

THE HOUSE OF DANTE'S DREAM

by

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Abstract

The House of Dante's Dream is a full length stage play that takes place in both 1992 and 2011, following a double time structure and dealing with the incomplete nature of human memory. The entire play takes place within the confines of the boathouse in Tilly's garden.

In 1992, the play follows the relationship of Tilly, a bored teenager, and Pan, an equally bored circus brat. Throughout the play, they engage in a series of increasingly bold and dangerous dares, which culminate in the accidental killing of a child.

The 2011 story deals with Tilly and Pan's daughter, Rosetti, who was abandoned as a baby and arrives at the boathouse in search of her past. Instead, she finds Edward, stuck inside his own head, and the memories of a past that he does not understand.

In the accompanying essay, "A Space of Time and Memory." I discuss the structural elements of time and space and draw connections between these elements and the predominant theme of memory. I conclude that in *The House of Dante's Dream* the theme of memory is made meaningful to the audience through a combination of temporal structure and spatial structure.

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THE HOUSE OF DANTE'S DREAM

A FULL-LENGTH STAGE PLAY

Characters:

1992:

Tilly Black - 14, Female
Pan Weyer - 15, Male
Young Edward Black - 16, Male

2011:

Rosetti Whitaker - 18, Female
Edward Black - 34, Male

The play takes place in and around an abandoned Boathouse in the village of Little Muckworth in both 1992 and 2011.

The two time periods often coexist and become ghosts of one another.

SCENE ONE

14 August 1992. Morning.

An old, abandoned boathouse beside the river. Inside the boathouse there is an old rowing boat in a state of disrepair that has been pulled out of the water and placed upside-down on the floor. There are a number of maps pinned to the walls, which have been written on in marker pen. There are also several prints of paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. On the floor of the boathouse there are several large wooden boxes, a small stack of books, a spade, a large suitcase and a machete in a leather sheath. Outside the boathouse there is an overgrown field and some trees.

Tilly is sitting on the floor inside the boathouse. She is tearing pages out of a textbook, one at a time.

Young Edward enters. He stands watching her for a moment.

YOUNG EDWARD

That's... productive.

TILLY

Piss off.

YOUNG EDWARD

Don't you need that?

TILLY

Piss. Off.

YOUNG EDWARD

How are you going to write an essay
without being able to read the textbook?

TILLY

I can read it.

YOUNG EDWARD

(singsong)

You're going to fail.

(Tilly ignores him)

Mum'll kill you.

TILLY

Drop dead.

YOUNG EDWARD

I can't. I'm bored.

TILLY
You're bored because you've got no
imagination.

YOUNG EDWARD
Well, at least I've got friends.

TILLY
I have friends.

YOUNG EDWARD
'course you do.

TILLY
Where are they, then?

YOUNG EDWARD
Busy.

TILLY
Of course.

YOUNG EDWARD
Shut up.
Anyway.
It could be worse.

TILLY
Eh?

YOUNG EDWARD
I could have a twelve-year-old stalker.

TILLY
A stalker.

YOUNG EDWARD
Haven't you noticed?

TILLY
What?

YOUNG EDWARD
Your stalker.

TILLY
Piss off, Edward.

YOUNG EDWARD
You haven't noticed!

TILLY
Haven't noticed what?

YOUNG EDWARD
Maura Tointon.

TILLY
What about her?

YOUNG EDWARD
She's stalking you.

TILLY
I haven't seen her in, like, a week.

YOUNG EDWARD
You're her hero.

TILLY
She's not my stalker.

YOUNG EDWARD
No?

TILLY
No.

Silence. Tilly continues to tear pages out of the textbook. Young Edward pulls a leaflet from his pocket. He holds it up.

YOUNG EDWARD
You coming?

TILLY
(still tearing)
Hmm?

YOUNG EDWARD
The Circus. Are you coming?
(Tilly shrugs)
Got no friends to go with?

TILLY
Shut it.

Silence.

YOUNG EDWARD
So? You coming?

TILLY
Nah.

YOUNG EDWARD
They've got acrobats.

TILLY
Can't be bothered.

YOUNG EDWARD
And a dancing sheep.

TILLY
A sheep?
(pause)
Nah.

YOUNG EDWARD
Come on. They're only here for three
days.

TILLY
I said no.

YOUNG EDWARD
Fine.
(he looks around the
boathouse)
What's in the boxes?

TILLY
Nothing.

YOUNG EDWARD
Let me look?

TILLY
No.

YOUNG EDWARD
Just a peek. I won't tell anyone what's
in them, I swear.

Edward begins to walk towards the boxes. Before he has taken more than a couple of paces Tilly has jumped up and pushed him out of the boathouse.

TILLY
Edward! Piss off!

Edward laughs - he has achieved the reaction that he wanted. Tilly goes back inside the boathouse and opens one of the boxes. She pulls out a tin of paint and a paintbrush.

SCENE TWO

12 August 2011. Morning.

Edward is sitting on an old wooden chair outside the boathouse, reading. Beside him, on the arm of the chair, is a phone. He stops reading momentarily and picks up the phone to check the time. He puts the phone down and continues to read.

In 1992 Tilly emerges from the boathouse with the paint and paintbrush. She begins painting on the side of the boathouse, "Tilly's Boathouse. Private. No entry or else!!!"

An alarm sounds from the phone beside Edward. He picks up the phone and turns the alarm off. He stands up and places the book on the chair. Then he begins to pace the ground outside the boathouse, from one side to the other, exactly fourteen times. On the seventh turn Rosetti enters, some distance from Edward. She has a pair of brightly coloured headphones around her neck. She watches him. He does not see her.

On the final turn Edward stops to read the writing that Tilly is still painting in 1992. He touches the word "Tilly" and then stands back and crosses himself.

In 1992 Tilly finishes painting the boathouse. She leaves.

Edward returns to his chair, re-sets the phone alarm and continues to read. Rosetti bounces up to him, energetic and a bit mad.

ROSETTI

What you reading?

EDWARD

(jumps and sends the phone flying)

Shit!

ROSETTI

What you reading?

EDWARD

(retrieving the phone)

Nothing.

ROSETTI

Liar.

EDWARD

(examining the phone for damage)

Hm?

Whilst Edward is distracted by the phone, Rosetti reaches forward and picks up the book that he was reading. She looks at it.

ROSETTI

You're reading...

(she flips open the book)

Poetry.

Ugh.

EDWARD

What's wrong with poetry?

ROSETTI

(reading)

Stand still, fond fettered wretch!

(Edward makes a grab for the book, but misses. Rosetti continues reading)

While Memory's art parades the past
before thy face, and lures thy spirit to
her passionate portraiture-

Edward finally succeeds in snatching the book from Rosetti. She giggles.

Pause - Edward stares at her. She stares back.

EDWARD

Footpath's that way.

ROSETTI

I know.

EDWARD

There's a sign.

ROSETTI

Is there?

EDWARD

"Private Property. Trespassers will be
shot!"

ROSETTI

Can't do that.

It's murder.

(pause)

What you going to shoot me with, anyway?

EDWARD

Poetry.

ROSETTI

Ah.

In that case...

Rosetti holds up her hands in mock surrender.

EDWARD

You are trespassing.

ROSETTI

Nah, I'm not.

EDWARD

There is a sign.

ROSETTI

(pause)

You're kind of... pompous.

For a hermit.

Rosetti sits down on the grass and pulls out her phone.

EDWARD

What are you doing?

ROSETTI

Angry Birds.

EDWARD

Angry what?

ROSETTI

(playing Angry Birds)

I'm waiting for you to calm down.

EDWARD

You can't just-

This is ridiculous-

(Rosetti ignores him)

Fine.

Fine!

He throws himself into the chair.

Rosetti looks up at him.

Pause.

ROSETTI

Better.

(pause)

I'm not trespassing-

EDWARD

Yes you-

ROSETTI

Ah!

She returns to Angry Birds.

After a moment she looks at Edward.

ROSETTI

I work here.

EDWARD

What?!

Rosetti takes a small handwritten advert from her pocket. She holds it up.

ROSETTI

Wanted:

Home help - cleaning - household chores -

Hourly wage - contact details -

Blah, blah, blah.

EDWARD

You can't just-

ROSETTI

Why not?

EDWARD

It's-

Rude.

ROSETTI

So?

EDWARD

I haven't employed you.

ROSETTI

You will.

EDWARD

You think?

ROSETTI

Yup.

EDWARD

Why?

ROSETTI

I heard you're crazy.

EDWARD

Did you?

ROSETTI

Which is why the last cleaner you had
lasted a grand total of three weeks.

EDWARD

Family emergency.

ROSETTI

Obviously.

(silence)

So:

You can't employ me if you don't know who
I am.

EDWARD

I'm not-

ROSETTI

I know who you are.
You're Edward Algernon Black.
Who chose Algernon?
That's very unfortunate.

EDWARD

Family tradition.
You wouldn't understand.

ROSETTI

No, I wouldn't.

(silence)

You know the woman in the post office
told me not to come here? Said you were
so far out of your tree that it wasn't
worth my while.

EDWARD

That's nice of her.

ROSETTI

So, really, if you don't employ me...

EDWARD

I don't even know who you are.

ROSETTI

Are you asking?

EDWARD
Yes, I am asking.

ROSETTI
Rosetti Whitaker.

EDWARD
Rossetti like the painter?

ROSETTI
Only one "s" and my friends call me Roo.

EDWARD
Roo?

ROSETTI
You can call me Rosetti.

Pause.

EDWARD
And you mocked me for Algernon?

ROSETTI
Piss off.
(pause)
So?

Pause.

EDWARD
If I were to employ you -

ROSETTI
Yes?

EDWARD
Hypothetically.

ROSETTI
Of course.

EDWARD
How would I know you'd do as you're told?

ROSETTI
Why wouldn't I?

EDWARD
"Private Property. Trespassers will be shot."

ROSETTI
Oh, get over it.

EDWARD
References?

ROSETTI
Not exactly.

EDWARD
Where do you live?

ROSETTI
Somewhere.

EDWARD
Anywhere?

ROSETTI
Does it matter?

EDWARD
Emergency contact? Your parents?

ROSETTI
Don't have parents.

EDWARD
So... No references, no fixed abode and
no one for me to call when you run off
with my family's priceless heirlooms.

ROSETTI
Why would I want your heirlooms?

EDWARD
Priceless heirlooms.

ROSETTI
I don't want your mouldy cutlery.
*(she pulls out a pen and paper
and scribbles down a phone
number and name)*
Social worker.
(she hands the paper over)
In case I steal your heirlooms.

EDWARD
I'm still not going to employ you.

ROSETTI
How about-
A three day trial?

EDWARD
If I say yes will you bugger off?

ROSETTI
Is that a yes?

EDWARD
When you are working you are to stay in
the house.

ROSETTI
Of course.

EDWARD
The garden and the boathouse are out of
bounds.

ROSETTI
Understood.

EDWARD
You will begin at eight forty five AM. I
expect you to be gone by the time I
return in the evening.

ROSETTI
Where will you be?

EDWARD
You will not ask impertinent questions.

ROSETTI
No.
(pause)
Sorry.

EDWARD
Three days.
(pause)
I will leave a key under the mat and
instructions under the kettle.
(long pause)
You will also learn to recognise when
your host is trying to get rid of you.

ROSETTI
Will I?

EDWARD
Yes.

Long Pause. Edwards stares at Rosetti. She stares back.

ROSETTI
Eight forty five.

EDWARD
Don't be late.

ROSETTI
How would you know if I was?
(pause)
Alright! I'm leaving!
(pause)
Bloody hermit.

She leaves before Edward can say anything more. Edward watches her go, checks his phone again and returns to reading his book.

