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Making *Invisible* Pathways Visible

Case Studies of *Shadow Play* and *The Rainbow Dark*

A thesis

submitted with creative work

in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

James Cook University

by

VICTORIA LEIGH CARLESS

B. Theatre (Hons)

School of Creative Arts

2008

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STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

I, the author, would like to recognize that this thesis would not have been possible without the contribution of others.

This includes the stipend support of the Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship from 2005 to 2008, in liaison with the Graduate Research School, and the intellectual contribution of my supervisory team: Associate Professor Michael Beresford, Professor Diana Davis and Dr Steven Campbell.

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DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement of Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999), the joint *NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H2192).

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to articulate a particular type of theatre aesthetic, that which manifests as *invisible* in the performative mode. This *invisiblist* theatrical paradigm might comprise an *otherness* of form, character and/or language in both the written and performed text. The thesis navigates a writer's teasing out of aspects of the *Invisible* for performance, as well as ways in which to plot conditions conducive to an *invisiblist* theatrical experience.

The study also looks to a further aspect of *invisiblist* theatre: its *temporality* or *aliveness*, which essentially represents an engagement with the *immediate now* in performance. This sense of the *immediate now* is contextualised within the wider or *peripheral now* - the social/cultural/ political *status quo*. Aspects of the *peripheral now* are extrapolated in the context of the works of theorists and theatre practitioners, in order to reflect the values of this epoch, or acknowledge *contemporaneity* within a theatre piece.

The outcomes of the research are tested and utilised in the writing and staging of a play entitled *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). This process was informed by experimentation within a pilot study, implementing a text entitled *Shadow Play* (2005). *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was realised in two different ways; as a reading with Queensland Theatre Company and in performative mode with Backbone Youth Arts; both these realisations took place in Brisbane in 2006.

The Rainbow Dark (2006) is a hybrid text with an *invisiblist* aesthetic. It borrows from the *peripheral now* with its specific political content, yet is able to avoid the effect of rhetoric in performance. Herein lies my potential model for *contemporaneity* in theatre writing.

The outcomes of this study also include an ongoing trajectory for the creative project of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). The play is currently contracted for broadcast by ABC Radio National, and will also be realised as part of Just Us Theatre Ensemble's *Independent* season in Cairns, in November 2008.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In late 2004, I attended a production of Edward Albee's (1928-) *The Zoo Story* (1962), in a small theatre space in St Kilda, Melbourne. This performance illuminated for me a particular type of theatre experience which I had been intuitively seeking. In *The Zoo Story* (1962), a character named Jerry tells an anecdote about his repeated attempts to befriend a vicious dog. The premise of this section of the text is simple, and the director had employed minimal production values in staging it. Something about this text in performance, however, lent to Jerry's speech a dream-like, otherworldly quality. The experience had an hypnotic effect, where time was forgotten, and I was immersed in the world of the Jerry character and his power struggle with a starved black dog.

The meaning of this story in the context of the play was open-ended or ambiguous. While Jerry's anecdote had an allegorical feel, it did not offer a definitive moral code or message. Instead, the meaning was left hanging and the implication was that it was to be interpreted by the audience. Only at the conclusion of Jerry's story did I realise my state of total engagement in the moment, and once more become cognizant of my surroundings.

Just what was it about this production that had so engrossed and engaged? While the performances were undoubtedly good, there was nevertheless something special about the construction of *The Zoo Story* (1962), a sort of magic woven into the fabric of the play. This was something that appeared to be *Invisible*, yet was highly sensed or felt. Here the audience was engaged via the word pictures, or images created. In essence then, it seemed that the text was not necessarily realised by the actors, but by audience members in their minds, through individual visualisation/s of the action.

Intrigued as to why this *Invisible* phenomenon peculiar to theatre had gripped me so, it was clear that further investigation of the concept of the *Invisible* in relation to theatre was warranted.

1.1 The *Invisible* in Theatre

The *Invisible* transcends the visible; that is, it can be intuited although never totally articulated for, in essence, it is an intangible property. In theatre it is accepted convention that one thing can be used to represent another. For example, a rope may represent a snake, or an actor might conjure a mythical beast through dialogue and stage play. The use of properties or stagecraft, where one real thing suggests something entirely different, perhaps an unreal thing, situation or world, contributes to the magic. The success of the illusion relies on the audience members' ability to take a leap of faith and suspend their disbelief. They are asked to engage their imaginations and invest in the *Invisible*.

For me, the *Invisible* can be located in the type of theatre that is deliberately ambiguous, as was the case with Jerry's allegory in *The Zoo Story* (1962). The placement of such ambiguities suggests other worlds and layers of meaning that are simultaneously fluid, dichotomous, contradictory, interpretive, and personal; they float over and through the audience yet elude any fixed definition. As a physical property it is *Invisible*; it is nonetheless present. It is something experienced, felt, but not necessarily explicitly understood.

In his seminal theatre manual *The Empty Space* (1968a), Peter Brook (1925-) proposes a Holy Theatre where the paramount goal of the theatrical experience is to "capture in our arts the invisible currents that rule our lives" (Brook, 1968a: 45). Brook (1968a) also notes that "the stage is a place where the invisible can appear" (Brook, 1968a: 42). Here, the potential of theatre is likened to a religious experience, and the *Invisible* to a manifestation of a divine or intangible thing. For Brook (1968a), this particular style or approach to theatre-making, one that captures a sense of that which is *Invisible*, represents the pinnacle of theatrical success, in artistic terms. A theatre that seeks to follow

this particular aesthetic, or one that is guided by a set of philosophical principles relating to this concept might be termed *invisiblist* theatre.

For me, *invisiblist* theatre seems to operate outside the Aristotelian theatre convention in both structure and appearance. In the *Poetics* (trans. 1995) Aristotle maintains that the two integral principles of theatre are action and character. He advises that the well-made play adheres to a three act structure and that the narrative is linear, with events occurring in chronological order. The plot construction is informed by cause and effect, and throughout the play, the protagonist or hero undertakes a physical and spiritual journey. The goal of Aristotelian theatre is to elicit a sense of catharsis for the audience. That is, in the tragedy, the audience is purged of their emotions, fear and pity for the protagonist via the resolution of the major conflict. As the writer resolves the dramatic tension, a moral imperative or universal meaning is presented to the spectators (Aristotle, trans. 1995). The singular or universal meaning prevalent in Aristotelian theatre is in contrast to the Invisible theatrical experience in which precise meaning eludes definition. Instead this experience comprises something *other* than that represented by the Aristotelian model.

This otherness requires in-depth exploration in order to determine its potentialities. As a playwright returning to the form, reinvigorated by the *invisiblist* experience of Albee's (1962) play, what might I learn from that event to further my own writing trajectory and effect a sense of the Invisible for the audience? That is, what might be the genesis of this *Invisible* manifestation conjured by Albee (1962)? And to what extent is this concept of the *Invisible* in the performative mode necessarily isolated to this experience of *The Zoo Story* (1962)? Might this be replicated in other productions of this particular play, or in other extant texts, or even new works for the stage? In fact, is there a latent current of Invisibility to be tapped to enhance and complicate the performative experience? How might this be achieved textually by a writer for performance, albeit an emergent playwright?

1.2 The *Invisiblist* Writer

For me, in *The Zoo Story* (1962), the *Invisible* was made manifest through the trance-like effect induced by the playwright's use of language. It follows that this *otherness* of theatre might be strongly linked to the construction of language in the text. This might take the form of a *sound-scape* that evokes images, ideas and an emotional response in the audience as with Albee's (1962) play.

Julia Kristeva, proponent of semianalyse, or the blending of psychoanalysis and semiotics, theorises an *otherness* of language, one that she refers to as *poetic* language (Kristeva, 1980). For Kristeva, (1980, 1984) *poetic* language is that existing between the speaker's everyday syntax, and the vocal manifestation of any latent desires; essentially a rupture in everyday language patterns (Kristeva, 1980, 1984).

Kristeva (1980, 1984) postulates that the subject is always caught between two processes of meaning or of signification. That is, speakers are simultaneously present in "two modalities" (Kristeva, 1984: 23) of language, or between unconscious and conscious driving forces (Kristeva, 1980, 1984). The subject, caught between a symbolic and semiotic language disposition becomes a *split* subject (Kristeva, 1980). This *split* or speaking subject is thus engendered by both the semiotic chora and the symbolic, "leaving its imprint on the dialectic between the articulation and its process" (Kristeva, 1980: 25). This dialectic yields *poetic* language, or that which is "screened out by ordinary language, i.e. social constraint" (Kristeva, 1980: 25).

Kristeva (1980) likens the ambience of *poetic* language, to a "carnavalesque discourse" (Kristeva, 1980: 133). As specific examples of this *otherness* in relation to language, she cites "the first echolalias of infants as rhythms and intonations... the rhythms, intonations and glossalalias in psychotic discourse" (Kristeva, 1980:133).

For Kristeva (1980), the writer and practitioner Antonin Artaud (1896 -1948) is one proponent of *poetic* language, as he explores the *semiotic* on stage in a metaphysical and visceral way. This is apparent in Artaud's (1970) manifesto in relation to his *Theatre of Cruelty*:

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey. That is to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its full physical shock potential, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflexions in a completely tangible manner and restore their shattering power and really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one might almost say alimentary, sources, against its origins as a hunted beast, and finally to consider language in the form of Incantation.

(Artaud, 1970: 35)

Here Artaud (1970) calls for almost a new interpretation of the function of language. Director Peter Brook (1968a, 1968b) attempted to distil Artaud's (1970) theatre manifesto for the London stage in the 1960s, on the grounds that the writer "must find his way to the new idiom" (Brook, 1968a: 37). In relation to that journey he speculates thus:

Is there another language, just as exacting for the author, as a language of words? Is there a language of actions, a language of sounds – a language as word-as-part-of movement, of word-as-lie, word-as-parody, of word-as-rubbish, as-word-of-contradiction, of word-shock or word-cry?

(Brook, 1968a: 49)

If such an *otherness* of language, in relation to its construction and delivery, is a trigger for the *Invisible* in performance, what else might contribute to its manifestation? For example, the Aristotelian model privileges form or structure and character as the building blocks of theatre (Aristotle, trans. 1995). If *invisiblist* theatre operates outside the Aristotelian frame, it follows that a writer

seeking to explore an *invisiblist* aesthetic might look to the texts of playwrights whose works exhibit an *otherness* in relation to form and character, in addition to language. This canon might include, but is not limited to the works of playwrights such as Samuel Beckett (1906 – 1989), Gertrude Stein (1874 - 1946), Suzan-Lori Parks (1964-), and Sarah Kane (1971-1999). Their works might be traced or *mined* in order to locate and probe a tradition of *otherness* and of *invisiblist* writing.

As a writer working within an Australian context, it is also important to *mine* the work of selected Australian playwrights exhibiting *otherness*. These include the performance texts of Jenny Kemp (1949-), Daniel Keene (1955-) and the Queensland based playwright Norman Price (1939-), whose works all evidence an *otherness* in relation to form, character and/or language. This *otherness* may reference local/regional culture and ideas, and reflect a particular Australian *invisiblist* aesthetic, yet it is *invisiblist*, nevertheless.

The presence of *otherness* might potentially be located in the everyday world also. For example, Kemp's play *Still Angela* (2002), features a woman sitting on a chair in her kitchen. From this static point, the woman, Angela, negotiates the experience of her life thus far by reflecting on her inner dreams and desires. This inner world transports her into "the social realm, the landscape, the stratosphere and then returns her safely to the earth" (Baxter, 2002:5). On stage this is conveyed by a juxtaposition of non-linear action, almost like framed moments in (un)chronological time, as well as the deceptively sparse text. The *Invisible* is at play, for me, in the vastness of the inner world to which the play alludes, that is, through the writer's (un)ordering of the character's experience itself, and the nature of a script with multiple trajectories.

For me, the *Invisible* is also linked to the imagination and the notion of filling in the gaps. Playwright Norman Price's *Barking Dogs* (2002) conjures a sense of the *Invisible*, even on an initial or *cold* read. This is achieved through the words unspoken that hang between the writer's considered placement of the phrasing and pauses. Price (2002) is especially concerned with the "spaces [that] appear between the language" (Price, 2002:17).

For Price, “there are shades of meaning and emotional response that are layered between, and within, the text that have to be uncovered” (Price, 2002: 17). These spaces connect to, or function as a way in to the text and the performance for the audience members, who are naturally seeking some manifestation of the human condition, or something to which they can relate. In the space they can insert their own meanings.

These examples of the *Invisible* in theatre texts and performance encompass an otherness in relation to form, character and/or language. In the script, however, what specifically contributes to the realisation of the Invisible in production? While it may be embedded in the written text due to a combination of *writerly* elements, it is not realised until the text is physically enacted on stage, that is, made *live*. This *live factor* impinges on the presence of an audience, and its engagement with the text. For Beresford (1994), in this mode of total engagement with the action, character and/or language, the audience “unwittingly become a part of the text’s location and further, its definition” (Beresford, 1994: 88). This *live factor* is significant in relation to *invisiblist* theatre.

1.3 The *Live Factor* in *Invisiblist* Theatre

Each moment in a play is a frame locked in time, a moving still, *existing only in the Now* – the current or the present. As a result of the unedited human energies at play, no single moment can ever be repeated in exactly the same way and no two performances will be identical. An actor may drop a line or a technician may forget a cue, but the action rolls on regardless. Thus there is no absolute or tangible record of performance. Phelan (1993) asserts that

Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.

(Phelan, 1993: 146)

So a video recording, while it archives, cannot capture the *buzz*, the transaction of energy, the feeling in the air that is created each moment in the live performance. *Live* interaction between actor and audience is also absent from other forms of visual communication/expression, such as film and television. This is because each visual moment is first constructed, set up, captured or effectively locked on film, which is then edited to serve a cohesive whole. In contrast, for theatre, the moments remain un-edited and, as such, the action is *live*. This correlates with the notion of being in the *now* - where the actor and audience are present and engaged in the immediate moment, or the *immediate now*.

For me, the *temporality* or the *live* factor is intrinsic to the *invisiblist* paradigm. In the instance of *The Zoo Story* (1962), I was so engaged with the *mise en scene* that all awareness of anything else fell away. This sense of *live*-ness was all-encompassing, albeit *Invisible*. What implications does this sense of the *immediate now* have for the writer attempting to enter the realm of *invisiblist* theatre? And what might the *now* represent in this paradigm?

1.4 Contemporaneity: An Intersection of Nows?

The *invisiblist* writing project in fact, may require an engagement with the *now* on *two* levels. The first is the *momentary* or *immediate now* brought about by the *live factor* of performance. The second is the prevailing wider or *peripheral now* - that reflecting modern and current aspects of the cultural/political/social *status quo*. *Modern* can be a problematic or loaded term, however, given its conceptual relationship to art/cultural movements. For me, the *modern* is historical: the same might be said of *post-modern*. Instead, for Smith (2005), the term *contemporaneity* could serve as a potential label for *now*-ness in this exploration of *Now* in the theatrical context:

What is contemporaneity? The idea of the 'contemporary' has always meant more than just 'now', more than what modern used to mean. The term calibrates a number of distinct but related ways of being 'of' 'with' or 'in' time. In each of these meanings there is a

distinct sense of present-ness, of being in the present, of beings that are present to each other and to the time they happen to be in.

(Smith 2005: 64)

Being present and having an awareness of the presence of others - both the audience and the actor/character - appears integral to contemporaneity and echoes the dynamic of the *live factor* so intrinsic to *invisiblist* theatre. Smith (2005) explores this further, suggesting that:

An essential quality of contemporaneity is its immediacy, its instanteity, its prioritising of the moment over time, the instant over the epoch, of direct experience of multiplicitous complexity over the singular simplicity of distanced reflection. If we were to generalise this quality ... we would see that contemporaneity consists precisely in disjunctures of perception, in mismatching ways of seeing the same world....

(Smith, 2005: 64)

The privileging of the singular moment over greater time affords a key insight into the experience of the *immediate now* in theatre. Additionally, the varied perception of the same moment in question suggests that the *immediate now*, while a collective audience experience, is also personal or idiosyncratic, due to singular interpretations.

How might the *peripheral now* inform a creative text to reflect this contemporaneity? Answers might be found by gazing outwards, towards the writings of those who theorise aspects of the wider or *peripheral now*. Frederic Jameson is one such theorist. Jameson (1981, 1991) proposes that all artefacts are a product of their cultural/economic/political *status quo*. That is, if the current cultural turn is regarded as the latter stages of postmodernity, then postmodern theory operates in dialogue with the economic *status quo*. Thus Jameson (1991) posits the defining postmodern view, constituting a "scepticism

towards metanarratives” (Jameson, 1991: 6), as a result of the economic force; that is, he locates postmodern values within Marxist theory.

Jameson foregrounds this interrogation of the political/cultural paradigm in *The Political Unconscious* (1981). In terms of the critical interpretation of a cultural artefact, for Jameson (1981), the political perspective is paramount. He regards this political interpretation

...not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today – the psychoanalytic or the myth-critical, the stylistic, the ethical, the structural – but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation.

(Jameson, 1981: 17).

Such a perspective, where the political reading is the “absolute horizon” or, definitive reading, indicates that a given text is not simply a polemical construction. The reading of a text becomes an unmasking of a “socially symbolic act” (Jameson, 1981: 20). This act is considered to be an unconscious one; as a result of the social climate the product is a political animal by default.

Thus all art, including written text, is informed by the stories/narratives, ideas and trace memories shared by greater human society through the ages. The utilisation of these in art forms is an unconscious act by the artist and might be considered as a foray into the *peripheral now*.

Jean Baudrillard also theorises contemporary society via its modes of communication and state of postmodernity. Baudrillard (1994a) envisions a culture of the *hyperreal*, or a *hyperreality*, where the real is effaced by a simulation. In this condition there exists “a plethora of myths of origin...signs of reality...truth...and authenticity” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 6). In other words, this era of the *hyperreal* is also akin to a proposal of fragmentation of meaning in postmodernity. The *hyperreal* results in a totalisation of culture, or “unconditional aestheticization” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 68), characterised by “incessant circulation of choices, readings, references, marks, decoding“

(Baudrillard, 1994a: 67). Thus, the *peripheral now* is marked by an inundation of cultural stimulation, or a *hyperculture* (Baudrillard, 1994a).

Herbert Blau (1926-) and Augusto Boal (1931-) are both cultural/theatre theorists and practitioners who, in very different ways, explore and make reference to the notion of the *peripheral now* in their creative praxis. Their roles as directors and in Boal's case as a playwright, ensure that they also engage in the realm of the *immediate now*. In the work of these practitioners it might be said that aspects of the *immediate* and *peripheral nows* intersect or *fuse*. How might these notions of *now* relate to an aesthetic of *otherness*, or indeed *invisiblist* theatre, in a specific *writerly* frame? Therein lies the challenge of this study: to seek and find pathways through the *invisible* and the *live factor* or an engagement with the *now/s*.

1.5 Rationale for and Aims of the Study

The initial task is to locate a tradition and identify aspects of what might constitute *invisiblist* Theatre. This also involves an exploration of the concept of contemporaneity in theatre writing, through an interrogation of the ways in which the *immediate* and *peripheral now* filter into *invisiblist* text and performance, or how these *fuse* in *live* theatre.

While the concept of the *Invisible* has been raised in theatre texts such as those of Brook (1968) and Boal (1992), there would appear to have been little or no formal research in relation to those elements which might characterise an *invisiblist* theatre experience. That is, what might a writer do in the creative process to make space for or allow the *Invisible* to manifest in performance?

Similarly, while there is much practice-based evidence of theatre texts engaging with cultural/political/social issues, there is a dearth of formal research that seeks to address the processes of engaging with these in the *immediate* and/or *peripheral nows*.

More specifically, the study aims

- I. To locate a tradition underpinning *invisiblist* performance writing.
- II. To explore what might constitute the *now* in a theatrical context.
- III. To identify principles from Aims I) and II) to employ in a creative text for performance, that is, a play in which the *Invisible* and *now* coalesce.
- IV. To realise the resultant text for performance; that is, make it *live*.
- V. To synthesize data from Aims I), II), III), IV) to create a model that blends the *Invisible* and the *now* to achieve a theatre ethos that celebrates *contemporaneity*.

1.6 Organization of the Study

Chapter Two encapsulates the probing of extant *invisiblist* literature, and is underpinned theoretically by an exploration of Julia Kristeva's proposed *Semiotic* or *poetic* language disposition (Kristeva, 1980). It explores the performance texts and practices of *invisiblist* theatre writers and practitioners, and identifies specific features of *invisiblist* writing relating to an *otherness* of form, character and/or language.

Chapter Three of the study focuses on the *now*, in both the *immediate* and *peripheral* sense. It analyses the literature of theorists who engage with these concepts, as well as analysing the practices and writings of theatre practitioners who explore and exploit these notions of *now*, in text and *live* performance.

Methodological processes are encapsulated in Chapter Four, which synthesizes the findings from the literature in Chapters Two and Three. It also examines the findings from previous research and writing practice, and the findings from the

implementation of a pilot study to derive pathways toward writing and staging the planned creative text.

Chapter Five documents the process of writing the performance text, including an account of the dramaturgical input and the text development processes. The two *standing up* or realisation processes of the hybrid *invisiblist/ now* text comprise the body of Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven comprises the pilot study text and a copy of the final script as the creative outcomes of the research project, in addition to photographic images of the performed creative text. Chapter Eight details the outcomes of Aims III) and IV) and posits a framework towards a hybrid *invisiblist/ now* text for performance. Chapter Eight also identifies possible future directions for this writer's creative practice and research.

A note on subjectivities: in relation to the use of *I*, and indeed each of the associated self-referential terms used throughout the study, such as *for me*, please note that these denote the writing subject, in the Kristevian sense. While Kristeva (1984) uses *he* when citing works of (male) authors such as Joyce and Artaud in her texts, she generally employs a more universal *we*, and sometimes *it*, when referring to the speaking subject (Kristeva, 1984). For Kristeva's translator, Roudiez (1984), both of these have the potential to be problematic in translation, as the former may be perceived as plural (or royal), and the latter is too abstract.

For Kristeva (1984), the subject is "always *both* symbolic *and* semiotic" (Kristeva, 1984: 24) in the signifying process. That is, they are effectively caught between the Lacanian *he* and the mediation of the mother, and *semiotic chora* (Kristeva, 1984). Thus I am simply *I* in this thesis, "marked by indebtedness to both" (Kristeva, 1984: 24). Similarly, in the creation of the text, I align with the Artaudian *I*, that *other writerly* subject privileging a metaphysical and Kristevian *poetic* language function. Here, with logic and lucidity, I am deliberate and anarchic writer both, seeking to sidestep being that "playwright who uses nothing but words" and, instead becoming an apprentice in

otherness; one of those “specialists in objective animated enchantment” (Artaud, 1970: 54).

CHAPTER TWO: LOCATING AN *INVISIBLIST* THEATRE TRADITION

2.1 Towards a Theoretical Foundation

In order to identify what might contribute to the realisation of the *Invisible* in live performance, the first recourse is extant theoretical literature and performance texts that advocate for an *otherness* in writing. Hence the literature will be probed specifically for texts that call for, or demonstrate an *otherness* in form, character and/or language, as these are arguably the foundational elements of performance writing. The review of performance literature builds on the theoretical foundations for an *otherness* of language, as proposed by Bulgarian-French theorist Julia Kristeva. Her writings have been chosen as those most likely to provide a pathway into locating a tradition of *otherness* in literature, and more specifically, language.

2.1.1 Kristeva: An Otherness of Language

A prolific literary theorist, feminist and novelist, Kristeva trained in and practises psychoanalysis, whilst simultaneously investigating the politics of the language paradigm. This makes her a principal proponent of *semanalyse*, the blending of psychoanalysis and semiotics. Kristeva's psychoanalytic background ensures that she sees the *subject*, and its construction, to some extent, in the same way as psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981) before her. She simultaneously searches to reframe the subject, albeit within a poststructuralist, or less formal, context.

For instance, in regard to the structure of the psyche, Lacan (1979) proposes that a child becomes a member of society when he begins to speak - linked with Freud's (1962) *Oedipus complex*; the stage of psychosexual development where the child identifies with his father, but is possessive of his mother (Freud 1905). Lacan (1977) refers to this as *the Name-of-the-Father*, which encapsulates accepting the rules and restrictions controlling both the individual desires, and rules of communication (Lacan, 1977). That is, the subject's

acceptance of the rules of language effectively equates to an acceptance of the rules of society, which is symbolised by the law or the word of the father figure (Lacan, 1977). This acceptance of the father's law is known as the acknowledgement of the *symbolic order*, (Lacan, 1977). Thus, as it relates to social mores and the laws of communication, the *symbolic order* is largely within a linguistic dimension. As it is also related to the psychosexual development of the subject, the symbolic order has implications for gender identity. While the male child takes his place in the community, finding an identity within the patriarchy, physiologically and symbolically represented by what Freud (1962) and Lacan (1977) both refer to as the *phallus*, the female child does not. That is, the female child cannot mimic the presence of the *phallus*, and so essentially experiences a linguistic void. Her lack of subjectivity denotes her a *silent other* (Lacan, 1977) and thus she is without representation in the symbolic order.

Kristeva (1995) concurs with this Lacanian proposal of the *symbolic order* and the construction of sexual differences; however, she refers to this as the "sociosymbolic contract" (Kristeva, 1995: 223). Kristeva (1980, 1995) addresses the notion of the *lack* (of phallus) *in* relation to the female child. She maintains that, while the *symbolic order* must be accepted and upheld, it is not appropriate for a female subject to simply adopt a masculine model (Kristeva, 1980). Instead she postulates that

...the problem is to control this resurgence of phallic presence; to abolish it at first, to pierce through the paternal wall of the superego and afterwards, to remerge still uneasy, split apart, asymmetrical, overwhelmed with a desire to know, but a desire to know more and differently than what is encoded-spoken-written.

(Kristeva, 1980: 165)

In other words, Kristeva theorises that an exploration of sexual differences might provide a pathway into knowing that which is *other* than that of *law-of-the-father*. One way this might be uncovered lies in adopting a multiplicity of *provisional identities* within the context of the already established *symbolic order* (Kristeva, 1995). She also advocates reclaiming the role of the mother,

and “the reinstatement of maternal territory into the very economy of language” (Kristeva, 1995: 137) suggesting that therein might lie an advocate for social change.

In this way, the female *in between* these *provisional identities* becomes the “subject-in-process” (Kristeva, 1980: 137), an answer to Lacan’s position of a female without subjectivity (Lacan, 1977). For Kristeva (1980), *the subject in process* impinges upon these identities or fantasies made manifest in works of art. As “artistic practice is the laboratory of minimal signifying structure” (Kristeva, 1980:137), it follows that works of art in this vein essentially exhibit *another language*, that which does not necessarily correspond with the language of the *symbolic order* (Kristeva, 1980).

That is, from these explorations of identity through the making of art, such forays may manifest a different language disposition, which Kristeva (1980) refers to as *poetic language*. Such is the thematic concern of her two seminal publications: *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980) and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). *Poetic language* for Kristeva (1980) might be considered to be

...distinct from language as used for ordinary communication – but not because it may involve a so-called departure from a norm; it is almost an otherness of language.

(Roudiez, 1980: 5)

For Kristeva (1980), poetic language exists somewhere between the *symbolic*, and what she refers to as the *semiotic*. The symbolic relates to the language function that will

...prepare the future speaker for entrance into meaning and signification.

(Kristeva, 1980: 136)

That is, the *symbolic* encompasses “language as nomination as sign, syntax” (Kristeva, 1980: 136). It is the language of the *symbolic order*, or the

sociosymbolic contract, learned from the community, the law, society and the father. For Kristeva (1980), the rationalist, formulaic, and arbitrary approximation of signs, syntax and signification can render sign to be disassociated from the subject (Roudiez, 1980: 6). Apparently the *semiotic* language disposition has the potential to restore to a “dialectical process” (Roudiez, 1980: 6) between this and the *symbolic* signifying system.

It is important to note that, while *semiotics* might generally be regarded as interchangeable for, or representative of, the science of signs, intricately linked with linguistics, which, in Kristeva’s words, had its origins in Saussure, “for all intents and purposes” (Kristeva, 1980, 24), she is more particular and singular in her usage of the term. For Kristeva (1980), *the semiotic* is related to drives, impulses and “the Freudian notion of the unconscious” (Kristeva, 1984: 22). As such, the *semiotic* “introduces wandering and fuzziness into language” and derives from the “instinctual and maternal” (Kristeva, 1980: 136).

Kristeva’s (1984) use of the *semiotic* has its origins in her interpretation of a Greek word *chora*, which denotes

...an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation
constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases.

(Kristeva, 1984: 25)

This *articulation* is differentiated from a language *disposition* as the latter can be represented, while the *chora* “can never be definitively posited” (Kristeva, 1984: 26). Manifesting as rupture or rhythm, the *chora*

...precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality and temporality.
Although the *chora* can be designated and regulated...one can
never give it axiomatic form.

(Kristeva, 1984: 26)

Kristeva (1980) cites as examples of the *semiotic chora*:

...the first echolalias of infants as rhythms and intonations... the rhythms, intonations and glossalalias in psychotic discourse.

(Kristeva, 1980:133)

These sounds produce “musical but also nonsense effects” and Kristeva (1980) likens the ambience of *poetic language* to a “carnavalesque discourse” (Kristeva, 1980: 133). Kristeva (1980) proposes such a language disposition as a conduit to linguistic veracity:

In short, this would establish poetic language as the object of linguistics’ attention in its pursuit of truth in language.

(Kristeva, 1980: 25)

Kristeva (1984) refers to the language or articulations produced by impulses or drives, the *semiotic* disposition, as *genotext*. Those that ensure communication, issuing from the *symbolic* are known as *phenotext* (Kristeva, 1984). Both textual dispositions are encountered and are integral to signification processes. Fundamental to *genotext* is the notion of *materiality*, those sounds that privilege properties such as shape and aural qualities over meaning (Roudiez, 1984). For Kristeva (1984), *genotext* is not necessarily “understood by structural or generative linguistics” (Kristeva, 1984: 86). It is, however, regarded as more of “a *process*, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral” (Kristeva, 1984: 86).

Kristeva (1980, 1984) introduces another concept in relation to textual processes – that of *inter-textuality*. Defined as a “transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another” (Kristeva, 1984: 59 -60), *inter-textuality* accounts for the fact that any signifying practice, including text (for example a novel) is in a state of flux, or considered to be “a field of transpositions of various signifying systems” (Kristeva, 1984: 60). As such a text is “never single, complete and identical to themselves” and is “always plural, shattered and capable of being tabulated” (Kristeva, 1984, 60). This means that, rather than being a totality unto itself, each signifying practice, each text and reading

of a text is a fluid, inter-dependent process, relying upon previous systems of signification and texts.

Roland Barthes (1915 -1980) also employs the term *inter-textuality* in his discussion of text, although his position differs from that of Kristeva (1984). In his critical essay *The Death of the Author*, first published in 1967, then included in the anthology of essays *Image-Music-Text* (1977), Barthes proposes that all literary works are separate from their author. They are also derivative, in that each new work foregrounds various texts from which it has borrowed (Barthes, 1977). For Barthes (1977),

...the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks.

(Barthes, 1977: 39)

Thus, Barthes's (1977) concept of *inter-textuality* relates to the author and literary influences on text, while Kristeva (1984) is concerned with the outcomes of a transposition of systems of signs or codes.

Kristeva (1980, 1984) identifies several writers whose work exhibit a *semiotic* or *Carnavalesque* discourse, including Lautreamont, Mallarme, Joyce and Artaud. For Kristeva (1984) these writers produce texts that require the reader to relinquish "the lexical, syntactic, and semantic operation of deciphering" (Kristeva, 1984: 103). Of these, it is Artaud the theatre practitioner whose texts most manifest the *semiotic*, which "signifying unity itself vanishes in glossalalia" (Kristeva, 1984: 186). Accordingly, by looking to the writings and practice of Artaud, a language exhibiting *otherness*, or a *poetic* language may be distilled.

2.2 New Theatrical Principles

This *otherness* of language or Kristevian *poetic* language will be explored further and in more detail in the practices and texts of theatre practitioners identified as *invisibilists*. As indicated, Kristeva (1980) cites seminal theatre practitioner Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) as an early and important proponent of poetic language in theatre. For her, Artaud's principal preoccupation was exploring *poetic language* or the *semiotic* on stage in a metaphysical and visceral way.

2.2.1 Artaud: Caught Between Thought and Articulation

Antonin Artaud is probably most well known for his manifesto on, and evidenced practice of, his performance aesthetic the *Theatre of Cruelty*. This practice is characterised by symbolic and sometimes violent (although not systematically so) stage imagery, ritualization, and a particular stage language, existing somewhere between thought and its articulation through gesture (Artaud, 1970). This playwright, poet, director and performer, working mainly in France in the 1920s-1940s, was anarchic and uncompromising in his vision for a theatre practice that both reflected, and shattered, reality.

Scheer (1996a) quotes Kristeva in a recent interview, on Artaud's contribution to literature:

Artaud has enabled us to understand literature is not only a text, but that it is an experience. It supposes a huge task of adjusting words, phrases and sounds, but embedded in this text is an experience which embraces the body of the subject and its relation to the other. And in this embrace a traumatic state is revealed.

(Scheer, 1996a: 267)

For Kristeva, according to Scheer (1996a), Artaud's theatre writings are conducive not to the logical realm of grammar and syntax but to an *otherness* of

text – the *experiential*. Not only do Artaud’s texts allow for an experience, however, they are specific to a *traumatic* state or experience – although not necessarily one imbued with the negative connotations usually associated with the word *trauma*. Kristeva, as quoted in Scheer, (1996a) clarifies this point:

Now when one speaks of trauma, one usually thinks of a great pain, of an excess, but an excess of what? An excess of delirium, desire, of passion, of drive. And how do these phenomena manifest themselves? Well, through gestures, vocal gestures in particular: that is screams which smash words and phrases and create an extremely violent and turbulent music, a music which translates a certain bodily dynamic

(Scheer, 1996a: 267 - 268).

For Kristeva, Artaud’s language of trauma or his excesses – his *cruelties* performed or enacted, constitute an *otherness* of language. This is a bodily or corporeal language, which may have a rhythmical or musical quality on stage. Just as these Artaudian vocal gestures “smash words” and engage the body to create a new language, on the stage, it follows that they also create a new *script* (Scheer, 1996a). Effectively this is akin to a new type of writing for performance, not only with words but almost a writing *of*, or *with*, the body. Like any other type of language or writing, it can be read and interpreted for significance. Kristeva (1996) identifies and aligns Artaud’s specific techniques with her own language explorations:

So we find ourselves in a modality of signification which Artaud calls a ‘motility’, a revolving movement. It resembles a dance which mobilises gestures, but which mobilises the voice as well. And so poetry has always mobilised these components that I’ve called a ‘semiotic chora’, this dimension between the surface of signification.

(Scheer 1996a: 268)

Hence, that which is signified in Artaudian bodily-writing performance is of the *semiotic chora*, articulations that defy the syntactical *symbolic* disposition. It is that which is between the skins of meaning.

Just as, on the stage, Artaud's performance language was a bodily one, his published writings could also be said to have a distinct corporeality when read. They have been characterised as "...performative...close to speech, and to DOING" (Stern, 2000: 75). This indicates that, when spoken, the construction of Artaud's language is such that it is conducive to action. The privileging of the *semiotic* language disposition, rather than the definitive, and for Kristeva (1980, 1984), somewhat limiting of the *symbolic*, might be regarded as an overarching theme of Artaud's *oeuvre*: his theatre-writings, poetry, letters and manifestos alike.

Artaud (1970) rejected the institutionalisation of theatre as western museum pieces, a strident view evidenced by his seminal work *The Theatre and its Double* (1970). In this text, he specifically rejects psychological-based costume drama which, for Artaud, was both empty and archaic and, indeed, of which, "the pervading tone stinks to high heaven" (Artaud, 1970: 34). Artaud's premise was not anti-Aristotelian (as might be assumed) but anti-*psychological*; it was a theatre where the *mis-en-scene* is primarily concerned with a character's inner-workings and how this impacts on their trajectory through the action (Weber, 2000). In fact both Aristotle's *Poetics* (1995) and Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* (1970) are built on a premise of privileging action over character (Weber, 2000). Fundamentally what Artaud (1970) rejects is Aristotle's unification of all the dramatic elements to reach a certain *goal* (Weber, 2000). Specifically, this is to deliver a story that ultimately effects *catharsis* for the audience (Aristotle, 1995: 51). Artaud (1970) appears to oppose the notion that writer and actor impart a moral imperative, so that the audience is released from the implications of the drama (Weber, 2000). That is, Artaud (1970) advocated implicating the audience viscerally in the performance.

For Artaud (1970) theatre was to be uncompromisingly oblique, communicating a state of being, as evidenced by his statement that

A real stage play upsets our sensual tranquillity, releases our repressed subconscious, drives us to kind of potential rebellion (since it retains its full value only if it remains potential), calling for a difficult heroic attitude on the part of the assembled groups.

(Artaud, 1970: 19)

For Artaud (1970), theatre is essentially lived on the brink of something irrational, by the audience. Consequently, if theatre, and its audience, are called to such anarchic extremes, existing as

...pure poetry, disorientating the public from the certainties of everyday existence...making impossible its desire to ignore unpleasant reality and bury its collective head in the sand...

(Calder, 1993: 104)

life might also be viewed as a *stand in* for theatre. Artaud pursues a notion that life and theatre are not simply mutually reliant, but inter-dependent forces; *doubles* in fact. His theatre is *cruel* only because life is. He challenges his audience thus:

I defy any spectator infused with the blood of violent scenes...who has seen the rare fundamental motion of his thoughts illuminated in extraordinary events...once outside the theatre....I defy him to indulge in thoughts of war, of riot or motiveless murders.

(Artaud, 1970: 62)

Artaud theorizes that, by embodying cruelty on stage as a reflection or mirror double of reality, the thirst for it in life will diminish for the audience. This is contradictory to contemporary notions regarding violence in film or television, media widely held to perpetuate violence in society. Artaud (1970) however, was referring to the power of *live theatre* and proposed engaging the metaphysical as a means of challenging the literal or circumstantial. The notion of capitalising on spectators' latent thoughts and making them manifest

demonstrates that Artaud (1970) believed these cruelties/horrors he enacted on stage to be dormant in everyone. Thus, for him, theatre becomes the essential representation of reality.

Artaud (1970) personally embodied this synchronicity between life and theatre. When invited to give a lecture on “New Ideas” at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1933, he began his discourse, likening theatre to the plague and then, almost imperceptibly, began to exhibit the symptoms and suffering of a plague victim, as described by his contemporary Anais Nin (1966):

His face was contorted with anguish, one could see the perspiration dampening his hair, his eyes dilated, his muscles became cramped, his fingers struggled to retain their flexibility. He made one feel the parched and burning throat, the pains, the fear, the fire in the guts. He was in agony. He was screaming. He was delirious. He was enacting his own death. His own crucifixion.

