‘Ingress’: a new terminology for the practice of writing audience involvement into playtexts

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Birmingham for the award of the degree of PhD in the School of English, Drama and Creative Studies and the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts

July 2019

Word Count (excl. plays): 42303

Abstract

This practice as research thesis examines the possibilities and achievements of intimately involving an audience within both the performance of the work and the fictional narrative. This is achieved by tracing the genealogy of participatory practices in both playwriting and the wider field of performance to the practices of the historical avant-garde and the performance experiments of the 1950s and 1960s. From this exploration, the necessity for new terminology in the form of ‘ingress’ is articulated to provide an appropriate, distinct terminology for an increasingly prevalent practice of writing audience involvement into playtexts. In addition, ingress is a fitting alternative for the term ‘immersive’ which is often misused to represent the participatory achievements of such work.

Within the thesis, three playtexts are included in chronological order that indicate the progression of my practice. Each piece employs different strategies and techniques, including the concept of procedural authorship explored in the research, to create an environment in which audience-participants can ingress the physical performance and the fictional narrative. This thesis identifies the necessity for the term ‘ingress’ to differentiate between audience participation within a playtext and an audience’s experience within immersive theatre. Also, it demonstrates that by employing a process of procedural authorship, the audience’s ingression into the performance and the fictional narrative can be effectively managed.

Dedication and Acknowledgments

This thesis is dedicated with the deepest love and gratitude to my parents, Sue and Bryn, and my sister, Rachael, who support me in everything I do; and to my late, beloved grandparents, Pearl and Howard, Gladys and Ken, who provide constant inspiration. Without them, my life wouldn't be what it is and my achievements would be minimal.

Endless gratitude has to be heaped upon my mum who has been forever willing and enthusiastic to assist and contribute to my academic progress, all the way from helping me learn my times tables (which I now have to swat up on), through the tumultuous GCSE and A-level period, to driving this PhD to completion with patience, love, fun and dancing. I am forever grateful and indebted to my dad who, through his own dogged determination and hard work, has been able to provide opportunities for me to pursue my interests and ambitions, and has been an encouraging, patient and pragmatic presence. During this long process, my sister, Rachael, has gone from strength to strength in her own life and career, blossoming from the little girl obsessed with pink, to an increasingly successful, strong-minded and driven, but still effervescent woman, who is a joy to have as a sister, a credit to us, her family, and a model for everything I hope to be. Since 2011, Robert Ball has not only become a trusted partner in our joint artistic endeavours and a reliable confidant during a particularly gruelling time, but more importantly, has become my dear and treasured friend who has brought a much needed, joyous and relieving irreverence to each day, and is now as integral to my life as my family.

As important to my progress through the last few years are these incredible people; so much heartfelt thanks goes to them:

Abigail Walton for her friendship and invaluable collaboration; Neil Jackson for being a driving force in my developing practice; Iain Stewart for his avuncular presence; Dr Paul Geary for his generosity and guidance; Andrew Lennon and Stef Kerrigan for providing a fertile scholarly environment; Pete Smith, Becky Deeks, Phil Hemming and

Ed Loboda for so vivaciously bringing words to life; all administrative and production staff in the Department of Drama and Theatre Arts; Dr Chris Megson and Dr Adam Ledger for their understanding and encouragement; and my supervisors, Dr David Pattie, Dr Joanna Bucknall and Professor Liz Tomlin for their crucial support and feedback at each stage.

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Ingress:

noun: **ingress**; plural noun: **ingresses**
the action or fact of going in or entering; the capacity or right of entrance.

synonyms:
entry, entrance, access, means of entry, admittance, admission; way in, approach, means of approach; right of entry
“two large doors offered ingress to the station”

antonyms:
egress, exit

Origin: late Middle English (in the sense ‘an entrance or beginning’): from Latin *ingressus*, from the verb *ingredi* ‘enter’.

Ingressive:

adjective: **ingressive**
relating to ingress; having the quality or character of entering.
“the most ingressive, transformative summons available to human experiencing”

- Google Dictionary 2019

Introduction

Thesis

This research will determine the achievements and possibilities of a playtext to intimately involve an audience within both the performance of the work and the fictional narrative. To this end, this thesis seeks to identify and analyse a dramaturgy of 'ingress' within playwriting and also seeks to theorise the role of the playwright and the audience that such a dramaturgy demands. As well as identifying a dramaturgy of 'ingress', I will contextualise an 'ingressive' trend within experimental playwriting and performance which can be traced back to the turn towards audience participation by the practices of the historical avant-garde and the performance experiments of the 1950s and 1960s. I will suggest that 'ingressive' playwriting techniques are born from postmodern, liminal and postdramatic performance practices, and form a dramaturgy that encourages the active role of the audience as participant and co-creator. I argue that 'ingressive' playwriting offers opportunities for the audience to participate in the performance of the play's fictional narrative as well as in the creation of the work. By being a part of the fictional narrative, the playwright, performer and audience share the responsibility for navigating through and delivering the performance.

Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to ascertain the possibilities of a playtext to ingress an audience-participant within both the performance of the work and the fictional narrative. A practice-based approach is necessary to establish the achievability of this objective. The research foregrounds several different elements that are utilised, to varying degrees, in the three playtexts which represent my practice. These elements include: the process of procedural authorship, as examined by Gareth White (2013); the use of disparate storylines and 'moments of loss' as in Howard Barker's approach to theatre (1997); and the removal of a traditional auditorium and stage configuration, which has its origins in the practices of the historical avant-garde. The playtexts are presented in chronological order and represent a development in achieving audience ingression within the performance and hence, the fictional narrative.

As the intention of my practice is to involve audience members as participants within the performance, it is necessary to consider the ethical implications of so doing. When audience members participate in a performance, their role changes to that of performer. In this situation, the anxiety that an audience member may feel results from a concern for their self-esteem, public-esteem and, for some, their psychological or physical well-being. Consequently, there are obligations on the theatre practitioner to employ certain safety factors to demonstrate the requisite duty of care for participants. As my practice is writer-driven, it is possible to try to safeguard the well-being of audience-participants by incorporating certain strategies into the verbal fabric of the playtext. Through practice and analysis, this thesis will explore and implement a number of techniques and structures which allow for audience members' increased involvement in the performance of the playtext, whilst ensuring that, from an ethical position of concern, audience members have the fullest and least inhibited experience of the play as intended by the playwright. The techniques utilised within my practice include: the establishment of an open and shared mode of performance; dramaturgies of interactive authorship and cerebral experience/imagination that enables simultaneous involvement and distance from the fictional world; the narrativisation of hospitality and the introduction to the performance explaining what will take place and what will be expected of audience members.

Originality

This thesis aims to contribute to existing knowledge by identifying and documenting strategies of 'ingress', which place the audience within the creation and performance of the fictional narrative. This will be achieved by tracing a lineage of participatory practices in both playwriting and the wider field of performance, in order to establish the existing achievements and opportunities with regard to integrating the audience as participant within writer-driven work. From this exploration, the necessity for new terminology, in the form of 'ingress', will be articulated in order to provide a more appropriate and, as yet lacking, distinct terminology for an increasingly prevalent practice of writing audience involvement into plays, and an alternative for the term 'immersive' which is often misused to represent the participatory achievements of such work.

Furthermore, a key aspect of the originality of this thesis is evidenced by the presentation of three of my playtexts. These works further demonstrate the necessity for the term ‘ingress’ when attempting to develop a dramaturgy of audience participation within a playtext. My practice will enhance knowledge within this field by pursuing the integration of the audience, not only within the performance of the playtext but also within the fictional narrative, emphasising the need for a terminology that supports this type of audience involvement within written work. These playtexts will be presented within the body of the thesis as they are crucial to the development of original terminology and to the purpose of this thesis. I suggest that this introduction of new terminology and its development within my practice contributes to the audience participation discussion, both in theory and practice.

Defining New Vocabulary

During the course of this research project, I will identify, examine and attempt to understand those theories and practices that provide a genealogy for my work. I suggest that the audience participation I wish to achieve does not easily fit within existing terminologies. The term ‘immersive’, I suggest, is often misused to describe the participatory achievements of an increasingly prevalent practice that inscribes the audience into a playtext. I will argue that aligning a playwriting practice with audience participation, which includes the audience-participant in the fictional narrative, requires a different terminology from those currently available. The terminology I intend to adopt is that of ‘ingress’, meaning ‘entry’ or ‘access’. This makes distinct the audience participation I aim to achieve and differentiates it from existing practices which describe themselves as ‘immersive’ and/or are perceived by others to be ‘immersive’.

Ingress

The term ‘ingress’ is employed in everyday phraseology to mean ‘entry’, ‘access’ or ‘action of entering’, as is shown by a dictionary example of the term in usage: “two large doors offered ingress to a station” (Google Dictionary, 2019). Its related forms, ‘ingression’ and ‘ingressive’, are defined as the process of entering and having the quality or character of entering, respectively. Additionally, another common use of

‘ingress’ is in association with the seepage or leakage of a liquid, foreign bodies or contaminants through a structurally undermined barrier, as is the case with water ingress in buildings. This form of ingress has been widely researched in varying areas of science and engineering, where the monitoring of the ingressive ability of water when in contact with, for example, concrete, solar panels (PV modules) and polymeric honeycomb panels used in aviation, is vital. In the case of water ingress in buildings, to use one example from this particular field, the water accesses the interior of a building through cracks in the wall or gaps between joints or junctures.

‘Ingress’ can only be found as a specific theoretical term in cell biology, in the form of ‘Ingression’. ‘Ingression’, in this context, describes one of a number of changes in the location of cells during the gastrulation stage of animal development. During ‘Ingression’, an animal’s mesenchyme cells are produced which then, as gastrulation progresses, detach from the outer surface of tissue and are internalised into the wider mesenchyme tissue formation and are allowed to migrate freely. These explanations from the disciplines of biology and engineering reveal how ingression describes the entry of an object/subject into another environment and its consequent internalisation. An additional definition for ‘ingression’ can be found in the field of metaphysics, where it is described as the process by which a potentiality enters into actuality. The potential for audience participation ingresses (enters) into actuality when audience members accept an invitation to participate and ingress into the physical performance and fictional narrative: they do not present an ‘impermeable barrier’ and decline the invitation.

The terms ‘ingress’ and ‘immersive’ and their related forms demonstrate similar routes of origin. Firstly, both ‘ingress’ and ‘immersive’ are terms used in computing technology. There are a number of references to ‘ingress’ within this field, namely ‘ingress traffic’, ‘ingress rule’ and ‘ingress routing’, which describe the internalisation or internal location of data or parts. ‘Immersive’ in computing terminology “describes that which ‘provides information or stimulation for a number of senses not only sight and sound’” (Machon, 2013: 21). Secondly, ‘ingress’ has a relationship with liquid as does ‘immersive’ through its related forms, ‘immerse’ and ‘immersion’. For immersion, the liquid within which the object/subject is immersed is already present, whereas with ‘ingress’, the liquid finds a way of seeping into a particular object/subject. Unless an

impermeable barrier is introduced, once begun, 'ingress' will be a continuous process. In contrast, 'immersion' is not necessarily a constant entity. As Josephine Machon explains in her discussion of immersive theatre, immersion in water involves dipping or submerging followed by removal (Machon, 2013: xiv-xv). The premise on which the term 'immersive' depends conveys an entry which is not sustained. Hence, 'ingress' is a more appropriate term to describe an entry into an environment that is maintained throughout.

For theatre practices described as 'immersive', the term implies that all audience-participants will have an inclusive, all-encompassing experience which persists from their moment of entry into the event until their exit. In reality, although it is possible for audience-participants to be totally submerged for the event's duration, it is also conceivable that they zone in and out of immersion or are only briefly immersed. The experience is unique to every individual and is more nuanced and personal than the terminology 'immersive' implies. Furthermore, within these 'immersive' practices, the body is the locus of experience with text not considered an essential feature. Consequently, the term 'immersive' is inappropriate to describe practices that aim to involve audiences within text-driven work. For these reasons, I suggest that 'ingress', and its related forms of 'ingression' and 'ingressive' is the terminology that should be implemented when discussing the sustained engagement of an audience-participant within a fictional narrative. In relation to my practice, the environment involved in 'ingression' can be viewed as, either the audience-participant allowing for the ingress of the physical performance and fictional narrative, or the fictional narrative in performance allowing for the ingress of the audience-participant.

Overview

This thesis consists of three chapters: Literature Review (p17), Practice as Research (p72) comprising three plays, *Pack*, *Two Degrees* and *Gumption*, and Dramaturgy of 'ingress' (p135), followed by a conclusion (p183). The thesis structure is such in order to genuinely reflect the journey of this research process. The literature review establishes a groundwork from which the exploration of audience participation with regard to playwriting first developed, the main influences being the experiential techniques of 'in-yer-face' theatre and the scenographic 'immersion' of Punchdrunk's

work and other immersive theatre practices. These elements are grounded in a larger genealogy of audience participation and theories concerning playwriting and the audience, which are established in the literature review. These interests and the surrounding research directly led to the development, in 2012, of the first playtext, *Pack*, and the implementation and exploration of audience participatory techniques in a practical context. It was through this practical exploration that the focus of my research and the evolving strategies of 'ingressing' the audience within a play were discovered and honed. It is for this reason that the practice-as-research component, crucial as it is to the development of my thinking and research, has been placed at the centre of the thesis, emphasising its position as an inter-dependant body of developing and interconnecting practice. The purpose of the final Dramaturgy chapter, therefore, is to reflect upon and analyse the progression of this practice-as-research as a body of practice. Furthermore, it refers to the work of playwrights, Tim Crouch and Andy Smith, Chris Thorpe and Hannah Jane Walker, and Chris Goode, whose practice in this field of involving the audience in writer-driven work was developing and increasing in prominence during the development of my own practice. Consequently, the Dramaturgy chapter reflects a growing emphasis, from 2009 to present, on involving audiences within the practice and performance of playwriting through the use of new and existing techniques.

The first chapter, the literature review, is presented as three separate sections. Its main objective is the appraisal of key literature that addresses the subject of audience participation in order to identify gaps and limitations within existing bodies of knowledge, which my practice will attempt to address. The assessment is limited to critical approaches that focus on the development of audience participation within Western performance practices in which, traditionally, the narrative has been the predominant structural device.

The first section, 'The re-emergence of audience participation' (p18), focuses on the historical avant-garde experiments of the early twentieth century, and Antonin Artaud's manifesto, the 'Theatre of Cruelty' which signify a turn towards the audience. I argue that this identifies the starting point for the genealogy of my work. However, Artaud's rejection of the subjugation of the text in favour of gesture and movement leads me to consider the much later work of Howard Barker and his 'Theatre of Catastrophe', in

which the written text takes precedence. I assess the distinctions and similarities within the work of Artaud and Barker that begin to explain how audiences can participate in performance.

The second section, ‘The pursuit of participation’ (p26), appraises literature that addresses audience participation which has evolved from the performance experimentations of the historical avant-garde. I examine the principal definitions of participation and their distinctions by, firstly, discussing Richard Schechner’s participatory performances where the participation is a *material* act. I explore anthropologist Victor Turner’s concept of the liminal that not only influences Schechner’s work, but also impacts upon the theories and practices of others in the field of participation. I also consider Susan Kattwinkel’s collected essays that explore practices that rely upon the audience for the performances to succeed.

In the third section, ‘An attempt at clarification’ (p32), I review Elinor Fuchs’ ‘postmodernism’, Hans-Thies Lehmann’s ‘postdramatic’ and Susan Broadhurst’s ‘liminal’ (based on the writings of Turner), which continue the genealogy for my practice. Each of these works attempts to identify and clarify emerging practices and their impact on the performance discipline. Fuchs perceives a shift in the audience’s role in postmodernist theatre. Her work establishes the discourse associated with theatre practices that demonstrate a shift away from the traditional audience/performer divide, and oppose and aim to deconstruct drama and all of its classical conventions. Lehmann’s text re-establishes Fuchs’ assertions from a historical and aesthetic frame of reference. He introduces the term ‘postdramatic’ to describe these works, which although maintaining a relationship with drama and the dramatic form can no longer be described as such. Broadhurst also concurs with Fuchs’ identification of such a shift, but Broadhurst explores the implications of that shifted relationship. I assess the differences between postmodern, postdramatic and liminal performance in order to establish their limitations in explaining audience participation.

Next, I consider in depth Josephine Machon’s *(Syn)aesthetics* (2011) which offers a theory that describes a range of performance practices including immersive theatre and site-specific work, and her *Immersive Theatres*, a comprehensive study into practices that are labelled as such. In reviewing Machon’s *Immersive Theatres* (2013),

I demonstrate how the use of the term ‘immersive’ to describe such a wide variety of different practices is, for me, problematic, especially when considering my practice and that of similar writerly works. I establish the need for a different terminology, ‘ingress’ and its related forms, to describe participatory work which is less physical and more conceptual, and is contingent upon a written text. Lastly, I explore Gareth White’s *Audience Participation in Theatre* (2013) which provides a wider examination of audience participation that is not restricted by a particular aesthetic or trend. He proposes an aesthetic act of invitation and a process of procedural authorship to guide audience members into and through participatory performance. White also considers the risk for both performers and audience members involved in accepting an invitation to participate, and how this can be managed by the procedural author. In concluding this chapter, I consider all the theories explored and assess their distinctions in explaining the strategies utilised for audience participation within performance. I evaluate which elements of these theories relate to my practice.

The second chapter consists of three playtexts which mark my practice as research. These plays demonstrate the originality of this thesis: the ingression of the audience-participant into the physical performance and the fictional narrative. The playtexts are presented in chronological order and demonstrate the progression of my practice. Each piece employs different strategies to create an environment in which the audience-participant can ingress the work. Within the synopsis of each playtext below, and where necessary, I will refer to the playwright in the third person for ease of explanation.

The first playtext, *Pack* (p73), utilises a number of different strategies derived from the research to encourage the audience to ingress both the physical performance and the fictional narrative. Firstly, as advocated by Artaud, the distinct stage and auditorium is removed, acknowledging the presence of the audience and allowing for direct interaction between the performers and the audience members. Also, the large factory site chosen for the performance allows the movement of the action and the audience throughout the space. Furthermore, the factory setting’s stark atmosphere impresses upon the audience the bleak nature of the fictional narrative. Each of these performance devices encourage the audience’s ingression into the performance and hence into the fictional narrative. Secondly, the use of different language techniques

within the text, such as fragmented speech, and the inclusion of familiar children's stories stimulates the development of audience ingression within the fictional narrative.

To progress the audience's ingression, the second playtext, *Two Degrees* (p107), inscribes audience members as characters within the narrative, and utilises White's notion of procedural authorship (White, 2013) to direct them through the piece. It has an intimate theatre studio setting and the audience, including one of the performers, is invited into the space by the playwright/performer, who sits amongst them and addresses them directly. Both performers present the script as a visual object and refer to it throughout the performance and the piece continues entirely verbally. From the outset, the audience is made aware of being cast as characters within the text. Audience members are invited to participate in the narrative by providing suggestions to infill the text or to read from cards which are handed out by the performers at the relevant time. These strategies assist audience members to ingress the fictional narrative and the performance.

The third playtext, *Gumption* (p119), demonstrates a departure from audience as character to author as character as a means of advancing audience ingression. It involves the playwright standing alone in front of the audience. Here, as in *Two Degrees*, the script is visible to the audience and the playtext proceeds entirely verbally. This playtext also utilises strategies of procedural authorship to encourage audience ingression within the narrative. By directly addressing the audience, the playwright establishes his/her authorial voice within the performance space. He/she informs audience members of their role as witnesses to the story in which the playwright is characterised as the author. Within the narrative, audience members are invited to take ownership of particular characters and are encouraged to have responsibility for the co-authorship of the script. In this way, they are able to ingress the fictional narrative and the performance. Audience-participants must navigate through the narrative in an imaginative and cerebral manner and take responsibility for their experience.

The third chapter, Dramaturgy of 'ingress' (p135), will explore and analyse the possibilities and originality of these playtexts in furthering a discussion about audience participation within the form of a playtext. I will trace the dramaturgical lineage of such

audience integration within the playtext - in Tim Crouch's *The Author*, Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe's *The Oh Fuck Moment*, and Chris Goode's *Men in the Cities* - in order to identify techniques of integrating the audience within written work which can be described as ingressive. Furthermore, these playtexts which developed alongside my own practice, will act as a starting point to demonstrate the originality of my work, which expands the idea of an ingressive dramaturgy by actively pursuing the audience-participant's ingress within the fictional narrative. The conclusion (p183) re-articulates a dramaturgy of 'ingressive' playwriting and emphasises the ontology of the audience-participant within the fictional narrative of the playtext.

Chapter One - Literature Review

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to trace the lineage of the re-emergence of audience participation, beginning with the historical avant-garde. The texts to be examined will be those that attempt to establish, express and explain the features of participatory performance and the strategies implemented by such practices. I will demonstrate the current gap in knowledge which my research seeks to address: that of a playwriting practice which includes the audience member as a participant in the fictional narrative. Within my work, the use of the term 'ingress' highlights the difference in approach between my research and existing theories and practices, which have pursued a participatory rather than simply spectatorial engagement with the work. This choice of terminology which I have defined in the introduction to this thesis (p7) clearly identifies that what my practice provides for a potential audience-participant is a means of entry into the work, and it does not assume or suggest the type of experience a participant may have whilst being a part of it. This, I suggest, differentiates my work, and in order to prove the necessity for such a distinction, this chapter will explore those theories and practices that examine audience participation and which best provide a basis and genealogy for my work.

I am choosing what may appear to be an eclectic group of theorists and practitioners, yet still I categorically aim to locate the thesis within the relevant field. The focus of my research is the development of audience participation and its relationship with text and fictional narrative. Consequently, the thesis references practices that develop key ideas and techniques which achieve audience participation, and notably have influenced the progression of writer and text-driven approaches, even if these examples are from different historical moments. The evaluation begins with the historical avant-garde which marks a turn towards the audience, a turn that builds momentum through to the performance experimentations of the 1960s, and continues to have a significant effect on contemporary participatory practice. It will be noticeable that the exploration proceeds directly from Artaud's 'Theatre of Catastrophe' to Barker's 'Theatre of Cruelty', overlooking the theories and practices of other avant-

garde practitioners, such as Eugenio Barba and Jerzy Grotowski. This decision was made so that this literature review is as specific and as beneficial as possible in providing a precise genealogy concerning advanced audience engagement and participation that, in turn, directly leads to the ideas and aims concerning the proposed 'ingressive' playwriting practice.

Section 1 – Re-emergence of audience participation

The theatrical avant-garde

The term 'avant-garde' is historically connected to the French military and is associated with the military strategy of leading and "providing an example for others to follow" (Warden, 2012: 4). It is generally thought that Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825) was the first to use this military terminology in connection with culture. In his work, *Opinions, literaires, philosophiques et industrielles* (1825), Saint-Simon proposed that artists were to lead in a new way of thinking (Warden, 2012: 4) and to "overcome the forces of inertia" (Saint-Simon, 1952: 2). Initially then, the historical avant-garde was "meant to transform society, [...] a utopian program for creating an idealistic world for the future" (Aronson, 2000: 6). It developed across various disciplines and a plethora of forms and mediums, and was comprised of many groups and movements, each with their own specific character and agenda. What these various practices have in common is a self-criticism that attempts to question the dominant social discourses that arose through and by art and the influential establishments that generated and supported them, as Richard Murphy explains:

> The avant-garde's standpoint rests upon a form of ideology critique that, as a mode of 'self-criticism', is aware above all of its own epistemological limits and institutional conditioning. It engages the ideological and institutional status of art by attempting to deconstruct the dominant social discourses (that is, the implicit epistemology, reality principle and social value-system) mediated by the institution, and it dismantles those representational conventions and social signifying practices through which social experience is organised and given meaning in the discursively 'constructed' image of the world.

(Murphy, 1999: 48)

The avant-garde theatre movement began in Western Europe in the late 1800s but developed during the early decades of the twentieth century which saw a great change politically, socially and culturally. As Günter Berghaus explains in *Theatre, Performance and the Historical Avant-Garde*, this period experienced a "feeling of cataclysmic commotion" (Berghaus, 2005: 26) and, as a result of this 'feeling', many "new forms, movements and techniques" evolved within this time (Warden, 2012: 3). Avant-garde theatre's aim was to radically alter the way in which the audience viewed and experienced the theatre event which, in turn, would change the way in which the audience viewed themselves and the world (Aronson, 2000: 7). Although, as Aronson suggests, the intention of the avant-garde theatre movement appears clear, it is not a homogenous category or a consistent body of theory or practice: it consists of a multiplicity of practices and manifestos. Yet, these different practices are united in a shared agenda, as Christopher Innes explains: "[...] on the surface the avant-garde as a whole seems united primarily in terms of what they are against" (Innes, 1993: 1). All the practices, to a greater or lesser degree, oppose the preceding structural principles of theatre and wish to respond to, as well as contribute to dominant discussions within the politics of a particular time (Warden, 2012: 24-25).

Through new making strategies and performance devices, avant-garde theatre sought a re-examination of theatre's relationship with the public and the commonplace. In so doing, avant-garde practice revitalised theatre's transformative powers, ensuring that it achieved a notable social impact and contributed to the socio-political discourses of culture. One strategy employed was to establish the distinct roles of the 'director' and the 'theatre-practitioner' in theatre's making process: roles that are associated with the aim to release the theatre from its prior subjugation to the written text, as Erika Fischer-Lichte comments: "[t]he abandonment of literary theatre by members of the historical avant-garde [...] rendered obsolete the reference to meaning generated by the literary texts" (Fischer-Lichte, 2008: 138).

The theatre experiments of the avant-garde marked an ontological shift towards a new approach to making theatre: turning towards theatricality and developing non-literary strategies of representation, supported by establishing the roles of the 'director' and

‘theatre-practitioner’. This ontological turn towards a new approach to theatre-making does not necessarily abide by set codes or conventions. Rather, it is defined by the desire for the negation of existing literary-based theatre practices and the pursuit of a form fit for social, political and cultural exposure and discovery.

Theatre of Cruelty

One of the central figures in the development of the avant-garde movement was Antonin Artaud, whose influence is still detectable in the performance trends of the twenty-first century (Tomlin, 2013: 20). Artaud wrote numerous essays and manifestos in which he summarises his vision for restoring the vitality of theatricality to the theatre: a ‘Theatre of Cruelty’. His proposals for a ‘Theatre of Cruelty’, a theory he formulated in the 1930s, were, for Artaud, a “solution for Western theatre’s obsession with language” (Warden, 2012: 111). In his manifesto, Artaud argues for a theatre that breaks its “subjugation to the text” (Artaud, 1993: 68) and rejects imitating the imagined real world. He advocates a theatre that refuses repetition, and instructs artists to “acknowledge that what has already been said no longer needs saying; that an expression twice used is of no value since it does not have two lives. Once spoken, all speech is dead and is only active as it is spoken. Once a form is used it has no more use” (Artaud, 1993: 56).

Artaud completely rejects the play as a form because of its ability to be representative of history and, as a result, loses the connection to audiences and its ability to affect them: “let us do away with this foolish adherence to text, to *written* poetry. Written poetry is valid once and then ought to be torn up. Let dead poets make way for the living” (Artaud, 1993: 59). As Arnold Aronson explains, Artaud believed that the narrative “equated with the entire stultifying concept of Western literary theatre” (Aronson, 2000: 29), and Susan Sontag re-articulates Artaud’s viewpoint when she argues:

> Plays tell lies. Even if a play doesn‘t tell a lie, by achieving the status of ‘masterpiece’ it becomes a lie. Artaud announces in 1926 that he does not want to create a theatre to present plays and so perpetuate or add to cultures list of consecrated masterpieces. He judges the heritage of

> written plays to be a useless obstacle and the playwright an unnecessary intermediary between the audience and the truth that can be presented, naked on stage.
>
> (Sontag in Scheer, 2004: 87)

Instead, Artaud demands an alternative theatre that "elevated the *mise en scene* over the text" (Aronson, 2000: 29). He argues for a new approach to making theatre that he defines as 'Cruelty': a theatre that aims to reveal the primitive ontology of human kind. He explains that "[e]verything that acts is cruelty. Theatre must rebuild itself on a concept of this drastic action pushed to the limit" (Artaud, 1993: 65). 'Cruelty' does not refer to an act of emotional or physical violence but rather the consequence of an act. The theatre must provide a 'total experience' for the audience members in order to inflict 'cruelty' and act upon them. The 'total experience' should act upon all of the audience's senses, both bodies and minds: "Artaud wants the theatre to address itself neither to the spectators' minds nor to their senses but to their 'total experience'" (Sontag in Scheer, 2004: 87). Artaud's aim to provide a 'total experience' places the audience at the centre of the action and the audience's ensuing experience is the main concern of the performance.

Artaud's manifesto underpins an experiential audience approach to perception. He argues for performance techniques that pursue a (re)connection of body and mind through prioritising the human body within performance (Machon, 2011: 44): a performance which, then, tended more towards a representation of physicality than a presentation of text. In the same way as Hans-Thies Lehmann's later suggestion that postdramatic theatre should not prioritise one element over another (Lehmann, 2006: 17), Artaud demands a 'total' experience for both performer and audience through bringing together all the elements of theatre. Crucial to Artaud's theatre, and a feature which provides the catalyst for my own approach, is the power to disturb and enliven through the interactivity of the performing physical body in the live space, which affects the sensate physical body of audience members. He states that 'cruelty' in the theatre "upsets our sensual tranquility [...] releas[ing] our repressed subconscious" (Artaud, 1993: 19). This accesses and cerebrally engages with the inner, primordial states and experiences that are not usually expressed. The corporeal meeting of performer and

audience member allows the inexpressible to “enter the mind through the body” (Artaud, 1993: 77).

Artaud further argues for the rejection of the conventional stage and the auditorium allowing for the re-establishing of a “[d]irect contact [...] between the audience and the show, between actors and audience, from the very fact that the audience is seated in the centre of the action, is encircled and furrowed by it” (Artaud, 1993: 74). This, in Artaud’s view, would, as Liz Tomlin explains, “enable the spectator to become immersed in the unfolding event, no longer a part of the seated public of spectators or consumers who were required to mainly observe from a distance the repetition of the ‘false’ reality that was dramatic representation” (Tomlin, 2013: 173). The removal of a distinct stage and auditorium not only acknowledges the existence of the audience, allowing for direct communication between the performers and audience members, but also allows for the audience to be acted upon in a metaphysical and material way. In addition, the action within the performance can be deployed to the four corners of the room, creating an encompassing experience for the audience. Artaud’s strategies for including the audience within the performance, by removing the traditional stage/audience setup and allowing the performance to traverse the room, are features which I have incorporated into my own work, notably *Pack*.

Additionally, Artaud articulates the need for establishing a new role within theatre to replace that of the ‘producer’ and the ‘playwright’, both prominent figures in theatre production at that time. He proposes a single figure to be responsible for the entire production. Artaud does not specify a particular title for this role, although the term ‘director’ for this singular creative role originated within avant-garde theatre. Necessarily, as Artaud proposes to free theatre from its reliance on the written text, then the authority of the playwright is renounced, and a more extensive single role will be required:

> Staging: This archetypal theatre language will be formed around staging not simply viewed as one degree of refraction of the script on stage, but as the starting point for theatrical creation. And the old duality between author and producer will disappear, to be replaced by a kind of single creator using and handling this language, responsible both for the play and the action.

(Artaud, 1993: 72)

Central to Artaud's manifestos is the rejection of theatre's reliance on text as the principal method of expression and representation. He argues for a theatre of signs and symbols and for the use of the body in a gestural way: "[a] physical language, no longer based on words but on signs formed through the combination of objects, silence, shouts and rhythms" (Artaud, 1993: 83). Although Artaud repudiates theatre's previous subjugation to the text and dialogue, he does not advocate total rejection. Instead, he re-functions dialogue, changing it into an *act* and suggests that both text and dialogue should be used sparingly and as a gestural sign. The tone, pace and resonance of the dialogue are as important as the linguistic merit of a spoken word: "[a]nd words will be construed in an incantatory, truly magical sense, side by side with this logical sense - not only for their meaning, but for their forms, their sensual radiation" (Artaud, 1993: 83). The use of language, signs, symbols and gestures affects "on all conscious levels and in all senses" which leads to "thought adopting deep attitudes" which Artaud refers to as "*active metaphysics*" (Artaud, 1993: 33).

The concepts and approaches demonstrated by Artaud were not entirely new as many of his ideas were also explored by the symbolists, expressionists and surrealists. However, his focus on the spiritual and the subconscious was greater and more thorough than any preceding theory or practice. Furthermore, although within his writings, Artaud's ideas are often ambiguously expressed, they became the basis for much of the avant-garde theatre between the 1950s and the 1970s. His writing had an immediate and direct impact on artists such as The Living Theatre, the development of 'happenings', and the environmental theatre of The Performance Group (Aronson, 2000: 30). As the written text is the focus of my practice, I find Artaud's argument for the rejection of the written play problematic. But, other strategies he proposes such as the removal of the traditional audience and stage configuration and the presence of a singular creative role provide a lineage for my practice.

Theatre of Catastrophe

It is Artaud's repudiation of the primacy of the written text that leads me to explore playwright and director Howard Barker's 'Theatre of Catastrophe', published in 1989,

which underpins his theatrical experimentations begun in the late 1960s. In Barker's work, the written text takes precedence, whilst in the same way as Artaud, Barker's work "rejects mimetic representation and disrupts the ideological implications of traditional forms of narrative, it is inarguably driven by his own single authorship" (Tomlin, 2013: 59). In his 'Theatre of Catastrophe', Barker proposes a writerly performance practice that, as Josephine Machon explains, "reve(a)ls in the sensate quality of verbal language and emphasizes the importance of a disturbed imagination within audience appreciation" (Machon, 20011: 48). Barker supports Artaud in emphasising speech as a sensual act, and argues that language has the potential to disturb and "breaks the bonds of the real, disrupts the familiar, [...] and draws the audience into a state of intoxication [and] subverts reason" (Barker, 1997: 213).

In Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', he argues for a re-examination of an entire inner world so that "imagination's rights" can be referred to again (Artaud, 1993: 71). Likewise, Barker argues for a return to the primordial imagination where the audience individually creates its own interpretation of the play's 'meaning', and that, once engaged, will not seek coherence, but rather, will seek an experience (Barker, 1997: 38). This insistence on the imagination in performance leads to the creation of work that makes for a 'tentative, speculative' and apprehensive audience member (Barker, 1997: 135). However, Barker stresses that it is the audience's navigation through the difficulties of interpretation, form and content by engaging corporeally that results in the arrival of meaning from the disintegration of meaning (Barker, 1997: 52-53). Again, Barker insists that the audience must draw on their own experience during and after the actual performance in order to find 'meanings' for themselves (Barker, 1997: 79).