SCENE THREE

16 August 1992. Afternoon.

Tilly is sitting on the floor of the boathouse, folding the sheets of textbook paper into small origami boats.

In 2011 Edward is still reading outside the boathouse.

Pan enters. He has never been here before.

PAN

Oh. Hello.

TILLY

(startled)

Ah!

Who the hell are you?

PAN

Sorry.

Do you live here?

TILLY

Who the hell are you?

Pan is too busy looking around the boathouse to answer.

TILLY

Oi!

PAN

Sorry.

(pause)

Do you live here?

TILLY

Obviously I do not live here.

PAN

You might.

TILLY

I don't.

What are you doing in my garden?

PAN

Your garden?

TILLY

My parent's garden. Therefore, my garden.

PAN

I was bored.

Pan gestures towards the ripped textbook.

PAN

Don't you need that?

TILLY

It's not mine.

PAN

Don't someone else need that?

Tilly does not answer.

Pan points to the Machete.

PAN

Is that a sword?

TILLY

It's a Machete.

PAN

Wherever did you get a machete?

TILLY

Found it.

PAN

You found a machete?

TILLY

Sure.

Pan unsheathes the Machete and points it at Tilly.

PAN

Avast!

(Tilly is unimpressed)

Come on.

You never played pirates?

TILLY

No.

Pause.

PAN

You've got a boat and you've never played pirates?

TILLY

Who are you?

PAN
Let me commandeer this ship and I'll tell
you.

(*silence.*)
You've got a proper stick up your arse,
haven't you?
(*silence.*)
My name's Pan.

TILLY
(*amused*)
As in-[Peter Pan?]

PAN
As in Panayiotis.

TILLY
Pana-what?

PAN
Panayiotis. It's Greek.

TILLY
Are you Greek?

PAN
No.

TILLY
Oh.

PAN
What's your name then? Virgin-Mary-Stick-
Up-Her-Butt?

TILLY
It's Tilly, actually.

PAN
Short for what - Matilda?

TILLY
Short for nothing.

PAN
I had a Great Aunt Matilda.

TILLY
My name's not Matilda.

PAN
She smelt like cabbage.
*(he pokes a paper boat with
the machete)*
Are you sure that someone doesn't need
this?

TILLY
What are you doing in my boathouse?

PAN
Oh, so you do live here.

TILLY
I live in the house over there.
Pan taps the wooden box with the machete. He opens it.

TILLY
Hey!

PAN
You don't live here, therefore it's not
your stuff.

TILLY
Drop dead.
*Pan is pulling an assortment of items from the box, including a
camping lamp, a carriage clock, a pair of shoes and around thirty
packets of Werthers Originals.*

PAN
Strange collection.

TILLY
Things I have acquired.

PAN
Acquired.

TILLY
After a fashion.

PAN
Did you acquire all this?
(Tilly nods)
I don't believe you.

TILLY
No?

PAN
You're too ... proper.
Uptight.

TILLY
Piss off.

PAN
Nah.
Tell you what.
I'll believe you.

TILLY
I'm not lying.

PAN
Of course not.
But I'll need evidence.

TILLY
Evidence?

PAN
A dare, if you will.
(pause)
You're not scared are you?

TILLY
No.
(pause)
What's in it for me?

PAN
Honour.

TILLY
Honour?

PAN
And drunken misadventures.

TILLY
I'm listening.

PAN
Come back here, this time tomorrow, with
a bottle of "acquired" gin.

TILLY
Gin.

PAN
Acquired Gin.
You do that, and I'll...

Pause. He is thinking. Then, he looks around, pretending there is an audience, leans forward and whispers in her ear.

Pause.

TILLY
You can't walk on the roof!

PAN
Why not?

TILLY
You'll fall off.

PAN
I most certainly will not.
(with a flourish)
I am the Flying Boy.

He does a backflip.

TILLY
You're a circus brat?

PAN
No. I am the Flying Boy.

TILLY
In the circus?

PAN
So?

TILLY
How's the sheep?

PAN
What sheep?

TILLY
Bastard!

PAN
What?

TILLY
Never mind.
Will you really walk on the roof?

PAN
On my hands if it's good enough gin.

YOUNG EDWARD (OFF)
Tilly! Hey! Tilly!

TILLY
Shit!

Outside the boathouse Young Edward enters wearing a black puffa jacket. He leans on the side of the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD
Guess who I saw today?
Inside the boathouse, Tilly pushes Pan underneath the upturned rowing boat.

YOUNG EDWARD
Aren't you going to guess?

Tilly comes out of the boathouse. She stops.

TILLY
What the hell is that?

YOUNG EDWARD
What?
Tilly touches his coat.

TILLY
This?

YOUNG EDWARD
It's a coat.

TILLY
Don't you have somewhere better to be?

YOUNG EDWARD
Obviously not.
You're supposed to be guessing.

TILLY
You look ridiculous.

YOUNG EDWARD
Shut it.

TILLY
How was the dancing sheep?

YOUNG EDWARD

What shee-
Oh.

TILLY

Knob.

YOUNG EDWARD

You've still not guessed.
Maura Tointon.
She's stalking you.

TILLY

Bollocks.

YOUNG EDWARD

She is!

TILLY

Well then at least I've got more friends
than you.

Pause. Edward touches the painting on the side of the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD

Nice painting.
Very Secret Seven.
(silence)
Can I see inside your boxes yet?

TILLY

Can't you read?

She indicates the writing on the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD

Free country.

TILLY

Piss off.

YOUNG EDWARD

Manners.

TILLY

Fine.
Piss off, please.

YOUNG EDWARD

Better.
*(he goes to leave but then
turns back)*
Say hello to Maura for me.

Edward exits.

Tilly goes back inside the boathouse. She kicks one of the boxes and then sits down on it. Pan clambers out from under the boat and stands up.

PAN
Did your brother really tell you there
was a dancing sheep?

TILLY
There might've been!

PAN
Sheep can't dance.

TILLY
Oh, shut it.

Silence.

PAN
So...
You and I were about to strike a deal.

TILLY
Fine.

PAN
Genuine? You'll do it?

Tilly holds out her hand to shake on the deal.

Pan spits in his own hand and grabs Tilly's hand before she has a chance to pull away. He shakes her hand.

PAN
Can't back out of a spit-shake.

TILLY
Drop dead.

Pan exits, walking on his hands. Tilly returns to folding the paper boats.

In 2011 the phone alarm begins to bleep. Edward gets up and begins pacing outside the boathouse.

SCENE FOUR

14 August 2011. Evening.

In 1992 Tilly is still in the boathouse, folding paper boats.

Edward is pacing up and down outside the boathouse. The book of poetry and the phone are on the chair. Rosetti enters, at a distance, watching him. He does not see her.

As before, on the final turn Edward stops to read the writing on the side of the boathouse. He touches the word "Tilly" and then stands back and crosses himself.

After a moment, Edward returns to the chair, collects the book and the phone and then leaves. Once he has gone Rosetti approaches the boathouse. She stands in front of the painted writing and takes a photograph out of her pocket. She holds it up in front of the boathouse, comparing the two, and then lowers it again.

Pause. She takes out her phone and begins to dial. She holds the phone to her ear. The photograph is still in her hand - she is looking at it.

Pause.

ROSETTI

Come on... answer.

Answer...

On the other end of the phone there is no answer. Rosetti hangs up.

Pause.

ROSETTI

Idiot.

Pause.

Rosetti dials again. She waits for the phone to go to voicemail.

ROSETTI

Shammy! I'm here, alive... calling you.

Get out of bed and answer the phone you

lazy bastard, it's five-thirty.

(pause)

Fucking voicemail.

(pause)

Anyway.

Call me. When you remember. I've found

the brother. He's properly strange.

Hermit, like, and he's really rude.

I'll tell you all about it, if you call me.

So... call me. I'm not leaving anymore
ridiculous messages.
Call me.

Rosetti hangs up.

Pause.

ROSETTI
Fucking. Voicemail. Idiot.

Pause. Rosetti holds the photograph up again.

*She touches the painted words on the side of the boathouse, and
then stands back.*

ROSETTI
Tilly's boathouse. Private. No entry or
else!!!

*In 1992 Tilly holds up one of the paper boats and pretends it is
sailing through the air.*

Rosetti puts the photograph back in her pocket.

She leaves.

Blackout.

SCENE FIVE

17 August 1992. Morning.

The boathouse is empty.

Pan enters. He is wearing Edward's black puffa jacket. He goes into the boathouse and stuffs the coat into one of the boxes. Then he begins rifling through another box. He picks up a Take That T-shirt and holds it up to himself.

Tilly enters, holding a PVC backpack. She sees Pan and jumps. He throws the shirt back into the box.

TILLY
Bloody hell!

PAN
Alright?

TILLY
Don't do that!

PAN
You weren't here.

TILLY
You're early!
(Pan shrugs)
I was fetching these.

Tilly puts the bag down and opens it. She pulls out a full bottle of gin, two glass tumblers and a Polaroid camera.

PAN
Don't count if it came from your house.

TILLY
As if I'm that thick.

Tilly opens the bottle of gin and pours two very full glasses.

TILLY
It's from under the bar at the Lamb and
Cockroach.
The camera was just a bonus.

Pan takes one of the glasses and downs it. He looks at Tilly.

PAN
Go on, then.

Tilly picks up the glass, but hesitates before drinking.

PAN
Tell me you've been drunk before.

TILLY
Course I have.

PAN
Well...?

TILLY
I don't like gin.

PAN
All the more reason to drink it quickly,
then.

Tilly sniffs the drink. She looks at it, and then downs it. She splutters, but finishes the glass.

PAN
See. That wasn't so hard, was it?

TILLY
'Spose.

Pan refills the glasses. He sips from his glass, puts it down and picks up the camera.

PAN
Has it got film?

TILLY
Obviously.

PAN
Smile!

Pan takes a photo of Tilly. He removes the print from the camera and shakes it whilst it develops.

Pause.

TILLY
So...

PAN
What?

TILLY
I brought you the gin.
And a camera.

PAN
So?

TILLY

So you're going to walk across the roof
on your hands.

PAN

*(looks at the Polaroid in his
hands)*

Hot.

TILLY

Shut it.

PAN

(points to her glass)

You going to finish that?

TILLY

You going to walk on the roof?

Pause.

PAN

Nah.

I don't trust you yet.

TILLY

You promised!

PAN

Drink up.

Pan hands her the glass. He downs his own. She doesn't drink.

TILLY

You said, if I stole the-

PAN

Alright, Matilda.

Get your knickers out your arse.

I'll walk on the roof.

TILLY

Don't believe you.

PAN

Too bad.

(pause)

One more dare and I swear I'll walk on
the roof.

TILLY

Bastard!

PAN

On my honour as the Flying Boy.

Pause.

TILLY

What's the dare?

Pause. Pan is thinking. Then he picks up the spade from the corner of the boathouse.

He leans over and whispers in Tilly's ear.

Pause.

TILLY

No way!

(silence)

No. Way.

That's... wrong.

PAN

Up to you.

TILLY

You're insane.

PAN

I'll walk on my hands.

TILLY

But-

Pan holds up his hands and waves them in her face.

TILLY

It's still wrong.

Pan picks up the bottle of gin and drinks from the bottle.

PAN

It won't hurt anyone.

TILLY

It's disrespectful.

PAN

They're dead! The dead don't grass you up.

(pause)

No one will know.

(pause)

Chicken.

TILLY

Piss off.

Pan leans forward, as if he were going to kiss Tilly. Then, millimetres from her face:

PAN

Bwarrrrrrkkkkkkk.

Pause.

TILLY

Fine.

Fine!