(Nin, 1966: 192)

This *immersion of self* into a horrific situation in order to convey a state of being, reflects one of Artaud’s core aesthetics: that “theatre can only happen the moment the inconceivable really begins” (Artaud, 1970: 18). By exhibiting symptoms of a plague victim, metaphysically he *becomes* the plague victim. Cruelty is made *live* bodily, so that theatre mirrors the reality of life.

Specifically, in Artaudian terms, theatre language that supports this embodiment of life’s cruelty/violence /anarchy is essentially metaphysical:

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey. That is to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its full physical shock potential, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflexions in a completely tangible manner and restore their shattering power and really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basely utilitarian, one might almost say

alimentary, sources, against its origins as a hunted beast, and finally to consider language in the form of *Incantation*.

(Artaud, 1970: 35)

Hence language in Artaudian theatre must be invested with shock. It is intended to reverberate in the space (as opposed to be contained within the stage), conveying not what is *normal* but something else, an *other* – to heighten it and make it transcend utilitarianism. The metaphoric comparison of words to hunted beasts; things to be brought down, tamed and consumed suggests that, in theatre, words are only important in the sense of signification and have no intrinsic value. Artaud (1970) pleads for them to be allowed to exist as independent entities, having poetic weight. As properties, this might be in the form of sound or shape. In performance then, this is the language relating to Kristeva's (1980) *poetic language* or the *semiotic*, a text lifted from pedestrian everydayness to heightened *otherness*, the pinnacle of which being, for Artaud (1970), *incantation*.

Incantation confers a spiritual aspect upon the theatre language of Artaud (1970). As discussed, he rejected the museum–style psychological costume based drama prevalent in his day and effectively “replaced the museum with the church” (Beresford, 1994: 7). Described as hyper-religious, he shunned western religion in his writings and turned to Eastern cultures for inspiration, such as that of the Balinese and also the reinterpreted Catholicism of the Mexicans. He held that these traditions – of a more “hallucinatory and fearful aspect” (Artaud, 1970: 36) were examples of what theatre should invoke. In the incantatory language style of Balinese theatre, in particular, Artaud located his muse for performance language. This included actors performing as “moving hieroglyphs” (Artaud, 1970: 37). Vocally he demanded “syncopated inflexions formed at the back of the throat” (Artaud, 1970: 37). This again alludes to a kind of bodily writing – an otherness of language where the text is the body in the space.

Thematically, religious parables and eastern mysticism also underpin Artaud's plays, suggesting that myth is integral to Artaud's work. For Artaud, “all great

myths are dark” and theatre-as–myth “unravels conflicts, liberates powers, releases potential” (Artaud, 1970: 21). This Artaudian use of myth to free powers and potentialities might provide a framework for *invisiblist* theatre. That is myth’s darkness and unknown quantities are conducive to intangibility and magical experience.

Indeed there is an element of shamanism to the practitioner himself. Much has been written about Artaud’s psychotic episodes or *madness*, and his suffering when institutionalised (Scheer, 2000). It is difficult to divorce the theatricality of Artaud’s identity from his work itself. Similarly, many studies of Artaud treat both the man and the body of work, linking themes to the state of his psyche (Scheer, 2000). While the two *may* be inextricably linked, therein lies the challenge of deciphering and interpreting the works *sans* Artaud. Perhaps the real intent of Artaud’s theatre is made manifest in his body of writing itself.

In regard to writing for performance, while much published correspondence testifies to Artaud’s output in relation to his particular theatre aesthetic (Sontang, 1976), in reality he produced only a handful of texts. Of these, *The Cenci* (1969), based on a corrupt sixteenth century papal Count and written in 1935, and Artaud’s first realisation of his *Theatre of Cruelty*, was a commercial and artistic failure, according to critics, (Schumacher, 1989). *The Spurt of Blood* (1989) written in 1925, is considered to be Artaud’s most successful dramatic text and is characterised by its brevity (about three pages) and a certain surrealist quality. The characters comprise amongst others a knight and a wetnurse and the play has a striking visual quality implicit in the stage directions, where things morph into others in front of the audiences’ eyes. For example two stars collide, causing limbs and various other paraphernalia to fall from the sky, a huge hand seizes a prostitute’s hair, which then catches on fire, and genitalia has the propensity to “shimmer like the sun” (Artaud, 1989: 20). *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* (1976), written in 1947, is a radio play text that fuses political rhetoric with rumination on God, faeces and arbitrary matter. There are broad similarities in all of these texts: character exists as a mythical or archetypal figure, imagery and the musical or aural qualities of language are privileged, and form is very much subject to content.

Artaud had much to say on the subject of writing itself, once proclaiming in a 1925 publication of the *Nervometer* that “all writing is filth” (Artaud, 1989:21). He argues that

People who leave the realm of the obscure in order to define whatever is going on in their minds, are filthy pigs.

(Artaud, 1989: 121)

It would appear, from these sentiments that for Artaud, to articulate thoughts by writing them down, with a view to extracting meaning, is an objectionable act. Obscurity of thought is cherished while the definitive is abhorred. Specifically, he targets

...all those who are masters of their own language, all those for whom words mean something... Those for whom certain words and modes of being have only one meaning...are filth.

(Artaud, 1989: 21-22)

To elaborate, those who seek singular meaning and identify with a type of symbolic language system are under attack. In summary: “The whole pack of literati are filth” (Artaud, 1989: 121). Literary pursuits and critical evaluation (and all its proponents) are shunned because, for Artaud (1989), to articulate and categorise a word is reduce it to filth. The magic, ephemeral, intangible or pure thought, word or moment, becomes sullied when defined and attributed meaning.

For Artaud (1989), that “pack of literati” includes playwrights. In Artaud’s theatre of bodily writing and myth,

...a playwright who uses nothing but words is not needed and must give way to specialists in objective, animated enchantment.

(Artaud, 1970:54)

Why then, asks Stern (2000), after making such strong statements, comparatively early in his career, did Artaud continue to write? Why, if “all writing is filth”, and all thinkers and literati are purveyors of filth, does Artaud (1989) pursue a particular theatre aesthetic via several written manifestos and play texts? Stern (2000), rather than reducing Artaud’s contradictions or paradox to the epithet of an enraged madman, complicates it, reading it as a deliberate and conscious invective, one that perverts “the tendency to nail things down” (Stern, 2000: 78). So the contentious proclamation, coupled with the act of continuing to write, proves to be another Artaudian double, one that refracts rather than reflects, contradicting, challenging, and enhancing conversation on the topic.

Artaud has since influenced and informed the work of many practitioners and theorists. Perhaps this is because, as Scheer (1996b) quotes Goodall as saying, Artaud is “...getting at what’s happening more because he is not literal minded” (Scheer, 1996b: 320). Goodall elaborates in the interview that Artaud, is engaging in and proposing an *other* mindedness:

There’s always logic at work but it’s that theatricalisation, it’s the gambling, everything’s in the lucid (sic) mode.

(Scheer, 1996b: 320)

This suggests that Artaud’s non literal-mindedness is deliberate and is essentially the *logic of theatre*. This non-literal, theatrical logic encompasses the indefinable, even contradictory, nature of the *Invisible*. While such writing and theatre may appear abstract, oblique even to the logically-conditioned mind, in *another* language mode or disposition (namely the Kristevian *poetic* or *semiotic*), the arbitrary assignation of concept to word (literal/logical or *symbolic*) is similarly so.

Kristeva (1984) encapsulates Artaud’s thesis: “...everything lies in motility from which, like the rest, humanity has taken nothing but a ghost” (Artaud, cited in Kristeva, 1984: 170). Artaud appears to be saying that, due to the constant revolving of all things, one might experience only a trace of what exists; in other

words we are living with a faint hint, or small representation of the magnitude of the complexities of being. Furthermore, as we are in a constant state of revolution, our realities are limited by our inability to see beyond the next revolution. This concept of the *ghost* when applied to theatre has implications for the *live* aspect of the medium. Artaud's concept of the *ghost* has been further interrogated by Herbert Blau (1982).

In essence then, Artaud (1970) un-conceals ideas of *otherness*, whilst maintaining reverence for the mysticism and magic of theatre and its intangibilities. This is evident through his construction of *another* language, namely a Kristevian *poetic* or *semiotic* one. His alternative offering is of a bodily writing; those *moving hieroglyphics* derived from eastern culture, religion and ritual, and of vocal qualities exploring rhythm and an *otherness* of sound. Similarly, by enacting *cruelty* on stage, he reflects for spectators their reality. Artaud (1970) also foregrounds subversive theoretical ideas of *doubling* and *ghosting*, and uncompromisingly pursues a theatre aesthetic both difficult and thrilling.

Artaud (1970) also occupies the territory of the mind. Although he wrote prolifically, and his body of work is significant, very few of his theatre texts received production in his lifetime. Over the years, Artaud has influenced many diverse theatre practitioners pursuing *another* theatre experience. One such practitioner, styling his own theatre productions after Artaud's legacy of the *poetic* and the *cruel*, is British theatre director Peter Brook.

More than 10 years after Artaud's death, Brook, (1925-) made several attempts to distil Artaud's (1970) largely untested theories into production for the London stage in the 1960s. Several of these experimental productions occurred while Brook was Artistic Director with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) (see 2.2.2). It is important to note, however, that while Artaud (1970) was very articulate on the subject of his vision for the *Theatre of Cruelty*, he left little in the way of a concrete framework or methodology for realising a production. While this may well be because he privileged obscurity and myth over the

prescriptive or formulaic, it appears that to be left to the practitioner to distil and interpret Artaud's writing.

2.2.2 Brook: *Holy Word Shock*

Peter Brook took up this challenge by exploring the tenets of Artaud's (1970) *Theatre of Cruelty*, in an experimental season of theatre in 1963. Over 12 weeks, Brook first auditioned and then re-trained an ensemble in preparation for the 1964 RSC production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1965). According to the rehearsal notes, a typical rehearsal session involved the actors experimenting with primitive quasi-instruments, with a view to re-discovering the notion of rhythm, and engaging the body and voice in the very Artaudian principle of enunciating "a language which went beyond text" (Marowitz, 1966: 156).

Following his time at the RSC, Brook wrote *The Empty Space* (1968a), a "semi-mystical manual" (Meyrick, 2004: 23) reflecting on his practice. *The Empty Space* (1968a), now recognised as a seminal theatre text, could be taken to represent Brook's ruminations on his own particular theatre aesthetic and experience from this time.

In the chapter entitled *Holy Theatre*, Brook theorises a mode for performance in which "we recognize the abstract" (Brook, 1968a: 42). His proposed theatre is one that acknowledges and gives space to the *non-literal*, and also where spectators "are transformed by an art of possession" (Brook, 1968a: 42). Like his predecessor Artaud, Brooke pursues a theatre akin to a religious experience, at once sacred and transformative for the audience. He is careful to emphasise however, that he is not concerned with "deadly sentimentality" or reverence for art's sake, but seeks to "...not only present the invisible but also offer conditions that make its perception possible" (Brook, 1968a: 56).

For Brook the "conditions" required to make manifest the *Invisible* are specific. He likens its presentation to a Zen experience, or other religious teachings, whereby the conditions are dependent upon spiritual factors or "can relate to certain states or to a certain understanding" (Brook, 1968a: 56). For example, to

use a religious analogy, yogic meditation may eventually lead, in theory and scripture at least, to levitation (Brook 1968a). The goal may be enlightenment but the journey to it is attenuated. As Brook acknowledges, the pursuit of such things on stage is involved and “to comprehend the visibility of the invisibility is a life’s work” (Brooke, 1968a: 56).

This suggests that the event of the *Invisible* and its appearance in the theatre is not completely random or accidental but something to be *worked towards*. That is, while not necessarily formulaic (due to its intangible nature), there are certain conditions conducive to its occurrence. Of paramount importance to this, for Brook, is “understanding”. What is left open, however, is whether Brook suggests understanding is required in relation to the audience, or from a practitioner’s perspective, or perhaps both?

In *The Empty Space* (1968a) Brook also nominates the type of theatre to which he, along with Artaud, is diametrically opposed: *Deadly Theatre*. This term applies generally to any production that does not strive to uphold the tenets of *Holy Theatre*. For Brook, *Deadly Theatre* is made particularly manifest in reproductions (note: not necessarily the plays themselves) of classics such as Shakespeare. Of Shakespeare’s plays, he says:

We see his plays done by good actors in what seems like the proper way - they look lively and colourful, there is music and everyone is all dressed up, just as they are supposed to be in the best of classical theatre. Yet secretly we find it excruciatingly boring – in our hearts we blame Shakespeare, or theatre as such, or even ourselves.

(Brook, 1968a: 10)

This is quintessential *museum* theatre, where reproductions of classics are churned out for public consumption. This is problematic, read: *deadly*, because it perpetuates the idea that theatre must adhere to a particular convention - “the proper way”, and, is ultimately “excruciatingly boring”. For Brook (1968a), this is

misleading, and the art form's agenda becomes confused, or even divided in public opinion. Indeed,

...one theatre chases money, another chases glory, another chases emotion, another chases politics, another chases fun....

(Brook, 1968a: 27)

For Brook then, the "theatre that chases money", or where box office success is the dominant driving force, is particularly *deadly*. For Brook (1968a), however, a large proportion of the blame for *deadly theatre* rests squarely on the shoulders of the playwright. Apparently reverence for the writer is a key contributor to *deadliness* in theatre, specifically:

The author [who] has been forced to make a virtue of his specialness, to turn his literariness into a crutch for a self importance that he knows is not justified by his work.

(Brook, 1968a: 34)

In a perceived theatre hierarchy, the writer is perched on his self-made pedestal, attached to his title or occupation, one not necessarily supported by the quality of his work. Arguably, Brook (1968a) has simply replaced this hierarchical role with that of *director*, a relatively new concept, peculiar to the 20th century and one which he himself helped to define. This position will be explored further in the subsequent discussion of Brook's (1968a) practice. Essentially, he demands that the playwright reject "the prisons of anecdote, consistency and style" (Brook, 1968a: 36) – redundant formulas for Brook (1968a). Instead the writer "must find his way to the new idiom" (Brook, 1968a: 37) and this appears to mean "a theatre in which the play, the event itself, stands in place of a text" (Brook, 1968a: 49). Here Brook has paraphrased Artaud and is arguing for a new type of theatre text, comprising a new *language* in theatre.

Nevertheless this somewhat mystical theatre model remains elusive until Brook's (1968a) practice is interrogated. *Another* language becomes bodied/

lived only in performance. This became evident in Brook's (1968a) work, particularly in the critical success of his productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

In 1964 Brook directed the RSC production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1965), a play based on the events of the French Revolution and set in a mental institution. Brook (1968a) departed from a faithful rendition of a text as written. Instead he has experimented with the text of the *Marat/Sade* (1965) to accommodate his individual aesthetic and vision for the work. In this particular production, a large amount of dialogue was edited out and meaning was conveyed through physical imagery, such as when an actress used her hair as a whip (Shellard, 2006: 3). Hence, the theatre language was closely linked to the corporeal. Brook (1968a) demonstrates this in the direction of the play's conclusion as cited by him below:

At the end of the play the asylum goes berserk: all the actors improvise with the utmost violence and for an instant the stage image is naturalistic and compelling...Yet it was at this moment... a stage manageress walked on to the stage, blew a whistle and the madness immediately ended. In this action a conundrum was presented. A second ago, the situation had been hopeless: now it is all over, the actors are pulling off their wigs: of course it's just a play. So we begin to applaud. But unexpectedly the actors applaud us back, ironically. We react to this by a momentary hostility against them as individuals, and we stop clapping. I quote this as a typical alienation series, of which each incident forces us to adjust our position.

(Brook, 1968a: 75)

Here, Brook has borrowed Bertolt Brecht's concept of *alienation* to disarm the spectator. *Alienation* is a technique used in a performance (often taking a social issue as central theme) to alert the audience to their responsibility for their individual theatrical experience. An example of *Alienation* might be the interruption to the flow of unfolding action with song or other devices, such as

holding up placards announcing the title of the next scenario. The primary agenda is that a lesson is learnt, which is conducive to Brecht's parable-like play texts. In Brook's 1964 production of *Marat/Sade* (1965) too, *alienation* is employed to make the audience consider their role in the experience.

The use of this technique, as directed by Brook (1968a), effectively alters the meaning of the performance. For the audience the experience changes; they are no longer simply watching a play, but are implicated in the events. Through this *otherness* of performance, that is, through the alteration of the transaction between audience and actors, the theatre language changes. It is lived bodily, not only by the actors but also by the audience, through their physical reaction to the performance; of applause, momentary confusion and finally, retraction from the *mise en scene*. Here Brook (1968a) has arguably extended the writer's text beyond its original intent, theatricalising the language by directing the actors (and audience) to *embody* the text. In this way, by constructing the "conditions" through his direction, Brook makes the "perception" of the *Invisible* "possible", due to the exploration of an *otherness* in theatrical language.

In relation to a theatre of *another* language and therefore *another* meaning, Brook searches further, this time turning specifically to word:

Is there another language, just as exacting for the author, as a language of words? Is there a language of actions, a language of sounds – a language as word-as-part-of movement, of word-as-lie, word-as-parody, of word-as-rubbish, as-word-of-contradiction, of word-shock or word-cry?

(Brook, 1968a: 49)

In essence, this *other* language, with word as *something else*, rejects dialogue as it is located within the *symbolic* language disposition. Instead Brook (1968a) appears to privilege the Kristevian *semiotic* or *poetic* language disposition as discussed earlier (see 2.1)

In the collaboratively devised production of *US* (1968b) for the RSC, Brook interrogates a political issue: the American/Vietnam war, through this *otherness* of language. By rejecting formal play scripts altogether, the ensemble developed and performed a treatise on civilian passivity in relation to this particular war. At the outset of rehearsals for *US* (1968b), the director proposed that:

In the case of Vietnam, it is reasonable to say that everyone is concerned, yet no one is concerned: if everyone could hold in his mind through one single day both the horror of Vietnam and the normal life he is leading, the tension between the two would be intolerable.

(Brook, 1968b: 11)

This contradiction became the premise of *US* (1968b): a dramatic confrontation that sought to explore and present all facets of the issue. Brook felt that no existing theatre text was suitable to convey the complexity of this subject. In order to convey the prevailing atmosphere of indifference, the ensemble was required “to start on the work of forging a language” (Hunt, 1968: 13). Progressive for its times, stylistically *US* (1968b) resembled a collage, as it was an ensemble-devised piece where the actors worked from ideas and images to improvise scenes. These were then shaped and moulded by the director – a process departing from the focus of character and story by adhering to a text. This new style of dramatic presentation provided the basis of a new theatre language in terms of composition of the production (context/ form) and content. Imagery and physical action became the forms of communication in this new theatre language. For example, according to the (post-production) script for *US* (1968b), in the final moments of the play, an actor releases several white butterflies. The audience’s sense of validation, attributed to this image of hope, is devastated in the next minute, however, when he produces a lighter and simulates setting one alight. For Brook’s actors and audience this gesture essentially communicated the inherent inconsistencies of the production’s original premise.

Brook's proposed *word-shock* or *word-cry* was apparently employed for particular scenes in *US* (1968b). For example, at one moment two actors conducted two groups or "choirs" (Brook, 1968b: 126) in rival songs. While each *choir* attempted to drown the other out, the meaning of the words is lost. Thus, the lyrics and music do not have significance or bearing on the action themselves. Rather, the meaning can be inferred from the *word-as-action*. Reverence for word as signification was largely rejected. In this case *word* serves another function.

Fortier (2004) also acknowledges that Brook (1968a, 1968b) holds no reverence for the playwright/author, only for the text inasmuch as its scope and potentiality for production (Fortier, 2004: 143). In the infamous 1969 touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Brook maintained complete fidelity to Shakespeare's written text, while apparently attributing it another meaning entirely. For Selbourne (1982), Brook reinterprets the text to the point where he apparently "induces responses which the text does not yield" (Selbourne, 1982: 93). That is, according to Selbourne (1982) the director contemporises the production by rejecting a Victorian-era style presentation (itself an appropriation of Elizabethan values); that which is "excruciatingly boring" and manifests *deadly theatre* (Brook, 1968a). Instead Brook reinvigorates the text via a multiplicity of world theatre forms and modes of performance, including amongst others, Japanese theatre and wrestling, Chinese circus and Pacific Island ritual (Selbourne, 1982).

Thus, for Brook (1968a, 1968b) it is not the text or words themselves that dictate meaning in such a production, but the reinterpretation of the underlying currents of magic originally plotted by Shakespeare. Instead the writer's intent is made manifest only when it is re-channelled as

...the only way to find the true path to the speaking of a word [is]
through a process that parallels the original creative one.

(Brook, 1968a: 13)

Brook's (1968a) decentralisation of the author then gives the play *other* meaning. It might be argued that Brook's practice exemplifies a director's theatre, one orientated towards the director/actor dynamic rather than simply adhering faithfully to the writer's intent. Nevertheless, as such a practitioner, he opens the experience up to the audience by creating a theatre language that transcends words.

As such, this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrates Brook's pursuit of the *invisible* via his creation of the "conditions": namely reinterpreting text via other modes of performance. *US* (1968b) and *Marat/Sade* (1964) also typify this approach. In performance each audience member is able to decipher a personal meaning, according to idiosyncratic experience. As Fortier (2004) points out, this treads the terrain of the audience-as-reader, where each individual completes the realisation of the text (Fortier, 2004).

Thus far, the exploration of an *invisiblist* aesthetic or tradition has been pursued through the theories of Kristeva (1980, 1984) and Artaud (1970) and Brook's (1968a, 1968b) practice of Artaudian derived principles. As the study takes a *writerly* focus however, by now turning to writers that privilege an *otherness* of form, character or language in their theatre texts, this writer may be able to distil a tradition and some key characteristics of *invisiblist* praxis.

2.3 *Invisiblist* Playwrights

An *invisiblist* playwright might be someone whose work and writing practice exhibits or demonstrates the principal theories of Kristeva, Artaud and/or Brook as discussed above. This would indicate that a given *invisiblist* playwright's work could privilege a Kristevian *semiotic* or *poetic* language disposition. Their texts would also purport a theatre of the body or the Artaudian "moving hieroglyphic". By looking to the canon, it might be argued that one such playwright is Samuel Beckett (1906 -1989). This is because Beckett is "able to achieve this physicality of language, and, astonishingly, anchor it textually" (Beresford, 1994: 73).

4.3.1 Beckett: *The Sound and Shape of Things*

Like Brook (1968a), Beckett usurps the conventional role of the audience in performance. In the Beckettian theatre experience, the audience actively participate in the performance outcomes. They contribute to the experience, becoming the “co-creative”, and essentially, support the “image-making” (Beresford, 1998: 26) that drives the Beckett performance text.

Unlike Brook (1968a) and Artaud (1970), however, Beckett did not produce a definitive text that outlines his particular theatre aesthetic in concrete or theoretical terms. Often portrayed as having an aversion to critical interpretation of his work, and to theatre critics themselves, Beckett famously declined to comment on the meaning of his plays. This is evidenced by Cohn’s (1992) citation of Beckett’s letter to a theatre director concerning his play *Endgame* (1958):

We have no elucidations to offer of mysteries that are all of their [critics’] own making. My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin.

(Cohn 1983: 109)

Adhering to the “fundamental sounds” (perhaps an echo of Kristevian *semiotic* language) in the text is paramount for Beckett (1958) whilst prescribing, adding or deriving “overtones” (read: meaning) is not. As Connor (1992) points out, it is noteworthy that the ultimate insult in an invective-laden exchange between *Waiting for Godot’s* (1956) principal protagonists is “Crrritic!” (Beckett, 1956: 75). Thus, in the absence of author commentary, meaning might be deduced by looking to Beckett’s plays. That is, by considering all the elements that characterise Beckett’s particular theatre aesthetic, the locus of *Invisibility* in his writing may be discerned.

Waiting For Godot (1956), considered to be Beckett's first commercial theatre success, is a seminal addition to the Western Canon; a play that confounded critics and theatre-going audiences in the inaugural production. Significantly, as Esslin (1961) points out, it was well received by a *non* theatre-literate audience, as evidenced by its positive reception in 1957 by San Quentin prison inmates (Esslin, 1968).

In terms of form *Waiting for Godot* (1956) is devised of an almost mirror-like symmetry, where the structure of the second act parallels the first. Stylistically, this is indicative of the repetitive nature of the action contained in the play. For Kennedy (1989), this action generally could be said to be that of "non-action", because it is an act of "waiting" (Kennedy, 1989: 23). This is set up in the first line of the play when Estragon, whilst struggling with his boot, remarks: "Nothing to be done" (Beckett, 1956: 9). The arc of action is such that there really *is* nothing (in terms of *action*) to be done by characters. That is, there is an absence of physical obstacles, overriding imperatives, or outcomes to achieve, except to, simply, abstractedly, wait.

In fact, this *non-action* of waiting becomes a type of stage language in itself. This is because the two main protagonists, Estragon (Gogo) and Vladimir (Didi) entertain themselves with random activities while they wait for the elusive Mr Godot, by whom they expect to be "saved" (Beckett: 1956: 94). These activities, delivered with a clown-like physicality include storytelling, performing tricks, and eating root vegetables. During the more tedious points in their waiting game, they make half-hearted attempts at suicide; however, even in this activity, there exists an undertone of clownish logic. Their frivolity is counter-pointed by terror at various interludes, when any noise (for example, the wind in the reeds) may herald the arrival of Godot. Beckett's deliberate and selective plotting and arrangement of these activities in the script convey the agonising act of waiting, presumably Beckett's thematic concern. Essentially they provide the characters (and the audience) a way to "pass the time" (Beckett: 1956: 69).

Further insight into the author's intent can be seen in the theatre productions Beckett himself directed. Kalb (1989) cites an example of a production of

Waiting for Godot (1956) directed by Beckett in Germany in 1975. In this production the action was “extremely calculated and non-naturalistic” (Kalb, 1989: 33). Beckett-as-director was renowned for feeding actors their lines and physically demonstrating the scripted stage directions in rehearsal. In essence for this particular German production, Beckett *choreographed* the action of the entire play, evidenced by Kalb’s (1989) citation of the production Assistant Director’s, Walter Asmus, rehearsal notes:

With each sentence Beckett makes a step towards the imaginary partner. Always a step then the line. Beckett calls this step by step approach a physical theme; it comes up five, six or seven times, and has got to be done very exactly. This is the element of ballet.

(Kalb, 1989: 33)

A text in production is then a precise, choreographed “ballet”. The Assistant Director elaborates that the characters travel towards each other “...by means of a standing broad jump” (Kalb, 1989: 33). This precision is indicative of Beckett’s highly developed sense of stage language, apparent in his development of the concept of a “physical theme”. These “graceful highly polished gestures” (Kalb, 1989: 33) are, in fact, executed *sans* dialogue, as generally Beckett strictly separated movement from the delivery of text in performance (Kalb 1989). And while the *mise en scene* might appear contrived in performance, it apparently has the opposite effect and “turns out to be strikingly natural” (Kalb, 1989: 33). This is because, in the Beckettian context, the seemingly strange and unnatural physical action actually enhances, and is perhaps in line with, the *otherness* of the text. In other words, “this [Beckettian] world defines its own sense of the natural” (Kalb, 1989: 33).

Much had been made of the identity of the elusive Mr Godot – the silent yet omnipresent *other* character. He is the apparent reason for the characters’ presence on the stage, and his *non-presence* informs the trajectory of the play (evidenced by Didi and Gogo’s waiting action - or their *non-action*). The most obvious and common identity ascribed to Godot is the Christian God figure, by whom Didi and Gogo will be saved. Saved from what, or whom, is not qualified

although it might be inferred from their unbearable, futile human existence – an existence where “everything oozes” and “It’s never the same pus from one second to the next” (Beckett, 1955: 60). The fact that Godot fails to materialize could be interpreted as a fairly direct comment that God does not exist. Calderwood (1986) derives that *Godot* can translate to mean something akin to *god-death*. Like the *invisiblist* Artaud (1970), who drew on religious iconography in his work, Beckett (1956) uses many Christian motifs throughout this play, such as the introduction of the character of the young boy, who acts as messenger for Godot; a Christ-like entity. Also of particular significance is Didi’s retelling of the gospel story about the two thieves crucified along with Christ. One of the thieves was supposed to be saved, although as Didi points out, the four gospels are not consistent in relation to this. The ambiguity or conjecture on this point in the text could be analogous to the characters’ plight. Underscored by such religious mysticism, the play itself could almost be viewed as parable-like, an *anti-parable* perhaps, with a message not of redemption, but of the perpetual waiting for it.

In fact, many metaphysical or ideological concepts have been attached to the work itself in order to interpret, or assign meaning. Kennedy (1989) however, cautions against imposing meaning as it has the potential to “reduce the play” (Kennedy, 1989: 23). Ideological interpretations or attachments might include

Existentialist (Godot shows man lost in a world after the death of god); Marxist (only the alienation of a late capitalist society, coupled with the hysteria of the cold war, can have produced such a work, where man ceases to be a political animal); Freudian (Gogo represents the id, Didi the ego); Christian (the play is a parable on man’s need for salvation)...

(Kennedy, 1989: 23)

By resisting the impulse to attach signification to the content of the play in the context of other disciplines, and by instead simply conveying the *non-action* of waiting (with all its inherent complexities), the author’s true intent may be realised.

The vaudevillian antics of Didi and Gogo also suggest another aspect to the play: that of a *self-aware* performance (Kalb 1989). The play's theatricality might be attributed to its "metaphorical staginess" (Kalb, 1989: 28). This is apparent in the section of text where Beckett (1956) alludes to the audiences' presence and alerts them to the fact that there is a play unfolding within the context of the performance. The nature of the characters' activities suggests that they are aware they are entertaining or performing, indeed playacting. This is evident in lines such as "I'll do Lucky, you do Pozzo" (Beckett, 1956: 73). At other times they appear to comment directly on audience, such as when Estragon faces the auditorium and comments "Inspiring prospects" (Beckett, 1956: 14). Or on the play itself, such as when Vladimir remarks: "Charming evening we're having" (Beckett, 1956: 34). Here Beckett (1956) deliberately draws the audience's attention to the fact that they are watching a play. Instead of the stage existing as a *stand in* or metaphor for reality, in *Waiting For Godot* (1956), the characters' reality might be seen as a metaphor for the theatre stage and performance. This subversion of text and dialogue both alerts the audience to their reality (read: I am watching a play) and furthers the trajectory of the play (the non-action of Didi and Gogo). This multiplicity of meaning suggests a kind of double function to the text.

For Esslin (1968), Didi and Gogo as characters also exhibit a particular co-dependence that drives much of their interplay. Beckett's (1956) characters read as "complimentary personalities" where "Vladimir is the more practical of the two, and Estragon claims to have been a poet" (Esslin, 1968: 47). This deliberate juxtaposition of character types creates a dynamic that allows the characters to bounce off each other, so that they become "a cross talk act" (Esslin, 1968: 46) - the quintessential clowns.

A similar observation can be made about the function of the supporting characters of Pozzo and Lucky. The former is a powerful master figure, and the latter is his put-upon slave who is to be sold at the fair. They appear twice in the play, once in each symmetrical half, although both characters have greatly deteriorated in health in the second half. Their role, on a technical level,

appears literally to involve breaking the monotony of Didi and Gogo's waiting. While giving them a premise of journeying to the fair, Pozzo and Lucky are effectively an interlude, giving Gogo and Didi another stimulus to focus on; a temporary relief from the perpetual waiting. The Pozzo character, in particular, is performative, having something of the egocentric orator about him. In this interlude, he becomes absorbed in the theatrical recitations of which he is fond. As Esslin (1968) points out, Pozzo "is not concerned with the meaning of what he recites, but with its effect on the audience" (Esslin, 1968:57). He is aware he has the attention of Didi and Gogo, and also, on *another* level, that of the play's audience. It appears that it is not the sense or significance of the words that Pozzo (or his author) is concerned with, but their *effect*.

The character of Lucky, when commanded by Pozzo to "think" (Beckett, 1956: 42), also performs such directives with the complete attention of the other three characters. There is a definite master and servant dynamic underpinning the relationship of Pozzo and Lucky. This stage dynamic might be read as a representation of the division of (capitalist) humanity (Esslin, 1968). That is, parallels have been drawn between the dynamic between Pozzo and Lucky, and the notion of the divided self, where materialism dominates spiritualism (Esslin, 1968: 48). Pozzo's degeneration into blindness in the second act suggests retribution for his cruelties, yet he still persists in his futile journey to the fair, commanding Lucky with a whip "On!" (Beckett, 1956: 89).

In terms of language, diverse linguistic devices are employed in *Waiting for Godot* (1956). The dialogic style Beckett employs varies at different points in the text ranging from slang and colloquialisms to poetic or heightened language, to more formal or philosophical commentary. In terms of the former, some of the characters' slang or colloquialisms are often used in the instance of a stand-off, such as when Gogo and Didi engage in rounds of name calling. This is exemplified by the above mentioned *cross-talk*, through which the characters play verbal ping-pong with an idea or theme. An example of this can be found below:

ESTRAGON: What exactly did we ask him for?
VLADIMIR: Were you not there?
ESTRAGON: I can't have been listening.
VLADIMIR: Oh...nothing very definite.
ESTRAGON: A kind of prayer.
VLADIMIR: Precisely.
ESTRAGON: A vague supplication.
VLADIMIR: Exactly.
ESTRAGON: And what did he reply?
VLADIMIR: That he'd see.
ESTRAGON: That he couldn't promise anything.
VLADIMIR: That he'd have to think it over.
ESTRAGON: In the quiet of his home.
VLADIMIR: Consult his family.
ESTRAGON: His friends.
VLADIMIR: His agents.
ESTRAGON: His correspondents.
VLADIMIR: His books.
ESTRAGON: His bank account.
VLADIMIR: Before taking a decision.
ESTRAGON: It's the normal thing.
VLADIMIR: Is it not?
ESTRAGON: I think it is.
VLADIMIR: I think so too.

(Beckett: 1956: 18-19)

The rhythm or vocal pattern created serves to underscore the scene almost musically. When produced, a director might capitalise on this rhythm created from the arrangement of the language. This correlates with Beckett's (1956) use of *physical themes* when directing action. In these *physical themes* each action is choreographed to create a stage picture or pattern. Similarly, the verbal exchange and the manipulation of the language by the separate voices could be directed to create an audible pattern, either of synchronicity or disjuncture, or both.

At other times in the text, the characters engage in heightened language or poetry. This can be observed in the exchange below:

ESTRAGON: All the dead voices.
VLADIMIR: They make a noise like wings.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.
VLADIMIR: Like sand.
ESTRAGON: Like leaves.

(Beckett, 1956: 62)

The characters have moved from everyday dialogue to a poetic interchange, which transports the action to *another* reality. The Beckettian device of repetition is also evident in the above extract. Both words and ideas are repeated and echoed in this passage of dialogue, lending an *otherness* to the ambience or mood. While the characters remain engaged in their characteristic cross talk, in this instance they are *simpatico*. Their thoughts momentarily align, and they appear to be speaking as one person – albeit on *another* plane to the everyday.

Beckett (1956) also uses language that has been described as philosophical and/or possessing an intellectual quality, unselfconsciously delivered by the characters in *Waiting for Godot* (1956). Kalb (1989) cites Mercier in conversation with Beckett, during which the latter suggests that, in the English translation of the play, Beckett (1956) “made Didi and Gogo sound as if they had earned PhDs” (Kalb, 1989: 29). Beckett responded: “How do you know they hadn’t?” (Kalb, 1989: 29). Here Beckett (1956) deconstructs attitudes towards character. This unexpected use of language is also significant, as Kalb (1988) points out, for it “reminds us they are acting” (Kalb, 1988: 29). That is, Beckett (1956) deliberately uses dialogue “sounding beautifully aphoristic and artificial” (Kalb, 1988: 29) to indicate the theatrical paradigm, and once again remind the audience that they are indeed watching a play. The almost matter-of-fact philosophical banter in which the characters engage, might be regarded as a typical feature of Beckett’s theatrical language.

Yet another linguistic device demonstrated in *Waiting for Godot* (1956) is stream of consciousness, made manifest in Lucky's infamous speech. When commanded by Pozzo "Think!" (Beckett, 1956: 42), Lucky emits a stream of chaotic and nonsensical dialogue, comprising unrelated phrases, words and sounds. It is perhaps one of the best examples of the author's "fundamental sounds" in text, where the meaning, or through-line of the dialogue is much less important than the effect or the sound dimension evoked. This echoes the Kristevian concept of a *semiotic* or *poetic* language disposition. These properties might include the shape and sound of words and their malleable rhythms when spoken.

What this play demonstrates for Nealon (1988) in this lack of prescriptive meaning, in its very ambiguity and resistance to categorisation is a quintessentially *postmodernism* theatre aesthetic. The only thing that appears to be fixed in the reality of the play is that the characters will continue waiting, and Godot will in fact never arrive. For as long as the characters continue to wait, the play will never end. For Nealon (1988) also, the inclusion of this *otherness* of language, exemplified in Lucky's speech, makes *Waiting for Godot* (1956) a play of postmodern discourse. While Didi and Gogo pursue one metagame, or a Lyotardian Grand narrative, (their act of waiting for Godot), which is a feature of *modernist* discourse, Lucky does not. Lucky's speech or "Think", through its non-sensical language becomes "a narrative that disrupts and deconstructs all notion of universal... meta-narrative – all Godots" (Nealon, 1988: 47). Essentially it breaks down all connection between any given philosophy and the notion of reason (Nealon, 1988). Nealon (1988) is careful to make a distinction between *unreasonable* and his coined word, *transreasonable*, which he defines as moving "beyond the limitations that have been placed on language" (Nealon, 1988: 48).

Just as *Waiting for Godot* (1955) is a self-aware play, other Beckettian dramas, such as *Happy Days* (1961) and *Endgame* (1958) also contain identifiable elements of *metaphorical staginess*. In *Happy Days* (1961), the optimistic Winnie is embedded in a dirt mound up to her waist. She observes that the

comb, brush and other personal paraphernalia she uses daily and leaves lying carelessly about, always mysteriously turn up the next day, *not where previously she left them*, but in her bag. This intimates the stage protocol of returning the properties to their proper place after a show. In this way, Beckett (1961) subverts the notion of theatricality.

In *Endgame* (1958), this theme persists. This might be personified by Hamm, the be-costumed, red-faced, aged tyrant, perched on his wheelchair/throne (an armchair on castors), who literally behaves as the quintessential *ham actor* by ordering his servant, Clov, about. Here the master/servant relationship is further explored/exploited by Beckett, although, ironically, it is Hamm the master who is most dependent on his servant. Clov performs all functions for Hamm, including that of sight. There are echoes of Pozzo in Hamm, who, similarly blind and rendered incumbent, fancies himself a great narrator. His delivery of dialogue is in the manner of the self-assured performer and, as in *Waiting for Godot* (1955), it is apparent that he is aware he has an audience, evidenced by his repeated line “Me – to play” (Beckett, 1958: 12).