In his essay, 'The Consolations of Catastrophe', Barker calls for "a new kind of theatre which [...] must locate its creative tension not between characters and arguments on the stage but between the audience and the stage itself" (Barker, 1997: 52). He cites previous tragic theatre as a point of reference in describing what he believes future theatre can achieve:

> A theatre of Catastrophe, like the tragic theatre, insists on the limits of tolerance as its territory. It inhabits the area of maximum risk, both to the imagination and invention of its author, and to the comfort of its

> audience. [...] It is distinctly not an experience associated with entertainment, and consequently an audience needs to be both prepared and, as is the case with all new theatre, educated in its own freedom. Not being conducted either by fetishisms of Clarity or Realism, it must be liberated from its fear of obscurity and encouraged to welcome its moments of loss. These moments of loss involve the breaking of the narrative thread, the sudden suspension of the story, the interruption of the obliquely related interlude, and a number of devices designed to complicate and to overwhelm the audience's habitual method of seeing.
>
> (Barker, 1997: 52-53)

Barker defines his Theatre of Catastrophe as possessing the "classic dramatic values, such as narrative, structure, character or language", but is nevertheless "irreducible to a set of meanings" (Barker, 1997: 80). Barker's approach provides a basis for my work, drawing audience interest and engagement from a lack of understanding or a need to piece together disparate storylines or narratives.

In the same way as Artaud, Barker criticises the construction of the conventional theatre with its stage and seating arrangement. Barker argues that this configuration "inhibits the unblocking of imagination by its mute assertion of power" (Barker, 1997: 81). He explains that "[b]y collectively situating the audience" in such a way that they look down onto the stage "implies a unanimity of response" (Barker, 1997: 81). Thus, the audience's freedom to 'respond individually' is restricted. However, unlike Artaud, Barker does not suggest the removal of a distinct stage and auditorium configuration. Instead, Barker expects his audience to 'work' alongside the actors: "[t]he play is a landscape in which the audience is encouraged to wander without maps. It is marked, it is not chaotic, but the disciplines of this theatre do not include the disciplines of demonstration" (Barker, 1997: 83). Whilst discussing the first performance of his play, *The Last Supper*, Barker explains that the audience were seated in a conventional theatre, "pampered as consumers", resulting in the experience being "harder to achieve", the audience were not expecting "to work, let alone suffer" (Barker, 1997: 83). But, Barker insists that many of the audience "overcame these conditions in an alliance with a company of actors whose faith was infectious" and they became "immerse[d] in the actions, moving from scene to scene fluidly, refusing to be stuck on

points of loss or obvious contradiction" (Barker, 1997: 83). Thus, by working through the difficulties of interpretation, many of the audience participated in the experience offered to them by the play.

Section 2 – The pursuit of participation

Environmental Theatre

As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the experiments of the historical avant-garde provide the starting point for the lineage of audience participation, but it is not until the late 1960s that a coherent and perceptible body of evaluative writing began to emerge. Richard Schechner introduced the term 'Environmental theatre' in the 1960s to refer to a performance in which the audience are integrated into the same space as the performers. In Schechner's view, although the audience's involvement may remain mainly psychological, he perceived the audience and performers making physical and verbal contact within the shared space. In his '6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre' (1968), Schechner explored the theatrical event as an interaction with a space and an audience:

> The theatrical event is a set of related transactions [...] All the space is used for the performance; all the space is used for the audience [...] The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in 'found space' [...] Focus is flexible and variable [...] All production elements speak in their own language [...] The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of the production. There may be no text at all.
>
> (Schechner, 1968: 41-64)

His aim was not simply to disrupt the traditional or conventional understanding of theatre but, more importantly, to reposition the audience member in relation to the performance. In 1967, Schechner's founding of The Performance Group initiated a theatrical response to his view that theatre was closed to audiences as they could not enter into the performance, or engage in any tangible or meaningful way with the performers, without fundamentally interrupting the art work in the process. Although other companies had achieved limited audience participation within their own

individual restrictive frameworks, Schechner's Performance Group was intent on revolutionising the whole idea of how performance was understood and experienced. Schechner explains that "[p]articipation is not about 'doing a play' but *undoing* it, transforming an aesthetic event into a social event - or shifting the focus from art - and - illusion to the potential or actual solidarity among everyone in the theatre, performers and spectators alike" (Schechner, 1973: 45).

In his article, 'Audience Participation' (1971), Schechner suggests that there is a difference between inclusion and participation. Inclusion, he suggests, is a turn to the audience, acknowledging their presence and placing them in a visible role, both to the performance and to each other. Schechner argues that participation is the involvement of the audience within the action of the performance. He posits that:

> Participation means taking part in the play: dancing, playing a scene with the performers, engaging fellow spectators in conversation as part of the play, removing or exchanging clothing, or any of the many other kinds of physical involvement possible.
>
> (Schechner, 1971: 73)

Schechner views this not as a conceptual or philosophical gesture but as a *material* and concrete act. It is 'material' because it has the potential to impact upon the performance itself, as well as the participant's experience of the event. He asserts that both inclusion and participation are forms of collaboration but suggests varying degrees of influence and involvement in the performance. Schechner argues that by "transforming an aesthetic event into a social event [...] participation occurred [...] when the spectators felt that they were free to enter the performance as equals" (Schechner, 1973: 44). For Schechner, environmental theatre is intrinsically democratic, destroying the theatrical illusion and unified focus of a collective audience and expanding the potential performance space to the entire theatre. This participatory and interactive approach is summarised by Arnold Aronson in his description of The Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* at 'The Performing Garage' in which:

> [s]pectators were encouraged to sit anywhere within the theatre [...] [and] [u]pon entering [...], spectators were greeted by casually dressed actors,

> who spoke to them informally and helped to guide them to seats. Once the play began, dialogue and speeches mixed classical diction with the contemporary. Parts of the text were designed to incorporate improvised speeches by the actors in which they would talk about personal events that had happened to them that day.
>
> (Aronson, 2000: 99)

Aronson's description of the Performance Group's approach highlights some of the differences between this environmental theatre and a traditional theatre, which, accordingly, provides a new experience for most of the audience. It is also my aim to provide a new experience for audience members, building upon these techniques of physical and vocal interaction in order to 'ingress' the audience both physically and conceptually.

Liminality and Communitas

Schechner's work was greatly influenced by that of social anthropologist Victor Turner. A dialogue between Schechner and Turner is evident in their publications, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985) and *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982) respectively. Turner's models of ritual assisted in the understanding of theatre and other performance genres and proved vital to the development of Schechner's performance studies. It is necessary to consider Turner's work not only because of its impact on the practice of Schechner, but also because his theories and the concepts he introduces and/or develops have had a significant influence on the theories and practices of others in the field of participation, which provide a lineage for my practice. In his study of rituals and social change, Turner developed the concept of 'liminality'. The use of the term 'liminal' (from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold), was first introduced to the field of anthropology in 1909 by Arnold van Gennep in his formative work, *Les Rites de Passage*. Although van Gennep established his theory at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not until after the 1960 publication of the English translation that, in the late 1960s, Turner adopted and developed van Gennep's concept. Turner described liminality as a "fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure" (Turner, 1990: 12). His theory of liminality continued to be a central

theme of Turner's work throughout his life. Here, I will focus on his first studies on liminality: 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*', from *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), and 'Liminality and Communitas' in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969).

Van Gennep described rites of passage as being structured into three parts: separation (preliminal), transition (liminal) and incorporation (postliminal) (van Gennep, 1960: 11). The person undergoing the ritual is initially deprived of their former social status and is separated from society either symbolically or physically. On entering the liminal period, the ritual subject is on the threshold of becoming something new whilst leaving behind their former self. This is a period during which the individual is 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1967: 110) and when the "characteristics of the ritual subject [...] are ambiguous: he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the characteristics of the past or coming state" (Turner, 1969, 94). In this 'liminal' period, as Turner describes it, the ritual subject is free of any social norms, rights and obligations. Whilst in this period, the subject feels liberated and consequently, is "expected to produce, and has licence for, extraordinary behaviour" (White, 2013: 139). Having been assigned new status, the subject is reassimilated into society and is influenced by new norms, rights and obligations.

There are difficulties in directly applying van Gennep's and Turner's concepts to theatre events. Theatre performances do not have the same importance and influence that is associated with rites of passage: audience participants are unlikely to be permanently changed by their involvement and resulting experience. They are not on the threshold of becoming something new whilst leaving behind their former selves. However, the sense of freedom that results from the liminal phase is of interest here. Turner explains that a characteristic of liminal activity is a loss of the sense of self and that liminal individuals are equal, they have "no status [...] nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows" (Turner, 1967: 98-99). The emphasis on the difference between participants is decreased or disregarded. As a consequence, Turner maintains that a social structure of 'communitas', an intense community spirit, is characteristic of individuals experiencing liminality together and is based on equality and not any kind of hierarchy. In communitas the individuals, grouped with others in the same condition, are expected to behave outside what is considered 'normal'. As

the framework for individuality has been removed, they feel less like an individual and, as a result, experience a closeness with others within the group with whom they can communicate freely. Turner suggests that communitas requires an individual to be of low status or an outsider. Often, rituals exclude an individual from their community for a period of time before allowing them to be re-integrated (White, 2013: 141), as Turner explains: “There is a dialectic here, for the indeterminacy of communitas gives way to the mediacy of structure, while in rites de passage men are revitalised by their experience of communitas” (Turner, 1969: 120). Consequently, as White clarifies, “communitas is the opposite of structure, and liminality one of the ways of facilitating it” (White, 2013: 141).

Turner differentiated between three types of communitas: ‘ideological’ – the establishment of a subculture in which everyone shares an ideal; ‘normative’ – the use of the ritual process to preserve a culture due to the need for social control; and ‘existential’ or ‘spontaneous’ communitas – the participants experience a togetherness, for example, that which occurs in an event with rules that go against current cultural norms. Of the types of communitas named, it is the latter that advocates of ritual theatre, such as Artaud – whose work was examined earlier in this chapter – strove for in order to attain a unique and captivating experience for audiences.

The terminology developed by Turner has a significance for performance and audience participation. The theories of liminality and communitas suggest that, by detaching from the norms, rights and obligations of everyday life, the sense of risk associated with the protection of a social self is removed “[w]hen one has become nothing, one has nothing to lose” (White, 2013: 142). Consequently, in these circumstances, an audience member is more likely to participate in an event. The concept of the liminal and its influence on performance practice and theory will be discussed further through the work of Susan Broadhurst later in this chapter. How Turner’s notion of communitas is evidenced in participatory performance is examined in Susan Kattwinkel’s *Audience Participation: Essays on Inclusion in Performance* (2003).

Participatory performance

Kattwinkel focuses on specific performances and artists that utilise the strategy of audience participation. In each case discussed in these essays, the audience has a specific role to play, and "has had a direct and immediate effect on the performance" (Kattwinkel: 2003, x). The performances have either been devised so that the audience engages in an active role in the performance, or have included the audience in the performance making process, or have been changed following the performance because of the audience's response (Kattwinkel, 2003: x). The essays in this collection concentrate on artists who consider their audiences at each phase of the making and performance process, as Kattwinkel explains:

> Many of these performances simply wouldn't exist without an audience; it's not a matter of needing spectators, but of needing co-creators, that without the decisions made by audience members, the product would be heavily fragmented.
>
> (Kattwinkel, 2003: x)

In each of the performances discussed within these essays, the audience is called upon to take an active role in the performance, to be 'co-creator', 'co-maker', and often 'co-performer', and the performance itself is dependent upon the action and engagement of the audience. Within these performances, the type of audience participation differs extensively:

> Performers include audiences by having them shout out answers to questions, they bring them on stage to become a character, they encourage vocal response and then engage in a dialogue of sorts [...], they leave space for audiences to provide text for the performance [...] and many more techniques [...].
>
> (Kattwinkel, 2003: x)

The performances examined within this collection of essays may not have a single motivation, but they possess some shared themes: “a desire for a Turnerian ‘communitas’ in which the audience can feel like they are creating and expressing common sentiment along with the performers and each other”; a move towards participation through a dedication to audience action, with the assumption that mental engagement may be achieved through physical engagement; and a diminishing of the assumptions and actions of traditional theatre together with the class structure implicit in those conventions” (Kattwinkel, 2003: xi). In the same way as Schechner, Kattwinkel appears to place the value of participation in the physical/*material* activity of the audience to affect the performance. She omits any examples of performance where cerebral or intellectual audience participation enables interpretation and experience of the performance, which is the focus of my practice. Nevertheless, the performances referenced by Kattwinkel, together with Schechner’s practice - influenced by Turner’s social anthropology theories - illustrate a performance trend towards audience participation. It provides a practical beginning for the genealogy of participatory practices, which led to the creation of the term ‘Postdramatic Theatre’ to account for work which is increasingly less text-driven and more environment based.

Section 3 – An attempt at clarification

Postdramatic Theatre

The term ‘postdramatic’ was introduced by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his text, *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). Prior to the introduction of this terminology, postmodernism or postmodernist were the terms most frequently used when referring to the theatre practices that became subsumed within Lehmann’s definition. However, it is important to stress that the postdramatic is not simply a replacement for postmodernism, but rather a repositioning of the postmodern debate in light of its leading to a disconnect between experimental theatre practices and dramatic form. As Małgorzata Sugiera acknowledges:

> Due to a conscious decision on the part of their respective authors, a large number of highly literary texts written in the latter part of the 1990s for German and British theatres do not respect the rules of traditional

> dramaturgy. A glance at the layout alone indicates that these texts differ substantially from other works which we commonly subsume under the umbrella of ‘drama’.
>
> (Sugiera, 2004: 18)

The entry of Lehmann’s postdramatic into the theatre lexicon followed Elinor Fuchs’ seminal discussion of theatre and postmodernism in *Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism* (1996). Fuchs, in the same way as Lehmann, pursues a desire to identify and clarify new and emerging practices and their impact on the performance discipline. She suggests that work by artists such as Richard Schechner, Robert Wilson and the Wooster Group might be described as postmodernist works. Fuchs argues that it is the concept of postmodernity that has complicated the traditional relationship between theatre and drama. Although, at the time of her writing, there was a noticeable growth in live and performance art, Fuchs focuses on theatre practices: works that have a relationship with dramatic form. In so doing, she indicates that a distinction exists between theatre and other performance practices. Lehmann, in his *Postdramatic Theatre*, also supports this distinction in his discussion of the postdramatic as a defining feature of theatre. The playtexts written and included within this thesis (see page 72) seek audience participation by the ingress of audience members within the textual narrative, and have a relationship with dramatic form, and can be described as theatre rather than live or performance art.

In her book, Fuchs explores the multiple worlds of theatre after Modernism, focusing on the decline of character that was once the central link between the artist and the audience. Similar to postmodernist theorists Barthes and Foucault, who announced the ‘death of the author’ (Barthes, 1989) and ‘the end of history’ (Foucault, 1989), Fuchs proposes the ‘death of character’. In so doing, Fuchs raises the question of the relevance in postmodernist performance of “the entire human chain of representation and reception that theatre links together” (Fuchs, 1996: 8). Fuchs establishes an understanding of drama and dramatic form, influenced by the classical writings of Aristotle, Hegel and Nietzche, in order to demonstrate the ways in which new and emerging practices oppose and aim to deconstruct drama and all of its classical conventions. Her reference to Derrida’s theory of deconstruction (Derrida, 1986) grounds her suggestion that postmodernist work undermines and deconstructs the

forms that led to these developments. Responding to this deconstruction, she explores the possible alternatives for character and the resulting relationship between the artist and the audience, including a multiple subject, an ever-changing audience, and a dispersed field of attention. Her use of the term, 'shopping theatre' (Fuchs, 1996: 8), although confusing because of its consumerist theme, articulates the change in the audience's role during the theatre event that she wishes to describe.

Of particular interest is Fuchs' focus on the postmodern's undermining of the 'presence-effect' found in dramatic performance pieces (Fuchs, 1996: 71), through the revealing of what has been 'banished' from dramatic performance, i.e. the written text itself (Fuchs, 1996). Fuchs regards the specificities of such an approach as dry and technical (Fuchs, 1996: 71), and instead emphasises that this "reading/writing topic provides an opening through which to glimpse the course of the postmodern tearing at the banks of dramatic form" (Fuchs, 1996: 72). She explains that works, from the 1970s onwards, have deconstructed the reputation of drama as a form of writing that creates the illusion that it is composed of spontaneous speech, and have instead projected the writing back into the performance: the writing now "declared itself the environment in which dramatic structure and theatrical performance are situated" (Fuchs, 1996: 74). The consequence of this postmodern approach, and perhaps its aim, has been to reconfigure the audience member's experience of their presence within the theatre. Fuchs' research establishes a discourse about the relationship between audience and performer, which is a principal feature of my research. I aim to explore this relationship in the context of my playwriting and that of others in the forthcoming Dramaturgy chapter, where the interaction between performer and audience-participant, and the playwright and audience-participant, will be established as a key concept of 'ingress'.

As Fuchs does, so Lehmann examines the crisis of drama, but places emphasis on the opposition to drama, and new and experimental theatre practices. These practices can be traced back to the historical avant-garde of the early 1900s. He argues that, despite the innovative experimentations of this era, the new theatre forms continued their adherence to "the mimesis of action on stage" (Lehmann, 2006: 22). The strategies and techniques utilised in these experimentations problematised and diverted from a straightforward undertaking of dramatic form and conventions, creating

a new relationship between theatre-making and drama. Lehmann suggests that, in recent years, the increasing omnipresence of the media in our everyday lives has led to the development of a more multi-faceted theatrical discourse (Lehmann, 2006: 22). A progression from Fuchs' categorization of such work is that Lehmann's analysis of the experimentations and ruptures within drama, from the 1970s onwards, leads him to argue that, although this work maintains a relationship with drama and the dramatic form, its labelling as such is no longer tenable. The reason for this might be that, as Sugiera suggests:

> Increasingly the contemporary theatre refuses to reproduce imitatively, or, to put it differently, to re-present real-life experiences on a proscenium stage, while retaining unshaken confidence in the magical illusion and the reliability of the mechanisms of projections and identification.
>
> (Sugiera, 2004: 20)

Lehmann explores how practitioners such as Frank Castorf, Jan Fabre, Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio and Robert Wilson have experimented with the disruption of dramatic coherence and narrative through a range of theatre and performance aesthetics. These aesthetics include the layering of many theatrical signs in a single scene and a focus on the production of theatre within a given space and time, and with a given number of bodies. Additionally, Lehmann recognises the irruption of the real as a key stylistic trait in postdramatic theatre. He begins by establishing that:

> [t]heatre is the site [...] of a *real gathering*, a place where a unique intersection of aesthetically organized and everyday real life takes place. In contrast to other arts, which produce an object and/or are communicated through media, here the aesthetic act itself (the performing) as well as the act of reception (the theatre going) take place as a real doing in the here and now.
>
> (Lehmann, 2006: 17)

Taking this into consideration, Lehmann later states that "[t]he postdramatic theatre is the first to turn [this] level of the real explicitly into a 'co-player'" (Lehmann, 2006: 100).

He emphasises that this is achieved not only theoretically but also practically: “[t]he irruption of the real becomes an object not just of reflection (as in Romanticism) but of the theatrical design itself” (Lehmann, 2006: 100). All these aforementioned traits participate in the disruption of drama by rupturing the ‘fictive cosmos’ that is “governed by its own laws and by an internal coherence of its elements and which is marked off against its environment as a separate ‘made up’ reality” (Lehmann, 2006: 100).

Lehmann continues to explain the importance of narration as a component of postdramatic theatre: in stark contrast to the representation of drama in the theatre, the theatre *becomes* the site of the narrative act (Lehmann, 2006: 109). The audience does not witness a scenic representation, but a narrated unfolding of the play in front of them that, in some circumstances, can oscillate between extended passages of narration and intermittent instances of dialogue. A plot is relinquished for an intimate encounter with the *personal* memory/narration of the performers (Lehmann, 2006: 109). It is this departure from a representational form and its often subsequent ‘fictive cosmos’ that results in Lehmann offering ‘postdramatic’ as a term to describe a significant sector of the new theatre he documents. As he explains, the adjective is reflective of a theatre that can operate beyond drama and after its authority on theatrical form, but does not mean that the tradition of drama is negated or ignored (Lehmann, 2006: 27). The implied ‘after’ of Lehmann’s chosen term emphasises that drama maintains an ongoing influence. He refers to the postmodern, from which his terminology has developed, and emphasises the intention of the prefix ‘post’ to signify “[...] a culture or artistic practice [that] has stepped out of the previously unquestioned horizon of modernity but still exists with some kind of reference to it” (Lehmann, 2006: 27). Indeed, Lehmann stresses that by pushing back the category of drama within postdramatic theatre, the latter can range from an ‘almost dramatic theatre’ to a form where fictive processes can no longer be found (Lehmann, 2006: 69). The range described here by Lehmann highlights that, by alluding to the genre of drama in the postdramatic, an association and exchange between theatre and text is maintained, but “considered only as one element, one layer, or as a ‘material’ of the scenic creation, not its master” (Lehmann, 2006: 17).

Perhaps, because of the timing of Lehmann’s *Postdramatic Theatre* - the German publication being in 1999 and the English edition in 2006 - the range of text-based or

text-driven work considered is limited whereas, since publication, this type of practice has become prolific. Furthermore, and for logical reasons, Lehmann focuses more on European practitioners such as Bernhard Minetti, Von Heiduck and Societas Raffaello Sanzio, whose use of narration is an added layer to their approach, which is primarily concerned with media and the body (Lehmann, 2006: 109-110). This is in contrast to my practice which is, as is clear from the thesis title, text-driven and reflects a practice that has gained in prominence since Lehmann's text was written. Sugiera observes that, increasingly:

> [...] the basic structural principle of texts written for the theatre [...] [is] their immanent theatricality, which is, however, no longer understood as a reflection upon theatre as a domain of artistic activity or as an extensive metaphor of human life, but rather as a means of inducing the audience to watch themselves as subjects which perceive, acquire knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition.
>
> (Sugiera, 2004: 26)

Both Lehmann and Jürs-Munby, in her introduction to the 2006 translation of Lehmann's work, acknowledge the presence of British dramatists – from around the time of the original publication and the intervening years – who provide a tension between dramatic and postdramatic theatre (Lehmann, 2006: ix). Jürs-Munby explains that Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* (2000) and *Crave* (1998), and Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life* (1997) and *Fewer Emergencies* (2005), could be described as postdramatic because they are "'open' or 'writerly' texts for performance, in the sense that they require the spectators to become active co-writers of the (performance) text" (Jürs-Munby in Lehmann, 2006: 6). Again, in his Preface to the English edition, Lehmann concedes that "*4.48 Psychosis* [...] would almost have to be invented as one of the great texts in analogy to postdramatic theatre if it did not already exist" (Lehmann, 2006: ix). For Tomlin, this is where the coherence of Lehmann's interpretation of ideology and form becomes threatened, in that "[...] work emerges [...] which is arguably both broadly dramatic in form and radical in its poststructuralist rupturing of the governing principles of the dramatic" (Tomlin, 2013: 52). Lehmann's reasoning does appear contradictory and confusing. In the Preface to the English edition, he stresses, as is explained in the book itself, that it is not necessarily the text

that is the focus of his study but rather the theatrical means (Lehmann, 2006: ix). However, throughout his work, he argues that a postdramatic practice should not be text-driven but should assign "the dominant role to elements other than dramatic logos and language" (Lehmann, 2006: 93).

Rather than foregrounding postdramatic theatre's suspension of the written text's authority, it is more worthwhile to focus on the form and structure of postdramatic text that scholars such as Jürs-Munby and Sugiera advocate. Amongst the features of such a text are "the lack of identifiable and consistent characterisation, a replacement of dialogue with direct address, an emphasis on monologic or choric structures, and a consequent inclusion of the audience within the world of the performance" (Tomlin, 2013: 63). It is the intention of this thesis to focus on the written text whilst incorporating some of those features of form and structure that mark the distinction between Lehmann's postdramatic theatre and what he identifies as the dramatic model.

Susan Broadhurst and the liminal

In *Liminal Acts: A Critical Overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory*, Susan Broadhurst describes the liminal as hybrid performances which "share certain aesthetic features, such as innovation, indeterminacy, marginality [...] and an emphasis on the intersemiotic" (Broadhurst, 1999: 1). She suggests the necessity for this term has arisen because of the prevalence of such hybrids of performance and slippages in form which exist on the edges and in-betweens of performance practice. Broadhurst bases her theory on Victor Turner's use of the term 'liminal', which was examined earlier in this chapter (p28). She takes Turner's concept of the liminal, which he describes as a space of possibilities, and establishes it here as a term to reflect the radicalised potential of space within performance. She suggests that "liminal performance strives to play to the edge of the possible, continually challenging not only performance practice but also traditional aesthetic concepts" (Broadhurst, 1999: 1). Liminal performance is described by Broadhurst as having "a certain 'shift-shape' style" (Broadhurst, 1999: 1): 'shift-shape' is a science fiction term for a shape with "no fixed form" (Broadhurst, 1999: 11). Many of the performances generate excitement, create feelings of discomfort and seek to arouse consciousness through the disruption

of emotions (Broadhurst, 1999: 13). Broadhurst lists further traits that she suggests are typical of liminal performance:

> [A] stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes (especially the juxtaposition of nostalgia with novelty), pastiche, parody, immanence (Hassan, 1978, pp51-55), cynicism, irony, playfulness and the celebration of the surface 'depthlessness of culture', the decline of the genius and authority of the artistic producer and the assumption that art can only be repetitious, a repetitiveness which foregrounds not sameness but difference (Jameson, 1984, p60). Additional traits are self-consciousness and reflexiveness, montage and collage, an exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous and openended nature of reality, and a rejection of the notion of an integrated personality in favour of the destructed, dehumanized subject.
>
> (Broadhurst, 1999: 13)

Broadhurst asserts that liminal theatre acts produce a shift in the relationship between the audience and performer, placing the audience at the centre of the work. She recognises that many of the aesthetic devices and strategies deemed typical of liminal performance can also be understood to be traits of the postdramatic. Although, in defining the liminal, she explores many of the same works as those discussed by Fuchs and Lehmann, her approach is from a different perspective. Postdramatic theatre is approached from a viewing perspective: looking at performances from the audience's perspective, and articulating how the performance is perceived. In contrast, liminal acts are defined in terms of space and are more concerned with the possibilities of physicality for an audience. Liminal performance, therefore, can be interpreted as a critical frame through which the space produced by different strategies, including the postdramatic, can be seen as radicalised space.

Again, some of the aesthetic devices included in Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' seem to be similar in nature to those of the liminal, but his objective for an 'essentialism' marks the difference. Artaud's view that the purpose of theatre is "not aimed at solving social or psychological conflicts [...] but to express objectively secret truths" (Artaud, 1993: 51) highlights "a certain essentialism together with an unchanging, fixed nature of

relations" (Broadhurst, 1999: 3) that is at odds with the aesthetic features of liminal performance. Broadhurst suggests that, rather than presenting certain secret truths, as Artaud maintained, liminal performance "produces an immediate effect which has *indirect* results on the political, [...], and the social in as much as it questions the very nature of our accepted ideas and belief systems" (Broadhurst, 1999: 24). Artaud's essentialism cannot adequately correlate with what Broadhurst describes as the '(syn)aesthetics' of liminal performance (Broadhurst, 1999: 3) – (syn)aesthetics being derived from 'synaesthesia', a medical term for the "subjective sensation of a sense other than the one being stimulated" (Broadhurst, 1999: 11) – and is a concept which Josephine Machon expands upon in her text of the same name. Fuchs, Lehmann and Broadhurst demonstrate theatre practices' turn towards the audience and shift away from drama and dramatic form. The postmodern, postdramatic and liminal attempt to identify and clarify participatory theatre practices but do not extend far enough to offer adequate distinctions and frameworks with which to understand these practices. But they can be considered to be a basis for articulating the move away from the audience/performer divide and the placing of the audience at the centre of the work.

(Syn)aesthetic writing

In her 2011 book, *(Syn)aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance*, Machon describes the difficulty in establishing a specific genre for a type of performance which has emerged since the late twentieth century. Inspired by Broadhurst's use of Turner's concept of the liminal, Machon adopts and furthers this terminology to find what Susan Sontag describes as a theory that encapsulates the serious nature of the form (Sontag, 1982: 103). Machon describes this performance style as "exploit[ing] diverse artistic languages to establish an 'experiential' audience event via the recreation of visceral experience" (Machon, 2011: 1). She observes that this type of performance practice emphasises the presence of the human body as a primary force of signification and takes advantage of the developing possibilities in design and technology. In addition, and of most relevance to my own research, the performance style that Machon describes has restated the claim that the verbal can be a visceral act and, consequently, has reconnected with the written word, an element previously dismissed in work where the language of physicality has been of prime importance (Machon, 2011: 1).

Machon maintains that such performance work which is defined as sensate and transgressive in its form requires a mode of analysis that describes the whole appreciation process that occurs. She adopts the term '(syn)aesthetics', derived from 'synaesthesia', to define and incorporate "fused corporeal and cerebral experiences" (Machon, 2011: 4). Machon employs this term to embrace performance work which consistently resists and breaks apart "established forms and concepts" and, consequently, is always open to further developments in practice and analysis (Machon, 2011: 4). She associates the (syn)aesthetic style with a variety of performance practices that have emerged in recent years, from the large-scale work of practitioners such as Punchdrunk and Shunt to the writing practice of Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane and Naomi Wallace. For a performance "to be wholly (syn)aesthetic there must be an element of disturbance and (re)cognition within appreciation, which can be unsettling, alarming even and/or exhilarating and liberating" (Machon, 2011: 21).

Machon identifies three key performance strategies which exist within the diverse texts of (syn)aesthetic practice: the (syn)aesthetic hybrid, a predominance of the actual body as text in performance, and an experimental or radical approach to writerly speech which results in a visceral-verbal *play*text. Of these (syn)aesthetic categories, the latter is the one which is most relevant to my practice. Machon deliberately emphasises the 'play' in *play*text because it is fundamental in defining this type of (syn)aesthetic work as inherently ludic in that it is subversive, curious and imaginative (Machon, 2011: 5). She draws particular attention to the work of neuropsychologist, Alexander Luria, who specifies that language is a physical, defamiliarized and sensual act interconnected with the human imagination: through hearing, appreciating, interpreting and understanding words, one is able to create and engage with rich sensual images, enabling corporeal (re)perception and recall. This is an ability observed by a number of commentators on contemporary writing for performance including Aleks Sierz who, whilst commenting on the 'in-yer-face' movement of playwriting, states that "the use of shock is part of a search for a deeper meaning" (Sierz, 2001: 5), and Howard Barker in *Writing Live* who articulates that the "written text can be explored differently such that its own demands and the demands made of

it may be radically different from those of a conventional playscript" (Barker in Deeney, 1998: 28). Citing Luria, Machon emphasises the power of imagination:

> [s]ynaesthetic imagination has the ability to 'induce changes in somatic processes' and disrupt 'the boundary between the real and imaginary' (138, 144). Whereas most individuals have in place 'a dividing line between imagination and reality', in those who experience synaesthesia this borderline has 'broken down' (144).
>
> (Machon, 2011: 17).

Accordingly, images tend to guide one's thinking rather than thought. Machon emphasises the 'corporeal memory' and 'embodied knowledge' as central features of interpretation. These features provide "an intuitive knowledge that refers human perception back to its own primordial, or chthonic (from the Greek, 'of, or to, the earth') impulse" (Machon, 2011: 5). The use of the term 'corporeal memory' indicates that the sensate external body produces and responds to its own 'language'. This sensual 'language' of the body in performance, together with any other sensual elements of the work, is experienced by the audience-participant through the presence of this language in themselves, in both an external and internal context. The 'internal' includes the "emotional and the physiological or sensational capabilities of the physical body", and work that embodies such a quality "has the potential to appeal to an equivalent chthonic sensibility within audience reception that allows for the slippage between the human faculties of intellectual and instinctual perception" (Machon, 2011: 6).

The (syn)aesthetic style shares the goal of Lehmann's postdramatic in that it also aims to harness "the full force of the imagination" and break down the "boundaries between the 'real' and the imaginable" (Machon, 2011: 18). But, in establishing (syn)aesthetics, Machon progresses this notion by declaring the absolute significance of verbal language as a "corporeal, defamiliarized and sensate act" (Machon, 2011: 18). Of relevance to this claim is the neurological condition of synaesthesia, which provides evidence that both the written and spoken word have the potential of being perceived in radical and affecting ways. In presenting the possibilities of the visceral-verbal *play*texts of the (syn)aesthetic style, Machon looks to other theorists and practitioners

for support. She references Roland Barthes and suggests that her idea of (syn)aesthetic *play*texts are in line with Barthes' idea of the 'pleasurable text' which he describes as a writerly "text that discomforts" and brings the reader "to a crisis" in his "relation with language" (Barthes, 1990: 14). Barthes explains that such text will have an unsettling and disturbing effect on the audience due to its form. But, it also delivers a 'jouissance' or 'unspeakable bliss', where the linguistics can 'granulate', 'crackle', 'caress', 'grate', 'cut' and 'come' (Barthes, 1990: 67). As Machon explains in her reference to Barthes:

> Jouissance names a fused physiological and psychological experience simultaneously pleasurable and disturbing, that accentuates the human experience of the live(d), present (as in prae-sens) moment. [...] The disturbance of sensations resulting from the defamiliarized state of jouissance produces a corporeal and cerebral impact which engages a (syn)aesthetic-sense and causes a reperception allowing an individual to experience anew, consider anew, interpret anew.
>
> (Machon, 2011: 39)

Machon argues that Barthes' thesis validates (syn)aesthetics as an interpretive device by proposing modes of interpretation and theorising that are responsive to the immediate and innate. Barthes' idea of the pleasurable text supports an understanding of a (syn)aesthetic impulse and response in performance as it calls for a corporeal creation, delivery and appreciation of writerly texts. This writing explicates the (syn)aesthetic style of *play*texts in that the "form and delivery of the text" allow the receiver to recognise and respond to the "embodied nature of verbal language in an experiential way" (Machon, 2011: 40).

