning. As such, 'good deed' is not reduced to what I imagine Portia's meaning to be, 'good deed' is now *multiplied* beyond its content and its mode of expression. Placing it in variation 'builds a continuum or medium without beginning or end' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 110). I refer to this virtual relational network as *textual immanence*.

As a performance philosopher, Cull Ó Maoilearca characterizes Deleuze as a 'philosopher of *life*' where

life is variously conceived as ceaseless creativity and change, as the production of difference or novelty, as a proliferation of encounters between differing forces of affect, as a multiplicity of presents; in a word, as immanence (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 3).

Substitute 'text' in place of 'life' and a world opens up for the director where linear text analysis is no longer relevant. To practice textual immanence is to open one's self to a proliferation of encounters with text where meaning is not contained, it is encountered on an infinite, ever-changing continuum. So, the modes in which you encounter the text (reading, speaking, listening, writing) are simply part of its immanence, and your perception of the author's 400-year-old meaning is no more relevant than any other proliferation of present encounters with the text.

UNKNOWABILITY AND MEANING

To be clear, there is nothing wrong with text analysis. But one of the biggest limitations I find with a linear approach to text is the unknowability of the author's meaning. You may say that the author's intent is knowable because the text represents the author's meaning, and it is an instrument by which we are able to understand or decode it. That's what linear text analysis purports. But if an author's meaning is unknowable, as I am claiming, why would anyone bother to write anything down? Why write this paper? To help us with this problem, I'd like you to become an author for a moment, just to prove me wrong.

Please use the space below to write or type a brief sentence. Write it so that when it is read by any English-speaking person in the future, the reader will know what you mean.



I've done the same thing. Here is a sentence I wrote with the intention that my meaning would be known to any future reader:

The dog is asleep.

Objectively (there's that word *object* again), it is easy to understand what I mean to convey. In English, the word 'dog' refers to a domesticated canine, and the word 'the' denotes a specific dog as opposed to any dog. The verb 'is' denotes a state of being, and we find out with the next word that the dog's state of being is temporary, as the word 'asleep' represents a temporary state of unconsciousness common to animals, with which the reader will be familiar. The sentence is purely informational, and easily understood. As such, I am satisfied that any future English-speaking reader will know the meaning of my sentence, which might be expressed in a kind of "meaning chart" like this:

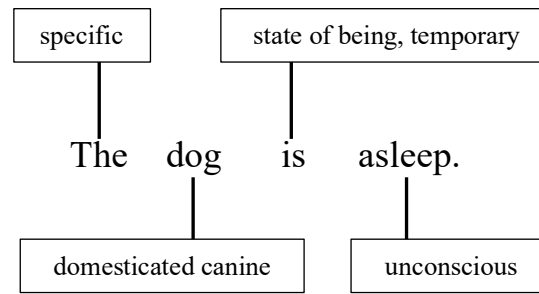


Figure 1

Are you satisfied with the sentence you wrote? If not, take some time to change your sentence now.

So, now that we've both managed to create text with knowable meaning, what is *meaning* exactly? Earlier I discussed process-relational philosophy, in which 'the world is composed of events and processes' (Mesle 2008: 8) as opposed to things. A linear approach seeks out meaning like a hidden treasure somewhere in the text, but I propose a relational, DeleuzoGuattarian approach to meaning explained by Colebrook:

Deleuze argues that the world is nothing other than an interactive plane of imaging or series of images, with each event in the world imaging or responding to every other (Colebrook 2002: 68).

With this in mind, take a moment to speak and record the brief sentence you wrote down. In your recording, try to capture the *original meaning* you intended:

• • • [record your sentence] • • •

Thank you.

I see text in the same way Deleuze and Guattari see the world. By refusing the notion of text as a collection of static objects, I accept that 'imaging' the text constitutes the text (Colebrook 2002: 68). This interactive plane of imaging is made of events, where 'one event of [text] apprehends a different event, creating two points, and each point of imaging has its own world' (Colebrook 2002: 69). In this interactive way, meaning is relational, conveyed in how one perceives the movement from one world to another – from one conceptual territory to another. Therefore, meaning is unknowable as a static object in the way that a linear approach defines text. Meaning is flux between events, it is always contingent.

ASSEMBLAGES

Concepts have an architecture, even though they're virtual. I am looking at meaning as a construction of the real, from a materialist, microphysical perspective as an *assemblage*: a rhizomatic relationality where text has 'no ontological status or integrity other than that produced through [its] relationship to other similarly contingent and ephemeral bodies...' (Fox & Alldred 2017: 17). What holds assemblages together are 'the capacities of assembled relations to affect or be affected', including expressive affects: thoughts, beliefs, desires and feelings (Fox & Alldred 2017: 18). So, if we think of the sentences we wrote as assemblages – in this case, of words – the sentences have no ontological integrity except through their relationship with other words. Moreover, those words belong to a larger system (the English language), and that system endows words with associations (historical, political, cultural), and I may bring personal associations to the words (when I hear the word "dog" I imagine my German Pinscher), and you may imagine something personal when you read the word "asleep"; and all of those associations are part of the *assemblage* of meaning(s) that you or I build for one simple standalone sentence. The longer the text, the more relational flux in play, the more imaging worlds created, and the more assemblages required. So, given all of these relational processes involved in encountering text immanently, how can it be said that the author's *meaning* can be known?

Earlier I asked, since an author's meaning can't truly be known, why even write this paper? Though my rhetorical question points up a problem with the premise that an author's meaning is unknowable, it is perhaps wrong to frame the unknowable as absent. The question, I think, is more one of where the author is positioned *in relation* to meaning. Once an author writes something down, her *original* meaning is co-authored by the next encounter with her text. So, it's not that writing this paper is futile in its unknowability, rather, as the author – as passionately as I may mean what I say in the moment of writing it – I must give way to your encounter as primary meaning-maker, I must give way to the manner by which you assemble meaning, and, even as I re-read it now, I am also re-writing my own text, which must be thought of as an event, a becoming, with you. In that becoming, a scaffolding of concepts is built in multiplicity as an image-creation: an assemblage.

REPRESENTATION

A linear approach analyses text as a stand-in for something: a concept, a thing, a feeling, an idea, which is meant to be understood by others; so, where text is concerned, it is important to acknowledge the concept of *representation*. In a linear approach, text is said to be a means of conveyance: a symbolic reproduction of the actual thing it's meant to represent. Text-event philosophy, however, looks at representation as a process of *real creation* itself, 'not a second-order mode of being, forever detached from and inadequate to some "thing" that is represented' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 5). Text and representation are inextricable in performance: '...that the processes of performance appear to us as signs of authorial intention or representations of ideas, is a real phenomenon. It is real, but it is also one process among others...' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012:12). So, rather than treating representation as the enemy⁵, I reframe it as one among other primary processes that text performs, which neutralises the representative and institutional power of text, diffusing its inherent transcendent authorial intention. Those other rhizomatic processes include variation, relational flux, reterritorialization, assemblage, and becoming-multiple.

Deleuze describes performance in terms of movement, or 'a state of continuous variation' (Murray 1997: 245-8). He argues that language and speech are in a 'reciprocal relation... in the same flux of continuity', both internal and external, with other non-linguistic components 'like actions, passions, gestures, attitudes, objects, etc.' (Murray 1997: 248). He describes theatre as a consciousness-raising, a universal-becoming, as opposed to something made for interpretation (Murray 1997: 256). It is with these processes in mind that I define representation – as applied to text – not as something standing in for another thing, but as a first-order process of creation in continuous variation.

What has become of your sentence? Take a moment to play back the recording you made of the sentence you thought up and wrote down:

• • • [play back your sentence] • • •

Does it still mean what you intended it to mean?

What do the words you just heard represent? ← This is a trick question.

⁵ Representation as the enemy is not hyperbole for Deleuze. His critical 1968 essay 'One Less Manifesto' (Murray 1997) positions representation as an ethical problem in performance by which institutional power and oppression operates. He offers a methodology to create a theatre of 'non-representative force' (Cull 2009: 5) that begins by 'deducting stable elements' (Ibid.) – an idea I return to in Parts Four and Five of this paper.

The sentence I wrote (“The dog is asleep”) may be easy to understand, but in performance, assembling meaning is more complicated. Taken on its own, the meaning (and perhaps even my intention as the author) is represented by the words, and they are easily understood by a reader of English. However, I have not yet come across a play composed of just one sentence, nor a playwright that creates a text composed solely of easily understood, separate, purely informational sentences (though I suppose such a play could be written). Since this paper is about performance texts, it’s useful to place my sentence in the context of a play. I encourage you to imagine your sentence as part of a scene from a play as well. Here I’ve imagined that Shakespeare wrote my sentence down in *The Merchant of Venice* in a scene between Shylock and his servant, Lancelot Gobbo. Imagine my sentence is meant to be performed in this sequence of lines – which I invented:

Shylock: What though they call me dog, and a cutthroat,
 They can no more accuse this dog a fool.
 Gobbo: Nay! No fool, good sir. **The dog is asleep.**
 And as in sleep, oblivious of its nose,
 From under which its supper dish is stolen.

It’s the same text, but now it is situated within a larger network of text in which the author’s original intent becomes multiple in the reader’s encounter. In that multiplicity, meaning departs from *representation*, and meaning no longer belongs solely to the author. The textual encounter’s ‘flux of continuity’ creates an assemblage on many strata: the specific, the metaphorical/hypothetical, the animal, the social/political, the humorous, the transactional, the religious, the racial, etc. – strata beyond what the author may have intended. If we were to chart my sentence again, as a network, within those five lines of made-up iambic pentameter, it might look something like this:

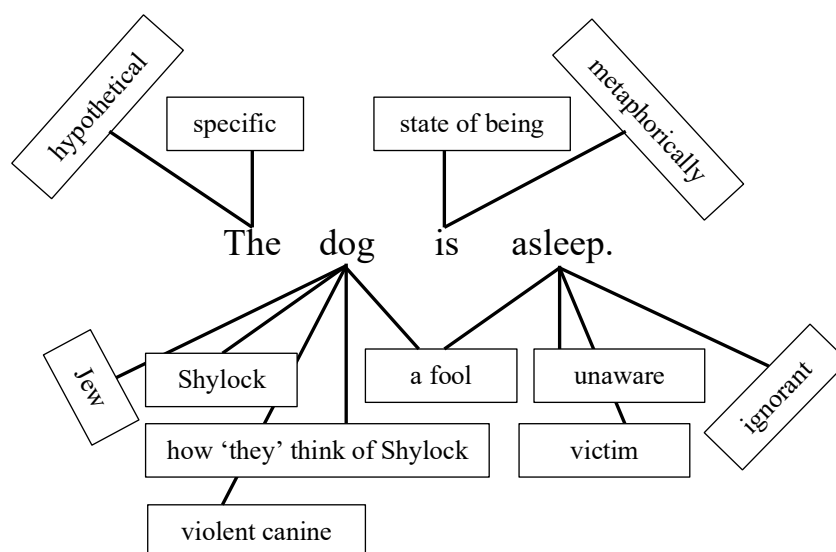


Figure 2

'The dog is asleep' is not a textual *representation* of a sleeping dog, it is its own creation: an assemblage of simultaneous associations in flux, comprehensible as multiplicity within a text event. The chart above (Figure 2) is only one of infinite possible maps. Textual immanence moves beyond representation; when we think immanently, the five lines of text are not standing in for something else, meaning flows *between* concepts: simultaneous meanings vibrating against the others, and yet all one textual organism, one *and* many. A play is made up of much more than five lines, so the implications of flux in a full play text are enormous, and the multiplicity of meaning, endless.