In *Endgame* (1958), Beckett arguably takes this idea of the self –aware performance further than he did in *Waiting for Godot* (1958). While in the latter, Didi and Gogo *allude* to their awareness of the audience’s presence and their own participation in a theatre production, in *Endgame* (1958) the characters directly refer to these. From the opening line, Clov locates the characters’ story as being “Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished” (Beckett, 1958: 12). This references an event already occurring in play – basically the protracted demise of the characters and their world. The theatrical awareness is compounded by Hamm and Clov’s comments on the trajectory of the action at various intervals, such as “This is slow work” (Beckett, 1958: 16).

The play contains within it an ongoing story that Hamm relates throughout. The characters in Hamm’s story are subjected to a plight that strikingly resembles that of the characters in the play. This use of a metaphorical parallel is also evident in the allegory Hamm recounts regarding a madman painter who, when he looked outside, saw only ashes and believed the world had ended. Hamm

and Clov's world too, appears to be have been subjected to some great catastrophe. Their action is contained within a room with two windows set so high that Clov must use a ladder to reach them. When he is asked by Hamm to look outside their world and describe what he sees, his observations are "The light is sunk" and the waves of the sea are "lead" (Beckett, 1958: 25 -26). For Schwab (1984), these visions create a world-within-a-world where "the boundaries between the "endgame" and the "games within the endgame remain fluid" (Schwab, 1984: 90). Thus, the situation Beckett has created by layering the characters' realities with metaphorical references, allows the work to "exist on a multitude of levels" and exhibit a "density of texture" (Esslin, 1968: 67).

When staged, Hamm's state of stillness is counter-pointed by his servant Clov's to-ing and fro-ing. Just as Hamm cannot walk, Clov cannot sit, and so this character is active throughout the entire play; contrasting Hamm's immobility with unceasing (though laboured) activity. Beckett (1958) writes very specific stage directions for Clov throughout, both to serve this function of counter-pointing the characters' physical states, and also utilise the space. Thus Beckett makes another *physical theme*:

Like a rubber band nailed to a central point, Clove moves from Hamm to window to kitchen to ashcans, but always back to Hamm again.

(Kalb, 1989: 40)

Again, as in *Waiting for Godot* (1956), Beckett has employed diametrically opposed characters in a mutually dependent relationship. Lane (1996) suggests that the characters might be two halves of the same person, or on a philosophical level, represent the Cartesian split between the spiritual and physical sides of humanity (Lane, 1996: 4). If the set – a room with two high windows, is taken to represent a human skull, this adds another dimension to the play whereby "Hamm's head is as much the stage as is the stage which is like Hamm's head" (Lane, 1996: 4). In other words, Clov's futile to-ing and fro-ing, and all the stage *business* they engage in, might simply be Hamm's

imaginings, or a projection of one of his narratives, made manifest in a theatrical context.

Two other characters people the strange inner space of *Endgame* (1958), a legless couple that live in ashcans or dustbins, presumably Hamm's parents. These "grotesquely sentimental imbeciles" (Esslin, 1968: 63) are despised by Hamm, and appear to be at the periphery of life.

In terms of identifying structure, *Endgame* (1958) appears to have a less superficially apparent form than *Waiting for Godot* (1955), which is comprised of two discernible symmetrical halves. If *Endgame* (1958)

...portrays a universe which is nearing its end but seems likely to continue repeating itself in an increasingly protracted form, forever... ,

(Hale, 1987: 72)

the play's structure could be interpreted as written in the form of a *continuum*. That is, the perpetuity of the characters' circumstance is contained in *Endgame* (1958) by one act, with a singular ongoing sequence of action reflecting the passing of time. This is in contrast to *Waiting for Godot's* (1955) demonstration of a similar concept of perpetuity (the characters' act of waiting) over *two* acts. It seems Beckett has effectively distilled his theatrical argument, which "shows the running down of a mechanism until it comes to a stop" (Esslin, 1968: 61) as one continuous trajectory. The dramatic question underpinning this sliding trajectory (if such can be applied to a Beckettian play) would appear to be whether or not Clov will leave Hamm (Esslin 1968).

Rather than attempting to interrogate *Endgame's* (1958) structural properties in a conventional sense, it is potentially useful to look at the play's inherent form from *another* perspective. *Endgame* (1958) and its apparent departure from conventional form (or characteristic *formlessness*) would appear to subscribe to Beckett's professed regard for the "shape of ideas...it is the shape that matters" (Kalb, 1989: 46). If this is so, then the shape of *Endgame* (1958) as a dense,

layered, one act, “interpretive play” (Henning, 1988: 115), which demonstrates a *winding down* rather than a *gearing up* is, in itself, the key to the play’s significance.

In this *end game*, or the prolonged playing out of the characters’ lives before their death, language also takes on another function. For Schwab (1984), the use of language in the play resembles a “language-game, in which speech units can be moved around like chess pieces” (Schwab, 1984: 90). This is evident in the repetition of phrases such as “Why this farce, day after day?” (Beckett, 1958: 18, 26), uttered first by Nell, then by Clov. Such interchangeable repetition “makes it impossible to identify the characters with their speech” (Schwab, 1984: 90). This generic quality, where the dialogue is not always particular to one character or another, has the effect of allowing the language to be free of signification, essentially becoming “empty speech which the characters toss to and fro between them like a ball” (Schwab, 1984: 90).

Simultaneously, in *Endgame* (1958), Beckett uses language that is essentially poetic. For instance Clov informs Hamm he is implicated in a woman’s death, as he denied her oil for her lamp, as a result of which she effectively died “Of darkness” (Beckett, 1958: 48). It is a very poignant line in the context of the play, yet still adheres to a Beckettian sense of *otherness* in language. This is because it addresses an *abstract* concept juxtaposed to the *literal*. This dialogue could be said to exist on two levels, where the meaning appears fluid.

Language is also a primary driver of some of *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1984). Here a failed writer, the 69 year old Krapp, listens to an earlier tape recording of himself; one marking his 39th birthday. His confident voice is foreign to him and he consults a dictionary for the definition of a fancy word used by his younger self. This previous recording is then juxtaposed by a new one – a recording that Krapp makes on stage in real-time to mark the current anniversary. The subject matter of this tape consists of the pomposity of his former self, and a commentary on the events of the previous year. The high point of the latter appears to be Krapp revelling in the sound of the word “spool” (Beckett, 1958:18). He savours the word, rolling it around in his mouth, and elongating

the vowel. Here is a further example of the Beckettian *fundamental sound*; a simple word is divorced from its assigned signification, and its meaning superseded by its other properties, such as the sound dimensions.

In *Rockabye* (1984), Beckett again employs the device of the pre-recorded voice, further exploring the notion of the chasm time creates between the older and younger selves. In *Rockabye* (1984), a “prematurely old” (Beckett, 1984: 273) woman in a mechanically controlled rocking chair rocks in and out of a single spotlight on stage. Her rocking and recorded dialogue is intermittently prompted by her *live* dialogue, which consists of the single line - “More” (Beckett, 1984: 275). Triggering both the rocking action and the pre-recorded text, this “more”, is to be delivered a little softer each time, perhaps alluding to the speaker’s gradual expiration. Has she effectively rocked til “the end came” (Beckett, 1984: 275)? The absence of *live* voice may suggest she is already dead. In true Beckettian style, the fact remains ambiguous, as

A definite decision either way - towards consciousness or unconsciousness – would simplify the play to the level of melodrama.

(Kalb, 1989: 12)

The rhythmical, almost catatonic, nature of the woman’s rocking underscores the voiceover text, which, like the action, is repetitious. Beckett has layered the language with repeated phrases and key words to create a vocal pattern or *sound-scape*. When performed, Kalb (1989) likens the combined effect of the voiceover and repetitious action to that of a soothing lullaby. Significantly, the action or *physical theme* (made up of the rocking accompanied by the voiceover lullaby) is isolated from the *live* dialogue delivery. This corresponds to Beckett’s directorial position on the separation of speech and action in the performance text.

Beckett also makes great use of extended pause or ellipsis in his dramas and this is evident in *Rockabye* (1984) before and after the Woman’s “Mores”. This appears to have two functions, firstly to give the word emphasis by allowing it to

reverberate in the silence, and secondly, to vary the *score*. Just as the repetitive voiceover dialogue creates a rhythm, the pause breaks it, giving nuance to the *sound-scape*. Billie Whitelaw, as cited by Kalb (1989), perhaps one of the most astute and profound performers of Beckett's *Rockabye* (1982), draws heavily on this idea of a musicality in the language when preparing to play the Woman. Her techniques include metering phrases by tempo and expanding words, delivering them with "more syllables than they really possess" (Kalb, 1989: 20), so that they become something more than their associated meaning. By colouring the text in such a way, she allows the character to have complexities and depth on stage, and yet still avoids resolving the "important ambiguities" (Kalb, 1989: 21) inherent in the play, such as her character's state of being (alive, dead, dying?), or exactly what the "Mores" might signify.

The stage device of voiceover as employed by Beckett in *Rockabye* (1984) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1984), where the character's voice appears to come from "some unlocatable point outside their actual body" (Connor, 1989: 160), conveys the notion that language might be alienated from the body or from the self. It then functions as a theatrical device, as evidenced by the *soundscape* discussed above. Similarly, language is used in *another* way in *Waiting For Godot* (1956) evidenced in the various linguistic devices employed, such as the colloquialisms, and poetry of Gogo and Didi, counter-pointed by the *semiotic* language disposition evident in Lucky's *Think*. This *otherness* of language also applies to *Endgame* (1958) where word may function in both the literal and abstract senses simultaneously, so that meaning is ambiguous and shifting.

This *otherness* of language explored by Beckett, in addition to his employment of *otherness* of form and character, as discussed in the deconstruction of his plays, might provide a blueprint or template for writing according to the particular aesthetic to be explored in this study. By looking to other writers who also employ an *otherness* in regard to language, form and character the pathway to writing an *invisiblist* piece for performance may become less opaque.

4.3.2 Stein: *The Essence of What Happened*

The work of Beckett's modernist contemporary, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) also exhibits *otherness* of language, particularly in its relation to *function*. Both a prose writer and dramatist, Stein's corpus is, at first read, apparently difficult to penetrate; her compositions are multi-layered in their use of language and appear simultaneously to deconstruct the literary genres in which she elects to frame her words.

For Bowers (1993) Stein's writing is characterised by an exploration of, or even a rejection of, *genre* – that which ascribes to a specific structure and literary system. That is, Stein questioned the accepted convention “that dictate[s] the use of literature as a means of representation” (Bowers, 1993: 2). By challenging such notions of genre and perhaps literary *form*, Stein was heavily criticised by contemporaries and reviewers (Curnutt, 2000). Nevertheless, Stein was actively committed to usurping the confinement of language to representational purposes, and had an ambitious view towards (re) defining literature for her time (Bowers, 1993). For Stein:

...nothing changes from generation to generation except the composition in which we live and the composition in which we live makes the art which we see and hear...

(Stein, 1971: 99)

For Stein, it seems, by literally changing the art of writing, she could change the composition of life around her.

Stein's work, in terms of its “energy, irreverence and the extremity of her experimentation”, could be viewed as having more in common with her painter contemporaries, than with other modernist writers (Bowers, 1993: 2). Like her friends and counterparts in the abstract and experimental, Picasso and Matisse, Stein (1971) did not seek to represent a subject within the confines of a given (writing) structure, but to express it in *another* way.

Stein's subjects and themes were often domestic, exemplified in the breakthrough volume first published in 1914 entitled *Tender Buttons* (1998). This is a selection of prose poems, which details, amongst other things, household objects and interiors. The compositions are a complication of a literal description of the subjects' properties, and the author's idiosyncratic experience of them. Just as an abstract painter might subvert a still life, by experimenting with colour or with the arrangement of the objects/subjects, Stein (1998) dismantles accepted ways of seeing objects/subjects in writing. She achieves this by re-arranging language and syntax (Bowers, 1993). Stein calls such compositions *portraits*, or *verbal still lifes* (Stein, 1998). These *portraits* or *still lifes* challenge the reader's perception in regard to the familiar and everyday inanimate object or experience; they ask the reader to see it in *another* way.

In her works for theatre, Stein (1970) once more sought to depict not the literal, but the figurative. According to Stein, "every body knows so many stories and what is the use of telling another story" (Stein, 1971: 75). Instead her agenda is "to make a play the essence of what happened" (Stein 1971: 75). This involves playing with language to capture the mood of an event or object, along with its rhythms, tempos and associated sound qualities.

For Bowers (1993), Stein's plays are essentially "about language and its relationship to the performance event" (Bowers, 1993: 121). While Stein (1971) referred to her theatre works as *landscapes* in a lecture entitled *Plays* (1971), Bowers (1993) reappropriates this term, terming them *lang-scapes*. *Lang-scapes* alludes to both the fact that language exists as the principal driver of each piece, and also that Stein's compositions could be viewed as a literary version of a painted landscape (Bowers, 1993). Like material objects in a landscape, Stein's words relate to each spatially, and when *painted* (read: written or performed), they create a kind of "verbal stasis" or, in essence, a frozen image or a word picture (Bowers, 1993: 123). An example of a Stein-ian *lang-scape* can be located in a play first published in 1922 - *Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked It* (1970). The opening text preceding the first scene exists as a type of portrait – a picture made of words, in this case about a person:

He was very restless. He does not like to stand while he picks flowers. He does not smell flowers. He has a reasonable liking for herbs. He likes their smell. He is not able to see storms. He has been able to be praised.

(Stein, 1970: 23)

The composition contains arbitrary facts and seemingly unrelated items about its subject; a man. What is the function of this extract in the greater context of the play? Is it a description of a character to appear on stage? Does it serve metaphorically to foreground what will unfold? Whatever its purpose, it could be viewed as an interpretive fragment of text, a floating island, a word picture, created to exist in the played moment. In fact, perhaps the question of such a composition's function is not the most important element in the context of Stein's plays. In Stein's exploration of the dramatic genre, other things may be of more importance – namely the use of language. Bowers's (1993) view is that "Stein's language does not represent something else. It simply exhibits itself" (Bowers, 1993: 131). That is, in performance, Stein's (1970) language is an entity in itself, to be played in some way by a performer. Thus, interpretation and the attachment of signification are not necessarily the most important elements in the production.

Certainly for Stein (1971), such items are not privileged. In her lecture *Plays* (1971) she gives some insight into her process stating that, when writing for theatre, she considers her work "from the standpoint of sight and sound and its relation to emotion and time " (Stein, 1971: 66). This suggests the privileging of the material qualities of the language and what they may evoke over the traditional driver of a play – narrative. In fact, for Stein, a play might include "anything that was not a story", including "letters and advertisements". (Stein, 1971: 75). This last insight is significant, in that it alludes to parameters being removed and ideas about what constitutes a play being broken down. A play might not necessarily be as formal as the convention of the public performance in a theatre with a paying audience. Gertrude Stein's understanding and

demonstration of the play genre encompasses other modes of writing and performance and other interpretation of audience.

Stylistically too, particularly in the way the plays are formatted, other conventional parameters shift or are subverted. Often individual characters' dialogue remains un-denoted within the body of the text. This creates ambiguity around whether it is one character, or a host of them, speaking. This can be observed in the extract below from *A Circular Play* (1970):

My colour.

Their colour.

Two

One

Two won.

I can think so quickly.

Silent and thoughtful. Crimson rambler and a legion post legion, a poor post legion Crimson rambler or star.

(Stein, 1970:144)

This (deliberate) absence of dialogue-to-character assignation lends an interpretive element to the work for a director and actors in rehearsal. When performed it may have the effect of a collective of disconnected voices, or a vocal "patchwork" (Bowers 1993: 150). The vocal patterning or *score* effect is compounded by the absence of a cast list and requires the ensemble to probe the text for clues as to the best possible *sounded* performance. Further demonstrating this inherent ambiguity is the fact that words and their patterns may appear to make more sense on the page. For example, how does a performer differentiate between one and won (used in the extract above) in live performance? Such "syntactical manoeuvres" (Bowers, 1993: 130) are the challenges of Stein's word play in performance.

Stein's plays are also typically characterised by an absence of stage directions and punctuation. The absence of the former reinforces the fact that Stein's plays are primarily about the language and its myriad of performance

possibilities. Arbitrary action may become superfluous in her rich language experience. Similarly, the lack of punctuation exhibited in the final two lines of the above extract, coupled with the subtle repetition, essentially removes the sense from the sentence. What remains and overrides this is the aesthetic aural effect of the text.

Repetition is often attributed as a defining characteristic of Stein's dramas. That is,

Phrases with minute changes will join sentences, and these sentences will collect new phrases and accents.

(Jefferson: 2005: 1)

Stein (1971), however, did not see this technique – that of building words, phrases and sentences into paragraphs, by collecting and adding accents, as a form of *repetition* arguing rather that “I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition” (Stein, 1971:100), Stein termed her use of this technique as *insistence*. While the recurrent use of a particular word might appear to be repetitious, Stein points out, if viewed as an *insistence*, the word in question would have a different emphasis each time it is used. This would vary its mode of delivery, and negate any repetitive quality. For Stein, this is evidenced in her infamous line of poetry: “A rose is a rose is a rose” (Stein, 1971: 138). In a lecture on *Poetry and Grammar* (1971) she cites that in the example of this given sentence, she has “completely caressed and addressed a noun” (Stein, 1971: 138), yet it is not necessarily repetitious in delivery. This is because, as she analogises, when you say the name of someone/something you love, it may be said “More violently, more persistently, more tormentedly” each time (Stein, 1971: 138–139). Thus the spoken line (its performance) has a trajectory, and not simply repetitive.

Stein (1970) embellished the sound dimension or score evoked by her *lang-scapes* in another performance genre – that of opera. *Four saints in Three Acts* (1970), accompanied by the music of Virgil Thompson, perhaps one of her best known works, is an example of this. Thematically the opera is based on the

lives of saints, the principal characters being Saint Teresa and Saint Ignatius Loyola. The saints' lives, however, are only a veneer, according to Bowers (1993). When the text is probed, it appears to be about the life of the working artist – Gertrude's Stein's life, in particular. The events unfolding in the opera appear to be the events surrounding the writing of the actual opera. In other words, from within the opera text, Stein is documenting her creative process (Bowers 1993) as is evident in the extract below:

How can it have been have been held.

A narrative who do who does.

A narrative to plan an opera.

Four Saints in three acts.

A croquet scene and when they made their habits.

(Stein, 1970:45)

It seems that Stein is meditating on her brief (a narrative concerned with four saints in three acts), to the extent of planning scenes ("A croquet scene"). She is making manifest her writerly *dreaming*, that which comprises the writer's process towards arriving at a script. This process is not specific to Stein's process; however what *is* unique is that she has deliberately included such meditations (which are usually confined to the writer's notebook) in the performance text proper. A narrative this play is not however, as it explores many different tangents in typical Stein-ian fashion – language play. In fact, this double function of text – that is both a performance piece, and a commentary on the writing process, occurs consistently throughout Stein's plays. According to Bowers (1993), this duality of text function

...inscribes her performance as a writer and that performance replaces all other events as the focus of the text.

(Bowers, 1993: 2)

Stein's "process poetics" ensures that the writing or the *lang-scapes* are also privileged in the live performance (Bowers, 1993: 3).

What does this mean for an ensemble staging a Stein-ian text? In 2005, the Wooster Group remounted a performance of another of Stein's operas; *Dr Faustus Lights the Lights* (1970). The text was fused with the 1964 film *Olga's House of Shame*, to create a multimedia production, presumably to indicate a contemporary reading of Stein's work. A review of this hybrid production called *House/Lights* credits the actors with demonstrating "Stein-speak perfectly" by making the rhythms "sound inevitable" (Jefferson, 2005: 2). This is apparently integral to performance success; otherwise an audience can "get rattled and start hunting for the logic of everyday speech" (Jefferson, 2005: 2).

Stein's sources of rhythmic inspiration are eclectic such as "listening to Basket my dog drinking" (Stein, 1971: 133). While it may appear to have obscure bearing on a construction of a sentence to most writers, for Stein (1971), such things informed the patterns of her sentences and language.

The privileging of language over other theatrical elements, such as action and character, has resulted in the plays being sometimes critiqued as "anti-theatrical" (Bowers, 1993: 109). Certainly, it is apparent that in Stein's plays there are more often "speakers" as opposed to characters in the traditional sense (Bowers, 1993: 119). This is due to the absence of a cast list, and the rejection of the convention in the text of a character's name followed by a colon (to denote who speaks a particular line of dialogue). As discussed above, this results in a vocal pattern, a sounding effect, rather than identifiable characters with idiosyncratic ways of speaking. Similarly, while the deliberate absence of a linear narrative would suggest that there is very little for an audience to follow, and the lack of formal stage directions (if present they are usually spoken rather than enacted), might suggest a resistance to action, there is another agenda at play. The way into the performance for the audience in a Stein-ian theatrical experience involves perhaps engaging in a shifting or fluid frame, as opposed to a more conventional dramatic one. Stein asserts

...that the words in plays written in poetry are more lively than the same words written by the same poet in other kinds of poetry.

(Stein 1971: 125)

This suggests that words are deliberately selected for their inherent *liveliness* in the Stein (1971) play. That is, the poetry of her plays embodies, or is conducive to action – essentially the words themselves are action and the language is the *mise en scene*.

So, while Stein's (1970) plays deliberately transgress the traditions of drama, have been labelled esoteric, deliberately omitted from a mainstream canon, confined to literature studies, and regarded as too problematic for performance, it is this very flirtation with the parameters of form that are the works' strength. Just as her experiments and deliberate language plays-in-action allow her to create an *otherness* in stage dimension and performance, an audience needs to be aware of an *otherness* when receiving or participating in the performance.

Just as Stein (1970, 1971) experimented with form and language play to create an *otherness* in writing for performance, the contemporary American playwright Suzan-Lori Parks, has both acknowledged Stein as an important influence on her playwriting praxis, and further extended Stein-ian principles in her own plays.

4.3.3 Parks: Digging For Figures

Like Stein, the plays of Parks, born in 1964, tend to feature an absence of punctuation in the dialogue, an absence of stage directions, and an *otherness* of form. Her earlier works are often categorized as *history plays*, whereby she presents an alternative version of an historical event or period. Parks depicts a history not often taught in classrooms, deriving from African American experience, and she achieves this by treating omissions and dismantling stereotypes. History, according to Parks, is "time that won't quit" (Parks, 1995: 15). In other words, history is something hauntingly persistent to be considered, turned over, and inside out and possibly rewritten. Although Parks received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2002, the price of making visible these previously *invisible* historical events and characters is that her work tends to be marginalized at times, both by theatre companies and the media.

For Garrett (2000), this marginalisation of Parks's work "ghettoizes African-American drama" (Garrett: 2000: 2). Not only does this "ghetto-ization" oversimplify the issues regarding the plays' content, it also overlooks any experimentation with form. In Parks's case this contribution is significant as her works are not simply polemic because she deliberately chooses to re-model theatrical conventions of language and character. Identity politics might come into play, but Parks is not so much concerned with representing "black life" or more accurately "black lives" (Garrett, 2000: 6) but rather in the tradition of Stein (1971), in capturing "the essence of what happened" (Stein, 1971: 75).

For Parks (1995), form is inextricably linked to the play's subject matter: "content determines form and form determines content" (Parks, 1995: 7). They are "interdependent", each shaping the other organically (Parks, 1995: 7). In Parks's plays, form assumes many shapes. Most deviate from narrative linearity and, as with Stein's plays, could be considered to be *lang-scapes* – language based depictions or compositions of moments, ideas or objects. According to Parks, it is up to the writer to be faithful to the form that is emerging from the writing trajectory, and not necessarily adhere to a predefined structure; "form is not merely a docile passive vessel, but an active participant in the sort of play that ultimately inhabits it" (Parks, 1995: 8). She paraphrases Louis MacNiece who argues that, "the shape is half the meaning" (Parks, 1995: 8).

An example of the "shape" informing the "meaning" can be found in Parks's play entitled *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (1995). Parks styles the beginning section of text (in which the characters introduce themselves) as an "Overture" (Parks, 1995: 101). According to the play's stage directions, this *overture* is interspersed with the sound effect of a bell. This suggests that there is a musical quality inherent in the delivery of the dialogue. Like Stein's work it is *scored*, which gives it a heightened sense; an *otherness*, by taking it out of the reality of everyday dialogue.

In *Imperceptible Mutabilities of the Third Kingdom* (1995), Parks divides the action into four parts plus a reprise. Each part contains different characters and treats separate concerns, but the piece is united by a central concept of

individuals searching for something. Through the fragmentation of the narrative, the author explores the notion of the same mistakes being repeated by different groups in society. In *The America Play* (1995), the action is set in an abstract place – the Great Hole of History. In this play key historical events are re-visited, examined and re-created from different perspectives, all occurring as though in a vacuum. This is a deliberate exploration of content in relation to form. Thus, in Parks's (1995) plays, form is influenced by a given play's historically-based content, and the content is influenced by the abstractedness and *otherness* of form.

For Parks, integral to this process of the history play is the notion of *digging*; “digging and listening – for action, characters, and words” (Garrett, 2000: 2). Parks (1995) speaks of hearing voices during her practice, and of “figures which take up residence inside me” (Parks, 1995: 8). By tuning in to these voices and “figures”, Parks is engaging in an unearthing process, as opposed to a layering one; effectively working from the inside/insight out. This suggests that Parks rejects a “more familiar dramaturgical model” (Garrett, 2000: 2). For Parks, this means substituting the dramaturgical model that might encompass adhering to a given structure, or one that “cleanly ARCS”, for a particular *modus operandi* that indulges *imagery* (Garrett, 2002: 2).

The source of these voices, are, of course the characters emerging. Parks (1995) prefers the term *figures*, as it lends them a symbolic, sometimes archaic quality that corresponds well with the notion of a re-written history. Her *dramatis personae*, which she describes as “figures”, “ghosts”, or “someone else's pulse” (Parks, 1995: 12), suggest *types* rather than concrete, identifiable characters. An example of this can be found in her *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (1995). The cast list includes *figures* such as Black Man With Watermelon, Black Woman With Fried Drumstick, Lots Of Grease And Lots Of Pork, and Old Man River Jordan. Not only do these titles denote and differentiate between the speakers (unlike Stein who often did not assign character to text), but also they evoke something about them or about their physicality. The names are almost like portrait titles in their detail. Like Stein, Parks (1995) has usurped the conventional use of character assignation. In this

case there exist elements of archetypes, and when the characters introduce themselves by their full title in the opening scene, they allude to the play's aesthetic – a sense of digging into history for the audience.

In the drama *Venus* (1995), Parks challenges notions of beauty in the title character/figure of Venus, a woman of such huge proportions she attracts top billing in the carnival sideshow. She becomes the fetish object of a French Scientist, who makes her his mistress. When she dies he dissects her out of morbid fascination. Based loosely on a real historical figure, this play attracted an amount of criticism, particularly from the African American theatre community, as it does not necessarily *celebrate* black experience. While the play portrays the brutality and fetishism to which this particular African American figure was subjected, it arguably does so in a way that is

...paradoxically, both horrific and comic – irresistibly or disrespectfully so, depending on your point of view.

(Garrett: 2000: 5)

The fact that the fetishized Venus is portrayed as neither victim nor martyr appears to be a deliberate choice made by Parks (1995). By exploring the mythology of this figure, Parkes subverts Venus's historical and contemporary significance. The audience is encouraged to explore their individual experience of the events, rather than be presented with a definitive outcome or moral imperative.

More recent work by Parks is indicative of a transition in terms of *dramatis personae* - from the figures peopling her history plays to more contemporary incarnations. One example of this can be found in *Topdog/Underdog* (2002), a play following the “conflicts and attempted connections” (Ollington, 2004: 2) of two brothers: Lincoln and Booth. There is historic resonance in the choice of character names (the USA President Lincoln was assassinated by a man named John Booth). This, compounded by a re-enactment of the event (also resulting in Parks Lincoln's death), lends the play a definite ironic quality. Parks (2002) subverts the historical event by using two African American characters.

Here she has simultaneously inserted black experience and re-appropriated white historical values. As it is set in the present, it has a contemporary resonance, giving the play and its characters, who inhabit two worlds; now and the past, a “labyrinthine” dimension (Ollington, 2004: 1).

What is consistent, however, over all the plays, is Parks’s (1995, 2002) distinct use of language. The characters/*figures* and their histories are bound up in the way they speak. Often taken to be a realistic reproduction of African American dialect/s, Parks’s (1995, 2002) dialogue actually taps into the rhythms and lyricism of such speech patterns. In essence, she

...crafts a theatrical poetry that bears the same relationship to black dialectical forms that, for example, [James] Joyce’s language bears to the speech of the Dubliners he heard and remembered.

(Garrett, 2000: 7)

Her use of language thus, appears not to be, as some might argue, inherent in her identity (as certain writing structures might be ascribed to, for example, female writers) but more a result of a conscious decision, born of the process of negotiating form and content. This deliberate composition and manipulation of language can be observed in this extract from *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* (1989-1992):

QUEEN-THEN-PHARAOH Before Columbus thuh worl usta be roun
-HATSHEPSUT: they put uh /d/ on thuh end of roun makin
round. Thusly they set in motion thuh end.
Without that /d/ we coulda gone on spinnin
forever. Thuh /d/ thing ended things ended.

(Parks, 1995: 102)

Parks’s deliberate method of matching spelling to spoken vernacular may appear difficult or even “impenetrable on the page”; however, it is precisely this that creates the work’s “theatrical poetry” (Garrett, 2000: 7). It actually adheres

to a tradition of “deliberately damaging and reshaping written English” to ensure it reflects a writer’s experience or that of their characters (Garrett, 2000: 7). Essentially, in Parks’s plays another language is created, one that is both theatrical and references African American re-shaped English. Parks, like Stein, appears to enjoy engaging in language play and games and there is more than a hint of Stein-ian influence in the phrase repetition (or *insistence*) in the final line of the extract above. In *The America Play* (1990-1993) Parks echoes Stein’s technique of doubling words that have the same aural quality albeit different spelling and signification. This is apparent in lines such as “He digged the hole and the whole held him” (Parks, 1995: 159). While the reader is able to discern the two different meanings on the page, in performance this is not necessarily clear, that is, it is deliberately ambiguous. It is the challenge of the director and performers to indicate or address this in action.

Significantly, like Beckett before her, Parks credits learning another language as a factor contributing to her particular use of English. As a teenager she spent several years in Germany where, faced with the task of learning a new language, she “gained a critical, estranging perspective on language itself, and therefore also on identity and culture” (Garrett, 2000: 3). This reinforces the observation that Parks’s shaping of language and dialogue is a conscious, deliberate process, and is not necessarily solely informed by her identity.

Parks eschews random action in a text, labelling stage directions “a prissy set of parenthesis” and instead advocates, “injecting action in a line” (Parks, 1995: 15). Her construction of language appears to incite the action relevant to a particular moment/event in the play. For example, in the opening scene of *Topdog/Underdog* (2002) the rhythm and speech patterning of the character Booth’s text is *simpatico* with his action – practising a card game scam. The hustling action is evident in the dialogue:

Ima show you thuh cards: 2 black cards but only one heart. Now watch me now. Who-sees-thuh-red-card-who-knows-where-its-at? Go on, man, point to the card. Put yr money down cause you ain’t

no clown. No? Ah you had thuh card, but you didn't have thuh heart.

(Parks, 2002: 8)

In a 2004 production of *Topdog/Underdog*, apparently the actor playing Booth “deftly tossing three cards” continued “hypnotically repeating” (Ollington, 2004: 2) key lines of such dialogue. This text is an example of the symbiosis of action and dialogue, which is inherent in the writing. Parks has this advice for actors speaking her dialogue: “How the line should be delivered is contained in the line itself” (Parks, 1995: 16).

Part of this organic action in a line might be attributed to the playwright's particular method when writing. She practices yoga and karate and cites the importance of being active as she writes, urging writers: “If you're one who writes sitting down, once before you die try dancing around as you write” (Parks, 1995: 15). This method of literally writing with the body, where the “writing comes from the gut, not the head” (Garrett, 2000: 7) ensures that the dialogue is infused with action, without extraneous “prissy parenthesis” or stage directions.

As well as writing with “yr whole bod” (Parks, 1995: 18), she advises writing in other modalities by engaging some often over-looked senses. She argues that: “A playwright should pack all five, all six – all 7 senses” (Park, 1995: 15). The sixth sense “helps you feel another's pulse at great distances” (Parks, 1995: 15), which suggests being in tune with things *invisible* but still present at some level in the process. This correlates with Parks's use of figures – the voices peopling the history plays. The seventh apparently is having a sense of humour. This is not necessarily about including jokes in the text, but literally embodying the writing process with laughter. Parks explains that the physical act of engaging the body is “a way of arriving on the scene” (Parks, 1995: 15). She literally uses her body to catapult herself into the world or experience of the play she is creating.

When questioned on the subject of the meaning of her plays Parks answers that

We are taught that plays are merely staged essays and we begin to believe that characters in plays are symbols for some obscured “meaning” rather than simply the thing itself.

(Parks, 1995: 14)

She suggests, “Don’t ask playwrights what their plays mean...have an exchange of ideas” (Parks, 1995: 15). By exchanging ideas, a play or performance can have fluid and multiple meanings, rather than a single prescribed definitive one. The plays of Suzan-Lori Parks exemplify this *invisiblist* quality. This occurs through their re-writing of history, their fluid form, their re-appropriation of character as *figure*, and their *otherness* of language, particularly in terms of rhythm, spelling, and it’s physical embodiment.

4.3.4 Kane: *Imaging Extremes*

Like Suzan-Lori Parks, the plays of British playwright Sarah Kane (1971 – 1999) also demonstrate contemporary aspects of what has been styled as *invisiblist* theatre. Like Parks, Kane’s works take an *otherness* of form, language, and character. While Parks’s (1995) history plays might be richly textured, language-driven *landscapes*, in the style of Stein, Kane’s work owes more to the concentrated imagery of Beckett, and to the pervasive undertone of menace embedded in the work of another British playwright, Harold Pinter (born 1930). Kane appears to take this menace a step further so that her plays depict a kind of unadulterated cruelty in terms of the acts of violence the characters inflict on one another. Where Pinter’s menace lies dormant, until it manifests suddenly and singularly, Kane’s is explicit and, once triggered, manifests as an onslaught. She was essentially the poster child of the guard of young British playwrights in the mid to late 1990s labelled “the New Brutalists” (Cheney, 2004: 3) although Kane herself rejected this term.

Kane’s plays are generally characterised by a sparse and economical use of dialogue, (which is simultaneously highly poetic), stage directions which are

seemingly impossible to enact, and characters who tread the line between victim and oppressor. Themes are love and power and annihilation, and how these three might interrelate and impact on both society and the self. Her plays are often set in an apocalyptic realm: a world at war experienced from a hotel room; a crumbling kingdom; an institution, which could be a university, or a mental asylum, or both interchangeably.

Due to her much chronicled battle with depression, and her suicide in 1999 at the age of 28, Kane's works are shadowed by dark real life events, and it is tempting to read and view her plays in this context. This applies particularly to her last play *4.48 Psychosis* (2001), performed posthumously, which is widely considered to be a "suicide note" (Cheney, 2004: 1). There lies a challenge in considering the works and their "explosive theatricality" at a distance from the "mythology of the author" (Greig, 2001: 1). In order to avoid such reductionism, the focus here is on Kane's experimentation with the conventions of form, character and language in particular.

Kane's first professionally produced play *Blasted* (2001) literally exploded onto the London stage in 1995. Set in an expensive hotel room in Leeds, the action centres around a journalist, Ian, attempting to seduce Cate, a shy young girl with a stutter, who might, or might not, be a "spaz" (Kane, 2001: 5). In the second scene, it becomes apparent that Ian has raped Cate over night. This unseen action appears to be a catalyst for the violence that unfolds throughout the rest of the play, heralded by the arrival of a soldier who announces that a war has begun: "it's our town now" (Kane, 2001: 39). A bomb blasts a hole in the wall of the hotel, representing the systematic breakdown of society and order that is to follow. Structurally, the breakdown is conveyed by short acts of violence, including the soldier raping Ian and then sucking his eyes out (echoing Shakespeare's eye-gouging scene in *King Lear*), and Ian eating a baby. The scenes become shorter and shorter in duration, until they are snapshots, or images lasting only seconds. These images depict the characters' psychological state in their apocalyptic reality, *sans* dialogue. Kane denotes the length of these snapshots/images by using blackout, as can be observed in the extract below:

Darkness.

Light.

Ian *strangling himself with his bare hands.*

Darkness.

Light.

Ian *shitting.*

And then trying to clean it up with newspaper.

Darkness.

Light.

Ian *laughing hysterically.*

(Kane, 2001: 59)

The use of the darkness/light stage directions gives these images or vignettes a sense of timelessness - where they occur in the context of the play's sense of time or chronology is not specified. This suggests that a significant or small amount of time could have passed, or even that Ian's reality has become a continuum. By using this displacement of time, shown through the construction of these images or vignettes, Kane has diverted from the naturalistic/realistic style (i.e., events unfolding in a linear fashion) she had established in the first scene. This *otherness* of form, in its fragmentation, conveys the disintegration of the characters' reality. In production, such a structure serves to compound the horror of the situation.

The critics' reaction to *Blasted* (2001) was unprecedented and one not seen in British theatre review for a number of years. Tags such as Jack Tinker's of the Daily Mail: "This disgusting feast of filth" (Tinker, 1995) sensationalised *Blasted*, so that the play is now haunted by its own furore. However the perception that the violence was gratuitous was not unanimous as others, such

as playwright Harold Pinter, personally penned Kane a note thanking her for confronting such subject matter. For him, Kane was not simply pushing the boundaries for effect, but crafting a considered piece in response to the world around her. The political climate at the time was of significant importance to her, particularly the Bosnian crisis. The play's content allegedly "drew parallels between Bosnia and Britain" (Lathan, 1999). It is important to acknowledge that this war was only a departure point – Kane did not seek to present an accurate account of the Bosnian crisis, but to use, mine, spin and abstract it, in order to create and highlight parallels between this event and the equally catastrophic, yet more internalised crisis, of Britain and western society. This metaphoric doubling is a feature of all of her plays. Sierz quotes (2000) Whybrow, who comments that "Her plays aren't troubled by awkward local references or contemporary detail in a way that would date them" (Sierz, 2000: 3).

An insight into Kane's process in crafting the play can be found in an account by her contemporary, playwright Mark Ravenhill. He speaks particularly about her crafting in terms of language. The dialogue in the published version of *Blasted* (2001) is quite minimalist and pared back. It becomes more sparse as the world and the characters deteriorate – pronouns disappear and so too does verbal communication at large, until only the images discussed above remain. According to Ravenhill (2003), however, Kane confided that an earlier draft of the play was "full of long rich sentences" (Ravenhill, 2005: 3). Through a process at her typewriter of "refining, tightening, honing" (Ravenhill, 2005: 3) draft after draft, Kane virtually edited out all the extraneous language. It is significant that Kane made this decision in her writing process before the rehearsal and performance phase, as it suggests she was striving for a particular linguistic and dialogic style, one that would best frame the play and its violent *mise en scene*. This is made particularly manifest in the above extract of vignettes, where dialogue is no longer necessary. This deliberate choice in process suggests a firm authorial vision for the work, rather than the uncontrolled "outpouring of the soul" (Ravenhill, 2005: 3).