Theatre practitioner and theorist, Valère Novarina, offers strong support for the visceral impact of the writerly and verbal performance. He believes that "[w]e write in confrontation, through the love of hand-to-hand fighting with our language [...] My language is not in my mind, like a tool that I would borrow in order to think. It is entirely within me: words are our true flesh" (Novarina, 1996: 125). Machon asserts that of central importance in her argument for (syn)aesthetics is Novarina's claim that the act of writing is:

> [...] a physical performance practice itself which collaborates with the processes of performance, highlighting the exchange of corporeality between writer and performer [...] emphasizing how the traces of the living body that writes remain within the fibres of the text to be interpreted by the living body that performs.
>
> (Machon, 2011: 47)

Novarina reiterates Barthes' theories of the jouissance of 'vocal writing' (Barthes, 1990: 66) and insists on releasing the body into verbal acts, in order to oppose the idea that words express disembodied thoughts rather than bodily physicality (Novarina, 1993: 100). He proposes that the text should reflect an 'articulatory cruelty' and 'linguistic carnage' so that, through a radicalisation and brutality of verbal language, perceptions of what language can achieve in a performance setting can be positively altered (Novarina, 1993: 96-99).

This idea of linguistic brutality as vital in reimagining the audience's perception of spoken text and language, is notably reflected in the already explored theories and arguments of Artaud and Barker. Machon asserts that Artaud's theories support the (syn)aesthetic style. A relevant feature is the ability of Artaud's theatre to disturb the audience by "the body of the actor working directly upon the nervous system of the audience" (Ward, 1999: 124), which subsequently acts upon the mind: "One cannot separate body and mind, nor the senses from the intellect" (Artaud, 1993: 66). Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' "upsets our sensual tranquility" and "releases our repressed subconscious" (Artaud, 1993: 19), and allows the indescribable to "enter the mind through the body" (Artaud, 1993: 77). Artaud proposes an '*active metaphysics*' where the "gestures, signs, postures and sound" of a theatre performance can affect "on all conscious levels and in all senses" and leads "to thought adopting deep attitudes" (Artaud, 1993: 33). His 'active metaphysics' equates with the (syn)aesthetics style where, as Machon argues, "the sentient source and conduit of the body can affect a (syn)aesthetic sense which allows a visceral cognition of intangible states" (Machon, 2011: 45).

Barker's 'Theatre of Catastrophe' also supports the (syn)aesthetic style. Barker argues for a writerly practice that makes known the sensate nature of speech and stresses the need for a disturbed audience imagination. He asserts the necessity for a performance style which acts upon the senses as well as the imagination. Barker's insistence on a visceral-verbal writing practice helps support and explain the establishing of a (syn)aesthetic style of playtext which can also be described as visceral-verbal. Machon follows these paths of lineage towards a complete and diverse concept of the (syn)aesthetic hybrid for which she provides concrete practical examples:

> It is the distinctive nature of the exchange within the (syn)aesthetic hybrid that procures a defamiliarized mix of the aural, visual, olfactory, oral, haptic and tactile within performance, enabling a (re)cognition of form due to the unsettling and/or exhilarating *process of becoming aware* of this special fusion. With the (syn)aesthetic hybrid the combination of forms and techniques amounts to an additive experience in reception, which transgresses notions of what performance is and can be. With its slippage between disciplines, blending a variety of forms and techniques from high and low culture, the (syn)aesthetic hybrid is inherently Dionysian in impulse. This is clear in the [...] hybridized forms demanded by the writing of Churchill, Kane and Wallace.
>
> (Machon, 2011: 55)

Machon's integration of playwrights and playwriting into her (syn)aesthetic concept is important in tracing the genealogy for my writing process. When discussing the place of writing within (syn)aesthetics, Machon emphasises that:

> [w]ith the visceral-verbal *play*texts of the (syn)aesthetic style the word is defamiliarized and has to be (re)cognized and made sense of via a sensate fusion of verbal and non-verbal means. Following this, within a (syn)aesthetic appreciation process a certain semanticizing of the somatic experience of words occurs during and/or following a performance where the 'meaning' of the words is reflected in the sound and the *feeling* they embody.

(Machon, 2011: 18)

She explains that contemporary performance writing has engaged with alternative disciplines, in order to find new ways in which to communicate in a socio-political and cultural environment, which calls for more immediate and intimate communication. This has, as Machon highlights, "affected an upheaval in the structures, form and content of textual practice in performance" (Machon, 2011, 31). She refers to 'New Writing', now a term less popular than in the 1990s, which describes writing that "express[es] with new verve and passion the concerns of an era, that strive[s] to find new forms and to produce a new stage language which questions and reflects the social, political and cultural mood of an age" (Machon, 2011: 31). Aleks Sierz, a prominent voice on this 'New Writing', emphasises that this writing "opened up new possibilities [...] jolt[ing] both actors and spectators out of conventional responses, touching nerves and provoking alarm" (Sierz, 2001: xii, 4). In line with Machon's (syn)aesthetic style, this new movement in playwriting "established writing *as* sensation [...] embrac[ing] brutally poetic language and starkly visual stage imagery" (Machon, 2011: 31). Machon establishes that this new writing, which has the ability to challenge and disturb, cannot be classified as one particular genre and does not utilise any one conventional device. Rather, this style of work attempts to adopt, and is influenced by, a number of different dramatic forms. For such playtexts, it is necessary to experiment with the performance style as it is not simply the content of the work, but also the form that is crucial to engaging the audience's imagination: "breaking down barriers between traditional writing conventions and new performance potentialities" (Machon, 2011: 32).

As shown in the earlier reference to practitioners of the (syn)aesthetic style, Machon focuses specifically on the writing of Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane and Naomi Wallace to reflect the visceral-verbal playtext of the (syn)aesthetic approach she theorises. She describes Churchill as "an emissary for engaging the imagination and breaking down categories by employing dance and music within the layers of her written text" and, consequently, a "forerunner for a performance-writerly practice that blended forms and disciplines within playwriting" (Machon, 2011: 31). With reference to Kane, Machon describes the layout of *4.48 Psychosis* (2000) as "played with [and] choreographed across the page" and her multilayered language as "find[ing] the affinities across and

beneath the verbal, connecting the visceral and transcendental throughout" (Machon, 2011: 73). Furthermore, she states that the nightmare world Kane realises in *Blasted* (1995) "places the audience in-between the real and the imagined, creating unnatural happenings which smack of the violent and troubled world in which we live" (Machon, 2011: 73).

Again, Machon asserts that the punctuated and rhythmic speeches in Wallace's *Things of Dry Hours* (2007) demonstrate "how verbal language can be (re)played, destroyed and (re)invented in order to produce a more visceral form of verbal communication and thereby find the somatic essence of words and speech" (Machon, 2011: 74). In the case of all these playwrights, "[i]t is through this play with the physicality of the verbal that body and word find a curious relationship, where the intertwined corporeality of the human body and visceral-verbal language [...]" (Machon, 2011: 78) allow for the corporeal to be spoken. Machon stresses the ability of (syn)aesthetic writing to:

> [...] appeal[...] to the imagination, in an acknowledgement that the sentient body is able to listen to and understand a more imagistic language at a deeper, somatic level. This corporeal aspect of delivered speech feeds into, and derives out of notions of 'writing the body'. It is the corporeality of the word that a (syn)aesthetic writing style explores and expounds, which encourages a (syn)aesthetic perception of verbal language. Such writerly practice highlights a certain antagonism between speech and physicality, whilst simultaneously foregrounding the potential for a symbiotic relationship between the two.
>
> (Machon, 2011: 78-79)

My research, and its embedded practice, is aligned with Machon's (syn)aesthetic concept in the way that it seeks a written performance which "reclaims performance writing as a sensate and multilayered form" (Machon, 2011: 69). Machon maintains that this reclaiming of the written word and its verbal delivery is an essential component of the (syn)aesthetic style. The written and verbal word has "the ability to stir innermost, inexpressible human emotion and to disturb those viscera which cause aural, visual, olfactory and haptic perception" (Machon, 2011: 69). Hence, language,

both written and spoken, has the quality of making-sense and sense-making that is similar to the (syn)aesthetic style. It is this quality of written and verbal language, which Machon describes, that is comparable to my practice.

Machon includes a diverse range of practitioners whose work she describes as having a (syn)aesthetic style. The visceral-verbal playtext is very different from the other more movement and environment-based performance work she cites, more especially as examples of the former still adhere, both in general structure and in staging, to a recognisable dramatic form. Moreover, in the context of the visceral-verbal playtext and the examples Machon discusses, the writerly approach to the work is diverse. Perhaps due to the time of writing, Machon's research reveals a lack of practice that is positioned between the environmental work of companies such as Punchdrunk and the writerly work of Churchill, Kane and Wallace. The opportunity to develop work that sits between such different practices will be addressed in my research. In order to establish possible areas of development for my practice, I will now focus on the 'immersive', a term which is often employed to describe contemporary theatre practices in which audiences are invited to participate.

Immersive Theatre

Immersive theatre has emerged over the past two decades as a major movement in performance. Its lineage can be traced through the generations to the interdisciplinary practices of Artaud, and of others during the Modernist period in the early decades of the twentieth century. A broad range of events has been described as immersive, the term being employed either by the production companies themselves or by the media that comments on them. In his article, 'On Immersive Theatre' for *Theatre Research International* (2012), Gareth White concurs that immersive theatre is diverse in form, content and style, but has the common aim of redefining audience/performer relationships by means of participation, agency and intimacy. In 2013, Josephine Machon offered the first comprehensive study into immersive theatre, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*.

In recent years, other theorists and practitioners have contributed to the 'immersive' discussion and attempted to establish a definition for the term. But, as Adam Alston

asserts in his essay, 'The Promise of Experience: Immersive Theatre in the Experience Economy' (2016), "immersive theatre is notoriously hard to define" (Alston, 2016b: 244). He describes it as a practice of experiences where the audience are invited to participate and "move within installation-like environments" (Alston, 2016b: 244). Additionally, James Frieze asserts that immersive experiences usually "depend on the creation of an event bubble that excludes the reality of the wider world" (Frieze, 2016: 5). To maintain the event bubble, "collisions between spectators, and collisions between the world demarcated by the event and the world beyond the event, must be avoided" (Frieze, 2016: 5). Despite plentiful discussions amongst theorists and practitioners, a distinct definition has proved difficult to establish and Machon's text remains the seminal work on the subject. She provides a much-needed vocabulary for an increasingly prominent performance style that places "the audience at the heart of the work" and submerges them "in an alternative medium where all the senses are engaged and manipulated" (Machon, 2013: 22).

In her 2016 essay, 'On being Immersed: The Pleasure of Being: Washing, Feeding, Holding', Machon asserts that immersive theatres are examples of a (syn)aesthetic approach to practice. She explains that immersive theatres can, by utilising the audience's imagination, activate "intense responses to the emotional and philosophical content of the work, the narratives that texture it and themes that underpin it" (Machon, 2016: 32). The acknowledgement of the physical presence of the audience within the performance (*praesence*) leads to a privileged audience experience which lasts longer in the body than that of traditional theatre, because of the way it attracts sensorial engagement and perception (Machon, 2013: 44). Machon asserts that, often, sight and sound are the only senses activated in a traditional theatre whereas an immersive event triggers a multi-sensory stimulation. She considers immersive theatres capable of conveying "actual sensation across the visual, physical, verbal, aural, tactile, haptic and olfactory within the real time, locational experience of the event" (Machon, 2016: 33). Consequently, when compared with traditional theatre, the depth of the audience experience is more substantial, resulting in the audience member's experience and memory of the performance being ingrained and embodied to a greater extent (Machon, 2013: 97). Machon emphasises that it is this strong sensory response that has connected diverse audiences to immersive performances. She claims that an immersive experience

cannot just be humoured, as is usually the case in a bad play, instead: “[t]he experience bleeds into the real world” (Machon, 2013: 55). The audience’s visceral perception of a number of senses, in Machon’s view, leads to higher forms of meaning that are viscerally felt rather than intellectually reflected upon or semantically decoded.

Writing for *Theatre Research International* in 2012, White acknowledges that, in the United Kingdom, the term immersive has become so widely used that the suggestion has been made that immersive theatre has lost its meaning, and the trend for it has run its course (White, 2012: 221). Yet, this diversity is acknowledged by Machon, who recognises the range of immersive theatre from one-to-one performances to the large-scale productions made popular by Punchdrunk: “‘Immersive Theatre’ is a term applied to diverse events that blend a variety of forms and seek to exploit all that is experiential in performance, placing the audience at the heart of the work” (Machon, 2016: 29). This diversity means that one concise definition of immersive as a genre is impossible to achieve (Machon, 2013: xvi). But, she identifies certain common characteristics that can be drawn from the range of work encapsulated by the term. These include the creation of a unique otherworldliness through the manipulation of space, sound, action, duration and scenography and the prioritising of the body within these worlds, either through performing or the audience member being placed in and interacting with the world which affects the result of the event (Machon, 2016: 31). Additionally, a pivotal commonality is that the performances provide a multi-sensory and physical experience which allows opportunities for interaction. As Machon explains, “immersive experiences in theatre combine the act of immersion – being submerged in an alternative medium where all the senses are engaged and manipulated – with a deep involvement in the activity within that medium” (Machon, 2013: 21-22). In opposition to a virtual society centred around social networking and vicarious encounters, she establishes immersive theatre as a real, sensate experience for audiences (Machon, 2013: 26).

It is Machon’s view that the term ‘immersive theatre’ can be used to describe “a visceral and participatory audience experience with an all-encompassing, sensual style of production aesthetic” (Machon, 2013: 66). Consequently, immersive theatre is to be viewed as an all-embracing term for various forms of theatre which achieve varying degrees of immersion. To clarify this use of the terminology, Machon suggests

a scale of immersivity which James Frieze asserts Machon utilises “to bring a scientific clarity to the mess of participatory performance” (Frieze, 2016: 3). This scale consists of the identifiable characteristics: ‘being-in-its-own-world’, space, scenography, sound, duration, interdisciplinarity, bodies, audience and politics of participation (Machon, 2013: 93-100). The prevalence of these characteristics within a work determines the immersivity of the experience. Also, “[i]t serves to illuminate differences and similarities between large-scale immersive works and one-to-one encounters” (Machon, 2016: 32).

Use of site in immersive events

For many immersive productions, the use of site as an atmospheric, sensual and interactive experience is a prominent factor. Non-traditional sites for performance events have been utilised for decades: Richard Schechner and the Performance Group’s renovation of a garage in the 1960s as a performance venue is an example, which was referenced earlier in this thesis. But, as Paul Masters explains in his essay, ‘Site and Seduction: Space, Sensuality and Use-Value in the Immersive Theater’:

> In *immersive* theatre, [...], emphasis on the real-time sensual engagement of participants alters the relationship of spaces to theatrical events. Spaces in these scenarios become vessels for sights, sounds, smells, and tastes that imbue abstract sometimes surreal surroundings with concrete and powerful immediacy. These transformations reimagine the relationship of the theatrical site, or ground, to other material and bodily aspects of the theatre.
>
> (Masters, 2017: 19)

Immersive theatre uses site to free it from the textuality of traditional drama, and creates transitory environments that are a substitute for text. This move away from the primacy of text and traditional theatre identifies immersive theatre as postdramatic, as described by Lehmann in his *Postdramatic Theatre*. He asserts that in postdramatic theatre, staged text (if present) is only one element of the whole composition, and that the breach between the discourse of the text and that of the theatre can become so wide that the two can demonstrate a lack of compatibility and appear unrelated

(Lehmann, 2006: 46). Immersive theatre practices open up such a discrepancy. Furthermore, as Masters explains, these performances involve the audience as participants:

> in strictly circumscribed sites and events masquerading as unique, individual and intimate one-time experiences. The sites of the immersive theatre therefore become exemplars of the postdramatic – post-textual events that develop through a synthesis of communications, hypertexts, and experiences occurring inside and outside of theatrical space/time.
>
> (Masters, 2017: 30)

Although the sites used for immersive productions vary considerably - garages, warehouses, offices, for example - there are similarities in the principles utilised within these spaces. The immersive sites act as channels into the otherworldly experience of the immersion; as Machon emphasises, they are places "[w]here the audience-participant is imaginatively and scenographically reorientated into another place, an otherworldly-world that requires navigation according to its own rules of logic" (Machon, 2013: 63). This implies that it is the atmospheric qualities of the site that are important, but Machon continues: "whereas in games practice this occurs in a conceptual space, in immersive theatre a central feature of the experience is that this otherworldly-world is *both* a conceptual, imaginative space *and* an inhabited physical space" (Machon, 2013: 63).

For many types of theatre – environmental theatre, site-specific theatre, participatory theatre, promenade theatre, interactive theatre – non-traditional sites and spaces are vital to performance. But, the term immersive theatre suggests more than is implied by these terminologies. Within the space, the expectation that the audience-participant is surrounded and enveloped imbues the notion of immersion. As Machon explains: "immersive theatre actively demonstrates how space is the palpable medium where the historical memory of simultaneous activity is a constant *praesence"* (Machon, 2013: 143). The immersive theatre space establishes the experience of the participant and is the channel into another world as well as the world itself.

Originating in 2000, the theatre company Punchdrunk are the most renowned practitioners of immersive theatre. They initiated a form of immersive theatre in which audience members are invited to roam through non-traditional sites and spaces and "experience intimately epic storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds" (Machon, 2013: 3). Punchdrunk's artistic director Felix Barrett articulates that audience engagement is central to the company's work. In an interview with Antonia Wilson for *Creative Review* on 15th July 2015, Barrett describes the objective of his company's work: "It was born from a desire to create work in which the audience is at the centre of the experience. We wanted to wrench them from the safety of traditional theatre seats and place them at the heart of the action, equipped with identity and purpose" (Barrett, 2015). He explains that a feature of immersive theatre is the "creation of parallel theatrical universes within which audiences forget that they are an audience, and thus their status within the world shifts" (Machon, 2013: 159). In many of Punchdrunk's productions, the audience members are required to wear masks allowing them a certain anonymity and a freedom to act as they wish without being judged. In other works, the audience-participant has no need of a mask as he/she is given a specific role to play to effect a shift in their status. But, as Barrett explains, "[i]f ever an audience becomes aware of themselves as *audience*, then we've probably slightly failed" (Machon, 2013: 161). He states that, to avoid this happening, Punchdrunk aims "to keep the lid closed so no light from the real world enters in, figuratively or literally!" (Machon, 2013: 161).

Another feature of Punchdrunk's work is that it is rooted in a textual source but the narratives are fragmented and layered and do not follow a linear storyline. Whilst narrative is important, it is only one element of the performance and has no greater significance than any of the other components: which demonstrates a direct lineage to the theatre of Artaud and equates with Lehmann's definition of the postdramatic. The overall intent of Punchdrunk is to "emphasise emotional, visceral and sensory excitement" (Biggin, 2017: 4). For Barrett, an immersive experience is essentially an emotional occurrence and being immersed in a Punchdrunk event involves particular emotions: "fear, mystery, 'nervous excitement', apprehension - and a sense of transgression and danger: 'illicit' activity that goes against (unspecified) rules" (Biggin, 2017: 4). It is possible, if not probable, that the audience will feel involved in this type of event, and that the immersive is achieved in the way that the audience are

surrounded by the environment, but the terminology suggests an exclusive experience that is consistently achievable for all audience members.

Criticism of immersive theatre arises as a response to the perceived disparity between the promise of a specific experience understood by the labelling of a production as ‘immersive’ and the actual outcome for an audience-participant within the space. The main aim of any event labelled ‘immersive’ is to succeed in attaining total immersion for all audience members. In pursuit of this goal, it is not sufficient that immersive theatre events invite participating audiences to interact and move within diverse environments, whilst attempting to engage them by employing various modes of participation. Audience members must take on the responsibilities that arise from participating and realise that they are tasked with helping to achieve the perfect experience. Alston concurs that an immersive experience may not occur without the participant’s commitment to the event:

> A particularly potent affective involvement with immersive theatre plays an important role in striving to achieve the (impossible) goal of total immersion; it is not just that immersive theatre places audiences in an environment that surrounds them completely, but that they must invest something of themselves in this environment that builds toward a sense of an immersive world’s cohesiveness. The sense of an immersive work tends to be linked to the richness and evocativeness of affective experiences, which are produced in a reciprocal relationship between audiences and the world in which they are immersed, but that are also predicated on a commitment to immersion as a productive participant.
>
> (Alston, 2016a: 220)

In her 2017 text, *Immersive Theatre and Audience Experience*, Rose Biggin also argues that an “immersive experience in an audience member is something that can be constructed, allowed for, and/or facilitated by theatre productions but that can never be guaranteed” (Biggin, 2017: 15). I suggest that the use of the term ‘immersive’ or ‘being immersed’ to describe an entire experience risks an over-simplification, and ignores the abilities of duration, movement, and interior and exterior distractions to complicate a truly immersive or immersed experience.

Machon considers a broad spectrum of work to be immersive, which is reflected in the wider discussion of immersive theatre and the labelling of performances as such. Andrew Filmer considers immersive to be an “umbrella” term that signifies “certain general relational dynamics that *may* be present” (Filmer, 2016: 296). In his *Creating Worlds: How to Make Immersive Theatre*, and based on his perceptions of immersive productions, Jason Warren provides a level of clarity on the subject, but also draws attention to the problem of defining the immersive in a practical context. He suggests that there are ‘common threads’ in all events that are described as immersive: they are, or strive to be, innovative both in determining the role of the audience and in their utilisation of the event space. Warren explains that within these threads there are innumerable variations in both intention and success, but it is possible to make certain assumptions (Warren, 2017: ix). In any immersive event it is generally accepted that the audience is unlikely to sit in rows facing the stage or to remain silent until applauding at the end. Also, it is most probable that the actors are not separated from the audience by the imaginary ‘fourth wall’. Warren suggests that the issue is that it is easy to describe any number of productions as *not* immersive and consequently, it appears that immersive can only be defined by negatives: “that by identifying everything that *isn’t* immersive, we can use what’s left behind as our definition” (Warren, 2017: ix).

But in an attempt to resolve the problem he describes here, Warren’s solution is broad and vague:

> To me, immersive theatre is about the certain spirit with which we make a performance. A production becomes immersive when it is made by a company who will experiment with the theatrical format in ways that are designed to drag the audience further in.
>
> (Warren, 2017: ix)

Warren’s explanation of ‘dragging’ the audience into the performance provides a wide scope for immersive theatre. This is reflected in Machon’s citing a broad range of artists and companies as exemplary producers of immersive theatre: such as Lundahl & Seitl who predominantly ground their practice in the use of technology; and others

who are reliant on the audience members' active participation, as in the work of Adrian Howells, or to a lesser extent, that of Punchdrunk. In addition, I doubt whether the comparison with Kaprow's Happenings (Machon, 2013: 31) is completely appropriate, because immersive theatre abides by a strict choreography and plotline, whereas Kaprow's Happenings were, as the name suggests, designed to be open and to happen in the moment. With Kaprow, and with happenings in general, the outcome remained uncertain, whereas immersive theatre works towards a predetermined outcome. In addition, the inclusion of works such as that of Adrian Howells is problematic as these could be viewed more accurately as performance or live art rather than immersive *theatre*. Indeed, Machon does emphasise from the outset that the area of study is broad and contestable (Machon, 2013: xv). Furthermore, Alston provides a logical reasoning and defence for the inclusion of such work:

> Immersive theatre is a loose term. It can describe practices that precede the currency of the immersive moniker, just as understandings of immersive theatre will probably - hopefully - continue to evolve as practitioners experiment with audience engagement.
>
> (Alston, 2016a: 6)

Labelling such a broad field of practice as immersive presents a problem in genuinely reflecting the experience of participating in such work, and is also misleading in representing the abilities and possibilities of immersive theatre as a whole. Immersive, then, is a paradoxical term which gives the impression of a specific experience whilst, simultaneously, not providing fixity because the audience experience is so subjective. This may be related to the fact that immersive theatre is not regarded as a text-bound form. As is reflected in Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, in which early examples of immersive theatre feature to aid the argument, immersive theatre and its predecessors display a strong rejection of text and semiotics and, instead, place an emphasis on instinct, physicality and spontaneity. As a result, the frustration of studying such work, which has no written and textual basis, is apparent in Machon's exploration of the subject: she remarks that immersive performance is "frustratingly fleeting, literally 'of the moment', utterly experiential in the 'you had to be there' sense" (Machon, 2013: 96). Consequently, an analysis must draw on individual and subjective experience as it is unique to every participant and to each time the work is performed.

This transient nature of immersive performance and the imprecise definition of immersive as a term, leading to its over-use in the mainstream, have influenced my choice of establishing the term, 'ingress', within my work. I suggest that it more clearly encapsulates the idea of the participant's entry into the performance without determining how, or to what degree, the subsequent involvement will affect them. Furthermore, it allows for a more mindful approach: the unilateral distinction of the body as being the locus of experience, in Machon's argument, seems to engage with essentialist notions and arguably places the body as a privileged, or more dominant, receiver in preference to the mind. I suggest that her focus here is so tuned to the bodily experience and text not being a vital factor, that her examples tend to stray towards the act of immersion in performance rather than immersive *theatre* as a specific concept.

Invitation and Procedural Authorship

Gareth White's *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (2013) provides a wider interrogation of audience participation which is not restricted to a particular aesthetic or trend. White seeks to confirm the essentials of audience participation which appear across a wide variety of forms, including Theatre in Education, pantomime, stand-up comedy and festival performance. He explores these genres in parallel with the trends of immersive performance, represented in his analysis of Las Furas del Baus and Punchdrunk, and audience engagement in written work, specifically that of Tim Crouch. By taking this wider approach, White is able to navigate his way through the various types of audience participation and their specific objectives, to reach the conclusion that they have one strategy in common, which is what he terms 'the aesthetic of the invitation' (White, 2013: 9). He aims to define the processes of audience participation as aesthetic acts which are distinct from the aesthetic concerns of the wider performance environment. Although White explores a broad range of practices, his focus on the invitation to participate in accordance with the process of procedural authorship is of particular value to my practice. Of further interest is White's account of how the audience members' decision-making process is influenced by their emotions and their perception of risk in public performance.

White explores the possibilities and achievements of this aesthetic act of invitation in line with a process of procedural authorship. This is a term borrowed from Jan Murray's gaming-focused *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1997) in order to articulate how facilitators guide participation from beginning to end, through a particular framework. She defines procedural authorship as:

> writing the rules by which the texts appear as well as writing the texts themselves. It means writing the rules for the interactor's involvement, that is, the conditions under which things will happen in response to the participant's actions. [...] The procedural author creates not just a set of scenes but a world of narrative possibilities.
>
> (Murray, 1999: 152)

From this definition, White suggests that what is important is "the authority of the practitioner who makes such a framework, and the distinctive character of the procedures they use" (White, 2013: 31). It is evident that the process of procedural authorship necessitates certain strategies and structures being written within the text to ensure the audience's involvement within the performance as a relevant and logical process. By employing this procedure within my practice – notably in *Two Degrees* and *Gumption* – it is hoped that the audience will be able to ingress the work.

To assist in developing his theory, White refers to Anthony Jackson's framework of audience participation (Jackson, 1997: 48-60), based upon an interpretation of Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1986). The framework that Jackson establishes consists of a number of frames which set up or initiate the audience's involvement in the performance. The 'Pre-Theatrical Frame', which as the name suggests, prepares the audience for the theatrical experience, and an 'Outer-Theatrical Frame', consisting of two 'inner frames', which establishes the theatrical space. The first of these 'inner frames' is the 'Narrative Frame', in which a story is told or introduced, the second is the 'Presentational Frame' in which the story is presented by the actors. In each of these frames, the audience remain observers and listeners, but they may be contextualised within the narrative and presentation, and given a fictional role. The 'Investigative Frame' consists of the audience joining the action, usually to execute a specific task, and often results in suspending the progress of the narrative. The

‘Involvement Frame’ marks the highest level of engagement, interaction, and participation: the audience and the performers occupy the same physical and imaginative space, with audience members becoming significant players in the creation and development of the story and action.

Although Jackson’s frames offer a helpful description of procedural authorship as “the manipulation of frames of interaction” (White, 2013: 33), they lack detail. In the context of TIE performance, which is Jackson’s focus here, these frames are fitting, but they are not sufficient to describe all types of audience participation. Also, as White explains, he does not provide a means of describing thoroughly how “facilitators begin and end participation, nor how they guide interaction” when it is in progress (White, 2013: 33). Jackson’s frames can, however, provide a starting point for White’s exploration of procedural authorship and audience participation.

White explores Goffman’s ‘Frame Analysis’ and describes as helpful his ‘The Anchoring of Activity’: ‘episoding conventions’, ‘appearance formulas’, ‘resource continuity’, ‘unconnectedness’ and ‘the human being’ (Goffman in White, 2013: 37). Goffman explains how, through these notions of anchoring, individuals apply mutual understanding to construct frames for participation. As White explains: “[t]he procedural authorship of audience participatory performance anchors itself to the common experience of its participants, grounds itself in the frames that they use in the rest of their lives” (White, 2013: 38). The concept of episoding conventions can be employed to express how people are invited to be involved in an interaction, and the other anchoring concepts to understand the relationship between this interaction and their ‘everyday selves’, and other features of the circumstances of the event, assessing how these elements jointly create an array of conceivable activities that can occur within the frame.

When discussing the use of episoding conventions in audience participatory theatre, White finds it helpful to add to Goffman’s terminology. Procedural authors use episoding conventions to introduce a participatory frame. White maintains that these episoding conventions can be described as different types of ‘invitations’: overt, where the performers give clear instructions to the audience of what they are expected to do; implicit, where no description is necessary as the audience are already aware of what

is required, as in pantomime's 'he's behind you'; covert, where the invitation to participate is hidden from the audience; and accidental, where the audience respond to signals from the performers when there is not an invitation. He then illustrates how these operate by providing examples which range from pantomime to Shunt's interactive productions. By using Goffman's notion of an overt invitation within my practice, the aim is that audience members will be encouraged to participate as they will have a clear perception of what is expected of them and the risk involved.

White explains that there are overlaps between the invitations in the examples he has described and that this will become progressively evident in his thesis. The invitation could be interpreted as overt or covert depending on the individual's response where an implicit invitation results in an unforeseen interaction, or where other ambiguities, accidents or strategies are implemented (White, 2013: 44). When an invitation is given, the audience members must understand this act so that they recognise themselves as possible participants. Although they may not, as individuals or as a group, become involved in active participation, they are aware that the performance, as a whole, is different. It is possible for performers to offer further invitations to persuade audience members to accept it and become involved in the new frame (White, 2013: 44).

Horizons of Participation

White's attention turns to a description of the reception of performance in its more passive form, not only to describe further what results from the relationship of procedural authors and audience-participants, but also to provide another approach to the framing of activity. He refers to Susan Bennett's theories of performance analysis as a basis for a discussion on the perceptions of theatre audiences. She uses the concept of 'horizons of expectation' to explain how audiences have preconceived ideas that direct how they perceive a performance. Bennett bases this concept on Hans-Robert Jauss's explanation of the term to describe how readers address a text:

> A literary work, even when it appears to be news, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by

> announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit illusions.
>
> (Jauss, 1982: 23)

White explains that the predispositions, expressed here in terms of text, add up to the horizon past which a reader, and, in the case of a performance, an audience, cannot see. White suggests “a ‘horizon of participation’, in which audience members perceive the range of behaviours through which they are invited to participate in a performance” (White, 2013: 57). He maintains that, as with the horizon of expectation, the horizon of participation “is a limit and a range of potentials within that limit, both gaps to be filled and choices to be made” (White, 2013: 59). In contrast to the horizon of expectation, “these gaps and choices are about action rather than interpretation” (White, 2013: 59). When invited to participate, an individual forms an initial evaluation of the possible activity fitting the invitation. A horizon is perceived, which does not give instructions as to what to do, but offers a set of limits and an understanding of the possibilities within those limits.

To some degree, the procedural authors are able to control the actions of the participants by controlling aspects of the procedure. They establish this horizon by defining the pre-theatrical and the outer-theatrical frames and supply the resources for the participants to use in the performance. In the writing for and setting of the performance, a continuity is implied between the performances of the participatory frame and the performances made by or known by the participants in other areas of their lives. Also, the horizon can be described precisely when the procedural author makes the invitation to participate. Following the invitation, the horizon will continue to be shaped by the actions of the performers, ending some possibilities and starting others. White states that these actions are “manifestations of procedural authorship” (White: 2013: 61).

Risk

A key focus for White, and of interest for my purposes, is how the decision-making process of a potential participant is greatly influenced by their perception of risk in public performance. White examines the risk in participation for both artists and

audiences, and how the procedural author can manage the risk, and the perception of risk. It is evident that for most, if not all, audience members, there is a reluctance to perform in public. This reluctance is based on many factors, but the most constant is their understanding of a real risk to their perceived public personas, a risk of embarrassment (White, 2013: 76). The more exposed a participant is in relation to the audience, the more embarrassment they are likely to feel. Equally, a larger audience has the potential to create greater embarrassment for the participant. Participating with others, then, can have the effect of lessening or removing the risk element and reducing any embarrassment (White, 2013: 81).

Although the risk of embarrassment is the most persistent, it is only one of the potential risks associated with performing in public. As White explains, there are risks involved:

> in taking part in an activity that is not enjoyable, or which might even be distressing, actual physical risks involved in the activity, and risks that a performance will bring dangerous consequences after the show is complete [...] [but] these actual risks may not [...] be as important to the procedures of audience participation as the perception of risk in the minds of the participants.
>
> (White, 2013: 77)

At the point of invitation to participate, it is the individual's own perception of the risk, rather than the risk itself, which will determine whether to participate or not. An individual's perceptions are formed by a number of factors including, a positive or negative anticipation of the performance, prior experience of the expected actions, his/her attitude to their own ability to perform, or their state of physical and mental health.

The task for the procedural author is to try to anticipate these perceptions of risk and to reduce, improve and/or overcome them, so that the majority of the audience can be comfortable with their involvement in the performance. White explores examples of performance from Forum Theatre to the festival performances of Jonathan Kay, to reveal how such risks can be expected by the procedural author and integrated within the invitation to participate. Whereas some participatory processes, such as TIE and

similar youth-based formats, focus on assuring that the risk is not obvious to audience members, those performance companies such as Ontroerend Goed and Las Furas Del Baus actively pursue the attainment of risk to be a 'rhetorical strategy' in their performances (White, 2013: 85). With the invitation to divulge personal information and to remove all clothing, Ontroerend Goed and Las Furas Del Baus, respectively, extend the horizon of participation anticipated by audience members in order to achieve a particular artistic end goal. Within my practice, it is not my intention to manage the risk as these companies have done but, instead, to reduce the perceived risk by employing strategies of procedural authorship within the written text.