Dickhead.

(points to the spade)

You can carry that.

She downs her drink and then leaves. Pan follows, carrying the spade.

SCENE SIX

15 August 2011. Lunchtime.

Outside the boathouse, Edward is sitting on the chair. He is reading the book of poetry. The phone is, as usual, on the arm of the chair.

Rosetti enters carrying a tray on which sits a plate of sandwiches, a teapot and a cup and saucer.

ROSETTI

Hey! You hungry?

EDWARD

What?!

ROSETTI

I brought lunch.

EDWARD

You're-

I told you this is out of bounds.

Rosetti ignores him and begins to pour a cup of tea.

EDWARD

You can't use that!

ROSETTI

Why not?

EDWARD

That's a Victorian tea set!

ROSETTI

It's very pretty.

EDWARD

It's not for tea!

ROSETTI

It's a tea set-

EDWARD

Yes, but-

ROSETTI

For tea.

The phone alarm begins to bleep. Edward stares at it.

ROSETTI

You going to get that?

Edward turns the alarm off.

EDWARD

You need to leave now.

ROSETTI

*(pointing to the writing on
the boathouse)*

I like the graffiti. Who's Tilly?

EDWARD

Did you hear me?

Pause. Rosetti continues to make the tea.

ROSETTI

Milk? Or lemon? I heard posh people put
lemon in their tea, so I brought both.

EDWARD

Neither.

ROSETTI

Doesn't it taste funny? It seems very
strange, putting lemon in a cup of tea.

(pause)

Sugar? No?

(pause)

Bloody hell, you're hard work.

EDWARD

I told you this was out of bounds.

ROSETTI

I've made you lunch and tea with lemon-

EDWARD

That tea set is both rare and valuable.

ROSETTI

My iPhone is valuable. That's a teacup.

EDWARD

You need to leave me alone.

ROSETTI

Why?

Silence.

EDWARD
Please.

ROSETTI
You want to get out more.

EDWARD
No, I don't.

Silence.

ROSETTI
You're very rude.

EDWARD
Is that so?

ROSETTI
Yes.

EDWARD
I'd like you to put my tea set back.

ROSETTI
Okay.

EDWARD
Now.

ROSETTI
You haven't finished drinking yet.

EDWARD
It is not for-

ROSETTI
Oh, be a rebel.
Break the rules.

EDWARD
No.

ROSETTI
Dare you.

EDWARD
No!

Edward begins pacing outside the boathouse.

ROSETTI
What you doing?

EDWARD
Walking.

ROSETTI
Why?

EDWARD
Because I have to.

ROSETTI
Oh.
(pause)
Why?

EDWARD
You've had your three days, Rosetti.

ROSETTI
Are you sacking me?

EDWARD
If you like.

ROSETTI
(laughs)
For making lunch?

EDWARD
For breaking the rules.

Pause.

ROSETTI
You're so dull.

For a moment, it seems as though Edward is going to hit her. He steps out of his ritual, towards Rosetti, but then checks himself. He stares at her, looking positively feral. Rosetti returns the stare for several seconds, then giggles.

ROSETTI
Nutter.

She exits.

Edward completes his ritual in silence, and sits back on the chair. The tea-set lies abandoned in the grass.

SCENE SEVEN

17 August 1992. Afternoon.

Pan is sitting on one of the boxes in the boathouse. The spade, now muddy, has been propped back in the corner. He is sipping at a full glass of gin.

Outside the boathouse Tilly enters, holding a cat which is making a vicious attempt to escape.

TILLY

Bastard!

Pan gets up and goes to the doorway of the boathouse.

PAN

Language.

TILLY

It scratched me!

PAN

You haven't drunk enough.

TILLY

What?

PAN

If it hurts, you haven't drunk enough.

TILLY

You hold it, then!

PAN

Nah...

(pause)

Stay there a sec.

Pan goes inside the boathouse. He grabs the Polaroid camera and takes it back outside. He pulls Tilly over to the boathouse and stands her in front of the boathouse. He makes a show of lining her up for a photograph.

TILLY

What are you doing?

PAN

Photographic evidence.

(he holds the camera up)

Smile!

Tilly doesn't smile. Pan takes the photo and shakes it.

TILLY

What am I supposed to do with the cat?

PAN

I'm not responsible for the cat.

He goes back inside the boathouse. Tilly follows, still holding the cat. Pan sits back down on the box and puts the photograph beside him. He returns to his gin.

TILLY

I only nicked it 'cause you-

PAN

If I told you to jump off a cliff...

TILLY

You sound like my mother.

PAN

Cheers.

TILLY

Theft is not the same as suicide.

PAN

Mrs Anderson might commit suicide when she finds out you stole her cat.

TILLY

It's a cat!

PAN

What took you so long, anyway? You were almost an hour.

TILLY

Maura Bloody Tointon.
Caught me throwing up in the hedge.

PAN

You threw up?

TILLY does not answer.

PAN

Lightweight.

(Tilly is not impressed)

What did you tell her?

TILLY

That you made me eat a worm.

PAN
(points to the gin)
You know if you throw up you have to
start again?

TILLY
Very funny.

PAN
You do!

TILLY
I can't. I'll lose the cat.

PAN
I've a plan for the cat.
*Pan gets up and picks up the suitcase. He opens it and holds it
out.*

TILLY
Oh, fucking hell.

PAN
We'll take it out again.
Come on.
We can't have it grassing us up.

TILLY
It's a cat.

PAN
It was spying on us.

TILLY
Cats can't talk.

PAN
Bet Mrs Anderson thinks it can talk.

TILLY
Yes, I'm sure it has a very articulate-
Ow! Bastard!

*Tilly throws the cat into the suitcase. Pan closes the lid and
zips it shut.*

Pause.

The suitcase meows, loudly.

PAN
We'll take it out again.

TILLY

When?

PAN

When it behaves itself.

The suitcase meows again.

TILLY

Promise?

PAN

Sure.

(pause)

Have another drink, lightweight.

Tilly hesitates. Pan ignores her. He picks up the photo.

TILLY

Are you sure it'll be okay?

PAN

You got a pen?

TILLY

Box beside the boat.

Pan, the cat?

Pan opens the box and rifles through until he finds a pen.

PAN

The cat's fine.

(the suitcase meows)

See.

*(he picks up his half-finished
gin and hands it to Tilly)*

Drink.

*Tilly sips at the gin. Pan begins to write on the back of the
photo.*

TILLY

What are you doing?

PAN

Something to remember me by.

(pause)

There.

Tilly and Pan Junior. The Boathouse at
Little Muckworth. Seventeenth of August
nineteen-ninety-two.

He hands her the photograph.

TILLY

Pan Junior?

PAN
What's wrong with that?

TILLY
Nothing.

Silence.

PAN
So.

TILLY
So?

PAN
Are you a virgin?

TILLY
Fuck off.

PAN
You are, aren't you?

TILLY
At least I don't have, like... syphilis.

PAN
Syphilis?!

TILLY
Syphilis.

PAN
I don't have syphilis.

TILLY
If you say so.

Pause, then the suitcase meows.

PAN
Ever kissed a boy?

TILLY
Sure.

PAN
Who?

TILLY
None of your business.

PAN
Bet you ain't.

TILLY
I have, too.

Pan suddenly, unexpectedly, kisses Tilly.

PAN
You have now.

TILLY
You kissed me!

PAN
Oh, you loved it.

Tilly hits him. Pan picks up the gin and drinks straight from the bottle. He passes it to Tilly. She also drinks.

PAN
I'm bored.

TILLY
Only boring people get bored.

PAN
Shut it.

TILLY
You must be very boring.

PAN
Cheers.

TILLY
You're supposed to be on the roof, you know.

PAN
I know.

TILLY
So...

PAN
Tell me something interesting first.

TILLY
Or what?

PAN
I'll be forced to kiss you again.

Pause. Tilly is thinking.

TILLY
How about, a Maori myth?

PAN
A what?

TILLY
I read it in a book.

PAN
A book?

TILLY
It begins a long time ago. Before there
were stars-

PAN
There were always stars.

TILLY
How do you know?

PAN
I know everything.

TILLY
A long time ago, before there were stars,
there lived this guy.

PAN
Just one guy?

TILLY
In a village. And, one day he took his
boat out on the lake, but he got lost.

PAN
Idiot.

TILLY
Anyway. Night came, and the monsters came
out, and the guy was all scared and
stuff.

PAN
Because of the monsters?

TILLY

So he picked up a bunch of glowing rocks
from the riverbank and sailed into the
sky to scare the monsters away.

PAN

That's the stupidest story ever.

TILLY

I like it.

PAN

You've got *Ophelia* on your wall.

TILLY

What's wrong with that?

PAN

Nothing whatsoever.

TILLY

Shut up.

Silence. Tilly holds out the gin.

TILLY

Drink?

PAN

Always.

(pause)

Are you really a virgin?

TILLY

Fuck off, Pan.

Silence. Young Edward enters and approaches the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD

You in there, freak?

*Inside the boathouse Tilly screws the lid on the gin and hurls it
into one of the boxes. Pan dives behind the boat.*

TILLY

What?

Young Edward leans on the doorframe.

YOUNG EDWARD

Hello yourself.

TILLY

I told you to piss off.

YOUNG EDWARD
Free country.

TILLY
What do you want?

YOUNG EDWARD
I came for my coat.

TILLY
What coat?

YOUNG EDWARD
The puffa jacket. It's missing.

TILLY
So?

YOUNG EDWARD
I want it back.

TILLY
I haven't touched your coat.

YOUNG EDWARD
No?

TILLY
No.

Edward doesn't move. He stares at her. Then, suddenly, the suitcase meows, more quietly this time.

Pause.

YOUNG EDWARD
What was that?

TILLY
Cat.

YOUNG EDWARD
You got a cat in here?

TILLY
No.

Pause. Young Edward looks around the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD
Maura Tointon says she saw you with a boy.

TILLY
Then she's lying.

YOUNG EDWARD
Nah.
She reckons he was on the roof.

TILLY
She's definitely lying.

YOUNG EDWARD
Is that so?

TILLY
Yes.

YOUNG EDWARD
She'll be very upset if you've gone and
got yourself a boyfriend.

TILLY
What do you want, Edward?

YOUNG EDWARD
My coat.

TILLY
I haven't touched your coat.

YOUNG EDWARD
Perhaps.

TILLY
Drop dead.

YOUNG EDWARD
I swear, if you've touched my coat...

TILLY
Piss off.

YOUNG EDWARD
Freak.

Young Edward leaves, Tilly hurls a packet of Werther's after him.

TILLY
Dickhead!
Pan sits up.

PAN
Language.

TILLY

Well, he is.

(pause)

Maura Tointon told Edward she saw you on the roof.

PAN

So?

TILLY

You haven't been on the roof yet.

PAN

Haven't I?

TILLY

Have you?

PAN

No.

TILLY

So... how did she know?

Pan opens the box where he hid the puffa jacket and pulls it out. He puts it on.

PAN

What do you think?

TILLY

You didn't!

PAN

Calm down.

TILLY

Edward'll kill me.

PAN

Why?

You haven't got it.

Does it suit me?

TILLY

No.

PAN

I like it. It's too good for Edward.

(pause)

He's a knob, Tilly.

TILLY
I know, but...

PAN
He's a knob.

TILLY
He's my brother.

PAN
So?

TILLY
I can't steal from my brother.

PAN
How did Maura Tointon know I was going to
walk on the roof?

TILLY
She didn't.

PAN
No?

TILLY
She can't have known.

PAN
Unless she overheard us.

TILLY
Why would she have overheard?

PAN
Are you thick?

TILLY
No.

PAN
Edward's paying her to spy on you.