While there is apparently nothing subtle about *Blasted* (2001), there is, however, a certain restraint in authorial condemnation of the characters and

their behaviour. Kane does not judge the actions of Ian eating the remains of a baby, or Cate later prostituting herself for food. It is this very lack of authorial condemnation that, in a good production or reading, makes an audience look beyond the brutality inherent to these acts, to what they might signify. Therein lies the face of the *Invisible*, as each audience member is confronted by what they have seen – sandwiched between what is presented before them and their own personal barometers of decency. For all the offences to the sensibilities the play might stir, the final image of *Blasted* (2001) is a redemptive one. When Ian finally dies, Cate gives him food, the final line being Ian's posthumous "thankyou" (Kane, 2001: 61). It speaks about being human, simply and powerfully, without sentimentality.

Kane's next performed work, one year later, was *Phaedra's Love* (2001), a piece commissioned by the Gate Theatre and based on Seneca's myth of Phaedra - a queen who falls in love with her stepson, the young prince Hippolytus. This adheres to another tradition of using myth as a framework for action (see sections 2.2 on Artaud and 2.3 on Brook). Kane juxtaposes the formality of the characters' royal positions and repositions the events in a *now* context with everyday (read: conversational) dialogue and her characteristic economy of language. Kane's Hippolytus is presented as an abhorrent character; grossly overweight, self-indulgent and depressed. He is the ultimate narcissist, who is condemned neither by his family nor his author. The play tackles the dynamic of the family and the self-destructive nature of love. The latter is made manifest in Phaedra's desperate need to seduce Hippolytus. When he rejects her, she commits suicide. Her posthumous act of revenge is to leave a suicide note accusing Hippolytus of rape. Perversely, this gives the previously mordant Hippolytus a cause. He refuses to deny the charges and turns himself in. He is killed and his body mutilated on stage by the angry mob revolting against the family's depravity. His sister and father also die as a result of the atrocities.

Again, as in *Blasted* (2001), characters' corpses speak on stage after they have evidently *died*, such as when Hippolytus says "If there could have been more moments like this" (Kane, 2001: 103). The stage directions following this line

specify a vulture descending. Here the lines between life and death are deliberately blurred. By giving her characters dialogue after they have been killed, almost suggests that Kane is offering them redemption – and that, in these words and moments, the meaning of the play might be located. This convention of redemption through death actually adheres to an almost classical school of drama. Sierz (2000a) quotes Ravenhill who expressed this view:

I see her as more of a classical writer. Her work is connected with a form of theatre that is quite confrontational because it doesn't reassure you with social context or Freudian psychology – it doesn't explain things. It just presents you with these austere extreme situations. She is the only contemporary writer who has that classical sensibility.

(Sierz, 2000: 2)

It appears then that *Phaedra's Love* (2001) did not seek to “explain things” or provide answers, but to explore the extremities of human nature in love and war – arguably the mainstays of classical drama.

Of *Phaedra's Love* (2001) in performance, the critics were equally scathing. One review in *The Telegraph* read: “It's not a theatre critic that's required here: it's a psychiatrist” (Spencer, 1996). Perhaps it is important to question context in regard to such criticism. Certainly the British stage has seen equally violent productions – consider the plays of Caryl Churchill or Howard Barker. Kane's long time collaborator, director James McDonald (1999) felt that, for the critics, her subject matter did not appear to reflect the perceived interests of a young woman. That is, these “unmentionable goings-on written by a 23 year old girl” (McDonald, 1999: 1) were more shocking due to Kane's age and gender. It is this very depiction of unadulterated brutality that marks her works' *otherness* however, due to “her ability to say the unsayable” (Sierz and Waddington, 2004: 1).

Kane was able to vindicate herself to an extent with the performance of her next play *Cleansed* (2001). Set in a university doubling as a facility resembling a concentration camp and/or mental asylum, the action concerns four couples as

inmates, who undergo physical atrocities in the name of love. Identity in terms of gender is also explored, as people are forced to wear each other's clothes and a woman becomes a man after a genital transplant. *Cleansed* (2001) might be viewed as "an attempt to articulate the obscenity of love" (Sierz and Waddington, 2004: 1). The head doctor/torturer/guard of the facility is called Tinker, apparently named after the critic notorious for slamming *Blasted*.

The stage directions in *Cleansed* (1998) serve the symbolic and reinforce the greater theme of love. Although simple and without extraneous detail, they simultaneously convey the sheer brutality and poignancy of the moment. For example, every time the character Carl uses a part of his body to express his love for Rod, that particular body part is removed. When Carl calls his lover's name the directions read: "Tinker produces a large pair of scissors and cuts off Carl's tongue" (Kane, 2001: 118). After Carl has danced for Rod: "He [Tinker] forces Carl to the ground and cuts off his feet" (Kane, 2001: 136). At other times rats carry dismembered body parts from the stage. On a more positive note, a stage direction reading "A sunflower bursts through the floor and grows above their head" (Kane, 2001: 120) represents a consummation of illicit love.

There lies a challenge in directing these types of texts on a purely practical level, in terms of representing live rats, sunflowers growing, and so forth, however "Kane believed passionately that if it was possible to imagine something, it was possible to represent it" (Greig, 2001: xiii). Thus, she was forcing her directors to take "an interventionist and radical approach" in their realisations and demanding of them "poetic and expressionistic" interpretations of her text (Greig, 2001: xiii). Essentially Kane's stage imagery sought to take theatre beyond the trend of "journalistic naturalism" (Greig, 2001: xiii). Apparently, the most effective interpretations of Kane's *Cleansed* (1998) for production are apparently "simple and symbolic rather than gory" (Cheney, 2004: 2). Hence, by directing the action symbolically, rather than literally, and rejecting "realism in search of better modes of communicating, the modes of poetry, ritual and dream" (Cheney, 2004: 2), the author's sparse lyricism might be realised.

In terms of the language in the play, Fisher (2006) quotes Kane herself, who said “almost every line in *Cleansed* has more than one meaning...I wanted to stretch the theatrical language“ (Fisher 2006: 3). Kane (2001) then, has experimented and constructed the dialogue as such to generate multiple meanings. An example of this might be found in lines such as: “Don’t trust me” and “I’m sorry “ (Kane, 2001: 112), where the context of the scene and the characters’ actions indicate that they might mean the opposite of what they say.

Kane appeared to be pursuing a deliberate ambiguity in the language of *Cleansed* (2001). This strategy of embodying multiple meanings is deliberate to break the linear narrative. Such a text might then be problematic for a director schooled in and practising a definitive approach to realising the performance text. If this fluidity or multiplicity of meaning were embraced, however, it would not only demonstrate a new type of *otherness* in *writing* but also in *performance*. This would be dependent both upon the theatre practitioners and the audience being open to engaging in a multiplicity of readings.

Kane’s next play, *Crave* (2001), also marks a departure in style and structure. Considered “an experiment in an open textual form” (Greig, 2001: xiii) *Crave* features not characters but *voices*. Assigned by the letters C, M, B, and A, these *voices* articulate the pain and ecstasy of love. There is only the faintest thread of a narrative in the text; that is, the emphasis is on the *voices* and their desires, as opposed to their histories and future journeys. The effect is of a scored piece, *Crave* (2001) having an inherent musicality in the construction of the dialogue. In performance:

...the text demands attendance to its rhythms ...revealing its meaning not line by line but, rather like a string quartet, in the hypnotic play of different voices and themes.

(Greig, 2001: xiv)

This suggests in this dense text that Kane was exploring an abstraction of meaning through the construction of the language. This is an example of an *other* sensibility, as it is apparent Kane has privileged aural aesthetics over the

unfolding of a story. Fisher cites Kane on the impetus of the play: "I wanted to find out how good a poet I could be while still writing something dramatic" (Fisher, 2006: 3).

The absence of conventional character and the effect of the dialogic patterning in *Crave* (2001) recall the plays of Gertrude Stein (1970). While there may be links to Stein in terms of the play's template, however, the content and subsequently the mood are quite different to Stein's *lang-scapes*. While Stein's plays are often domestically themed, and typically have a sense of playfulness and frivolity, there still remains a sense of the abstract about them. Kane's *form* may be abstract but her voices speak explicitly about love. There is also an echo of Beckettian influence in *Crave* (2001). This is particularly evident in the event, metaphoric or otherwise, of the characters falling into light (Kane, 2001: 200) as implied in the final dialogue. This is reminiscent of the light that features as a somewhat ambiguous ending to Beckett's work *Play* (1964).

Crave (2001) has neither stage directions nor discernible action prescribed in the text. Production companies have addressed this by staging it quite simply, as in the Paines Plough premiere at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, August 1998. In this production, the *mise en scene* comprised "four actors sitting on swivel chairs as in a talk show" (Sierz, 2003: 7). Other performances have adopted this interpretive frame also, electing to realise the four voices as that of a single individual's shifting experience. This apparently depicts a "powerful sense of a self fragmented" (Greig, 2001: xiv). By allowing the text and language to be privileged over extraneous *mise en scene*, Kane challenged conventional (read: main stage) theatrical *status quo*. What makes *Crave* (2001) an arresting theatre experience?

Perhaps it is the tangibility of the concepts expressed in *Crave* (2001); the familiarity of the pain of love, fused with the elusive imagery. These are anchored textually by the free form and *otherness* of character. As Greig (2001) suggests,

...one can almost feel the intoxicating release of Kane's writing as the borderlines of character evaporate entirely and her imagery moves from physical [as demonstrated in the stage directions of *Blasted* (1995)] to textual realisation.

(Greig, 2001: xiv)

Such a melding of the tangible with the elusive or indefinable might contribute to a sense of the *Invisible* in performance.

Kane's final play, *4.48 Psychosis* (2001) was produced posthumously after her suicide in 1999. Inevitably, this work is read on a personal level; through the lens of an author with debilitating depression. The material deals with the psychotic mind and its perception of everyday experiences, including treatment. Just as Artaud's perceived "madness" fuels curiosity and interest about the writer himself and subsequently his work, Kane's plays have gained somewhat mystic/mythic status. She has something of a cult following and it may be tempting for the reader to search her plays for clues or insights into her condition. Greig's (2001) view comes from a different perspective:

That the play was written whilst suffering from depression, which is a destructive rather than a creative condition, was an act of generosity by the author. That the play is artistically successful is positively heroic.

(Greig, 2001: xvii)

So, while an authorial connection to the material must be acknowledged, by distancing this fact momentarily from the text itself, Kane's leap in her writing trajectory may be observed.

Described as "a report from a region of the mind that most of us hope never to visit but from which many people cannot escape" (Greig, 2001: xvii), *4.48 Psychosis* (2001) is like *Crave* (2001), a free form text. Again the dialogue appears to belong to one voice, as it is entirely free from character assignation, and there is absence of stage directions. Although character is never

delineated, there is a suggestion in the text that there is more than one voice speaking, as can be observed in this extract:

- If you were alone do you think you might harm yourself?
- I'm scared I might.
- Could that be protective?
- Yes. It's fear that keeps me away from the train tracks. I just hope to God that death is the fucking end. I feel like I'm eighty years old. I'm tired of my life and my mind wants to die.
- That's a metaphor, not reality.
- It's a simile.
- That's not reality.
- It's not a metaphor, it's a simile, but even if it were, the defining feature of a metaphor is that it's real.

(Kane, 2001: 211)

This could be taken to be the voices of a doctor and patient, or less literally, as a patient interrogating the self. Due to the surrounding ambiguity, either interpretation lends itself to theatricality, as both require two bodies on stage. This makes it interesting dramatically, as well as textually. In the first production at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, the director James McDonald divided the text into the voices of three roles, that of: "victim/perpetrator/bystander" (Greig, 2001: xvii). This different interpretation serves to emphasise Kane's practice of leaving the text open to multiple readings in staging and performance. She invites other practitioners to solve the dramatic paradigm – giving them a richly textured and imagistic script and very little else. In her three earlier plays, the imagery comes from the stage directions and action while, in *Crave* (2001) and *4.48 Psychosis* (2001), it is embedded in the text, the language of the dialogue itself.

Kane's explorations of form, character and language have produced a style of drama text that "demands that its staging be as poetic as its writing" (Greig, 2001: xiii). This correlates with an *invisiblist* aesthetic of deliberate ambiguity and multiplicity of reading. For instance, by creating a text with dialogue that

may contain more than one meaning, Kane (2001) challenges the parameters of theatrical writing and performance and almost certainly moves towards defining a new theatrical experience, one where the audience members interpret the text for themselves.

2.4 Looking to Australian *Invisiblist* Writers

This type of interpretive theatrical experience might also be located in the work of a number of practitioners currently writing for theatre here in Australia. By looking to the texts of several Australian writers working within this interpretive frame, further dramatic elements negotiating *otherness* may be uncovered. One such Australian playwright whose theatre writing praxis exhibits *otherness* is Jenny Kemp, (1949-).

2.4.1 Kemp: Other Worlds Other Times

Kemp's plays feature deliberately disjunctive moments, usurping of linear time, and deconstruction of the characters' psyches. There is a distinct female quality and sensuality to Kemp's work, as aspects of women's experience are explored textually. The intangible is privileged; her plays exhibit in performance "something which has remained unnamed" (Meth, 1999: 2). Kemp also explores the notion of transience in terms of time, and how it might relate to and shape human experience. Her characters appear to wrestle with the concept of time, simultaneously treading both reality and their subconscious world. This lends an ethereal, almost dream-like quality to her work. By its very nature theatre is a transient event and Kemp exploits further this notion of the ephemeral, employing it as a fundamental premise for her characters' trajectories.

Her text *Call of The Wild* (1999-2000), first performed in 1988, exhibits this ethereal/ephemeral quality in its exploration of "the continual interplay between inner and outer worlds" (Kemp, 2007a: 1). Four women, and a character known simply as The Man, float through their day of household chores, negotiating a path between their "despair and desire" (Kemp, 2007a: 1). The women attempt to transcend their domestic reality (their despair) by vocalising and embodying their dreams and desires. The female characters are denoted not by name but

by the type of clothing they wear: Woman in Short Skirt, Woman in Pale Hat and so forth. These characters for Kemp (1999-2000) are not individual entities; instead they “represent the one woman” (Kemp, 2007a: 1). Thus, in performance, they may symbolize different aspects or roles of woman/hood. That is, the four characters represent the inner and outer, sometimes conflicting, desires of a single woman. For Kemp, these characters were inspired visually by the paintings of the Belgian Surrealist Paul Delvaux. Of particular significance to Kemp (1999-2000) in these images were the “spatial dynamics” (Kemp, 2007a: 3) of the subjects. This notion informed the staged realisation of *Call of the Wild* (1999-2000) in which Kemp privileged stillness to convey an internal state or “the landscapes of the soul” (Kemp, 2007a: 3). Structurally, this juxtaposition of the inner and outer worlds is represented by an assemblage of images or a collage of vignettes. For Radic (2006), *Call of The Wild* (1999-2000) is “not so much a play as a mosaic of dreams, images and snatched moments of conversation” (Radic, 2006: 291).

For Fensham and Varney (2005), the play contains “four distinct textual registers, that of everyday narration, dream imagery, sexual fantasy and mythological story”. (Fensham and Varney, 2005: 70). This has resonances of Barthes’s (1977) notion of *inter-textuality*. These registers are layered, apparently randomly, throughout the text, as they “intertwine and alternate with no particular hierarchy of meaning” (Fensham and Varney, 2005: 70). They are also shot through with music and “feminine acoustics” (Fensham and Varney, 2005: 70) in performance, to create a score-like effect. Kemp (2007a) records Co-director Elizabeth Drake’s account of this process in rehearsal and performance:

I developed scenarios with the actors which involved doubling and multiplying the voices and adding simultaneous action. The idea of the co-presence of discontinuous elements. A recurring patterning....

(Kemp, 2007)

This doubling and multiplicity of spoken dialogue to create a “patterning” effect reveals common motifs of animals, folkloric legends, and ideals of domesticity embedded in the text. These textual symbols represent and complicate the woman’s myriad and changing “despairs and desires”.

Radic (2006) identifies some “wider references” (from both the greater literary canon and historical events of female experience in particular) upon which Kemp draws in *Call of The Wild* (1999-2000). These range from

...witch trials of medieval Europe, to fairytale literature, and to archetypal situations where man is the teacher and woman the pupil.

(Radic, 2006: 291).

This *inter-textuality* gives *Call of The Wild* (1999-2000) a sense of timelessness; past events hold resonance for the contemporary experiences of Kemp’s character/s. For Radic (2006), this poses some difficulty in performance in terms of signification – he describes the play as “a baffling piece” (Radic, 2006: 291). This is predominantly due to the fact that Kemp’s play does not attempt to chronicle a particular event in real terms and time. That is, for Radic (2006), it is a play that does not necessarily contribute to cataloguing “a social history of the times” (Radic, 2006: 292) which, for him, justifies a place in the canon of Australian drama. In lieu of this perception, Kemp’s works are, for Radic (2006), “of marginal importance” (Radic, 2006: 292) in a greater Australian tradition; however, he acknowledges that Kemp’s (1999-2000) work explores an alternative tradition and exhibits *otherness* by exploring “the encounters of the mind and the projections of the sub-conscious” (Radic, 2006: 292).

It appears that this *otherness* is deliberate, an agenda of the text. Far from being merely “baffling”, *Call of the Wild* (1999-2000) is constructed so that, as Kemp (2007a) cites Drake, “recognition of meaning [is] endlessly delayed” (Kemp, 2007a: 3). Signification is elusive for the audience; a constant intangible. The experience is paramount; it is itself the meaning of the performance.

Kemp's *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996) also pursues this notion of intangibility, and is again influenced by the paintings of Paul Delvaux. Kemp (2007a, 2007b) explains that the sense of stillness embodied in the painting ignites or stimulates movement in her, and that this impulse becomes a departure point for the theatre piece. *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996) features a woman who leaves her home and children in the suburbs and goes to a city nightclub in her evening dress. As she walks through the nightclub, she hesitates for a moment, looks back, trips and falls. This fall metaphorically triggers a descent into a mythical underworld. In this place of fantasy, she is able to negotiate issues relating to her identity and to reconcile them with her fixed reality. For Kemp (1996) the play explores "The premise that any ordinary action has extraordinary resonances" (Kemp, 1996: iii). Once more, the playwright draws on myth, memory, dream and desire to draw an everyday event into a realm of *otherness*.

As with *Call of the Wild* (1999-2000), the experiences of a single woman are interrogated in *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996) by the presence of four characters on stage - Woman 1, 2, 3 and 4. All serve to communicate, through the dialogue, the state of their/her psyche in a way that demonstrates conditions of both disjuncture and symbiosis. The voices of the characters might contradict each other or echo in agreement as can be observed in the extract below:

MAN: May I join you?

WOMAN 4: Join me?

MAN: Yes.

WOMAN 1: I almost said, what, in holy matrimony?

MAN: Well, if you like. I'm not averse.

[WOMAN 3 goes and sits at the table on the left chair. WOMEN 2, 3 and 4 frequently giggle.]

WOMAN 1: But actually, I'm not averse either.

WOMAN 3: But perhaps we should get to know each other.

(Kemp, 1996: 23)

In performance, the effect is of a score; vocal dynamics comprising, as described by one reviewer, “irrigous uncertainty” (Murphet, 1996). It is almost as though the source of the sounds are ambiguous; they may well be inside the audience’s heads. The tonal registers, as suggested by the script, range from meditative to desperate, enhancing the texture of the aural experience for the audience.

Meth (1999) attributes elements of Chinese philosophy and field thinking to *The Back Sequin Dress* (1996). In these disciplines, the focus is not on the relationship between cause and effect but on ““what goes with what”” (Meth, 1999: 3). As such, rather than being chronicled in a linear fashion, events might be explored through other modalities of time, such as cyclical or associative time (Meth, 1999). This is reflected in the play’s form, as the single event of the woman falling in the nightclub is re-visited each time from a new perspective; she is by turns shocked, embarrassed and afraid. Text accompanies each fall, and it may either support the woman’s demonstrated emotion, or counterpoint it entirely. Formally the play subscribes to a destabilisation of linearity.

This modality of *otherness* may also be the most suitable frame in which to view the play. Kemp asserts that she wishes to “liberate the audience from the usual constraints of convention” (Kemp, 2007b: 3). Her goal, in this instance,

...is to stimulate a relationship between audience and performance which allows a flexible interplay between the active and possibilities of both.

(Kemp, 2007b)

Thus in Kemp’s work, the audience is invited to interpret the images and text at their will.

In *Still Angela* (2002) the convention of exploring an “ordinary action” and the possible resultant “extraordinary resonances” is once again the premise of the play. Once more a character’s inner landscape, or psyche, is the playwright’s

exploration. This time, however, the departure point is from *stillness itself* rather than an action, as in *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996). On the eve of her 40th birthday Angela sits on a chair in her kitchen. As she contemplates her life thus far, she projects a journey, both backwards into her past, and forward into her future. From this static point (sitting in her kitchen) in the present, Angela travels in her mind to places as diverse as the place of her childhood, to the Simpson desert. For Baxter (2003), Kemp effectively “spins her [the character Angela] into the social realm, the landscape, the stratosphere” (Baxter, 2003: 5). Angela’s contemplations or forays into memory, and her enacted projections serve to create the *mise en scene*. Kemp describes it as a “contemporary fairy tale” (Kemp, 2007c: 3) about a woman in transit in her own life.

Angela’s journey is represented theatrically by four actors – a character device employed in *Call of the Wild* (1988) and *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996). Kemp (2002) constructs the journey on timelines, or *grids*, as she relays to Baxter (2003) in an interview:

To find a form for these ideas I organise the performance narrative around 2 grids. I structure this by creating a visual storyboard, which I then workshop further with the group. One line is moving forward on a linear narrative structure – a casual concept of time. Then there’s the other part of the grid, the vertical where the movement is downwards, sometimes backwards. This is where time is no longer a factor.

(Baxter, 2003: 4)

It is apparent Kemp has plotted and strategically arranged both Angela’s real, and imagined, moments of experience into a carefully crafted piece of theatre. This method of storyboarding the juxtaposition of the real and imagined was an “attempt to give form to the way we psychically order and negotiate experience” (Baxter, 2003: 3).

Kemp has traditionally collaborated with composers, designers, and performers in her theatre practice, often from a project’s inception, so that there is a sense

of sharing and co-creation to a given performance. Collaboration was expanded with *Still Angela* (2002) to include a choreographer in the production team. The outcome was another theatre language; that of the physical, as Kemp and her ensemble discussed in an interview with Robinson (2002). Performers involved in the inaugural production spoke of wanting to “hook into speaking”, but nevertheless, acknowledged that it was vital to “be aware of the other language that’s going on” (Robinson, 2002:3) – that of the body.

Through a multiplicity of character representations, the experimentation with theatre form and the manipulation of a theatrical language, Kemp achieves what might be referred to as an *otherness* in her theatre writing, which demonstrates she works in a theatre modality akin to that of an *invisiblist* practitioner.

2.4.2 Price: Meaning in the Spaces

The plays of Brisbane-based playwright Norman Price, (1939-), also exhibit an *otherness* of theatricality. Price mines the potentialities of Australian idiom and vernacular to create a richly poetic and image-laden text. Price’s plays could be considered an exploration of the “familial and cultural inheritances embedded in the Australian psyche” (Price, 2004: 114). As, such Price’s theatrical voice might be considered distinctly Australian. His own experiences also provide much of the impetus for the action and inform the world of the play. Price is particularly concerned with memory and acknowledges that “both my life and my memories are major resources for my writing” (Price, 2004: 3). Far from being merely an autobiographical exercise or some kind of catharsis, Price’s plays invite the reader/audience to interrogate their own experience.

This is particularly evidenced by *Barking Dogs* (2002), first performed at the Metro Arts Theatre in Brisbane in 1998. The nexus of this performance text is the reunion of three estranged sisters who gather at the family home after their father’s death. Rather than mourn his passing, however, the sisters reflect on their miserable lives as a result of their father’s abuse. This exorcism of memory culminates in the eating of a pie, made by the eldest sister, of their father’s

remains. Their father's legacy: memories of his abusive acts are metaphorically cooked and consumed by the women, and finally exorcised as the eldest sister sets fire to his house.

The director of the inaugural production of *Barking Dogs* (2002), Marcus Wessendorf (2002) believes the play demonstrates a "sensitive balance of heterogeneous registers and mood" (Wessendorf, 2002: 8). He attributes this achievement to Price's manipulation of the funeral ritual, his referencing to other iconic theatre texts such as Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1964), and to the shifting style of the play. Wessendorf (2002) elaborates on the latter, stating that, for him, *Barking Dogs* (2002) shifts stylistically "between the tragic, the melodramatic, the sentimental, the grotesque and the realistic" (Wessendorf, 2002: 8).

Wessendorf (2002) also highlights the tension between the alternating dialogic styles in *Barking Dogs* (2002). Price employs various linguistic devices, ranging from everyday language to the heightened poetic. The construction of the dialogue, however, consistently uses a type of verse form, as evidenced in the extract below:

Monnie: There you were in the morning.
 I told you to leave it there.
 It's still there filled with dead flies.
 That bloody fly paper is still there.
(Price, 2002: 29)

While the play's construction is poem-like, or "non-realistic", the language itself is identifiable as everyday, colloquial or "realistic" (Wessendorf, 2002: 9). Price (2002) also uses heightened language that features repetition:

Helen: I heard you moving things.
 You moved the earth.
 The smell of the earth came rushing through

the back there.

The smell of the earth and all the memories
buried in it.

(Price, 2002: 41)

Interspersed through all of these dialogic conventions, as specified in the stage directions, is the sound of chained dogs barking and the rattle and creak of the plumbing. These directives in performance create a *sounding effect* or an underpinning musical *score*.

Formally the play is constructed to allow the important information to be released slowly, over a period of time. That is, the story is contained in the poetic-shaped dialogue, to be uncovered or made *visible* by the audience. Wessendorf (2002) argues that:

Price's performance texts are not held together by a consistent psychological through-line or a tightly developed Aristotelian plot but, instead, use rather simple narrative constructions to allow for the episodic presentation of the protagonists' stories.

(Wessendorf, 2002: 9)

Thus, the audience is not expected to navigate a complicated plot. Their role is to be receptive to the characters' stories made manifest in the fabric of the greater text of the play. Here Wessendorf (2002) references Bertolt Brecht's *Epic Theatre* technique (in his application of the term "episodic"), which involves a theatrical device such as a musical interlude, caption or placard indicating the theme or content of a scene (McDonald, 2005). In Price's theatre, this episodic style may be more subtle than a placard; that is, metaphoric language may be used to signal latent meaning. Indeed, "It is more important to him [Price] that his performance texts are open enough to allow for a response to occur" (Wessendorf, 2002: 13).

For Wessendorf (2002), Price's work also exhibits influences of the German playwright Heiner Muller. This is because they both invite the audience to interpret/complete the text for themselves. In other words they endeavour to:

...set up a conflict between the audience and the text and invite the spectators to become active co-producers of the overall meaning of the performance.

(Wessendorf, 2002: 6)

Price (2002) has identified a central concern of his writing praxis to be the "spaces that appear between the language" (Price, 2002: 17). He acknowledges that

There are shades of meaning and emotional response that are layered between, and within, the text that have to be uncovered.

(Price, 2002: 17)

It appears that Price has deliberately constructed *Barking Dogs* (2002) so that there are ambiguities inherent and evident in the "spaces". These "spaces" might be indicated by a pause in the text, or by a stage direction for a specific song. In other words, something is communicated in a "space" between the language or the dialogue, that can not be effectively communicated, for Price (2002), via words alone. The actor in performance is also required to observe these "spaces" (Price, 2002). Such "spaces" delineating "meaning" are to be distilled, or in Price's (2002) words, "uncovered" by the audience. Similarly the "emotional response" is of the audience's making; they are invited to respond emotionally, though the type of response is neither prescribed nor contrived. Thus, the audience is given a role in the performance, that of willing interpreters.

Another example of the way in which Price uses memory as a frame or lens to focus and represent events or issues theatrically can be found in his play *Urban Dingoes* (2004). These memories, although idiosyncratic to the author, are

nonetheless portrayed so as to resonate or be familiar to the audience. He speaks of his writing practice in terms of memory:

At times when I write, I feel my memories take place in what could be a dream atmosphere...it's not a dream. I am aware that I am working in the time of my memory, the time of my mind...not at all like the time the watch on my wrist keeps.

(Price, 2004: 3)

It appears that, while Price's (2004) *remembering* unconsciously informs his *mise en scene* (that is, he is engaged in the writer's dreaming or mind as though in a *dream*) he is simultaneously conscious, on some level, of this. In other words, he is aware that he is creating the world of the play as he writes. In this modality there is a doubling of time; the time of the play is different from real time.

In *Urban Dingoes* (2004), as in *Barking Dogs* (2002), the action centres on the family home. The play's premise sees an aging Claire paid a visit by her three grown children. The children characters behave like dingoes, sniffing at Claire's assets; her house, and fighting each other over her possessions. They question her state of mind, as she has recently removed the house's front steps and keeps company only with a black dog. Their collective agenda is clear:

Anne: I want her screwed down and tied up.
Always like that.
Prowling like a bitch on heat.
Sniffing around.
It's worse?
Swinging in and out of reality.
It happens quickly.
How long has it been?
She's always been crazy...
Get her locked up.
She stinks.

(Price, 2004: 38-39)

Claire is not oblivious to her children's machinations, but she sustains herself by holding fast to her lifelong dream - to be a performer in a musical. She also has an uncanny hold on her children in that she possesses the ability to trigger them into regression; a reversion to childhood, such as when they play freeze - as rats (Price, 2004: 84). These characters effectively "oscillate between their adult and the child-like world of the past" (Gattenhof, 2004: 10). Thus the play deals with an "exorcism of the living" and "an expiation of memory" (Price, 2004: 114).

The play departs from the realm of the everyday, however, by a theatrical device whereby Claire breaks the *fourth wall*. Here she speaks to the audience in an opening address from a swing suspended above the stage and auditorium. This suspension gives her almost a supernatural presence: she is both a figure of reality and something not of the world. The effect in performance is one akin to a surrealist image; like surrealist painter Marc Chagall's floating brides (Gattenhof, 2004: 10-11).

Again in *Urban Dingo*es (2004), dialogue is composed in verse form, as can be seen in the following extract:

Margaret Mary: We thought it would be good for you
to get rid of some of the things
around the house.
Things you're not using.
They get in your way.
We're here today to help you sort it
out,
Help you bring an end to it.
You know!

(Price, 2004: 38).

What is different, however, is the form. While *Urban Dingoes* (2004) could be considered to be another example of Price's (2004) "simple narrative construction" in order to privilege the "characters stories", this time it is less "episodic", in the sense that all the characters have their cathartic moment in the spotlight. The characters' lines are more integrated or *woven* so that the text in performances yields different voices intermittently in a type of poetic patterning. Stage directions indicating specific sounds such as the black dog barking or a "symphony of voices" (Price 2004: 73) contribute to this sound pattering effect or *aural texture*. Formally the play appears to traverse two worlds, the real and the heightened or, as Price expresses it, "a sharper reality" (Price, 2004: 3) – one imbuing *otherness*.

In Price's most recent (as yet unpublished work) *Swamp Witch* (2006), there is a shift from the exploration of "familial inheritances" to the broader community. As *Swamp Witch* (2006) is as yet unperformed and unpublished there is currently an absence of literature or critical review in relation to it. That is, it may only be interrogated by this researcher, in its current draft form. Set on Moreton Island, the play features a woman labelled by locals as the Swamp Witch, a quintessential outsider figure. She has a companion, a beachcomber and collector of flotsam and jetsam, similarly ostracised by the community. There is also a ghost figure, an abused and drowned girl, who acts as a type of narrator for the events.

A sense of mythology surrounds the character of the drowned girl, as there are initially many unanswered questions about both her life and death. Her role as an ethereal observer and commentator, in a both narrative and onlooker capacity has an *otherness* to it. The convention of narration is usurped by her liminal state – to which reality does she belong? Almost as with Kane's (2001) characters who speak after they have effectively *died*, Price's drowned girl speaks the true wisdom of the play.

Again the language of *Swamp Witch* (2006) is both heightened and everyday. Price also explores a new linguistic device in this latest work. When the swamp witch inhabits her sacred site, she begins to *speak in tongues*. At this draft

phase of the script this convention is represented on the page by stage directions, indicating that it is up to the director and performer to co-create this language. It appears that Price (2006) is using this biblically derived language in order to convey the character's interior landscape, that of her search for something, and her attempts to access this in *another way*.

Thus through interrogation and reframing of memory, shifting modalities, meaning between the spaces, traversing two realities, *otherness* of language, mythology of character, and ritualisation of space, Price draws a type of theatre text that might allow the *Invisible* to manifest in performance. Like Price and Kemp, the Australian playwright Daniel Keene (1955-), also mines Australian imagery and idiom to pursue an exploration of *otherness* in theatre writing.

2.4.3 Keene: *A Theatre of Difference – Play as Poem*

Working prolifically in France, Keene has had a “profound impact on Australian Theatre” (Croggon, 2000: xi), particularly in Melbourne in the late 1990s and early 2000s. During this period Keene collaborated with director Ariette Taylor on the Keene/Taylor Theatre Project (KTTP). This theatre experience was characterised by its ensemble-driven short works, and was staged in venues as diverse as warehouses to boutique art galleries to the Sydney Opera House. In 2002 Keene absconded from the project, the reason for which, as told to Boyd, was “I felt it was becoming too much of an institution” (Boyd, 2006a: 2). Indeed Keene always appears to be seeking something fresh, a new *otherness* to drive his practice, as evidenced by his 2006 address at the Annual Rex Cramphorn Memorial Lecture.

In this lecture, Keene (2006a) conveys that he is concerned with a *theatre of difference*, which he sees as something *other* than “theatre as a kind of litmus paper dipped into the soup of society” (Keene, 2006a: 16). Nor does he see theatre in terms of:

...the deadly plays that have been boring audiences stupid for a long time, or stroking the vanity of those it apes, eliciting the hollow laughter of identification without the shock of recognition.

(Keene, 2006a: 16)

Here Keene (2006a) echoes Brook (1968a) and his concept of *deadly theatre*; “plays done by good actors in what seems like the proper way” (Brooke, 1968a: 10), a type of theatre that edifies its audience and their particular lifestyle and cultural choices. Instead, Keene is concerned with

...the kind of theatre that embraces change and is a reminder of our mortality; theatre that does not confirm power, but rather admits fragility, acknowledges failure, that recognises tragedy and is disrespectful enough to create comedy...I imagine the kind of theatre where it might be possible to capture what is immanent or nascent in a society and not only that which exists in apparent permanence.

(Keene, 2006a: 3-4)

This *otherness* of theatre, where the writer and practitioners divine what is “nascent” and make it *visible*, appears to be an underlying principle of Keene’s *theatre of a difference*.

This aesthetic can be observed in Keene’s play *Terminus* (2003). Premiering in Adelaide in 1997 at the Red Shed Theatre and directed by Tim Maddock, *Terminus* (2003) is set in the transient environment of a train station, a setting that exists metaphorically as “the last stop for a vague community of lost souls” (Croggon, 2002: 1). The central character of John has traits of an everyman, yet is also a loner and a murderer. Along with his *alter ego*, the tramp/visionary character of the Man, these two characters seem to represent the “spiritual poverty of modern urban life” (Croggon, 1996). This concept of “spiritual poverty” is conveyed through John’s empty, apparently meaningless and motiveless action of killing. The lack of spirituality paramount in contemporary society, or, as Keene might perceive the *Now*, is thus embodied in the John

character and his action. The other characters, including John's victims and a chorus comprising three pub drinkers also encapsulate this central concern of emptiness, albeit to a lesser extent (Croggon, 1996). Thus, in *Terminus* (2003), a sentiment or authorial concept is represented by a figure, and explored through both metaphor and the *mise en scene*. However, conclusions are not drawn and nothing is definitive.

Stylistically, these ambiguities are made manifest through form. The play has been described as "formally audacious" (Croggon, 1996) as its trajectory is fragmented, scenes and passages of dialogue change direction, or are broken off, and symbols mutate. The ultimate effect of this in performance is a "strange, dream-like reality" (Croggon 1996). The fragmentary nature of its text correlates to a postmodern way of writing, where not one truth is acknowledged, but many (Croggon, 1996). That is, Keene's (2003) text does not provide answers to metaphysical questions but explores the question itself. Keene (2006) acknowledges that there are deliberate ambiguities in his writing, and cautions that

...we must be prepared for the possibility that the answers to these questions may be further questions, ambiguities and inscrutable puzzles. We may have to welcome unanswerable questions, and love the beauty that refuses to flatter us.

(Keene, 2006: 6)

Thus, Keene advocates an *otherness* in theatre, one in which the audience might "welcome" or seek an experience that is not definitive, is puzzling even, and also one that does not necessarily reflect human reality as we might wish to see it.

Also in *Terminus*, (2003) an *otherness* of language is employed, contributing to this postmodern fragmentary effect. That is, a range of dialogic styles are employed, ranging from the naturalistic or conversational tone of the police officer characters, to the *expressionistic* language of the chorus (Croggon,

1996). The combination and juxtaposition of these styles is deliberate, and gives the script *aural texture* in performance.

After *Terminus* (2003) Keene's work appears to take on new shapes and concerns. His next shorter, perhaps more distilled works, were the product of his collaboration with director Ariette Taylor for the Keene/Taylor Theatre Project (KTTP). When questioned in an interview with Muh and Bouvier (2000) about the brevity of these works, Keene identified two reasons for this; one pragmatic and one artistic. As cited, Keene elaborates:

Pragmatic...because it was easier to stage short works; they were less expensive to produce, required less cast members, suited smaller venues. It was also to give myself a break from the efforts required to write longer work. Artistically, short works presented certain problems/challenges that I had wanted to address for some time. Central to these was the notion of a play as a kind of poem.

(Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 3)

The Keene/Taylor Theatre Project functioned as a space where Keene could test his practice further by working consistently (rather than seasonally or intermittently) with an ensemble of committed stage performers. These plays/poems are concerned with what Keene perceives to be "the deep core of drama" (Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 1), which sees

The individual struggling to come to terms with (to recognise) his/her situation and having to make, finally, a choice as to how she/he responds to it.

(Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 1)

The struggles of individuals in their everyday lives are made manifest in Keene's characters and dramatic situations and are the nexus of the work produced for the KTTP. Keene describes his characters as "mostly people without privilege, who have no 'position', who have no power" (Muh and

Bouvier, 2000: 2). This might include the young, the elderly or the homeless – apt considering that the inaugural and two subsequent KTTTP seasons were staged in a mission warehouse amidst furniture reserved for “the homes of those who could not afford to buy their own” (Croggon, 2000: xiii).