When an invitation to participate has been accepted and an interaction has begun, the perceptions of both those participating and those observing will continue to be affected by the activities of the performers:

> The apparent difficulty of a task as it is evidenced in the achievements of participants who actually undertake it, will be a very great influence on the perception of the difficulty and risk involved for those who might follow, and the appearance of the difficulty is something that can be manipulated by the facilitating performers or other techniques of procedural authorship.
>
> (White: 2013: 86)

Manipulation may or may not be successful in encouraging participation. The with-holding of information about the process may have the opposite effect to that intended so that a potential participant's perception of risk results in the refusal of an invitation. However, risk is not the only factor that can influence an audience member's decision to accept or decline an invitation to participate and, hence, requires the procedural author's consideration.

Emotion/Feeling

Emotion is another important factor in the decision-making process of a potential participant. White explains that in the same way as emotion affects decision-making in life in general, so an invitation to participate will summon an emotional response in

audience members. The individual's response will depend upon their "expectations of, dispositions towards and previous experience of audience participation as well as the manner and form of the invitation" (White, 2013: 116). Whilst procedural authors make explicit and inexplicit use of emotional response, audience members will have both expected and unexpected individual responses "and [...] this nexus of the authored procedure and the process of action that derives from it becomes part of the substance of the event" (White, 2013: 116). To accurately describe an experience of participation, it is necessary to recount the feelings involved that result in a motivation or demotivation of the individual's reaction to the invitation. Although everyday language is sufficient to describe how decisions are informed by feelings, White turns to the science and philosophy of cognition for more accurate definitions and distinctions with which to develop an understanding of a more unified relationship "between the apparently rational mind, bodily reaction and emotional response, which is in operation at every stage of a theatre event, not only when we 'feel' an emotion" (White, 2013: 117).

White explores Antonio Damasio's *Descartes' Error* (2006), in which Damasio argues that emotions are significantly involved with perception and cognition. Also, the lack of an emotional element can result in ineffective and irrational thinking. Damasio suggests that:

> [a]t their best feelings point us in the proper direction, take us to the appropriate place in a decision-making space, where we may put the instruments of logic to good use. We are faced by uncertainty when we have to make a moral judgement, decide on the course of a personal relationship, choose some means to prevent our being penniless in old age, or plan for the life that lies ahead. Emotions and feelings, along with the covert physiological machinery underlying them, assist us with the daunting task of predicting an uncertain future and planning our actions accordingly.
>
> (Damasio, 2006: xxii)

These are life-changing decisions which Damasio describes here. But, White suggests that in audience participation the same basic principles - physical, emotional and

intellectual - apply, except that the audience is being presented with an environment and situation where the outcome may be important in the context of the performance, but does not have the same consequences as it would have in real life.

Damasio continues to make a distinction between emotions and feelings. He explains that the emotional response to any given object or incident is inherent allowing an individual to make an immediate response. This response does not happen in isolation, but is followed by the feeling of emotion in relation to the object that provoked it – "the realisation of the nexus between object and emotional state" (Damasio, 2006: 132-133). Feeling an emotional state or being conscious of emotions, provides an individual with a versatility of response based upon his/her past interactions with the environment. For Damasio then, feelings are emotions which have become conscious and identifiable for the individual. More importantly, they are memorable and transferrable to later, comparable circumstances. Both feelings and emotions originate in the body and both have an effect on the body:

> Emotion and feeling thus rely on two basic processes: (1) the view of a certain body state juxtaposed to the collection of triggering and evaluative images which cause the body state; and (2) a particular style and level of efficiency of cognitive process which accompanies the events described in (1), but is operated in parallel.
>
> (Damasio, 2006: 162-163)

Damasio maintains that emotion is the 'substrate' of our everyday thinking. This, White explains, is important in the understanding of interactions in performance. At the moment of decision making in response to the invitation, the participant's experience reaches an important climax. Being aware of what this decision making is composed of is necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, the procedural author's work involves acknowledging these emotional, unconscious reactions and, secondly, the performance is comprised of the participant's experience and its connection with the procedural author's work. The decision-making process then develops as a combination of conscious and unconscious response. White suggests that in audience participation, the 'risk assessment' for any participant can, in some cases, if only momentarily, be controlled completely by emotion, as described by Damasio,

particularly if the invitation takes place unexpectedly, or with an immediate alteration to the atmosphere or environment. When we are allowed to think, we “assimilate emotion - as feeling - into a thought process, and a conscious narrating of the situation that will attach an identifiable feeling to the emotion, and assess risks and benefits with the help of an appropriate emotional accent to our thinking” (White, 2013: 119).

Not all theorists form a similar contrast between emotion and feeling. White refers to Bruce McConachie who, in his *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (2008), bases his exploration on Ciompo and Panksepp’s six basic emotional systems: FEAR, RAGE, PANIC, CARE, PLAY and SEEKING (White, 2013: 119). In general, the systems of CARE, PLAY or SEEKING can be seen as motivating participation, whereas FEAR, RAGE or PANIC are demotivating systems. But, it is possible for FEAR or PANIC to motivate participants away from one activity and into another, or for RAGE, when expressing a virtuous anger, to persuade participants to engage in order to express a certain viewpoint. The implementation of any of these six basic emotional systems, therefore, could inspire participation or deter involvement in one participatory act in favour of another. McConachie builds on these systems and explores the effects of emotions on cognition. He states that emotions will:

> stimulate or, on the contrary, inhibit cognitive activities, that is they act on them as energy-regulating ‘motors’ or ‘brakes’; focus the attention on emotion-congruent cognitive objects, thus tending to establish an emotion-dependent hierarchy of perceiving and thinking; preferentially store and mobilize emotion-congruent cognitions in memory; and tend to link emotion-congruent elements and to combine them in larger cognitive entities.
>
> (McConachie, 2008: 94-95)

White’s exploration of the work of Damasio and McConachie suggests that emotions and feelings inform us what takes precedence in our thinking, urge us towards particular types of thinking in response to stimuli, and order our thinking about stimuli that are immediate and of the past. At a conscious level, decision-making is informed by a ‘substrate’ of emotion within the body that develops into a conscious feeling, and

this substrate can govern some reactions before conscious thought (White: 2013: 120). Consequently, for an invitation to participate to be accepted by an audience member, the procedural author must not only anticipate the audience members' perception of risk and address it, as already described above, but also acknowledge their emotions and feelings, and consider how all these factors influence decision-making and how they can be managed. These are considerations for me as I attempt to write audience participation into a playtext in the anticipation of audience ingression.

For White, the aesthetic act of invitation is fundamental to participatory performance. He describes the invitation for an audience member to participate as an 'authored procedure'. He explains that, in participatory performances, the creative process is shared between practitioners and the audience members who accept the invitation to participate. This "changes its character as a process of authorship, but does not fundamentally undermine it: what is authored, as well as any performance that results, is the interactional space into which the audience member can step as participant, if they choose to" (White, 2013: 195). In the conclusion to White's text, he makes clear the difference between 'authorship' and 'procedural authorship'. Authorship is understood to be a "relationship of agency with regard to an art object" - a writer is responsible for a text, but procedural authorship is "agency at a remove; though a procedure might be regarded as a kind of art object, it is only such a thing because it has the potential to give rise to actually occurring performances" (White, 2013: 195-196). Procedural authorship is achieved "when a practitioner takes the risk of making an invitation, and opens the conversation out of which the action of participation will arise" (White, 2013: 196). In his text, White's purpose is not to address an ideological analysis of audience participation, which has been provided elsewhere. Instead, he focuses on strategies to understand and implement participatory performance which has a particular relevance for my practice, where my aim is to construct a written framework, within which an audience member can participate physically and psychologically and, hence, can ingress the performance and the fictional narrative.

Conclusion

The exploration of these texts has emphasised the fact that, from the early twentieth century, there has been a determination within performance practice and theory for a re-emergence of audience participation, which has involved a shift away from drama and dramatic form. In many of the practices examined, the physical and sensorial engagement of the audience has been achieved through the diminishing of the role of the written text. As has been noted in the introduction to this thesis (p7), the intention of my research is to explore the possibilities and achievements of the playtext to involve the audience intimately within both the performance of the work and, most importantly, within the fictional narrative.

Through the process of reviewing the literature in this chapter, I have articulated the areas of theory that align with and influence my approach. Artaud's placing of the audience within the performance, through the removal of the traditional stage/audience setup, is a strategy that has continued to be used and explored by successive performance practices, including Schechner's environmental theatre and contemporary immersive theatre, which have been discussed within this chapter. This is a technique that I will implement in accordance with a textual narrative in seeking to involve the audience within the fiction of the playtext. I will also employ Barker's idea of rejecting clarity and realism: his insistence that the playtext should welcome moments of loss, and actively embrace the breaking of the narrative thread is a textual method that pursues the closer involvement and enhanced engagement of the audience. Furthermore, his approach echoes that of Artaud in the criticism of a traditional theatre spatial arrangement. But, Barker's allegiance to the playtext and the theatre as a performance environment leads him to explore the audience's perception and awareness of the theatre space in order to achieve their interaction with the playtext in performance.

In my own playwriting practice and that of others to be explored, this reassessment of the abilities of a theatre space in line with a pursuance of increased audience participation and responsibility will be a prime feature. This approach, as is highlighted in the research of Schechner and Kattwinkel, calls upon the audience member to take an active role in the performance as 'co-creator'/'co-maker' and, in certain instances,

‘co-performer’. The audience participation offered in Schechner’s work and the performances explored by Kattwinkel favour physical/material activity rather than mental engagement. Lehmann and Broadhurst also use the term ‘co-creator’ in their discussions of postdramatic and liminal audience participation, but the participation here is an intellectual/conceptual one. My focus on playwriting will interact to a greater degree with the thoughtful and imaginative processing and subsequent reliving of the text by the audience.

Fuchs, Lehmann and Broadhurst, whilst emphasising different definitions and distinctions within their work, all identify theatre practices’ shift away from drama and dramatic form. In their examinations of such practices, each theorist provides a different viewpoint on the characteristics of this work: Fuchs emphasises the cultural, Lehmann focuses on the historical and aesthetic, and Broadhurst examines the potential of space and its involvement. The postmodern, postdramatic and liminal theories attempt to identify and clarify participatory theatre practices, but do not adequately reveal the distinctions and frameworks with which to understand these practices. To further my understanding of audience participation, I explored the work of Machon, who adopts the term (syn)aesthetics in an attempt to describe work of varying disciplines which occupy the same ground with regard to experimentation with physicality, the sensual and the visual. For playwriting, the (syn)aesthetic model establishes the visceral-verbal playtext that acknowledges the ability of the written and spoken word to affect audiences in a sensorial manner, and that seeks interaction through imaginative interpretation. This is emphasised by Machon citing work, including that of Sarah Kane, that is also highlighted by Lehmann in recognising that aspects of New Writing are expanding the postdramatic model.

Machon’s discussion of immersive theatre explores environmental and spatial approaches to involving the audience within performance, furthering the work of Artaud in a contemporary context. Due to its focus on the environment and the ‘immersion’ of audiences within a setting, immersive theatre, as explored by Machon, distances itself from the text. It is this factor which supports my criticism of the term ‘immersive’ as it is extensively applied to describe work, including that which is text-based, that involves or interacts with the audience in some way. Furthermore, the use of the term ‘immersive’ raises questions as to whether the audience’s involvement is

as consistently achievable as the term suggests. The exploration of immersive theatre provides support for my proposal of a new terminology that more specifically encapsulates the audience's own control over their involvement, and the mitigating circumstances that detract from immersion or an immersive experience. This is particularly relevant when discussing a text-driven form, as is the subject of this thesis, which depends on a flexible relationship between the text and the audience, as well as the performer and the audience, in order to negotiate participation.

This proposal for a new terminology initiated an interest in White's work which focuses on strategies to understand and implement participatory performance. White's discussion of the role of the procedural author and his examination of Frame Analysis relates directly to my work as the playtexts will require specific frameworks in order to function in a participatory manner. He also emphasises the risks involved in inviting an audience member to participate. The procedural author must anticipate the audience members' perception of risk, and whilst acknowledging their emotions and feelings, consider how this might influence their involvement, and how this can be successfully managed. These factors are particularly pertinent for my practice. Giving due consideration to audience members' feelings, emotions and perceptions of risk, whilst encouraging their participation in an ingressive playtext is paramount, more especially as the subject matter can be disconcerting or even distressing.

This chapter has established a precise genealogy of audience participation, that not only specifies the methodologies and techniques of working to enhance the audience's role within the performance, but also clarifies the terms of my practice in this field: to discover and establish a playwriting model that allows for and actively pursues the integration of the audience into the written and performed work. This literature review contributes to the three plays, which follow in the second chapter, by providing a theoretical and practical framework from which to build, relying upon the participatory traditions of avant-garde theatre, the experimental practices of playwrights in the (syn)aesthetic mode, the spatial and scenographic audience impact of immersive theatre, and the structural approaches towards participation of Frame Analysis and Procedural Authorship. Furthermore, this chapter indicates the direction of the thesis by emphasising the gap in research and lack of precise terminology relating to the involvement of audience members in written performances. The following chapters,

then, are a vital extension to the existing research presented here and a response to the questions raised about its relevance for a playwriting practice. The initial research presented in this literature review will be implemented, expanded and evaluated through the subsequent completion of practice and its analysis. By directly referencing the knowledge provided by the literature review, this exploration of text-driven works, including my own, which seek to integrate the audience as participants, aims to confirm the necessity for a dramaturgy of 'ingress'. This is required in order to progress the notion that audience participation is compatible with a playtext, whilst avoiding any association with an immersive dramaturgy which does not provide a clear impression of the participant's experience and, most importantly, does not accommodate a playwriting practice.

Chapter Two – Practice as Research

Contents:

Pack

(2012)

Characters:

Lewis, *late forties*

Ruth, *early twenties*

James, *mid twenties*

Alan, *unknown*

*

a dash (–) at the end of a line denotes a following interruption

a forward slash (/) denotes overlapping lines

Outside. A quiet road or lane lit by street lights.

Lewis *walks down the road. A crowd follows.*

Lewis: This is a story about –

a man. Yes. That's right. A man. A sword. A child. Two children. A sink. A cot. No – a sink. That's right. And water. Water? Yes. Lots of water. Yes. And blood. Lots of blood. On floor. Wooden floor. Old wooden floor. Blood stained on old, warped, wooden floor. Man. Wolf. A Prince. Yes. Llewellyn. And a wolf. Dead under cot. No. Wrong story. Man. Wolf – inside. Yes. And friend. On floor. Old wooden floor. Stained. Old. Wooden. Floor. In the old wooden house. Blown apart by the wolf. Three little pigs. Two little pigs. One little pig.

Lewis *turns into a courtyard which services a number of factory buildings. He stops and addresses the crowd directly.*

NO! Scrap that. Wrong story. All wrong! Start over. Please. Start again. Tell the story right.

James *appears from the crowd.*

James: I will, dad. I promise. (*Beat*) A man.

Ruth: (*From the back of the crowd*) Poor excuse for a man.

James: Two children.

Ruth: One child – when the other –

James: abandoned us.

Ruth: No. That's not fair. When the other –

James: gave up –

Ruth: No. Try again. When the other –

James: Ran?

Ruth: Yes. I think you're right. For once.

James: Go on then.

Ruth: What?

James: We're telling the story. Run.

Alan: (*Pops up*) Run?

Beat.

Ruth: Yes! Run!

Ruth *runs across to one of the buildings, throws open the door and runs inside.* **Alan** *follows, as do the crowd.*

Come on, Alan! Do you wanna get caught?

Alan *stops and hunches over wheezing.*

Alan: I can't – no – no further.

They both slump down against the wall which is uplit by a couple of construction-style floor uplighters. The crowd gathers.

Alan: What did you get?

Ruth *takes a bottle of alcohol from her coat*.

Ruth: You?

Alan *retrieves a Mars bar*.

Ruth: Is that it?

Alan: What's wrong with it?

Ruth: Well it's hardly worth nicking, is it?

Alan *tucks into his Mars bar.*

Alan: It'll keep me going.

Ruth: Doubt it. You're not allowed chocolate remember? Makes you sick.

Alan: Maybe. But *you'll* fall flat on your face if we've got to run again.

Ruth: How much do you wanna bet?

Alan: Nothin'. No money.

Ruth: Me neither.

Alan: I bloody well hope not. If I ran all that way –

Ruth *rummages around in her pockets and brings out a loose button*.

Ruth: Raise you –

She places the button down on the floor.

Alan: I see your button and I raise you –

Alan *rummages in his pockets but can't find anything. He scoffs the rest of the Mars bar and slams the wrapper down.*

Alan: (*Mouth full*) Do I win?

They laugh, and then silence.

Alan *takes a deep intake of breath and exhales with a smile.*

I like subways.

Ruth: Yeah?

Alan: Yeah. They have a certain charm about them. It's the only place where the smell of piss is actually quite comforting.

Ruth *laughs.*

Seriously. Because if it wasn't there, then it just wouldn't be a subway anymore would it? It would be just some tiled tunnel under the ground with nothing about it which makes it – different. I know it sounds stupid but if a subway doesn't smell of piss, I get quite disheartened. The world just doesn't seem right somehow, like it's been set off balance by a lack of – piss. So there's nothing else for it but to restore the balance and take a piss myself. Thanks to me, everyone can live a happy life knowing that subways are being kept in the manner to which people have become accustomed.

Ruth: Thank you.

Alan: For what?

Ruth: You know. Not so – scary.

Alan: What are you scared of?

Silence.

A faint police siren breaks the silence and quickly increases in volume.

Ruth: (*Jumps to her feet*) Shit! We've got to go. Alan?

No response. **Alan** *joins the crowd.*

Come on, Alan. We've got to go! Alan? Alan!

No response. **Ruth** *is frantic but doesn't know what to do. The police siren stops abruptly. And the lights cut out.*

Beat.

Ruth *stands stock still. The crowd is ushered to close in around* **Ruth***.* **Alan***,* **James** *and* **Lewis** *shine torches at* **Ruth** *giving the impression of an interrogation.*

Ruth: No one is sure about Ruth's personal details. She is not sure where she was born. The United Kingdom?

Lewis: Ruth is not her real name. *I* should know. Ruth says she is fifteen. She has no documents to indicate her age, nationality or history.

Alan: Ruth was arrested in January 2013 having been caught shoplifting.

Ruth: The custody sergeant thought Ruth looked older than the age she claimed, so she was seen by a social worker. That social worker reported that Ruth appeared to be between sixteen and nineteen.

James: Ruth says she has been in the city for a number of years and this would appear truthful because she has a slight regional accent and can describe a number of landmarks.

Ruth: An official age assessment stated that Ruth was likely to be over eighteen, considering her ability to care for herself. Consequently, she was interviewed by authorities as an adult.

Lewis: If she's honest with herself, Ruth knows that this is far from the case.

Alan: She still relies on me.

James: But she says she has lived in many places.

Ruth: She can remember living in Derby –

James: Liverpool –

Lewis: and Glasgow?

Ruth: She has worked when she can but has often lived on the streets. Ruth has said she doesn't know who or where her family is and does not want to be reunited with them.

James: Ruth was eventually released into the care of a shelter.

Ruth: She's no longer there. No one knows where she is.

All torches are turned off except **James***' who guides the way towards a lone chair. A black dinner jacket hangs on the back of the chair. There is a lamp on the floor beside the chair. He places the torch within the lamp as if a bulb. He then removes his coat, revealing a white shirt and black trousers. He drops the coat to the floor and sits down in the chair. The crowd congregate around him.*

James *picks up a foil dish and a fork from the floor and shovels the contents, Macaroni Cheese, into his mouth.*

James: Once upon a time. (*Beat*) They all started like that. (*Beat*) Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. One pig built her house of straw. The second built his house out of sticks.

A big, bad wolf was passing one day and spotted the two little pigs dancing and playing and thought to himself, 'What juicy meals they will make!' He chased the two little pigs and they took refuge in their houses. The wolf went to the house made of straw and blew it down with no effort at all. The frightened, little pig ran to the house of sticks and hid there with the other frightened little pig. The big, bad wolf huffed and puffed and he blew the house of sticks down. The terrified little pigs ran to the third pig's house which he'd built out of bricks. They all hid there and waited for the wolf. He huffed and he puffed and he huffed and he puffed but as hard as he tried he could not blow the house of bricks down and the three little pigs remained safe inside.

Usually, the moral of that story is not to be lazy. It always had a different meaning for us. When the wolf comes huffing and puffing and threatens to rip you apart, find refuge in numbers. Don't be alone. Be with your family, your loved ones, in your home.

The house is now so much quieter. His voice is only a whisper from our bedroom – a memory of those stories he used to tell. Her energy creeks through the floor. But she's nowhere to be seen. And dad just sits in his chair.

I occupy myself with writing. I'm completing dad's last ever work.

I get distracted by the house I can see from my window, just across the fields. I decided when I was seven that it's a mental asylum because it's a shadowy, gothic building like Arkham Asylum in Batman.

Dark figures pass the windows, creating shadows on the blank, beige walls. How do they think they can make people less crazy in there when everything is beige? If

anyone needs their head read it's the person who decided to paint mental asylums beige. How about orange? That should make you happy.

Pause.

If only I could be a fly in there. (*Beat*) On second thoughts, I don't think it would be much fun being a fly in a mental asylum. Not that it can be much fun being a fly anywhere, but a fly that inhabits a place like that can't be a happy fly. He's probably quite a depressed fly, which is lucky, because he's in exactly the right place.

One night – it's a Thursday – I'm taking a tea break from writing, eating Macaroni Cheese from the dish. And suddenly I see her. Not a dark figure. A white figure. White and surrounded in bright light, blending with the beige walls. Her face is familiar. A face I see through child's eyes, her child's eyes staring back.

The encounter is fleeting. I wait for her return.

She appears to me again on Tika Masala night. Take away. From the carton. I wipe sauce from my mouth. (*Does the action with his hand*) She wipes blood from hers. The bird in her withered, clawed hand has no head. My sister smiles, bright white daggers of teeth, stained red on the tips. Through my reflection in my window, I see her face changing from wolf to child and back again, over and over until it's as if the image has worn itself out and fades into the dark of the glass. Beyond it? Just beige.

For a second, I feel close to her. Just a second. Then I don't. She could now be one of the many passing dark figures which punctuate the beige of the asylum or hug the street corners of the city or, so dark a figure, disappear completely from view.
One little pig. Two little pigs. Three little pigs. And a wolf. I hope she remembers. I hope it wills her return.

James *takes a bow tie from his jacket pocket, clips it on and then puts on the dinner jacket.*

A floor lamp is turned on and draws attention to **Ruth** *who stands by an armchair, wearing a glamorous dress.*

James *takes the torch and guides the way, crowd following, to a tablecloth-covered table and a chair. On the table is a lamp, a piece of paper and a pen. He places the torch within the lamp and then sits down at the table and reads through what is written on the paper, making amendments.*

Silence.

Ruth: I remember the water.

James: Me too.

Ruth: And the flames. Like tongues licking the walls.

James: Simile. Well done.

Ruth: You're not very funny are you?

James: No. Not really.

Ruth: And do you remember the holes?

James: Of course. I remember everything you do. If you look hard enough, you can see where they used to be. The grass is a different shade.

Ruth: Geek.

James: Chav.

Ruth: Remember when he dug up the dog?

James: Dig to Australia Attempt number three. December 1st.

Ruth: It was snowing.

James: He put on like ten layers. I told him, you're a little overdressed for Australia, dad. It's summer down there.

Ruth: He just carried on.

James: After a while, he'd always just give up and sit in the hole until he wondered why on earth he was sat in a hole. (*Grabs his pen*) I think I'll tell that one tonight. Yes. I'll put it in – here. (*Scribbles*)

Ruth: It's all a bit contrived don't you think?

James: I think the intention is that it's heartwarming.

Ruth: Will you hug him?

James: Yes.

Ruth: Will you enjoy that?

James: Yes, I think I will.

Ruth: They'll probably do the same when *you* win.

James: Probably.

Ruth: You'll have to hug him again.

James: I hope so.

Ruth: That's quite egotistical actually.

James: What is?

Ruth: You think that'll happen. You think you'll win.

James: You were being hypothetical.

Ruth: I was, yes. But you could see it. I could see you seeing it. You have your speech prepared. In your head. (*Beat*) On paper? Cocky is not the –

James: It's just dreaming. Hoping.

Ruth: Do you think he'll ever be honest? I know it's not a secret. It's almost his trademark. His marketing strategy. 'I was a complete loon! See my plays!' But he hasn't actually been honest, has he? He's written about it, around it, given his characters it – poor sods – but he hasn't addressed it. He hasn't shown everyone why he writes like that – that stuff – where it all comes from.

James: Would that make you feel better?

Ruth: No.

James: Would it make you come with us tonight?

Ruth: No.

James: You look hot.

Ruth: I know.

James: Shame people aren't going to see you.

Ruth: *I've* seen me. (*Pause*) Is that a proper one?

James: Clip-on. (*Pulls at his bow tie*)

Ruth: I'll do you a proper one.

James: You think it matters?

Ruth: You could view it as my presence at the party. I'll go get one.

Ruth *goes to leave but* **James** *pulls out a tie from his pocket.*

Ruth: I knew it! I knew you would've tried.

James: It always beats me.

Ruth: Here.

Ruth *takes the tie, whips the clip-on off and starts over with the proper one.*

James: Do you think mum did this for dad?

Ruth: Don't know.

James: I like to think –

Ruth: You like to dream.

Silence as **Ruth** *concentrates on doing the tie.*

James: He *is* writing about it all.

Ruth: You don't have to –

James: Really. He wouldn't tell you. You wouldn't want him to. It'll take time. He'll need to really search at times. Pick through it.

Ruth: I could strangle you with this.

James: We may have to help him.

Ruth: *You're* the protégé.

James: *You're* the female lead.

Ruth *finishes the tie. She steps back to assess her handiwork.* **James** *points to his cheek.* **Ruth** *kisses him on the cheek.*

Ruth: What's it called again? The award?

James: Outstanding Achievement Award.

They then just stand there.

Silence.

Ruth: I hear it.

James: I know.

Ruth: That crunching, thudding sound.

James: It scares the shit out of you. Of course it does.

Ruth: If I go before you, you'd better not bury me. Just in case.

James: Might just do it for a laugh.

Ruth: I love you.

James: I love you too.

Ruth *straightens up* **James***' tux.*

Ruth: Those words always sound so hollow. I do mean them though. I know you do too.

Ruth *takes* **James***' speech from the table and hands it to him. He pockets it and then looks at her.*

Pause.

James: Take the dress off.

Sound of printing attracts the crowd to what's behind them. **Lewis** *stands alone, gripping a few pieces of A4 paper. He lights his face with a torch as if telling a spooky story to a group of children on a camping trip. He glances at his collection of papers and looks daunted, scared even.*

Lewis: OK. Here goes.

Lewis *prepares himself.*

It was a Thursday. I put the disappointment of the day behind me. Not a word on the page.

I put my energy into already existing pages and read my kids a bedtime story.

Once upon a time, there was a mighty Prince called Llewellyn. One day, Prince Llewellyn left his baby with his dog while he went hunting. It was late when he eventually returned home. What met him was a terrible sight. The room had been torn apart; furniture lay upturned, tapestries had been ripped from their hangings and the baby's cradle lay empty on the floor. As Llewellyn remained rooted to the spot, a nose nuzzled his foot. He looked down to see Gelert, his faithful hound and friend, with blood stained paws and head. "You wicked creature!" Llewellyn roared and with no

hesitation, plunged his sword into the dog's side. As Gelert lay dying, the cries of Llewellyn's son struck the air. The Prince threw the upturned cradle aside to find his son with a dead wolf lying nearby. Gelert's body was buried outside the castle walls and, in memory, the nearby village became known as Beddgelert; grave of Gelert, the dog of the Crown.

I kissed them both goodnight, placed the book back on the shelf, went down to wash the dishes. Macaroni Cheese that night.

It began on the stairs with a sigh in my ears. My own sighs in my own ears. But I wasn't sighing. I stopped half way down, took an intake of breath to gather the sighs and an exhale of breath to push them all out. I continued down the stairs, into the kitchen and turned on the tap, an action that now sometimes escapes me. Into the bowl went a plate, some cutlery and a mug – and then went the dog, dragged from the basket. My weight pushed him against the surface, my hands gripping his head and forcing him down. His legs kicked and flailed, his claws ripping deep into my skin. My strength waned and we both dropped to the floor. My hands clasped round his neck, his claws grasped at the floor. Until – rest.

I buried him in the garden. But there was this muddy mound, haunting, so I moved the trampoline over it.

I buried my baby next to the dog. I thought that's what she would want. She loved dog. She smiled the toothiest grin whenever she saw him.

When I dug her up, she was still breathing.

I put her back to bed. I returned to the dishes. Tika Masala that night.

As my hands waded through the water, luke warm by then – bits of food and scum on top – I stared at my reflection in the window. In the darkness of the glass. My reflection was a familiar face. I knew it well, drawn by my imagination every time I read the stories.

If what happened next hadn't happened, I would have sought help sooner. But it did. It's as if the sighs in my ears had released a voice from within. The words formed like they never had. Like molecules. And multiplied. Like bacteria.

And there in my head, I could hear the opening lines of my debut play –

In my darkness lies the wolf. In the wolf lies me.

Lewis *drops the pages, turns off the torch, and sinks to the floor.* **Alan** *steps into view and sits back to back with* **Lewis***. They are lit by standing floodlights.*

Sorry.

Alan: For what?

Lewis: You know.

Pause.

Alan: That? That's past.

Lewis: But –

Alan: You're not to blame.

Lewis: You didn't –

Alan: As I said, you're not to blame. I'm better off here anyway.

Lewis: You're enjoying it?

Alan: Oh yeah! I've become somewhat of a socialite. I met one of the Queen's Corgis the other day. Susan. Charming. Really charming. And I'm meeting Frank Sinatra's

goldfish tomorrow for a swim. And apparently, he sounds just like the man himself. Susan says that if you ask really nicely and buy him a drink, he'll even take requests.

Pause.

Lewis: But so –

Alan: Lost. Yes, I know.

Lewis: More lost than usual.

Alan: How do you know?

Lewis: Meaning?

Alan: How do you know that you're more lost than usual? Is it a feeling? How do you feel when you're more lost than usual?

Lewis: (*Smiles*) Just – lost – I suppose. (*Pause*) There's so much beauty up there. You can't possibly understand it all can you? There's not enough time. People will try. People try now. But there'll be things which will always be beyond them. And that's great, isn't it? To know that there are things you'll never know. To think that there's something out there that's greater than you and always will be. It keeps you grounded.

I can't ground myself, Alan. I can't ground them. Everything just swirls around me. Swirling, pulling me down into black. The kids, they hide from me. They take safety under the kitchen table. 'Take cover! Things are swirling. Daddy's being pulled. Straight down. Into – '

Alan *slips back into the crowd.*

Alan? Alan?

The lights snap off.

James: BLACK.

Ruth: Everything so black.

The sound of typing begins and increases in volume during the following.

James: You open your eyes.

Ruth: That must be why it was black.

James: But it just gets blacker.

Ruth: So black it's almost light.

James: So light.

Ruth: Too light.

James: You watch as into the light, your memory chokes up – EVERYTHING.

Ruth: A – palm tree? (*Beat*) Really?

James: A chewed-up piece of gum.

Ruth: Your headmaster's toupee.

James: Your father's old Amstrad computer which he was SO proud of –

Ruth: until you smashed it up with a rolling pin.

James: Your wife's old Henry Hoover which *she* wasn't so proud of –

Ruth: "It never sucks up the fucking dirt" –

James: She'd say.

Ruth: "It's like you! It's USELESS!"

James: She said that?

Ruth: She said a lot of things. I miss her at times. And then I remember. That mouth. Those lips. Pouting that really arrogant pout. Bitch!

James: You see the frog you grabbed from the garden pond when you were seven –

Ruth: pummeled it with a stone and posted it through your neighbour's letter box.

James: You were an awful child.

Ruth: BUZZING! Aaaaaah! An awful BUZZING! And then –

Ruth and James: BLACK.

Silence.

James: Scratchy sheets. Squeaking of wheels. A trolley? You don't open your eyes.

Beat.

Ruth: Back home. You just know it. Just the feel of it. That dead, numb, wooden feeling.

James: And that – BUZZING. It's louder than it's ever been. Aaaaah!

Beat.

Ruth: Your eyes open and they're already open.

James: And you're alone.

Ruth: We are nowhere to be seen.

James: We've taken cover.

Ruth: Take cover! Things are swirling! Daddy's being pulled. Straight down! Into –

The lamp on the table and standing lamp by the armchair turn on. **James'** *tux lies in a heap on the floor and* **Ruth***'s dress lies strewn across the table.*

Silence.

James' *and* **Ruth***'s voices reveal their location.*

James: He hasn't got much longer. They said we should make the most of the time.

Ruth: That's nice.

James: You know they meant you too.

Ruth: That was the whole point in not going.

James: I don't think it's working.

Ruth: What?

James: Your strategy.

Ruth: Where do you think you'll go? You should go to the garden centre. That one with the parrot. That one where you got lost trying to find the parrot.

James: We could go to the cinema where you wet yourself.

Ruth: You could go to Mr Blobby's house. Is it still there?

James: They demolished it.

Silence.

Your birthday. Fancy dress. He made such an effort. Rented a Mr Blobby costume from that shop in the market. He could hardly see a thing. He kept bumping into things, almost dropped the cake. But he kept it on the whole day even when he went out for a cigarette. He almost set the bloody thing alight. And he did that to make you happy. To make you look at him differently. But you didn't.

Ruth: Please don't push this.

James: We can go to that shop. It's still there. Get that Mr Blobby costume. You were Tinkerbell, yeah? And I was Leonardo from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. We can get those I'm sure. We can do it all again. We can have those times again.

Ruth *crawls out from underneath the table in just her pants.*

Ruth: What is it with men? You think you have all the answers. But in reality, they're just holes. Great big deep holes that you can't get out of. Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan. Wall Street. HBOS. FACEBOOK! This house. Him. He's dug plenty in his lifetime. Literal and metaphorical ones and I'm in a grave that he dug especially for me. Can't get out.

James *appears from underneath the table. He's also just in his pants. They just stand looking at each other.*

What did you think this would do? Going back under the table. Living all that again. Those feelings. The horror. The fear of it all. The terror on my skin.

James: That all goes round in my head too.

Ruth: Not the same.

James: I'm not saying –

Ruth: He left you alone!