TILLY
What?

PAN
I followed him. Yesterday. I thought he
was an arse, so I followed him. I was

only going to nick the coat but he was talking to her.

TILLY
Maura?

PAN
Gave her five pounds.

TILLY
Shit.
(pause)
Do you think she knows we stole the cat?

PAN
Did she see you with the cat?

TILLY
Oh, fucking hell.
Knob!

Silence.

PAN
We could... exact our revenge.

TILLY
How?

PAN
I don't know.
I'm not sure you'll like it.

TILLY
Why not?

PAN
It is the perfect revenge.

TILLY
What is?

PAN
You have to say yes first.

TILLY
Why?

PAN
Because I say so.

TILLY
Is it legal?

PAN
As legal as switching two headstones in a
graveyard-

TILLY
Shhhhhh!

PAN
...And then stealing the cat that was
spying on us.
Go on.
I dare you.
Unless you're frightened?

TILLY
Fine!
Yes.
What is it?

PAN
Do you promise?

TILLY
I promise.
Pan retrieves the gin. He holds it out.

PAN
Drink on it.
Tilly drinks from the bottle.

TILLY
Well?
Pan leans forward and touches Tilly's face.
Pause.

PAN
You and I are going to shag on Edward's
coat.
He kisses her.
Blackout.

SCENE EIGHT

15 August 2011. Evening.

The tea set is still on the ground outside the boathouse, the sandwiches untouched. The poetry book is still on the chair.

Rosetti enters. She picks up the book, sits in Edward's chair and does not move.

Silence.

Her phone rings. She takes out of her pocket, checks the screen to see who is calling and then answers it.

ROSETTI

Hey! What's up? ... Alright, I guess -
You were supposed to call me ... Yeah, I
found the brother ... Edward. He's pretty
weird ... OCD or something ... No, I
can't "just ask him!" ... He might lock
me in a cupboard ...

(Rosetti laughs)

... "Hello strange man, sorry to intrude
but I'm looking for your missing
sister..."

(she laughs again)

... Shut up! ... Of course I'll be there
... Mel'd kill me if I missed it ... I
don't know ... Yes, before Friday ... I
don't know! - Ask Jessie, she's good at
fancy dress ... A tree, probably ... Piss
off! ... I am not dressing up as a
Hobbit! ... Whatever.

Alright, talk to you later ... Yes, I
promise to call you if he locks me in a
wardrobe ... Yeah, you too ... 'Night.

Rosetti hangs up and puts the phone back in her pocket. She takes out the photograph that we saw in scene four and stares at it.

SCENE NINE

17 August 1992. Late afternoon.

Pan and Tilly are lying side by side on the floor of the boathouse. They are both only partially dressed, and partially hidden underneath Edward's coat.

In 2011 Rosetti is still sitting in the chair outside the boathouse.

TILLY

Was that it?

Pan doesn't answer.

TILLY

I wasn't expecting that.

PAN

What were you expecting, a movie scene?

TILLY

Less mess.

(pause)

It must be getting late.

PAN

I should go soon. I'm supposed to help dismantle the trapeze.

TILLY

Oh.

PAN

You knew that.

TILLY

I know.

PAN

You're not going to get all girly on me, are you?

TILLY

No.

Of course not.

PAN

Good.

Silence.

TILLY
How do you dismantle a trapeze?

PAN
You take it apart.

TILLY
What if it breaks when you're on it?

PAN
It won't.

TILLY
But if it does?

PAN
Don't be so morbid.

Silence.

TILLY
Will you write to me?

PAN
Sure.

TILLY
Please.

Pause.

TILLY
I'll write to you.
(pause)
I need your address.
Do you even have an address?
(pause)
I don't even know your last name.
I should know your last name.

PAN
Weyer.

Pause.

TILLY
Panayiotis Weyer.

PAN
What?

TILLY
Nothing.

PAN
Shut up then.

Silence.

TILLY
Can I let the cat out now?

PAN
Only if you make it promise not to tell.

TILLY
How?

PAN
Threaten it with your Machete.

TILLY
Piss off.

Tilly gets up and opens the suitcase. She shuts it again almost instantly.

TILLY
Shit!

PAN
What's up?

TILLY
It's dead!

PAN
Don't be ridiculous.

TILLY
No, it is.
It's dead.

PAN
You're over-reacting.
I'm sure it's fine.

Pan gets up and looks into the suitcase. He pokes the cat.

PAN
Oh.
Oops.

TILLY
You said it'd be fine!

PAN
It wasn't in there that long.

TILLY
So?!

PAN
It probably died of old age.

TILLY
You promised!

Pan is silent. He opens the lid and pokes at the cat again.

TILLY
What are you doing?

PAN
Checking.

TILLY
For what?

PAN
It's definitely dead.
She hits him.

TILLY
Bastard!

PAN
Eh?

TILLY
We can't give back a dead cat.

PAN
We can't keep it!

TILLY
I wasn't suggesting we did.
(pause)
Mrs Anderson'll be devastated.
(pause)
Fuck.
What do we do?

PAN
Bury it.

TILLY
I'm serious!

PAN
It's a cat!

Pause.

TILLY
(points at the cat)
Fix it.

PAN
I'm not magic.

TILLY
You killed it!

PAN
Cats die.
Tilly hits him.

TILLY
This is your fault.

PAN
It's just a cat!

TILLY
It was out there, minding its own
business...

PAN
It was spying on us.

TILLY
Maura Tointon was spying on us.

PAN
(pause)
Do you think she saw us in the graveyard?

TILLY
Yes.

PAN
Do you think she'll grass you up?

TILLY
(pause)
Fuck.
My parents are going to kill me.

PAN

Nah.

TILLY

"Sorry Mother, I dug up some dead people
and killed a cat"

(pause)

Poor cat.

PAN

You could deny it.

TILLY

How?

PAN

Cats go missing all the time.

TILLY

But-

PAN

Unless you want to tell your parents?

TILLY

No chance.

Shit.

Shit!

She's going to tell.

I know it.

She'll tell Edward, and he'll tell my
parents, or Mrs Anderson, or both, and
then everyone'll know what we did. And no
one'll care about you because you're
leaving, and so they'll all look at me.
Poor little Tilly Black. What a crazy
little freak she is: fucked a circus
brat, dug up the graveyard and killed a
completely innocent cat.
Shit!

Silence.

PAN

Have you finished?

TILLY

Bastard!

Tilly kicks the suitcase.

Silence.

PAN

Maura Tointon was only spying on you
because Edward paid her to spy.

TILLY

So?

PAN

So she can be bought. We pay her more and
she keeps her gob shut.

TILLY

But Edward paid her five pounds. I don't
have five pounds.

PAN

*(points to the boxes around
the boathouse)*

No, but you've got all this stuff.

TILLY

Stuff I've nicked.

PAN

She don't know that.

TILLY

So, what, I go up to her, and say, "Here
is all my stuff, please don't tell on
me?"

PAN

Pretty much.

TILLY

Will you do it?

PAN

Me?

TILLY

I don't want to.

PAN

Scared?

TILLY

Fuck off, Pan.

Pause.

PAN

Sorry.
Tell you what:
I'll go and find Maura.
You bury the cat.

TILLY

Shouldn't we give it a proper funeral?

PAN

It's a cat.

TILLY

So?

PAN

You're such a girl.

(pause)

Fine.

Dig the grave and when I come back we'll
bury it together.

*Pan picks up the PVC backpack and stuffs it with random items
from the boxes. He picks up the machete, and examines it.*

TILLY

You're taking that?

PAN

I'd have thought this was the height of
cool when I was twelve.

TILLY

I bet you would.

Pan leaves taking the Machete and the backpack with him.

Pause.

Tilly looks at the suitcase.

TILLY

Sorry cat.

She picks up the spade and begins to dig.

SCENE TEN

15 August 2011. Evening.

Rosetti is still sitting in the chair outside the Boathouse. The tea set remains untouched on the grass and she is still holding the poetry book.

Rosetti flips the book open. There is a handwritten inscription on the back of the front cover, which she reads.

Inside the boathouse, in 1992, Tilly is still digging.

Edward enters. He sees Rosetti and stops.

EDWARD

I told you to leave.

ROSETTI

Shit!

She jumps up and slams the book shut.

ROSETTI

What are you doing here?

EDWARD

I left the tea set.

ROSETTI

You left a rare and valuable tea set on the lawn?

EDWARD

It's my tea set.

ROSETTI

Petulant child.

EDWARD

Piss. Off.

ROSETTI

Nah.

EDWARD

I'll report you for trespassing.

ROSETTI

I'm quaking in my converse.

EDWARD

I mean it.

He takes out his phone and holds it up.

Rosetti doesn't respond.

Edward begins to dial.

ROSETTI

Fine.

You're so dull.

I'm looking for Tilly.

EDWARD

Tilly?

ROSETTI

Do you know where she is?

EDWARD

Tilly's dead.

ROSETTI

Liar.

EDWARD

What?

ROSETTI

You're lying.

EDWARD

So?

Pause. Rosetti holds up the book.

ROSETTI

Haven't you found a new book yet?

EDWARD

Eh?

ROSETTI

You're still reading this one.

EDWARD

So?

ROSETTI

Doesn't it bore you?

EDWARD

No.

ROSETTI
Reading the same book over and over and
over again?

EDWARD
Give it back.

ROSETTI
Ain't yours.

EDWARD
Give me the book.

ROSETTI
It's Tilly's book.

EDWARD
Tilly isn't here.

ROSETTI
No?
*(opens the book and reads the
inscription)*
Dearest Tilly, Happy Birthday. Lot's of
love, Uncle Algy.
(pause)
Algy?

EDWARD
Algernon.

Pause.

ROSETTI
Do you miss her?

EDWARD
What?

ROSETTI
Tilly.

EDWARD
None of your business.

ROSETTI
It is.

EDWARD
Is it?

ROSETTI
I'm asking.

EDWARD
So?

ROSETTI
I ask, you answer.

EDWARD
No.

Pause.

ROSETTI
Aren't you curious?

EDWARD
Not really.

ROSETTI
I knew your name.
I know Tilly's name.

EDWARD
It's written on the boathouse.

ROSETTI
I see that.

Pause.

EDWARD
I'd like my book back now.
Please.

ROSETTI
Tilly's book.

EDWARD
No.

ROSETTI
My book.

EDWARD
No!

Pause.

ROSETTI
Do you come here every day?
(*pause*)
It's very odd.

The walking, I mean.
I saw you.
Up and down.
Fourteen times.
And then...

Rosetti crosses herself.

EDWARD
You've been spying on me?

ROSETTI
I had to be sure.

EDWARD
Of what?

ROSETTI
I didn't realise you'd be so...

EDWARD
What?

ROSETTI
Peculiar.

EDWARD
Thanks.

ROSETTI
You are, I wasn't going to-
I mean-

EDWARD
What?

Silence.

ROSETTI
I wasn't going to tell you.
I didn't think-

EDWARD
You were looking for me?

ROSETTI
Tilly.

EDWARD
Tilly's gone.

ROSETTI
I know.

EDWARD
It's been nineteen years.

ROSETTI
I know.

EDWARD
So...?

ROSETTI
I'm sorry, Edward.
I shouldn't have-
I just wanted to-
Sorry.

Rosetti begins to walk away. She still has the book in her hands.

EDWARD
Wait!

Rosetti stops. Edward tries to take the book from Rosetti's hands. She won't let it go.

EDWARD
Please don't take this.

ROSETTI
Why?

EDWARD
Please.
(pause)
Why are you here?
(pause)
Rosetti?
Roo?

ROSETTI
Rosetti.

Silence.

Then, Rosetti takes the photo out of her pocket. She looks at it and then hands it to Edward.