(RE)TERRITORIALISATION

Earlier I mentioned that each event creates a world and likened that world to a conceptual territory. I'd like to come back to that because de- and reterritorialisation are part of why I think text-event philosophy is important for theatre practitioners. In brief, it is a useful tool to make connections from one concept to another: the in-between-ness from the play text to the audience encountering it.

Deleuze used the term *territory* to describe connections in any form, and the transformative process of territorialisation as the 'connective forces that allow any form of life to become what it is' – and the inverse – deterritorialisation, 'can also allow it to become what it is not' (Colebrook 2002: xxii). I am using this idea in a virtual sense: when applied to text, a territory is a conceptual connection, not a physical one. In a plane of images, a territory is formed by the connective tissue between them that rises like a mountain range or flows like a river, carving the image-plane into conceptual borders – some more impermeable than others, but none impassable with the image-power of text.

The word 'territory' is useful as it conjures images of a place to dwell. I find it helpful to imagine text as a series of concepts that dwell within a territory. To reterritorialise is to relocate – and in performance this can be done by changing the dwelling-place, or by moving the inhabitant concept from one dwelling to another. The words "flesh and blood" may dwell in the territory of human biology, for example, but in performance, an actor could, by inflection and innuendo, move the concept of "flesh and blood" to a sexual territory. Likewise, a designer or director could move the dwelling-place of the phrase "flesh and blood" to an abattoir or a custody hearing, in which case, the same text that was once in the realm of human biology, when reterritorialised, it is suddenly an animal welfare, or parental, or legal concept. This streamlined application of a larger DeleuzoGuattarian theory will become important in practice in Part Three.

MULTIPLICITY, FLUX, AND TEMPORALITY

For Deleuze, language is 'a multiplicity of semantic worlds' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 74)⁶, which to me is an apt description of how meaning emerges from the text event. I think of multiplicities as a proliferation of conceptual events; an instantiation of something: 'multiplicities are what becomes, without ever reaching beyond becoming' (Faber & Stephenson 2011: 25). Derived from the field of mathematics, process-relational philosophers define 'multiplicity' in many ways, but in my work, I refer to multiplicity as *virtual*. Wholly internal to the process of their becoming, virtual multiplicities are 'real but not "actual"', and express 'the pure potentiality of the actual to become other' (Robinson 2008: 227-8). The delicate, whisper-thin difference between the actual (a number, a space, an object), and the virtual (an idea, emotion, a belief) is a critical distinction, and the virtual is useful when talking about a concept. Although written text does have materiality that could be considered actual, and rhizomes can connect to the actual, I am conceiving of text as an event, so, when applying multiplicity to the relationship between text and meaning, multiplicity remains virtual.

I've grouped multiplicity with flux and temporality because they inform one another. Time is intrinsic to event, and event is intrinsic to flux. Earlier I mentioned that an event is temporal, and that all is event: two important process-relational concepts. It follows, then, that nothing in the universe is fixed; all things move in time. Whether an instantiation of concepts or a collection of molecules, time changes what *is*, so what *is* is in *flux*. In this way, the entire Cosmos can be seen as a 'Chaosmos' of becoming (Faber & Stephenson 2011: 1-49). Deleuze challenges us to be neither a one nor a many, but multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 26). Thinking in these terms is a simple but subversive act that liberates text from the hierarchies of linear analysis and 'barbarian transcendence' (Robinson 2008: 208). Thinking in these terms has also liberated my practice from the tyranny of the author, who, as it turns out, doesn't even exist.

⁶ In this context, Deleuze is referring to spoken speech, not written text. However, as my work is limited to pre-scribed play texts, speech is herein considered a mode of text, and I find the notion of semantic worlds useful in defining multiplicity as applied to the text event.

DEFINING THE TEXT EVENT

The primary motivation behind methods of text analysis in the theatre is to find a way to understand it so that it can be performed, but by thinking about text immanently – as an event of becoming – the motivation shifts from “how will I perform this text” to “how is this text performing”. That is to say, using the text as a code to find out something else ignores the text’s intrinsic activity. Decoding text is not the text event. The moment my eyes, ears, hands, or imagination encounter it, the text is acting. Although in subsequent parts of this paper I will detail the mediatisation of text, I have, like Derrida, moved away from thinking of text *itself* as a medium (Derrida 1988: 1), because it objectifies text as a conveyance or container of meaning, as opposed to an event. In any text encounter regardless of its medium, the text is already acting, multiplying associatively, vibrating with difference, reterritorializing itself, rippling through folds of meaning, and becoming-multiple: becoming another text co-authored by those involved in the encounter. The mediums through which this happens (reading, listening, speaking, writing), and the simultaneity of those media, will affect the aleatoric outcome of co-authorship, which is a continuous process, as I detail through practice in Part Three.

The text event is happening whether we pay attention to it or not. My project is to notice the becoming of text, and I have developed that noticing, theoretically, into a performance philosophy so that a dramaturgy of textual immanence may emerge in practice.

This part of my paper defines key terms in process-relational philosophy as applied to text. At the beginning of Part Two, I asked whether words fixed on a piece of paper as text could be an event. But, after examining concepts like immanence, multiplicity, representation, (re)territorialisation, and flux, perhaps that’s not the question to ask at all. A text-event philosophy asks (out loud), **what is the text becoming?** It’s the ancient push-pull between being and becoming. Text is the moving river AND the one who steps into it. This simple (though not simplistic) philosophical shift in thinking about text is all I am after. It is decidedly anti-Platonic, eschewing the idea of univocal Being, rejecting dualisms whenever possible (Mesle 2008: 7-9). Once an author’s words are recorded, the temptation is to treat those words as though they are fixed with intended meaning, but text-event thinking teaches us to treat written or recorded words as a constant process in flux. And, once wrested from the controlling force of meaning, text is no longer a container, it is becoming-text. The text event *performs*; it ricochets through a ceaseless proliferation of encounters.

Part Three: Text in Mediation

Text in mediation

On my desk is a cacophony of text. There are fifteen books and three electronic devices: a phone, a tablet, and a laptop computer on which I'm typing these words. My ringer is on, and a minute ago I heard the sound of a bell notifying me that I had received a text message from a friend whom I'd messaged earlier today. Just now I received an email notification in a text bubble at the top right corner of my screen about a health advisory.

[This is where I succumbed to the temptation to read an email about coronavirus precautions and a case of mumps where I teach. When I resumed writing I had lost my train of thought. In trying to regain writing momentum, my eyes wandered over some of the book titles, and I wrote, deleted, and re-wrote several words and phrases to try to get started again, but then decided the words above expressed my point well enough, and it is perhaps a bit overmuch already, so I decided to move on.]

I am *mediatised* through text events, as is the world around me. And the modes in which I encounter text events will change how I assemble meaning. Today I will type more than I will speak, and I will read more than I will listen. Some days I will listen more than I read, especially if I watch TV, see a play, or hear a lecture. If I drove to work, I would listen to news on the radio for at least an hour a day, but on public transport I read my phone and advertisements. I can imagine that my interactions with text are similar to billions of other people in urban settings all over the world. In the past twenty years my communication has shifted ever more away from speaking toward writing, and from listening toward reading. My first instinct is no longer to speak, but to write, and for that reason it's fair to say that I have significantly increased my output as an *author* from the time before smartphones. Today I will speak with one person on the phone, and yet by ten in the morning I have already had brief conversations on three different apps with six people by writing text. I have spoken to no one in person, nor heard anyone speak to me (except in pre-recorded videos on my tablet and phone). And yet, I feel connected to the world, aware of other peoples' lives through social media, and more active than ever in communicating the little stories and pieces of my day through technology that didn't exist a decade ago.

Text changes the perception of time and space. For example (I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that) I count seventeen tabs open on my web browser. When I click on a tab, the words and images I encounter bring me to a different place in my imagination: a virtual destination that exists in the connection between me and some other-where, to which I am transported instantly by text. Another tab, another place on the web, a virtual location I can now say I've "visited" without leaving my chair. Likewise, time is affected by my electronic connection to text. Just this second a window popped up with a calendar reminder of a chore I need to attend to in ten minutes, changing my perception of time for a moment, and sending me into the future that the pop-up window represents. Whereas a

few moments ago I was deep in the present task of writing and unaware of time passing, I am now struggling to get my thoughts down as I become aware of the near future. These are very simple examples of how text is an event with spatial and temporal power, text to which I am ambiently, but intimately, connected. In this way, not only is the text event working in mediation, but I am also *mediatised*.

In one generation, I have become so used to encountering text through electronic media that I take it for granted. But how are electronic media different from, say, reading a newspaper? One way to think of it is that a print edition of the *New York Times* is like walking on solid ground, whereas scrolling through articles on a NYTimes app is like jumping through a wormhole.

In a nod to Donna Haraway (1991), Cyborg anthropologist Amber Case says, and I agree, I am effectively carrying around a wormhole in my pocket that can bend time and space and connect me to others instantly across the globe in ways that have never before been possible in human existence (Case 2010). A printed newspaper, however, is not a wormhole; it doesn't carry the connective power of an electronic device. Our connection to others through electronic media – our 'external brain' – creates an 'ambient intimacy', and even though we are all cyborgs now, we are also becoming more human (Case 2010). Early in my research when I looked at my own web of electronic connections through the lens of the text event, questions emerged around mediatisation that have resonance in performance contexts:

1. What are the differences between reading and listening to text in performance? Or, for an actor, how is reading different from speaking?
2. What does writing do to text that speaking doesn't do, and vice-versa, and, can that writing/speaking contrast be used in performance somehow?
3. Can performance help to better define these differences?
4. Can understanding these differences better improve the way we perform texts for a mediatised audience?
5. Does encountering the same text in different ways change its meaning?

I asked these questions as provocations for my solo studio practice in which I researched the nature of text encounter in a performance context, over the course of a six-month period from January to June 2019. Detailing parts of my PaR (which I mentioned in Part Two) will help in addressing possible answers to the questions above.

READING A PLAY AS A RHIZOME

This part of my paper applies text-event thinking in practice, using my work as a case study. With reading as a primary mode of mediatizing text, my early research focussed on disrupting the linearity of meaning-making by encountering the play text from multiple entry-points, rather than reading arboreally, top to bottom, start to finish. In the studio I made efforts to equalise myself with William Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams, who both loom large as transcendent authorial figures in my life, like giant trees with sturdy taproots. Their works tower over me with a thick trunk of production histories, large branches of literature and scholarship, and a leafy canopy of traditional norms that cast shadows over characters, scenes, and themes. Just the mention of a Shakespeare play forms strong expectations and assumptions in my mind long before reading the text. So, in an effort to equalise my own ideas with the fixity and authority of these oaken texts, I walked out of the forest and into the studio, where I deliberately worked against my usual linear analysis by employing sensory experiences that helped me rethink my relationship with text. Reading from the middle, eschewing cause and effect, I focussed on the subterranean micro-ecology of words, assembling and reassembling word-concepts by associative thinking, and slowly the words grew fresh stems from their conceptual nodes that blossomed in unexpected shapes and colours. This new way of reading a text emerged as an *encounter*, not an analysis. In fact, it can't really be called reading in a traditional sense, because my goal had shifted from understanding the meaning, to experiencing the text. I reframed my encounter with text as a *doing*, and I limited those encounters to the studio (as opposed to casual reading at home). The studio became a kind of "assemblage machine" full of music, movement, writing, and other sensory input like pictures and videos; an environment in which each word or concept was equal to and in connection with all its other associative parts. In this way, I applied Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) rhizome as a methodology to explore text as a network, a map, a multiplicity: a process that was freeing, both imaginatively and emotionally.