Long pause.

James: Put those moments together – those horrors, those fears, those terrors – put them all together and they still only make up a second of a lifetime. That shit is a minuscule part of our world. That's it.

Ruth: James. Please. / Please!

James: (*Takes her hand*) He'll be gone soon. Please understand that. And his entire existence will be that one solitary second because *you* won't forget it.

Ruth: (*Breaks away*) You're a retard! It's not just that! It's everything! Setting fire to the house, flooding the house, digging up the garden, killing Alan and well yeah, burying me –

James: / The lighthouse. Remember the lighthouse! You loved it there! With him!

Ruth: trying to swim the estuary with all his shitting clothes on, walking along the side of the motorway for miles and miles and miles and FUCKING MILES! Fine, he got better. But that – that THING – just stayed. You can't change that! Yeah, he was a shit father and a shit excuse for a man. But that's not why I hate him. I hate him because he made babies. He made me. And I don't want to be here. It's happening. The same person who pissed in his gene pool has pissed in mine and now that – THING – that THING he calls the WOLF like it's a fucking children's story, is making my life a horror story. HAUNTING. STALKING. RIPPING me apart. Until I'll just be lost to it.

He couldn't have explained it better.

In my darkness lies the wolf. In the wolf lies me.

Ruth *goes to exit*. **James** *grabs her by the arm and pulls her into him.*

James: You can't. We can't separate. That's the worst thing we can do.

The digging sound starts and increases in volume.

Ruth *prises* **James** *off as the sound makes her contort.* **James** *backs away.*

Alan *appears and passes her a hoodie and some joggers.* **Ruth** *dresses.*

Alan: Where will we go?

Ruth: Anywhere.

Ruth *and* **Alan** *run off.* **Lewis** *joins his son and they both stare longingly into the distance.*

James and Lewis: Goodbye.

Lewis: I don't think I ever said goodbye. To my friend. On that old wooden floor. Old, stained, wooden floor. In the wooden house. Blown apart by the wolf. Goodbye. I never got to say goodbye.

James *leaves. The floodlights bring light to* **Lewis** *who paces around, taking in what he views as new surroundings.*

Alan? Alan, you in? Alan?

Alan *breaks through the crowd. He's wearing a silk dressing gown.*

Alan: (*Calls off*) I'll be back. Yes, I promise. Ooo you naughty girl. (*Growls*)

Alan *turns to see* **Lewis**.

Ah, Lewis – hi.

Lewis: She sounds fun.

Alan: Oh yeah. Susan. Queen's Corgi.

Beat.

Lewis: Really?
Beat.

Alan: Really.

Lewis: Right. I'll – right – I'll leave you to it.

Lewis *goes to leave.*

Alan: No, no. What sort of a friend would I be if I just turned you away? Susan won't mind. She's all for loyalty.

Lewis: Sure?

Alan: Of course I'm sure. Take a seat.

Lewis: I think I'll just stand.

Long pause.

Nice place. Very – white.

Alan: Yeah. I have asked for someone to come in and splash some colour around. But apparently orange isn't protocol up here. So I'm stuck with the white. Well, at least it's not beige. (*Beat*) You want to sit.

Lewis: Do I?

Alan *sits* **Lewis** *down in a nearby chair. Awkward silence.*

Alan: I can go ask Susan for some tea. She's got some very nice china with Prince Andrew's face on it. Makes drinking tea a lot more amusing. But you didn't come here for tea, did you? Cards? Yes, a game of cards. Poker maybe?

Lewis: Do you ever think that everything you are is a lie? That it's all one big joke. One big setup. That there's someone tucked away somewhere watching you, bent over double from laughing their fucking guts out at your expense. Like all those hidden camera shows on TV. You know those? None of this seems real, Alan. None of it. It's just like one big bubble and I'm just waiting for it to –

Alan: Do you know what I learnt from you? Do you know what I learnt just from watching you?

Lewis: What's that?

Alan: Do not give in.

Lewis *just stares into the distance*.

And do you know what the last thing I saw was? Light. Do you know how terrifying that is? To see light and know that in the next second or two, it'll be dark. Seeing that light and knowing that the impending dark will be permanent.

Beat.

Don’t say you’re sorry. Please don’t. Please don’t be predictable. I hate predictable. I spent most of my life fetching a ball. Believe me, I hate predictable.

Lewis: Normal.

Alan: What’s that?

Lewis: You think I can ever get there?

Alan: No.

Lewis: Thanks.

Alan: You’re an oddball. Always will be. And if you really think that people are meant to be normal then you’re more messed up than I thought you were.

Lewis: I suppose it’s simple then.

Alan: Yep. Piss easy.

Lewis: OK. (*Pause*) OK.

Awkward silence.

Alan: Write it down. You’re supposed to be good at that aren’t you?

Alan *goes to the table and writes on a post-it note.*

Take daily dosage. (*Passes it to* **Lewis**) Remember. You must take your daily dosage.

Pause.

Lewis: How?
Alan *writes on another post-it note.*

Alan: Instructions. Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap.

Alan *pulls off the note and sticks it on* **Lewis***' forehead.*

Stick it on the fridge.

Lewis: What if –

Alan: (*Takes back the note and writes*) See note below for how to turn on tap. (*Sticks note back on* **Lewis***' forehead*) *You* can write that one.

Alan *goes to leave.*

Lewis: I –

Alan: You'll be fine. Just keep on going.

Lewis: Alan?

Alan: Take your daily dosage. Remember. Coming, lemoncake!

Alan *backs into the crowd.*

Lewis *removes the note from his forehead and reads.*

Lewis: Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap. (*Begins to mime the actions*) Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap. (*Beat*) Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap.

Ruth *joins* **Lewis.**

Ruth and Lewis: (**Ruth** *doesn't mime the action*) Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap. (**Ruth** *starts to mime, copying* **Lewis**) Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap.

Lewis *goes to sit down in the armchair. The lamp beside it is on.*

Ruth: Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with water. From tap. Bathroom cupboard. White pack with pink writing on top shelf. Open pack. Take one tablet. Place on tongue. Wash down with –

The floodlights go off leaving just the lamp on the table and the standing lamp by the armchair.

James *appears near* **Ruth***, grinning.*

James: Hello.

Ruth *doesn't turn to him.* **James** *walks towards her.*

Ruth: Don't hug me.

James *stops.*

James: It's nice to see you.

Ruth: I decided I needed my tablets.

James: Good. That's really good.

Ruth: Stop smiling.

James *stops smiling.*

How long has it been?

James: Three months.

Ruth: Where's dad?

James: He's dead.

Pause.

Ruth: You scatter him?

Pause.
Bury him?

James: Not quite.

Beat.

Ruth: Mince him?

James: No. No. I didn't do anything with him. I just left him. He's still in the chair.

Ruth: Oh. That's – different.

Pause.

Do you wash him?

James: Why would I wash him?

Ruth: He must be starting to smell.

James: Yeah he does. But he's dead. Washing him's not going to make any difference.

Ruth: I suppose not. (*Beat*) Cling film maybe.

James: What?

Ruth: Use cling film. It preserves things doesn't it? Perhaps it'll preserve dad.

James: I'm not wrapping our father up in cling film.
Ruth: What you been up to?

James: Just writing.

Ruth: How's that going?

James: I need your help. At the moment, I'm writing about the black.

Ruth: Oh yeah. I know it well. So black it's light. And it chokes up everything. Everything you've ever known. Her lips. (*Shudders*) Bitch.

James: And the stories. I've got Beddgelert.

Ruth: Oh yes. Prince Llewellyn and his faithful hound.

James: That's right.

Ruth: Didn't do him much good being faithful.

James: Three little pigs.

Ruth: Red Riding Hood.

James: Oh yeah.

Ruth: The girl who goes into the woods and is faced by the terrifying wolf!

James: It's strange how stories can become so real.

Ruth: Sometimes intentionally.

James: I think we should stop doing that now. It doesn't really feel the same. It's a bit –

Ruth: Creepy.

James: Exactly.

Ruth: It was the only story he told us where the wolves weren't evil.

James: 'Remember the Law of the Jungle, man cub!'

Ruth: (*Proudly*) NOW – this is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky.

Ruth and James: And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the wolf that shall break it must die!

They revel in their reminiscence.

Silence.

Ruth: Do you think they'll think it's all real?

James: What do you mean?

Ruth: The public. When they see the play. Has it got a name yet?

James: A few. I can't really decide. And I think they'll think it comes from somewhere. I'm sure there'll be parts where they'll relate.
Ruth: What did Miss Jones say? 'Stories are universal. Everyone can find a meaning in every one.'

James: All those stories. The reason I write. The reason you act. The reason for all of this. I think it's so incredible that those stories were part of his darkness. Despite how dark it got, the wolf remembered who dad was. He was still there – through our favourite stories. (*Beat*) I was thinking. I think we should stage it in an empty factory. I know just the place. Robert thinks it's a good idea. Tons of atmosphere. Immersive, he says. What do you think?

Ruth: Who's Robert?

James: He'll direct.

Ruth: They call it Intertextuality. Miss Jones taught me that too. When other stories find themselves in your own.

James: What about when they find themselves in real life?

Ruth: Not sure. Inevitability?

Silence.

James: I've got the last bit. This is how he wanted it to end.

James *takes a scrap of paper from his pocket.*

Pause.

James: Thank God –

Lewis: (*From the armchair,* **Alan** *sat at the side*) I killed the dog that day and not myself or you. We wolves have to look out for each other, drag each other up, get each other through.

Ruth: Pack. That's it. It should be called Pack.

End.

Two Degrees

(2013)

Characters:

Abie

Jonathan

Participants

Participants, along with **Abie***, congregate outside the space.*

They are all soon welcomed inside by **Jonathan** *who greets everyone with: 'Hi', 'How are you?', 'Please take a seat', 'Thanks for coming!'*

There is a circle of chairs, on one of which is a rucksack. Everyone sits down. **Jonathan** *eventually sits in the chair reserved by the rucksack, tucking it underneath the seat.*

Jonathan: Hello, everyone. Hi. I'd just like to say before we start that I have no reason to believe that you're not all lovely people. And there's no reason why I shouldn't continue to think that you're all lovely people. What you've done, or haven't done, or want to do is nothing to do with me. Because that's all been decided. The space has been set – a room, like this one, hired for the occasion. We've all been cast – a group of people who knew each other once. And this story is to remind us all of how we came to be here.

Jonathan *refers to his script.*

Beat.

You found me in your vulnerable stage. When your options were limited. When you had no real control over your actions, your lifestyle choices, those voices which told you to be something that you weren't. And you had no idea who I was – where I came from, what made me, directed me, what ways of the world my head had been filled with. But you trusted me. You had no choice, I suppose. You said 'Hi'. I said it back. And there we were on the top level of a multi-storey car park till past midnight just – spilling – everything out of our mouths. Our histories. Our short, incomplete histories of how we entered, how we conquered – at times – and how we fell just before that car park encounter from a – FUCK – from a definite height. And the cold, damp, hard and the harsh concrete floor that you could feel through your not-sure-how-old jeans was a fitting place for your backside to be, in fact, having fallen from the highest point of your apparently stable life. From a giddy height to a particularly solid, unmistakably definite ground.

We were there. We talked. (*Pause*) We laughed. (*Pause*) We shared.

So I know that you were scared once. And I know that you lost faith once. Twice? And I know that you were left once, or twice, in a shopping centre. OK, not left. That makes your parents sound neglectful. Maybe they were. But if they weren't then I'll just say – lost – yes, you got lost in a shopping centre. Because you wandered off. Or you were being naughty or stubborn and your parents just pretended to leave you to teach you a lesson. You told me all that and you went into other, more intimate details, like relationships and not-quite relationships, meaning one night stands and the like and your first meaningful relationship, the one you thought would be for – yes, well, that one. You told me all that. Along with everything you'd dedicated your life to, put passion into, money into, thought and work and time into. And you realised what you had become on that concrete floor.

And we held hands.

Pause.

And it was – that moment. Just that. That's all.

Long pause.

Abie: (*Referring to script*) It all happened so – no, sorry. What's another word for fast? (*Waits for a suggestion*) ... [Repeat response] Yes. Thank you. That's perfect. It all happened so [insert word]. And [insert word] somehow led me to a concrete floor in a concrete car park. We were all there. Some of you I'd known for ages. Others I'd just felt I'd known for ages. There were things we said that we shouldn't have. Sitting here now, I know that there were certain things I shouldn't have let slip out. But it all felt right at the time, all so honest and freeing and strangely trustworthy. This union of a broken – NO – breaking people. Before we knew it, we were in its grip.

And we went from the concrete floor in the concrete car park – (*Pause*) – to our everyday lives.

Having hit concrete bottom, a week later I'm in a shiny foyer in even shinier shoes and a suit which declares 'I AM THE DOG'S BOLLOCKS'. And for fifteen minutes I was spouting bullshit – truths, but managed truths to make me sound better. 'I was a lead navigator on my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award.' In truth, I followed the others and cried the whole time. But those kinds of embellishments work, don't they? And I got the job. And I'm still there. A couple of promotions have followed. Good wage. And those very unstable few months when I questioned everything, was angry at everything and everyone, the world, are just weeks amongst many. Weeks which I hide, for good reason, between the others so they're concealed and blurred and, at times, become forgotten.

Jonathan: Life for me drifted on. In the same way as it always had done. It all sort of drifted. I sort of drifted. I always felt that life should have been more than it seemed to be, so I was fighting – fighting ever since I can remember – to just find something better. Because life just, well, it seemed like a bit of a rip-off. I thought surely - surely there must be more to this.

Abie: We met at university, queuing up to enrol on the first day. Usual pleasantries. (*To a participant*) Hi. I'm Abie. You are? [Response] Hi. It's so great, isn't it? You going out tonight? Yeah! I'm going to get SOOOO PISSSSED!

Long, awkward pause.

Jonathan: No university for me. Waste of time. Don't get me wrong, I chased knowledge but on my own terms. So it was an informal, social education for me, meaning Wikipedia and YouTube and a cocktail of Class A drugs, prescription drugs, tranquilizers – anything to make life a bit more interesting and my mind a bit more ... thoughtful.

Abie: [Suggest name eg. Katie?] No? [Participant gives name]. Yes, that's right. [Insert name] was studying – (*provides a series of cards for participant to pick from*) ... [participant reads from card eg. European Politics]. *I* was studying [insert from card

eg. History]. Two degrees which have no impact on what you do with the rest of your life.

Our friendship just developed from there really. Clubbing. Coffee. A brief period of drunken fucking. More clubbing. More coffee. Getting to know everything about each other. We became in tune with each other's behaviour; how we'd react to certain things, how we were feeling just by our posture or the look on our faces. Yes. We were close.

Jonathan: (*Greets a participant*) Hi. You are? [Response] Hi. (*Beat*) I met [insert name] at a march against the cuts. It turned violent. That was my intention. I brought a baseball bat for the essential festivities and a hammer in my rucksack just in case it really kicked off. It was as if we were drawn together. Something in our minds just locked and attracted and pulled us in on each other (*Stares at participant, remembering*).

When the police arrived, I gave you the baseball bat and said to you 'just in case'. And you looked at me – that stare – as if sold on everything and repeated (*gives a card to participant*).

Participant: (*Reads*) Just in case.

Jonathan: I told you to defend yourself at all costs. I made you swear that you wouldn't give up your fight – your principles – not to get scared by their threats of force. But when they started to make their mark on the masses, I was sure to get out of there quickly. I may have started it but no way was I getting arrested for it. You didn't want to leave. (*To others*) [S]he was running on adrenaline and principle and an attempt at trying to impress me. But I knew [s]he'd be pulled apart in there so I grabbed her[/him] and dragged her[/him] with me. We found a café. And we talked and laughed and shared. And we both felt the attraction – me to her[/him] for her[/his] innocence tarnished by quiet rebellion and her[/him] to me for my violence and hate which [s]he found intriguing. And, I like to think – sexy.

Long, awkward pause.

You seemed to be looking for someone like me – someone who had a solution to all of your problems. Perhaps not problems. You know what I mean. I'm sure you can all think of a better word. (*To participant*) Now, I don't think you'd have done that, would you? [S]he wouldn't. You'd think better of it, getting involved with someone like me. But your youth encouraged you to be out there and indiscriminate – to the extreme. Adventurous – also to the extreme. Seduced, incensed, invigorated, empowered – triggered? Yes, I figured – until protest was – all you were.

Abie: Our lives seemed sorted. Stable. Me and [insert name of participant]. Comfortable. Familiar. But then we graduated. And those degrees – yes, you've got it, they really did have no impact. Because awaiting us was nothing. Absolutely nothing. And apart from the clubbing and coffee and brief period of drunken fucking, we'd both worked shitting hard for those bits of paper. For that nothing. And for all that – nine months! Or was it ten? Nine months of –

We both refused to move back home. Or was the truth that our parents refused to have us back? So it was a squat. The dole. Not even a retail job, because we were 'over-qualified' apparently. I spent my time sleeping and trudging the streets and searching for jobs. And I was descending into the dark mentality which landed me – there. (*Beat*) I regret it. I do. (*Pause*) I know it doesn't excuse my actions, but I wasn't myself.

Abie *addresses another participant*.

You, yes, *you* always got up early. (*To everyone*) [S]he volunteered at an arts centre in the day and went to her[/his] meetings in the evenings. [S]he'd come back each night and rave about how many new people had joined. You kept on at us, at everyone in that place, that we should think the same way, join the fight, make our voice so loud that it would be impossible to ignore! I think that's what eventually attracted me. I was tired of being ignored. So we went from the concrete floor of the concrete car park and – and then, like nothing had happened, we returned to our everyday lives.

Jonathan: I hid behind a tree and watched them mourn him. I watched them lower him into the ground. I wondered what he looked like in there. I wondered whether they'd made him look any better than he did when we left him.

Abie: We returned to what we robbed him of. We returned to our everyday lives. [Name of participant]'s everyday life consists of an everyday morning which includes an everyday breakfast. [Name of participant]'s everyday breakfast consists of – ? [Participant answers]. And then after [name of participant]'s everyday breakfast, [name of participant] sits in a chair between four rather uninspiring walls and – contemplates. And the short but intimidating question frequently appears in his[/her] mind –

Card to participant.

Participant: WHY?

Abie: And you're no different to [name of participant].

Because you all still see it. You all know it's an image that will never go away.

Your mind reconfigures it in alarming detail in front of your very eyes. Like refresh. You leave the concrete floor of the concrete car park and – and he asks –

Jonathan: Have you got it?

Provide a card to a participant.

Participant: Yes.

And another card to another participant.

Participant: It's in the rucksack.

Abie: We all know why we went that night. We all had our reasons.

Abie *takes a pile of cards and reads from the one on top.*

Abie: (*Reads from her card*) I wanted what I thought I was owed.

The participants are then encouraged to each read from a card which **Abie** *passes to them.*

Participant 1: I wanted to be a part of something.

Participant 2: I wanted someone to listen to me.

Participant 3: I wanted to stand up for what I believed in.

Participant 4: I wanted to make a statement.

Participant 5: I wanted the thrill.

Participant 6: I wanted to spread the message.

Participant 7: I wanted to see what it was all about.

Participant 8: I wanted to fit in.

Participant 9: I wanted to be seen as a human being.

Participant 10: I wanted a purpose.

Participant 11: I wanted to help.

Participant 12: I wanted to show that I wasn't scared.

Jonathan: (*Reads from his card*) Why not?

Abie: (*Referring to a participant*) [S]he rang me yesterday. (*To chosen participant*) Don't look so surprised. You knew this was coming. Her[/his] quiet, shaking voice. And the greeting – 'Hi. Its -' (*Hints for participant's name*). [Insert name] rang because [s]he was nervous about today. More than nervous. [S]he knew this day was coming. [S]he knew [s]he had to come. Her[/his] newly obtained conscience wouldn't let her/[him] ignore it. (*Beat*) We caught up. Confided in each other. Encouraged each other that this was right. Coming here. To finish the way we started. Chairs now instead of a concrete floor which reflects how we've all progressed in life. Better clothes too. Fatter wallets. And [s]he told me what [s]he's afraid to tell you. (*To participant*) They deserve to know.

Beat.

[S]he's a Chief Exec. Chief Exec of a National Marketing Agency. And as we're on that topic, I'm a business analyst. Yes. We've come so far. Haven't we?

Jonathan: (*To all*) Don't give me that look. I know that look. I've seen it too many times. I *hate* that look. I know what it says. You still don't think it was your fault. There's guilt. Shame. There's the fear of it catching up with you. But you can't help but still believe that your responsibility was limited.

Abie *passes a card to another participant.*

Participant: He shouldn't have been there.

Another card to another participant.

Participant: He was an unexpected occurrence.

And another.

Participant: A necessary casualty.

Abie: (*To the 'Chief Exec' participant*) You cried that night. I heard you. In the toilet during our meal. You'd shocked the shit out of yourself – at what you'd become. I know. Sick. Horrified – at what you'd suddenly, unknowingly become. I couldn't bear it. I couldn't even comfort you. I don't know whether that was for me or for you. But I left. And that was it. Until now. Do you know? I thought as I left your flat – I remember as clear as day – that you'd either go one way or another. That night would either spur you on even more or make you change direction. Now I know what you did. I'm not sure whether that pleases me or not. Whether your change in direction and massive salary makes me happy for you or makes me sick to my stomach. I suppose you still cry. I suppose you're still so fucking haunted. And, yes, that makes me feel better – slightly.

Jonathan: You were surprised at how much mess it made. I wasn't. Hammer – skull – a great big fucking mess.

Abie: I don't know how we managed it. We just managed to fade into the masses. Not many people manage that. But it hasn't made for a comfortable life – always thinking about it, wondering when will be the time. (*Pause*) How do you all feel? No. Don't answer that. I'd rather not know. We all wanted it, in some way or another. You all said it before – why you came. We all had reasons. OK. Maybe some of us didn't have a total grip on what we were getting into – got gripped ourselves and got caught up with it, but we all knew what we were doing. We were – yes – (*to relevant participant*) what did you say again? Making a statement? Yes. And that definitely made a statement. You definitely achieved your goal. All we wanted was a fire. Set the place alight. Draw attention. No one hurt. But we caused a storm. That night created a whole week of terror. Attacks on every corner. Shops ransacked. People persecuted. And we just observed as the country imploded. And that's had a legacy. We created a legacy.

Jonathan: I'm pleased you're all here. Thank you ... for coming. It's funny how different you all are now. You've gone from being so confident, so set and focused, to now being so scared and remorseful. The mention of 'Police' wouldn't shake you at all back then, but it's funny how all it took were those words – and you were here like a shot. The media would love this! Just imagine. A full page spread. 'The truth of the October violence'. All those years ago. It would be like fucking Christmas, especially in this

culture of erasing the past. I saw something the other day. I was struck by how appropriate it was. It was exactly what I was thinking. I like it when that happens, don't you? It was a placard on the side of the road: 'In the 21st Century, deleting history has become more important than making it'. *You* see, you must do, the way they're ripping whole swathes from what we knew or even what we didn't know. They're lying to themselves about what this country was. What it promoted. What it created. What it did to people. And they're abandoning all responsibility!

Pause.

Abie: He's got it all planned.

Jonathan: It's the only way. It's the only way this can end. I made the call.

Jonathan *gets up but stops short of leaving.*

Abie: But can we really believe that?

Jonathan: Exactly. Should you believe a word that comes out of my mouth? After all, you found me in your vulnerable stage. When your options were limited. When you had no real control over your actions, your lifestyle choices, those voices which told you to be something that you weren't. And you had no idea who I was – where I came from, what made me, directed me, what ways of the world my head had been filled with. But you trusted me. You had no choice, I suppose. You said 'Hi'. I said it back.

And we talked. (*Pause*) We laughed. (*Pause*) We shared.

But *I* didn't actually tell you that much. Nothing personal. Nothing deep. It seemed as if I did. But – no. I can talk for Britain. You know that by now. But most of it is repetitious, rambling and irrelevant shit that gives an impression of who I am but, actually, when written down on paper and analysed line for line, there's not much there at all. And that's how I drew you in. That's how I made you tell me everything whilst keeping everything about myself to – myself.

And we held hands.

Pause.

And it was – that moment. Just that. That's all.

We deserve what's owed to us. (*To* **Abie**) Right?

Jonathan *grabs the rucksack and leaves.*

A recording of the earlier card readings plays, followed by a recording of –

Participant (Rec): Don't worry. I've got it.

Participant (Rec): It's in the rucksack.

Participant (Rec): Just in case. *(Loop 3 times)*

Abie *stands to leave.*

Abie: Hello everyone. Hi. I'd just like to say before we end that what happened here had already been decided. So despite what you've done, or haven't done, or – you get the picture – despite all that, I have no reason to believe that you're not all lovely people. But more importantly, despite what happened here, you're all lovely people because you all know *that* yourselves.

Abie *takes the hammer from her handbag, places it in the centre of the circle and, without acknowledging anyone, leaves.*

Gumption

(2014)

Performed by the playwright (or as the playwright)

The playwright stands near a table with the following items assembled: this script, a bottle of water, a tub of pens and a copy of 'The Guardian' newspaper (with the front page blanked out).

Playwright: I'm going to say – welcome. I know it's quite formal. Sounds – feels a bit – awkward. But, please, bear with me.

Beat.

We're here. For the next [insert running time]. So if we – can we – sync our watches? We'll go by mine if that's OK. [Insert exact time]. Right. So in [insert running time], it should be [insert approximate finishing time]. You can look back at the end and check that I've run on time. If you feel compelled to look at your watch before then, feel free to do so. Don't worry, I won't take it personally. (*Beat*) I'll try not to take it personally.

Right.

Clears throat and takes a swig of water from the bottle.

Pause.

'Welcome.' (*Beat*) Amanda says to Philip as they shake hands – a mixture of a strong and limp handshake. I'll let you imagine that. Try it out if you'd like. (*Long pause*) Welcome to Amanda's office - white, mostly - with artwork on the walls – black and white lines with splashes of colour here and there. (*Beat*) 'Welcome.' (*Beat*) Amanda and Philip, both smartly, darkly suited, sit opposite each other, a large chrome and glass desk between them – less of a desk, more of a sculpture – or better still – oh yes, this is better, much better – STATEMENT.

Beat.

'How do you plead?'

Long pause. **Playwright** *takes in the audience.*

We're sat here – in a living room, lamp-lit, night, (*looks at watch and pauses to encourage everyone to look at theirs*), this time, Carla sits on a sofa, tucked up, knees to her chest, in a corner of one of the sofa's – two – corners. She has her phone in one hand and the other follows its index finger across the screen. Each photo reminds her, as photos tend to. And every swipe, that young woman – that oh so familiar young woman's disposition gets brighter and brighter, especially as Daniel becomes a common feature at her side and Carla's smile grows wider as a tear travels further down her face followed by another and another and – another?

Beat.

A man. Yes, that's him. A man stands on a box in a city street. I haven't given him a name because, for me, I don't see him having one – disclosing one. Not right now. But you can if you want. But please do make it an interesting one. So this man — with or without a name — he blasts:

'We must not allow them to silence our thoughts, our opinions. We can think differently. We do not need to conform. There is an idea forming. A mass idea. It is dangerous! We must resist it at all costs. Just because we think differently does not mean we are wrong, should not mean we should be silenced and definitely must not result in segregation or demonization or alienation.'

He blasts more - which possibly includes some more 'ations' but – I haven't written that bit.

Philip has taken an immediate dislike to Amanda. Just the way she said 'Welcome', over-pronouncing the 'WEL' with an arcing sound caused intense irritation all through his flesh and, in that moment, Philip's urge was to drop his hand from Amanda's and use the other to slap her across the face. He didn't. But he is still thinking about it, looping the silent, moving image over and over in his mind.

And this is now in your mind too. That hard imagined slap across Amanda's hardened face. He, Philip, imagines this. But you can do it for real if you'd prefer. Place yourself there in his fifteen pound Shoe Zone brogues. Go ahead. Hit her.

Amanda nods as Philip's spherical, cratered face becomes background for the series of pencil-sketched shapes which she etches in front of her eyes. 'God, this man is fucking boring', she thinks. At least, she thinks it's just a thought, until she becomes aware of Philip's increasingly bewildered expression beneath the shapes and then of herself in the reflection in Philip's glasses. And her mouth is moving. Horrifyingly. Her eyes widen in her reflection as she realises that she can't stop – her mouth is moving – 'AAH' – along with the – 'HELP ME' – words forming in her head. (*Beat*) 'Shit!' She does actually think this – silently. 'Shit!'

'FUCKTARD!' The man who you know better than I do takes the insult on board – well, at least he thinks it's an insult. He's never heard fucktard before. Retard, yes. He's used that plenty of times. Fuckwit, heard that. But never the combination of the two. FUCKTARD! He blasts the word into an echo in his head, thinking on it, without it affecting him much, if at all. The man's thought process might give the impression that he's stopped ranting, but he hasn't. Yes, I've written this bit:

'- aries. Of course there must be boundaries. But I think – don't you all think – that this has gone too far? There will be a backlash – a backlash to this censored free speech – free thought even – there will be a – '

Hi. (*Long pause*) We're in a theatre. We're all alive. (*Beat*) I hope so.

And now - we're on a train. One of those fifty billion, high-speed ones. Welcome to the [insert exact time] service to London Euston. (*Beat*) Yes, I'm setting this up for you. It's SO obvious, isn't it? You could almost write it yourself. A train!

Beat.

It's – (*looks at watch*) – [insert time]. 'You're watching Breakfast with Naga Munchetty and Charlie Stayt'. Now these aren't the people or even the programme you're thinking

of. In fact, by the time this happens, Charlie has long been retired and presents a banal daytime quiz show on TV. Naga is playing golf - professionally. Naga and Charlie and Breakfast, in this case, are – representational. *You* can input whatever names you like. Or - leave them the same?

If it's OK though, if Carla – she's about to re-appear – if Carla could remain as Carla, I'd really appreciate that. Thanks. (*Beat*) Carla sits in carriage B. She has two bulging ring binders and her phone on the table – stacked. She's been looking out of the window, sky and fields and the odd concrete tunnel flashing by, and back at her multi-coloured tower ever since she got on. But now she really has to work. Yes. And thankfully, carriage B is the quiet carriage so - a foghorn voice, destructive, inconsiderate to peace, a man's – 'obviously', she thinks – here it is –

'I CAN'T STAND WORKING CLASS PEOPLE!'

He doesn't actually say this. I now know that. Although at first I think he's a twat and that he possibly deserves it. But then I do my research. Unlike the guy who posts his thoughts onto Twitter and gets a suspended sentence, an eight-hundred pound fine and a community service order. I think he's a twat but do I really think he deserves all that? But then there's another celebrity suicide - the latest - and there's the predictable battle in my head between 'kill all the keyboard warrior Piers Morgans' and 'be kind to each other', 'be kind to each other', 'no matter your opinions or views of each other, just be kind to one another.' (*Beat*) My research concludes that Daniel does say something about working class people because he's having one of those controversial conversations which people have, although unwise, in public spaces. Everyone in carriage B, including Carla, interprets his remark negatively but actually, it was meant to be positive.

The cork is released from the bottle and the waiter pours an inch into Philip's glass. Philip tests the wine. He feels pretentious doing this but he knows it's the done thing so he goes through the motions. He says it's fine because it tastes fine to his indiscriminatory, unknowledgeable taste buds. And the waiter proceeds to fill the rest of Philip's glass and then Amanda's. Amanda edges out a hand to suggest, 'that's

enough. I don't want to lose control', and the waiter places the bottle on the table and scuttles off.

'So, yes, what was I saying?'

The waiter had arrived just as Amanda was apologising for the umpteenth time.

'It's fine.'

Philip still finds the embarrassing moment amusing so he's – laughing.

'I was shocked, yeah. Didn't see that coming. But really funny. I wasn't offended. Actually, if I'm honest. Can I be honest? I really disliked you before you said that.'

'Really?' Amanda feigns shock but she's used to people not liking her. 'Well aren't I glad I told you how fucking boring you are!'

They drink and laugh HYSTERICALLY and COARSELY, so much so that the waiter asks them politely to keep it down, and they drink and continue drinking. Between their laughter, Philip finds a gap to plug with 'Thank you. I'm so glad this happened tonight.' Amanda just grins, caught up in the whole affair, and raises her glass, still laughing – 'CHEERS!'

Beat.

Whenever I hear the name Chloe, I think young – teenager. Chloe rides the escalator on the right, as is social protocol, the running-late, the rushed and the impatient fleeing via the left. Earphones plugged in, she's listening to Lily Allen's classic, 'Fuck You'. Whenever she's pummelled and jostled by the passing swarm, she sings along with the *inspirational* lyrics in her head – 'Fuck you. Fuck you very, very much.' (*Beat*) It makes her feel instantly better! The spritely, foul-mouthed, high-pitched anthem accompanies her through the ticket barrier, across the HIVE of a ticket hall and up the steps towards LIGHT and the increasing onslaught of a man's rant. Chloe can't totally make out what he's saying but she knows he's an idiot for just being there, so as the

soles of her (*looks down at shoes*) – Converse? – meet the pavement, she conjures up an insult there and then – 'cause she's creative – taking the fuck from Lily Allen and marrying it with the first teenage insult she can think of. I'll say retard. But there are others. Mong. Div. Spaz, perhaps. Although I'm inclined to say that fuckmong, fuckdiv and fuckspaz don't really roll off the tongue – as much. But your choice. (*Beat*) 'FUCKTARD!' The creative insult rolls off Chloe's tongue quite nicely as she intercepts the rush hour crowds.

Daniel's thigh buzzes – vibrates. Well, his phone buzzes – vibrates – which then makes the skin on his thigh buzz – vibrate – I just want to make it clear – too. His friend, nameless again but doesn't have to be, stops mid-conversation and lets Daniel respond to his phone. It's a text.

'Keep your voice down. You sound like a dick.'

Daniel turns to be met with her disapproving face. Familiar. He turns a pale shade of red and looks around for stares but people are no longer looking - although they may still be thinking all sorts of things about him. And he knows this so his stomach reacts – CHURNS – as he lowers himself back into his seat. His friend places a hand on his shoulder to say 'Don't worry. You won't see these people again.'

Eyes closed but awake, Philip sits in the back of a taxi. He's not pretending to be asleep. The driver knows he's not pretending. The driver knows Philip's awake. And, as taxi drivers do, he's talking. I don't want to seem too stereotypical but I'm sure you'll know what I mean when I say that he's talking about the things that taxi drivers talk about. You know those things. But Philip doesn't respond. He doesn't want to respond. He doesn't feel obliged to respond. For once, all obligation and any ounce of effort has left him. And he just sits, head resting on the head rest, eyes closed but awake and just – DOESN'T.