He stares at it.

ROSETTI
Tilly.
Says so on the back.

"Tilly and Pan Junior. The Boathouse at Little Muckworth. Seventeenth of August nineteen-ninety-two."

Did you take it?

EDWARD

No.

(pause)

Where did you get this?

ROSETTI

I was found with it.

EDWARD

Found?

ROSETTI

In some little parish church in Somerset. Nothing but this photo and my name on a scrap of paper.

EDWARD

When?

ROSETTI

Eh?

EDWARD

When were you found?

ROSETTI

May 24th nineteen-ninety-three.

EDWARD

Shit.

Silence.

ROSETTI

Who's Pan Junior?

EDWARD

No idea.

ROSETTI

It wasn't your cat?

EDWARD

No, it looks like...

But-

It looks like Mrs Anderson's cat. The one that vanished.

ROSETTI
Vanished?

EDWARD
Yes, but...
Cats go missing all the time.

ROSETTI
Do you think Tilly stole the cat?

EDWARD
Maybe.
She-
Were you really found with this?

ROSETTI
Yes.

EDWARD
Tilly-
I don't think she's coming back.

ROSETTI
But you're waiting for her?

EDWARD
I promised.

ROSETTI
You were a kid.

EDWARD
And?

ROSETTI
She'd never know.

EDWARD
Wouldn't she?

ROSETTI
So... you've spent twenty years sitting outside a boathouse, reading one book of poetry and pacing randomly up and down on the grass.

EDWARD
Fourteen isn't random.

ROSETTI
It's not?

EDWARD
Tilly was Fourteen.

Pause.

ROSETTI
For a promise?

EDWARD
Yes.

ROSETTI
Why?

EDWARD
Why not?

Silence.

ROSETTI
Have you ever been inside?

EDWARD
In there?

ROSETTI
No entry or else...

EDWARD
Not since... No.

ROSETTI
You could.

EDWARD
No.

ROSETTI
Could I?

EDWARD
I don't think...

ROSETTI
Dare you.

EDWARD
I don't-

ROSETTI
Go on.

EDWARD
No.

ROSETTI
No entry or else!!

Rosetti grins suddenly and runs into the boathouse. She starts opening boxes and looking through them. Edward is left outside alone.

Blackout.

SCENE ELEVEN

17 August 1992. Late Afternoon.

Tilly is alone in the boathouse. She has finished digging the grave for the cat, which is still in the suitcase. She is sitting on one of the boxes, wearing Edward's puffa jacket. She is not moving.

Young Edward enters. He approaches the boathouse.

YOUNG EDWARD

Oi, Freakshow!

Tilly, panicked, takes off the jacket and stuffs it in the suitcase, with the cat. Just as she sits back down Young Edward reaches the doorway of the boathouse.

TILLY

What?

YOUNG EDWARD

(sees the hole)

What's that for?

TILLY

I'm digging for treasure.

YOUNG EDWARD

What sort of treasure?

TILLY

Magic treasure.

(pause)

What do you want?

YOUNG EDWARD

How's the stalker?

TILLY

Piss off.

YOUNG EDWARD

Have you seen her today?

TILLY

No.

Why?

YOUNG EDWARD

Just wondered.

TILLY

Piss off, then.

Outside the boathouse, Pan enters. He is covered in blood, dragging a heavy hessian sack, and carrying the machete, which is also bloodstained.

YOUNG EDWARD

You haven't seen her?

TILLY

No.

YOUNG EDWARD

You sure?

TILLY

What's it to you?

YOUNG EDWARD

Nothing.

TILLY

So, piss off.

Pan, hearing Young Edward and Tilly pulls the sack round behind the boathouse and stays there himself, listening to their conversation.

YOUNG EDWARD

Do you know something?

TILLY

About what?

YOUNG EDWARD

Nothing.

TILLY

You're odd.

YOUNG EDWARD

What'll you do, if you do find treasure?

TILLY

Hide it from you.

YOUNG EDWARD

Cheers freak.

TILLY

What do you want?

YOUNG EDWARD
Maura.

TILLY
I haven't seen her.

YOUNG EDWARD
I know she was here.

TILLY
How?

YOUNG EDWARD
(pause)
Magic.

TILLY
Liar.

YOUNG EDWARD
So?

TILLY
I don't know where she is, Edward.

YOUNG EDWARD
Fine, but if you see her...

TILLY
I'll tell her you were stalking her.

Young Edward leaves the boathouse and wanders away. Tilly sits back down on one of the boxes. She picks up the almost empty bottle of gin, removes the lid, lifts it to her lips and then changes her mind. She puts the bottle back down. She taps her hands on the side of the box.

Pan double checks that the coast is clear and then scurries into the boathouse, leaving the machete and the sack outside. He enters the boathouse and then stands perfectly still, staring at Tilly. She looks up at him.

TILLY
Fuck!
What happened?
(pause)
Are you okay?

Pan picks up the gin and opens it.

PAN
Drink.

He finishes the bottle and drops it.

TILLY

Pan?

(Pan is silent)

Are you hurt?

(silence)

Is this your blood?

PAN

No.

TILLY

Pan...

PAN

I didn't-

It was-

Shit.

TILLY

Maura?

Pan gestures vaguely to the side of the boathouse.

PAN

I didn't mean to.

I swear.

Pan sits down on a box. Tilly kneels in front of him.

TILLY

Did you find Maura?

(Pan nods)

Did you give her the machete?

(silence)

Edward was here.

Looking for her.

I think he knows I know.

(silence)

What happened?

(silence)

Did you cross the field with the bull?

(silence)

Did it attack you?

(silence)

Where's Maura?

She won't tell on us?

PAN

She won't tell.

TILLY
That's good.

PAN
No.

TILLY
Where-
Why-
I don't understand.
There's so much blood.
Were you attacked?

PAN
There was nothing I could do.
She tripped and-

TILLY
(pause)
Tell me you killed a sheep or a bull.
Or something.
Please.
(silence)
Pan?
(silence)
Where's Maura?

PAN
Outside.
(Tilly gets up to go outside)
No!

TILLY
I'm going outside.

PAN
I don't want you to see.

Tilly goes outside. She walks around the boathouse to where the sack and the machete are lying in the grass. Pan follows her. She picks the machete up, stares at it and then drops it.

TILLY
What did you do?
(silence)
You were supposed to bribe her.
What the fuck did you do?

PAN
It was an accident.
I wouldn't kill a child.

I wouldn't.
I swear.
It was an accident.

Silence.

TILLY
I should've let her grass.

PAN
I didn't know what to do with her.

TILLY
We should've left her.

PAN
I brought her here.

TILLY
What do we do now?

PAN
We can't tell anyone.
No one must know.
They won't believe me.
I killed her.

TILLY
We can't just leave her.

PAN
No one can know.
Please.

TILLY
She's just a child.

Long Silence. Neither Pan nor Tilly can look at each other.

TILLY
This is your fault!

PAN
I did it for you!

TILLY
I didn't ask you to.

PAN
Yes, you did.

TILLY
Fuck!

(pause)
She's dead, and now everyone'll know
everything.
And you're leaving!

PAN
You knew that.

TILLY
I don't want anyone to know.
Not about you, not about the cat, or
Maura, or anything.
(pause)
Make it go away.

PAN
I'm not magic.

TILLY
Fix it!

PAN
Calm down.

TILLY
They'll look for her. They'll come
searching, and they'll find her, and
they'll ask questions, and everyone will
know.

PAN
No.
We hide her.
And...
(kicks the machete)
This.

TILLY
How long, Pan? How long before they look
here?

PAN
(pause)
I'll tell the police I saw a little girl
being bundled into a van outside the
circus. I'll tell them they were driving
towards London.
They won't come here.

TILLY
If they don't believe you?

PAN
We've got nothing to lose.

Pause.

TILLY
What about...
Where do we put her?

Pause.

PAN
We'll bury her.
In the boathouse.
(silence)
It's going to be fine.

TILLY
Promise?

PAN
I promise, Tilly.

Silence.

Pan picks up the machete and the sack. He takes them both inside the boathouse. Tilly does not follow.

Pan puts both the sack and the machete into the grave that Tilly dug. He begins to fill it in.

Outside, Tilly sits down on the grass and starts to cry.

Blackout.

SCENE TWELVE

15 August 2011. Evening.

Rosetti is in the boathouse, rifling through boxes. Edward is still standing outside, staring at the doorway. He takes tiny, incremental steps towards the boathouse.

Inside, Rosetti looks up every few seconds to see if Edward has followed her yet. She picks up a packet of Werther's and examines it.

Her phone rings. She jumps, then takes it out of her pocket and answers it.

ROSETTI

What? ... Sorry ... Not really a good time ... He found me outside ... Yeah ... I showed him the photograph ... I'm fine ... He's not ... No ... Not exactly ... I'm in the boathouse ... Yes, really ... It's kind of messy ... No, outside ... he won't come in ... I'm not locked in a cupboard ... Yes, I'm sure ... I told him where I got it ... Not too well ... He's strange ... Not scary, no ... I'm safe, I promise ... I'll call you later ... Yes, I promise ...

(Edward is now standing in the doorway of the boathouse)

I have to go. Sorry. Talk later.

Rosetti hangs up and puts the phone in her pocket. She stares at Edward.

ROSETTI

Strange collection.

(She holds out a pack of Werther's)

Sweet?

EDWARD

No.

Rosetti pulls out a t-shirt with "Take That" written across it. She holds it up to herself, and then tosses it back in the box.

EDWARD

What are you doing?

ROSETTI

Just looking.

EDWARD
Who was that?

ROSETTI
On the phone?

EDWARD
Obviously.

ROSETTI
Shammy.
Friend.
From home.
He's worried you're going to lock me in a
cupboard.

EDWARD
Is he?

ROSETTI
Are you?

EDWARD
No.
(pause)
Boyfriend?

ROSETTI
Ew!
No.
Friend.

EDWARD
Just asking.

Pause.

Rosetti opens the suitcase. She screams and leaps backwards.

EDWARD
Awww, was there a big, scary spider?

ROSETTI
There's bones.

EDWARD
Eh?

ROSETTI
Bones.
See?

Edward looks into the suitcase.

EDWARD
Hey, that's my coat!

ROSETTI
That's your- what?

Edward takes the Puffa Jacket out of the suitcase and puts it on.

EDWARD
She swore she hadn't taken this.

ROSETTI
That's disgusting.

EDWARD
Oi.
This was very trendy.

ROSETTI
It's been in there.
(pause)
With the bones.

Edward pulls the coat off and throws it to the floor. Rosetti laughs. She is still peering at the bones.

ROSETTI
You're an idiot.

EDWARD
Cheers.

ROSETTI
Was this a cat?

Edward looks into the suitcase.

EDWARD
I think so.

ROSETTI
Pan Junior?

EDWARD
Must be.

Silence.

ROSETTI
Did Tilly have a boyfriend?

EDWARD
What?!

ROSETTI

It takes two. You know. To...

Rosetti points at herself.

EDWARD

How should I know?

ROSETTI

Did she, though?

EDWARD

Maybe.

I don't really...

You have to understand.

We were children.

ROSETTI

Edward, she abandoned me.

EDWARD

I suppose she did.

ROSETTI

So did she have a boyfriend?

EDWARD

Little Maura Tointon saw her with a
circus boy. In the summer, that was.

ROSETTI

Maura Tointon?

EDWARD

Yes.

ROSETTI

As in the girl who..?

It was in the news.

EDWARD

Yes.

Pause.

ROSETTI

Tilly got with a circus boy?

EDWARD

That's what Maura told me.

I was-

I paid Maura to spy on Tilly.