From the plant kingdom, Deleuze and Guattari appropriated the rhizome as a central pillar in their thinking about connective principles⁷, with far-reaching implications that eschew dualism (1988: 3-23). In language, a rhizome does not plot a starting point and proceed in a grammatic dichotomy, like a tree root. Since 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 5), it is a constant process of connection-making between signs and their objects: a collective assemblage of enunciation (Ibid.: 6). A rhizome also admits that language is connected to non-linguistic features (social, biological, political, economic, psychological, etc.) within a *machinic assemblage*

⁷ The principles outlined in their introduction to the Rhizome include: connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, asynonymizing rupture, cartography and decalcomania (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 3-20).

(ibid.) and therefore rhizomatic systems reject grammatical power markers and linguistic universals. Say it aloud:

Rhizomes are both subject and object; one and many.

As a practical example of a rhizomatic approach, metaphoring⁸ is a method I developed to create conceptual assemblages using words from classic play texts based on my own prehensions and associations in a sensory practice that engages my imagination. This process does not engage with the play’s larger *meaning(s)*, instead, it decentres the playwright and brings his words into co-authorship with my personal machinic assemblage in a particular time and space. Each session would begin with a three-minute meditation, usually with music. If I hadn’t chosen a section of text prior to the session, the first task after meditation is to choose what text I want to encounter without thinking too hard about it. Here’s how a session typically goes (a sort-of twelve-step programme):

METAPHORING: WORD-ASSEMBLAGE	
1	Play music that appeals to your mood without thinking too much about it
2	Choose a short section of a pre-selected text
3	Read it aloud
4	Choose words that call out to you while reading
5	Write each word down on a post-it note as you choose them
6	Rearrange the words into groupings that ‘make sense’ or appeal to you
7	Use those word assemblages to think of images that express them
8	Write down the images or phrases, or make drawings if so moved
9	Choose new music based on an image/phrase you particularly like
10	Remove the original word post-its
11	Combine the new images (from 8) and ask ‘what does this make me think of’?
12	Write down any metaphors, similes, phrases, or scenarios that come to mind

Table 1

A rhizome or multiplicity exists on a flat plane (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 8), and I found that this simple system put me on level ground with Shakespeare. In its best moments, word-assembly can create a personal mosaic: a metaphorical or conceptual picture of the play. At worst, it can cause confusion and send you on a tangent. The trouble with this list of instructions (Table 1) is its linearity; in reality, my studio sessions afforded the freedom to arrange and rearrange, skip ahead, start again, question my choices, or fail to come up with any metaphors at all. At no time does this method make me concerned with or burdened by meaning: it is a different way of knowing the text. As a result, I felt creatively free, perhaps for the first time, reading a classic play.

⁸ See Appendix A for an in-depth understanding of my metaphoring practice.

Here, try a mini-metaphoring session yourself...⁹ I've chosen a brief text for you to read aloud, from *Measure for Measure* (Gibbons 2006: 4.2.31-35). If you prefer to use a different text, feel free.

Follow steps 3-12 from Table 1. If you don't have post-it notes, just tear the following pages into smaller pieces.

There is a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow of justice;
For which I would not plead, but that I must;
For which I must not plead, but that I am
At war 'twixt will and will not.

⁹ ...but only if you want to.

[use this page for post-it notes if you need them]

A grid of dashed lines for post-it notes. The grid consists of a vertical dashed line running down the center of the page, and three horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly apart. This layout creates four columns and three rows of rectangular areas, intended for placing post-it notes.

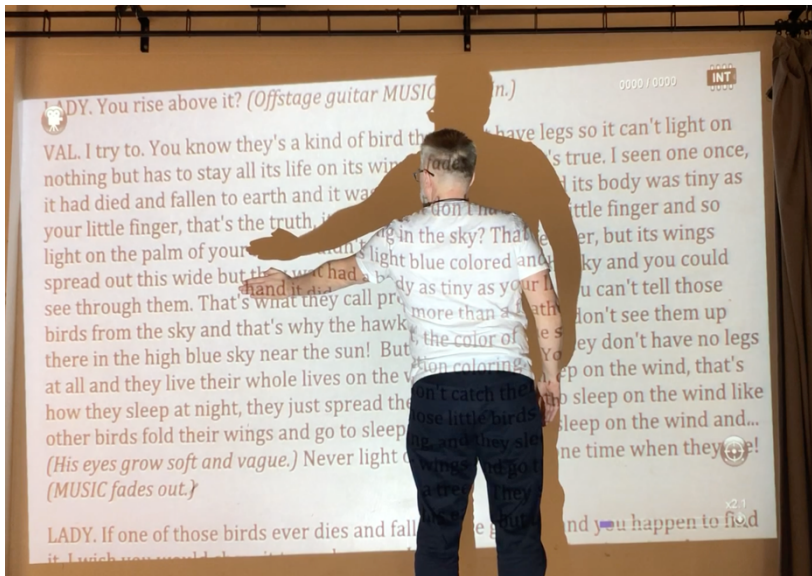


Figure 3

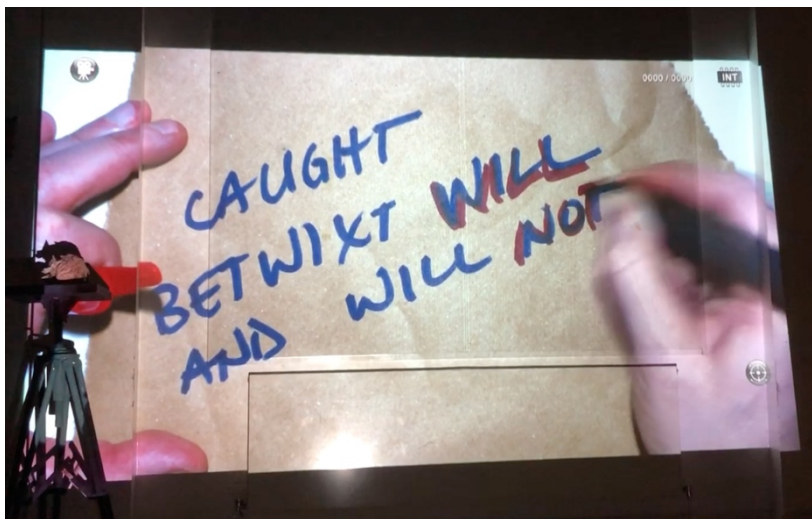


Figure 4



Figure 5

This metaphoring method evolved into a variety of sensory experiences beyond playing music, speaking aloud, and writing. I began mediatizing the text in other ways: projecting text on my body so that I could touch it (Figure 3), playing recorded text back to myself (using my voice and other peoples' voices), filming myself writing phrases projected on the wall (Figure 4), typing the text, dancing the text (Figure 5), and combining these text mediations in simultaneous combinations until I felt ready to delineate some emergent differences between *encounter* and *analysis* (Table 2).

THE PRACTICE OF READING PLAYS – TWO APPROACHES	
TEXT ANALYSIS	TEXT ENCOUNTER
Linear Approaching a play text by reading from beginning to end, backwards and forwards, in order to derive (or unearth/discover) what happens, what the play is about, how it's constructed, what it might mean to me, and eventually an audience.	Associative Approaching a play text from any entry-point, plucking out words and phrases to discover what they make me think of, with no agenda other than finding emotional conceptions of the play (or parts of it) that reflect my current state and connection to the world.
Hierarchical Cause-and-effect events, plot and subplots, main and minor characters, super-objectives, thematic through-lines, foreshadowing, etc.	Rhizomatic A network of interconnected nodes (concepts/bodies/ideas/ actions) in constant flux, defined only in relation to other nodes.
One TO Many How a word relates to a sentence, how a phrase relates to the scene, how a scene relates to the play, how a character functions in relation to a larger idea (plot, event, episode, theme, concept).	One AND Many Individual words, phrases, scenes are only describable insofar as they are networked with the collective assemblage of the whole. The connective tissues of these utterances make one many, and the many, one. When one part changes, the whole changes.
Contextual Understanding the author's worldview, the time and culture in which the play was written, and also the context in which the play is being read or produced.	Territorial Connections to the world-systems (political, social, environmental, etc.) that affect the person encountering the play text, without regard to the original author's context.
<u>The Doing of Analysis:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delineating events • Identifying fixed concepts • Uncovering layers of meaning • Defining what is signified • Noticing images and symbols • Studying from the outside 	<u>The Doing of Encounter:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering assemblages • Discovering connections in flux • Identifying strata of language • Noticing what is sensed • Connecting images with other images • Experiencing from the inside

Table 2

What emerged from my rhizomatic reading practice was an awareness of interconnectivity: the remediation of text (speaking, listening, reading, dancing, projecting, touching) gives me freedom to encounter the play from any entry point. The interconnectivity of the rhizome is analogous to the interconnectivity of the Internet, which I understand from the wormhole in my pocket as a constant ambient intimacy. So, I began thinking of a play as a vast social network in which each word (or scene, or character, or stage direction) as a node that sends out lines of connection to any other part of the play as well as lines of connection to things outside the play like concepts, social-political formations, historical events, personal emotions, and the like, in infinite multiplicity. The play text, then, is not a tracing¹⁰ of the author's words, it is a map: an ever-evolving schematic (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 12), like the connectome of the brain.¹¹

RE-DEFINING AUTHORITY AND AUTHORSHIP

Approaching text as a map fundamentally changed my practice, and after seven weeks of solo PaR, I began involving other people in my application of rhizomatic systems on the mediatisation of text. In addition to continuing my work with associative thinking on the text encounter, my group research focused on the text/authorship problematic following three main strands, including:

- Text mediatisation: surveying the qualitative effects of listening, speaking, writing, and reading in single and simultaneous intermedial events;
- Text as multiplicity: identifying and exploring rhizomatic structures of de- and reterritorialisation
- Disrupting hierarchies: experimenting with ways to decentre the control of the author and director in rehearsal and performance;

This work culminated at the BRINK Festival at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama on 1-2 July 2019 in two presentations entitled *Fun (Da) Mental (Text) Encounter* (Figure 6) in which five performer-participants and ~25 spectators formed a live rhizomatic encounter with text from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. The presentation mediated text in multiple ways, often simultaneously (speaking, writing, reading, listening, moving, watching), and in combination with provocative imagery and non-Shakespearian texts

¹⁰ Because Deleuze and Guattari call the rhizome 'a map and not a tracing' (1988: 12), one may be tempted to infer a reference to Derrida's 'trace' (Derrida 1988: 6), however there is no evidence linking to Derrida's term in this case. Here they set themselves at odds with binary logic, which they describe as 'infinitely reproducible and representative', likening it a tree, the structure of which 'articulates and heirachizes tracings; tracings are like the leaves of a tree' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 11-12).

¹¹ Recent studies in functional neuroimaging reveal meta-networking of brain functions that were, until recently, thought to be localised, but are now shown to be diffuse (Hebert & Duffau 2020); in other words, a network across the entire brain, like a rhizome.

written before and during the presentation in order to expose and examine co-authorship in performance, decentre the author, and foster aleatory as a means of learning how meaning may be created in multiplicity. The presentations were successful in some of the above-listed research strands, such as exploring the qualitative effects of mediatisation, reterritorialisation of text, and reframing meaning as multiplicity. Perhaps most exciting was seeing text *acting* on its own, with its own agency, as a performer would do (Figure 7). This unexpected emergence from the presentation is what led me to define the process-relational philosophy of text event.