The autocue rolls. VIOLENCE. The ethics of pet pigs. ATTACK. Paul O'Grady's latest instalment of his autobiography – THE FIFTEENTH! GOD! (*Beat*) No, really, a report about God – a man who thinks he's God and owns a fish and chip shop in Stoke-on-Trent. DEAD: three. WOUNDED: two-hundred. Two brothers gunned down by police

in a sleepy suburban street. No, it's not the pigs that have ethics, the pigs' ethics, no, it's about the ethics of keeping pet pigs. (*Beat*) The error in grammatical structure is the cause of some light relief between Naga and Charlie on the sofa. 'EVERYONE DEAD!' an American Baptist preacher warns. But we're all still alive! Though Charlie's not sure whether he wants to be. This is dire. It all – the words – it all means so little. Reduced to – Arial? Or something. 'Don't worry. You won't see these people again': Daniel's friend being interviewed on the sofa by Naga about – about – it RIPS at him but he PUSHES through –

He realises – realises – it's slow – there's something not quite right. Daniel's DROOPING. CLENCHING. GRIMACING. More than just a reaction to his embarrassment.

And Daniel's friend looks at Naga, and he can't help thinking that that abuse she gets online — that it might just be — some of it — a little - not justified — he knows what he means — accurate maybe — there's just something — he can't put his finger on it —

He has no idea how this happened. He looks around, startled, to try and pinpoint the cause. Not that he could do anything. A small crowd begins to gather in the aisle. Some are trying to help – an off-duty nurse, a couple of first-aiders, a few who'll do anything they think will assist. There are others with their phones, taking photos and posting them onto – 'TWITTER' —

— Naga says — and there are her eyes — and in that — 'TWITTER' — there's a CONNECTION —

Pause.

Carla is buried in paperwork. She's aware of some commotion further down the carriage but she refuses to engage with anything but the TEXT.

You want to do something. Go ahead. Make him OK. I want that too.

A word alerts her. One word. The only word that Daniel's friend can find but a perfectly sufficient word.

You must know though that we don't. You can - but we don't. We don't intervene. Because we're not in that carriage – B – sorry. But PLACE yourself in that carriage - BE - there - and you CAN - but we don't - sorry - we're not on that train - [insert previous train time] service to London Euston. High speed. Ninety billion. Won't be completed till - FUCK KNOWS WHEN –

'CARLA.'

No. We're here.

Long pause.

Amanda lives in flat fifty-one. Ade in flat fifty-two. So they live opposite each other. Or next door to each other. Amanda's just got in. Ade could hear her heels pad along the carpet from the lift, her rummaging in her bag for her keys, the jangle of her keys, her key in the lock, the door open, her heels clip on wooden floor and the door – CLICK – into place. He's been waiting at his door, pressed up against it, for exactly five minutes. He knows. It's now [insert exact time]. It's time. He lets himself, very quietly, particularly, out of his apartment, makes the few steps to Amanda's apartment, fifty-one, and lets himself in.

I see the article. The picture and the tagline. There are many articles. But this one gains more of my attention.

Holds up a copy of 'The Guardian', the main front page article blanked out.

'This is what this world is coming to!' Your man's hand grips this newspaper. His speech continues apace. We'll cut back in here – 'You say something, you air an opinion, you pledge allegiance, stand up for something you believe in and you get PUNISHED for it – SACKED, IMPRISONED, KILLED - ROBBED of your LIFE!

TRAVESTY! Absolute TRAVESTY! The world's gone MAD! We must get a grip of it, and of ourselves, before it's TOO LATE!'

'I'm sorry' are the words amongst Amanda's sombre tone. Carla forces an appreciative smile as she looks through Amanda to a splash of colour on the wall. Her smile paused for face value, Carla sinks into the colour – succumbs to its tempting depths – and with her fall, her response forms, scratching itself out on the back of her skull: 'thanks, but you say that every day'.

Aging skin, familiar, almost sensitive to cold china, grips each messied plate and introduces it to the dishwasher. This shouldn't be Charlie's job. Of course it's not his job. But he finds it therapeutic – GROUNDING. It makes him feel as if he's a real person. He rarely feels like a real person. He feels above it all – immune to it all. He doesn't like that. So he's filling the dishwash – eerrrrrrrrr –

Ade is thrusting enthusiastically from behind and those sounds you make – you know – noises, swear words, anything else that reflects the thrill – are now coming out of their mouths. They're trying desperately to keep it quiet but – not possible – your sounds – now their sounds – filling the space, seeping through the thin walls, creeping through the gap beneath Chloe's bedroom door – 'Fuck you. Fuck you very, very much' – Chloe confides in Lily Allen, whilst her mother – and this would be Chloe's exact choice of word – HOWLS next door.

He steps down from his box. You know who it is. His crowd has gone now, dispersed into the everyday. He felt empowered as he was sending out his message. ALIVE. He doesn't feel so alive anymore. He can't say he has faith in anything he's just said. He does feel those things but he looks around, now on solid, humbling ground, glimpsing face after face after face and he thinks, 'it's just all so complicated. This world has become too complicated. And it's my fault. It's our fault. It's - '. He steps into the crowds.

Still merry, Philip collapses into his sofa. He revels in the spontaneity of the evening. It couldn't have worked out better, wrapping up in style. He takes the blade, purposefully positioned on the side table since the morning and without even a

hesitation, but with a big grin on his face, runs it round each of his wrists. Figure of eight. Just runs it gently around his wrists.

Ade pulls out a tissue. Or - he takes 'The Guardian' newspaper protruding from Amanda's handbag and wipes himself in the front page. (*Beat*) Nice image. (*Beat*) He approaches the kitchen table, the black text getting clearer with every step. There's a thud in his stomach, the erratic rhythm radiating through his body, the bass almost breaking out of his flesh. He picks up the chrome fountain pen, his wife's. He signs the document in the thick black ink, steps back and stares at the scrawl. He thinks about what he never said, what he shouldn't have said and what he definitely should have said. But as he puts the top back on the pen – his EX-wife's – he decides to let it all go. He turns. She's there, now fully-clothed. Smart. Never casual. She smiles, which Ade knows after ten years of marriage means 'thanks but now bugger off'.

'How do you plead?' (*Beat*) Carla watches him, numbed, expressionless, and raises her arm. This might not be allowed but she does not care. She raises her arm, paper gripped in clammy hand, and there on the front page, the photo of her dying fiancé provided by some – twitterer - tweeter - TWIT? And she hopes some telepathic link magics from somewhere and the unfamiliar face that has become too familiar over the past months hears and responds with the word she oh so hopes for.

Ade's wig feels like NEEDLES and he can't take much more. 'Can this guy just plead guilty so I can get out of here? Surely he — and his barrister — wouldn't be stupid enough to put this in the hands of a jury.' Ade has phased out for a second but he suddenly remembers that 'plead' was uttered – he hears it over in his head like a jolt – and he tunes back in, his eyes fixing upon, like sniper lazar, the front page of 'The Guardian' newspaper and the image of his — OH SHIT — it's in his head – and the urgent words – DILUTING. He tries desperately to swat the stubborn image out. He fails. And he feels his redness rising. His wig feels like – NAILS. 'GUILTY.' 'Thank FUCK for that!' Ade adjourns to consider the sentence.

Takes a tissue from his pocket and wipes the sweat away.

Beat.

Yes, I know there was the tissue and you can by all means go with that. (*Beat*) But then that Ade bit will never have happened - or not have happened in the same way. And the Guardian newspaper is important because I've written this bit about -

Michael Billington – nice chap, not that I've ever met him - slimmer chance now that he's retired – SELFISH PRICK - he mucked up this whole bit – I had to rewrite it. But I was hoping when I first wrote this bit - first draft - that having - complimented - him, he'd give this show a positive review. If he saw it. If I got it to the right places. And if that was the case, then he might have been sitting somewhere amongst you. (*To an audience member*) Maybe even exactly where *you're* sat. (*To the side*) And then that's nice for *you*, sitting next to Michael Billington - from the Guardian. Wow! And you tell him he has nice shoes. Because you've been looking at his shoes. Because you know Michael Billington is sat next to you and you don't know where else to look but down so, now, you have established a very intricate opinion of his shoes. And if he hadn't fucking retired, all *I* would have been thinking about would have been that two star review he gave 'The Merchant of Venice' at the RSC and I'd have been - nervous. Sweating. Crap. Why did I have to mention Michael Billington? Oh yes.

Michael Billington has probably been called a lot of things during his days of reviewing, but he's been called one thing in particular by one person in particular in the online comments to his review of The Merchant of Venice at the RSC. The comment that you'll find when you - Bing – it – (*beat*) who am I kidding? – GOOGLE - it, labels his review 'silly and shallow' - which is immediately met with outrage from another. Indeed, the word 'abusive' *is* mentioned. And this shocks the owner of the comment because he just said what he felt in a really passionate way because he liked the show and genuinely thought Michael Billington was being unfair when he called it 'poorly conceived and drably spoken'. Anyway, the fingers responsible for that comment are attached to the usual body parts and more importantly a mind with a conscience and that conscience spirals. And Michael Billington soon receives an email. He might still have it in his inbox. It's an email from the guy in question apologising profusely for the personal comment. According to a follow-up comment, Michael Billington replies and graciously accepts. I wonder why he graciously accepts. I like to think it's because he - really doesn't give a fuck.

I bumped into the guy in question – the one with the fingers and the conscience – on my way, so it's unsurprising really that this is now my stream of consciousness as I stand in a white room examining a white line merging with a black line which collides with a splash of - ORANGE.

Beat.

'You're watching Breakfast. And here's a reminder of the main headlines' – rolling from the screen – 'Chloe Davenport MP, a passionate campaigner for the rights of refugees and migrants, was stabbed yesterday as she left her home' – rolling from Charlie's tongue and out into the early morning which seems more real, more important, more – visceral – than any other time of day.

Lights down. Applause? Lights up.

The applause diminishes gradually until silence. Chloe is at the lectern, her papers organised meticulously just the way her mother suggested. 'Right. This is it', are Chloe's driving thoughts before –

- Look inside. Look inside your tiny mind. Now look a bit harder. 'Cause we're so uninspired, so sick and tired of the hatred you harbour.
- So you say it's not okay to be gay. Well I think you're just evil. You're just some racist who can't tie my laces.

She's not too sure about this line. But she continues anyway. UNFAZED. CONFIDENT.

- Your point of view is medieval.
- Do you, do you really enjoy living a life that's so hateful? 'Cause there's a hole where your soul should be. You're losing control of it and it's really distasteful.
- You say, you think we need to go to war. Well you're already in one. 'Cause it's people like you who need to get slew. No one wants your opinion.

The shoal of faces rises and swells towards her and the eyes flick upwards at the three words on the screen: YOUTH. CRIME. COMMISSIONER. Some aren't convinced by the speech. Others CONNECT and can envision her future political career. The applause starts up again, her mother creating the rhythm, a beaming smile from ear to ear. Chloe shifts her gaze to discover confused and disapproving faces, clearer than the others. But, completely confident in her inaugural speech, she thinks, 'Well at least I didn't use the chorus.'

The guy who killed Daniel – do you think he deserves a name? He's counting down the days to his parole board. I leave him on day nine – for a badly paid commission from a theatre company somewhere in the Midlands. I urge him to keep in touch. I kind of know he won't. When I meet him, drawn together by the impression of the same man, he's just a boy driven by bitterness and brokenness and misplaced, under-class arrogance. As a man, I'm not sure he's any less bitter or broken and, although quiet, the arrogance remains in his stance, in his voice, in his face. As the days go by and the countdown from NINE completes, I fear what he may still be capable of. But what I fear more is the world that made him.

On the train to my first meeting with a theatre company somewhere in the Midlands — carriage B — I start to write. The idea has been simmering and spitting and is ready to – SPLURGE – US – what we do, what we say, how we interact, our perceptions of each other, our impact. Initially, it seems quite a simple idea but the more we are allowed to think about it, the more complicated - the more NECESSARY - it becomes.

Long pause.

Hi. We're here. In a theatre. Together. Welcome. (*Beat*) Take a look around. Go ahead. That's it. And try your best not to avoid eye contact. Let's have some time to feel welcome – to be together.

Thanks! That was nice.

Picks up the script from the table.

Now, you may have noticed that I have this here. It's here because I want to show you what you're in. I want to show you what you're part of, from both being a part of it and not being a part of it. If that makes sense.

So, I'm going to pass this around. (*Rips off the title page and offers up the rest of the script*) Can you pass this around? And take a page for yourself. Pass it round and rip a page from it and you can keep that. Aren't you lucky? And can some people rip their page in half or quarters and share those around? There may not be enough otherwise. Thanks. Make sure everyone has a piece. You all deserve to be included in this.

And now write on it. Go ahead! Here are some pens. (*Passes round some pens*) Write down what you've contributed or feel you've contributed. Note down what you've changed, what you've omitted, what you've added.

Great! Thanks so much! (*Beat*) This is nice. Actually, I'd really like to continue this relationship. So why don't you write your email address somewhere on your piece of paper and leave it somewhere when you go and I'll email you that page – that page you've just ripped – in electronic form. And I might even add an extra message. Or I can ring you! Yeah! You can write your number down if you want and I can ring you! And then I can read your piece of paper to you!

So, yes, do that. Email. Number. Great! But just so we're on the same – page – I can't promise I'll do what I've said. I'm yet to write that part, you see. Who knows what I'll think of! But, please, do give me the opportunity. Give yourself the opportunity.

Oh, and why don't you before we go – because I'm generous – why don't you give your man one last scene? Give him one last burst of thought and action. Do it for you, for him, for me – you're welcome.

Beat.

And I'll add one last scene too.

Beat.

Amanda’s gone.

Starts ripping up the front page in a precise manner, letting the pieces drop to the floor, one by one, until only the piece with the title remains.

She hasn’t died. She’s not missing. She’s just gone. Yes, I can do that. But I *can’t* give you the reasons or where it factors in the narrative timeline. I haven’t thought of any of that. What I *have* thought of is her last word – her very last word – the only thing she utters before vanishing. I can’t tell you what comes before, or after, what sentence this word exists, who it’s spoken to or what relevance it has, because I haven’t written that. But just the one word –

Beat.

Scrunches up the bit of paper, tosses it aside and leaves.

Chapter Three – Dramaturgy of ‘ingress’

Introduction

Having reviewed literature that addresses audience participation in a theatre context, it is now crucial to review playtexts and performance texts which operate in an ingressive manner. To reiterate, I define ‘ingress’ in this situation as relating to ‘entry’, ‘access’ or ‘means of entry’ and, in relation to a playtext, is best described as it would be in the case of water/liquid ingress. When defining new terminology in the introduction, it was established that the ingress of a liquid occurs when the barrier that usually prevents its entry is structurally undermined. This ingress is characterised by a seepage or leakage. As is explained in the literature review, this terminology can replace the term ‘immersive’ if or when, as I have suggested, ‘immersive’ no longer serves the purpose of describing an audience member’s experience of being involved or participating within a performance. I have referenced White’s and Alston’s respective views that ‘immersive’ has become a too generously-used term to describe participatory or interactive work, and that it is difficult to completely define as its meaning depends on each audience member’s personal experience of the performance. Furthermore, immersive theatre has been defined by Machon as not being text-driven and, rather, involving a number of mediums, a viewpoint supported by Lehmann when addressing most postdramatic practice. Thus, the use of the term ‘immersive’ to describe playtexts that attempt to involve audiences is untenable. Indeed, the reason immersive practices employ a number of interdisciplinary artistic mediums is to, as Machon states, create an environment of interest and exploration which encourages audiences to “roam free, take risks, be adventurous” (Machon, 2013: 28), not to be focused on processing a narrative throughline.

Playwriting practices that are visceral and experiential for audiences have already been identified within the theories of (syn)aesthetics and the postdramatic: those of Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane, Naomi Wallace and Martin Crimp. As articulated in the literature review, the writerly approaches to the visceral-verbal playtexts Machon describes are diverse and, in many cases, depend on the inclusion of other mediums to create the overall effect (Machon, 2013). Crimp’s fragmented and multilayered

language described by Lehmann when addressing writing styles that can be considered postdramatic, connects cerebrally and sensorially with audiences through its, as Vicky Angelaki describes, “rich [...] textual, visual and visceral nuances” (Angelaki, 2012: 1). Despite the achievements of these playtexts, the focus of this thesis favours examples of work that, similarly to my practical approach, seek to involve audience members physically within the performance as well as encouraging their cerebral, sensorial and imaginative interaction with the narrative. The idea of a linguistic brutality or viscerality, as achieved in the aforementioned playtexts and supported by Artaud and Barker, will remain an element of my developing research but will be explored in a different theatrical context.

The texts I have chosen to investigate reveal a similar propensity for inviting the audience to participate in a text-driven performance, and achieve this by writing the audience’s ‘ingress’ into the actual text. As White establishes, there is a need for procedural authorship in these kinds of works in order to structure the work in such a way that it encourages and contextualises the audience’s ingress (White, 2013). The texts that will be explored have developed alongside my practice in this field between 2012 and 2014 and are created by playwrights and performance-makers who are notable for their approach to an inclusion of the audience within the text and performance, that I have defined as ‘ingress’. These texts are *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2013) by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, and *Men in the Cities* (2014) by Chris Goode.

Firstly though, I regard it important to address a playtext which can be viewed as a seminal work in the field of involving audiences within the playtext and its subsequent performance. This work is Tim Crouch’s *The Author* (2011). As Crouch explains in ‘Death of The Author: how did my play fare in LA?’, “[t]his is a play where the actors sit among the audience, wearing their own clothes, called by their own names; where players, audience and author are lit by the same light, scrutinised by the same gaze” (Crouch, 2011a). This explanation reveals the intention, in the manner of Artaud, to reposition the audience’s relationship with the performers and the performance space, and in the case of Crouch, the text, in order to, as Stephen Bottoms asserts, “question[...] theatrical form, narrative content, and spectatorial engagement” (Bottoms, 2011: 11). To enhance audience/performer interactions, the performance

space consists of two opposed banks of seating, thus fulfilling Artaud's demand for a non-traditional auditorium and stage configuration when in the pursuit of audience participation. The reason it is important to discuss Crouch's *The Author* here, however, is not necessarily for its achievements in inviting the audience's ingress – (achievements and approaches that will be apparent in others' practice and that of my own) – but to ascertain its limitations which has warranted a clearer approach to audience ingress within the text that, to some degree, has been offered by my work and the works of others to be explored in this chapter.

The Author

Tim Crouch's *The Author* had its debut at the Royal Court's Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in 2009, and received critical acclaim. It relays the events surrounding the fictional production of a violent play written by a fictional author, Tim Crouch, also staged at the Jerwood. The story is related by the four performers: Tim Crouch (playing his namesake) as author/playwright, two principal actors, and an audience member for the fictional play. As the piece develops, entirely verbally, the audience learn that the fictional play portrays the relationship between abuser, Pavol, played by actor Vic, and his daughter, Eshner, played by second actor, Esther. Very few precise details of the fictional play are disclosed, although those that are prove evocative. Instead, the playwright and two actors impart a graphic description of their dedicated and all-encompassing research process that informs their approach to creating the violent world of the play. They each divulge their viewing of internet images portraying real, extreme violence: war-related gang-rapes, torture, mutilations and beheadings. They describe their trip to a war-torn country, that is the setting of the piece, and relay encounters with people who have experienced similar events to those confronted by the characters in the play (Crouch, 2011: 181-185). The account concludes with Crouch's confession of his act of sexual abuse upon Esther's baby. *The Author* reveals how the telling (diegetic) of the violence, rather than the showing (mimetic) – as previously seen on the Royal Court stage – can be more disturbing when perceived in one's imagination (Radosavljević, 2013: 155), as is revealed in the literature review when exploring (syn)aesthetic and postdramatic works such as that of Sarah Kane and Martin Crimp.

The dramaturgy of such work depends upon the audience's reaction, whether that is an emotional response, thoughtful consideration or an angry departure. With the audience engagement being paramount, *The Author* begins by directly addressing the audience and establishing its presence in the event. The task of speaking to the audience falls to Adrian who appears as an audience member. Other audience members are invited to offer their own responses, a participation which is included within the text and, as a result, audience members are able to ingress the text and its performance:

> I'm Adrian. I'm Adrian and you are? Hello! What's your name? Do you love this, _____? Our knees touching! Don't you? Who'll you be next to! I'm next to you!! What's your name?
>
> (Crouch, 2011: 165)

By speaking directly to the audience members around him – describing his expectations of the performance and asking a series of questions – Adrian attempts to engage them in conversation. This inclusion of audience involvement within the text establishes a clear expectation of the audience's role within the performance, and the way in which they are involved. As a result, the audience can ingress the text and the performance through direct interaction. This approach reflects how the concept of 'ingress' relates to my work: the playwright can more effectively achieve an involving audience experience when he or she, as Duška Radosavljević explains, "inscribes the spectator into the work" (Radosavljević, 2013: 150) and allows and encourages audience members to engage with what is offered. However, although Crouch inscribes audience members into the work so that, in the time and space of the performance they co-exist with the performers' characters, there are areas of Crouch's text which seem to contradict this intention. Despite the gaps left in Adrian's conversational text that invite audience input, Crouch restricts this participation. The text is such that it does not allow for an audience member to continue a conversation instigated by Adrian and, on the whole, he must adhere to Crouch's designated route. As Bottoms confirms:

> The potential for vocal audience response has proved one of the most controversial elements of *The Author*, since – in circumstances where

> unexpected interjections have suddenly been made – the four actors will make no effort to respond and incorporate them through spontaneous ad-libs. An accommodating pause will be left, and then the actor will resume delivery of the scripted text. This approach has sometimes prompted hostility, even anger, from those who feel that audience participation has been solicited and then frozen out; that the actors have shown themselves incapable of improvising. Yet the resistance to engaging with such speakers is ethically consistent with the play's commitment to eliciting individual rather than group responses: if a spectator chooses to become 'actor' by speaking out, that is a choice and a right, and the unscripted words will be heard – whether witty, poignant or otherwise – without gloss or contradiction from the 'official' actors. But nor is it the actors' responsibility to fold such interjections back into some open-ended process of chat-back, group therapy or forum theatre [...]. Their responsibility, rather, is to those who have come to see and hear and respond to the play as written. It is up to the impromptu speaker to take responsibility for his or her injection, just as s/he would be speaking out during any other play, or for leaving the auditorium.
>
> (Bottoms, 2011: 455-456)

This does not mean that the text is fundamentally flawed. A text structured in this way can accommodate significant spontaneous participation from audiences, without it placing pressure on the text-driven form. I suggest that the destabilising factor in *The Author* is not the structure of the text per se, but that the relationship that Adrian establishes with and between audience members, suggests an environment in which the audience can freely communicate and interact more than the text actually allows. The expectation of the audience is unclear: audience members are encouraged to be together in a social manner but then find themselves considerably controlled. Additionally, from the start there is an uneasiness in the relationship between Adrian and other audience members. His questions and comments such as, "What's your name? That's beautiful. You're beautiful! Isn't _____ beautiful? Everyone?" (Crouch, 2011: 165), are unsettling and unlikely to encourage a response. This disquiet between performer and audience member is even more apparent in Tim's

opening monologue. He recounts his visit to a floatation tank facility and describes the woman who guides him to the tank: relaying a stream-of-consciousness, Tim divulges vivid private fantasies, inappropriate in a public setting, but within which the audience is invited to participate:

> I think about her being naked and stretched out for me! Can you imagine? I look at the shape of her breasts. I think about the weight of her breasts. [...] Her dress is pressed across the curves of her young body. I imagine her legs opening for me, her dress lifting up. Her soft flesh opening up for me. I imagine I -
>
> (Crouch, 2011: 169-170)

Crouch does not acknowledge the audience members' feelings and emotions in this situation, which as White (2013) asserts is a function of procedural authorship and is a requisite consideration when inviting an audience member to participate. Although, as Bottoms attests, Tim's position within the audience on one seating bank prompts "reassuring nods of assent" (Bottoms, 2011: 453) revealing that some audience members are participating.

Additionally, when, following Adrian's opening conversation, the other performers recount their experiences of the rehearsal and performance of the fictional play, the audience's involvement reduces significantly, both within the performance space and in the fictional world that is presented in the narratives. The fleeting interaction between the performer and audience members that does occur mainly consists of questions, such as "Is this okay? Is it okay if I carry on?" (Crouch, 2011: 170), which are generally interpreted as rhetorical. As Helen Freshwater observes in ''You Say Something': Audience Participation and The Author' (2011), much of the audience anger surrounding *The Author* was caused by the social script being almost impossible to follow or to confidently predict. Freshwater describes the uncertainty amongst the audience members of not knowing "whether what they [...] are watching is scripted, or improvised, and whether they are expected to be 'saying something' or not" (Freshwater, 2011: 409). Even when these questions receive a response from the audience, the script dictates that the show will continue in the planned way regardless of how the audience respond (Freshwater, 2011: 409). The consequence of these

contradictions within *The Author* is that the audience occupy an ambiguous position. The audience is characterised within the text but, perhaps because its role is still that of an audience, there are times when the text and the audience become separate and the audience's involvement is removed.

I suggest it is not Crouch's intention to involve audience members within the fictional narrative of the performance. Rather, his intention is to provide focus on the complicit act of being an audience member in the context of a play portraying violence and, consequently, he maintains the expected boundary between the performance and audience realms. In his introduction to Crouch's compiled plays, *Plays One* (Crouch, 2011), Bottoms explains the intended audience experience by posing the question of audience members: "To what extent are we accountable for what we choose to watch?" (Bottoms in Crouch, 2011: 19). As Crouch explains in 'The Author: Response and Responsibility', "[a]t many times people called on me to stop. And I wanted to stop. But that is not the play I have written. The play carries on. And the consequences are felt" (Crouch, 2011b: 417). However, because of the disparity in audience involvement between Adrian's sections and the performers' narrations, and the fact that there is a lack of articulation within Adrian's interaction with the audience as to its actual role (White, 2013: 190), a strange relationship is created between involving the audience members and keeping them detached. Radosavljević explains that *The Author* provides an ambiguous and indecisive contract between performer and audience as to how, when and how much audience members can participate (Radosavljević, 2013: 171).

Although Crouch writes ingress into his text, through which audience members can participate in the performance and interact with performers, a consistent and considered regard for procedural authorship, and the role of the procedural author in supporting and facilitating the audience members' ingress is not achieved. Responding to these problems, White notes:

> Explicit invitations for verbal audience participation are made throughout *The Author*, but though the form of words used remains much the same, the horizon of participation offered changed drastically as the play goes on. Its opening sequence is conversational, and creates easygoing

> exchanges between an actor and several audience members, but it progresses so that later direct questioning is much less likely to draw responses. But while structured and invited participation fades out of the performance, the intensity of involvement, and implication, of audiences evidently increases, sometimes leading to [...] [disruptive] interventions [...]
>
> (White, 2013: 190)

When considering the success of Adrian's – or Chris's in the case of White's reference – interactions with audience members, White refers to Crouch's note that appears before the script in the published text:

> There should be plenty of warm, open space in the play. The audience should be beautifully lit and cared for. When the audience is asked questions, these are direct questions that the audience are more than welcome to answer – but under no pressure to do so.
>
> (Crouch, 2011: 164)

White argues that, despite the warmth that is encouraged by Crouch, there is an obvious discomfort in this relationship from the outset, which is partly due to "the lack of articulation of what the role of the audience will be in the performance" (White, 2013: 190). White concludes that:

> [a]s a procedure of participation [...] [*The Author*] is unusual, generally moving from small contributions to none at all. The participation it is concerned with is really the wider issue of an audience's participation and complicity in the culture of theatre, and its potential excesses. But it is a procedure of participation, both in the way it deploys small amounts of participation to enhance its effect on most audiences, and in how it occasionally provokes performances of protest.
>
> (White, 2013: 191)

What is evident from *The Author* is that if the audience experience depends on intimacy and involvement, the potential for ingress in not only the performance but

also the text might be greater if consistent or continuous rules of audience involvement are sustained throughout the writing of ingress into the playtext. Necessarily then, the writer must consider opportunities for involvement throughout, and consistently articulate this involvement and the context and procedures surrounding such within the narrative of the text. The idea of procedural authorship, introduced in the literature review (p57), encapsulates the notion of a making process which invites the authorship of the overall audience experience. To substantiate the possibilities of procedural authorship to intrinsically involve the audience within the text and achieve sustained opportunities for ingress, I will now examine *The Oh Fuck Moment*. This is a performance text by Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe, and the writing here closely reflects the process of procedural authorship and its impact upon consistently inscribing the audience into the text and its subsequent performance.

The Oh Fuck Moment

It must be stated from the outset that Walker and Thorpe's *The Oh Fuck Moment* (2013) is not a playtext – it is rather a performance text. The writers emphasise this in a note to the text, published along with another of Walker and Thorpe's works, *I wish I was Lonely* (2013). It is stated that while the language, as documented in the text, is fixed, these shows are intended to be conversations and, therefore, are different every time they happen. Consequently, the scripts are not to be considered a faithful record but rather an attempt to reflect the experience of each show in written form and to provide a framework that reveals the range of things that may have happened in the performances, as well as allowing space for what may happen in the future (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 9). Despite this confirmation by the writers, I have chosen to include *The Oh Fuck Moment* within this thesis because it provides a clear and still relevant model for the ingress of audience members within a text-driven performance, by the inscribing of their participation within the text. Furthermore, this ingress is achieved by Walker and Thorpe's procedural authorship – the writing of the rules for the audience-participant's involvement – through the use of a procedural framework in line with Jackson's interpretation of *Frame Analysis*, as laid out in the literature review.

In *The Oh Fuck Moment*'s performance, Walker and Thorpe invite an audience of twenty-five into an office space and seat them around a conference table to hear, and

be reminded of, the split-second decisions that lead to the major mistakes we are capable of making in our everyday lives: our own ‘oh fuck moments’. In limiting their audience to twenty-five, Walker and Thorpe’s desire for an intimate and inclusive audience experience is clear. This environment encourages audience members to more readily accept the invitation to participate in the forthcoming performance: the risk of embarrassment for a potential participant, as explored by White (2013), is reduced by their inclusion within a small audience. Furthermore, as Artaud recommends (1993), the choice of a non-traditional performance space enables the performers and audience members to easily interact.

Before taking their seats in the office space, the audience congregates in the foyer and, as is usual in any performance setting, awaits the start of the performance. C, performed by Thorpe, meets the audience members in the foyer and welcomes them to the event in an exchange that can be regarded as a Pre-Theatrical Frame, an introduction to the theatrical experience in which audience-participants are prepared for the experience (White, 2013: 32). C greets them and emphasises, “Don’t worry. I’m not acting” (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 13). C’s welcome prepares the audience members as it immediately informs them that the performance does not conform to the traditional performer/audience boundaries. Furthermore, his meeting with the audience in what would be described as the ‘audience space’, begins to blur the lines between the performance and that of the audience members’ lives outside of this ‘theatre’ experience. This prepares audience members for their involvement within the performance, as well as its nature: sharing details of their own lives to contribute to the content of the piece.

Once audience members are seated in the office, C and H, performed by Walker, deliver two narratives, in accordance with the Narrative Frame established in White’s discussion of framing procedures (2013). The first of these is an exchange between C and H within which short accounts are given of individuals’ mistakes, blunders or accidents:

> H: A man slams his laptop shut just that crucial second too late.
> C: A woman wakes and realises that dream she just had about drunken sex was not in fact a dream.

> H: An S&M enthusiast realises he has forgotten the safe word.
> [...]
> H: The president realises that the mic was on after all.
> C: A parachutist looks up to see the reserve chute tangled in the main chute that she has just cut away.
>
> (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 14-15)

The second is relayed solely by H, who recounts sending an offensive email concerning a colleague to the person in question (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 15-17). These narrative sequences align with the Narrative Frame established within Frame Analysis through the way in which they deliver a story related to the relevant subject of the performance, and that can relate to audience members. I suggest that these narrative sequences provide ingress, as in a means of entry, to the text, as audience members engage with the narrative relayed by the performers, especially enhanced when these narratives appear personal or recounted from experience. It is apparent here that, despite a short welcome from C before entering the space, the opening of *The Oh Fuck Moment* does not immediately introduce the concept of the performance as intended by procedural authorship. However, the narrative sequence explored above nevertheless begins to establish the premise of the performance, as does the following narration from H describing her experience of accidentally sending an offensive email to the person whom it concerned. Indeed, this is definitively clarified by C who states "[…] that is the definition of an oh fuck moment" (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 17).

The introduction to the framework of the performance and what is expected of participants appears once the audience is settled into the environment:

> In the next hour, we are going to ask you to do some things.
> We are going to ask you to write something down.
> We might ask you to read something out.
> It's not going to be anything more strenuous than that.
>
> (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 17-18)

This text predicts a likely range of reactions to the interaction and participation that is proposed and attempts to put the audience at ease as to the level of their involvement. It is emphasised that they will not be forced to partake, and that the intention is not to consistently pursue a response. Here, unlike in *The Author*, the meaning of participation is clear, and the instructions provided instil confidence in the audience member that they will be consulted as to their participation at each specific occasion. Although, at the relevant junctures, it remains the audience member's choice whether or not to participate and to what extent, their participation is made more likely as there is little if any ambiguity as to when and how they will be required to do so. Furthermore, the fact that Walker and Thorpe address themselves within this introduction – stating that no one should feel embarrassment at contributing personal information because they have probably done something much worse or more embarrassing – not only further encourages the engagement of audience members within the interactive experience, but also strengthens the overall intimacy and communal involvement of the performance. What is impressed upon the audience is that they and the performers co-exist and, together, participate in the text-driven event. These strategies consider the potential participants' emotions and feelings – a consideration foregrounded by White – and assists them in assessing the risk of participation (2013).

The potential of a consciously applied procedural authorship is shown as *The Oh Fuck Moment* moves past its introductory stage. Walker and Thorpe's effort to reinforce what is established and to consistently involve the audience in the experience is apparent when they encourage each audience member to write down their own 'oh fuck moment':

> Right, this is the first, well actually the only time we are going to ask all of you to do something together. You will see in front of you there is a pen and a post-it note. And what we'd like you to do, is to think of an oh fuck moment, something that you personally have done, and we'd like you to write it down on your post-it note, in one or two sentences.
>
> (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 19)

Walker and Thorpe provide a coherent explanation as to the intended activity. The opening to this statement, clarifying that this will be the only group engagement,

achieves audience engagement in two ways. Firstly, the text presents the performance's expectations of audience members: they can prepare themselves for the level of engagement required and be confident that this type of engagement will not be sprung upon them later. Secondly, Walker and Thorpe set the precedent that other audience participation will follow, including interaction with individuals. This fulfils the definition of procedural authorship by writing the rules for the interactor's involvement and response (Murray, 1999) and, in doing so, may involve the audience more intimately in the overall experience and encourage a more comfortable interaction and participation.