A selection of the plays produced by the KTTTP were published in an anthology entitled *To Whom It May Concern* (2000). Three plays from the anthology particularly deal with the “individual struggling” to understand and respond to their reality, thus demonstrating Keene’s working ethos of “the deep core of drama”. They are *untitled monologue* (2000), *night, a wall, two men* (2000) and *the rain* (2000) and are discussed in detail below.

The piece *untitled monologue* (2000), first performed in 1998, features a single figure, that of Matthew, a boy/young man who has left home to enter the wide world. The text takes the form of Matthew’s letters to his father. As Matthew continues to write to his father (who does not reply), his crumbling psyche is revealed; his frustration, disappointment, anger and fear at being without a job, money, a girlfriend, and a place to live. The dialogue is constructed so that the audience are aware of the character’s gradual breaking down; at first the letters are cohesive; reporting Matthew’s account of settling in to his new environment. As time passes and Matthew’s bravado begins to falter, his letters become more fragmented and uncertain in tone:

I like to be on my own just not where I live it’s funny really I just
like having people around me even if I don’t know them I like
being alone as long as I’m not on my own it’s funny really.

(Keene, 2000: 56)

The repetitious phrasing of “it’s funny really” alludes to the character’s gradual loss of faith or confidence. The lack of punctuation indicates that the delivery of this section might be subject to, or in sync with an actor’s breathing patterns. The text continues to fragment with a thought being cut off in mid-sentence and another articulated:

Later we sat at a table and later we went outside that's when
I didn't mean to hurt her
Outside is when it happened

(Keene, 2000: 57)

It is eventually revealed that Matthew has assaulted a woman; an event only alluded to in this extract of text. This act is conveyed through not what is *said*, but what is left *unsaid* that denotes the signification.

According to Muh and Bouvier (2000) Keene terms this technique, where he “make[s] the strongest possible utterance with the least amount of words” a “narrative compression” (Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 1). This “narrative compression” evident in *untitled monologue* (2000) demonstrates Matthew’s struggle to cope within his new reality, and is made manifest in his response (upholding the “deep core of drama” concept). This response might be considered essentially an *invisible* admission.

In another short work, *night, two men, a wall* (1998) Keene deploys a similar *invisiblist* effect. The piece features two homeless men who have something of the Beckettian tramp about them; they are literally people at the edges of society. Incidentally, Keene acknowledges in an interview that Beckett is a seminal influence: “Beckett has always been a very important writer for me” and his body of work for Keene “seems a relentless excavation of the human soul” (Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 4). This particular play is divided into 17 sections, or vignettes, in which the characters reveal their experience of reality, via their nightly conversations at the wall. Topics include food, women, the health of their homeless acquaintances, as well as their own ailments, both physical and spiritual. Keene builds the characters by layering; each vignette adds another layer or dimension to the two men; they are both tragic and funny. The play’s form takes on an *otherness*, as it does not rely on “larger narrative strategies that can often dilute the central themes/concerns/meaning of texts” (Muh and Bouvier, 2000:1) but explores an issue; homeless-ness, through language and character and situation (the latter evident in the mission warehouse where it was initially staged).

Keene elaborates on his method when it comes to form. He approaches a text with

...a blank sheet of paper. I decided nothing before I sat down to write. I wanted to see what emerged, and I would follow that. I had to trust myself.

(Keene, 2006: 16)

This methodology employed by Keene is a specific one; he has privileged the notion of seeing “what emerged” and honouring the writer’s instincts and unconscious; trusting that the *invisible* words and characters would be made *visible* on the page.

The play *night, two men, a wall* (2000) has resonances beyond a story told; it is perhaps an example of a “kind of poem” that Keene seeks to present. Each vignette or exchange might be viewed as a stanza, the whole contributing to an inchoate knowing. It resists a single identifiable meaning but conveys a sense of the men’s experience.

Keene’s short plays for the KTTP are poem-like – although not necessarily in the sense of poetry *qua* poetry, as the language is not necessarily poetical, or composed as such in the traditional sense. Keene paraphrases Jean Cocteau on this: “he was dead against poetry in the theatre, but all for poetry *of* the theatre” (Keene, 2006: 2). This might be understood by considering that a poem does not seek to explain something explicitly, but to describe it through metaphor and allusion. It does not tell; it merely shows. In the heart of each Keene piece, there exists a poetical idea; sometimes the shape is the poem itself.

The rain (2000) also reads like a poem. Like in *untitled monologue* (2000), it too has a single character, an old woman named Hanna, who catalogues for the audience miscellaneous items in her possession; so many items that they fill

her house and so she must live in her back yard. The items in question were apparently given to her by others for safekeeping:

...the people they gave things to me when they were getting on the train they were in a hurry to get on the train there were others telling them to get on the train...

(Keene, 2000: 113)

According to Hanna “there was more than one train” (Keene, 2000: 113) and it soon becomes apparent that the people are Jews being forced to board Nazi trains bound for concentration camps. The items Hanna speaks of are their worldly possessions; mostly material except for one item given by a little boy: a vial of rain: “God’s rain” (Keene, 2000: 119).

Apart from the poetic content, the text is again in free form and again it does not contain punctuation. There are more questions than answers to this piece: Did Hanna literally take the possessions of the Jewish prisoners for safe keeping, or is she metaphorically a keeper of something else; their memories? Keene is very interested in the idea of memory, stating that: “the theatre is a place of both memory and presence” (Keene: 2006: 1). He appears to draw on this concept in regard to form by exploring both on stage simultaneously.

The full-length play *Half and Half* (2002) produced by the KTTP appears to probe more deeply this concept of memory and presence in relation to one another. *Half and Half* (2002) maps the road to reconciliation for two estranged brothers Ned and Luke. Ned returns to the family home after a long absence and, as his relationship with his brother grows, so too does the garden he plants in the kitchen. This use of metaphor is a typical device used by Keene to underpin a theme.

In terms of language Keene (2002), again employs his “narrative compression” in the brothers’ interactions, that is, he uses the “least amount of words” possible to convey the essence of the scene, evident in this extract below:

- morning
- morning
- sleep well?
- did you sleep well?
- yes
- so did I
- lovely morning
- it is

Long pause

- complacency is the mill stone of the abject
- probably

(Keene, 2002: 41)

The dialogue is minimal, almost stark, yet conveys the underlying sense of unease between the brothers. Keene (2002) rejects character assignation in the formatting of the play, instead allowing the nuance of the line to denote the character speaking.

When the brothers are alone however, the dialogue style changes to a more meditative, reflective tone, evident in Ned's musings below:

I've come over lost I'm doing what I please I'm idle hands I'm left
wanting I'm one and zero

Pause

When the night comes I see best I see there's no escape not for
me escape from what? Not for me to know what do I know? I
know me it doesn't help

Pause

calling for help knowing there's no help

(Keene, 2002: 26)

The strategic placing and subtle repetition of the words “I’m” and “know” lend the aforementioned *aural texture* to the play, while the juxtaposition of the different language styles, echo those explored in *Terminus* (2003).

One of Keene’s (2006b) most recent works, performed in France, is decidedly political in tone. *Elephant People* (2006b) was commissioned by the National Theatre of Bordeaux and is classified by Keene in an interview with Chris Boyd (2006b) as a type of “sideshow opera” (Boyd, 2006b: 3). The characters are about people who have, in previous eras, been perceived as circus “freaks” (Boyd, 2006b: 2), such as conjoined twins. The performance will encompass Keene’s texts in poetic form (from the perspective of each character), in addition to music and projected visual images, composed by Keene’s fellow practitioners. A sample of the text entitled *Boy With No Face* (2006a) details the experience of a boy pinned in a blanket citing “white cars with blue flags” (Keene, 2006b: 1). His jailers can be inferred to be “the men inside with eyes that shine” (Keene, 2006b: 1). Whilst appearing to be a reactionary text to events in the *peripheral now*, things nascent in western society, there is also a dream-like quality to the work. The boy repeats his visions of incarceration in different ways. The text is constructed so that the reader is taken under the blanket with him, and allowed entry into his head, seeing what he sees in a broken, dream-like way. Indeed for Keene (2006a, 2006b), the *theatre of difference* has a quality of dreams about it, as “The theatre is where we come to dream in public” (Keene, 2006a: 11).

Keene advocates for writers to tap into the potentiality of theatre, to be “quite dangerous, seditious in fact; wilfully mutinous, suggesting a separation from the accepted norm” (Keene, 2006a: 9).

Such experiments with form, language and character as evidenced in Keene's plays are testament to his ongoing interrogation of the theatrical medium and its possibilities. Of his *theatre of difference* he says:

That's the theatre I keep imagining and that I write for. I write for it in order to create it. A playwright must do this; the play that he or she writes is always a new proposal for the theatre. It is an imaginative act that suggests something beyond the play and contains the possibility for new forms of theatre.

(Keene, 2006a: 4)

Keene's (2006a) statement conveys an *invisiblist* sentiment; the "imaginative act" alluding to an *otherness* of theatre, "something beyond the play" and the writer's words. It is an *invisible* property brought to the theatrical experience by the other practitioners, the audience and that which is intangible, felt but not seen, that which exists "between everyday perceptions and imagination" (Keene, 2006a: 7).

When asked if he regards his theatre writing as a "political process", Keene states in reply: "Every public act is political" (Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 5). Thus Keene's theatre texts in production are quintessential public acts or *dreams*, and are inherently political. However, Keene's works are never obviously polemic or didactic in tone. Indeed "Writers who really wish to make a political difference...become politicians" (Croggon, 2000: xv). What differentiates Keene's work as *other* than the strictly polemic is his particular brand of theatrical poetry, as "the initial impact of a poem is never on the intellect" (Keene, 2006a: 9).

2.5 Synthesising *Invisiblist* Features and Moving Into the Now

Chapter Two identifies some recurring features of the *invisiblist* practitioner's/writer's work, particularly in relation to form.

2.5.1 Synthesis of Chapter Two

In terms of form, both Artaud (1970) and Brook (1968a) liken theatre to a divine or *holy* experience, through which the face of the *invisible* may be made manifest. Religious resonances are apparent in Artaudian texts, and also in those of Sarah Kane (2001); both of these writers' works are rich in biblical references. Artaud (1976, 1989) and Kane (2001) also employ mythological stories as a framework for dramatic action; as does Parks (1995) in her history plays. In his ritualisation of domestic actions such as baking Price (2002, 2004), affects a sense of the holy and ceremonial to the atmospherics of his theatre texts.

The shape of a play is acknowledged as significant for Beckett (1956, 1958, 1984) and Parks (1995, 2002) who regards the shape of intrinsic value to the meaning. The same is also true of Stein (1970, 1998), in her depiction of a composition or conveyance of the *essence* of an event. This is not necessarily pre-determined by these writers but subject to, and informed by, the play's themes and content. In the same vein, Price (2002) constructs his texts in order that there be spaces in which to insert meaning, as noted in his introduction to the *Barking Dogs* (2002) text.

Artaud (1970) and Beckett (1984) explore a play's trajectory via a single action, or prescribe a specific movement to underpin the *mise en scene*. Artaud speaks about the idea of things being in a constant state of *motility*, while Beckett experiments with a rocking motion in *Rockaby* (1984), Clov's *too-ing and Fro-ing* in *Endgame* (1958) and even *non-action* in *Waiting for Godot* (1956). Kemp (1996, 2002) also works from the notion of a single action (or *non-action*) as a trigger for a character's trajectory, evidenced by the Woman's trip or fall in *The Black Sequin Dress* (1996) and Angela's (external) state of stasis on a chair in her kitchen in *Still Angela* (2002).

The concept of *doubling* also emerges as a notion theorised or practised by those discussed in Chapter Two. Artaud (1970) argues for a doubling of theatre and life, as though one is the mirror image of the other. There is also a sense of doubling in Kemp's *Still Angela* (2002), where she juxtaposes realities; the current world and an imagined one. Some of the *invisibilists* also pursue

otherness in the construction of the text, rejecting and privileging an assemblage approach. Brook (1968b) constructed *US* (1968b) as a type of collage with his acting ensemble and Keene's (2003) work, particularly *Terminus* (2003), has been described as fragmented and postmodern in style. Similarly, Kemp's (1996, 1999-2000, 2002) work is comprised of collage or vignettes and Sarah Kane's (2001) is pared back in some texts such as *Blasted* (2001) so that scenes consist of stage directions arranging images *sans* dialogue.

Both Stein (1970, 1998) and Parks (1995, 2002) also exhibit *otherness* in terms of stage directions, in that there is generally a (deliberate) absence of them in their plays. Rather than prescribing the action, it is left up to the interpretive faculties of the director and actors. In fact this *otherness* of stage directions also extends to Kane (2001) who writes *poetic* or *expressionistic* stage directions that similarly require interpretation by a director, as evident in *Cleansed* (2001).

While I have interrogated the notion of *otherness* in theatre writing and identified some features of an *invisiblist* text and aesthetic in this Chapter, I have yet to explore the concept of the theatrical *live* factor or the engagement in the *immediate now*. Similarly there is a need to explore the notion of the wider or *peripheral now* and how this might filter into the performance text.

2.5.2 *The Need to Explore the Now*

Keene's (2006a) assertion that the theatre text and/or performance are inherently political (see 2.4.3) segues into the notion of the *peripheral now*, or that of the *political* or *collective unconscious* (Jameson, 1981). This is where cultural/political/social capital filters into the *writerly* process and the text (Jameson, 1981). To begin to get a sense of what might constitute the dimensions of a broader cultural, or *peripheral now*, the study might look to the writings of cultural theorists who envision a specific philosophy for the current contemporary climate. It might also seek to identify writers or practitioners who explore or exploit the *live* factor or the notion of the *immediate now* in a

theatrical context. This aspect of the *invisiblist* paradigm; the intersection of the *immediate* and *peripheral nows* will be explored in Chapter Three of this thesis, overleaf.

CHAPTER THREE: LOOKING TO THE NOW

3.1 Theorising a Now

Two theorists, who, for me, best articulate and present systematic visions or an ethos of a *cultural now*, are Frederic Jameson and Jean Baudrillard. Each has a distinct vision of their own cultural turn, with a particular emphasis on the political *status quo*, which will be discussed in depth in this chapter below. I will also look to theorists who trouble the borders between theatre theory and practice, particularly in relation to their understanding of the social and political climates. Two theorists/practitioners who exemplify this in their theatre practice are Herbert Blau and Augusto Boal.

3.1.1 Jameson: The Postmodern and the Political

The cultural theorist Frederic Jameson holds in counterpoint apparently paradoxical disciplines, or traditionally conflicting threads of critical thought, to enable a sweeping vision of contemporary society. Jameson unites elements from the paradigms of Marxism and postmodernism to describe and detail the current world condition. This “transdisciplinary” (Hardt and Weeks, 2000: 2) approach, where the Capitalist hegemony is discussed across political, social and economic strata, is encapsulated in Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). The book expands on an earlier journal article of the same title, published in 1984.

Jameson (1991) posits the defining postmodern view, constituting a “scepticism towards metanarratives” (Jameson, 1991: 6) as a result of the economic force; that is, he locates postmodern values within Marxist theory. For Jameson (1991), postmodern theory operates in dialogue with the economic *status quo*. Jameson (1961) came to Marxism through an earlier dissertation on the writings

of existentialist and Marxist Jean-Paul Sartre. Jameson locates himself within a Marxist tradition, although perhaps not a particularly orthodox Stalinist or Leninist one. Instead he develops on a European (read: Hegelian) or Western strain of Marxism, evolving in Europe and America since the 1920's (McPheron, 1999). This shift in the Marxist movement, which encompasses thinkers such as Theodor Adorno and Louis Althusser, articulates Marxism's political and economic relation to, and impact upon, cultural and literary trends. Jameson (1991) postulates that a Marxist frame is necessary for viewing and interpreting culture, as "aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally" (Jameson, 1991: 4).

Jameson's seminal publication, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) is of particular relevance to the exploration of the *peripheral now*, as Jameson (1991) pursues an ideology of Western culture in relation to the economic and political *status quo*. For this theorist, all cultural artefacts remain the product of their historical circumstance. In particular, Jameson (1991) is concerned with the current political climate or period, which he identifies as *late capitalism*. The era of late capitalism is characterised by the extreme commodification of work (materiality), primarily through the phenomenon of "multinationalism" and globalisation (Jameson, 1991: 6). The resultant commodification of human nature (spirituality) subsequently impacts on its expression (culture). Jameson's (1991) critique proposes that culture, far from existing autonomously, relates to the economic, as well as political and social spheres. Specifically, he attributes postmodernism to the rigours of intellectual labour demanded of the worker by late capitalism (Jameson, 1991).

Just as the political *status quo*, capitalism, informs the cultural, the social whole may be better understood by engaging in the study of cultural objects (Jameson, 1991). Here, the borders of demarcation between that constituting culture, and that constituting the economic, fall away. Jameson (1998b) later terms the effacement of these borders, where culture and politics overlap, become interrelated, and even interchangeable as "dedifferentiation" (Jameson, 1998b: 73).

This *dedifferentiation* essentially yields the postmodern condition; the present societal frame, where it is essential to conceive of postmodernity not simply as “a stylistic description”, but rather as a “periodizing hypothesis” (Jameson, 1991: 3). Thus, postmodernism is the cultural framework by which society lives, the manifestation of the theory of late capitalism. Clarke (1996) comments that Jameson (1991) subscribes to *periodization*, or the notion of *phases* of Capitalism, as both an ideology and societal framework. For Jameson (1991), the periods of history denoted as Realism and Modernism correlate with the Marxist Capitalist phases of *market capitalism* and *monopoly capitalism*, respectively. This is evident in the ethos and form/s of the cultural artefacts produced during each of these periods. Similarly the current postmodern cultural frame corresponds to the final phase: multinational or late capitalism. Therefore all cultural artefacts, be they literary texts, films, or artworks are, by default, postmodern in ethos and form.

Jameson (1991) identifies specific features that, for him, characterise the postmodern epoch. They include “a new depthlessness” (Jameson, 1991: 6), “a waning of effect” (Jameson, 1991: 11) or the slow demise of emotional connection, “the disappearance of the individual subject” (Jameson, 1991: 16), the notion of “pastiche” (Jameson, 1991: 17) and “a weakening of historicity” (Jameson, 1991: 6).

The latter feature, “the weakening of historicity” derives apparently from a general lack of historical consciousness; a result of the “random cannibalization of all styles of the past” (Jameson, 1991: 18). In other words, history’s effacement is caused by the reappropriation of historical periods in popular culture, a practice denoted as “*historicism*” (Jameson, 1991:18). Jameson (1991) cites the examples of films where contemporary held values or ideals of a particular era are reproduced on celluloid. The past is viewed through a “pseudohistorical” lens; a given period feature film is only a stylish representation of what, for Jameson, is “the insensible colonization of the present by the nostalgia mode” (Jameson, 1991: 20). History is effectively lost; all that remains are the aesthetics of texts; which constitute a mobilization of historical knowledge (Jameson, 1991).

The occurrence of the cultural object as an article of “pastiche” is testament to this “weakening of historicity”. Jameson (1991) defines *pastiche* as a kind of extension upon the notion of parody in culture. He elaborates thus:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter....Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs.

(Jameson, 1991: 17)

Hence pastiche could be interpreted, in Jameson’s terms, as the empty imitation of a pre-existing cultural form, characterised by a lack of meaning or the aforementioned “depthlessness”. The cultural product of the postmodern moment or epoch is then a veritable pastiche “of the past” (Jameson, 1991: 17). It is also

...the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture.

(Jameson, 1991: 18).

Despite his insistence on contemporary cultural practice as pastiche, Jameson (1991) does not necessarily claim a homogeneous quality to all postmodern art works or texts. That is, a cultural artefact does not unequivocally or passively express the social climate in which it was produced (Hardt and Weeks, 2000: 9). Those texts “that tend to fall apart into random and inert passivity” do so because “theories of difference” are employed without rhyme or reason (Jameson, 1991: 31). Jameson eschews this “virtual glad-bag” (Jameson, 1991: 31) approach for one that employs a

...more positive conception of relationship which restores its proper tension to the notion of differences itself...

(Jameson, 1991: 31).

Such attention to this specific “notion of difference” can have the effect of producing startling new cultural objects that achieve “an original way of thinking and perceiving”, arriving at a response that “perhaps can no longer be called consciousness” (Jameson, 1991: 31). What Jameson appears to be advocating for is a focus on the concept of difference itself, and the resultant tension between differences, as opposed to the random synthesis of materials or impulse. The resulting object, for example, multiple simultaneous images projected onscreen, might then challenge the reader to perceive and relate to the stimuli in a new way. This is apparently Jameson’s benchmark for a “striking emblem” of postmodern culture: the propensity to conjure and create a “new mode of relationship thinking” (Jameson, 1991: 31).

Jameson (1981) proposes “a finite number of interpretive possibilities in any given textual situation” (Jameson, 1981: 31-32). This derives from his observation that any experimentation with the writing of a text yields the fact that

...the mind is not content until it puts some order in these findings
and invents a hierarchical relationship among its various
interpretations...

(Jameson, 1981: 31)

Jameson’s (1981) assertion that the political reading is definitive in the interpretation of any given cultural artefact is significant. In terms of a discourse specifically focused on the cultural practice of *theatre making*, Jameson (1998a) turns to the works of playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). In *Brecht and Method* Jameson (1998a) dissects the relationship between Brecht’s dramatic literary texts and his socialist or Marxist politics. Jameson proposes a re-framing of Brecht’s modernist sensibility into the current epoch: postmodernity – “into which we seek to welcome him and rediscover his message” (Jameson, 1998a: 3). Brecht is a modernist writer for Jameson (1998a) due both to his work and its themes reflecting the aesthetics of the Modernist period. This period in Marxist theory corresponds to the phase of

industrial Capitalism, a period also shadowed by the political events of the two World Wars.

Jameson (1998a) demonstrates that Brecht's "fables and parables" in fact, constitute a systematic method that might represent "something a little more fundamental than mere didacticism" (Jameson, 1998a: 2). He focuses this theory through what he refers to as Brecht's "doctrine of activity" (Jameson, 1998a: 4). This is a feature of modernism for Jameson (1998), one now counter-pointed by the stasis of today's postmodernism. Brecht's concept of activity as envisaged by Jameson (1998a) aligns itself with metaphysical notions of change and flow as the natural order of things. The "discontinuities and fragmentation" (Jameson, 1998a: 6) of Brecht's play and poems echo this idea of perpetual activity. That is, in the Brechtian dramatic experience or production, the audience is engaged in a state of activity.

For Jameson (1998a), Brecht's plays such as *Mother Courage and her Children* (1983), *The Good Person of Sezuan* (1994), and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1989) contain a *gap* in the textual construction, in which the audience might situate themselves. That is,

Brecht allows for a dialectical relationship between reason and the emotions

(Jameson, 1998a: 176)

of the audience. This "dialectical relationship" is achieved through the Brechtian techniques of *alienation* and *gestus*. The *Alienation effect* occurs where the audience is deliberately distracted from becoming completely immersed in the character's journey/emotions by various dramatic devices such as songs or placards. *Gestus* is a physical gesture that identifies a character and/or represents the character's emotions (McDonald, 2007). The Brechtian performance invites the audience to self-project into the situation or experience represented, and to reflect on place within it, via these techniques.

Jameson illustrates how such Brechtian theories and praxis might infiltrate a postmodern aesthetic. This is through “productivity” (Jameson, 1998a: 177), a kind of extension or progression of the aforementioned Brechtian “activity”. This progression to “productivity” corresponds to the postmodern era, albeit one troubled by the disjuncture between technology and human energy. He cites *alienation* as a tool capable of demonstrating this disjuncture so that the forces of production, (Western) humanity itself, might reflect on this paradigm (Jameson, 1998a).

If, for Jameson (1991), the phase of late capitalism is the *status quo*, and this phase equates to postmodernity, it follows that the *peripheral now* is a state defined by the postmodern condition. Within the postmodern condition, for Jameson (1991), all cultural works are essentially capital through a process of *dedifferentiation*, and all cultural works are, by default, political in design and aesthetic. In this vein, a specific feature that identifies the postmodern cultural artefact might be *pastiche* and a culmination of past styles, yet characterised by a certain “depthlessness”. Similarly, all culture is definitively interpreted in terms of its political resonances. All of these observations made in regard to culture generally could be taken to relate to the discipline of theatre also. This is encapsulated in Jameson’s (1998a) treatment of Brecht’s synthesis of dramatic text and politics, where he finds modernist Brechtian techniques translate well to a postmodern paradigm.

Like Jameson (1981, 1991), Jean Baudrillard pursues strains of a Marxist ideology in his earlier publications (1968, 1970, and 1972, translated into English in 1996, 1998, and 1981 respectively). This philosopher and French theorist analyses contemporary society and culture, and theorises modes of communication, this time with a particular emphasis on technologies and the media.

3.1.2 Baudrillard: Hyperreality and Theatre

Rather than treating postmodernity as the manifestation of late capitalism as does Jameson (1991), Baudrillard re-positions the notion of a consumer society

within a linguistically-derived (read: Saussurean) framework. In this vein, objects are products to be consumed and these products exist as *signifiers*. A product reflects not necessarily the needs, but the desires and values, of a particular consumer. In this way, the product becomes a symbol of social standing and a way to differentiate strata of society. Thus, Baudrillard's semiological application of a system of signs to the economic *status quo* theorises a system for the classification and coding of Western society.

Arguably, Baudrillard's most important work, is *Simulacra and Simulation*, first published in French in 1981 and translated into English in 1994. This publication represents a shift from his earlier critique of consumer society through the distillation of Marxist and Saussurean perspectives to a broader theory of contemporary culture that disputes accepted conventions of reality. Baudrillard (1994a) proposes that the present day is characterised by an absence of the real; in its place is a simulation of reality. If to simulate is "to feign to have what one doesn't have" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 3), Baudrillard asserts that his theory moves beyond and complicates this definition, as "simulating is not [only] pretending" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 3).

The idea of *simulacrum*, as interpreted by Baudrillard (1994a), dates back to the biblical text of Ecclesiastes where it is defined as "the truth that conceals that there is none" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 1). In his infamous map analogy, Baudrillard (1994a) revisits the Borges fable of a map so detailed that it precisely covers the territory of the empire it maps. As the map frays, the empire declines simultaneously so that, through this process of slow decay, "the double ends up being confused with the real thing" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 1). This fable is useful, for Baudrillard, not in the sense of being a metaphor for current times as "Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror", but for the inverse of it where it is "the map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 1).

In other words, the territory no longer exists in conceptual terms, and the act or event of simulation no longer applies to something tangibly real. This is the quintessential phenomenon of the *hyperreal*. This process, where the simulated

object (the map), or the *simulacra*, comes before the original, perpetuates the *hyperreal*, and is referred to as “*the precession of simulacra*” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 1).

Baudrillard (1994a) elaborates further on this fable, postulating that, in the *hyperreal*, neither the map *nor* the territory exists, only the notion of the empirical state itself remains. This is echoed today in the imperialistic attitudes of the “simulators” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 2). The *simulators* attempt to merge the real with their constructions of reality. What is lost in this attempt to reconcile the two, or the “mad project of the ideal co-extensivity of map and territory”, is the essential notion of *difference*. The difference or distinction between the two is that which “constituted the charm of abstraction” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 2). For Baudrillard (1994a), the loss of difference attributed to the grand plans of the “simulators” is of metaphysical proportions.

The “simulators” themselves comprise “models” and also

... miniaturized cells, matrices and memory banks, modes of control and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these.

(Baudrillard, 1994a: 2)

These simulators and their infinite possibilities, it seems, are responsible for the contemporary state of the *hyperreal*. To this, Baudrillard (1994a) attributes “a liquidation of all referentials” (Baudrillard, 1994a, 2). In this vein, meaning is determined through self-referentiality. For Baudrillard (1994a), the proliferation of information technologies manifests an overload of meaning in contemporary Western society. The result is an “artificial resurrection” of reality by “systems of signs” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 2). Therefore, in the simulacrum, “It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody”, but “a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 2).

It follows, for Baudrillard (1994a), that there are four successive phases of simulacrum:

it is the reflection of a profound reality
it masks and denatures a profound reality
it masks the absence of a profound reality
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
(Baudrillard, 1994a: 6)

In this, the “precession of simulacra” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 1), it is apparent that even the figurative real no longer exists. There is no representation; instead it is replaced by a total simulation.

In this condition “where the real is no longer what it was” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 6), there exists “a plethora of myths of origin...signs of reality...truth...and authenticity” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 6). In other words this era of the *hyperreal* is also akin to one of postmodernity. He identifies a number of phenomena that characterise the epoch of the hyperreal including the commodification and incessant circulation of culture. Culture in the hyperreal becomes “hyperculture”, as it is “no longer linked to distinct exchanges or determined needs” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 67). This totalisation of culture or “unconditional aestheticization” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 68) can be attributed to “incessant circulation of choices, readings, references, marks, decoding” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 67). This state of *hyperculture* effectively effaces and negates the value of culture just as the *hyperreal* effaces the real.

Similarly, the “artificial representation” or the *hyperreal* enforces a *hyperculture*, leading Baudrillard (1994a) to demonstrate the ways in which language separates society from reality. Baudrillard (1996) conceptualises consumer society, through its fetishization of objects via marketing and media, as representing a shift in modalities of speech: “This immense paradigm lacks a true syntax” (Baudrillard, 1996: 260). In this vein, language is likened to a code, or even a machine: “media mediators of nature” (Baudrillard, 1994a: 111), in terms of its systematic nature. Thus, the language of the *hyperreal* is like the *hyperreal* itself, based on simulacrum.

Throughout subsequent publications Baudrillard develops further his themes on the simulacrum, the *hyperreal* or the postmodern epoch. His commentary theorises a broad range of subjects, with cultural, political and economic themes. In the *Illusion of the End* (1994b) Baudrillard uses the Cold War to draw comparisons between the left and right political ideologies, in terms of the fact that both share a utopian vision of a unified society. For Baudrillard (1994b), with the advance of globalisation, history as it is currently understood, draws to a close. Following this, for Baudrillard, were several journalistic forays into world events, in particular one notable, (deliberately), provocative interpretation of the events of the Gulf war, entitled *The Gulf War Never Happened* (1995). In the article and subsequent book, Baudrillard (1995) dismisses the conflict as a war on the grounds that the political outcomes were minimal: at the end Saddam continued to suppress the Kurdish, the US dropped bombs that were largely ineffective in deterring the *enemy*, and the Western media were complicit in the hoax by using footage as propaganda (Baudrillard, 1995). The position attracted a considerable amount of criticism but this did not deter Baudrillard (2002) from commenting publicly on the events of September 11, 2001. Here characterised the attacks on the World Trade Centre not as a clashing of religious ideologies, but as a symbolic battle between two forces of globalisation (Baudrillard, 2002). These two alternative stances on political conflicts support Baudrillard's (2002) construction of a theoretical *hyperreal* where the proliferation of globalisation and a consumer society efface reality.

For Baudrillard (1994a), the question of proof is paramount and the key lies in "proving the real through the imaginary" (Baudrillard, 1994a: 19). Consider

the proof of theatre through antitheatre;

the proof of art through antiart;

(Baudrillard, 1994a: 19).

In the later published *The Conspiracy of Art* (2005) Baudrillard theorises such a paradigm. As described in a review by Boyko-Head (2006), this publication

...enters a dialogic dance that swirl Baudrillard's comments on art with consumerism, consumerism with politics, politics with art and both art and politics with commercialism, collusion, and conspiracy...

(Boyko- Head, 2006: 1).

Baudrillard (2005) demonstrates how art has become like society as a whole: a simulation of itself. Art, for Baudrillard (2005), no longer has an illusory or aesthetic function, but is valued only in exchangeable terms, or banal commerciality (Baudrillard, 2005). For Baudrillard (2005), there exists no formal distinction between art and reality; indeed he summarily classifies contemporary art as null (Baudrillard, 2005):

The majority of contemporary art...[exhibits a] confiscating banality, waste and mediocrity as values and ideologies. These countless installations and performances are merely compromising with the state of things, and with all the past forms of art history. Raising originality, banality and nullity to the level of values or even to perverse aesthetic pleasure...But it is just as empty as and insignificant...The passage to the aesthetic level salvages nothing; on the contrary, it is mediocrity squared. It claims to be null – “I am null! I am null!” – and it truly is.

(Baudrillard, 2005: 27)

This sense of nullity is not necessarily implying the end of art *per se*, but in fact, ushers in a new trend for art, or at least gives the condition a name. It acknowledges that this phenomenon of banality or “uselessness”, born of the hyperreality, might in fact bear “a culture of indifference that is not far from becoming the only true social bond” (Baudrillard, 2005: 36).

Baudrillard (2005) identifies two phenomena of the *peripheral* or cultural *now* that exhibit the banality that is symptomatic of the *hyperreal* construction. The first is reality television which, for Baudrillard (2005), “is a media illusion of live

reality” (Baudrillard, 2005: 181). In an analysis of *Loft Story*, the French version of the reality television program *Big Brother*, Baudrillard (2005) likens the show to a “artificial microcosm”, which demonstrates a “synthetic banality” (Baudrillard, 2005: 181). He observes that

It is at this point when everything is on display that we realise
there is nothing left to see

(Baudrillard, 2005: 181).

In contrast to the held belief (“since a long time”) about the interpretive faculty of art, for Baudrillard (2005), in the reality television show, where “the disappearance of the other is blatantly reflected” (Baudrillard, 2005: 199), the experience is closed.

Baudrillard (2005) also cites the example of images of war, such as photos of American soldiers torturing prisoners in Abu Ghraib, as indicative of art’s metamorphosis to be *transaesthetic* (Baudrillard, 2005). Posted on the internet and freely accessible, these virtual images of violence are labelled as “the pornographic face of the war” or “war porn” (Baudrillard, 2005: 208). Western society, in viewing these images, is implicated in the proliferation of a parody of violence. The images themselves are likened to “a grotesque infantile reality-show” that displays a “desperate simulacrum of power” (Baudrillard, 2005: 206).

Baudrillard (2005) succinctly highlights “the transparency of the conspiracy and the conspiracy inherent in transparency” (Boyko-Head, 2006: 3) by playing the notions of *hyperreal* off against traditionally held concepts about art and art forms. But what does this mean for theatre? Baudrillard (2005) says of the theatre practitioner Artaud:

As soon as Artaud started writing for the theatre, he turned his
own theory into a caricature. What results from it is a banal cruelty
and this text, when you read it, is hardly different from many other
texts.

(Baudrillard, 2005: 230)

Baudrillard (2005) attributes this phenomenon to language, whereby Artaud's true or total realisation of his theories occurred in his mind; the essence of which was experiential. Writing, or language "satisfies this intellectual - and not instinctive – compulsion of becoming the world, but not through words" (Baudrillard, 2005: 230).

Instead, for Baudrillard (2005),

The function of language, its only function really, is not to communicate or inform, transmit something – all this is secondary – but to captivate.

(Baudrillard, 2005: 230)

Baudrillard (2005) privileges a language function that *captivates* its audience. For him this involves a "strategy of seduction" (Baudrillard, 2005: 230), to enable a *luring in* of the reader to something *other*, that which is "foreign to ordinary language" (Baudrillard, 2005: 231). As one such strategy Baudrillard (2005) cites Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty, where the *materiality* of language is privileged over meaning (Baudrillard, 2005) (see section 2.2).

3.2 Fusing Theory with Practice: Between the Nows

By also looking to further theorists, who first develop rigorous theoretical positions on theatre-making and its relation to the *now*, then test such theories in performance, more insight into this concept might be gained.

3.2.1 Blau: Doubles and Ghosts

The perspective of theatre theorist Herbert Blau, (1926-) on the *peripheral now* has a specific *performance* orientation. An American theatre-maker with a directorial focus, Blau's theories draw on his experience directing the plays of Brecht, Beckett, Chekhov and Shakespeare, with The Actor's Company in San Francisco (1952-1965), and the Repertory Theatre of the Lincoln Centre in New York (1965-1968). Like Artaud (1970), Blau considers himself to be "messianic

about the theatre” (Blau, 1987: 205). In other words, he is “in it to create the possibility of a valid public life” (Blau, 1987: 205).

That is, Blau (1987) envisions theatre as an art form or mode of communication that has the potential to revolutionise society. He unashamedly acknowledges he is “in the theatre to save the world” (Blau, 1982a: 32). Blau (1964) simultaneously acknowledges, however, that this is indeed an impossible goal; inherently paradoxical. Nevertheless this forms the central theme explored in his publication *The Impossible Theatre* (1964). Blau’s theories also draw on his experience as artistic director of the experimental theatre company KRAKEN (1968 -1981), the principal findings of which are presented in his seminal work *Take up the Bodies* (1982a).

In this publication, Blau (1982a) identifies theatre as an art form that encapsulates a *cognitive process*:

I will not be speaking of theatre merely in formal terms or as an art that encompasses social and political realities...I am speaking of theatre not only as an instrument of thought, but as thought, an activity becoming what it thinks of...

(Blau, 1982a: 9)

For Blau (1982a), what “moves us to the theatre” is not simply what registers or resonates with an audience emotionally, as “emotion is cheap” (Blau, 1982a: 1). In fact, it comprises “something other” that might include: “the integrity and shape of emotion” or a “sign” (Blau, 1982a: 1). Thus, it is the *properties* of the spectacle rather than the spectacle *itself*, which attracts. For Blau (1982a), theatre is the experience of a thought process enacted: “theatre is theory, or a shadow of it” (Blau, 1982a: 1). By attributing a theoretical function to theatre, as a means of understanding something of the human condition, Blau (1982a), paraphrasing Aristotle, locates theatre’s existence somewhere “between history and philosophy” (Blau, 1982a: 2).

The “shadow” Blau (1982a) refers to above might also be regarded as the theatrical event’s ephemeral trace; that which remains after the performance is finished. Blau is primarily concerned with the “dynamics of disappearance” (Blau, 1982a: ix) and the theatrical phenomena of “afterimage and afterthought” (Blau, 1982a: xii). He likens theatre to music, or even dreams, in the sense that

...theatre is hollow at the core, empty in value, until its signs...are retrieved by reflection within a structure of relativity.

(Blau, 1982a: 195-196)

The “signs” he identifies include “body act space gesture colour light cadence voice word mask etc” (Blau, 1982a: 195). Such tangible aspects of performance denote the significance of the experience. The “structure of relativity” appears to refer to the way in which these signs: “gesture”, “light”, and “word” relate and interrelate to create meaning. Thus, they function as both individual signifiers and as an integrated whole, or complex frame of reference.

In this way, theatre is essentially an “abstraction” until “blooded” (Blau, 1982b:xiii), a concept taken up further by Blau’s publication *Blooded Thought* (1982b). That is, for Blau (1982a & 1982b), theatre exists only as an ideological construction until enacted on stage. When the theoretical concept or the *abstraction* is made *live* through the presence of a performer, the effect is of a haunted moment - suspended between what has been and what is yet to come (Blau, 1982a, 1982b). Blau (1982a) refers to this effect, the epoch between such moments, as “a process of ghosting” (Blau, 1982a: 195).