ROSETTI
You paid a kid to spy on your sister?

EDWARD
So?

ROSETTI
Knob.
(pause)
What kind of circus boy?

EDWARD
I don't know.
I asked Maura to find out.
She was supposed to meet me in the
village, but she never turned up and by
that evening the whole village was
buzzing with the news that she'd been
abducted from outside the circus.
She wasn't even supposed to be at the
circus.

Pause.

ROSETTI
Did Tilly tell you... About me?

EDWARD
No.

Silence.

ROSETTI
Why is there a cat in a suitcase?

EDWARD
I have no idea.

ROSETTI
Tilly put it there?

EDWARD
Must've done.

ROSETTI
Why?

EDWARD
I supposed it died.

ROSETTI
Most people bury their pets.

EDWARD

Yes...

Edward stares at the now filled-in hole.

ROSETTI

What?

EDWARD

Nothing.

ROSETTI

What was she like?

EDWARD

Odd.

ROSETTI

Odder than you?

EDWARD

Different.

Silence.

ROSETTI

I'm sorry.

EDWARD

Why?

ROSETTI

If it wasn't for me...

EDWARD

It's not your fault.

Pause.

ROSETTI

Did she know about Maura?

EDWARD

I... maybe.

I never asked.

Silence.

ROSETTI

I don't understand.

EDWARD

What?

ROSETTI
She got knocked up and ran away.

EDWARD
Yes.

ROSETTI
Why did she make you stay?

EDWARD
She didn't.

ROSETTI
But you said-

EDWARD
She made me promise I would never let
anyone into the boathouse. Ever.

ROSETTI
Why?

EDWARD
I don't know.

ROSETTI
Didn't you ask?

EDWARD
No.

ROSETTI
I'd have asked.

EDWARD
Would you?

Silence.

ROSETTI
I used to dream about finding her.
Tilly and Pan Junior.
(pause)
I wasn't expecting a hermit and a
boathouse.

EDWARD
I must have been such a disappointment.

ROSETTI
I didn't mean that.

EDWARD
Yes, you did.

ROSETTI
A bit.

EDWARD
Tilly was so strange that summer.
Stranger than she'd ever been before.
And then, Maura vanished, and Tilly...
Tilly changed.

ROSETTI
Do you wish you knew what happened?

EDWARD
Do you?

ROSETTI
No.

Silence.

EDWARD
You can keep the book.
If you want it.

ROSETTI
Thank you.

Silence.

EDWARD
Will you keep looking for her?

ROSETTI
There's nowhere else to look.

EDWARD
The circus?
You might find the boy?

ROSETTI
Maybe.
I don't know.
(pause)
I'm sorry...
For bothering you.

EDWARD
I know.

Silence.

ROSETTI

Look after the tea-set: it's very
valuable.

EDWARD

Of course.

Silence. She and Edward stare at each other.

EDWARD

You...
You're always welcome here.
If you're passing by.

ROSETTI

Time don't go backwards, Edward.
Everyone knows that.

*Rosetti walks out of the boathouse. She stops for a moment
outside and places the Polaroid onto the tray with the tea-set.
She takes out her phone and dials. She puts the phone to her ear.
She walks away.*

Inside the boathouse, Edward doesn't move.

SCENE THIRTEEN

15 August 2011 and 12 December 1992.

In 2011, Edward is still sitting in the boathouse.

In 1992 Tilly enters. She is dressed in a winter coat, a hat, gloves and a scarf. She is carrying a backpack, out of which she pulls a can of petrol, which she splashes around the inside the boathouse and on herself. She screws the lid back on and leaves the half empty can on the floor.

EDWARD

What happened, Tilly?

Tilly takes out a box of matches.

Takes out a match.

Lights it.

It burns.

She blows it out.

Drops the end into the water.

Does nothing.

EDWARD

I promised.

I didn't ever want to know, you said. I
was never to ask.

Tilly takes out another match.

Puts it back.

Drops the matchbox.

Nothing.

Tilly touches the patch of earth where Maura is hidden.

In 2011 Edward approaches the same patch of earth. He also touches it.

EDWARD

Digging for treasure.

What "treasure"?

After a moment, Tilly makes a decision. She stands and crosses herself.

She gathers a few items from the boathouse, including the camera and photographs, which she shoves into the backpack.

Pause. She looks around.

Tilly leaves.

Edward stands up.

He picks up the spade.

He puts it down again.

Then he picks up the half-empty can of petrol and discarded box of matches. He covers the inside of the boathouse in petrol, lights a match and drops it into the petrol.

Blackout.

Accompanying Essay

A Space of Time and Memory:

An analysis of the development of *The House of Dante's Dream*

"Stand still, fond fettered wretch! While Memory's art
Parades the past before thy face..."

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

"Parted Love" - *The House of Life*

Introduction

The primary theme of *The House of Dante's Dream* can be summed up in one word. It is a big, confusing and complicated word, but it is also a word with which we are all familiar, even if the precise meaning of that word eludes us. The word is 'memory'. In the simplest of terms, *The House of Dante's Dream* is a play about memory, and the futility of trying to lead a life based upon half-remembered events from long ago. *The House of Dante's Dream* is comprised of two main stories, separated by nineteen years, and linked by both the character of Edward, and the unfolding events of 1992. The parallel storylines are connected in such a way that they

become ghosts of one another, with the present impacting on the past as the past impacts upon the present.

As we shall see in this essay the connection between past and present (and, therefore, time) within the theme of memory hints at another crucial connection that exists between memory and the self. As Bruce Barton and Pil Hansen point out in "Memory", our understanding of what the notion of memory means has shifted dramatically in recent years, primarily as a result of advances in cognitive science. They explain that the notion of memory as being solely a recollection of the past has become outdated, and been replaced with the understanding that memory exists in the present just as certainly as it exists in the past (3). In essence, our memories are not filing cabinets, to be consulted and re-filed in the present, but rather the very centre of what makes us who we are at any given moment in time. Indeed, it seems reasonable to suggest that one of the reasons the notion of memory has been so frequently explored in drama is because it is inextricably linked to our individual sense of self, and our own internal narrative. If it is the case that memory builds identity, and directly impacts on our individual internal narrative, then the natural failings of human memory will disrupt that narrative and instigate dramatic conflict. Consider the extreme example of the Alzheimer's patient, whose memory becomes so disrupted that he or she eventually loses their sense of self and their ability to function in everyday society. To

put it another way: without memory, we would remain forever children.

This essay will analyse the development of *The House of Dante's Dream* from conception through to the final draft. I will examine the structural elements of time and space, and analyse how these elements connect to the play's primary theme of memory. I will also look at how the characters are developed through these two structural elements, as well as the connection that they each have with time, space and memory. In the first part of this essay, I will discuss the connection between *The House of Dante's Dream* as a double time play, and the theme of memory, paying particular attention to the incomplete and fluid nature of human memory. Following this I will proceed to illustrate the connection between space and memory, and discuss the idea that thematic memory is a product of space and time in combination. Finally, I will look at perceived space, and the differences between the on-stage and the off-stage worlds in *The House of Dante's Dream*, and discuss how these two worlds impact the play as a whole.

Part One: Time and Memory

The House of Dante's Dream was, from the earliest pitch, a double time play, divided in early drafts between 1992 and 2010, and later between 1992 and 2011. This was a change no more sophisticated than to push Rosetti's age to eighteen, rather than seventeen, in order to give her character the relative freedom of adulthood. The reason that this particular time structure was used in *The House of Dante's Dream* is inextricably tied to the fact that it is a play about memory (and the incomplete nature of memory), where a character from the present seeks answers about an event of the past, which are ultimately found to be unanswerable.

The trend for disrupting linear time in dramatic writing is still a relatively recent development. Dasha Krijanskaia discusses this shift from linear time to disrupted time in her essay "A Non-Aristotelian Model: Time as Space and Landscape in Postmodern Theatre". She states that Aristotelian ideas about structure dominated theatrical writing up until the 20th century, during and after which time there has been a conspicuous departure from these ideas of temporal linearity (337). Krijanskaia goes on to explain that "causality as a fundamental principle of Aristotelian plot presupposes that action entirely occurs in a linear time within a particular time segment which has a beginning and an end ... One situation leads to another, one event takes its roots in a preceding one ... Aristotelian plot is narrative, the storyline advances as a progression from past to future" (338). What makes Krijanskaia's

discussion particularly interesting, however, is her argument for why such a linear form of storytelling was popular for so many centuries: "While its timeline co-flows with [the] physical timeline of the universe and, consequently, with the timeline of all [human biological processes], it is congenial to human cognitive perception as well" (338). The crux of this statement lies in the assumption that cognitive perception is linear, but as I indicate in the introduction to this essay, the modern perception of cognitive understanding is of something far more complex in nature. As Barton and Hansen point out, our understanding of memory has moved from a simple process of storing and recalling to a much more complicated symbiotic process, where the past and the present co-exist within the individual (3). Further to this, if memory is not a simple cause-effect process, a play about memory is unlikely to be cause-effect either. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the trend for plays that disrupt temporal linearity coincides with changing understanding of cognitive theory. The twentieth century saw the rapid development of modern psychology and cognitive theory, including the psychoanalytic theory that repressed memories, often from childhood, cause psychological instability later in life (Bateman and Holmes 77) - in other words, the idea that the past and the present can coexist within the realm of memory and cognitive perception.

In *The House of Dante's Dream*, Edward is a direct embodiment of this changing notion of memory. It is no coincidence, then, that he

is also the only character who appears in both 1992 and 2011, and thus the only character who directly links the two time periods. Although Young Edward appears only sporadically in 1992, his offstage actions lead directly to both the conception of Rosetti and the death of Maura. Crucially, the young version of Edward is almost entirely unaware of the consequences of his actions, and as a result cannot fully explain the peculiarities of Tilly's subsequent disappearance. His partial understanding of the events that occurred in 1992 is what leads to his strange obsession with the boathouse, and the peculiar ritual that we see him undertake in 2011. Edward's relationship with the past is central to his present-day existence - to the extent that emotionally, he still exists in 1992, and has, in 2011, become something of a hermit. He knows that the answer to Tilly's absence (and Maura's supposed abduction) lie somewhere within the boathouse, but in the absence of further information, he cannot proceed beyond the point he is already at. He has become stuck in a cycle of repeated action and reclusiveness; in essence, his half-formed memories contribute directly to the half-life that he leads in the present day. Until Rosetti interrupts his day-to-day life, Edward is static: he does nothing, and he changes nothing, until the past intervenes to change him.

Interestingly, as *The House of Dante's Dream* developed, Edward's static state caused the biggest problem from draft to draft. His lack of interaction with the present day was blocking the relationship between himself and Rosetti, and, consequentially,

himself and the audience. In the earliest pitch (Appendix A) Edward was actively investigating the disappearance of Tilly, which he knew nothing about, and didn't want to know anything about. In this version of the story Edward appeared to lack any personal investment in the events of the past, because he was simply not interested and had no specific goal or desire to attain. As a result, Edward's story became uninteresting for the audience. To resolve this problem, the role of investigator was transferred to Rosetti. As the abandoned child and the direct consequence of Pan and Tilly's teenage misadventure, she has every reason to investigate the past, because it is a part of her identity. With this change made Edward then became the obstacle to Rosetti's acquisition of knowledge about her parents, and hence his static nature was solidified.