This 'investigatory' stage of the text includes a number of guidelines which assists in the ingress of audience members into the activity. Firstly, an instruction is given for audience members not to write their names on the post-it note that presents their story and, secondly, they are all asked to begin their story in the same manner: "'it was when, I...'" (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 19). In translating thoughts and memories into the tangible written word, the opportunity arises for them to be seen or heard by others and, accordingly, interpreted and experienced by everyone in some way. Consequently, the audience members may perceive that they need to confirm their authority over the story as it is their creation and their overall responsibility. H's premeditation of this action allows for the ownership of this material to be judged more universal, emphasising that no matter who technically owns the text, each audience member has the opportunity to make it their own. The imposition of the opening phrase, "'it was when, I …'" (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 19) with the inclusion of the personal pronoun 'I', works in a similar manner: all the stories are given a group identity and, therefore, can relate to everyone as well as the individuals who authored them.

When asking four audience members to read out their 'oh fuck moments', Walker and Thorpe continue with the same procedure as before, reinforcing Thorpe's introductory guidelines that the audience's permission will be sought:

> Now you four, you lucky, lucky people, have just been randomly selected...to share your oh fuck moments with the rest of the group.

> But we made a promise at the start of the show, that we're not going to force you to do anything. So I just want to check – are you OK with doing that?
>
> (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 20)

With regard to successfully maintaining the audience member's involvement, C's question has two possible outcomes. Firstly, the audience member is more likely to accept the opportunity to become a character in the event, having had their choice to do so considered empathetically. Secondly, if declining the opportunity to partake, the audience member feels involved to the extent that their decision is respected by the performer, and this is integrated and adapted into the event. This emphasises the achievement of procedural authorship in creating audience participation. As shown here, even when preparing the audience for interaction and participation, the audience member participates as a character in the theatre experience as a whole. By inviting the audience to participate in the writing of the text, *The Oh Fuck Moment* brings together the performer and the audience member in the same experience and allows their relationship to become an intrinsic part in the creation of the performance. Although the text has already been written, Walker's and Thorpe's practice of procedural authorship allows for the text to be created, lived and experienced by all involved in its performance.

To this juncture in the text, the involvement of the audience has been achieved through open interpretation of the story and self-creation of the text. Walker and Thorpe only 'impose' specific characters onto audience members when they introduce the scenario involving Don and Pete, requesting that two audience members perform this dialogue. But, Walker and Thorpe continue to engage with features of procedural authorship to consistently consider the audience members' perceived risk in participation: by introducing Don and Pete in the third person and the past tense, they are clearly established as characters. As these characters have no personal relevance to the audience members, they can safely accept these roles and hence, are able to ingress the text:

> Donald Rowland was the First Officer on a Canadian Airlines flight from Montreal to Toronto Pearson Airport in July 1970.

> And Donald Rowland crashed the plane.
> The Captain, Peter Hamilton, and the First Officer, Donald Rowland, had flown together for years.
>
> (Walker and Thorpe, 2013: 22)

Additionally, the decision to present the characters in this way is prudent as the event portrayed, of which Don and Pete are the protagonists, is traumatic. Again, Walker and Thorpe have considered the potential participants' feelings, and so encourage them to take on the roles of Don and Pete. As well as the audience's characterisation within the text as audience members within the event, Walker and Thorpe are seen here to also characterise the audience within an actual story and dramatic narrative. This is a clear progression from *The Author*, where the performers' stories failed to involve the audience. However, the ingress of audience members as participants in characterising Don and Pete serves only as another example of an 'oh fuck moment'. If the ingression of an audience member within the text results in an all-encompassing audience experience, then the integration of the audience must progress from simply a recognition of it within the performance space - although this is a vital aspect – and move toward the ingression of the audience within the overall fictional narrative or story.

The Oh Fuck Moment highlights areas of my approach towards writing ingress into a playtext. Here, through a process of procedural authorship, the text guides and encourages the audience members into their participation and involves the audience member in a consistently intimate relationship with the performers and fellow audience members. However, I suggest that the reason this work has been able to so successfully abide to the framework of procedural authorship, suggested by White, is that the performance provides an open exploration of a particular theme, the 'oh fuck moment', rather than a continuous narrative throughline within which the audience becomes involved. *The Oh Fuck Moment*, in a similar way to the TIE to which procedural authorship and procedural frameworks are most associated, is, I suggest, a product more engaged in, as White states, "...building a body of process-orientated practices with audience participation at its heart" (White, 2013: 30). It is also worth noting that, although the audience members are involved within the textualisation of this exploration within the event, the performance environment has no specific relation

to the conversation that ensues. The office environment only seems to provide a general context to proceedings, suggesting that the office is somewhere where 'oh fuck moments' are likely to happen. In reality, this exploration of 'oh fuck moments' could happen in any space where performers and audience members can intimately interact.

Furthermore, the fact that C and H are suited and wear name badges identifying them as Human Resource workers has no impact upon the conversation in the office: the audience members are not characterised as employees and are not taken to task over any of their 'oh fuck moments', which, in any case, would have to be work-orientated to be relevant. However, as many of the audience members may work in an office, the choice of performance space can be seen as a familiar, comfortable environment that can nurture performer/audience interaction and audience participation. Also, as the role of a Human Resource department is one of caring for employees, the identifying badges can also be viewed as having a positive effect on audience members – again, encouraging interaction and participation.

As stated previously, I chose to examine this performance text to ascertain how a process of procedural authorship and consistently inscribing the audience within the text can aid participation in performance, and in this respect, *The Oh Fuck Moment* is successful. Although this text delivers a procedural authorship that is suited to an exploration of individual tasks rather than ingress into a consistent fictional narrative, Walker and Thorpe highlight the possibilities of such an approach in constructing opportunities for ingress within a playtext and its story. Indeed, a procedural framework may not function as faithfully compared to the original concept established by White in a playtext, as Walker and Thorpe achieve, but as White emphasises in *Audience Participation in Theatre*:

> [these] frames [...] are appropriate to the work that is common in TIE, but they will not serve to describe all kinds of audience participation. In particular, there will be a greater variety of 'inner frames' available in addition to the ones [...] describe[d], and also a greater number of variations [...]
>
> (White, 2013: 33)

Furthermore, I suggest that some frames or procedural techniques can be used to a greater degree than others to encourage the audience's ingression. This is particularly the case for a narrative procedure or narrative telling, especially if the performer or playwright is also seen to ingress this narrative.

Men in the Cities

What Chris Goode demonstrates with his playtext *Men in the Cities* is a predominantly narrative model which allows the audience to ingress into the fictional narrative through direct storytelling. This narrative element, which Lehmann describes as "an essential trait of postdramatic theatre" (Lehmann, 2006: 109), is present to varying degrees in the previous works explored, but like Crouch, Goode constructs a point of ingress for the playwright to enter the narrative to meet with the audience. However, in contrast to *The Author*, in which the playwright, Tim Crouch, is purely fictional, the ingress of Goode into this playtext follows the playwright's truthful telling of the writing process of the actual play on display, *Men in the Cities*. This dual ingress allows the audience, together with Goode, to relive the fictional narrative within the time of the performance.

This sense of the real created by the author becoming character is shown immediately in the opening to *Men in the Cities* when Goode addresses the present space and time of the theatre event. As suggested by White (2013), and a feature of the other works examined, Goode engages procedurally with an introduction which establishes the type of event and what is expected of the audience. This introduction is comprised of three principal strategies to engage the audience in the theatrical event. The first of these strategies is to immediately address the whole audience with his greeting: "Hey. How's everyone doing?" (Goode, 2014: 17). This establishes the authorial voice within the performance space, acknowledging that the audience is part of the theatrical event and encouraging the audience members to feel acknowledged, included within the event, and valued as the audience of the piece.

Having directly addressed the audience, the second strategy employed is to directly address the form: “This is a story called Men in the Cities” (Goode, 2014: 17). This line’s function is to place the story at the forefront, establishing the text as a tangible entity which evolves in time with the real time of the performance. By directly stating that the story itself starts in the middle of the night with a screaming sound, rather than immediately setting the scene in the present tense – ‘it’s the middle of the night’ – is the third strategy. It may not at first seem to be the most immediate sentence construction. However, Goode’s choice to reflect the position in which he, as author, has been placed in the performance of his work to phrase the opening in this manner reflects the benefits upon audience engagement, by having the author as character, or alternatively speaking, the character as author. The fact that Goode openly refers to the form as a story establishes that he has responsibility for its authorship and subsequent relaying, and that by bringing this piece into the performance space he anticipates the audience’s interaction with the process.

The opening invitation of audience involvement is completed by the construction of a relationship between author and audience of co-ownership and, to some extent, co-authorship of the story. The final phrase of this introduction, “It starts in the middle of the night, with the sound of screaming. This awful kind of shrieking sound” (Goode, 2014: 17), maintains the relationship between the text, in this case the setting of the scene, and the text from which this image was born. At first, this may not seem the most appropriate sentence construction to deliver a narrative of immediacy and to engage audience members in the story from the outset. But, by adopting this opening structure, the audience members are invited to engage with the story and to connect with it in their own way, taking ownership of the ‘shrieking sound’ which is described before being confronted by it. By the time the telling does become immediate in the following paragraph – “It’s a fox out in the street; it’s a vixen. Being fucked” (Goode, 2014: 17) - the audience has been encouraged to create its own vision and interpretation of the ‘screaming in the night’. So when Goode asks “Do you know that sound?” (Goode, 2014: 17), the audience members are likely to have imagined and taken ownership of it and, as a result, achieved a personal and heightened engagement in the story. Furthermore, Goode’s question provides greater emphasis from the author that the audience is being consulted throughout.

Having grounded his story within real events, namely the murder of Drummer Lee Rigby in 2013, Goode further emphasises the sense of the real by adding factual markers into the story. For example, with regard to the scream of the vixen, he adds:

> If you Google 'vixen crying mating call' there's a thing that says: don't be frightened when you hear the vixen's scream, the scream is only a love song. It's only to human ears that it sounds like murder.
>
> (Goode, 2014: 18)

The achievement of this additional information is twofold. Not only does it relate the telling to the real world by the reference to Google and the factual information revealed, but also it can be viewed as engaging the audience in the telling of the story, especially as they perceive that the author has personally searched Google. Furthermore, the inclusion of this factual definition, which implies that humans would recognise the scream as being sinister, foreshadows and raises questions about the following events in *Men in the Cities*, allowing the story to appear more personal to Goode and authentic.

Additionally, Goode further encourages the audience to see the real in his storytelling, in the following description of Rehan waking up:

> The first alarm to go off is Rehan's at five forty a.m. It used to feel early when he started out but now it just feels like a fact, like any other fact in the fact-based universe.
>
> (Goode, 2014: 18)

Goode emphasises that the world experienced is factual which can encourage the audience to perceive and experience an interpretation of this story as if what is portrayed are indeed real events. In the same manner as the characters appear in the narrative story so does Goode, writing himself into the actual world of *Men in the Cities*, London on 23 June 2013. One particular instance of this is when, following his telling of Matthew's imminent discovery of his dead partner Graeme, Goode states: "Oh. I can't write this part" (Goode, 2014: 35), revealing his reluctance to complete such a harrowing story. The writing process, although completed well before the performance,

can appear spontaneous, as if the author's thought process is developing in real time. Consequently, the audience is afforded the opportunity to assume that the Graeme and Matthew scenario has perhaps been experienced first-hand by Goode. This enhanced inclusion of the author as character, as well as the audience's engagement within the narrative, is heightened when Goode continues to convey his own story, featuring himself writing *Men in the Cities*:

> I'm sitting at my desk in front of the window that looks out over the street where I live in London and a kid, a Hasidic kid, walks past on the pavement on the far side of the street, and then no one, no one, and I don't want to write this part, and I can't.
> I was worried that this would happen. Trying to write this thing.
> It's just hard. Go for a walk around the block. Clear my head.
>
> (Goode, 2014: 35)

Goode's hesitancy when talking about this writing is successful in portraying the author as a character who seems to have direct experience of the events that are portrayed. As a result, the authentic nature of the story is enhanced and can result in increased audience engagement and a deeper interest in the other characters within the story and what happens to them.

The fact that Goode repeats his fears about telling the story and shares his worries of being unable to write a particular section of text suggests that, as well as his own story, the other real events portrayed, and the numerous stories and characters included within *Men in the Cities*, all have some element of truth and personal relationship to Goode. The benefits of the playwright's ingression are established through the way in which the audience can engage personally with the story due to the reality of the author's presence within the text. The way in which Goode appears to fictionalise aspects of his life, and the processes surrounding the work, opens up the performance to a new kind of engagement and relationship. As stated when introducing *Men in the Cities*, the performance does not actively include the audience. But, Goode's presence as the author within the playtext and the performance, allows audience members to actively ingress the fictional narrative as co-author:

> So listen. What does it mean to create a character only to kill them off? Isn't that fucking cheap and nasty? Isn't that every exhausted iconic gesture I ever hated, rolled into one? The interesting thing is to let him win, Rod Palladino as he nudges ninety, tearing up the A1017.
> Spare his life. Put his kid on the back seat. You won't kill an innocent child.
>
> (Goode, 2014: 74)

There is the potential for audience members to experience ingression as they are put in direct contact with the text and, although Goode takes his own direction with the fate of Rod and his child, the audience member is placed in a position of authorship. As shown in this extract from the narrative, Goode is able to place the audience members in contact with the characters through which they achieve a tangible, real existence in the audience member's experience of the performance. The techniques that Goode uses can be directly related to the research into postmodernism and the postdramatic and are explored and developed in my practice. Specifically, the reference to the writing of the text within the text and its performance is what Fuchs refers to as the undermining of the 'presence-effect' found in many dramatic pieces (1996). Fuchs articulates that the aim of these techniques which have arisen from postmodern performance is to reveal and emphasise to the audience its presence within the performance and the creation and meaning of the work. Furthermore, in his definition of the postdramatic, Lehmann describes the importance of the real in engaging audiences in the performance and its given space and time. As explored in the literature review, Lehmann emphasises that theatre is a real gathering, a fact that is evident to audiences in their experiencing of postdramatic work.

The examination of these three texts reveals a range of attempts to include or ingress the audience into the written performance, and to an extent, within the fictional narrative. With my practice as research, three playtexts written between 2012 and 2014 alongside the emergence of this type of audience-inclusive writing, I attempt to further this idea of ingress to include the audience-participant within the narrative and, therefore, to extend their involvement within the text-driven performance. I will identify the ways in which I have tried to achieve this – with regard to the research established in the literature review – and how these experimentations have succeeded, how they

have improved throughout the practice as research, and how they might be improved further still.

Mimesis and Diegesis

As established in Chapter One, my practice has its origins in the historical avant-garde's turn towards the audience. In Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', his criticism of Western theatre's classical structure focuses specifically on its literary nature and mimetic representations of the 'real'. Artaud advocates a theatre that rejects attempts to imitate the illusory reality of the world to allow for a mystical or spiritual experience of a more authentic 'real'. In his *Postdramatic Theatre*, Lehmann argues that drama's mimetic tradition is unavoidable because of its bond with the Aristotelian notion of action. He asserts that this "fixation on action seems to entail thinking the aesthetic form of theatre as a variable dependant on another reality – life, human behaviour, reality, etc" (Lehmann, 2006: 36-37). Also, whilst echoing Artaud, Lehmann argues that "[t]his reality always precedes the double of theatre as the original" (Lehmann, 2016: 37). Both Artaud and Lehmann argue that the traditional idea of theatre precludes any audience infiltration into the representational world presented on stage: a closed fictive cosmos is maintained. When occasional disruptions to this closure, such as directly addressing the audience or asides, do occur on stage, the play is nevertheless understood as a diegetic world: "a separated and 'framed' reality governed by its own laws and by an internal coherence of its elements and which is marked off against its environment as a separate 'made-up' reality" (Lehmann, 2006: 100). Although this infrequent disruption to the theatrical frame can be interpreted as 'real', it is considered a negligible aspect of traditional theatre both artistically and conceptually. Consequently, in theatre that Lehmann describes as postdramatic, practitioners have experimented with the disruption of dramatic coherence by utilising a variety of theatre and performance aesthetics including the irruption of the 'real'.

In his manifesto, 'Arguments for Theatre', playwright and director Howard Barker reiterates this opposition to traditional theatre's mimetic representations. However, he understands his own work not as postdramatic but as a return to a "dramatic method before the nineteenth century" (Barker, 1997: 96) which did not conform to the mimetic

imitation of the real but a re-imagining of it. Barker describes his work as a Theatre of Catastrophe that includes the “classic dramatic values such as narrative structure, character or language” but is nevertheless “irreducible to a set of meanings” (Barker, 1997: 80). He argues that the “clarity, meaning, logic and consistency” (Barker, 1997: 43) of the dramatic narrative can be disrupted by employing certain strategies such as the “existence of one narrative [being] continually displaced by the eruption of others” (Barker, 1997: 121) which results in his theatre “not [being] a disseminator of truth but a provider of versions” (Barker, 1997: 45). Barker’s suggestions for disturbing the flow of a narrative are techniques that influence my work.

In my practice, the playtext *Pack* has similar features to that of a traditional play: the audience view the action of the performers and listen to the monologues and dialogues in order to follow the storyline. Although mimetic in its moments of representation, the action is not linear and only provides glimpses into the characters’ lives. With little physical action for audience members to observe, they are reliant on a cerebral and imaginative interpretation of the narrative to enable understanding. From the outset, the character Lewis’ monologue informs the audience that *Pack* is a story: “this is a story about -” (p74). The inclusion of familiar fictional stories into his personal story impresses on the audience members that what they are about to experience is the telling of a story: thus informing the diegetic nature of *Pack*. The later monologues of James and Lewis also include fictional stories that reinforce the storytelling aspect of the playtext. Additionally, the dialogue between the various characters is a telling of remembered events, and the action within the scenes relates to recollections and depicts their memories. Therefore, *Pack* can be understood to be predominantly diegetic in form.

In contrast with *Pack*, *Two Degrees* has no physical action for the audience to observe but, nevertheless, it has elements of a traditional play as its setting pretends to be ‘real’ (mimesis). The audience are cast as characters within the playtext - “a group who knew each other once” (p108). Again, as in *Pack*, the audience is immediately made aware that this playtext involves the telling of a story (diegesis) that recalls particular memories: “And this story is to remind us all how we came to be here” (p108). The audience is invited to remember and relive certain events – pretending that the fictional space is real (mimesis). Furthermore, the audience’s reading of cards

adds to the narrative - the diegetic nature of the playtext - and also disrupts the fictional real. *Gumption*, the same as *Two Degrees*, involves no physical action, but in contrast with both *Pack* and *Two Degrees*, it is completely diegetic in form. In this playtext, the playwright narrates a story that audience members must navigate cerebrally and imaginatively, and take overall responsibility for their experience. These three playtexts demonstrate a progression from *Pack*'s combination of mimetic and diegetic characteristics, to the telling of a story (diegesis) as the overriding feature of *Two Degrees*, although the event is happening as 'real' (mimesis); to *Gumption*'s playwright narrating a story (diegesis) with no element of mimesis.

Pack

In my work, as in that of Barker, the written text takes precedence but, as Barker maintains, it is possible for a written text to "be explored differently" (Barker in Deeney, 1998: 28). He echoes Artaud in emphasising speech as a sensual act but argues for a writerly practice that, through its challenging form, disturbs the audience's imagination. Hence, with *Pack*, my aim is to present a written text that is substantially different from a conventional play script. In so doing, I seek to ingress audience members into the fictional narrative that has the ability to unsettle and disturb their innermost emotions. This is comparable with Machon's description of a visceral-verbal playtext which is a vital feature of her (syn)aesthetic concept and which is supported and elucidated by Barker's ideas (2011). To achieve these objectives, I experimented with several different strategies and techniques.

Experimentations with speech and dialogue

Fragmented speech is the first technique employed to heighten the impact upon the audience's perception of and engagement with character and the situation. From the opening lines of the play, this style of dialogue is a recognisable feature:

> a man. Yes. That's right. A man. A sword. A child. Two children. A sink. A cot. No – a sink. That's right. And water. Water? Yes. Lots of water. Yes. And blood. Lots of blood. On floor. Wooden floor. Old wooden floor. Blood stained on old, warped, wooden floor. Man.

(p74)

The use of such a technique helps portray Lewis's confused and erratic mind-set, and the strangeness of his delivery encourages the audience's interest in the developing story. Furthermore, the speech's irregularities provide opportunities for the audience to engage with the characterisation on a more personal and authoritative level. As Lewis continues to weave snippets of children's stories together with his expressed disturbed thoughts and memories, the audience begins to anticipate what the narrative may reveal. Through the confusion between fiction and his own reality, Lewis presents uncertainty about the exact number of children involved; he seeks confirmation on whether or not water is a feature of his story; and he introduces characters such as Llewellyn – all of which invite speculation from the audience about the significance of the characters mentioned and how this story will unfold. Furthermore, this style of writing heightens the illusion that Lewis is constructing the story in the here and now, giving the impression of improvisation: of a story that might not be fixed as to how it will develop or end, but is unfolding in the present, impromptu. By beginning with this irregular speech pattern, the audience is immediately encouraged to be involved and connected with the text-driven performance. Additionally, from the outset, audience members are made aware of the demands that the play will exert upon them: they must navigate through the difficulties of interpretation, form and content. This allows the audience to be more at ease with the nature and direction of the piece and, consequently, aids their involvement within it.

The audience's engagement with the text is further enhanced by employing a collaborative responsibility. Ruth's false account of herself to police and officials is recounted to the audience not only by Ruth but also by the other characters: "No one is sure of Ruth's personal details" (p78). The collaborative responsibility for performing the text is another feature which gives a sense of improvisation, involving the audience in a communal authorship. This is heightened by the fact that not only are Ruth's personal details progressively revealed to be untrue, but also that significant parts of Ruth's biography are undisclosed, allowing the audience to actively create their own version of Ruth's 'story'. Furthermore, by referring to Ruth in the third person, even when the speech is delivered by Ruth herself, the literary roots of both the character and the performance are revealed, and the character is placed in direct and tangible

contact with the audience as a textual object. This emphasises to audience members that the character of Ruth not only belongs to the performer, writer and other informed actors but also to the audience. Similar textual decisions have been made elsewhere in *Pack*. Of particular note is the dialogue between Ruth and James which provides some insights into Lewis's life and his illness. Here, the expected use of 'he' is replaced with 'you' and 'his' by 'your'.

> **James:** You open your eyes.
>
> **Ruth:** That must be why it was black.
>
> **James:** But it just gets blacker.
>
> **Ruth:** So black it's almost light.
>
> **James:** So light.
>
> **Ruth:** Too light.
>
> **James:** You watch as into the light, your memory chokes up – EVERYTHING.
>
> **Ruth:** A – palm tree? (*Beat*) Really?
>
> **James:** A chewed-up piece of gum –
>
> **Ruth:** your headmaster's toupee,
>
> **James:** your father's old Amstrad computer which he was SO proud of –
>
> (p91)

This change of pronouns expands the text's interpretation. The use of 'you' not only brings the discussion of Lewis into the live event making it more immediate, but also it allows for ingress as the audience can interpret this as a direct address. This exchange between Ruth and James also adopts a structure of short and incomplete sentences and the speech achieves a progressive pace. The delivery of such short snippets of information, which individually have little relevance, invites audience members to have greater personal control over the visualisation of the text. Further evidence of this is demonstrated later in the text when the audience is encouraged to be co-authors in the creation of a hospital scene, the bare minimum of facts being provided by the text: "Scratchy sheets. Squeaking of wheels." (p92) In addition, the question "A trolley?" (p92) impresses the scene's location whilst emphasising that the audience member is predominantly in control of the specifics. The textual sequence between Ruth and James, quoted above, includes a number of fleeting references to various objects, ideas and references such as a Henry Hoover, an Amstrad computer and a palm tree which audience members can easily recognise and visualise. I suggest that, in tandem with the succinct nature of the text, this achieves quick recognition and visualisation for audience members. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for them to imaginatively build upon these given facts to personally experience the text and, as a result, ingress the situation.

The sections of text analysed demonstrate how experimenting with speech structure offers significant opportunities for the audience members to take an active, if unvoiced, responsibility for the creation of the text in the moment of the event, and aids their ingression into the fictional narrative. In addition, the collective performance of a personal account creates the illusion that the text is being constructed spontaneously in the here and now and, as a result, has the potential to engage the audience in an environment of creation and improvisation, thus achieving ingress within the playtext.

Text's hidden meaning stimulates imagination

Another technique examined within this playtext is the ability of language to imply an underlying meaning or a sense of the unknown, and hence possibly stimulate the audience's imagination. Ruth and Alan's subway exchange is one example. This scenario appears routine: two friends fleeing from trouble. However, Ruth and Alan's

conversation hints at an unusual aspect to their relationship and the true nature of the character Alan:

> **Alan:** It'll keep me going.
>
> **Ruth:** Doubt it. You're not allowed chocolate remember? Makes you sick.
>
> **Alan:** Maybe. But *you'll* fall flat on your face if we've got to run again.
>
> (p76)

Alan is in fact the human characterisation of the family dog, who in Lewis's later monologue is depicted as being savaged and killed. When Ruth tells Alan that he is not allowed chocolate because it makes him sick, the audience witnesses information which reveals a backstory and, consequently, seems to require expansion. There are two particular aspects of Ruth's statement that potentially heighten the audience's curiosity. Firstly, she uses the word 'allowed', which suggests some sort of responsibility for Alan despite his appearance suggesting he is an independent adult. Secondly, by ending her statement with 'remember?' Ruth implies a shared history and deeper connection between the two of them. Having made the audience aware of a possible deeper meaning to what is being communicated, the conversation deliberately continues without hesitation or rumination, allowing the previous hints to spawn ideas: engaging the audience member imaginatively and intellectually in the active creation of the story. Alan's sudden exit from the situation, leaving Ruth alone to face the police, raises further questions as to the nature of Alan and what wider relevance he may have within the story. Although not providing any further leads to his non-human state, this abrupt and unexplained departure, which in fact becomes a motif throughout *Pack*, continues to impress upon the audience that there is something about Alan which is as yet underdeveloped but is vital to the overall story.

As the playtext continues, it becomes apparent that Alan's role acts as the audience's guide through the narrative whilst the other characters' lives increasingly break and separate from each other. I suggest that this is achieved in a number of ways. Firstly,

Alan's appearances and comical anecdotes about the Queen's Corgi and Frank Sinatra's goldfish (p89-90), for example, provide an interlude between Lewis's monologue and his later overdose. Secondly, Alan regularly reasons with the other characters and aids them in their struggles. In so doing, he guides the audience members through the narrative and provides a stable reference point amidst the fragmentation of other identities. He helps the audience members to chart a path through the narrative and he stays close to them through the violence and reassures them during the worst moments – thus sustaining the audience's empathetic involvement; without Alan, they might simply withdraw emotionally and psychologically and disengage from the violence and confusion.

Other examples of concealing meaning within the text to further the audience's ingression occur as the play progresses. For audience members, the siblings' relationship appears suspicious when James abruptly demands that Ruth should "Take the dress off" (p87). The audience is encouraged to envisage a reason for such a statement if, as the earlier narrative has implied, they are indeed siblings. James could be innocently suggesting that, as Ruth is not attending the awards ceremony, she no longer needs to wear the dress, or the truth of their relationship is strange or even sinister. The subsequent scene in which Ruth and James relay Lewis' life experiences confirms for the audience that the two characters are definitely siblings. Consequently, when, in a later scene, the audience return to the location of the earlier sibling dialogue, and encounter their clothes discarded and the characters absent, questions about the situation can engage the audience within the action. Audience members are encouraged into imaginative speculation to find answers to what is happening. Ruth and James' voices draw the audience's attention to the table beneath which the two are hidden from view by a low-hanging table cloth. This revelation has the potential to further engage the audience in the tangible reality of the situation. This sequence of events actively welcomes audience interaction with this circumstance and invites speculation as to the direction of action.

Having observed the discarded clothes and the hidden characters, the audience's expectation is fulfilled when Ruth, and subsequently James, appear almost naked from beneath the table. This disclosure, although fulfilling expectations, does not necessarily resolve the situation but rather engages the audience in the possibilities

of the text. As soon as James joins Ruth in the open, she questions him as to the necessity of being under the table; “What did you think this would do? Going back under the table. Living all that again. Those feelings. The horror, the fear of it all. The terror on my skin” (p94). Ruth’s line is underscored by subtext, particularly the references to living those feelings again and feeling the terror on her skin. These opportunities for a broad interpretation of the text can engage the audience members in an interactive and participatory relationship with the text. This is enhanced by positioning the audience as onlookers to Ruth and James’ compromising situation. The fact that *Pack* is performed in a factory, rather than a traditional auditorium and stage theatre space, has the potential to intensify the audience experience. The open, atmospheric nature of the factory space provides an element of unpredictability – where there is a possibility of presenting anything – and allows for the audience’s accessibility to the performers and the action, as advocated by Artaud and implemented by subsequent practices including Schechner’s Environmental Theatre. In performance, an intense curiosity surrounding the play’s presentation was evident, with audience members providing vocal or gestural commentary to each other as they were being led through the environment. Furthermore, there were noticeable physical responses to the performers’ actions due to the performers’ and audience’s proximity.

These examples from *Pack* correspond with Barker’s idea for disturbing the narrative flow (1997) and establish the potential of text to enhance the involved audience experience through what the text does not express or what it leaves unexplained. By engaging cerebrally to interpret the underlying meaning of the text, the audience is able to create, live and be affected by the experience of what the text intentionally denies its audience.

How familiar stories can aid audience ingression

The telling of stories is a significant element of *Pack*, reflecting the principle themes of upbringing, family and the reliving of memory as well as technically working to progress the narrative. The main monologues of James and Lewis feature the stories of *The Three Little Pigs* and the Welsh folktale, *Beddgelert*, respectively, which both present a wolf character, a feared antagonist in many children’s stories, who is used to symbolise Lewis’s and, later, Ruth’s battle with mental illness. The content of these

monologues addresses the impact of mental illness upon both their lives and, as a result, ventures into strange, dark and, at times, potentially upsetting or disturbing territory. The chosen children's story for each monologue is used almost as an introduction to the characters' own stories and recollections which follow. Potentially, the audience can engage imaginatively with fear and uncertainty through a familiarity with these particular children's stories or at least with the storytelling form: the telling of both *The Three Little Pigs* and *Beddgelert* begin with the expected, engaging phrase, 'Once upon a time'. Having established a direct connection with the audience through the communication of the children's story, the requisite tale leads into the character's narrative. This extends the invitation for audience ownership of the story and has the possible effect of maintaining the audience's engagement in a text which becomes increasingly disturbing.

James's series of succinct sentences immediately directs audience members to piece together their own image of what is being described by developing the fleeting, sparse information or attempting to read between the lines:

> But she's nowhere to be seen. And dad just sits in his chair.
> I occupy myself with writing. I'm completing dad's last ever work.
>
> (p80)

The lack of detailed description encourages the audience to take control and create for themselves: building upon Ruth's story revealed in her previous scenes, constructing an impression of James's house and predicting the reality of Lewis's presence. Both James and Lewis reveal shocking and potentially distressing imagery: there is sauce around James's mouth, blood around Ruth's; the headless bird in Ruth's hand; the dog dragged into the bowl with the crockery; and the burial of the baby next to the dog. In the earlier exploration of Crouch's *The Author*, Radosavljević proposes that the telling rather than the showing of violence can be more disturbing when perceived in the audience's imagination (Radosavljević, 2013: 155). Hence, the violent and distressful content of these excerpts from James's and Lewis's monologues has the potential to disturb more than a mimetic display of violence on stage. Audience members must navigate through this disjointed, unsettling narrative and attempt to

piece together the full story. Additionally, the 'moments of loss' provided by the 'breaking of the narrative thread' (Barker, 1997: 52-53) encourages audience members to imaginatively fill these gaps. In this way, the audience members are able to gain understanding. Lewis recalls his first manic episode:

> I buried my baby next to the dog. I thought that's what she would want. She loved dog. She smiled the toothiest grin whenever she saw him.
>
> When I dug her up, she was still breathing.
>
> I put her back to bed. I returned to the dishes. Tikka Masala that night.
>
> (p88)

In Michael Rothberg's *Traumatic Realism*, the perception of traumatic or distressing experiences through what is lacking in memory is a particular point of focus, and is defined by Rothberg as "traumatic absence" (Rothberg, 2000: 22) which, as he explains, succeeds in maintaining the impact of the past within the present. Lewis's vague reconstruction of his volatile and disturbing past presents the audience with the responsibility of piecing together what has happened, and to imagine the extent and consequences of his brutality. The event is never fully explained and the actual outcome of the situation is never resolved. It is the audience members' task to find their own meaning from their lack of understanding (Barker, 1997: 38).

Unlike the expected course of a play, especially that of a tragedy, there is no point of catharsis within *Pack*. The audience becomes engaged in their own interpretation of Lewis' violence which lingers in the imagination and, as a result, the fear and threat of the unknown, as described by McConachie (2008), provided by the textual image is lasting rather than momentary. Consequently, as Helen Freshwater explains in *Theatre & Audience*, the audience cease to be "a mere congregation of people" and become "a body of thought and desire" (Freshwater, 2009: 22) which creates, imagines and lives with the characters through their experiences as complicit participant rather than a spectator. Therefore, a desire/displacement relationship is set up between actor and audience, in that the pleasure and lasting effect of theatre is in, as Freshwater confirms, what it "denies its audience" (Freshwater, 2009: 22).

The relevance and impact of a non-theatre space

The final consideration in relation to *Pack* is the relevance and impact of the chosen performance environment upon the ingression of audience members within the fictional narrative. As explored in Chapter One, the lineage of my work has its origins in the work of Artaud and the practices of the historical avant-garde. Artaud (1993) argued for the rejection of the traditional stage and auditorium allowing for direct contact between performers and audience members, and allowing the performance to traverse the room. In his view, this would enable the audience members to become immersed in the performance. This removal of an auditorium and stage configuration has been a feature of many subsequent practices including Schechner's Environmental Theatre, introduced in the 1960s, through to the many contemporary immersive productions that use non-traditional performance sites to provide an all-encompassing audience experience. Such sites offer flexibility of movement for both the action and the audience as well as providing the possibility of creating an involving environment and atmosphere which is live, tangible and interactive (Machon, 2013: 27). In choosing a non-theatre space – an empty factory setting – for the performance of *Pack*, I hoped to ingress audience members within the action of performing the playtext.