Blau (1982a) writes specifically about *ghosting* in terms of language: “the body is always ghosted with words” (Blau, 1982a: 224). He distinguishes between the intent of a signifier (for example a theatrical gesture), and its actualisation, or the thing that is signified:

...there is no way in which the thing we want to represent can exist within representation itself, because of the disjuncture

between words and things, images and meanings, nomenclature
and being...

(Blau, 1982a: 199)

Thus, representation is subject to the disjuncture between an object and its name. During this process, between representing and representation, a rupture or slip occurs; something is lost or changes. There exists a discontinuity, and here the reader is unable to articulate a precise meaning. For Blau (1982a), this is a natural and inevitable paradigm of language.

Blau (1982a) attributes this slip or disjuncture to “the *immateriality* of language” (Blau, 1982a: 224). Blau (1982a) and the KRAKEN group (whose experimental approach to theatre-making are interrogated throughout Blau’s texts and praxis) refused to regard this as a negative outcome but treated this concept as “another articulation of possibility” (Blau, 1982a: 224). For Blau (1982a), the inevitable failure of language systems, in fact “generates a skein of meaning” (Blau, 1982a: 224). This came to be the focus of the KRAKEN theatre group’s experimentation; a type of *word play*, where the ensemble played with “displacing, dividing and repelling words” via a process of “attracting and repelling” (Blau, 1982a: 224). Thus the disruptions or disjunctures inherent within language construction, those “between its power to signify and its escaping subject” (Blau, 1982a: 224) are explored. And in the escape of the subject, *ghosting* is found.

Blau’s (1982a and 1982b) concepts of *ghosting*, *blooded thought* and the *immateriality of language* have correlations with the *invisiblist* theatre aesthetic explored in Chapter Two. That is, Blau’s (1982a) notion of a “skein of meaning” evokes parallels with the *invisiblist* concerns of fluid form, *otherness* and multiplicity of interpretation and meaning. These concepts, however, also negotiate with the *now*, in terms of their relation to the present or immediate; living and dying in the epoch of a moment, leaving only an ephemeral trace (but a trace nonetheless).

Blau (1982a) also idealises a construct in which theatre might function as a key indicator of the cultural *status quo* or *peripheral now*. The role he identifies for theatre in this function is primarily one of a *political* intention (1982a). He acknowledges that much of the preoccupation of his earlier work was concerned with a sense of (1960s-1970s) societal “political apathy” (Blau, 1982a: ix). He privileges a theatre aesthetic that demonstrates such themes:

...it's better to think in terms of purpose, mission, action, task, service to others than in terms of identity, alienation, otherness, division...not values but default of value...

(Blau, 1982a: xii)

He simultaneously acknowledges, however, that the two types of “values” are mutually intertwined, and that there is a gap between the “illusion of the objective” (Blau, 1982a: xii) and the impossibility of achieving the noble values he identifies. He proposes that the aspects he considers to be “default of value”; such as “alienation” and “otherness” mentioned above, also possess a valid function, “*within the structure of relativity*”. (Blau, 1982a: xii). This function is primarily to underpin the process of arriving at the privileged outcome: the concrete objectives such as “purpose, mission, action, task”. That is, the abstract or ephemeral concepts support the manifestation of the overriding (often political) intention: “introversion...teases you out of thought to such a conclusion” (Blau, 1982a: xii). In other words, by employing introspective theatre techniques such as those above, the actors/audience may arrive at the value of the performance, via the reflection process: “we insist upon reaching after what it means as if striking through a mask of unmeaning” (Blau, 1982a: xii).

Blau (1982a) discusses his work in terms of this political value, or application of meaning, in his deconstruction of *Danton's Death* (1987) by Georg Buchner (1813-1837). He co-directed the play in 1965 for the Repertory Theatre at the Lincoln Centre. It is thematically concerned with the events of the French Revolution, and explores notions of idealism and corruption, in the name of anti-royalism and democracy. Blau (1982a) demonstrates how an extant text such

as this can be given a new reading. Rather than focusing on the individual internal conflicts of the main character, Danton, Blau (1982a) interpreted the text as a vehicle for political ideology: effectively realising his vision for “what I always claimed for it [theatre]” (Blau, 1982a: x). This echoes Jameson’s (1981) assertion that the political interpretation of a text is the ultimate reading (Jameson 1981).

In Blau’s *now*, or in the 1960s, the political *status quo* yielded Western concerns such as the perceived threat of a communist takeover. Accordingly as a director, Blau re-appropriated *Danton’s Death* into contemporary (1960s) circumstances. Reviewers, such as those for *Time* magazine (1965) held that Blau blatantly inserted the political agendas of the current politicians into the dialogue of the historical characters. One review claimed that Blau was alluding to the U.S. Presidential Election candidates as tyrants, and described the production as “smothered in rhetoric” (*Time*, 1965).

Nevertheless, this apparently contentious production experience did not shake Blau’s (1982a) belief in the significance of a political underpinning for the theatre text: “the one certainty for me in that disaster was Danton’s abhorrence of those pressing him with their politics” (Blau, 1982a: x).

Harvard academic Anthony Kubiak (1994) makes a case for the relevance of *Danton’s Death* and its preoccupation with The Reign of Terror in his (read: 1990s) *now*. For Kubiak (1994), terrorism and tyranny are ongoing themes, and the mainstay of political *modus operandi*. He states that “the play speaks pertinently to the dreary tendency of modern liberationist ideologies to collapse into tyranny” (Kubiak, 1994: 84). This notion of perpetuity in politics appears to be a concept Blau (1982a) explores in his theatre praxis also, the stated reason being that “it gave my desire for political being a locus” (Blau, 1982a: x).

In *The Dubious Spectacle* (2002), a collection of essays spanning the last 25 years of his practice, Blau (2002) reflects on the relationship between theatre and theory. He extrapolates further on the ideas of blooded thought and the perpetuity of representation, the ongoing assembling and disassembling of the

theatrical moment or image. This perpetuity, “the idea of performance unable to escape from the theatre” (Blau, 2002: x) occurs for Blau (2002), despite a “fantasy of subversion through permutations of theory” (Blau, 2002: x). That is, while there are many theoretical paradigms manifested as “the vanity of critique” (Blau, 2002: x) heralding the death of theatre, representation and “its myriad of replications” (Blau, 2002: x) are ongoing. Thus, for Blau (2002), theatre engages in a chain of *Nows*; each *immediate* and then each ghosted, *ad infinitum*.

Blau (2002) continues to develop his aesthetic for “a theatre with a political conscience” (Blau, 2002: xviii). He discusses experiencing a sense of validation in terms of the “fervour of recrimination” (Blau, 2002: xi) in relation to his political work, likening some critical responses to those of the Puritans on Shakespeare’s theatre in Elizabethan times. He cites the example of his experience directing Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* (1953) which is thematically concerned with witch-hunts. This play with its “transparencies of hysteria” might be read as an allegory for “anti-McCarthyism” and Communist scape-goating, a preoccupation of the socio-political wider *now* (Blau, 2002: xviii). For Blau (2002), the overwhelmingly positive reception to this production was troubling, as theatregoers strongly identified with the leftist politics, and the play served only to “edif[y] the incapacities of our liberal audience” (Blau, 2002: xviii).

This *preaching to the converted* syndrome is counter-pointed by the fact that, for Blau (2002), the plays of Beckett and Genet are more political in tone than plays by writers preoccupied with overt political themes. The latter’s *The Screens* (1962) is described as “revolutionary in its exposure of the political illusion” (Blau, 2002: 62). Of Beckett’s *Waiting For Godot* (1956) he states:

I still think [it is] the most powerful political statement in the theatre since WWII...though it had no political intentions whatever.

(Blau, 2002: 63).

The curious phenomenon of finding a political locus in an apparently anti-political text Blau (2002) attributes to its “instrumental passivity or negative

capability” (Blau, 2002: 63). For Blau (2002), this very (deliberate or conscious) passivity is “the most effective strategy of activist politics” (Blau, 2002: 63). Indeed, this strategy was “renounced when the rage took over” (Blau, 2002: 63). It preceded rhetoric and diatribe as a theatrical mode of expression/communication and, for Blau (2002), herein lies a key principle for making sense of a “public sphere [that] is insufferably baffling” (Blau, 2002: 63). That is, the play that rejects or obscures political content, paradoxically, may best represent the political *status quo* or *peripheral now*.

Blau theorises the *immediate now* through the performative methodologies and concepts of *ghosting* and *blooded thought*. He also identifies the political ideology as the privileged function of theatre, envisioning the stage as the forum most appropriate for the manifestation of the wider or *peripheral now*.

3.2.2 Boal: Theatre at its most Live?

Augusto Boal, (born 1931), is founder of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* organization also which explores aspects of the *wider or peripheral now*, particularly in terms of the political. Boal’s experiments and development of a particular theatre practice also sees him engaged with the *immediate now*.

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* movement had its beginnings with Boal as the Artistic Director of the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in the 1950s and 1960s. His ongoing theatre practice draws on, but is not limited to, Marxist and Brechtian ideology and themes. The original productions encapsulated by *Theatre of the Oppressed* were in response to the Brazilian political climate during this period, where the country’s citizens were oppressed by a military coup. The shifting ensemble comprising the *Theatre of the Oppressed* company, spearheaded by Boal, identified and strove to address the absence of the worker’s presence in the largely bourgeois Brazilian theatre (both on and off the stage). In Boal’s (2001) own words,

Our discussions turned more on the political than the aesthetic.
The most urgent question that exercised us was: To whom

should our theatre be addressed? Our audience was middle class. Workers and peasants were our characters (in itself an advance) but not our spectators. We did theatre from the perspective which we believed to be 'of the people' – but we did not perform for the people!

(Boal, 2001:175)

This was addressed by touring the productions throughout the Brazilian countryside in search of the desired audience, that elusive collective “the people”. Initially, the company performed extant scripts that were held to have political resonance, and then new works by Boal and other Brazilian writers were developed for performance. In these later works, Boal (2001) identified a common theme: a preoccupation with socialist and communist ideological threads, which tended towards sentimentality and exacerbated “The snivelling of the Left” (Boal, 2001: 180). This “ideological torture” (Boal, 2001: 183) was compounded by impositions of censorship. Shows were banned because of their provocative content, and theatres were policed by officials with weapons. Boal’s provocatively titled *Revolution in South America* (1961) was one such work subjected to censorship.

In 1971, Boal was arrested, tortured, and forced into exile as a result of his theatrical/political activity, fleeing first to Argentina, then to Europe. While in exile, he composed the seminal manual outlining his pedagogy, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). In this publication Boal (1979) draws on the influences of Bertolt Brecht, and also of Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator who challenged artists to become advocates for the poor and oppressed (Freire, 1970). Boal (1979) theorises a version of theatre derived from Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1995) and likens it, in construction, to a method by which the masses may be controlled. For Boal (1979), Aristotle’s classic structure for tragedy is “coercive” (Boal, 1979: 39) as it effects control of the audience and their emotional state or journey (Boal, 1979). For example, as cited by Boal (1979), while the audience initially identifies with the hero Oedipus, when he discovers he has had intercourse with his own mother, they detach and he is punished by both himself and the state. The audience “*recognizes the error* vicariously

committed and is *purified of the antisocial characteristic*" (Boal, 1979: 40). In this way, anything that does not uphold the values of society, or "the perfect social ethos" (Boal, 1979: 41) is rejected. For Boal (1979) this includes revolution and the uprising of the people against a controlling or fascist state. Boal acknowledges the Aristotelian (1995) method has its place: "The coercive system of tragedy can be used before or after the revolution" (Boal, 1979: 46). It does not, however, further the *unsocial* ethos or event, (read: revolution) in an artistic sense, where this model is regarded by Boal (1979) as somewhat redundant: "...but never during it!" (Boal, 1979: 46). This is because, in the (then) military state of Brazil, such a theatre frame perpetuates the oppression, almost as though the government was using theatre as propaganda (Boal, 1979). In other words, he rejected the notion that theatre functions only as entertainment or spectacle, and makes a case for theatre as an educational and change agent.

Boal develops his theories further in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992). In this publication, the intellectual underpinnings that effectively raised awareness and created dialogue about the inter-relation of theatre and politics, are made more accessible for theatre practitioners. *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992) contains comprehensive definitions of all of the *Theatre of the Oppressed* movement's key concepts, and gives examples of their practical application towards theatre-making. As the exercises in this book are generally not text based, that is, without extant scripts (unlike Boal's earlier work with the Arena, in Brazil), his employment of the *immediate now* is made manifest through his theatre techniques. While he has developed many methodologies throughout his practice, there are three in particular that best exemplify an engagement in the *now*. These are *Image Theatre*, *Forum Theatre* and *Invisible Theatre*.

Image Theatre encapsulates:

...a series of exercises and games designed to uncover essential truths about societies and cultures without resort, in the first instance, to spoken language...

(Jackson, 1991: xix)

A static image created by the collective might then be “dynamised” to convey or communicate particular “feelings, experiences, oppressions” (Jackson, 1991: xix). Image theatre can be viewed as a “prelude to the action”, or “the bringing to life of the images and the discovery of whatever direction or intention is innate in them” (Jackson, 1991: xix).

Image Theatre, as defined by Boal (1992), may undergo several phases and it is through these transitions that the final significance of the image is revealed. One process involves the group (by consensus) enacting the “Real Image”, which is effectively “the image of reality, the world as it is” (Boal, 1992: 2). Following this is the construction of the “Ideal Image” or “the image of ideality, the world as it could be” (Boal, 1992: 2). The group is then invited to modify the initial *Real Image* as a possible means of arriving at the final *Ideal Image*. These shifting, intermediary images represent the “*Image of the Possible Transition*” (Boal, 1992: 3). This image phase is the nexus for the desired “dynamic of change” (Feldhendler, 1994: 98) or manifests

...the transformation of the protagonist from being an object of prescribed social and psychological, conscious and unconscious states, to becoming a master of these states.

(Feldhendler, 1994: 98)

Boal’s (1992) *Invisible Theatre* experience comprises a previously rehearsed performance that is played out in a public sphere, such as a marketplace, restaurant or train. It is paramount that onlookers remain unaware that they are watching a planned event or show, or that actors are performing the spectacle to which they are witness. The scenes are usually concerned with topical social issues, “of burning importance” (Boal, 1992: 6) to the targeted demographic. The agenda is to stimulate public dialogue or debate, with a view to educating the audience; the spectators, those implicated by their presence at the event. By presenting relevant, pertinent issues to an unsuspecting audience in their natural environment, the public domain, Boal (1992) subverts traditional theatre contexts and also roles. That is, “the spectator is transformed into a protagonist

in the action” (Boal, 1992: 17). This is because “he is unaware of its fictitious origin” (Boal, 1992: 17) and invests in the scene as though it were reality.

Once the physical and conceptual construction of a *theatre* performance is removed, so too, theoretically, is the concern of rhetoric or diatribe. This is because the issue is opened up to the audience. They are free to respond as they choose, “without the mitigating effects of the rites of conventional theatre (Boal, 1992: 15). This might take the place of a verbal response or action and Boal acknowledges that safety in these instances is an “important problem” (Boal, 1992: 15). Thus, the audience’s engagement in the *peripheral* (the “burning” issue) and *immediate now* (the *live factor* where the spectators respond to the event organically) appears to intersect.

Boal’s (1992) *Forum Theatre* targets the role of the audience even more specifically. A rehearsed play concerned with an issue or aspect of oppression is performed up until a particular point. Here the protagonist/s indicate/s that they are conflicted ideologically, or are unsure of how to proceed to overcome the given oppression. The audience is invited by a mediator or “joker” (Boal, 1992: 18) to interject with possible scenarios to resolve the issue, physically enacting them on stage. In this way, the spectator becomes actor, or “spec-actor” (Boal, 1992: 18). The concept of the *Spec-actor* once more subverts traditional theatre conventions, as Boal (1989) asserts in an interview: “She profanes the altar where the priests are saying mass” (Taussig and Schechner, 1989: 27).

In this way, the audience enacts potential solutions to their real life oppressions and so become empowered by learning “the arsenal of the oppressors”, embodied by the actors, and “the possible tactics and strategies of the oppressed” (Boal, 1992: 20). The *Forum Theatre* experience might be viewed as a rehearsal for the real life situation where the audience become equipped to manage their oppressions.

Forum Theatre engages with the *now* on two levels: by addressing contemporary issues in terms of themes and/or content, thereby encapsulating

elements of the *peripheral now*. It also employs the *immediate now* in the sense of the play being re-written and performed in multiple ways, resulting in a *new now* every time a potential solution is enacted. In many ways, it might be considered theatre at its most *live*.

3.3 Synthesising the *Now*

The writings and methodologies of the theorists and theatre practitioners discussed above yield several intersections of thought, or common ideologies in regards to both the *peripheral* and *immediate nows*. These findings are summarised below.

3.3.1 *Synthesis of Chapter Three*

In relation to the *peripheral now*, the seminal writings of each of the theorists/practitioners discussed emphasise or reference the political *status quo*. That is, they have specific political underpinnings, which may align with particular political ideologies. This is made apparent in Jameson's (1991) *précis* of all cultural artefacts as a product of their political climate. For this theorist, the western political state corresponds to the phase of *late capitalism* (as prescribed by Marxist thought). Late capitalism equates to postmodernity for Jameson (1991), and therefore, by default, all art is postmodern in aesthetic.

In turn, Baudrillard's (1981) vision of society, where reality is effaced by a simulacrum, the *hyperreal* in essence, is attributed to the proliferation of *globalisation* and *consumerism* in society. Art, including theatre, is valued in exchange terms; its function being one of *banal commerciality* (Baudrillard, 2005).

In similar vein, Blau (1982a) discusses the function of art and theatre in terms of its functional value. That is, a performance may function as a political vehicle, and this is privileged as a desirable function, in theory, over works that explore more introspective subjects. Boal (1979) theorises a version of Aristotelian theatre as government propaganda capable of subjugating the masses, and in

his practice demonstrates that his agenda is always political: he writes and makes theatre for *the people* (Boal, 2001: 175).

The literature from Chapters Two and Three is instrumental in laying a foundation for the pathway to realising an Invisibilist/Now text for performance. The distillation of the literature towards this pathway can be found in Chapter Four, overleaf.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGICAL PATHWAYS

4.1 Directions From The Literature.

A key purpose of the literature review was to chart the essence of a particular theatrical experience, that which yields a recognisable phenomenon or *frisson*, or that which might characterise an *invisiblist* theatre experience. Chapter Three of the literature focuses on distilling what might constitute both the *immediate* and *peripheral* *nows* in a theatrical context. These findings are distilled in sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Characteristics of Invisiblist Writing

The first task was to distil some *invisiblist* writing directions, from the tradition of *otherness* in theatre practice and aesthetic, as explored in Chapter Two. Table 4.1.1 below synthesises the key characteristics as developed and implemented by the theorists and practitioners, in relation to form, character and language; the elements of the theatre text that appeared best to exhibit *otherness*.

Table 4.1.1 Summary of Key Characteristics made by Invisibilist Theorists/Practitioners

Theorist/ Practitioner	Form	Character	Language
Julia Kristeva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action of play in <i>motility</i> a revolving movement, resembling a dance which mobilises gesture, eg: as evidenced by Artaud's theatre writing (Scheer, 2000: 268) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Semiotic/Poetic – not everyday language e.g., “Echolalias of infants” and “Glossalalias of psychotics” (Kristeva, 1980: 133)
Antonin Artaud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Myth or religious parables as framework: e.g., <i>To Have Done with the Judgement of God</i> (1976), <i>The Spurt of Blood</i> (1989) - Doubling of and theatre and life (reality), e.g., Lecture on <i>The Plague</i> at the Sorbonne (1966) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mythic or archetypal figures, e.g., a knight, a priest in <i>The Spurt of Blood</i> (1989), the papal count in <i>The Cenci</i> (1969). - The ability to morph or change shape or form; a surrealist quality, e.g., <i>The Spurt of Blood</i> (1989) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bodily Writing, e.g., actors as “moving hieroglyphics” (Artaud, 1970: 37) - Performative – close to “doing” (Stern, 2000: 75) - Incantation, e.g., as found in Balinese theatre
Peter Brook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Holy Theatre</i> as frame/ condition making the perception of the invisible possible - Use of Brechtian alienation to implicate audience in action, e.g., final scene of <i>Marat/Sade</i> (1965) - Doubling/Interface between two realities, e.g., <i>U.S</i> (1968b) - Ensemble-devised collage, e.g., <i>U.S.</i> (1968b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actors' ensemble devised character, with performers playing multiple roles, e.g., <i>US</i> (1968b) - Use of a <i>choir</i>, e.g., <i>US</i> (1968b) - Actors borrowing from cross-cultural performance styles, such as Chinese Circus, Japanese wrestling and Pacific Islander rituals, e.g., in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical/bodily imagery, e.g., an actress using her hair as a whip in <i>Marat/Sade</i> (1965) - Word as other, e.g., “word-shock” or “word-cry” (Brook, 1968a: 49) - Actor-devised script, e.g., <i>U.S</i> (1968b)

Table 4.1.1 Summary of Key Characteristics made by Invisiblist Theorists/Practitioners

Theorist/ Practitioner	Form	Character	Language
Samuel Beckett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action of <i>non-action</i>, e.g., <i>Waiting For Godot</i> (1956) -“The Shape of things”, e.g., <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1956) two symmetrical halves, <i>Endgame</i>, perpetually repetitive (1958) - Repetitive Action, e.g., Woman rocking for entire play in <i>Rockaby</i> (1984) - Voiceover to convey disjuncture between language and self, e.g., <i>Krapp’s Last Tape</i> (1984), <i>Rockaby</i> (1984) -Brevity, e.g., <i>Krapp’s Last Tape</i> (1984), <i>Rockby</i> (1984) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Performative characters, e.g., Pozzo and Lucky in <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1956) -Metaphorical Staginess, e.g., Hamm in <i>Endgame</i> (1956), Winnie’s props in <i>Happy Days</i> (1961) - State of mortality (living, dead, somewhere in between) e.g., Woman in <i>Rockaby</i> (1984) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choreographing action as “Physical themes” (Kalb, 1989: 33) - “Fundamental sounds” (Connor, 1983:109) e.g., Lucky’s “Think” in <i>Waiting For Godot</i> (1956), “Spool” in <i>Krapp’s Last Tape</i> (1984) -Cross-talk act, e.g., Gogo and Didi in <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1956) - Use of pause to vary score, e.g., <i>Rockaby</i> (1984) -Repetition, e.g., <i>Rockaby</i> (1984) - Range of Linguistic styles, e.g., <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1956)
Gertrude Stein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capturing the “Essence of what happened” (1967) (non-representational), e.g., <i>Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked It</i> (1970) - Double function of text or “process poetics” (commentary on writing process), e.g., <i>Four Saints in Three Acts</i> (1970) - Absence of stage directions, e.g., <i>A Circular Play</i> (1970) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of character assignation, e.g., <i>Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked It</i> (1970) - Character- as-artist, e.g., Saint Teresa meditating as Stein the Writer in <i>Four Saints in Three Acts</i> (1970) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Re-arranging syntax to create Compositional Portraits/Verbal still-lives, e.g., <i>Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked It</i> (1970) -“Lang-scapes”, e.g., Stein’s Lecture <i>Plays</i> -Vocal “Patchwork” e.g., <i>A Circular Play</i> (1970) -Absence of punctuation, e.g., <i>Turkey and Bones and Eating and We Liked It</i>, (1970)

Table 4.1.1 Summary of Key Characteristics made by Invisiblist Theorists/Practitioners			
Theorist/ Practitioner	Form	Character	Language
			- Repetition or “insistence”, e.g., Lecture on <i>Poetry and Grammar</i> (1967)
Suzan-Lori Parks	-Interrelation of form and content -“The shape is half the meaning” Structure has musical resonances, e.g., <i>The Death of The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World</i> (1995) begins with an “overture” -Absence of stage directions	-“Digging for Figures” (Parks, - Subverts traditional notions, e.g., beauty in <i>Venus</i> (1995) - Re-appropriating Historical figures, e.g., in Lincoln and Booth in <i>Topdog/Underdog</i> (2002)	- References (African American) dialectical form - Absence of punctuation -Matches spelling to spoken vernacular
Sarah Kane	- Scenes comprised of images/snapshots, e.g., <i>Blasted</i> (2001) - Abstract setting, e.g., <i>Crave</i> (2001) - Based on myth, e.g., <i>Phaedra’s Love</i> (2001) - Invites Poetic/Expressionistic interpretations of stage directions, eg., <i>Cleansed</i> (2001)	-Mythic Figures, e.g., Phadrea, Hippolytus in <i>Phaedra’s Love</i> (2001) - Voices, e.g., A,B,C, M, in <i>Crave</i> (2001) - Absence of character assignation, e.g., <i>4.48 Psychosis</i> (2001)	-Sparse/restrained dialogue style - Repetition, e.g., <i>Crave, 4.48 Psychosis</i> (2001) - Absence of punctuation, e.g., <i>Crave</i> (2001)
Jenny Kemp	- Inter-textuality, e.g., <i>Call of the Wild</i> (1999-2000) -Assemblage/collage of images/vignettes, e.g., <i>Call of The Wild</i> (1999-2000) -Action explored in cyclical or associative	- One woman represented by four character roles, e.g., <i>Call of the Wild</i> (1999-2000), <i>The Black Sequin Dress</i> (1996), <i>Still Angela</i> (2002) -Character as aspect of the psyche, e.g.,	- Choreographed movent and “spatial dynamics” as language, e.g., <i>Call of the Wild</i> (1999-2000), <i>The Black Sequin Dress</i> (1996) and <i>Still Angela</i> (2002) - Textual registers including music and

Table 4.1.1 Summary of Key Characteristics made by Invisiblist Theorists/Practitioners

Theorist/ Practitioner	Form	Character	Language
	time, eg: <i>The Black Sequin Dress</i> (1996) - Juxtaposition of the real and imagined worlds, e.g., <i>Still Angela</i> (2002)	<i>The Black Sequin Dress</i> (1996)	“feminine acoustics”, e.g., <i>Call of the Wild</i> (1999-2000)
Norman Price	- Shifting modalities of style, e.g., <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002) - Retaliation of the domestic, e.g., <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002), <i>Urban Dingoes</i> (2004), <i>Swamp Witch</i> (2006) - “Episodic” presentation of stories, e.g., <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002) - Construction of spaces in text to allow for audience to insert meaning	-References to canon texts, e.g., three sisters in <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002) echo Chekhov’s <i>Three Sisters</i> (1964) - Author’s memory informs characters, e.g., Claire in <i>Urban Dingoes</i> (2004) - Dispossessed characters on the fringes, e.g., <i>Swamp Witch</i> (2006)	- Alternating dialogic styles, e.g., everyday to heightened/poetic in <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002) - Sounding effect/score, e.g., sound effect of dogs in <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002) and <i>Urban Dingoes</i> (2004) -Construction of a Symphony/ Aural texture, e.g., <i>Urban Dingoes</i> (2004) - Repetition, e.g., <i>Barking Dogs</i> (2002)
Daniel Keene	- Fragmentation of text creates a “dream-like reality”, e.g., <i>Terminus</i> (1996) - Brevity where play exists as poem, e.g., <i>untitled monologue</i> , <i>night, a wall, two men</i> and <i>the rain</i> (2000) -Metaphor underpinning trajectory of action, e.g., Garden growing as estranged brothers reconcile in <i>Half and Half</i> (2002)	- Marginalised/ dispossessed/fringe characters, e.g., <i>Terminus</i> (1996), <i>night, a wall, two men</i> (2000) and <i>Boy With No Face</i> (2006) - Absence of character assignation, e.g., <i>untitled monologue</i> , <i>night, a wall, two men</i> and <i>Half and Half</i>	- Absence of punctuation, e.g., <i>the rain</i> (2000), <i>Half and Half</i> (2002) -Juxtaposition of dialogic styles, e.g., cohesive to fragmented in <i>untitled monologue</i> (2000) - Minimal/stark dialogue, e.g., <i>Half and Half</i> (2002) - Repetition, e.g., <i>the rain</i> , (2000), <i>Boy with No Face</i> (2006)

The above Table 4.1.1 yields several common or overlapping themes in the methodologies and texts of the theorists and writers, apart from that relating to form as summarised in 2.5.1.

One aspect of form discerned from Table 4.1.1 is the brevity of some works by Beckett (1984) and Keene (2000). The latter explores the notion of play-as-poem and each of them has had works produced that condense time but not themes or aesthetic.

Table 4.1.1 also indicates overlapping theories and practices in regard to character. One emergent idea is that characters exist in a state of *otherness*; a kind of luminosity. For example, ambivalence surrounds Beckett's (1984) *Woman in Rockaby* (1984): is she alive, or has she already passed away? In Kemp's work her subjects all appear to have one foot in each world; the real and the imagined.

Another trend is the use of mythic or historical figures/characters, generally re-appropriated in a contemporary context, as employed by Artaud (1976, 1989) Stein (1970, 1998), Parks (1995, 2002), Kane (2001) and also Kemp (1999-2000), more abstractedly through her inter-textual references. Similarly, Price's (2002) *Barking Dogs* (2002) has intimations of canonical characters from Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1964). Beckett (1956) and Keene (2000) have peopled their plays with characters existing on the margins or fringes of society, as has Price (2006) in *Swamp Witch* (2006).

A convention peculiar to the plays of Beckett (1956, 1958) and Stein (1970), whereby the characters comment on the action, exhibiting a kind of *metaphorical stagi-ness* also demonstrates *otherness*. Herein occurs a rupture where the audience momentarily hears the voice of the author, albeit through the fictional characters.

In a more technical modality, another of the overlapping devices employed is an absence of character assignation such as is evident in the works of Stein (1970), Kane (2001), and Keene (2002), where they become almost like disembodied voices. Here the notion of the character is essentially subverted, so that the performer must approach the realisation of their role in *another* way.

The major theme identified in terms of the *invisiblist's* use of language is that of language as *something else*, that is, in *another* function. For Kristeva (1980, 1984), it is as *Semiotic* or *Poetic* language – or that not of the everyday realm. For Artaud (1970), it is a language of the body evidenced by his *moving hieroglyphics*. Artaud (1970) also advocated *otherness* of the vocal instrument, exemplifying *incantation* as a modality of communication. Brook (1968a) explores further Artaud's premise of writing with the body for performance, and also proposes *word-as-other*, for example "word-shock" or "word-cry" (Brook, 1982a: 49). Kalb cites Beckett (1989), who speaks of his texts as comprising fundamental sounds, and his dramatic writing process as akin to scoring music. Kalb (1989) also cites Beckett directing his action in *physical themes*, a kind of highly choreographed *mise en scene*. Kemp (1999-2000) mines language for its various *textual registers* and employs distinctly *feminine acoustics* in *Call of the Wild* (1999- 2000). In addition to this *sound-scape* effect, Kemp (1996, 2002) explores *spatial dynamics* via choreography of the performers' bodies in relation to the space. Price (2004) also employs a sounding effect, likening his construction of dialogue at points to creating a *symphony* of voices. Keene (2000, 2002) explores the notion of *aural texture* with his linguistic construction ranging from cohesive to fragmented in style in order to convey shifts in a given character's psyche.

Hence it might be inferred from Table 4.1.1 that *language-as-other* occurs in both a bodily (physical) and verbal/vocal function or capacity, both of which are employed simultaneously by *invisiblist* writers for performance. Other common themes can also be identified. One such theme is alternating linguistic or dialogic styles, for example, Beckett's (1956) juxtaposition of the *cross talk act* to the more reflectively poetic in *Waiting for Godot* (1956), or Price's characters' shifts from everyday colloquial to heightened or poetic language. Repetition or,

in Steinian terms, *insistence*, is also a recurring feature – apparent as a device in the texts of both Beckett (1984) and Stein (1970), and more subtly implied in the works of Kane (2001), Price (2002, 2004, 2006) and Keene (2000, 2002).

A certain amount of *rearrangement* occurs in the texts of some of the *invisiblist* writers also: in Stein's (1970, 1998) plays it occurs in the syntax. Parks's writing (1995, 2002) references African American dialectical form and rearranges English spelling. An absence of punctuation, again drawing on the interpretive faculties of the other practitioners involved in the creative process, can be observed as a linguistic feature in the plays of Stein (1970, 1998), Parks (1995, 2002), and in some works by Kane (2001) and Keene (2000, 2002). Also, Kane's (2001) *oeuvre* has been defined by its economy or sparseness of dialogue, which is also a feature of some of Keene's work (2002), particularly evident in *Half and Half* (2002).

In essence then, an *Invisiblist* play exhibits *otherness* in form in terms of (a) its conception as a divine or holy experience framed by myth or ritual; and/or (b) in terms of its *otherness* of shape or trajectory of action; and/or (c) in terms of *doubling* of functions or realities as assemblages/collages/vignettes; and/or (d) in terms of brevity. Character in the *invisiblist* theatre aesthetic exists in a state of *liminality*, as a mythic/historical/canonical figure, as exhibiting a self-conscious *metaphorical stagi-ness* and, often without formal assignation in the text. With a view to discerning an *invisiblist* language, a writer should consider *bodily writing* and spatial dynamics, *Semiotic* language with word-as- other, composition of a sound-scape or score, juxtaposition/ alternation of linguistic styles, repetition or *insistence*, a *rearrangement* of syntax and/or spelling, and an absence of stage directions or *expressionistic* or interpretive ones.

While such stylings might comprise a potential storehouse from which to develop *invisiblist* writing strategies and/or techniques, a writer must not be limited to these. Hence they may also act as a trigger or departure point for exploring the scope of a wider, contemporary *invisiblist* theatrical landscape. Such a wider landscape might also look to further directions from the literature to orientate the *now*.

4.1.2 Aspects of the Now

The literature has also revealed what might represent underlying aspects or concerns of the wider cultural or *peripheral now*, and how these might impact on, arguably, the most *live* of art forms; one engaging in the *immediate now* – theatre. These findings are derived from the writings of the theorists and practitioners in Chapter Three, and are synthesised in Table 4.1.2 below.

Table 4.1.2 Summary of Key Points of Theorists/Practitioners Envisioning A Now

Theorist/Practitioner	<i>Peripheral Now</i>	<i>Immediate Now</i>
Frederic Jameson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural artefacts as a product of social/political <i>status quo</i> - Phase of <i>Late Capitalism</i> equates to postmodernity - Art in postmodernity characterised by: “a new depthlessness” , “waning of affect” “fragmentation of the subject”, “pastiche” and a “weakening of historicity” (Jameson, 1991: 6-17) - Eschews random synthesis of materials/ impulses for a conceptualisation of “notion of differences itself” (Jameson, 1991: 214) -Political Reading of a text as “absolute horizon of interpretation” (Jameson, 1991: 17) - “Finite number of interpretive possibilities” of a given text (Jameson, 1991: 31) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brechtian “fables and parables” (Jameson, 1998: 2) translate to postmodernity, due to: - The activity of Brechtian plays, evidenced by their “discontinuities and fragmentation” (Jameson, 1998: 6) -Brecht’s plays contain a “dialectical relationship between reason and emotion” (Jameson, 1998:176) or gap, in which the audience can insert themselves - Brecht achieves this dialectical relationship with <i>Alienation</i> or <i>Gestus</i> - So “activity” becomes “productivity” (Jameson, 1998: 177) in the postmodern era.
Jean Baudrillard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exist in a Simulacrum, where the real is preceded by a simulacra or the <i>hyperreal</i> (Baudrillard, 1981:1) -<i>Hyperreal</i> perpetuated by “simulators” (Baudrillard, (1981: 2) or information technologies - The <i>hyperreal</i> equates to postmodernity due to “plethora of myths of origin, signs of reality, truth” (Baudrillard, 1981: 6) - Culture in the <i>hyperreal</i> is <i>hyperculture</i>; “a total descriptive universe” (Baudrillard, 1981: 67) - Language in the simulacrum likened to “media mediators of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proof of real through imagined construct: “the proof of theatre through antitheatre” (Baudrillard, 1981:19) - Art valued in exchangeable terms or <i>banal commerciality</i> (Baudrillard, 2005). - New function of art in terms of banality) as “only true social bond” (Baudrillard, 2005: 36) - “Synthetic banality”, e.g., <i>Loft Story</i> (reality television show) is closed experience due to notion of “nothing left to see”

Table 4.1.2 Summary of Key Points of Theorists/Practitioners Envisioning A Now

Theorist/Practitioner	<i>Peripheral Now</i>	<i>Immediate Now</i>
	<p>nature” (Baudrillard, 1981: 111)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proliferation of globalisation and consumer society efface reality (i.e. event not so much political as economic), e.g., the Gulf War, the attacks on the World Trade Centre (Baudrillard, 1991, 2002) 	<p>(Baudrillard, 2005: 181).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “War Porn”, as parody of violence or “desperate simulacrum of power”, e.g., internet images of Abu Graib (Baudrillard, 2005: 205)
Herbert Blau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies a pervading sense of “Political apathy” (Blau, 1982a: ix) - Privileges function of theatre in terms of “purpose, mission, action” etc, as opposed to “identity, otherness” etc (Blau, 1982a: xii) - Acknowledges value of introspection in arriving at this privileged function - Reframes current political agendas into extant texts, e.g., <i>Danton’s Death</i> (1987), <i>The Crucible</i> (1953) - Locates a political locus in seemingly apolitical texts, e.g., <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1956), <i>The Screens</i> (1962) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theatre as theory; the “dynamics of disappearance” (Blau, 1982a: 1) - Concerned with what remains: “afterimage and afterthought” (Blau, 1982a: xii) - Theatre remains abstraction until “blooded” or embodied (Blau, 1982b: xiii) - Process of “ghosting” whereby theatre comprises haunted moment; the <i>Now</i> haunted by the past (Blau, 1982a: 195) - Disjuncture exists between words and things; evidencing “the immateriality of language” (Blau, 1982a: 199) - Inevitable disjuncture “generates a skein of meaning” (Blau, 1982a: 224)
Augusto Boal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preoccupation with socialist and communist ideological threads, with a view to writing for “the people” (Boal, 2001: 175) - Subject to censorship and exiled as a result of political agenda - Rejects Aristotelian theatre structure, regarding it as a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Image Theatre” where through three phases of static and/or dynamised images, the actor transforms from object of oppression to “master of these states” (Feldhender, 1994: 98) - “Invisible Theatre” where an issue “of burning importance” is enacted in a public space, in order to stimulate dialogue amongst spectators (Boal, 1992: 6)

Table 4.1.2 Summary of Key Points of Theorists/Practitioners Envisioning A Now

Theorist/Practitioner	<i>Peripheral Now</i>	<i>Immediate Now</i>
	<p>means of perpetuating control of the state</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theatre as a tool for education and change, as opposed to (only) education and spectacle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Forum Theatre” where the audience (“Spec-actors”) are invited to act out possible solutions to a given oppression, so empowering them with strategies for managing their oppressions (Boal, 1992: 18) - “Cop-in-the-Head” or internal oppressions, e.g., “loneliness, purposelessness” preventing political action (Feldhendler, 1994: 87)

As can be observed from Table 4.1.2 there exist intersections of thought, or common ideologies in regard to both the *peripheral* and *immediate nows*.