Once the relationship between Edward and Rosetti was established, it became crucial to make that relationship more challenging for both characters involved, in order to make the drama more interesting. During the workshop process in June 2011, many of the questions asked were directly connected to Edward's role within the play, and what the aim of his individual character was actually intended to be ("Playwright's Workshop"). It was clear that, at this point, Edward's character was still not dramatically interesting enough for either the audience or the actor. In the subsequent supervision, Steve Waters suggested that Edward's apparent absence of guilt was creating the impression of an entirely unsympathetic character. If he were carrying a greater burden of guilt about the

past, then he would become immediately more interesting to the audience. In a play where the predominant theme is memory this suggestion became invaluable to the subsequent development of Edward's relationship with Rosetti, as well as with the place where the past events had occurred. Memory, as we have already seen, is an incredibly complex concept where the past and the present impact upon one another and exist in a co-dependant relationship. Edward, until the final draft, lacked this co-dependency, ironically because he was too absorbed in the past, and his present day life wasn't expressed on stage or within the action of the play. By giving Edward the more obvious role of 'hermit' and the strange, obsessive-compulsive ritual that he undertakes every day, we are given the sense that he is a man trapped in the present by the past. Not only does this add strength to the theme of memory but it also makes Edward a significantly more interesting character with whom the audience can engage.

In *How Plays Work* David Edgar discusses the use of double and disrupted time, as well as the connection between this particular temporal structure and memory. Using the example of *Death of a Salesman*, Edgar states that "disrupted time not just for expositional or ironical purposes but to dramatise how memory brings the past to life in the present" (108). He also goes on to point out that the 1990s trend for plays where the present directly investigates the past - such as Tom Stoppard's 1993 play, *Arcadia* - was a direct echo of a development in the novel (112). This was

perhaps, in itself, a direct consequence of changing understanding of memory. Later in the same chapter, Edgar points out that "plays which disrupt or dislocate time mount a challenge to the overwhelming dominance of narrative in popular drama, and contribute to an extensive canon of work ... of which the subject is the reliability or otherwise of memory itself" (115). Having said this, the relationship between the double time play and the unreliability of memory is a significantly more complex one, and cannot just be explained away by the idea that double or disrupted time explores the credibility of human memory. It does, of course, explore this, but the fact that human memory is fallible is a given state - human beings are already entirely aware that memory is not the most reliable or objective source. There is, after all, a reason that eye-witness testimony is no longer accepted as reliable evidence in the case of a criminal trial.

In the 1970's Elizabeth Loftus performed experiments that showed how simple manipulation of questions could result in participants incorrectly remembering something that they had seen not five minutes earlier (Engelhardt). Engelhardt also goes on to state that "the process of interpretation occurs at the very formation of memory—thus introducing distortion from the beginning. Furthermore, witnesses can distort their own memories without the help of examiners, police officers or lawyers. Rarely do we tell a story or recount events without a purpose. Every act of telling and retelling is tailored to a particular listener; we would not expect

someone to listen to every detail of our morning commute, so we edit out extraneous material. The act of telling a story adds another layer of distortion, which in turn affects the underlying memory of the event."

In the case of Edward, in *The House of Dante's Dream* he has gaps within his memories of 1992, which cannot be adequately filled, and so he has become stuck - unable to continue in the present as a result of the past. In a sense, the audience becomes privy to the gaps in Edward's memory, because the audience can see the events of 1992 as they unfold. As a result we observe the damage that occurs when memory is noticeably flawed. Yes, it is fair to say that *The House of Dante's Dream* deals with the unreliability of memory, but like all plays of this genre it deals with the emotional consequences this unreliability may have on an individual character. Through memory we are able to travel in time (Waters, "Old Times"), but even time travel isn't that simple or linear in nature. As Steven Moffat puts it, "people assume that time is a strict progression of cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint - it's more like a big ball of wibbly wobbly... time-y wime-y... stuff" ("Blink"). Time is complicated and mixed up, just like human memory.

An interesting follow-on from the connection between time and memory is the connection between memory and the ghost. "Literally embodying the past, bringing on a ghost is a dazzlingly effective way of bringing past events to life in the present and creating

drama" (Edgar 188). This has a specific connection with *The House of Dante's Dream*, which from the first draft contained the stage direction, "The two time periods often coexist and become ghosts of one another." Rather than bringing on a literal ghost in the present, *The House of Dante's Dream* works on the basis that Pan and Tilly are ghosts of Edward and Rosetti's present, and that Edward and Rosetti are ghosts of Pan and Tilly's world - the ghosts of things to come, as it were. Both sets of characters are ghosts of the space - that is the boathouse - where the events of the play take place. Ghost stories in general are about the past returning to haunt the present - often to wreck revenge upon a perceived wrongdoer, and always to impact the present-day lives of those characters who are being actively haunted. In the stage adaptation of *The Woman in Black*, for example, the young solicitor ends up being haunted himself after discovering the truth about the ghost and the child. He then retells the story - reliving the memory - in an attempt to finally exorcise himself of the emotional ghost that the real ghost has left behind. In the case of Edward, he too harbours an emotional ghost, as a direct result of the events that occurred in 1992. He suspects that he was somehow involved in the disappearances of Maura and Tilly, but has no possible way of finding the answers, because he has no information or evidence on which to draw a conclusion.

Until the final draft, Edward was played by one actor in both time periods, effectively making the events of 1992 his direct memories. The problem with this, however, is fairly obvious - there

is a lot that occurs between Pan and Tilly in 1992 that Edward never sees, hence his lack of understanding about what really happened inside the boathouse and why Tilly disappeared. If we see him observing the past, but not all of the past, then it becomes confusing, because the audience is unclear as to what Edward knows and what he doesn't know, as well as on what the shifting time hinges ("Playwright's Workshop"). The answer to the second part of this problem is relatively simple - the shifting time centres on the place, because both sets of characters are ghosts of the boathouse. This answer is what lead to the division of Edward, from one character who exists in both time frames to the separate characters of Young Edward in 1992 and Edward in 2011. Rather than stepping into his own memories from 2011, Edward can now cross paths with his younger self, which has a similar effect but is a much less confusing device for the audience to assimilate. It also allows space for other characters to be seen through the perception of the ghosts as well. Rosetti, for example, inadvertently mirrors a number of the words and actions of her parents throughout the play. The audience sees the similarities between Rosetti and her parents, but Rosetti herself will never be able to see or understand.

In terms of time, one of the key plot points in the earlier drafts of *The House of Dante's Dream* was the return of Pan and, later, Tilly to the boathouse in 2011. This is something that existed to give Edward a visible confrontation with his past, as well as forcing either Pan or Tilly to face up to the events of

1992. In one draft, Pan returned to the boathouse at the end of the play and met Rosetti, without ever knowing that she was his daughter. This didn't work in the context of the play for the reason that the audience would instantly want to know what happened next. The complication that arises with this device, however, is that neither Tilly nor Pan have a compelling reason to return - following the events of 1992, when they accidentally kill Maura, they leave and their individual fates remain a mystery. This mystery and the fact that the events of 1992 are unknowable by anyone else are a significant element of Edward's present life, which means that Pan and Tilly can never return to the boathouse as adults without having to fill in all the gaps. There are many gaps which may never be filled. Further to this, Rosetti is, in a symbolic sense, already representative of both Pan and Tilly. As I have already pointed out, she emulates both her parents throughout the play, particularly in terms of language and turn of phrase. This in itself is unusual, because she hasn't grown up anywhere near the place where she was conceived, and so it draws attention to the connection between her and her parents. Rosetti's arrival at the boathouse is enough to represent the return of Tilly and Pan, with the added element that Rosetti can never truly know where she came from or why. This plays much more strongly into the idea that *The House of Dante's Dream* is a play about the gaps in memory and knowledge of the past. If Rosetti were to meet her parents, then that would directly contradict this theme and confuse the audience.

Moving on from the connections between time and memory, we shall now look briefly at the continuous time of 1992, which frames the story of Tilly and Pan. The events of 1992 take place during the long summer holidays, which immediately adds a sense of peculiar timelessness, and long drawn out days - these are the dog days of summer where minutes stretch like hours across the day. In spite of this, the relationship between Tilly and Pan is subject to a very distinct and specific time constraint - that is that their relationship may last only as long as the circus is in town. The contrast between these two temporal states is, in part, what gives the play the feeling that it is a slightly peculiar world we inhabit for the duration of the play, or that it is the world on a tilt (Dale). Pan and Tilly only know each other for three days, but these are three summer days, when perception of time is distorted. This contrast is how it is possible for them to do so much, and change so much, in such a short amount of time. Neither Tilly nor Pan care particularly for the length of time that has passed or will pass, but instead they move from one thing to the next - a feeling that is exacerbated further still by their drunkenness, which skews their perception of time even further. This lack of caring in the immediate is a direct contrast with Edward's rigid timekeeping in 2011. Edward marks the passage of time with an alarm clock and a set ritual, which he does not like to change. One effect that this contrast has on the audience is to highlight the innocence and naïveté of Pan and Tilly, whose lives revolve only around themselves

in the here and now. It reminds the audience of the fact that Tilly and Pan are nothing more than children.

Part Two: Space and Memory

I have already stated the *The House of Dante's Dream* is a play in which the two time periods become ghosts of one another and that the characters are all ghosts of the specific place in which the play is set. This leads us on to the structural element of space, which, like time, serves to express the action of the play (Edgar 35). The time structure of *The House of Dante's Dream* is non-linear, and as I have stated the time shift hinges around the boathouse, or the space of the play, since this is the world where the action occurs. For this reason, the set of *The House of Dante's Dream* remains a closed space - the boathouse and surrounding area does not change throughout the play, even if the time period and the character do. The effect this has on the audience is to draw attention to this as the place where everything changed for the characters, and as a place of unresolved mystery. Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* uses a similar structure, whereby the characters (and objects) of each time period exist on top of one another in the same space. In a strange way, this serves to make the space a narrator or a character in itself, because we become aware of how significant a place may be in understanding both the present and the past. In this situation the place is something that has existed across the events of the past, watching it pass by. The effect that this has on the time structure of the play is to condense everything into something that, although spread across nineteen years, is very condensed and tight. The boathouse holds a great deal of significance to Tilly,

Edward and Rosetti throughout the play, and thus by not leaving the boathouse the experience of the audience is intensified. There was one early draft of *The House of Dante's Dream* that had Tilly and Pan in a graveyard swapping headstones (something that later occurred offstage). Taking them out of the boathouse, however, also removed some of the mystery and the peculiarity that is built within the confines of the boathouse. We still gain a sense of the world beyond, but we never see it, and so the play becomes far more about the relationship between the characters and the place that they inhabit.

Steve Waters discusses the function of space in his book *The Secret Life of Plays*. He describes space as either open, where the function of the space is fluid and non-specific, or closed, where the function of the space is clearly defined. He goes on to say of closed-function space that "it's a useful playwriting strategy to play against a space's conventional function, cutting across the audience's expectations and lending the scene an out-of-kilter frisson" (62). In the case of *The House of Dante's Dream*, this out-of-kilter nature sets the tone for the entire play. Whilst the characters are inside a boathouse, and there is even a boat, the boathouse is never used for that intended purpose. The boat is used for hiding under, but never for rowing. The boathouse is used to store the boat, but the boat is never used as intended, and so the boathouse is never used as intended. This disparity is further compounded by Tilly's painting of the phrase, "Tilly's Boathouse.

Private. No Entry or Else!!!” on the side of the boathouse. By claiming the boathouse as her own, she re-purposes the whole space, and the boathouse becomes her hideaway, rather than simply a place where boats are kept. Everything that Pan and Tilly do is out-of-kilter – to use the colloquial term, it is “messed up” – by disrupting the expected use of the place, this enhances the sense that none of what they did should ever have happened. On a similar note, the same disruption of expectation also occurs in 2011, whereby the boathouse is still not used as a boathouse, but has instead become something of a shrine at the centre Edward’s obsessive ritual. Again this serves to alert the audience to the fact that all is not right within the world of the play.