The factory setting was chosen for its stark appearance and its potential to intensify the bleak storyline of Lewis' actions. The desire for a flexibility of atmosphere encouraged me to take advantage of the full potential of the chosen venue. Consequently, the adjacent road and courtyard were included as spaces within the performance. This is documented at the beginning of the *Pack* script with the introduction of Lewis, who leads the audience down the road and into the courtyard where James, Ruth and Alan enter the action. Ruth and Alan's subsequent run into the factory building is the impulse for the audience to follow the characters inside to the *America* space, where the action continues for the rest of the performance. In conceiving the idea, I intended for it to reflect Lewis's mental state, that he was out wandering in the middle of the night, and to emphasise his unpredictable nature as explained by Ruth later in her argument with James:

> **Ruth:** (*Breaks away*) You're a retard! It's not just that! It's everything! Setting fire to the house, flooding the house, digging up the garden, killing Alan and well yeah, burying me –
>
> **James:** The lighthouse. Remember the lighthouse! / You loved it there! With him!
>
> **Ruth:** / trying to swim the estuary with all his shitting clothes on, walking along the side of the motorway for miles and miles and miles and FUCKING MILES!
>
> (p95)

Textually, I was satisfied with this opening: introducing the audience to the world of the play and its characters in an intriguing and engaging manner. However, in performance, the outside performance space and the navigation through the play's promenade nature provided distractions. Logistically, difficulties arose when navigating a large crowd of audience members along the road and into the courtyard.

When in the main performance space – from Ruth and Alan's subway scene to the final exchange between Ruth and James – the adopted staging technique was for the action to move through the space and occupy a new performance area. Each performance area's set remained flexible and relatively minimal and neutral to accommodate a number of different scenes without the need for changes. However, the result of this staging when applied to the performance of a fully-conceived text was that movement to and from each area distracted focus and engagement. Furthermore, the audience members were provided with seating at each performance point in order to control their movement within the performance, and hence maintain a consistent engagement with the narrative. In reality, the seating arrangement impeded an easy and fluid movement between the areas, and as a consequence, the flow of the narrative and the audience's engaged involvement with *Pack* was adversely affected. This production decision was contrary to the playtext and the directorial vision of director Robert Ball, whose help I had enlisted to realise my vision of how a writer-driven work should be produced.

On reflection, having the audience standing throughout the performance would have resulted in more fluid transitions between areas. In addition, this may have enabled the actors to interact with the audience during these transitional movements, linking them into the overall narrative and action. The performance space did not enhance the audience's experience of *Pack*, as was intended. The low temperatures within the building possibly impacted upon audience members so that their experience was dominated by the environment rather than the text. Although the venue was successful in creating atmosphere, this became increasingly unrelated to what the audience members were attempting to process through text: the performance was neither site-specific nor immersive. Additionally, even though Robert's impact upon the production was significant, I realised that the authorship of the audience experience, with regard to the theatrical environment and interaction with the text, was vital to the experiencing of the text. Therefore, I re-evaluated how the audience can exist and operate in an increasingly text-driven format.

As the audience appeared increasingly disconnected from the text, it became evident that in subsequent playtexts the performance environment needed to be fundamentally included within the narrative of the piece. This would allow for more relevant and integral audience participation within the performance of the text, and reflect the effort of the playwright to include opportunities for the audience's ingress within the authorship. This does not mean that the space needs to be site-specific but that the space shared by the action and the audience, whether theatre-bound or otherwise, is fully considered and defined within the text itself. This reasoning does not suggest that site-based work and text-driven theatre are always incompatible. I cite Cora Bissett and Stef Smith's *Roadkill* (2011) as one example of recent work which has been successful, particularly from an audience and a critical perspective, in marrying a text-driven narrative with a non-theatre-bound performance environment. The main difference between *Roadkill* and *Pack*, however, is that the former approached the production process from a directorial, rather than writerly, initiative. The idea for *Roadkill* first came from the director Cora Bissett, involving the audience in a story concerning sex trafficking: the audience accompany the central characters on a bus journey to an empty building where the action takes place in a number of different spaces. As well as the text, the published script includes detailed plans of the space and explains how the audience are to physically experience the performance.

In contrast to the usual playwriting process, *Roadkill*'s writer Stef Smith, was presented with Bissett's already formulated idea for which she then provided a suitable text. In this case, the environment was the main driving force behind the performance's creation and, although it remained the principle mode of narrative communication, in development the text consciously became secondary to the mode of presentation.

With *Pack*, the audience's ingression within the text and its performance was the central goal throughout. As has been shown in this reflective exploration, the consequence of the chosen production method was that the text and the environment battled for supremacy and remained disparate. The performance of *Pack* may have been more successful if a similar approach to that of Bissett and Smith had been employed, and even more so if I had taken on full authorial control, as suggested in the writings of Artaud. However, this method would not have sufficiently achieved the type of audience participation I was seeking. The performance of *Pack* highlighted that its performance and the audience's experience of it was not sufficiently inscribed into the written text for the audience members' successful ingression within the narrative or action. As the focus of this thesis is the creation of a text-driven performance which achieves a heightened engagement and involvement with its audience, the tension between the audience and an inclusive text in this case could not be reconciled by simply allowing for the director's vision to dictate: this vision was required from the writer.

Two Degrees

The writing of *Two Degrees* signifies a concerted effort to advance the audience involvement experienced in *Pack* by utilising different techniques and strategies. These include the replacement of a non-traditional performance site for a more conventional space in order to encourage an intimate and evolving relationship between the audience and the performers during the performance. Such intimacy required a space other than the traditional stage and auditorium configuration. Consequently, a theatre space setting was chosen which enabled a small audience together with me as playwright/performer and a second performer to sit in a circle. This intimate environment has the potential to reduce the audience members' perception of risk in deciding whether to participate and lessens any hesitation a potential

participant may feel in accepting the invitation. This aligns with Schechner's practice and specifically his argument for an aesthetic event that mirrors or transforms into a social one (Schechner, 1973: 44). He argues that a shared mode encourages participation from all members of the audience through a sense of equality and communitas.

The playtext utilises the strategy of displaying the script in performance which deconstructs the dramatic tradition of concealing the authority of the pre-written text. In clearly presenting the script to the audience, any illusion of spontaneous speech is eliminated. In contrast to *Pack*, this playtext is entirely verbal with no physical action other than the handing out of cards. Audience members are invited to participate in the narrative by providing suggestions to infill the text, which are then repeated by the performers, confirming the audience as co-authors of the text:

> **Abie:** [suggest name e.g. Kate?] No? [Participant gives name] Yes, that's right. [Insert name] was studying.
>
> (p110)

Also, audience-participants can interact verbally with the performers by reading aloud the text on cards which are handed out at the relevant time:

> **Jonathan:** And you looked at me – that stare – as if sold on everything and repeated (*gives a card to participant*)
> **Participant:** (*Reads*) Just in case.
>
> (p111)

The involvement of audience members as co-authors is similar to the approach highlighted in the research of Schechner and Kattwinkel, which calls upon audience members to play an active role in the event as 'co-creators'/'co-makers' or sometimes 'co-performers'. Lehmann and Broadhurst also use the term 'co-creator' in their discussions of postdramatic and liminal audience participation. However, there is a difference in the audience participation described here. Schechner's work and the performances explored by Kattwinkel favour physical/material activity whereas Lehmann and Broadhurst discuss an intellectual/conceptual one. In my practice –

where the playtext is the focus – the strategy of involving the audience in the creation of the text will potentially encourage audience participants into a thoughtful and imaginative processing of the text and assist in their ingression into the narrative.

Ingress of audience as character

Of the three texts previously explored, *The Oh Fuck Moment* is the most successful in ingressing the audience as character. Audience members are able to engage with the performance despite the pressure to actively participate. This work is successful because it implements techniques of procedural authorship, through which the expectations of participation are articulated at each stage of the performance. Although effective, I suggest that this close adherence to the procedural framework is made possible because *The Oh Fuck Moment* is a performance text and the audience participation is in the exploration of an overall theme rather than in a consuming and evolving narrative, as is the aim of my writing. Consequently, *Two Degrees* makes some clear progressions in its approach to procedural authorship in order to ingress the audience in a continuous and coherent narrative. A characteristic of procedural authorship, the 'introduction' is utilised with varying degrees of success in the three texts previously explored, and is also a feature of *Two Degrees*. It establishes the intentions of the performance and how it might be experienced by its audience:

> **Jonathan:** Hello everyone. Hi. I'd just like to say before we start that I have no reason to believe that you're not all lovely people. And there's no reason why I shouldn't continue to think that you're all lovely people. Because what happens here has already been decided. What you've done, or haven't done, or want to do is nothing to do with me. The space has been set – a room, like this one, hired for the occasion. We've all been cast – a group of people who knew each other once. And this story is to remind us all of how we came to be here.
>
> (p108)

This introduction clearly establishes the difference between real space and the environment of the narrative which the audience will ingress. In a similar way to Goode's introduction to *Men in the Cities*, Jonathan begins by immediately addressing

the whole audience with “Hello everyone”. This establishes his authorial voice within the performance space and immediately acknowledges the audience as audience members included within the event. They are made comfortable within the performance environment by Jonathan’s description, ‘lovely people’. By attributing them this personality, it clarifies for them that their inclusion as characters in the following narrative is not intended to impose responsibility or judgment upon them. In addition, the use of the inclusive vocabulary, ‘we’ and ‘us’, can add to the audience’s reassurance and possibly reduce the perceived risk of participation. The audience members are left in no doubt as to their role as characters: “we’ve all been cast - a group of people who knew each other once” (p108). These features of the introduction demonstrate that the audience members’ emotions and feelings have been considered which encourages them to participate in the forthcoming fictional narrative (White, 2013). By openly acknowledging that what is about to be experienced has already been written - the space and the characters being set within a fixed entity - the introduction attempts to further emphasise that the level of participation will not be spontaneously decided by the performers during the performance. All these strategies potentially encourage audience members to accept the invitation to participate and, as a result, ingress the narrative.

In contrast to the previously explored works, the involvement of the audience within a clear narrative creates more opportunities for audience members to share the same imaginative space as the performers. When the performers greet particular audience members, they are immediately cast as characters in contact with the performer’s character. Abie’s first interaction with an audience member is a prime example:

> **Abie:** We met at university, queuing up to enrol on the first day. Usual pleasantries. (*To audience member*) Hi. I’m Abie. You are? [*Response*] Hi. It’s so great, isn’t it? You going out tonight? Yeah! I’m going to get SOOOO PISSSSED!
>
> (p110)

This textual interaction brings a fictional past into the active present, and is lived by the performer and the audience member in the real time event. This achievement of *Two Degrees* contrasts with *The Oh Fuck Moment*, in which direct interaction with

others often presents itself in an investigatory manner (White, 2013): the specific source of interaction being provided and thoroughly explained beforehand, as in the Don and Pete scenario. *Two Degrees* illustrates the benefit of a continuous narrative as the opportunities for audience members to engage with each other and with performers in the same time and space are organically established and understood as the performance develops. However, these interactions between performer and audience are fleeting and are often generally interpreted as rhetorical. In addition, some of Adrian's interactions with audience members are unsettling and therefore unlikely to encourage a response. This is in contrast to Jonathan's comforting "lovely people" (p108) and Abie's friendly interactions:

> **Abie:** [suggest name e.g. Katie?] No? [Participant gives name] Yes, that's right. [Insert name] Was studying [...] Our friendship just developed from there.
>
> (p110)

The performers continue to engage directly with different audience members, inviting their co-authorship of the text:

> **Jonathan:** (*Greets a participant*) Hi. You are? [Response] Hi. (*Beat*) I met [insert name] at a march against cuts [...] (*gives a card to participant*)
> **Participant:** (*Reads*) Just in case.
>
> (p111)

The combination of introducing into the narrative the audience-participants' spoken responses, together with their reading of pre-written cards, enhances the opportunity for ingression into the text. This activity is linked to Turner's idea of ritual and surrendering the social norms of everyday life. The audience members communally relinquish their separate identities and adopt a set of rules which may differ from their known cultural norms. The act of inputting speech or reading from cards becomes a ritualistic process, especially as this is executed in a communal setting, where everyone shares in the same repeated behaviour with no sense of personal judgement. The audience-participants' inclusion within the text continues throughout the performance: the audience being guided by the procedural author into ingressing

the fictional narrative. At the end of the narrative, Abie returns the audience-participants from their role as characters in the fictional narrative to being an audience again: “Hello everyone. Hi...” (p118) The audience-participants are reminded that they have been cast as characters in an event that has already been written. They are reassured that they bear no responsibility for what has occurred in the fictional narrative. Furthermore, Abie reinforces Jonathan’s opinion expressed in the introduction that the audience-participants are “all lovely people” (p118). As a result, the audience-participants’ emotions and feelings are again considered by the procedural author and successfully managed, as considered by White to be a necessary consideration when inviting audience participation (2013).

I confidently present *Two Degrees* as a performance text which ingresses the audience by inscribing the characterisation of audience members into the fabric of the text. *Two Degrees* proves, firstly, that procedural authorship provides a clear but flexible set of aids in order to engage audiences more comfortably in a participatory text and, secondly, that the act of simply involving the audience within the narrative provides an instant opportunity to experience text-driven performance in a more direct, immediate, intimate and more affecting manner. Although a functioning strategy, the audience as character approach, as shown in all text examples, including *Two Degrees*, creates an almost disconnected relationship between the narrative and the real world. The experiencing of the fictional narrative does indeed blend into the real time and space of the performance, but during the implementation of procedural authorship that is required to place audience members in such an environment, the real space inevitably becomes visible. In *Two Degrees*, the audience/performer interactions and the card readings used to integrate the audience as character within the narrative are at variants with a consistently involving experience of a text-driven fictional world.

I would argue that to achieve such an audience experience, this slight disconnect is essential, especially when drawing audience-participants into troubling stories, such as the violent protests and the subsequent events featured in *Two Degrees*. There is a danger of alienating the audience through imposed responsibility, guilt or fear surrounding the narrative situation rather than intimately involving them. A particular mindset is necessary for the audience to experience ingression into a text-driven

narrative: “[p]retending that the action is real affords us the thrill of fear, knowing that the action is pretend saves us from the pain of real fear” (Laurel, 1993 in Pitches and Popat, 2011: 120). *Two Degrees* invites the audience into a real environment and encourages them to involve themselves in a story, the experience of which is real through the act of participation: “allowing the [...] [audience-participant] to be in two places in one instant” (Giannachi, 2004 in Pitches and Popat, 2011: 120). The marked change in audience behaviour between the performance of *Pack* and that of *Two Degrees*, provides support for this argument. *Pack* raised restrictive questions for audience members as to what they were expected to do in this more open setting, which were not resolved in the performance, nor were any resulting fears or hesitations allayed. In *Two Degrees*, on the other hand, audience members appeared to be less questioning of and uncomfortable with participation within the environment, even though more direct involvement was required. I suggest that the audience members’ ability to clearly read and understand the expectations and boundaries of a ‘pretend’ performance environment through this disconnect between real and fictional space, allowed for a more confident interaction. For the reasons cited, I do not intend to resolve this disconnect with regard to the involvement of audience as character. However, by shifting the emphasis from audience as character to author as character, the author is able to ingress the audience members within the creation of the narrative without the need to navigate the relationship between the fictional and the real. Hence, the writing of *Gumption* provides the third phase of my practice as research into the ingress of the audience into the fictional narrative of the playtext.

Gumption

Gumption is a narrative told by the playwright to an audience in an auditorium setting. The playwright is the single creative figure responsible for the entire production and could be interpreted as Artaud’s “single creator” (Artaud, 1993: 72) responsible for the language, the play and the action. Here, as in *Two Degrees,* the script is clearly presented to the audience, removing any impression of spontaneous speech. Additionally, the piece begins with an introduction “I am going to say – welcome” (p120), which is a component of procedural authorship and a feature of the other entirely verbal works explored within this thesis. This feature of procedural authorship indicates the playwright’s authorial voice within the performance space and the piece,

and acknowledges the audience as audience members included within the performance. This introduction informs the audience members that their role is that of witnesses to the subsequent story. The narrative immediately follows the introduction and, from the outset, audience members are encouraged to imaginatively place themselves as onlookers within the characters' situations and, as a result, are able to ingress the narrative. The fact that *Gumption* is a fictional narrative is emphasised throughout by references to the presence of the audience and the playwright in the theatre space. These references take the form of either stage directions as in "*Looks at watch and pauses to encourage everyone else to look at theirs*" (p121), for example, or the playwright speaking directly to the audience as, for example: "Hi (*Long pause*) We're in a theatre. We're all alive. (*Beat*) I hope so" (p122). The audience's intimate encounter with the personal narration of the playwright – a type of theatre Lehmann describes as postdramatic – is an obvious departure from a representational form and its often subsequent 'fictive cosmos'.

The narrative is not one continuous story but instead consists of a number of disparate storylines that echo Howard Barker's approach to theatre: "the breaking of the narrative thread [and] the sudden suspension of the story" (Barker, 1997: 52-53). Consequently, audience members need to imaginatively and cerebrally ingress the narrative in order to piece together these different storylines. As in *Two Degrees*, at the close of the narrative, and in this instance for the final time, the playwright returns the audience-participants from their role as witnesses to the told story to being an audience again: "Hi. We're here. In a theatre [...]" (p132). This playtext utilises a number of different strategies to help audience members ingress the narrative: the gifting of characters and the ingressing of the playwright within the narrative.

The gifting of characters

A key feature of *Gumption* is the way in which the playwright relinquishes the development of characters to audience members in order to ingress them within the performance and the fictional narrative as audience-participants. A prime example of a character that engages the audience in co-authorship is the man standing on a box in a city street. On first introducing the man, the playwright admits that s/he hasn't given him a name because that choice does not necessarily fit with his/her vision.

However, the opportunity is provided for each audience member to take control of this decision. Unlike the playwright, they may conclude that a name is required and that naming him will possibly aid their experience of the story. Having made their decision, audience members are confronted by the man's speech, divulging his views about freedom of speech and censorship. Audience members have the sense of a character who is outspoken and probably disillusioned with life, and they may also have the impression that he is railing against more progressive and 'liberal' thinking. Of course, this could be either interpreted positively, negatively or indeed indifferently, depending on the individual audience member's viewpoint or disposition. What is probable is that the man's bold character and forthright opinions leads audience members to make an instant judgment of him. The fact that they have made a personal decision about his name, even if this has been not to name him, allows for a sense of ownership of the character and, therefore, an investment in his story. Whatever the audience members' opinions of the man and his views – on which they will gain further insight as the narrative develops – an understanding of the character is deduced that is personal and unique to each audience member. Each of these strategies aids the audience members' ingression into the narrative.

The playwright offers other opportunities for the audience to develop their authorship and ownership of the character. As is the case for the other characters in *Gumption*, the man does not remain the focus of the narrative throughout: the playwright moves on to relay snapshots of other stories. In relation to the man's story, the playwright interrupts his speech with other stories or skips ahead to later parts of the speech. As a consequence, there are gaps in the audience's knowledge as they are unaware of what is said in its entirety. These gaps or, as Barker describes them, 'moments of loss' (Barker, 1997: 52-53), are deliberately marked by the playwright within the narration. For example, during their first encounter with the man, audience members are provided with a burst of speech before the playwright summarises that the man continues 'blasting', the content of which "possibly includes some more 'ations' [...]" (p121). When the audience return to the man during his contemplation of the insult 'Fucktard!', the playwright notes that the man is still ranting but s/he does not provide the exact words until s/he picks up the speech whilst in full flow: "-aries. Of course there must be boundaries. But I think – don't you all think – that this has gone too far?" (p122). Similarly, the playwright leaves the speech before the man has completed

vocalising his train of thought. These moments of loss provide the possibility of a wider scope for the character for which the audience can take responsibility, and/or can encourage audience members to further ingress the narrative and attempt to cerebrally fill these gaps to aid meaning and hence their understanding.

Another example of this gifting of character to the audience is the inclusion of Charlie, Naga and Breakfast as representing the news presenters of the televised morning programme. The playwright encourages the audience members to input their own suggestions of names as when, sometime in the future, this morning news programme is broadcast, the presenters and the title are likely to have changed. In addition to providing the audience with the development of characters, this relinquishing of more specific elements of the world of the narrative encourages audience members to be responsible for the co-authorship of the script, as is highlighted in the research of others and referenced in the discussion of *Two Degrees* (p171). Although previously written by the playwright and already predetermined, this element, along with similar ones throughout the script, give the impression that the narrative is being constructed spontaneously within the time of the event, emphasising the audience members' co-authorship and ingression within the performance.

These gifting elements of *Gumption* culminate in the ending, when the playwright interacts with the audience, introducing them to the printed script that has been on the table/lectern since the beginning of the performance. The playwright again draws attention to the audience members' presence in the space: that they have been engaging with a story and have been part of it. Similarly to *Two Degrees*, where the script appears as a physical and referenced entity within the performance, in *Gumption*, the playwright brings the documented performance into the physical performance, and emphasises its importance within what has been or is being experienced. Here, the playtext and the playwright are evident and, as a result, the audience can interact directly with the work on stage instead of the narrative being a closed fictive cosmos. Hence, this text-driven performance is unlike the staging of the traditional playtext, critiqued by Artaud, in which the absent playwright has authority and controls the meaning of representation.

The playwright of *Gumption* emphasises the possibilities for audience interaction with and ingression into the work when s/he offers the physical script to all audience members. S/he encourages them to author or, with regard to certain aspects of the script, re-author the script in the way they have imagined throughout the performance, developing their cerebral co-authorship into a physical, documented aspect of the playtext. This can be viewed as an investigative activity as established in Frame Analysis, involving the audience members in a task. The original concept of an investigatory frame is that it breaks from the flow of the narrative and the performance. In this instance, by merging the investigatory and narrative frames, ingress is afforded into the fictional narrative. In an attempt to consolidate the co-authorship of *Gumption*, the playwright uses the physical copy of the script as a type of contract between him/her as playwright and the audience members who have created their own experience of the playtext/performance. The playwright encourages audience members to note down their mobile phone number and/or their email address in order to potentially continue the relationship with the playwright and the playtext after the performance has concluded. This exchange, I suggest, achieves the ultimate form of ingress, welcoming the audience member into the heart of the playtext – the fictional narrative – as a physical co-author.

The ingress of the playwright

As is established from the outset, stated on the cover sheet of the playtext, this narrative is either performed by the actual playwright or as the playwright. The fact that *Gumption* is written to be performed by the playwright and from his/her personal perspective, rather than by a performer who is directly addressing the audience, is clear from the opening line: “I’m going to say – welcome. I know it’s quite formal. Sounds – feels a bit – awkward. But bear with me” (p120). This introduction to the playtext conveys an authorly awareness of the direction of the text and the performance. In the case of other texts explored, and aligned with White’s discussion of procedural authorship, the introduction prepares the audience for the participatory performance that will ensue. This has been achieved in a number of ways: through direct interactions between performers and audience members inviting the audience member into the communal, participatory event of the theatre performance, as in *The Author*; by stipulating the procedure of the forthcoming performance, as in *The Oh*

Fuck Moment and *Two Degrees*; or by stating from the outset that the form is a story and divulging some information about what will happen. In this instance, the introductory method sees the playwright ingress his/her own text, interacting with the specific word that will be said: 'welcome'. Further to Goode's technique which, although relaying the story in the present tense and confirming to the audience that what is being said is indeed a story (Goode, 2014: 17), here, the playwright is seen to author not only the text but also the performance as it happens. This does not mean that audience members are given the impression that the playtext is being constructed spontaneously – indeed, the script is on display to establish the previous authorship of what is to be performed. However, what is achieved is an interaction with the text which invites the audience to be involved in its construction from page into performance. This self-referential and self-aware approach continues throughout *Gumption*, with the playwright admitting at regular intervals that parts of the fictional narrative have not yet been written. This allows audience members to potentially ingress the narrative as co-authors and imagine these 'moments of loss' for themselves.

Moreover, like Goode in *Men in the Cities*, the playwright is ingressed within the fictional narrative as a character, seen by the audience to be authoring the performed playtext from within itself, bringing it into the time and space of the performance, opening opportunities for ingress. The playwright recounts his/her interaction with the characters within the playtext, developing the ambiguity of the personal relationship between Goode and his characters in *Men in the Cities*. Through the personal relationship between the playwright and the fictional characters, the audience members can obtain more visceral connections with the characters and the playtext through their ingress as a co-author.

Conclusion

The analysis of these playtexts has established the feasibility of ingressing audience members within the text's fictional narrative and performance. It has been shown that a process of procedural authorship is essential to successfully guide audience members through the performance and encourage their ingression into the fictional narrative. A fundamental requirement is the implementation of an introduction that

clearly establishes a contract between audience members and the performers and the performance. In this way, audience members are confident about their role within the performance and, consequently, can more successfully ingress both the performance and the fictional narrative. Indeed, the progression of my practice, from *Pack* through to *Gumption*, reveals a growing emphasis on providing the fictional narrative as a tangible tool which allows the audience's ingression. *Gumption*'s development of the Narrative Frame through the direct telling of a fictional narrative to an audience, the drawing of attention to the text as an interactive object/document, and the ingression of the playwright into the performance of the work and into the fictional narrative itself, provides the possibility of audience ingression into the story by exploring and progressing the possibilities of fictional narrative in practice.

Conclusion

This practice as research thesis began with two main objectives. The first of these was to examine the possibilities and, hence, the achievements, of intimately involving an audience within both the performance of the work and the fictional narrative. The second was to introduce and demonstrate the need for a new terminology, 'ingress', to describe audience participation within text-driven work. To this end, I traced the genealogy of my practice to its origin in the performance experiments of the historical avant-garde which marked a turn towards audience participation. Some of the strategies proposed by Artaud, a central figure of the avant-garde theatre movement, provide a lineage for my practice. His aim to provide a 'total experience' for the audience by placing them at the centre of the action has influenced subsequent practices and, consequently, has also affected my work. From this basis, I have explored postmodern, liminal, and postdramatic performance theories that attempt to identify and clarify those practices that encourage the audience's active role as participant and co-creator. To aid my practice, I have examined White's 'aesthetics of the invitation' and 'procedural authorship' (2013) as a means of achieving and controlling audience participation within performance. I have considered the theory of (syn)aesthetics that describes diverse performance practices including those that are described as 'immersive'.

Although in recent years a number of theorists and practitioners have contributed to the 'immersive' discussion, the term remains notoriously difficult to elucidate and is incapable of a single, clear definition. Machon's text *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, although published in 2013, remains the seminal work on this subject. She asserts that the term 'immersive' applies to diverse practices ranging from the large-scale to 'one-on-one' or 'one-to-one' events (Machon, 2013: 22). I argue that the labelling of so many contemporary participatory performances as immersive is problematic as such a description implies a particular audience experience, which is unlikely to be the case in all these disparate practices. Moreover, I suggest that of particular relevance to my work is the mis-use of the term 'immersive' to describe the participatory achievements of writing audience involvement into playtexts. Consequently, this examination of theories and practices has foregrounded the demand for new terminology in the form of 'ingress', to more

adequately describe the audience experience when practices, including my own, inscribe audience participation into text-driven work. By identifying and documenting strategies of 'ingress' – which place the audience within the creation and performance of the fictional narrative – this thesis aims to contribute to and enhance existing knowledge of audience participation within text-driven work.

The exploration of the practice of others demonstrates a progression in work that seeks the involvement of audience members within a text-driven performance and, ultimately, their participation within the fictional narrative. The examination commences with Crouch's *The Author* which is regarded as a seminal work in the field of involving audiences within the playtext and its subsequent performance. *The Author* begins by directly addressing the audience, acknowledging their presence within the performance space and immediately inviting their participation. Crouch leaves gaps within the conversational text that invite audience input: audience participation is inscribed within the text. Accordingly, audience members have opportunities to ingress the text and the performance through direct interaction. However, some of the interactions between performer Adrian and audience members are unsettling and are unlikely to encourage a response. Crouch does not consider the audience-participants' emotions and feelings in this situation which, as White (2013) asserts, is a requisite consideration when inviting an audience to participate. In addition, the relationship that Adrian establishes with audience members suggests that the audience can freely communicate and interact more than the text actually allows. As a result, Crouch restricts this participation, creating an ambiguous contract between the performer and the audience as to when and how much audience members can participate. Therefore, the potential for audience-participants to ingress the fictional narrative is diminished. This playtext establishes the importance of a clear contract between the performers and audience members and that a consistent approach is necessary for audience members to successfully ingress the performance and the narrative. To this end, other strategies need to be utilised. A more uniform procedure for audience ingression is demonstrated in Walker and Thorpe's *The Oh Fuck Moment*. This performance text is an example of work that utilises the process of procedural authorship (White, 2013) to guide and encourage audience participation throughout. Here, unlike in *The Author*, the contract for audience participation is clear, resulting in sustained opportunities for the audience's ingression. However, I suggest that the success of this work to

incorporate many of the processes of procedural authorship and hence, more successfully allow the audience's ingression into the performance, is due to it not being a continuous narrative.

Goode's playtext, *Men in the Cities*, illustrates how an audience can be ingressed into the fictional narrative without being actively included in the performance. As in the other playtexts, Goode addresses the audience directly, establishing his authorial voice and acknowledging the presence of the audience within the theatrical event. He informs the audience members of their role within the performance, and he invites them to engage with the narrative and to imaginatively participate within the text. Goode's presence within the performance space and his characterisation as author within the text encourage the audience members' imaginative co-authorship, and consequently, their ingression into the text. The exploration of these works has identified the use of particular techniques to involve audience members within the text-driven performance and, to some degree, within the fictional narrative. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, my practice developed alongside the work of these practitioners. The objective of my practice is to ingress audience-participants within the fictional narrative and, as a result, further their involvement within the text-driven performance. In an attempt to achieve this aim, a variety of different strategies and techniques originating in the research are utilised for each of the practice-as-research playtexts.

The writing of the playtext, *Pack*, incorporated a number of distinct methods to encourage audience members to participate. A prime feature of this playtext is the inclusion of various writing techniques – fragmented speech, familiar stories and lack of clarity within specific areas of the text – designed to draw audience interest and engagement through a lack of understanding and a wish to piece together disparate storylines. Another strategy utilised in *Pack*'s performance was the choice of a factory setting to provide a desolate atmosphere that echoed and enhanced the melancholy nature of the narrative. In addition, this large space allowed the audience to follow the action as it moved through the site to different performance areas. All of these tactics were employed to encourage the audience to imaginatively and cerebrally ingress the narrative. As discussed in the dramaturgy chapter, the low temperatures within the performance space and the decision to provide seating proved an overriding

distraction for the audience. Consequently, the success or otherwise of the writing techniques or the choice of venue to ingress the audience within the narrative proved difficult to judge.

When writing *Two Degrees*, I realised that by inscribing the audience into the work, I could more effectively achieve an involving audience experience. The audience is then able to ingress the text and the performance through direct interaction. In addition, the inclusion of audience involvement within the text establishes a clear expectation of the audience's role within the performance. Furthermore, I implemented a process of procedural authorship, as explained by White (2013) and which was explored in the literature review. This procedure involves writing certain strategies and structures within the text in order to ingress the audience within the work. To allow for an intimate relationship between the performers and audience members, a small audience together with the performers are seated in a circle. In this way, the audience members' perception of risk in public performance is minimised, and their ingression into the narrative can be managed by the procedural author. This playtext utilises the strategy of clearly presenting the script to the audience and so eliminates any illusion of spontaneous speech. *Two Degrees* begins by directly addressing the audience, which establishes the intentions of the performance and the audience's role within it. Accordingly, audience members can assess the risk associated with participating. Throughout the narrative, audience members are invited to be co-authors by providing suggestions to infill the text which the performers then repeat. In addition, some audience members are invited to interact verbally with the performers by reading aloud from cards that are handed to them at the relevant time. The audience members' participation within the text is managed by the procedural author, allowing them to ingress the narrative with minimised risk of embarrassment.

However, as discussed previously, the implementation of procedural authorship, necessary to integrate the audience as character within the narrative, is at variants with a consistently involving experience in a text-driven fictional world. Consequently, the writing of the next playtext, *Gumption*, shifts the emphasis from audience as character to author as character. In so doing, the author is able to involve audience members within the creation of the narrative without there being such a profound contrast between the fictional world and the reality of the performance space.

Gumption is a narrative told by the playwright to an audience within an auditorium setting. Here, as in *Two Degrees*, the script is clearly displayed to the audience. The audience members are included within the writing as the witnesses or spectators of the told story and are, therefore, referenced as such by the playwright. In so doing, audience members are asked to imaginatively place themselves within the situations of the characters, as onlookers. The fact that *Gumption* is a fictional narrative is emphasised throughout by references to the presence of the audience and the playwright within the theatre space. The audience members are encouraged to further ingress the narrative through the inference that the playwright has insider knowledge of this story, and that the fictional narrative that s/he is telling or performing may be grounded in some element of personal truth. This is emphasised by the later interactions between the playwright and the characters as well as the situations included within the fictional narrative. The intention of *Gumption* is to build upon the achievements of *Pack* and *Two Degrees* by focusing on the act of narration, and to provide a greater opportunity for the audience to ingress the fictional narrative by including them as co-authors in the seemingly spontaneous creation of the predetermined story. It is worth noting that as my practice progresses, the increased potential for the audience's ingression within the narrative arises from significantly simplifying the artistic form: relying on a told, diegetic narrative and a minimal, non-representational performance setting.

The originality of this thesis is in identifying the necessity for the term 'ingress' to understand and achieve the involvement of the audience as participant within a playtext. In addition, it demonstrates that by employing a process of procedural authorship, the audience's ingression into the performance and the fictional narrative can be effectively managed. It is imperative that this research clarifies the distinction between an audience experience within immersive theatre and the audience participation that the work presented here aims to achieve. This thesis emphasises that the term 'immersive' problematises a coherent understanding of an audience-participant's experience of participatory performance. This is especially so when a dominant text requires an audience's undivided attention and navigation. I suggest that in introducing the new terminology 'ingress', and establishing its development within my practice, this thesis contributes to the audience participation discussion both

in theory and practice. When the term ‘immersion’ fails to adequately describe an audience participatory experience, then ‘ingress’ is the term that should be employed.

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