In their writings, both Jameson (1991) and Baudrillard (1981) identify similar features that characterise postmodernity and postmodern art. One example is Jameson's (1991) notion of the "fragmentation of the subject" (Jameson, 1991: 16) and Baudrillard's (1981) "plethora of myths of origins" and "truth" (Baudrillard, 1981: 6). Another overlap occurs with Jameson's (1991) postulation that a political reading is the ultimate interpretation of a text, and Blau's (2002) determination that a political locus may be found in seemingly apolitical texts.

In regard to a specific focus on theatre or the *immediate now*, Table 4.1.2 yields several intersections of thought. In his discussion of the work of playwright and practitioner Brecht, Jameson (1998) identifies "discontinuities and fragmentation" (Jameson: 1998: 6). Similarly Boal's (1992) theatre practice involves a type of fragmentation, particularly in his system of *forum theatre*. Both Jameson (1998) and Boal (1992) discuss the significance of creating a dialogue between the performers and audience in or as a result of the theatrical event fostering a "dialectical relationship" (Jameson, 1998: 176). Just as the *activity* of Brechtian theatre becomes *productivity* with the construction of this "dialectical relationship", so the *spec-actor* becomes pro-active or empowered in Boal's (1992) models of theatre.

Less obvious intersections include the permutations of theory applied to theatre by both Baudrillard (1981) and Blau (1982a, 1982b). Baudrillard (1981) theorises the visual communication medium (for example, reality television) as "the proof of theatre through anti-theatre" (Baudrillard, 1981: 19). For Blau (1982a, 1982b), theatre is theoretical or abstract until embodied; it is signified only by the "afterimage or afterthought" (Blau, 1982a: xiii) and a place where the *immediate now* is haunted, or *ghosted* by the previous moment.

In summary, the work of all theorists/practitioners in Table 4.1.2.1 derives from, or is underpinned by, consciously or unconsciously, political ideology. Similarly, all advocate that art, in its fundamental state, is political. This indicates that their process and text are encased and informed by the wider or *peripheral now*. These theorists also characterise the art of this epoch as artefacts of postmodernity, which feature fragmentation and disjuncture. This has implications for the realm of the *immediate now*, intrinsically connected to the art form of theatre. Practitioners such as Brecht [as discussed by Jameson (1998)], and Boal (1961, 1979, 1992, 1995, 2001) and Blau (1982a) privilege the political as thematic concerns in their theatre productions and in their theatre-making methodologies. Furthermore, Brecht (as discussed by Jameson (1998)), and Boal (1992) demonstrate the fostering of a dialogue between the actors and audience, while Blau (1982a) theorises theatre as the “dynamics of disappearance” (Blau, 1982a: 1), a place where audience members are invited to reflect upon the *afterthought* or *afterimage*.

These directions from the literature form the backdrop to informing the writing and staging of a new piece for performance that fuses an *invisiblist* sensibility in terms of *otherness* with aspects of the *now*. Also paramount to the negotiation of this pathway between process and product, is the writer’s understanding of the individual creative process. The idiosyncratic approach of the present writer’s trajectory towards these outcomes must be evaluated in relation to previous creative texts and practice. Hence there is also a need to reflect upon and evaluate this previous work, in order to determine what might be learned from this process to inform and direct the new creative project.

4.2 Theoretical Frame as Derived From Individual Practice

4.2.1 Reflecting on Previous Writing Processes

Reflection on the themes that have characterised previous practice must be considered alongside the findings from the literature. For example, identification of the use of form, character and language and how it intersects with aspects of an *invisiblist* aesthetic and permutations of the *now* have the

potential to identify those pathways most conducive to realising such a theatre aesthetic.

Two theatre texts written and produced prior to this study will thus be explored with a view to locating overlapping themes. These are *A Perfect Skin* (2002), encapsulated in the Carless (2002) honours research project *Between the Skins: The Crucible of Feminine, Feminist and Female Theatre*, and, *Inflatable Heart* (Carless, 2004) a monologue-style piece commissioned for a collaborative show produced in Melbourne in 2005.

In regard to my particular *modus operandi*, the writing process usually takes its departure from myth. This is evidenced in *A Perfect Skin* (2002) where the mythologies surrounding historical figures such as Anne Frank, Florence Nightingale, Mary Magdalene and the Greek goddess Diana are explored, and reappropriated in a contemporary context. In the first act of the play, these historical characters are caught somewhere between life and immortality, and are effectively hitchhikers waiting by the road. They are picked up by the play's protagonist, Grace, a woman driving away from something alluded to, but not yet acknowledged. Each of the characters has a story to share, all of which hold a peculiar resonance for Grace. The action of the first act takes place primarily in Grace's car. In the second act, the audience is privy to Grace in her natural environment: home and work. In the former, most of the scenes involve a type of ritualisation of domestic chores such as ironing and washing, *sans* dialogue. In the latter, Grace works as a skincare consultant and all the mythical/historical characters visit her in what might be perceived as their contemporary incarnations (for example Anne Frank is embodied in a schoolgirl character of the same age).

In the writing process, it was almost as though I was working backwards to fulfil the original vision/concept of a flight of fancy, constituting Grace's mythical journey. That is, the events of the second act occur in Grace's actual reality, or in the time of the play, *before* the events of the first act. Here Act One and Act Two are essentially chronologically reversed. Formally this reversal suspends the play's momentum, and subverts its otherwise linear shape or trajectory.

The characters in *A Perfect Skin* (2002) might be considered as representations of those peopling the *collective unconscious*, first discovered in childhood readings. By referencing mythological or historical figures, these identities are further developed in the mind of the writer, gestating for a period of some 10 years. With a view to making them accessible/demystifying them, I allocated them collected stories from my own and other women's experience, thus referencing their interchangeable and universal quality.

In *A Perfect Skin* (2002) the dialogue might be described as *poetic*, in the Kristevian sense, particularly in Act One. Words are chosen for their sound, shape and pattern (as well as the emotional sound-scape they might evoke) as opposed to primary meaning. This can be observed in the dialogue below, where the character of Florence shares her experience nursing in the Crimean War:

I saw so much blood it made my heart sick. Blood on hands feet faces. Blood on skin and skin on blood. I was bleeding they were bleeding so hard it hurt. I couldn't tell where their blood stopped and mine began. They kept bringing soldiers in to be saved but I had blood in my eyes. I couldn't see straight couldn't think through the stream of red.

(Carless 2002: 9).

The extract lacks punctuation within the sentences, signifying a particular style for their delivery.

The second example of previous practice, *Inflatable Heart* (2004), utilises a direct address style, where a young woman inflates her heart manually with a mattress pump, and recounts to the audience the precise moment of its bursting. There is an *otherness* of form here as the character swings from storytelling to a more introspective point of view, although the text is devoid of any stage directions signalling when these shifts might occur. This convention of acknowledging the audience cultivates a dynamic relationship between

performer and spectator, a kind of cognitive complicity between the two parties. Similarly, the event of the heart bursting takes place on a tram and thus the *mise en scene* subtly shifts focus, which is manifested bodily by the actor, as the character becomes immersed in her story. Brevity is also a key feature of *Inflatable Heart's* (2004) form (as well as of its function, as it was staged as part of collage/assemblage style performance with short texts by several playwrights) with a performance length of approximately three to four minutes.

The character in *Inflatable Heart* (2004) exists on the fringe of society, or at the edge of things, without exposition or *back story*. She is an outsider *per se*, yet a familiar one, reminiscent of Beckett's or Keene's fringe dwellers. The language of *Inflatable Heart* (2004), like that of *A Perfect Skin* (2002) is largely devoid of punctuation and, once again, demonstrates a deliberate linguistic arrangement for a certain aural effect:

But it just wouldn't stop - the thinking I mean. It came out all congealed and messy. Stuff like newspaper smudges on foreheads and the stare off between a cat and a dog. Stuff like a one-legged seagull winning the chip and how red is a feeling as well as a colour.

(Carless, 2004: 1)

Both *A Perfect Skin* (2002) and *Inflatable Heart* (2004) were staged for public performance, the latter in Melbourne in 2005. Reflecting on these experiences in relation to the writerly role, and comparing this to the strategies employed by the *invisiblist* writers profiled in section 4.1.1, will assist in determining an *invisiblist* pathway through the new creative piece.

4.2.2 Linking Previous Practice with Invisiblist Strategies

There are several intersecting traces of the *invisiblist* writers' practices and techniques, in Table 4.1.1 and those of this writer, in regard to form. For example, *A Perfect Skin* (2002) is based on myth, just as Artaud (1970) and Kane (2001) utilise myth in their work. It features an *otherness* of shape, as

does the work of Beckett, and, at points, a ritualisation of the domestic, in the vein of Price (2002, 2004). *Inflatable Heart* (2004) exhibits a deliberate avoidance of stage directions, as evidenced by the work of Stein (1970, 1998) and Parks (1995, 2002).

In regard to character, my *channelling* of the characters peopling my collective unconscious is reminiscent of Parks's approach of *digging* for *figures*. The notion of mythological characters' being interchangeable with the real character of Grace, resonates with Kemp's (1996, 1999-2000, 2002) practice of one woman being represented by four actors. Here each character represents the woman at a different age or, in metaphysical terms, as an aspect of her psyche. There are also elements of Kemp's *inter-textuality* in the presentation of the historical characters' stories. *Inflatable Heart* (2004) echoes the complicity of the performing character and her audience, in essence an acknowledgement of the theatrical construct. This correlates with the Beckettian and Steinian devices of *metaphorical stagi-ness*. Brevity too, is a feature of *Inflatable Heart* (2004) that features in the work of the *invisibilists* Beckett (1984) and Keene (2000, 2006).

The linguistic patterning explored in *A Perfect Skin* (2002) correlates with that featured in *invisibilist* writers' work. In fact, the privileging of *properties* of words, such as sound and shape, over their designated *meaning* resonates with notions of language explored and addressed by each of the writers in Table 4.1.1 in terms of function and/or aesthetic effect. Similarly, in *Inflatable Heart* (2004), the arrangement or composition of the dialogue and lack of punctuation are reminiscent of *invisibilist* linguistic devices, particularly those of Stein (1970, 1998), Kane (2001) and Keene (2000).

It is apparent that, for both *A Perfect Skin* (2002) and *Inflatable Heart* (2004,) there are discernible traces of an *invisibilist* aesthetic. In relation to permeation of the wider or *peripheral now* in the construction of the texts, this might be evidenced by the fragmentation of the subject in *A Perfect Skin* (2002), which echoes Jameson's (1991) characterisation of art in postmodernity. Similarly, *A Perfect Skin* (2002) exhibits a disjuncture between words and things, as *per*

Blau (1982a), and particularly so in the characters' articulation of their objectives or desires. Generally, however, there is no obvious exploration of an aspect from the realm of the *peripheral now*, or an overt political agenda, as of that characterising the work of Blau and Boal (see Table 4.1.2.1). While both *A Perfect Skin* (2002) and *Inflatable Heart* (2004) borrowed, to an extent, from the wider cultural *now* in terms of referencing particular societal issues relating to women, this did not necessarily present as an overt or explicit idea in performance; neither was this my agenda.

Both *A Perfect Skin* (2002) and *Inflatable Heart* (2004) could be perceived as largely an exploration of *invisiblist* preoccupations such as an *otherness* of form, character, and language, to the point where the function of the piece and its significance becomes obscured. By occupying the territory of the obscure, meaning may become elusive entirely for the audience. While *invisiblist* texts, such as Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1962) appear to demonstrate a deliberate ambiguity, they are also deeply rooted in the notion of the *live* factor, or the *immediate now*.

How might the notion of *now* manifest in a contemporary theatre text? To speculate, might the *peripheral now* act as a thematic departure point for the play's content, as is the case with the work of Blau (1982a) and Boal (1991)? That is, might it be something that embeds itself conceptually? Or rather, might it be something guiding the trajectory of the action or that moving the play onward, something related to form?

i had an opportunity to explore how such a potential absence of the *now* in previous practice might be addressed, by creating a work of brevity with the assistance of a professional dramaturge, in collaboration with a local professional theatre company. I took this opportunity to initiate and implement a *pilot study*, testing the findings from the literature and the evaluation of my previous practice, with a view to obtaining feedback from an in-house audience comprised of industry practitioners.

4.3 Pilot Study

This pilot study was designed to encapsulate and test the realisation of an *invisiblist* theatrical experience as a basis for informing the larger creative text component and research aims for the study.

4.3.1 Setting up the Pilot Study Parameters

The primary aim of the pilot study was to explore those characteristics identified as *invisiblist* and the aspects relating to the *now* (see section 4.1), and also to take its departure from those correlating characteristics embedded in previous writing.

Accordingly, throughout the writing process, the pilot text was designed to (a) take as its basis a mythological framework; and/or (b) exhibit *otherness* of shape or trajectory of action; and/or (c) employ aspects or *doubling*; and/or (d) either utilize assemblage/collage and/or brevity as a dominant compositional strategy. Character was to in the liminal state or the *in-between*, take on the attributes of a historical figure or have mythic properties, exhibit an essence of self-awareness, and perhaps remain unassigned in the layout of the text. In terms of language, I considered *bodily writing* and spatial dynamics, *Semiotic* language with word-as- other, composition of a sound-scape or score, juxtaposition/alternation of linguistic styles, repetition or *insistence*, a *rearrangement* of syntax and/or spelling, and an absence of stage directions or *expressionistic* or interpretive ones.

The *now* was also considered, in terms of using a political nexus as a focus for the literary artefact, and position the postmodern text in terms of disjuncture and fragmentation. I also had a view towards exploring the *immediate now* paradigm by developing a *dialectic relationship* between the actors and audience, and considered the potentialities of haunted or *ghosted* moments throughout the text.

4.3.2 Writing the Pilot Study First Draft

Just as *A Perfect Skin* (2002) provided a literary forum through which to explore and re-appropriate the mythical/historical figures peopling my collective unconscious (see section 4.2.1), the pilot study gave me an opportunity to explore another myth swirling through my *writerly* dreaming. The thematic content of this particular piece was less concerned with *real* or once-living historical figures than with one of the myths assigned to a fictional figure: the *mermaid*.

In the preliminary stages of writing the pilot text, one mermaid myth in particular was selected as it provided scope in relation to the notion of *doubling*. Specifically, this myth entailed that a mermaid must possess a man's shadow to combat her immortality, hence the pilot study's title: *Shadow Play* (2005). This was inspired by Oscar Wilde's narrative: *The Fisherman and His Soul* (2005). Simplified, in this story a fisherman falls in love with a mermaid and learns that he must relinquish his soul in order to be with her. He discovers that his soul is embodied physically by his shadow, and renounces it in order to be with his love. The *doubling* of the physical and metaphysical elements of the human condition, the shadow and the soul, appealed to me as it provided scope for interplay between these dimensions and fulfilled an *invisiblist* stratagem.

The myth also provided scope for an *otherness* of shape. This was achieved by distilling the story from a narrative in its entirety to a single on-stage event. I concentrated the action or *mise en scene* on the meeting and interaction of the mermaid and her target, as opposed to establishing a *back-story* for their meeting, as Wilde's (2005) story does. This addressed the brevity issue - another identified feature of the *invisiblist* play. The exchange and interplay between the mermaid and the man in the contest for the shadow was limited to ten minutes of dramatic action, which constituted about twelve pages of text. The first and second drafts, chronicling the development of the *Shadow Play*

(2005) script can be found in Appendix A (see A.1 and A.2) while the final textual outcome of the pilot study is located in Chapter Seven (see section 7.1).

In order to acknowledge the *immediate now* in the pilot text, at this point in the drafting stage, I composed the events as though they were unfolding in real time, so that the audience would be engaged in the action as it was happening. Thus, formally, the trajectory was continuous, unbroken by the convention of separate *scenes*.

From the inception of the project, I was taken with the notion of the mermaid and the man presenting as two lost souls, displaced by fate or circumstance, from very different realities, forming an unlikely connection and finding a counterpoint in each other. The mermaid figure, Oepi, subscribes to an *invisiblist* character aesthetic, almost by default, as she is a mythic creature. She also inhabits a liminal state, as she is officially from *another* realm, and struggles to inhabit the everyday world of the man character, a retired school teacher called Reg. The action was set in Reg's domain; a classroom and it transpired that Oepi had been observing him for some time. The play has a twist in the tail, as they re-engage in a shared moment in their past, and Reg subsequently agrees to Oepi's proposal for possession of his shadow, a decision manifest more in his action than in his dialogue.

The linguistic style I have previously employed has generally been poetic - both in the conventional, and Kristevian *Poetic* sense (1984). In *Shadow Play* (2005), I also endeavoured to indicate the disjuncture between the two characters through language. This involved using the *invisiblist* precept of juxtaposing linguistic styles. For example, Reg's speech is quite colloquial, mining Australian vernacular and idiom as do Norman Price's character. This was counter-pointed by *Oepi-speak*, or the dialogue of the mermaid, which explored the properties comprising her world: the sea, the notion of her being part fish, and the loneliness accompanying her immortal state.

This juxtaposition of styles contributed to the disjuncture of the characters as can be observed in this extract where Oepi emerges from hiding, observing Reg. It constitutes the initial meeting of the two characters:

REG: Holy - !

Blimmin' heck! You scared the bejesus outta me!

Pauses to regain breath.

I'll have to change me daks now.

Pause

You the new cleaner then?

OEPI: (*nods*) You're a good dancer.

REG: Ta. (*Gestures to dummies*) They don't get out much. Least I can do ya see.

OEPI: What are you making?

REG: To tell you the truth, I don't really know. Finishing it for me wife. I think it's a skirt but then there's this bloody seam! Looks like a flippin' tail.

OEPI: (*Touching the fabric*) It's nice. Like a purple monkfish sky. Or a broken sea.

Pause

I saw your marble.

REG: Listen, you shouldn't be here. It's not ...applicable. Trespassing! That's what it is!

OEPI: It reminded me of one from a long time ago. It was clear with the universe caught inside.

REG: Oh yeah? I had one like that myself. Dropped it. When I was a kid. In a big fish tank. May as well have been the ocean!

(Appendix A.1)

After completing the first draft of the pilot study text, following this style of juxtaposing prosaic and poetic dialogue, *Shadow Play* (2005) became subject to several phases of dramaturgical feedback and script development. In conjunction with this, the play was to be read for public performance on a

number of occasions, as part of the various developmental processes detailed below. This dramaturgical and professional development allowed the writer to gain critical feedback and audience response to the pilot text.

4.3.3 *Dramaturgy and Development*

At the time of composing the pilot text the writer was a participant in the Just Us Theatre Ensemble's *Enter Stage Write Program*¹. As part of the requirements of this program, the first draft of *Shadow Play* (2005) was submitted to a dramaturge (Dramaturge One) for a critical evaluation. This was the first time this writer had experience with a dramaturge in the formal sense of applying rigour to the feedback situation, with a view to re-drafting. Dramaturge One's response was positive in terms of the play's potential as a theatrical landscape, the world and mood it evoked. She also identified what she referred to as *gaps* in the character construction of the mermaid. In terms of constructive directions for developing the play, Dramaturge One advised the writer to explore Oepi via the *Four Ws*: Who, What, Why and When. This was designed to give the character a *back-story* by addressing the speculative items in her history. That is, it would answer questions such as: What does she want most? And why did she choose Reg to deliver it?

Following this feedback I addressed these *gaps* by compiling a *back-story* for Oepi, focusing on answering the *Four W's*. Although this process is not identified in Table 4.1.1 as a particularly *invisiblist* approach, this served to clarify the mermaid's function in the play for this dramaturge. Due to the feedback from Dramaturge One, the revised play addressed the unknown or speculative details in relation to the mermaid's history and became more tangible, concrete and clear in its dimensions. The implementation of her suggestions appeared to be moving the script in a different direction. I

¹ Enter Stage Write (ESW) is a program established by Just Us Theatre Ensemble, to foster the development and scripts of new, emerging, and more established writers for theatre. The program comprises individual drafting, group workshops and intensive phases of dramaturgy.

wondered whether these dramaturgical approaches were either compatible or consistent with my inherent *invisiblist* vision.

The writer then had an opportunity to attend a theatre-writing workshop in Melbourne, which had an emphasis on preparing works for the annual *Short and Sweet* play festival ². This festival showcases plays of brevity, with the rationale that it enables more works to be programmed per evening, and theoretically reflects and attempts to address a contemporary *concern* of performance writing - time and attention span factors. It is similar in this ethos to a short film festival.

The first draft of *Shadow Play* (2005) was read to an audience by professional actors at the Arts Centre, Melbourne at the culmination of the workshop. From this reading I was able to discern that *Shadow Play* (2005) had several stage directions that were complicating the characters' actions. As these were all read aloud in the performed reading, it became apparent that they were extraneous, as they prescribed a lot of unnecessary stage *business* for the actors, prior to their initial event of meeting. It was also apparent to me that Oepi's need for the shadow was not signalled clearly enough for the audience.

For the co-ordinator of the workshop, *Shadow Play* (2005) juggled too many motives or symbols for the play. Apart from the central notion of a mermaid needing to steal a shadow, I had also incorporated a good deal of *back-story* in relation to Reg's recent bereavement – the death of his wife. This amounted to a muddying of ideas for the workshop co-ordinator who felt this complicated the action in a piece where one of the features is brevity. He also felt that the script required more rigour in the structuring of the dramatic tension.

My *writerly* impressions contrasted with those of the workshop co-ordinator, most notably in that I was interested in the effect of the construction of the form to produce a sense of rolling action, while he advocated for an increase in the

² Short and Sweet is a theatre festival held annually in Sydney and Melbourne to showcase works of brevity to a paying audience. The guidelines specify a play must run for a maximum duration of ten minutes performance time.

tension or *the stakes*. This indicates that he was working from a more conventionally derived structure base that traditionally privileges linearity and transparency of signification, whereas I was privileging an *invisiblist* aesthetic, one that sought to showcase rhythm and atmospherics.

Following this was the second phase of the Enter Stage Write program, where I met with a second dramaturge (Dramaturge Two), with a view to directing the piece forward from the outcomes of the first public reading. While Dramaturge Two had not attended this reading, she had definite views on the piece that, for all intents and purposes, amounted to: *I don't get it*. For Dramaturge Two the play was fundamentally devoid of a formal plot. She advised that each character's motivations should be identified for each particular action or moment. Simultaneously, she required me to define and detail the *suspense plot*, which she described as a linear progression from the event or action- with event A leading to event or action B, B leading to C and so forth. This process entailed dividing the script into *beats*, or sections of action, differentiated by a shift in character intention. This was to show exactly what information was being made apparent to the audience and what the characters' agendas were at any given point.

I applied this formulaic approach to Draft One of *Shadow Play* (2005) by separating the entire text into incremental *beats*, according to Dramaturge Two's advice. At this point in the script's development, however, I began to become confused about how to reconcile my vision for the script with that of the dramaturge. While I wanted to develop my script with a view to its production values, I also wanted to adhere to my desired *invisiblist* aesthetic.

In this phase of development it was also suggested by the dramaturge that some of the mermaid's dialogue was too poetic and therefore inaccessible. Oepi's line "purple monkfish sea" (Appendix A.1) is an example of one proving problematic. For me, however, such dialogue represented the mermaid's *otherness*. I was concerned with creating evocative word patterning, while signification was not necessarily the most important function of the dialogue.

During this phase of the pilot study, I received notification of my successful application as a playwright delegate to *World Interplay*³. A key prerequisite for participation in Interplay is to have a play script as a basis for further development in workshop sessions. Given the dilemmas I was facing in relation to *Shadow Play* (2005), I elected to concentrate on developing this script for my writing project at World Interplay.

At World Interplay the young playwrights are divided into several base groups, led by industry professionals acting as tutors. Every morning in these base groups we read and discussed one of the group members' plays. In this way, each young playwright received the feedback of peers, in addition to the feedback of the more experienced tutors. An extract of each young writer's play was then rehearsed and read by their base group to the collective (the remaining tutors and young playwright delegates). In addition to the peer group/tutor feedback, each young playwright was also assigned a tutor with whom to discuss the script in depth.

Three things consistently emerged from the varied sources and forms of feedback I received about *Shadow Play* (2005) at World Interplay. The first was: to whom did the story belong, or, in other words, who was the protagonist? This was confusing for several parties as, while it was apparent that it was meant to be the mermaid's story, there were conflicting messages, as the action was set in Reg's natural environment (a classroom). Secondly, the mermaid character was still too ambiguous in the script. The audience wanted specific details about her physicality: did she have a tail or legs? How did she move *on land*? Thirdly, *the stakes* needed to be made clearer or, as I interpreted this, the sense of Oepi's need and Reg's sacrifice for her (essentially his life) required heightening.

Thus there were several implications for the second draft.

4.3.4 Implications for the Second Draft and Public Reading

³ This is a two-week long biennial festival for young playwrights (aged 18-26) designed to foster the development of young playwrights and their writing skills.

Some common themes regarding *Shadow Play* (2005) emerged, mostly in relation to the play's form. Due to the consistent comments of the Short and Sweet workshop co-ordinator, Dramaturge Two and several of the World Interplay tutors and young playwright delegates, I resolved to *raise the stakes* by making Oepi's objective (to steal Reg's shadow) and Reg's sacrifice (his life) more explicit. This served to heighten the sense of conflict and restructure the play into a more conventional mould or form.

Just as it emerged that character and form in the pilot study had shifted from the original *invisiblist* aesthetic to a theatre piece that had a more explicit agenda, so too did the tone of the language become more focused *on what needed to be signified*.

That is, as a result of the development, and the *beat* work undertaken with Dramaturge Two particularly (see section 4.3.3), the language of the play became more explicit. This was in order to convey the characters' intentions clearly at all times and to signal the meaning of the play definitively. An example of this shift in language style can be observed in the extract below, which comprises the Third Draft version of the same play extract quoted in 4.3.2, that is, the initial exchange between Oepi and Reg (also note the change to the spelling of Oepi to Opi). This final-to-date draft of the pilot text can be found in 7.1.

REG: Holy - ! Blimmin' heck! You scared the bejesus outta me!

Pauses to regain breath.

Shit, I'll have to change me daks now.

Reg checks the state of his pants.

It's alright. Phew. You had me worried there. Who are you? More to the point, what the bloody hell are you doing here?

OPI: My name's Opi. I've been watching you.

Pause

REG: That's a bit off-puttin. What for?

OPI: I like your dancing. The way your shadow moves.

Pause

You're a good dancer sir.

REG: Well, ta. Name's Reg. (*Gestures to dummies*) They don't get out much. Least I can do.

Pause

You were watching me you say? For how long?

OPI: A few nights now.

REG: That's a bit off-puttin.

OPI: Don't worry, I won't say anything.

REG: What do ya mean? About what?

OPI: You sneaking in here. After hours.

REG: Think I'm entitled miss! It's me old classroom. Taught here 42 years! Home Economics. I was a pioneer. Never made Principal though. Bastards. Anyway, who gave let you in?

OPI: You did.

REG: I don't even know you! How could I give you permission?

OPI: You do know me.

REG: Since when?

OPI: Since always.

REG: That's rot. Absolute rot. You shouldn't be here. You're dripping! It's not ...appropriate. Trespassing! That's what it is! Get along now.

OPI: I saw your marble.

It was nice. It reminded me of one from before - a long time ago. It was clear with a pattern inside. A blue pattern - like a promise.

REG: (*In spite of self*) Yeah, it's a beauty. I had one like that myself. When I was a little tacker. Gave it away to someone. Dropped it into a big fish tank. Thought I saw

OPI: What? What did you see?

REG: Nah, nothing. Just kid stuff. Nonsense out of a storybook. A fish probably et it.

(7.1)

As can be observed in this extract, Opi's dialogue is generally less poetic, with the intention of making it more accessible for the audience. In my view, while transparency of intention has been gained with the re-drafted dialogue above, the mystery, metaphor, and magic surrounding the mermaid figure has been lost.

The completed second draft, the product of both the phases of dramaturgy and the World Interplay development as discussed above, was rehearsed and read for public performance at the annual JUTE Playwrights Conference in Cairns. My impression of the reading was that it represented a fair attempt by the director and actors to realise the ambiguities in the text. However, to my ears, the mermaid's dialogue sounded *clunky* and obvious, even expository, and not at all enigmatic, which had been the original design.

From this pilot study there emerged several insights and items to consider in relation to negotiating *invisiblist* paradigms within a text for performance.

4.3.5 Directions From Pilot Study Towards Invisiblist/Now Writing

Following the outcomes of the pilot study I felt I had been *sidetracked* by the dramaturgical input which, although pertinent to the development of a well-made play of a conventional design, did not reference the *invisiblist* aesthetic. It was effectively a semi-insidious feedback loop, where I privileged the given expertise of the dramaturges and practitioners over my own aesthetic or vision. That is, although I had initially drafted *Shadow Play* (2005) guided by *invisiblist* principles, I had little by little allowed my focus to segue, thus re-appropriating the play through its dramaturgical and developmental phases into a text that sought to make its meaning transparent. The inherent ambiguities were largely

lost and, in the public readings, the text was caught between an *invisiblist* aesthetic and a more concrete realisation.

Another outcome was the understanding that a key *invisiblist* language function (identified in section 4.1.1) had been overlooked in the drafting of *Shadow Play* (2005): an *otherness* of stage directions. The stage direction issue emerged as a significant one throughout the development process, particularly for the Short and Sweet workshop co-ordinator, who felt that the stage directions as written were *extraneous* and *prescriptive* in the first draft. Perhaps the interpretive or expressionistic stage directions of Kane (2001), or even the economy employed by Stein (1970) and Parks (1995, 2002) (see Table, 4.1.1.1) might have been explored more in *Shadow Play* (2005). This may have encouraged other practitioners involved in the play's realisation to interpret it with something of an *invisiblist* perspective.

Further, in the writing of the first draft of the pilot study I might have explored the *immediate now/live* paradigm to a greater extent. This might have been achieved by locating pathways into a *dialectic relationship* between the actors and audience, and/or by considering the potentialities of haunted or *ghosted* moments in the text.

My original intention for *Shadow Play* (2005) had been to investigate the presence and potentialities of the *now* in the text. This is evidenced in my composition of the events as though they were happening in real time (read: in the *immediate now*). It is also apparent in my attempt to indicate the disjuncture between Opi and Reg's different worlds as can be observed in both the construction of their oppositional dialogue styles and their frequent pauses/beats. This was *scaled down* in subsequent drafts, as my focus shifted towards *raising the stakes* and achieving meaning and clarity in regard to the characters' motivations, as per the dramaturgical feedback.

Such findings from the pilot study have implications for the writing and staging of the longer piece for this study. For such a piece I had a view to privileging an

invisiblist aesthetic and simultaneously encapsulating aspects of both the *immediate* and *peripheral nows*, as per the aims outlined in 1.5.

4.4 Pathways for Writing the Script

Thus, in writing the extended play, involving a fusing and styling of the *invisiblist* aesthetic with aspects of the *now*, the cumulative findings from the literature (as synthesised in 4.1), my previous writing practice (see 4.2), and the outcomes of the pilot study (see 4.3.5) were to be employed.

This meant that, for the initial drafting process of the new creative text, I planned to continue to explore the potentialities of identified *invisiblist* principles, as per my established *modus operandi*. To recapitulate, this includes employing an *otherness* in form, in terms of (a) as a myth or ritual; and/ or (b) shape or trajectory of action; and/or (c) *doubling* of functions or realities; and/or (d) assemblage/collage and/or brevity. Character in the *invisiblist* theatre aesthetic exists in a state of *liminality*, as a mythic/historical/canonical figure, as exhibiting a self-conscious *metaphorical stagi-ness* or, formally, without assignation in the text. With a view to discerning an *invisiblist* language, the writer must also consider *bodily writing* and spatial dynamics, *semiotic* language with word-as-other, composition of a sound-scape or score, juxtaposition/alternation of linguistic styles, repetition or *insistence*, a *rearrangement* of syntax and/or spelling, and an absence of stage directions or *expressionistic*/interpretive ones.

As identified by the reflection on my previous practice (see 4.2) and the outcomes of the pilot study (see 4.3.5), there was a distinct obscuring and/or even general absence of the *now* embedded in the theatre texts and performative experiences. There were some *traces* of an exploration of the *now*; my previous work *A Perfect Skin* (2002) exhibits *fragmentation* of character and text to an extent. This is a characteristic identified by Jameson (1991) as a typical feature of the postmodern artefact in this postmodern epoch, which equates to Jameson's reading of *now*. For the pilot study, *Shadow Play* (2005), the writing processes were initiated with the intention of capitalising on

the theatrical *live* or the *immediate now* by constructing the action as though it was happening in real time, via language constructions signifying disjuncture. Nevertheless, these manifestation of the *now* remained throughout as *traces*, overshadowed by the *invisiblist* concerns and, in the case of the pilot study, became superseded by the implementation of conventional dramaturgical modellings.

To reiterate, the potentialities of what the *now* might encapsulate includes an underpinning of a political ideology. This corresponds to the recurring belief, held by each of the theorists in Table 4.1.2, that art, in its fundamental state, is political. These theorists and/or practitioners also characterise the art of this epoch as artefacts of postmodernity, featuring fragmentation and disjuncture. In terms of the wider or *peripheral now*, this has implications for the realm of the *immediate now*, intrinsically connected to the art form of theatre. Practitioners such as Brecht (as discussed by Jameson (1998)), Boal (1961, 1979, 1992, 1995, 2001) and Blau (1982a) privilege the political as thematic concerns in their theatre productions and in theatre making methodologies. Furthermore, Brecht (as discussed by Jameson (1998)), and Boal (1992) demonstrate the fostering of a dialogue between the actors and audience while Blau (1982a) theorises theatre as the “dynamics of disappearance” (Blau, 1982a: 1), a place where the audience are invited to reflect upon the *afterthought* or *afterimage*.

To address this latency of the *now*, evidenced in my previous practice and the pilot text, I intended to specifically identify the functions or ways in which to utilise both the *peripheral* and *immediate* aspects of the *now* at the very beginning of the writing process of the extended piece. To achieve this, I intended to revisit processes of the *now*-orientated practitioners Blau (1982a) and Boal (1992). Hence, in keeping with Jameson’s assertion that the elemental reading of a text is a *political* reading, I sought to embed in the play the fundamentals of such an interpretation. More specifically, just as Blau (1982a) privileges the function of theatre in terms of *purpose*, I endeavoured to allow a political agenda to permeate the process as the play’s conceptual locus.

This may encompass employing a particular political issue, reflecting the concerns of the *peripheral now* as a conceptual theme, as evidenced in the theatrical construct of the *immediate now* by Boal's (1992) *Image Theatre*, *Invisible Theatre* and *Forum Theatre* models. By exploring in the new creative piece/play's content a contemporaneous political issue of resonance, it is thus proposed to enable the function of Blau's (1982a) *purpose*.

While borrowing from the wider or *peripheral* concerns of the *now* to inform the content, I decided it was viable to capitalise on the *immediate* or performative *now* for the audience by looking to the theatrical moment as theorised by Jameson (1998), Baudrillard (1981) and/or Blau (1982a). This entailed constructing a *dialectical relationship* such as Brecht's *Alienation* or *Gestus* techniques does for Jameson (1998). These are essentially measures of alerting the audience to the theatrical paradigm. What might constitute a contemporaneous example of *alienation*? Might this traverse territory with Baudrillard's (2005) positioning of art, in the contemporaneous state, as *synthetic*, or as contrived *banality*, an art state that nonetheless might constitute the "only true social bond" (Baudrillard, 2005: 36)? By considering these ideas, in conjunction with Baudrillard's (1981) seemingly paradoxical proving of the event of the theatre through the *hyperreal* or *antitheatre* (Baudrillard, 1981), an awareness of the *now* might also be achieved. Furthermore, by considering Blau's (1982a) notion of *ghosting*, that is, the event of the disappearing moment leaving a trace or stamp on the next, the sense of the *immediate* might be brought to the audience's experience of the *now*.

What is notable in these ideological positions and probing is the role of the *audience*. They are instrumental in the realisation of the *now* (as they are to the *Invisible*), as their presence bears witness to, engages in, and responds bodily to, the performed or embodied text. This is evidenced by the *dialectical relationship*, or the *social bond*, proposed by theorists Jameson (1998) and Baudrillard (2005), respectively. The audience, in fact, encompass those engaged by default in the participatory models proposed by each theorist. That is, they are those who play out Blau's (1982a) *dynamics of disappearance*; are *ghosted* from moment to moment by disappearing moments, and are implicated

as Boal's (1992) *Spec-actors*, even arguably, as co-writers in *Forum Theatre*. Thus, in the writing of the extended piece, this writer had a view to considering and exploring how best the *audience* might be invited to contribute to the realisation of the *immediate now*.

To alleviate the potentiality for the political content (that reflecting the *peripheral now*) to appear didactic in tone in any public reading and/or performance of the text, as was the experience of Blau (1982a), I aimed to temper this through the *otherness* of *invisiblist* theatre principles. Thus, by drawing on aspects of the *invisiblist* aesthetic, and observing closely the way/s the *peripheral now* might infiltrate and permeate the *writerly* experience, the extended text might avoid both total obscurity and/or total rhetoric. It therefore becomes a hybrid piece; an allegorical resonator of contemporaneity. It is that caught between conscious *writerly stylings* - the *invisiblist* aesthetic and manifestations of the collective unconscious (Jameson, 1981).

The evidence of the pilot study is that, when seeking feedback on the first draft, I became swayed by the dramaturgical comments, and began to move my text in another direction. That is, I began to re-negotiate and reconstruct the form of the play, privileging qualities such as transparency, lucidity, chronology, and linearity, as opposed to the *otherness* of form I had originally sought. This also had an impact on character and language to an extent (see section 4.3.4), and the outcome was that the play became expositional, as opposed to fluid; in other words, exhibiting the qualities of a play that did not necessarily reflect, and was even in opposition to, an *invisiblist* agenda.

It was also concluded from the pilot study that, while dramaturgy is undoubtedly instrumental to the process of developing a play towards its staging, it must also be faithful to the authorial aesthetic of the play. Hence, from the outset I will discuss with the dramaturge/s my vision for the piece, and work alongside them to evaluate and develop the play, within this particular sensibility, or aesthetic frame.

In summary, for the writing process of the creative piece I intended to continue to explore and extend my previous praxis in the *otherness* of form, character and language, as inherent in the *invisiblist* paradigm. To address the recurring absence or latent presence of the *now* in my praxis I also aimed to specifically identify the functions or ways in which both the *peripheral* and *immediate* aspects of the *now* infiltrate the writing process, from the very beginning of the extended piece. This potentially involved privileging a political nexus as the function of the piece; a specific political issue embodying a concern of the *peripheral now* as a thematic thread for the content. I also intended to explore ways to realise the *immediate now* in performance by either creating a *dialectical relationship*, and/or proving the theatrical paradigm through the notion of *anti-theatre* or by *ghosting* moments. Instrumental to this was exploring ways in which the audience might engage with the writing and even realisation of the text via these strategies.