Figure 6



Figure 7

Disrupting traditional hierarchies proved difficult during weekly studio sessions, in which a rhizomatic approach was taken with the goal of textual immanence and eliminating stratification in everything I undertook. One problem that faces any collective is the position of the director, who can be seen as a transcendent top-down presence of authority, outside the proceedings. Though I had recently conquered the idea of the author-god in my solo practice, my project takes up pre-existing classic texts, and that creates another hierarchy in addition to the director, in which the transcendence of the written word runs counter to a theatre of immanence (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012). With this in mind, I employed several strategies in hopes of the group sharing the authorship equally with Shakespeare: choosing the text we would use democratically, writing out the text by hand, metaphoring the text, live-commenting on the text, rewriting the text, etc., with some success in fostering the group's co-authorship of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Less successful was the task of disrupting the position of the director. Although I changed my position within the rhizome each week: sometimes as a performer, sometimes staying silent using images or written notes, sometimes having others lead a session, none of which truly decentralised my primacy as the leader of the proceedings; after all, it is my research project. The true breakthrough came from Deleuze himself, who, when referring to Italian avant-garde theatre and filmmaker Carmelo Bene, 'seems to embrace the idea of an authoritarian director' as long as it is in service of continuous variation. (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 53-4). That is to say, the 'immanence/transcendence dyad cannot simply be mapped onto specific instances, allowing us to separate the bottom-up from the top-down' (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 55), and, in fact that dualism in itself is counter to immanent thinking. So, I reframed my function as that of a facilitator, redefining direction as simply harnessing the creativity of the proceedings without *controlling* the definition of my author-ity. By finally letting go of the struggle to decentre my authority as director and allowing the rhizomatic structure to work upon me in a *shared* authority, the work ended up succeeding on a continuum of authority-in-flux, immanent to itself.

SIMULTANEITY AND ALEATORY IN PRACTICE

Having begun to grasp in the studio how different modes of rhizomatic text encounter affect meaning as multiplicity, I looked toward other performance practices to better understand the differences between a fixity of authorship and a shared co-authorship. As alluded to in the introduction, here I offer *simultaneity* and *aleatory* as sister concepts to the rhizome, which are central to assemblages of meaning. Simultaneous text events create ‘continuous variation’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1988) in the Chaosmos, and variation gives rise to chance – aleatory – as a primary factor in meaning-making. Part of my practice was to attend over 60 performances¹² that broadened my understanding of text mediation and challenged my notion of the boundaries of authorship. In so doing, I was exposed to productions in multiple languages, with projected text, subtitles, supertitles, no titles, overlapping texts, and combinations thereof. These simultaneous text encounters present a choice for the spectator. When printed words appear in performance as actors are speaking and images are in view (sometimes with music or other sounds and stimuli), those encountering the text must choose what to take in: what to read, whom (or what) to listen to, where to look. This can be said to some extent of any performance; it is always up to the spectator where to place her attention, but layering simultaneous text events in performance deliberately diffuses attention, thereby relinquishing a director’s and author’s control over the spectator’s experience. A linear approach to text creates one clear, accurate idea for the audience to focus on from moment to moment (Mitchell 2009: 213), but a non-linear approach that overlaps multiple text encounters will multiply foci for the spectator rhizomatically while increasing elements of chance. In this way I frame simultaneity as aleatoric in nature.

Crucial to my understanding of aleatory vis-à-vis text was Annie Dorsen’s *The Great Outdoors* (2018), a performance installation inside an inflatable planetarium in which a performer reads text scraped from the Internet, assembled by an algorithm. As the sun sets giving way to a starry night sky, participants hear anonymous unrelated statements, ‘sometimes banal, sometimes deeply personal’ (MacArthur Foundation, 2020), juxtaposed against the vastness of the universe. For everyone in this rhizomatic encounter, control is given over to an artificial intelligence: spectators, performers, technicians, and, crucially, the director, are subject to the aleatoric whim of the algorithm. Any meaning – or semblance of narrative – is left completely up to the participants, depending upon their engagement with the text. This experience made me re-think the boundaries of traditional theatrical performance and re-examine the minute aleatoric elements in the existing performance structures I use in my work with classic texts. Dorsen’s work places chance front and centre, but on a micro level in classic theatre, actors’ choices, incorrect line

¹² For details as to which productions I saw and how I transformed my practice as a spectator, see Appendix B

readings, audience response and laughter, technical mishaps, and other influences can be considered aleatoric in nature, changing the experience for the spectator. With this in mind, I set about experimenting with ways to decentre control and increase aleatory through multiple, simultaneous text encounters; and in this way, I found simultaneity and aleatory to be inter-related.

In addition to my group studio work, my observation of simultaneity applied to text can be understood through two productions: Thomas Ostermeier's *Hamlet* (2019) provided insight into multilingual text events, and Simon McBurney's production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (2019) exposed the effects of unilingual text-upon-text. I am fluent only in English, with a familiarity of Spanish; and though I can make out French and German words and phrases, I am by no means proficient in either. Ostermeier's *Hamlet* is performed almost entirely in German, but I saw a performance with French supertitles. So, my experience was one of continuous translation, an act of mental gymnastics whereby the performance lay in-between apparatuses of language and memory. I relied on my previous knowledge of the play, listened to spoken German that I mostly couldn't grasp, read French that was informative only when filtered through my rudimentary Spanish, and put it all together with the imagery on stage like a grand puzzle. It was exhilarating, and mine was a completely different experience from the people sitting around me. The simultaneous linguistic inputs – spoken and written – put me in control of the story, which clarified the authorial power of the spectator. Shakespeare's language can often feel impenetrable even for an English-speaking audience unfamiliar with it. The language barrier of watching *Hamlet* in German rendered a play text I thought I knew backwards and forwards into something impenetrable again, something I was compelled to re-understand. Shakespeare may have penned the play, but he didn't write my experience at the Schaubühne that evening, I did. *I re-wrote the play* in real time, in English, while ascribing my own assemblage of meaning to the text.

By contrast, McBurney's *The Magic Flute* was performed in English with English supertitles, augmented by hand-drawn English text and images projected in real time as a prominent design feature. My experience with *The Magic Flute* crystallised two things for me about simultaneity: (1) the primacy of reading over listening, and (2) co-authorship is a continuous process. Unlike with the German *Hamlet*, the asynchrony of simultaneous texts caused me to notice my reliance on the written word. Timing written speech to live opera singers is particularly challenging, and even though I could have understand much of what was being sung, I didn't *listen* to the words as they were sung, I *read* them first, then compared what I read to the singer's text. There were times when the supertitles and the singers used different words, causing a rift – different texts with differing shades of meaning that I was compelled to reconcile. I tried to look away from the supertitles, but I could not bring myself to ignore them – just in case I missed something. Simultaneity of more than one text

mediation causes a real-time authorship task for the viewer, who must knit together the different modes of text. The more modes, the more authorship.

CONTINUOUS CO-AUTHORSHIP

We are all authors. Whether silently re-writing in another language or correcting singers who disagree with the supertitles, the process for participants of performed texts is one of co-authorship. Furthermore, especially with classic play texts that are performed over and over again, that co-authorship is a continuous, lifelong rhizomatic process where meaning is multiplicity.

Co-authorship is not always written down, but many times it is. For example, the notes an actor or director makes in rehearsal, recordings that may be played back, stage directions, designs – these are co-written texts familiar to any theatre-maker. But there are other texts in the rhizomatic connections to a play that may not be so obvious: critical reviews, marketing and advertising, press releases, awards, resumes and CVs, websites, interviews, political demonstrations, social media posts, emails, documentary films, personal journals, and on and on. Some of these co-authorships are more consequential than others, but the text of a play is in a continuous re-write by those who encounter it, even if they've never read it or seen it performed. If they have seen the text performed, the next time they encounter it, their first experience with that text is networking in collaboration with the current text event, together with every other text tethered to it. For instance, the chalk artist drawing pictures and words in *The Magic Flute* (for the audience's amusement and understanding of the opera) became for me the primary storyteller. His presence as another author reinforced the primacy of written texts – most of which were not Mozart's. So, the diffusion of simultaneous text-on-text in *The Magic Flute* helped me understand myself as a continuous co-author along with everyone participating in the opera that day, including Mozart, and, in comparison to the texts of other *Magic Flutes* I have seen.

The next time I see *Hamlet* will be in co-authorship with the text I co-wrote while watching Thomas Ostermeier's production, the emails I exchanged with him and his assistant, the Instagram post that I wrote just after I saw it (Figure 6) and the conversations I had about it with strangers in the lobby, what I am writing about it right now, and everything else I know about *Hamlet*, and everything I think *Hamlet* ought to be. Whether my texts are written, spoken, drawn, discarded, recorded, erased, sent, posted publicly, or kept privately, I am Shakespeare's co-author, and therefore my next *Hamlet* will have another new text.



Figure 8

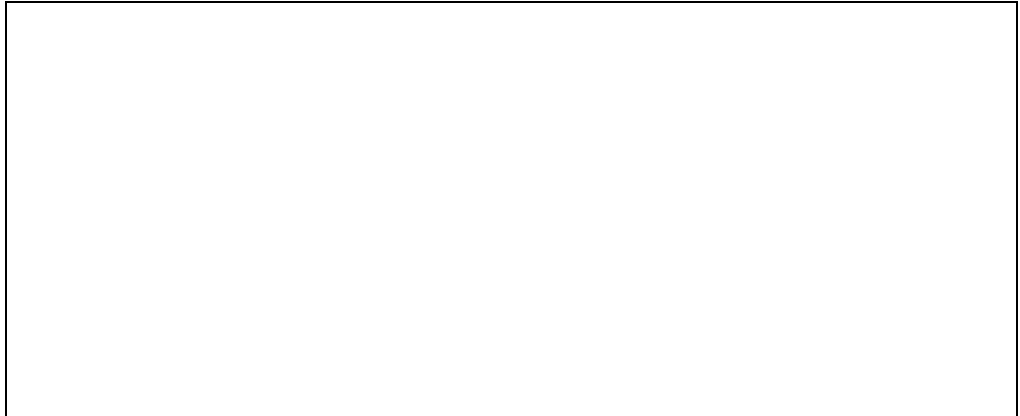


Having explored text mediation in practice, I turn now to the five questions I posed at the beginning of Part Three – not to answer them, but to re-write them in co-authorship with you. I asked these questions, writing them down over a year ago when I first embarked on my studio practice. But now they occur differently to me, having experienced so much since then, and having written and rewritten so much of this paper. Therefore, I think they need to be re-examined, and that we should say them out loud. First question:

1. **What are the differences between reading and listening to text in performance?** Or, for an actor, how is reading different from speaking?

How would you write this question? To me it suddenly sounds naïve and obvious, and I am having trouble remembering why I wrote it that way. It's not even that provocative. Reading takes precedence over listening in performance; my studio work confirmed that time and again. The better question is *why* or *how* does reading overtake listening in performance? For an actor, we found that speaking is a process wholly removed from reading, which I will examine in Part Four. If you've been participating throughout this paper, you may have some preliminary findings yourself that inform the reading/speaking problematic.

How would you write this question?



Next question:

2. **What does writing do to text that speaking doesn't do**, and vice-versa, and, can that writing/speaking contrast be used in performance somehow?

As discovered in my group research and theatregoing, the act of writing has a permanence and an *author*-ity to it, whereas speaking disappears the moment it's spoken, except in the imagination of the listener and speaker. So the real question here is not *whether* the writing/speaking contrast can be used in performance, but *when* is the authority and permanence of writing useful as a contrast to speaking.

Do you agree? Do you have a better clarification?



Next question:

3. **Can performance help to better define these differences?**

Yes. Based on my research, performance is a superior method by which to define the differences mediation causes to the text event. Performance, as a doing, thinks differently. Writing about it is inferior. Even though I'm asking the reader to become a participant-performer, this paper doesn't provide simultaneity, which is a key factor in experiencing the effects of modal text-event differences. A film or video might be able to provide simultaneous text encounters, but a film lacks the aleatory of live performance so critical to co-authorship. So, my answer is yes.

Do you agree or disagree? If so, take a moment to speak and record your answer.

• • • [Why do you agree or disagree?] • • •

Next question:

4. **Can understanding these differences better improve the way we perform texts for a mediatised audience?**

This is an awkward yes-or-no question that makes assumptions and begs a definition. I wouldn't ask it today. It helps that I defined what I meant by a "mediatised" audience at the beginning of Part Three – someone with a wormhole in their pocket who is constantly connected to electronic media – but the assumptions this question makes are manifold.