In *The Secret Life of Plays*, Waters also defines the different axes of public space and private space. He states that “a play set entirely in private spaces will tend to express a disconnection from wider social meaning; one set entirely in public spaces will tend to inhibit the revelation of feeling and character” (60). This is a particularly apt description when it comes to *The House of Dante’s Dream*, which takes place in a single, private space, and is noticeably disconnected from the wider world. This is especially interesting when we consider the fact that *The House of Dante’s Dream* is a play about memory, and the individual consequences of the fallible nature of human memory. Memory, whilst connected to the wider world (in that it is how we contextualise ourselves within that world), is also incredibly private and self contained within

the individual. Inside one's own head is about as private as it is possible to be. In *How Plays Work*, David Edgar cites Stephen Lowe, who considers all plays to be about escaping or invading secure communities (35). This connects in an interesting way with *The House of Dante's Dream* as a play set in a private space, because that private space is invaded on more than one occasion throughout the play. Tilly, at the beginning of the play, defines the boathouse as her territory by painting her name on the outside wall. This territory is then invaded by Pan, whom she allows in, because he intrigues her, and Young Edward, whom she rejects, because she dislikes him. In 2011, the space outside the boathouse becomes Edward's private space, where he completes his ritual. At this point, he has ceased to invade the private space of the boathouse, but is protecting it instead. Edward's private world is then invaded by Rosetti, who serves as the catalyst for his change from obsessed hermit to destroying the boathouse entirely. Rosetti's invasion of the boathouse is yet more interesting, because whilst she invades Edward's space to get there, she has, in some sense, inherited the boathouse from Tilly. Rosetti is a part of Tilly, and was led to the boathouse by Tilly's photograph. There is a part of Rosetti that feels she has a right to be inside the boathouse, which is a feeling that Edward does not share. These moments of invasion give shape to the play, and they enhance the feeling of the boathouse as a private space. As Waters says, the boathouse lacks a wider social meaning, but only because it is about the small individual things that

individuals do. To take this one stage further, it is a play based on the things that people are capable of doing to one another. As we see in Appendix A, the initial pitch for *The House of Dante's Dream* had a significant event that took place within the wider world, outside the boathouse. That is, an unsolved shooting in the village. The feedback from this initial pitch was that this event wasn't connected enough with the world of the boathouse (which was still the main space setting for the play), and that the play could become far more interesting if it were about the incredibly damaging things people can do to one another, and the effect that this had on the individual (Waters, "Pitching Seminar"). This works well in a play where the space is private, and the events are entirely unknown outside of that private space. In short, *The House of Dante's Dream* is a play about the things that people do, and the impact those things have on other people.

Whilst *The House of Dante's Dream* does take place in a closed and private world, this does not mean that there is not a world that exists elsewhere, merely that the audience does not see it. There are a number of significant events that take place off stage, the consequences of which only appear in the boathouse later. As Steve Waters puts it, "the aperture into and out of the scene of the action is the most critical source of pressure and power available to the dramatist; it functions like a tap that controls the play's energy" (61). In other words, the things we do not see can still have a huge bearing on the play as a whole. This was most clear in

the development of *The House of Dante's Dream* with the death of Maura Tointon, which initially occurred on the stage (although Maura was unseen), and can be seen in Appendix B. Whilst the death of the child is a tragic event, it became increasingly apparent that the moment the child died was not having the impact that it needed in order for the play to work. The same problem was occurring in the 2011 plot, where they discovered the body in the ceiling. In addition to it becoming dangerously farcical, it also raised too many questions about why the dead child had never been found. In order to overcome this problem without having to remove the killing of the child entirely (because it is a crucial moment for both Tilly and Pan), I considered the way the death of Duncan is handled in *Macbeth*. In this case, we see the preceding events, we see Macbeth leave to do the deed, and we see him return in a state of distress directly afterwards. We see nothing of the murder itself on stage, but that does not mean that we do not imagine the moment of death - and usually our imagination can picture something far worse than what we might see on stage. Indeed, the BBC receives more complaints about scenes or events that are implied (such as implied sex) than it does about things that are explicit (such as a swear word) because people are much more afraid and embarrassed by the power of their own imagination than by somebody else's imagination (Wild). For this reason, I took the killing of Maura offstage. We see Pan leaving to bribe her with a machete, and we see him return some time later, traumatised and covered in blood. He never fully explains how

Maura died, but gives enough information for the audience to fill in the gaps. By taking this moment off the stage and putting it into the imagination of the audience instead, it creates a far more powerful dramatic moment.

Another significant series of offstage devices used in *The House of Dante's Dream* are Rosetti's phone calls in 2011. Initially this was placed as one phone call, in scene eight, which was intended to build the suspense of the audience, by feeding them the knowledge that Rosetti was not exactly who she claimed to be. The single phone-call, however made this device seem awkward and took the audience away from the action of the play, rather than into it. Furthermore it invites the audience to ask too many questions about the person on the other end of the phone, because they do not have enough time to build an accurate picture of that person, or how that person relates to Rosetti (Wild, "2"). In order to counteract this, rather than remove the phone-call, the number of calls made was changed to three, with the third call then serving a secondary purpose of slowing down the pace of scene twelve, and delaying Edward's entrance into the boathouse, which increases the impact of this event within the play. Whilst we do not receive a full explanation of Rosetti's offstage life, we glean enough information to build up a reasonable picture in order that we ask fewer questions, rather than more questions. What this also does is give some idea that Rosetti does lead a life of her own - separate from the events of the play and, importantly, some idea that she has

something to go back to. This also means that her choice to leave at the end of the play becomes much more a choice between the world of the boathouse, and the world in which she has grown up, and in which she now lives. Rosetti's final line to Edward in part also highlights this choice, because she is choosing between her past and her present. Amidst the chaos of a play where the characters are stuck in complicated cyclical patterns of memory and the past, Rosetti makes a very simple forward choice: "Time don't go backwards, Edward," she says. "Everyone knows that."

Conclusion

Throughout this essay we have seen how the theme of memory is connected to both time and space within *The House of Dante's Dream*. We have seen how the ultimately fallible nature of human memory and cognitive perception influences the dramatic structure of theatrical writing. Whilst *The House of Dante's Dream* is far from a perfect piece of writing (as perfection is an impossible goal), we have seen how the structure of the play evolved to give greater meaning to the play as a whole. Like all pieces of dramatic writing, regardless of context, *The House of Dante's Dream* is about the things that people do. In the case of this play, this idea is taken within a small space (the boathouse), across what is effectively a generation (Rosetti's lifetime). The crossover from past to present is blurred, creating the sense that the past and present have a symbiotic relationship within an individual. This symbiosis is echoed in the double time structure used in *The House of Dante's Dream*, which, like so many other disrupted time plays, draws attention to the fact that memory is often unreliable or incomplete. We have also seen how the world of the play connects with the theme of memory, with the idea that the two time periods are both ghosts of one another. This is a crucial connection, because we see how double time in a closed space forces both the audience and the characters to become trapped in the memories of the boathouse. Whilst there is an outside world, which is mentioned throughout the play in both time periods, the primary world of the characters and the events of the play is the

boathouse. The events that have happened inside and around the boathouse, both past and present have, in a sense, become etched into its walls. The space itself becomes the centre point for the memories of the characters who inhabit it and it is those same memories that exist and change from past to present, across time.

Appendix A

Informal Notes for Initial Pitch - November 2010

Untitled / The Boathouse?

The play is set in and around the old boathouse on the edge of Edward's father's land in the village of Muckworth. There are two separate stories, which will be told in parallel to one another across three acts, effectively as two 'two-handers'.

In the winter of 2010, following his father's death, Edward returns to the village where he grew up for the first time since his sister mysteriously vanished in 1992. Uninterested in anything but organising his father's affairs and leaving, Edward is frustrated to discover that his father's will contains a caveat - Edward cannot inherit anything until the fate of his missing sister is determined. His sister, Tilly, vanished in 1992 on the day of the infamous Muckworth Shooting. The audience learns this through Edward's conversations with the young stranger, Rosetti, who has stolen his shoes and put them up a tree. It becomes clear very early on that Rosetti knows a lot more about Edward and his sister, Tilly, than she is letting on, but also that she wants Edward to work it out for himself.

In the summer of 1992, meanwhile, we follow the story of Tilly and Pan's strange relationship. Pan, a want-to-be army boy, stumbles

upon the boathouse whilst exploring the village he has been forced to move to for the summer. It is here that he meets Tilly, who is tearing up a stolen textbook and folding it into paper boats. Shortly after they meet, Pan discovers Tilly's secret stash of stolen objects. He then dares her to steal some gin from his parents' house, which she does, and they get drunk together. Throughout the summer they become closer, with Pan helping Tilly to fix the old sailing boat in the boathouse, and eventually daring her to steal a hunting rifle. It is also implied that Tilly and Pan have been sleeping together.

In 2010, it becomes increasingly clear that the answers are available to Edward, but he is choosing to ignore them. Eventually, in order to avoid having to spend any more time in the village, he makes the decision to declare Tilly officially dead, which effectively fulfils his father's instruction. Meanwhile, in 1992, Pan's time in the village is almost up. Pan desperately wants to stay with Tilly, however his parents refuse and insist he move on with them. In anger, Pan takes the stolen hunting rifle and threatens his parents, accidentally killing them both. He flees. Tilly takes the boat and follows him, although she has no idea where he is from, or where he is going.

The audience is left with a hint that Rosetti is Pan and Tilly's child, and the reason she wanted him to stay is because she was pregnant, although this is never fully confirmed. The play closes with a much older Pan returning to the boathouse and crossing

paths with Edward, who has no idea of their connection. We never find out what happened in the intervening years, because Edward never asked.

Characters:

Edward. Mid forties. Male. Head of the Purchase Ledger dept. for a national chain of care homes. Has never sustained a serious relationship.

Rosetti. Seventeen. Female. Thinks that every town should have a 'shoe tree'.

Tilly. Fifteen. Female. Spends every day in the boathouse fixing the little wooden sailing boat and planning her adventures on the high seas. Has a habit of stealing things.

Pan. Sixteen. Male. Real name Panayiotis, something for which he has never forgiven his parents. Wants to be in the army.

Appendix B

Extract from scene twelve of *The House of Dante's Dream* (draft three).

PAN
How about it?

TILLY
(doesn't get it)
What?

PAN
One last dare?

Pan makes a stabbing motion towards the back of the boathouse.

TILLY
No!

PAN
Hush!

TILLY
No way.

PAN
It's going to die anyway.

TILLY
So?

PAN
It's going to be shredded to pieces by dogs.

TILLY
Shut up.

PAN
We'd be doing it a favour.
No one'll miss a fox.

Pause.

TILLY
Really?

PAN
I promise.

TILLY

You do it.

Pan hesitates. Then he holds out the machete.

PAN

Together?

TILLY

Alright.

Pan picks up the almost-empty bottle of gin with his other hand and takes a large swig. He passes it to Tilly, who also drinks. He watches her.

PAN

You know, you're pretty cool for a girl.

TILLY

Oh?

PAN

I meet a lot of girls.
Most of them are properly boring.

Pause.

TILLY

Bet you have got syphilis.

PAN

Shut up!

Pan and Tilly creep slowly towards the back of the boathouse. They reach the wall, machete raised. Tilly takes her hand off the machete.

TILLY

I'm not sure about this.

PAN

It'll be fine.
Over in a second.

Tilly puts her hand back. They plunge the machete through a small gap in the wooden slats. There is a terrible, startled cry of a child from outside and then silence.

TILLY

What was that?
(*Pan does not answer*)
Pan!
What the fuck was that?

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