First of all, I've made no attempt to describe what an audience's ambient connection to electronics actually *does* to spectatorship, and to me that sounds like an entirely different (and daunting) scope of research that this project couldn't possibly address. Second, underlying this question is an ethico-aesthetic judgment that performances need improvement, that they are not meeting the needs of mediatised audiences in general. I will touch on this in Part Five as part of my overall frustration with how classics are approached and performed, but this question as worded is not really asking anything I didn't already assume to be true, nor can I pick apart and study its underpinnings within the scope of my research.

If you have something to say here, I'd appreciate your thoughts. You can find me on Instagram @one.f.jef

Last question:

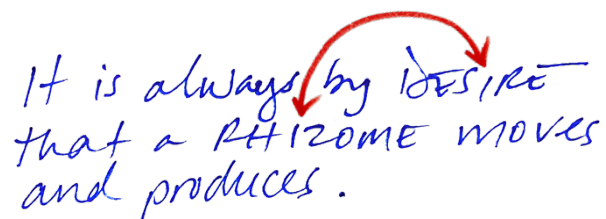
5. **Does encountering the same text in different ways change its meaning?**

Here I want to jump up and down and shout "Yes! Of course it does!" But when I wrote this question a year ago I was thinking that text has fixed *intended* meaning that an author or director could control. But now, I would completely rephrase this question in terms of process-relational philosophy: "As the becoming of text events are encountered in multiple modes, is it possible for the same meaning to emerge using the same text? If so, how?" That question could easily fuel my next PaR inquiry.

Having immersed myself in the Chaosmos of Deleuze, Bergson, and Whitehead, and, having banished meaning from the room when I approach text, I am now more concerned with understanding and engagement in performance, building assemblages that connect rhizomatically *through* the text event. This is a welcome shift in my directorial practice.

I have one final thought about my work before exploring other practitioners' approaches to text. One of the reasons I found affinity with process-relational philosophy has to do with desire. Theatre is hard. It is not a career with any guarantees, as proven by a mutated coronavirus. I have always thought that if one is to be a performance practitioner, one must passionately *desire* it above all else. That desire had become calcified in my career before undertaking the present work. So, when I read these words from *A Thousand Plateaus*, I found my way again: 'Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces' (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 14).

It is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces.



It is always by desire
that a RHIZOME moves
and produces.

Part Four: No Speaking Please

El Conde de Torrefiel

Throughout this paper I have pointed out the contrast between reading and speaking without clearly articulating those differences, which is what Part Four addresses. Incongruously, a production with no spoken speech provides an ideal case study through which to formulate an understanding of what speaking does in performance, by examining how it differs from reading, and why that is important in a hyperconnected world. *La Plaza*, a theatrical production by El Conde de Torrieffiel, employs no spoken speech whatsoever, and yet, by subtraction, it manages to unpick the complex nexus of mediations between speaking, listening, and reading. By separating word from image, and withholding speech from text, meaning in *La Plaza* emerges in the silent auto-affection of the text event.

SECOND PERSON SINGULAR

La Plaza begins with the curtain opening to a carpet of flowers and candles on an otherwise empty, dim stage. Nothing happens for a few minutes, which seems like a very long time to you. Finally, some text (in two languages) appears projected on the backdrop, planting ideas into your mind, one by one:

You're sitting in front of a darkened stage.

You're watching LA PLAZA by El Conde de Torrefiel.

The piece is showing for 365 days
in 365 theatres around the world simultaneously.

The set consists of a subtly illuminated space
and, as the only piece of scenery,

a carpet of flowers and candles set out
like a memorial tribute.

Cities as far apart as Kyoto, Kairo, Medellin, Jerusalem,
Amsterdam, Barcelona, Damascus, Portland, Gondar and Belo Horizonte

are taking part by showing the project.

During the show,
spectators are free to enter and leave the theatre

and even to pass their ticket on,
so that others can see the piece.

For short periods of time over a whole year
you've been coming here to spend a few hours sitting in a seat.

Absolutely nothing has happened in the show.

The same image, every day, for an entire year.

During the hours you've spent in the theatre,

your attention has automatically been redirected towards yourself.

Instead of flitting between actors,
dancers, videos and lights,

your brain has stopped,
leaving you as the only protagonist of the show,

and, inevitably, a question has surfaced in your mind:

For how long are you capable
to enjoy watching the same image?

(Gisbert 2020: 1-2)

In the absence of anything else on the stage, a relationship forms between you and the text. That relationship is shaped by what you're reading, but also by your expectation: of what a play should be, what you expect from this performance, and what you expect from images on a stage. You're grateful for the text, because otherwise there would be nothing happening other than the discomfort of the people around you as they shift in their seats and clear their throats. After a poem culminates the fictional performance piece, which you read, the curtain closes to pre-recorded applause, and just when you think the actual performance might really be over, the curtain opens again on a completely empty stage. You read about how you're walking home after the piece finishes, as the faceless figure of a woman appears, then another, and another. They walk and greet each other silently, not quite in slow motion, but not at a natural speed, so you can study them while you continue to read the text. No one speaks aloud. The women have nothing to do with what you're reading. Throughout the performance, groups of people drift in then drift out. Women, men, young, old, a group of Arab women with shopping bags near a soldier with a machine gun, a homeless man ignored by passers-by, drunk women collapsing and boys stealing their panties, a baby crawling aimlessly on the ground, tourists being led by a guide, a film crew shooting a scene with a corpse; and all the while the text creates a completely different narrative about you walking home through the city and none of what you're reading is directly related to the images of the faceless people you see on the stage.

The director of *La Plaza*, Tanya Beyeler, makes clear distinctions between word and image. While claiming that people come to see a play – as opposed to *listen* to it like a music concert – she places text at the centre of their company's praxis. 'It's more intimate', she says, 'The image of the word is very powerful, like a twelve-thousand megapixel camera... but you cannot enter the soul of a photograph... The emotion is in the text, not in the image' (Beyeler 2020). And, projected text is 'like reading a book. The audience reads with their voices, with their rhythm. It's very direct. The text is theirs... They don't have an actor that filters the text' (Beyeler 2020). Not since 2013 have the company's actors spoken

directly to the audience, because they have found 'the only way to reach an audience is to put the text in the foreground, so that the connection is not with the human, but with the text' (Beyeler 2020). For *La Plaza* specifically, written by Pablo Gisbert, they re-thought the function of the text's tense, deciding on 'second person singular – "you are" – because it makes more of an impression... the sensation of the little thoughts or little words that appear in the head of a person' (Beyeler 2020). No word is ever spoken, but reading in the second person gives the text a powerful voice that keeps *telling* you what you are thinking and feeling:

You realise you've had an orgasm
to the image of Linda Lovelace, a dead person.

You think:

I can get excited by an image from years ago

and live it as if it were the present.

And it comes to you that you're definitely
part of a necrophiliac species

that feeds on any image
that provides some kind of stimulus for happiness.

You think:

I'm made up of images that repeat themselves.

Fragments of feelings and thoughts from the past,
that travel in time every day

until they reach my brain.

(Gisbert 2020: 31-2)

The text of *La Plaza* (2019, 2020) sends the spectator travelling in time and space. The text transports you to an imaginary city where you take a long walk from an imaginary theatre to an imaginary bar, to an imaginary home, where you have an imaginary wank. These imaginary experiences are performing Deleuze's 'interactive plane of imaging' (Colebrook 2002:68), and they are real experiences, even if they are virtual. Simultaneously with the text-images you create in your mind, the images before you on the stage make you well aware of the fact that you are in an actual theatre watching actual actors, making up another imaginary, parallel narrative that their faceless bodies activate in you. As a result, you are two places at once.

In addition to being in two *places* at once, reading the text in second person singular makes you two *people* at once. When I first saw the production (*La Plaza* 2019), I noticed my inner-self *multiplying* through the text event. As I often do when I am reading, I *heard* my own voice speaking the projected text in my head, while a second “self” had an inner conversation with what I heard myself read. At times, a third “voice” (I say it was a voice, but, could I have really been hearing two versions of myself speaking?) would emerge within to criticize what I was *thinking* about what I heard my second self say in response to the text. This inner conversation is a *creation* of the interactive plane of imaging, and those inner voices I will refer to as the *auto-affective* voice.

Derrida extends phenomenologist Edmund Husserl’s work on expression and meaning from a teleological point of view, saying that ‘the operation of “hearing oneself speak” ... [is an] ‘absolutely unique auto-affection’ in which ‘the subject can hear or speak to himself and be affected by the signifier he produces, without passing through an external detour’ (Derrida and Kamuf 1991: 22). By contrast, speaking out loud is a ‘reproduction of the pure auto-affection’ (Ibid.: 23) – a copy of a thought. This is, I would argue, is the tangible difference between reading and speaking: reading is a pure, internally mediated phenomenon, and speaking is twice-mediated externally. And, by extension, listening to one’s auto-affective self is also a pure, internal phenomenon, whereas, one listens to spoken text through a network of mediation, whereby the listened-to text is remediated (repeated, copied, multiplied) by the auto-affective self. Though Derrida only refers to one self, I would argue that auto-affection can subdivide into more selves: a rhizome within.

The performance methods through which El Conde de Torrefiel used text to multiply my auto-affective selves unleashed a unique power to question my assumptions and prejudices. For instance, I chastised myself for not being threatened by the soldier with a machine gun when some Arab women were on the stage. It was only when the projected text mentioned a group of Arab men (who were *not* on stage) that I reacted to the soldier. In another instance, I scolded myself about the falling-down drunk woman in high heels (Figure 7). I initially thought she was annoying and rude, because she distracted me from the written text, which described me walking home with a friend. It wasn’t until she fell unconscious and a young predator assaulted her by stealing her underpants (Figure 8) that I realised how harshly I had judged her. These simultaneous conversations were made between my inner selves only because the text was foregrounded through reading. Detached from the mediation of the human voice, reading the projections leaves space and time for text to vibrate against one’s imaging plane, giving rise to an auto-affective conversation between an imagined ‘I’, the voice of the text, and one’s own conscience. For each spectator, therefore, meaning is a pure and private assemblage, a becoming of the text event shared by no other spectator.



Figure 9



Figure 10

SUBTRACTION AND JUXTAPOSITION

In its silent, uniquely private, text-forward praxis, *La Plaza* decentres the power that the author and actor traditionally have over the assemblage of meaning. As such, the production provides an excellent example of two anti-representational processes that Deleuze declares essential to true consciousness-raising in the theatre: subtraction and juxtaposition. First, he says, 'you begin by subtracting, deducting everything that would constitute an element of power, in language and in gestures, in the representation and in the represented' (Murray 1997: 245). This process of *subtraction* is an amputation of sorts:

cutting out what the audience has come to expect from a theatrical production through institutional custom, historical precedent, or cultural dogma. Second, place everything in continuous variation, especially language and speech, which, in order to 'escape the system of Mastery or domination organizing it', the interior variables of language have to be placed 'in a reciprocal relation with exterior variables, in the same flux of continuity' (Murray 1997: 248). This second process of *juxtaposition* is a concurrence of unlike elements against which concepts vibrate and intersect through the folds of meaning associated with them in the prehensions of the spectator.

The most obvious stable element deducted or subtracted from *La Plaza* is the spoken word, but an equally powerful dramaturgical gesture is the deletion of the human face, which, in addition to its aesthetic impact, has cultural and socio-political implications that de- and re-territorialise the text through an *imaginative speculation*. The actors wear tan-coloured lycra bodysuits that obscure the skin from head to toe (Figure 9). Therefore, 'because you don't see the face, you read the clothing. You give her a job, a cultural level, a bank account – not the person, but how she presents herself. So you begin to judge yourself. You crash into your prejudice' (Beyeler 2020).



Figure 11

El Conde de Torrefiel have effectively separated components that are usually intertwined in performance: words, images, voices, faces, bodies, characters, actions, gestures, and sounds operate on parallel tracks that are juxtaposed simultaneously but don't intersect, except as the spectator wishes. This requires the author and director to choose carefully what texts and images get placed on stage at every moment. It also acknowledges the lack of control the creators of this piece actually have on what it will eventually mean to the

audience, given that each spectator's prehensive associations create unique planes of imaging. Authorship in *La Plaza* is one of juxtaposition, as Gisbert explains, 'The same composition, the same image with another word, with another text, with another thought, can strongly change its meaning (Figure 10). We are searching for a contrast between what is seen and what is heard' (Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2018). The author of the text and the director expect meaning to emerge in process-relational terms, synthesised in multiplicity when the strands of separate elements are combined in the mind of the viewer. 'Of course the combination in your mind can touch you emotionally, but it is always your brain, your mind, that is making this connection according to your personality – it creates something that affects you. But it will be something completely different than the person next to you' (Beyeler 2020). In this way performing and viewing *La Plaza* can be seen entirely in terms of the text-event philosophy this paper aims to define. Meaning is an emergent property of the rhizomatic reading of co-authored texts in process, and therefore *La Plaza* is an ideal performance conduit through which we can better understand the becoming of text.



Figure 12

I included *La Plaza* in this paper because process-relational philosophy can be closely applied and understood critically through the textual praxis of El Conde de Torrefiel. However, their work falls outside my interest in applying this philosophy to classic plays of the Western theatrical canon. What I have learned from *La Plaza*, however, is valuable in its use of text as a tool for raising political and social consciousness. In the same way that my work is about the perception of authorship and its relationship to the perception of meaning, *La Plaza* is about 'our perception of the world and how it relates to other

perceptions' (Internationaal Theatre Amsterdam 2020). In a mediatised world where 'we're all free to say what we want... What do we do with this democratic concept of free speech, of "everything goes?" Where does your freedom begin and mine end?' (Ibid.). This is a central question in my work. What is freedom from meaning, and where are the boundaries of authorship? And, once I dissolve those boundaries by freeing myself from the tyranny of meaning through the text event, what then is my responsibility? To examine these questions and others more closely with my own directorial experience, I turn next to a theatre company that deals specifically with classic texts. But before I do, read these words from *La Plaza* carefully, silently... and see if you notice your auto-affective selves in flux:

This single and primitive cell
that appeared millions of years ago

will survive in other bodies when you die.

And this primitive cell is also in the beggar
asking you for money on the street,

is in the friend you see every day,
in the blind man you look at out of the corner of your eye,

in the tourist visiting your city,
in the baby who sleeps in the building opposite,

in the mother who originally passed that same cell to you.

In all these anonymous faces
that you see on the street every day,

there's you.

(Gisbert 2020: 33-4)

Part Five: Shakespeare's Last Play
Dead Centre

My problems with staging classic, canonical texts run deep, which I alluded to in my introduction by asking, “why should we stage 400-year-old meaning?”. Incapable of letting authors like Shakespeare and Chekhov retire, theatre practitioners like myself have revived their plays for generations, feeding on and regurgitating them, bending and distorting them, or worst of all, performing them just how they’re expected to be performed in an institutional representation, a product of authority (Murray 1997: 252). This phenomenon is taken up incisively in the works of Dead Centre, by exposing cracks in the authority of the text, the control of the dead author, the power of the well-intentioned director, and the source of meaning. Two of their productions provide useful case studies for text-event philosophy in the way they foreground the problematic of the author’s intentions. In *Chekhov’s First Play* (2016) and *Shakespeare’s Last Play* (2019), Dead Centre deduct stable elements from classics, personify the director and author, and rethink text in performance through mediating technologies that create multiple relationships between authorship and meaning. In so doing, their praxis asks, among other things, ‘can art change the world?’ (Schaubühne Berlin 2018).

THE VOICES IN YOUR HEAD

For Dead Centre, ‘technology is just a point of access for the audience, to move them into realms of consciousness, to the voice in their heads’ (Pearson 2018). Having been given a set of headphones, audience members at *Chekhov’s First Play* (2016) are first addressed by one of its directors, who explains that he has set up a ‘director’s commentary to explain what’s going on, what it’s about, and why you should like it’, because theatre ‘can feel complicated and inaccessible, especially these old plays, the classics’ (Kidd and Moukarzel 2016: 11). He goes on by promising that he ‘won’t distract’ the audience, he’ll ‘just be a voice in your head’ (Ibid: 12). Before ducking backstage, he recommends keeping the headphones on, ‘but if there’re any members of the audience that are comfortable with the classics, feel free to take them off and enjoy the play, as Chekhov intended’ (Ibid: 12). Immediately and cleverly, this commentary exposes the problematic my work addresses: how meaning cannot be determined by authorial intention in performance; it is a text event co-authored between all who encounter it, intersecting in multiplicity with the interpretation of the director, actors, technicians, and audience.

Bush Moukarzel, as the director, stands on stage with a gun, and, for those audience members that have seen or studied Chekhov, they may recognize the trope of the gun from late 19th Century well-made plays; but for someone who is new to Chekhov, the gun may mean something different – perhaps threatening, perhaps playful. In either case, Dead Centre foregrounds the *director* as the one making the *meaning* of the gun known, along with everything else in the play. Very quickly, however, the director’s voice in your head

reveals that he can't actually control the production: actors mispronounce words, forget lines, move when they shouldn't. The audience hears the director admit to cutting characters, scenes, complicated storylines, and boring speeches, rethinking and regretting some of those decisions even as he explains why he made them. As a powerful gesture of subtraction by *Dead Centre*, the title character, Platonov, doesn't appear. Finally, an audience member stands in for him as a silent Platonov-Everyman figure in perpetual variation with everyone on the stage. The director then loses control as both the play-text and the director's commentary recede in your earphones, overtaken by thunderous music, a cacophony of actors speaking at once, and a wrecking ball that destroys the set, freeing the actors to create brand new text events that the original author couldn't possibly have intended.

In contrast to the private auto-affection of *La Plaza* where you listen to the voices in your head reading text silently in self-judgment, the director's voice in *Chekhov's First Play* lodges in your head to either converse with your private interpretive voice or completely crowd it out, along with the author's original text. Meaning in *La Plaza* is a pure, streamlined text event of triangulation between the stage image, written text, and the spectator (Figure 13). However, spoken text as an external mediation, plus the voice of the director in your ear in *Chekhov's First Play*, creates exponential relational complexity in the text event (Figure 14).

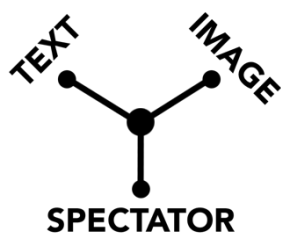


Figure 13 – *La Plaza*

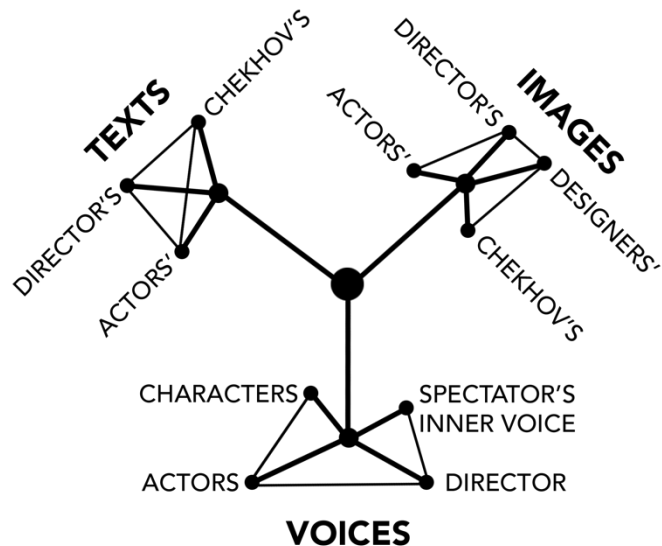


Figure 14 – *Chekhov's First Play*

The director's commentary makes the spectator aware of the original author in all aspects of the production and therefore the spectator judges how the director's choices (together with the performers' and designers') measure up to the author's perceived intentions in the here and now of the performance. As a result, the consciousness-raising of the director's voice in the audience's headphones makes the text a rhizomatic process-relational event, in which multiple continuous co-authorships cannot be ignored.

OF CANNIBALS AND CREATIVES

*We cannot be ourselves while Shakespeare still writes our plays*¹³

- Heiner Müller

Bush Moukarzel, one of Dead Centre's director-writer team has a 'We can't get past him / we have to get past him' relationship with Shakespeare (Moukarzel 2019). I agree with his claim that 'The Western canon is a power product of white men: something monolithic that has to be guarded and protected, as with universities and institutions; and it needs to be questioned' (Ibid.). At the same time, as he argues, the height of poetry is infinite, and 'a poem about the limits of human thought, that's a productive thing ...it's ongoing, infinitely interpretable. Same with these texts – they will outlast us' (Ibid.). Dead Centre's production of *Shakespeare's Last Play* (2019) acknowledges the lasting influence of Shakespeare while targeting the problematic colonial worldview of power in *The Tempest* (Lindley 2002: 70). Specifically, the production questions the misogynistic treatment of women, and the power hierarchies that dominate over personal agency and freedom. Using multiple modes of technology to mediate text, the production also questions the transcendent power of Shakespeare the writer, which is at the heart of my research inquiry. In a sense, my entire project is a way of getting *around* Shakespeare's power over meaning. But Dead Centre have taken a direct path in dealing with the author-god by making him a character in their play, in which – after he kills off each of their characters – the actors turn off Shakespeare's 400-year-old life-support system (Figure 15), then eat his body.

By framing Shakespeare's plays not as literature to be read, but as theatrical events, Professor John Russell Brown argues that Shakespeare 'must have known that each time a play was performed it would be different, as performers and audiences changed' (Brown 2002: 3). But it is hard for me to imagine Shakespeare could have known how his plays would be thought of or performed hundreds of years in the future. Brown admits that 'little is indisputable' when performing Shakespeare, and that 'we should be ready to venture into territory where we may well lose our bearings' (Brown 2002: 3). In my experience, it is easy to lose one's bearings trying to shoehorn a Late Elizabethan or Jacobean text into a contemporary mindset if the director acts as the translator or mediator of what Shakespeare *meant*. As transcendent presences, directors often attempt to plant a tree with 400-year-old text instead of placing it in constant variation along a continuum (Deleuze & Guattari 1988: 110), which is what Dead Centre do so effectively through a process of amputation and transposition.

¹³ This is a paraphrase of Heiner Müller from an interview with Bush Moukarzel (2019), which Carl Weber translates from the German as 'We haven't arrived at ourselves as long as Shakespeare is writing our plays.' The quote is from an address Müller gave at a conference of Shakespeare scholars in 1988 (Weber 1990: 31).



Figure 15

Dead Centre rely on the fact that audiences will watch *The Tempest* in co-authorship with what they already know, so, by subtracting the main characters (Prospero, Ariel, Caliban), the spectator encounters the play as if for the first time by amputating it down to a handful of minor players (Alonso, Gonzalo, Miranda, Antonia, Ferdinand). As Deleuze says of the power of subtraction, 'thus appears in a new light what existed only virtually in the tragedy' (Murray 1997: 240), so the plight of the minor characters – lost on a desert island without understanding the magical forces controlling them – are now our focus. 'Prospero uses his magical powers for surveillance, to track the characters in this play' says co-director Moukarzel, so they manifest Prospero's presence using a large projected map of the island (Figure 16) with 'GPS tracking for surveillance, authority, and manipulation' (Moukarzel 2019). The magical presence of Prospero is actually that of Shakespeare, whom Dead Centre resurrect to exert control and track the characters on and off stage. Adding another layer of transcendent control, Shakespeare talks in the disembodied voice of the play's director, who speaks in English over a loudspeaker as opposed to speaking German like everyone else on stage. The power of subtraction is a decentring disruption that wrests control from the author and forces the audience to look at the connective tissue of the play – the rhizomatic connections to other parts, including the author – in which the part-whole relationships are what form a narrative co-written by the spectator. Put another way, the written text becomes a map (conceptually and physically) from which meaning does not emerge in start- or end-points, but rather, from in-between-ness. In their amputated and transposed treatment of *The Tempest*, Dead Centre manage to do what Deleuze called 'to minorate' the text, in opposition to what the audience thinks they know of it: they give it 'a minor treatment... to extract becomings against History, lives against culture, thoughts against doctrine, graces or disgraces against dogma' (Murray 1997: 243). If art can change

the world, Dead Centre believe that 'we've got to proceed as if it can. We don't know yet. Shakespeare and Chekhov and Beckett do so in a minor key: "I assume this does nothing, and yet, I'll do it"' (Moukarzel 2019).



Figure 16

The production deals with issues of control in many ways. 'Directing is already written into the play' Moukarzel remarks, 'Prospero and his dramaturgy of the characters is already a conversation about directing, about authority and human freedom. These questions in the play want to be dealt with, interpreted, and given a conceptual turn' (Pearson 2018). Dead Centre reterritorialise concepts of authority and control on several strata simultaneously through their positioning of the text. Thereby, one experiences in performance what I imagine is meant by *intensive multiplicity* or 'becoming-multiple' (Colebrook 2002: xxvi). For example, there is a moment in which Miranda says 'no' to Ferdinand's rough amorous advance, which is not in Shakespeare's written text (Figure 17). The disembodied voice of Shakespeare/Prospero/Moukarzel interrupts Miranda and Ferdinand, saying 'Stop! Again', and they re-set from the beginning of that section of the play while their GPS locators move with them. They re-play the scene, and this time the actor playing Ferdinand is even more menacing, so the actor playing Miranda is once again unwilling to be manhandled. They repeat this several times until it's clear the author has no control over the actors, or the meaning of the text. That one word, 'no' erupts in multiplicity by *reterritorialisation*, placing the text in continuous variation with the author's worldview, the actor's point of view, the concept of male privilege, elements of misogyny and feminism, the audience's assumptions about the play, historical precedent, and the director's role, all at once. The textual rhizome sprouts before one's eyes in multiple directions, and the spectator can then enter the Shakespearean text from multiple entry-points, decentring authority.



Figure 17

With each production, *Dead Centre* strive to meet the chaos of a mediatised world with new forms that get the audience's attention in a technological age by 'owning up to the fact that we can't. You can honour that cacophony rather than try to ignore it. You can honour it "to find a form that accommodates the mess. That is the task of the artist now", as Beckett said'¹⁴ (Moukarzel 2019). For a tech-savvy world, *Dead Centre* engage in simultaneous *imaginative speculations* by mediatising text with voiceovers, video projections, GPS mapping, supertitles, etc., which provide enough theatrical magic for the spectator to become a time-traveller. The spectator is catapulted back in time to hear directly from the author/director as to what the *original* intent was, while simultaneously evaluating that intent against what it has *become* in the present, or what those text-event concepts might become in the future. In order to achieve this superpower through text, they must kill Shakespeare, or at least the idea of him. Actors pulling Shakespeare off life support in a theatre is a savage kindness that neutralises his tyranny and puts him out of his misery at a time when he seems to need – like Prospero – to finally give up his craft. As for

¹⁴ The full Samuel Beckett quote is worth including here, in which I think of 'form' as a praxis and 'chaos' as a classic text: 'There will be a new form, and this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now' (Sidiropoulou 2011: 51).

eating his body? Well, that seems equal parts sacrilege and sacrament, which I think makes Deleuze's point rather eloquently as to how a theatre of minority may resist dogma.

No matter how many arguably irrelevant productions of Shakespeare's plays may persist in the world, I daresay no one sets out to create one. Relevancy – a form to accommodate the mess of a classic play – is a hard thing to achieve. And, to be fair to all those who try, Dead Centre have not actually put on productions of *The Tempest* or *Platonov*, they have co-authored *through* them, using the texts as a conduit for something new, something transposed in rhizomatic relationality. Shakespeare and Chekhov are among the writers involved in their process, but they are deliberately *not* performing their whole plays. So, strictly speaking, neither *Chekhov's First Play* nor *Shakespeare's Last Play* are examples of how text-event philosophy might be applied to an unedited classic text in performance. What Dead Centre does achieve with classic texts, however, is relevance; and they do so with a non-linear dramaturgy. Text acts on its own, and performance *thinks* on its own (Cull Ó Maoilearca 2012: 3), and Dead Centre allow room in their praxis for both, without seeking to present the *meaning* of the text as a tracing of what came before. Rather, they resist tracings in favour of creating a map for the spectator's continuous co-authorship, whereby meaning emerges through text events placed in variation, undoing 400 years of Shakespearean dogma. Dead Centre's robust intermedial praxis, therefore, is a process-relational framework for the *becoming* of classic texts.

The last text in my paper

Together, you and I have established that text is not a *thing* or a container that conveys meaning, it is an *event* in flux. Text acts freely on its own. The author's original intended *meaning*, therefore, can be seen as a kind of tyranny over the freedom of text, especially to a director charged with staging text in performance. Applying process-relational philosophy to text disrupts that tyrannical stance by repositioning text as an event. Text events occur rhizomatically, and while they vibrate and move in constant variation with internal and external conceptual terrains, text cannot be understood as one thing or many things, but a process of one-and-many, immanent to the entire rhizome. We've also begun to understand together how meaning emerges as multiplicity through the text encounter, from which a continuous co-authorship intersects with an interactive plane of imaging that engages our prehensions via the text event. We've also encountered many ways in which text can be mediated, and discovered that if those mediations are simultaneous, it changes the architecture of meaning-making by the spectator. We looked at these phenomena through productions that foreground reading to multiply the auto-affective voice, and that use technology to undo the authority of authorship. We also discovered that simultaneity and aleatory work together, and, the power of careful mediation, subtraction, juxtaposition, and minoration, creates a reterritorialised theatre of consciousness-raising. We synthesise all these ideas through a performance philosophy of the text event. That – is – a lot! But also, this entire paper is as simple as this paragraph.

I do not pretend that my PaR is easy to read about, because some of the terminology is complicated and unfamiliar. But I do hope, after encountering it as my co-author, you are able to understand the paragraph above, and can begin to think through a new lens of the event. If not (and if you're anything like me, you didn't at first), go ahead and re-read sections of the paper you may be wondering about, so that this rhizomatic assemblage of terminology may begin to germinate stems of meaning that reach out horizontally and connect to your own life and practice, so that you are freed from the notion that an author's meaning is a constant, fixed thing. I also hope you still have the five voice recordings you made earlier. Please take a minute to replay them now, and as you do, think about this: **what is the text becoming now?**

[replay your five recordings now]

As I forewarned, you are becoming throughout this paper, so your text will no longer act upon you quite the same; it may not mean what it did when you first recorded it. And, if the performance practitioner grasps that we are becoming, she can operate with more confidence in a world of flux, understanding that authorship is always, always shared.

In conclusion, this is just a start. Even though the bulk of this paper is spent on dismantling linear text analysis by defining a text event philosophy of process-relational thought, this is

only the beginning of my research. The BRINK Festival provided a PaR platform to disrupt the boundaries of authorship; El Conde de Torrefiel provided a way to understand how text performs; Dead Centre provided a way to envision how classic texts can be transformed in a technological world of multiplicity; but I have yet to apply text event philosophy by directing a full production of an unedited classic play. I am almost afraid to find out whether a truly consciousness-raising encounter in the theatre is even possible using Shakespeare's words as text events, or whether, like the merciful cannibals in *Shakespeare's Last Play*, I should let him finally give up. Other than giving me a renewed confidence, it is also unclear to me where this important shift against linearity in my thinking may lead, because it can be applied in so many ways: as a rehearsal technique that decentres authority, as a collaborative design process, as a rhizomatic reading practice, as a sociological research tool, as a non-linear strategy for directors, as an ethico-aesthetic praxis, and more that I can't yet imagine.

Beyond the narrow and rarefied field of classic theatre, billions of people are ambiently connected to an electronic rhizomatic network through the wormholes in their pockets. They, you, and I are aware of the ways in which meaning is constructed as multiplicity, whether that awareness can be articulated or not. Since everything acts, the next phase of my research aims to understand how the text events act upon *us* – how our cyborg selves are becoming-text. The connectome of the Internet, like the brain, is not linear. I would argue that we, as cyborgs, centre ourselves as the authors of our own connectomes of meaning: GPS technologies make it possible for us to pinpoint ourselves on a map, social media makes us authors that curate versions of ourselves, and messaging apps allow us to write ourselves with new identities. These centrings are all created through text, which, we can now understand as an event. So, by extension, the average person, through her electronic rhizome of text events, may already understand meaning as multiplicity over which she has *author-ity*. The converse is also becoming apparent to me: the more we are connected, the more that text events have rhizomatic authority over us; as any worldwide hashtag battle will attest, meaning is not fixed. I would like to find out how the average person's rhizomatic authorship and ambient connectivity affects spectatorship in the theatre. And, key to that inquiry, how may our continuous process of becoming-text in the worldwide connectome change the practice of directing?

Once I submit this paper, it is no longer under my control, just as a Twitter or Facebook post has a life of its own once it collides with and connects to the text-event network of the Internet. But that is perfectly OK. In fact, my relinquishing of authorial control, like Prospero's, is an act of understanding: by letting go, I connect to the world. So, this text will continue to act in ways unforeseen, by me, its author, and by you, its co-author. So, how could this be a conclusion? It is becoming.

This is not the last text in my paper.

List of Photographs

Figure 3

Jef Hall-Flavin in a studio research session at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, exploring a physical encounter with text. 21 February 2019. Text projection from *Orpheus Descending* by Tennessee Williams (1957). Video screen capture courtesy of the author.

Figure 4

Jef Hall-Flavin in a studio research session at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, exploring written encounters with text. 19 February 2019. Hand-written paraphrase of text from *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare. Video screen capture courtesy of the author.

Figure 5

Jef Hall-Flavin in a studio research session at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, physicalising text through dance and movement. 26 February 2019. Video screen capture courtesy of the author.

Figure 6

Ariel Sobel, Caitlin Stegemoller, Parke Fech, and Kyle Nudo during the BRINK Festival in simultaneous text encounter: writing, speaking, reading, listening. 2 July 2019. Photo by Jemima Yong, used with permission.

Figure 7

Jef Hall-Flavin reterritorialising text which acts on its own during the BRINK Festival, 2 July 2019. Photo by Jemima Yong, used with Permission.

Figure 8

Programme photo from *Hamlet* at the Schaubühne, Berlin, directed by Thomas Ostermeier from an Instagram post by the author on 8 December 2019. Names of commenters redacted for privacy.

Figure 9

La Plaza, 2018. English version of projected text: 'Inside the car they jump around, clapping and shoving each other', written by Pablo Gisbert. Photo by Luisa Gutierrez, courtesy of El Conde de Torrefiel.

Figure 10

La Plaza, 2018. Screen capture of a promotional video by Kunstenfestivaldesarts. Available at <https://vimeo.com/268961858>.

Figure 11

La Plaza, 2018. Photo by Els de Nil. Courtesy of El Conde de Torrefiel.

Figure 12

La Plaza, 2018. English version of projected text: 'Everyone is enjoying themselves and having a good time', written by Pablo Gisbert. Screen capture of a promotional video by Kunstenfestivaldesarts available at <https://vimeo.com/268961858>.

Figure 15

Shakespeare's Last Play, Schaubühne Berlin: Actors (L-R) Mark Waschke, Nina Kunzendorf, Thomas Bading, Jenny König, and Moritz Gottwald remove Shakespeare's life support system. Photo by Gianmarco Bresadola, 2018, used with permission.

Figure 16

Shakespeare's Last Play, Schaubühne Berlin: Gonzalo (Mark Waschke) and Antonia (Nina Kunzendorf) pinpointed on the stage by GPS mapping. Photo by Gianmarco Bresadola, 2018, used with permission.

Figure 17

Shakespeare's Last Play, Schaubühne Berlin: Miranda (Jenny König) fails to follow the script, so Ferdinand (Mark Waschke) forces her at the author's behest. Photo by Gianmarco Bresadola, 2018, used with permission.

Appendices

METAPHORING: WORD-ASSEMBLY

THE PRACTICE STEP BY STEP	THE DOING OF THAT STEP OF THE PRACTICE	THE DOING OF THAT DOING	WHAT DOES THAT DO?	WHAT IS EMERGING?
Play music that appeals to your mood	Thinking about my day and how I feel at the moment	Searching for a musical expression of myself, relevant to now	Provides a filter for my thoughts	A specific emotional connection to the world via sound
Choose a short section of a pre-selected text	Flipping through looking for a long speech, picking up where I left off, or choosing a speech I know	Listening to my impulses about what part of the play I'm trying to make my own	Puts into focus a small portion of the text without needing to understand the whole play	A mosaic of short snippets of text rather than one long narrative
Read it aloud	Hearing myself speak the words over the music	Breathing, resonating, articulating, listening, judging, stumbling, fighting the music, correcting	Filters the words through my body and my mood as I speak them	An embodied, physical and aural sense of the words in relation to my current emotional state
Choose words that call out to you	Looking for something that's interesting to me; juicy, charged	Making split-second decisions, sometimes wondering why, sometimes editing my choices	Sparks a dialogue with myself about the words I'm choosing	Takes words from the author's text and makes them my choices
Write each word down on a post-it note as you choose them	Choosing a color, making letters	Observing how I form the letters and making sure I like the result	Physically embodies the chosen words and leaves a visual record	Generating my own writing makes claims on those words as my own
Rearrange the words into groups that 'make sense' to you	Imagining how the concepts contained in / sparked by those words might connect together	Following my impulses, re-arranging, sometimes speaking, sometimes not finding a good fit	Engages associative thinking	Abstracts the text beyond sequential cause-effect ideation
Use those word assemblages to think of images that express them	Imagining all the words are one thing or contribute to one thing	Letting my mind wander, sometimes speaking them aloud	Gets into the crevasses between the concepts and the words	Reconfigures author's meaning(s) into something unintended, new
Write down the images or phrases, or make drawings	Choosing a color and a medium to express the phrases in my mind	Scribing auto-affective thought into text or picture	Leaves a (sometimes unsatisfying) expression of what I've imagined	An engagement with the ambiguity of self-expression
Choose new music based on an image/phrase you particularly like	Typing into the YouTube search algorithm (or choosing not to)	Selecting a piece of music (or silence) without thinking too much about it	Leads to a new, random aural-emotional state, a new visceral connection with my environment	Brings my imagination and association with the text to unplanned, unexpected places
Remove the original word post it notes	Piling words up and putting them out of sight	Leaving only my abstract images or phrases in my field of vision	Focuses my attention on my images, phrases or drawings	The author's original text is now my own abstraction
Combine the images and ask 'what does this assemblage of images make me think of?'	Sometimes reading them aloud or drawing arrows, usually dispensing with clichés that often crop up	Thinking how the images combine or not: how one image or phrase could inform/affect the other	Begins a process of comparison or overlay to create new meaning	A metonymy of image, rather than a literal interpretation of text
Write down any metaphors, similes, stories, or scenarios that come to mind	Choosing the right words that express a mash-up of ideas (it's a struggle!)	Forcing my brain to invent a new associative concept	Gives me a sense of creative agency inspired by – but not slave to – the original text	My own metaphorical lens through which I can read the play

APPENDIX B

LIST OF PRODUCTIONS ATTENDED

The following is a list of live performances I saw during the course of study that prompted this text-event PaR. Prior to October 2018, I hadn't formally examined my practice as a theatregoer in terms of the 'doing of the doing' (Bryon 2014: 67). As such, I discovered during early self-reflective sessions in 2018 that I unconsciously approached performances from a position of competence as a director, judging and analysing performances linearly, which held sway over my viewing experience, coloured my taste, and held captive my creative and associative thinking. In early 2019 I brought my unconscious competence under scrutiny, and I applied the methods I was exploring in the studio to my playgoing practice. Reframing spectatorship as a rhizomatic encounter freed me from the responsibilities that directing for meaning implies.

To choose the productions, for the most part I followed these criteria: (1) focus on classic plays, (2) choose a variety of forms and styles, (3) seek out a variety of languages with and without translation, and (4) experience things I may not have chosen to see had it not been for this inquiry. Still, some productions were chosen at random or by affinity, and I missed some shows that I would have liked to see had my schedule allowed.

Prior to this course of study, spectatorship had become a chore to be avoided. I am fortunate to have been given the time and creative impetus to see 63 plays. As a result of my PaR, reframing my approach to theatregoing has completely transformed from a judgmental exercise into an experience of encounter.

	DATE	PRODUCTION	THEATRE	DIRECTOR
1	17 Oct 2018	Antony and Cleopatra	National Theatre	Simon Godwin
2	24 Oct 2018	Company	Gielgud Theatre	Maryanne Elliott
3	27 Oct 2018	othellomacbeth	Lyric Hammersmith	Jude Christian
4	10 Nov 2018	Moonlight / Night School	Harold Pinter Theatre	Lyndsey Turner and Ed Stambollouian
5	14 Nov 2018	Twelfth Night	Young Vic	Kwame Kwei-Armah
6	14 Nov 2018	Misty	Trafalgar Studios	Omar Elerian
7	17 Nov 2018	A Kind of Alaska	Harold Pinter Theatre	Jamie Lloyd
8	18 Nov 2018	The Great Outdoors	Centre Pompidou Brussels	Annie Dorsen
9	21 Nov 2018	The Inheritance	Noël Coward Theatre	Stephen Daldry
10	28 Nov 2018	Summer and Smoke	Duke of York's	Rebecca Frecknall
11	30 Nov 2018	Uncle Vanya	Hampstead Theatre	Terry Johnson
12	01 Dec 2018	A Very Very Very Dark Matter	Bridge Theatre	Matthew Dunster
13	10 Dec 2018	Nine Night	Trafalgar Studios	Roy Alexander Weise
14	13 Jan 2019	The Unreturning	Theatre Royal Stratford East	Neil Bettles
15	25 Jan 2019	Lam Gods (Flemish)	ITA Amsterdam	Milo Rau
16	26 Jan 2019	The Wedding	Barbican Centre	Gecko Ensemble
17	26 Jan 2019	Richard II	Almeida Theatre	Joe Hill-Gibbins
18	01 Feb 2019	Timon of Athens	RSC Stratford	Simon Godwin
19	02 Feb 2019	The Father	Barbican Centre	Peeping Tom

APPENDIX B

	DATE	PRODUCTION	THEATRE	DIRECTOR
20	08 Feb 2019	Good Person of Sichuan (Russian)	Barbican Centre	Director
21	13 Feb 2019	Babylon: Beyond Borders	Bush Theatre	Ruthie Osterman
22	14 Feb 2019	The Price	Wyndham's Theatre	Jonathan Church
23	16 Feb 2019	Everybody's Talking About Jamie	Apollo Theatre	Jonathan Butterell
24	18 Feb 2019	Mother Courage	Royal Exchange Manchester	Amy Hodge
25	20 Feb 2019	A Slight Ache / The Dumbwaiter	Harold Pinter Theatre	Jamie Lloyd
26	23 Feb 2019	La Plaza	HAU Berlin	Tanya Beyeler
27	24 Feb 2019	Shakespeare's Last Play (German)	Schaubühne Berlin	Bush Moukarzel and Ben Kidd
28	02 Mar 2019	Dionysus Stadt (German)	Kammerspiele Munich	Christopher Rüping
29	06 Mar 2019	Medea (Dutch)	Barbican Centre	Ivo van Hove
30	16 Mar 2019	Betrayal	Harold Pinter Theatre	Jamie Lloyd
31	16 Mar 2019	Richard III	Alexandra Palace	John Haidar
32	23 Mar 2019	The Magic Flute	English National Opera	Simon McBurney
33	24 Apr 2019	The Crucible	The Yard	Jay Miller
34	04 May 2019	Grip	Tristan Bates Theatre	Harriet Taylor
35	06 May 2019	Top Girls	National Theatre	Lyndsey Turner
36	10 May 2019	Oedipus (Dutch)	ITA Amsterdam	Robert Icke
37	29 May 2019	Orpheus Descending	Menier Chocolate Factory	Tamara Harvey
38	01 Jun 2019	Death of a Salesman	Young Vic	Marianne Elliott and Miranda Cromwell
39	05 Jun 2019	The Lehman Trilogy	Piccadilly Theatre	Sam Mendes
40	19 Jun 2019	A Midsummer Night's Dream	Bridge Theatre	Nicholas Hytner
41	22 Jun 2019	Three Sisters (Russian)	Vaudeville Theatre	Lev Dodin
42	24 Jun 2019	Les Damnés (French)	Barbican Centre	Ivo van Hove
43	06 Jul 2019	Night of the Iguana	Noël Coward Theatre	James Macdonald
44	01 Oct 2019	Peter Gynt	National Theatre	Jonathan Kent
45	05 Oct 2019	Glass. Kill. Bluebeard. Imp.	Royal Court	James Macdonald
46	19 Oct 2019	Translations	National Theatre	Ian Rickson
47	23 Oct 2019	The Antipodes	National Theatre	Annie Baker
48	09 Nov 2019	Szechwan (Czech/English)	Venuše Švehlovce Prague	Michal Hába
49	13 Nov 2019	Oh Yes Oh No	Battersea Arts Centre	Louise Orwin
50	07 Dec 2019	Streetcar Named Desire (German)	Berliner Ensemble	Michael Thalheimer
51	08 Dec 2019	Hamlet (German)	Schaubühne Berlin	Thomas Ostermeier
52	23 Dec 2019	Taming of the Shrew	RSC Barbican Centre	Justin Audibert
53	28 Dec 2019	Measure for Measure	RSC Barbican Centre	Gregory Doran
54	22 Jan 2020	Child	Barbican Centre	Peeping Tom
55	23 Jan 2020	Chimpanzee	Barbican Centre	Nick Lehane
56	29 Jan 2020	Optraken	Peacock Theatre	Galactik Ensemble
57	30 Jan 2020	Cold Blood	Barbican Centre	Jaco Van Dormael and Michèle Anne De Mey
58	04 Feb 2020	La Plaza	ITA Amsterdam	Tanya Beyeler
59	11 Feb 2020	Cyrano de Bergerac	The Playhouse Theatre	Jamie Lloyd
60	15 Feb 2020	Nora: A Doll's House	Young Vic	Elizabeth Freestone
61	17 Feb 2020	Endgame	Old Vic	Richard Jones
62	26 Feb 2020	Martin Creed	Toynbee Studios	Martin Creed
63	28 Feb 2020	Leopoldstadt	Wyndham's Theatre	Patrick Marber

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