In terms of staging the extended piece, there are many possible directions for the *writerly* role in this context. By looking to the *invisiblist* writers' tradition of the staging processes, in conjunction with my previous experience, and the events of the pilot study, I sought to determine how to stage the extended piece.

4.5 Pathways for Staging the Script

Several of the *invisiblist* writers profiled in Table 4.1.1 were directly involved in the staging of their own work. That is, they functioned, on occasions, at the helm of *standing up* processes, in the role of *director*, as well as that of writer. From the scope of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two it appears these writer-as-director practitioners include Artaud (1970), Beckett (1956, 1958, 1984), and Kemp (1996, 1999-2000, 2002). These writers have recorded and detailed aspects of their staging experiences, (or have had such processes documented by others). Their specific methodologies, exemplified by Artaud's "moving hieroglyphics" (Artaud, 1970: 37), Beckett's "physical themes" (Kalb, 1989: 33) and Kemp's "spatial dynamics" (Kemp, 2007) are extensively discussed in Chapter Two.

Similarly Boal (1992), a writer and theatre maker whose collaborative theatre models such as *Forum Theatre* represent an intersection of the *peripheral* and *immediate nows*, effectively directs the outcomes of his theatrical endeavours. While such theatre models do not *always* involve the use of a script, Boal (1992) facilitates the text-based and/or improvisational proceedings in his role as *Joker* or mediator.

Unlike Artaud (1970), Beckett (1956, 1958, 1984), Kemp (1996, 1999-2000, 2002), and Boal (1992), I do not intend to take on the accepted conventional role of director for the staging of my extended text. This decision is certainly influenced by my previous experience in regard to my involvement in staging work.

In my experience thus far, generally everything inherent in my written script is heightened in a public reading or performance. That is, every flaw, imperfection and inconsistency is magnified to extreme proportions. While there are always satisfying moments and, indeed triumphs, these are glossed over; *taken as read* and the inherent problems fixated upon. In short, I find it difficult to be objective or a neutral party in the evaluation of my script when presented publicly. This critical approach limits my ability to become immediately conscious of the areas of concern or problems in the script. One particular observation I have made in my play writing trajectory thus far is that, in the reading/staging context, I pay very close attention to the aural qualities, the rhythms, textures and sound-scape of the text in performance. If a word sounds particularly out of place or disrupts the rhythm of the dialogue, immediately I make a mental note to revisit this section in the script. By consistently engaging in this *editing mode*, I am potentially missing out on other aspects of the script in performance such as the physical embodiment of the text, the imagery, the interpretation of place, the symbols, how the themes/premise/ideas of the play are realised and made *live*.

By allowing time to reflect thus after the show, I might be better equipped to evaluate the dramatic text objectively. In this way it is proposed that I may be

better enabled to develop the script towards further staging opportunities. Thus a period of reflection was ideally to be sought post-realisation, to enable the writer to evaluate and compare the *writerly* and production aesthetics and outcomes. It was hoped this would be conducive to enabling the writer to view the play and its realisation/s objectively.

By drawing on my experiences of staging prior works more specifically, the process lends itself to a myriad of possibilities in terms of the *writerly* role. In the instance of my extended text *A Perfect Skin* (2002) my role in the staging phase of this play's realisation was essentially *co-director*. The result was that my sense of *writerly* function was in conflict. It was apparent that for my co-director, I was unable to definitively answer questions in regard to the precise chronology of events, and the conceptual theme/s of the play, or provide a tangible *throughline*. I had deliberately embedded conflicting threads as ambiguities, however, and this remained the crux of the directorial issue.

Relating to this issue is the fact that, while the play was in rehearsal phase, I was also engaged in the re-drafting process. This meant essentially that I was struggling to differentiate between my simultaneous roles as writer and co-director. As a new writer it was difficult to detach from my creative product – the play *A Perfect Skin* (2002), and evaluate it objectively from a directorial standpoint, particularly as I had anticipated further drafting processes. Thus, in this instance, my co-director's prescriptive directorial approach did not fundamentally acknowledge or address my *writerly* aesthetic, and I, the writer struggled with the inaugural experience of co-directing my own work, to which I had an organic, profound, attachment.

Due partly to this, and partly for availability reasons, I opted out of the rehearsal process for *Inflatable Heart* (2004), making myself available for questions and communications from the director and actors outside of formal rehearsal hours. For me, this enabled an objective evaluation of the outcomes of the piece in performance, from both the practitioners' and audience's feedback.

In the instance of the pilot study, the writer actively sought the opportunities for public presentation/realisation of *Shadow Play* (2005) via readings. For these three public readings the level of input into the staging process was varied (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). Generally, however, I was present for some or all of the rehearsals in the *standing up* phase, and attended the performance-as-reading. My role in rehearsals was to answer questions and provide feedback on the processes, when sought, to the practitioners involved. This function as *writer* in the rehearsal processes worked relatively well for me, as I was able to observe the trajectory of the script from reading to reading, in between the dramaturgical and developmental phases. By being present at the three readings I was also privy to the play's interpretive possibilities, by observing the creative decisions arrived at by the practitioners for the three separate realisations.

Therefore for the extended piece, a frame for the realisation that permits circumstances where I function in this type of *writerly* role was to be sought. That is, after I was satisfied with the drafting process (working with a dramaturge who supports my particular aesthetic and style decisions), I aimed to then seek out practitioners interested in the realisation of my script cognizant of its *invisiblist* form.

All of these contextual underpinnings detailed above guided me in the realisation of my creative text. To reiterate, this involved the identification of my role as *writerly* (only) in the rehearsal room, and allowing for a period for reflection after a presentation of the script (to consider each of the play's production values in depth) before further development. It also involved actively seeking opportunities for staging that enabled several different realisations of the text to observe the interpretive possibilities, and ideally, identifying and working with practitioners who acknowledge/exhibit an aesthetic akin to mine. In this way, I intended to realise an *invisiblist* script that locates itself in the spaces between the *peripheral* and *immediate nows*.

CHAPTER FIVE: *INVISIBLE WRITING*

5.1 Conceptual Underpinnings for the Writing Project

As outlined in the methodological pathways chapter, my vision for writing the new creative piece encompasses blending *invisiblist* principles with the manifestation/s of the *now*, in the sense of both the wider or *peripheral* and *immediate* (see 4.4). These conceptual underpinnings frame and guide the trajectory of the writing and realisation processes. Within this framework I will explore how these two concepts may interact in an extended performance text.

As with previous practice (see 4.2), I approached this new creative piece with an image and/or idea that had been haunting my *writerly* mind. Upon reflection, it was almost though I did not choose the idea – the idea chose me. This is akin to Jameson's (1981) notion of the *political unconscious*, to the concept of *writerly* dreaming. It echoes Turcotte's (1990) assertion:

I have never felt that I chose the subjects I wrote about. I feel that they grab me by the scruff of the neck and announce themselves as the topic of my next novel.

(Turcotte, 1990: 71)

Specifically the image that presented itself was of two women of later years, sisters in fact. I had the sense that they were hiding something, potentially a secret. These sisters also appeared to keep company with a quirky, personable and insightful dog. In conjunction with this image and/or idea, I had a secondary image of a cupboard beneath an internal staircase. For me, it was apparent that hidden in this cupboard under the stairs was the very thing the sisters were concealing. Initially this was to be the cornerstone of the piece - the notion of appearances and concealment, things embedded and hidden away.

Before putting pen to paper for a first draft my task was to consider and *mine* these images and ideas for their theatrical potentialities. For me, the most dramatic solution was to reveal that what was concealed under the sisters' stairs were *people*. But who were these people? And why were they incarcerated in a cupboard? And what might be the function of the dog in this revelation?

Initially, in keeping with my tradition/previous practice of exploring the paradigm of beauty in the strange (see 4.2.1), I considered denoting the incarcerated collective the *blue people*, or some similar abstract concept. Such a concept, the *blue people*, was certainly allegorical, yet something about it did not feel quite right as the allegory currently lacked a specific function. For whom or what did the *blue people* stand?

I turned to my *invisiblist/now* framework as a basis for considering these questions in conjunction with my desired aesthetic/creative outcomes. As per 4.4, the proposed solution for endowing the creative piece with *now-ness*, was to identify an issue reflecting the concerns of the wider or *peripheral now*. The most concrete example of this, for me, can be found in Boal's (1992) various models of theatre which address issues relevant to the oppressions of certain groups or minorities. These oppressions, originating for Boal (1979) in his native Brazil, reflected cultural/social inequalities, denied the oppressed access to basic human rights and often had political motivations. In fact these manifestations of oppression can be found in myriad forms and incarnations worldwide.

I looked to the Australian cultural/social/ political landscape for current examples of oppression; ones that might constitute issues of the *now*, and that held resonance for me as a member of society. Two issues in particular were immediately apparent for me, as embedded in the collective psyche of Australian identity politics. They were that of race relations between Indigenous and white Australians, and that of illegal immigrants or *boat people* seeking asylum. Far from regarding these two issues as (only) potential themes or as content for a creative text, I had a very strong interest in, sense of concern for,

and even a feeling of responsibility to contribute to the national conversation in regard to these. At this time, however, I did not feel qualified either by my experience or origins to speak on behalf of the indigenous Australian community on any of the myriad injustices committed as a result of our troubled history since colonisation. I would at some point in my later writing trajectory like to collaborate with indigenous storytellers on a work exploring themes such as these.

Neither did I feel adequately equipped to represent all the concerns and complications of the asylum seekers issue, or speak on behalf of these much-maligned people. Nonetheless, despite this lack of personal experience or involvement in the issue, I was still affected in the sense of the zeitgeist; the *peripheral now*, or the collective unconscious. This sense of the *peripheral now* was engaging my writerly focus. Once again, to paraphrase Turcotte (1990), this issue appeared to have chosen *me*.

While aware of the plethora of extant theatre texts concerned with the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, I had not, at this time, encountered any plays that looked at the issue from the view of a particular demographic: the *average* or *everyday* Australian. Stereotypically this might constitute a profile such as: white, middle class, and probably of Anglo-Saxon stock. I chose this demographic profile, as I wanted to create a character, environment, and situational mindset recognisable to and accessible by the audience. In this way, I rationalised that I would be able to explore how the views of such a character might represent or inform public opinion and position on this issue.

Thus, I incorporated my initial image of two sisters of mature years into this portal of the *peripheral now* by having them house asylum seekers in a cupboard beneath their stairs. This became an allegory for my perception of the issue: concealed from public view and yet embedded deeply in the Australian psyche. I also felt that a third character was important here to present the other view, one sympathetic to the asylum seekers' cause. In the world of the play, this character might be a gentleman caller and so I conjured the character of Donald, a butcher who questions the *status quo*.

An issue to consider here was the potential for a work of this nature, that is, a text having a political nexus, to be read as diatribe or rhetoric. Conversely, I was aware that it may be read as another case of *preaching to the converted* – or that the audience may already be sympathetic to this view. Blau's (1982a) caution in this regard to this has resonance for me at this stage. The solution I came up with was the potentiality of this message coming from the simplest voice. In this case, it was that of the dog. By endowing this character with human-like qualities, such as the ability to communicate, I hoped that the sisters, along with the audience, might be disarmed. By seeding the message of the play in an unexpected source or vessel, a sense of rhetoric might just be avoided.

Having established my thematic concerns/content/premise in accordance with my prioritisation of an issue reflecting the *now*, that of asylum seekers and Australian peripheries, I was ready to begin writing the first draft.

5.2 Writing the First Draft

Unlike *A Perfect Skin* (2002) or *Shadow Play* (2005), this extended piece did not take its formal directions from, or even overtly reference, myth. For me, the narrative concept of two elderly sisters keeping people captive did not necessarily intersect with any (known) universal myth. Nonetheless, such a story had an air of familiarity about it in the way that, for Fensham and Varney (2005), the plays of Jenny Kemp (1996, 1999-2000, 2002) borrow from different textual registers including mythological constructs; or exhibit the *inter-textuality* of Barthes (1977) (see 2.1). That is, Kemp (1996, 1999-2000, 2002) references familiar, yet not quite identifiable stories, legends and characters and juxtaposes them with, or repositis them in, the everyday (see 2.8).

Rather like Keene (2006), I began the process with

...a blank sheet of paper...I wanted to see what emerged, and I would follow that. I had to trust myself.

(Keene, 2006: 16)

In this way, by seeing what emerged, and trusting my conceptual preparation (see 5.1), the script unfurled unto itself (each of the drafts of the creative text can be found in Appendix A – A.3 through to A.6). At the beginning of the writing process, I initially explored the world of the sisters, who became the characters Babs and Gloria. I gave them free reign to establish the dynamics of their relationship and the tone of their rapport. It emerged that they had a peculiar way of speaking; their expression was slightly old-fashioned and that, the elder sister Gloria was domineering while Babs was reticent and echoed Gloria. By experimenting with this dynamic in the situation it emerged that motive for keeping the people incarcerated was a government incentive, whereby they were paid “some benefits from the government“ (Appendix A.3) to hold the people in “an appropriate vestibule“ (Appendix A.3), or the cupboard under their stairs. The risks associated with this arrangement were represented in the text by a television reporter’s announcement, written as a voiceover, detailing an escape of such peoples from a similar environment: a sewing room. The use of the television as a device for transmitting important information to the audience in relation to the *stakes*, was a reference to the role the media plays in these issues of the cultural *now*.

The next intervention to maintain the momentum of the sisters’ journey to awareness was the appearance of the third character, Donald the butcher. There was speculation among the sisters as to whether Donald had a view to courting Gloria. His suggestion to give their prisoners his leftover produce is met with resistance, particularly on Gloria’s part.

It was in the vicinity of this point of the play’s trajectory that I came to a halt; I was unsure how to resolve the action. I knew I wanted the sisters to realise their latent compassion for their prisoners and to take action on this. I also perceived the dog character, named Sylvia, as having an instrumental role in this. I was unsure about how to realise these ideas in the script, without *clunking the audience over the head with it*. All of my ideas in regard to this seemed overt and obvious. That is, I wanted to maintain an interpretive or *invisiblist* element to the outcome of the play.

While struggling with the future directions in the writing of the piece, I was simultaneously reading Erica Wagner's *Ariel's Gift* (2000), a commentary on the relationship between the poets Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. I was charmed and intrigued by a particular line of Ted Hughes's poetry that I had stumbled across in my extracurricular reading: "into the rainbow darkness" (Wagner, 2000: 54). Although an arbitrary occurrence, the beauty and potentialities of the phrase stayed with me. It spoke of the abstract: light, darkness and the shades in between. It also seemed to speak of hope in a place where it was unexpected; the idea of a myriad of brilliant colours in the dark. For me, the metaphor seemed to align with the *unsayable* aspects I was trying to convey in my script. It also, for me, analogised well the way the people incarcerated under the sisters' stairs may have felt. Thus I manipulated this metaphor into the dialogue at the pivotal point in the text. It is through this metaphor, delivered by the delightfully articulate dog Sylvia, that Babs has her epiphany, and resolves to change the *status quo* of her world.

This timely event lent the metaphoric or allegorical texture I was seeking to counterpoint the political premise and overtones. It also gave me the title of the piece: *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). The phrase also became the departure point for me to explore further the world of the people under the stairs. As the people under the stairs were unseen in the context of the action, due to their incarceration, I was able to signify their collective presence and emotional arc in other ways. This included playing with aspects of light and dark in the stage directions and also sound. Their presence was made apparent in a section of text, which I called the prologue. Here, Gloria descends the stairs to give them food, when a door creaks open in the darkness to reveal mumblings and cries (see Appendix A.3). At the end of the play I composed a complementary epilogue where the door creaks open and the cupboard is bathed in light, which shows it to be empty (see Appendix A.3). The play also emerged as a work of brevity; the first draft was completed in 22 pages.

In terms of character, my design was that the ladies have a familiarity about them, so that the audience is able to identify as knowing them, or someone like them. Perhaps they would remind someone of their grandparent or aunt in their

views and mannerisms. Being over 65, both were retired and appeared to have come from an era or demographic that held fast to a peculiarly exclusive sense of their Australian identity and values reflecting a conservative view on border politics. Being pensioners, the extra money from the government incentive allowed them to justify their decision to house peoples under their stairs. I strove to make their world familiar by setting most of the action in a domestic environment, such as their lounge room and kitchen. Their idiosyncratic nature was made apparent in my detailed stage directions in regard to the furnishings, such as plastic covers on the couches and plastic carpet runners on the floors.

I envisioned Gloria and Babs as unmarried and living in each other's company for some time. Thus the dynamic between them was one of longstanding familiarity. I did not necessarily want them to be interchangeable however, but to have their own personalities, as discussed previously. While Babs was generally more retiring, she was also more intuitive. She is the only one who can hear Sylvia speaking and thus can communicate with the dog character. Therefore Babs is the character that takes action to free their prisoners.

The dialogic interplay between the sisters is a deliberate theatrical device. There is a certain self-awareness to them, almost as though they know their words are being heard by others (the audience). I had just finished re-reading Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1956) when writing the first draft of the extended piece and perhaps the *metaphorical staginess* of the interplay between Gogo and Didi unconsciously informed that of Babs and Gloria.

Donald the butcher character, like the sisters, is of mature years, but is not yet retired. He runs his own business as a trading butcher and has recently taken, on occasion, to visiting Babs and Gloria of an evening. I saw Donald as gentlemanly and kind, and tried to indicate this through his humanitarian agenda; made manifest in his offer to give the prisoners his surplus meat stock. His reasoning for this was that, while the people under the stairs are fed only vegemite sandwiches by Babs and Gloria, he has meat going to waste.

The much *put-upon* dog Sylvia at first appears to be a silent character however; her function is made apparent when she begins to communicate with Babs. Through this character, I was able to explore the notion that sometimes the *voice of reason* is the *simplest one*. For me, things of fundamental importance are very clear-cut and simple for animals; they appear to have a strong sense of right and wrong in the context of their world. In *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) Sylvia appears to exist in a vague state of the liminal in-between. While she takes the form of a dog, she has the capacity to think and communicate like a human.

The other character, or *presence*, in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) is the collective of people under the stairs. They are present not in the physical sense of an embodied character, but are referenced by the stage conventions; realised by sound and lighting, and acknowledged by the referrals of other characters. It is important to note that I did not refer to this collective as asylum seekers or refugees. This was because I wanted to avoid the political implications associated with this appropriated term, and avoid being too particular in relation to exact nationalities or origins in order to avoid misrepresentation. As a result of these concerns I elected to call them Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders (referred to, in short, hereafter as Peoples From Elsewhere). The long-winded term is meant to create humour and is a play on bureaucratic terminology and the prevailing attitudes of political correctness.

In regard to the language employed in the first draft of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), the sisters' modes of speaking took a colloquial tone. That is, they employed aspects of Australian idiom and vernacular in their everyday language. The sisters also at points appeared to segue into more heightened sections of speech where their spoken thoughts would echo or overlap each other. This is reminiscent of the Beckettian (1956) Gogo and Didi's *cross-talk act* where the characters seem to bounce off each other, intellectually and verbally. For the dialogue of Babs and Gloria I explored this idea of cross-talk to create discernible *patterns of sound*, by paying close attention to syllables, phrasing and rhythms of words as I wrote. An example of Babs and Gloria's cross-talk can be observed in the extract below:

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?
BABS: Yes, dear. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the fridge.
GLORIA: Good. We don't want any fuss while our guest is here.
Pause
I hope you were economical.
BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.
GLORIA: A smidgeon of Vegemite?
BABS: A speck of jam.
GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.
BABS: I know, dear.
GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the government. It's only a token, mind.
BABS: Of course, dear.
GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.
BABS: That's very true, dear.
GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?
BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk our duty.

(Appendix A.3)

To Donald, as their suitor, I gave a slightly more formal language style, consistent with his agenda of wanting to please and/or impress Gloria. The dog's language was very much a bodily one. As Sylvia was to be played by a human actor in a dog costume, I took the opportunity to explore ways in which the performer might enact the physicality of a dog and convey objectives bodily. When Sylvia eventually began to speak to Babs, her voice came out as relatively colloquial and everyday; nonetheless she did possess a wisdom not

matched by her owners, made manifest in her *rainbow in the dark* allegory. As a compromise, to acknowledge Sylvia's *otherness* I made a suggestion in the character list suggesting the dog's lines could be pre-recorded and delivered on stage as voiceover to highlight the heightened effect I was seeking.

In relation to the voice of the People From Elsewhere, I placed their presence at several key points throughout the dialogue via sound, communicating their fear, anger, distress, thirst, hunger and so forth as murmurs and cries in an indistinct language. The stage directions relating to them, as with Sarah Kane's (2001), were often interpretive, or perhaps even *expressionistic*. This is evidenced by the stage direction in the text: *Gloria opens the door. The sound of fear rushes out* (Appendix A.3). The aural quality of fear is open to interpretation by the director, sound designer and/or sound technician. In this way I hoped to convey the invisible yet palpable presence of the People From Elsewhere.

After completing the first draft of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) I was eager for some professional feedback and began to seek opportunities for this with a view to developing the script for production.

5.3 Professional and Dramaturgical Feedback on Draft One

My first application responded to a call from the Australian Theatre For Young People (or the ATYP) for a season of scripts by young playwrights. These scripts were to be developed and produced to launch the 2006 ATYP program in Sydney. After reading my first draft, the Artistic Director contacted me with some feedback in regard to further development, which can be read in its entirety in Appendix B. For him, *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was a "general sketch of an interesting idea", requiring "a lot more work to get up to production standard" (Appendix B.1). The Artistic Director compared *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) to being "in the vein of Monty Python" (Appendix B.1) and also categorised the play as *absurdist* in style. He advised that to develop the play further I should research the embedded political issue more thoroughly, as "it seems a little under researched" (Appendix B.1). He also advised that I should consider the action from a narrative point of view, to "see if it interests you

purely on this level” (Appendix B.1). I was asked to address these concerns and resubmit my script within a time frame of three weeks.

Due to the time constraints of the ATYP for the development process, and the Artistic Director’s feedback regarding the general unreadiness of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for production, I elected not to pursue this opportunity further. I felt that if I were to address and implement this feedback, I would be directing the piece away from an *invisiblist/now* sensibility, as had occurred to an extent with *Shadow Play* (2004), the pilot study text. Similarly, I felt that by conducting further research and factual data I might potentially signal the political function too overtly. That is, my goal in the writing of the first draft was not to replicate or authenticate the specifics of Australian border policies, but to explore this issue in depth by creating another world, a completely hypothetical situation that deals with the concerns on a metaphorical level.

Nonetheless, it was my goal to further develop my script through both dramaturgical assistance and, ideally, a production, so I thanked the ATYP for the feedback on my script, and sought out alternative development opportunities. Backbone Youth Arts, based in Brisbane, were simultaneously calling for the submission of scripts by young playwrights. The program brief specified that the successful applicants would meet regularly with a professional dramaturge to support the script development process into rehearsals and production.

Accordingly, the first draft of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was submitted to the company for consideration for a season of short works entitled *Fragments*. The season was to be staged in the latter half of the year; allowing more time for development. The premise of the *Fragments* project was to develop and produce four works by young and/or emerging playwrights for performance to a paying audience. The works were to be directed by young and/or emerging directors with young and/or emerging professional actors. The writers selected for the *Fragments* process were required to develop their script from the first draft to production stage over a period of approximately six months.

After submitting my play to the *Fragments* steering committee, I received communication from the Artistic Director of Backbone Youth Arts advising me that *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) had been selected for the *Fragments* program. I was assigned a dramaturge who, coincidentally, was familiar with my work from World Interplay. That is, she had prior knowledge of my piece *Shadow Play* (2005) and therefore some understanding of my writing aesthetic. This dramaturge (Dramaturge One for *The Rainbow Dark*) was from the outset enthusiastic about the potential of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for performance, and commented on my *leap* as a writer.

She initiated the dramaturgical process by asking my current thoughts on the piece; what aspects of the play I wanted to address and further develop, what was problematic for me, and what I had envisioned for the future directions of the play. I communicated that I was mainly concerned with the role of each of the characters in the landscape of the play, particularly that of Sylvia and Donald. Dramaturge One also shared her questions about, and interpretations of, the first draft with me. Generally, for her, draft one required more work in terms of *filling in the gaps* or shading in between the lines of the content, and its meaning in regard to the characters.

Her approach in this instance involved breaking the play down in terms of the characters and their functions and significance to the trajectory of the action, and *how they served the metaphor*. In particular, she posed questions about Sylvia, such as *who is she?* What is the primary purpose of Sylvia's life? What is her function in the play? Dramaturge One suggested that I might consider Sylvia as a character *in her own right*. I interpreted this to mean that currently Sylvia existed in the world of the play merely as an extension of the sisters, or perhaps of Babs's psyche. The dramaturge likened the placement of Sylvia in the play to a *Deus ex Machina* effect, where the dog is wheeled in towards the end to resolve the play, just as the gods were lowered on a crane in Greek tragedy to aid the hero in solving his crisis. The implication here for me was that this character was under-used in the script; it was possible to seed her sympathies earlier in the script and *mine* the potentialities of canine

communication. There were also decisions to be made about her different relationships with each of the sisters.

Dramaturge One also had questions regarding the characters of Babs and Gloria. She suggested it might be useful to explore the dynamics of their relationship further. Although she felt the characters were layered, they were not complicated or troubled enough by the issue. For example, she posed questions such as: how does Babs feel about Donald, and his effective choice of Gloria over her? To what extent is there an element of competition between the sisters? Why does Gloria appear to dislike Sylvia? This aided in identifying how each character *fits* or what function/s each serves in the world of the play.

Similarly, Dramaturge One asked me to clarify the function of the Donald character, and suggested I consider what he represented in the context of the political issue explored and in the world of the play. That is, what role does this character play in serving/enhancing/reiterating/complicating the metaphor of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006)?

We also discussed the role of the television report where a journalist (as voiceover) delivers breaking news about a People From Elsewhere escape. For Dramaturge One, this was problematic as the crucial information came from a source not already established in the fabric of the play. That is, it transferred elsewhere the onus or responsibility from the characters. I had deliberately included the television report as a device to represent the interrelation of media and politics to introduce a fragmentary type effect. This reflected my research into the *now*, however, Dramaturge One felt this information would resonate with the sisters and perhaps also with the audience more if it was to come from one of the characters. She suggested there was perhaps a way to integrate this information into the play and thus maintain the continuity of their world.

Generally Dramaturge One's feedback was both helpful and stimulating for me. I felt she had an understanding of, and appreciation for my writing aesthetic, ideas for *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), and that I was *au fait* with her theatre/dramaturgical vernacular. I felt confident in moving forward on the piece

with this type of support, particularly as she had directed all of her questions and enquiries in relation to the *world of the play*, evaluating them in terms of how they could potentially best *serve the metaphor*. I resolved to explore the ideas that had emerged from our dramaturgical session.

As a result of this interchange there were several dramaturgical implications for the second draft, which I was eager to address. We agreed on a period of time in which I could explore these ideas in a second draft of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) and resubmit to Dramaturge One for further feedback and development.

5.4 Writing the Second Draft

After taking some time to reflect on the dramaturgical feedback I began the redrafting process. One of my first priorities was addressing the function of Sylvia. This involved finding a means for her to communicate with her owners earlier in the piece. This was necessary because it foregrounds Sylvia speaking with Babs, which is an event of some significance, both in the context of the *real* world and the world of the play. In fact this event is essentially the metaphorical nexus of the play, as Sylvia's allegory propels Babs's to take action to release the People From Elsewhere. My action to address this was to seed Sylvia's presence vocally, earlier in the play.

In the prologue, the audience is alerted to the collective presence of the People From Elsewhere by the stage directions prescribing sounds in the darkness. Here I addressed signalling Sylvia's presence earlier in the stage directions by having her bark at this point. This implicates her from the outset in the Peoples From Elsewhere's plight. Throughout the play, I continued to link Sylvia vocally with the presence of the People From Elsewhere. That is, where I had strategically placed indicators of the People From Elsewhere in the stage directions, I then followed this with an action or *line* of Sylvia's. For example,

*There is a low muffled moan. They [Babs and Gloria] pause.
Sylvia barks She looks at BABS and barks again*

(Appendix A.4)

and

*A slightly louder muffled moan. They [Babs and Gloria] pause.
SYLVIA barks then begins to whine. She sits up and begs*

(Appendix A.4)

In this way, it appeared Sylvia was acknowledging the presence of the Peoples From Elsewhere (while the sisters did not appear to be doing so) and responding to the situation emotionally. This was either by attempting to appeal to Babs vocally, via her vernacular, which up to this point remains strictly of the canine variety, or by enacting her distress bodily such as by begging.

I felt I had to make some decisions about Sylvia's act of speaking at this point. This was linked in with Dramaturge One's comment regarding the *Deus Ex Machina* effect. Is Sylvia's act of speaking an altogether too neat solution? For the dramaturge, there had been no precedent to this event. It seemed I was required to justify this event in the world of the play. As such, I experimented with the notion of Sylvia attempting to talk earlier. This can be observed in these stage directions from Draft Two:

An even Louder muffled cry. SYLVIA howls then makes barking noises that sound suspiciously like the words: "People From Elsewhere Who Don't Respect Perfectly Good Borders Want to be free!" She struggles throughout

(Appendix A.4)

I also continued to explore the scope of this character in a physical sense. Clarification was required in her attitude to the sisters' treatment of the Peoples From Elsewhere. In the second draft, Sylvia effectively takes action to confront them about this, evidenced by her coughing up of a baby's slipper (Appendix B, A.4). This is to alert them to the presence of a People From Elsewhere baby in the cupboard. When this apparently fails to move Babs and Gloria, Sylvia sits in the middle of the lounge room with a cardboard sign, presumably lettered in the hand of the Peoples From Elsewhere while the other characters speculate on

what the writing might mean. (Appendix A.4). I then went on to construct a preamble to the metaphorical nexus, composing a vignette between Babs and Sylvia exploring the logistics of Sylvia's ability to speak English (Appendix A.4) – almost as though I was attempting to justify this marvel for the audience.

While finding ways in the redrafting process to endow Sylvia with a physicality with a view to exploring how this character might best *serve the metaphor*, I was also addressing the feedback of Dramaturge One in relation to Babs and Gloria. To further establish and complicate the dynamic between the sisters, I commenced exploring their *back-story* or character histories. By composing subtle points of difference or contention between them and strategically placing these in the text, I aimed to both differentiate between them, and signal Babs's gradual dissent or breakaway from Gloria's, and society's, accepted views on this issue.

I reflected on each character's attitude in relation to the others. One of the things that emerged from this was that both of the sisters liked Donald. There was an element of competition between them as a result of this mutual interest that I exploited in the text, evident in the extract below:

GLORIA: How do I look, dear?

BABS: Just lovely, pet. Peach is definitely your colour.

GLORIA: I have been told so, on occasion.

BABS: Although...you don't think....

GLORIA: What?

BABS: That it might be ...a touch...just a tad...

GLORIA: Spit it out.

BABS: Inappropriate? A bit *forward*, even? After all, it is a negligee.

GLORIA: It's a *nightgown*. It *is* *night*-time.

BABS: Is there a difference? I was never certain.

GLORIA: Of course there's a difference.

BABS: But for a visitor... a *man*...

GLORIA: I don't know what you're worried about, Barbara – it's completely lined.

Pause

Besides, sometimes it serves the mature woman well to be slightly less than subtle...

BABS considers her own outfit. She undoes her top button.

(Appendix A.4)

I also explored the concept that Babs and Gloria are anticipating Donald's arrival right from the beginning of the play. This was done by seeding mention of him much earlier in the text, in the initial exchange between the sisters (Appendix A.4). I also reasoned that Gloria perceived Sylvia as a threat to the stability of the People From Elsewhere arrangement, and that her attitude was one of dislike towards the dog. I exaggerated Gloria's nature to be generally more critical and mean-spirited to demonstrate this (see Appendix A.4).

I also considered the role of Donald in the greater fabric of the play. I was not yet satisfied with his function either in terms of *servicing the metaphor* or in relation to the inherent politicised issues of the play. In terms of the latter, in some ways Donald represents the *fat of the land*; Australia as the *lucky country* with a surplus of home grown produce, and *more than enough to go around*. His sympathies are suggested in his gesture of donating his unsold produce. Taking this into account, I realised Donald had the potential to be a catalyst or a trigger along the path of the sisters' path to realisation. Thus I decided he would play the role of the *messenger* to an extent and replace the television news report, which for Dramaturge One (see 5.3), had been problematic. This would thus address both the issue of Donald's function in the play and replace the external stimulus of the television with an internal or already established presence. Hence, in the second draft Donald became the character that

delivers the news about a Peoples From Elsewhere escape from a sewing room in a nearby suburb, news that contributes to the sisters' internal questioning process.

I also developed and complicated Donald's role in relation to the characters of Babs and Gloria. I explored the idea that the reason for his knowing the information about the recent People From Elsewhere escape was that he regularly visits several or perhaps all of the ladies in the neighbourhood. This added another dimension to this character.

In this second draft process, I had a sense while writing that I was exploring the world of the play, *pushing the boundaries*, or *taking things to their limits*. This was encouraged by the dramaturge, as evidenced by her feedback (see 5.3), so that we might see what *works* or *does not work* in the context of the play.

During this drafting process I had submitted *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for another development and presentation opportunity. I had received notification about Queensland Theatre Company's George Landen Dann Award for young playwrights. To be eligible to enter, participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 26 and be a resident of Queensland. The prize entailed a rehearsed reading of the successful play by professional actors from the Queensland Theatre Company Acting Ensemble.

My reasons for submitting *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for consideration for this opportunity were two-fold: firstly, I viewed it as another way to realise my play and learn more about its production values in relation to the *invisiblist/now* paradigms when made *live*. It also appeared to offer another opportunity to receive professional feedback as a practitioner and observe how it might be interpreted for realisation in a different context to the *Fragments* opportunity.

Some time after I submitted *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) to Queensland Theatre Company for the George Landen Dann Award, I received word from the company that my application for this opportunity had been successful. My prize, as indicated, was to include a professional reading with professional actors. To

support the development of my play for this realisation I was offered the support of Queensland Theatre Company's in-house dramaturge, who effectively became Dramaturge Two on this creative project.

To avoid confusion, we felt it best that Dramaturge One would continue to be the *mouthpiece* for the dramaturgical process. That is, she would seek the input of Dramaturge Two on my behalf and relay this to me, to be considered alongside her own feedback.

Thus I submitted Draft Two to Dramaturge One, who took on the task of submitting it to Dramaturge Two for their collective perusal and feedback. I felt that the draft I had submitted effectively increased the dimensions of the play; there were layers beneath the metaphor and the political nexus. These layers supported the decisions I had made organically in the first draft in terms of both function and aesthetic.

5.5 Dramaturgical Feedback on Draft Two

Dramaturge One felt that aspects of the play in this draft were *overwritten*. While she appreciated my efforts to make changes by *pushing the boundaries* or *taking things to their limits* in order to see how far they could go, there were points for her where the dialogue was extraneous. One example of this was in Gloria's treatment of Sylvia, which appeared unnecessarily cruel and unprovoked. For this dramaturge, it made Gloria appear as a caricature. That is, *she came off as a bit of a meanie*.

This was also the case in relation to the information on Donald, which for Dramaturge One was sometimes unnecessarily explicit. That is, the dialogue was expositional, as though the writer was trying to explain or justify things, such as when Gloria and Babs speculate on what might be holding Donald up (Appendix B.4). This information did not necessarily contribute to the momentum of the play and was distracting from the more important thematic concerns. The dramaturge wondered if this might be pared back, whilst maintaining the crucial information and intention.

There were also some aspects of Sylvia's shift/transition from Draft One to Draft Two that were problematic for Dramaturge One. These occurred mostly around the points in the text where Sylvia was taking action or attempting to communicate to shift Babs and Gloria into a greater awareness in relation to the Peoples From Elsewhere suffering. For example, the dramaturge felt that Babs and Gloria did not sufficiently acknowledge the event where Sylvia coughs up the baby slipper (Appendix A.4).

Similarly, Dramaturge One had very little emotional reaction to Sylvia's introduction of the sign (Appendix A.4). Rather than leave it to conjecture, that is, have the other characters discuss what it might say, the dramaturge suggested there might be a way to use this incident as a device to move the play along.

Dramaturge One also felt that the information I had added in regard to how Sylvia performs the act of speech (Appendix A.4) was unnecessary; extraneous and too explicit. She explained that, as a reader, she was much more interested in *why* Sylvia had chosen *this particular point* at which to speak than in *how* she achieved this feat.

In regard to this draft being *overwritten*, Dramaturge One finally concluded that the play did not *bear the weight* of the excesses alluded to above, and my role in the impending drafts would be to temper these. After reading Draft Two, this dramaturge also had identified what was, for her, the *big unexplored question of the play*: Who are the People From Elsewhere? And what did I ultimately want for them?

While I was unsure exactly who the People From Elsewhere were in terms of their demographical specifics such as nationality, gender, or race, I knew what they represented to *me*. This was an oppressed people seeking sanctuary who had been much maligned by those to whom they had turned for aid. I was clearer on the question of what I wanted for them, however, and that was *freedom*.

Having established this in relation to the People From Elsewhere, the dramaturge advised me to consider the final image of the play in this context. Dramaturge One suggested that I identify all of the concrete items such as props, and also the non-tangible things, such as symbols and traces, and consider how they might contribute to the resolution of the final image. She also advised me always to draw upon the metaphor I had seeded in the play. Her final suggestion on this draft related to the question of the impact these final events, once decided upon and written, would have on the character of Gloria.

Dramaturge One also relayed the feedback of Dramaturge Two who asked me to identify the hero of the piece (for him it was the character of Babs), and consider the play in terms of her journey. That is, I was to determine her original state (at the beginning of the play) and her final state (at the end). Had she undergone a *change*? If so, what were the steps to this process? And how could this be signalled to the audience, or made more transparent? After considering this feedback, it was apparent from such questions that Dramaturge Two was working from a different dramaturgical model, whereby clarity, transparency, and an identifiable character journey were privileged over aspects relating to an *invisiblist* aesthetic.

Armed with this collective dramaturgical feedback I began to approach drafting *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for a third time, in an effort to work through the knots in the fabric of the play.

5.6 Writing the Third Draft

Writing Draft Three for me seemed to involve a process akin to that of layering: embedding or seeding things earlier, paring or shaving things back, shading here, touching up to make something shine there. This was embarked upon with a view to achieving a delicate balance between signalling the important information and maintaining elements of an interpretive quality in the piece.

To address the dramaturgical feedback I focused mainly on the characters of Sylvia and Gloria. I set about finding ways to craft or communicate their intentions more clearly, whilst still maintaining my vision for the piece.

Thus, in regard to Sylvia, I cut the dialogue comprising her barking/speaking attempt (Appendix A.5). I decided however, to keep the incident of Sylvia coughing up a baby slipper as written (Appendix A.5). I also edited the sisters' text following this event (see Appendix A.4 and Appendix A.5) to compare Drafts Two and Three). The intent here was to make Gloria appear as though she was simply *brushing this off*, nonetheless a remarkable occurrence. The logic was that it would contribute to a pattern of Gloria's behaviour, her dismissal of anything untoward. It also signals her concealment of knowledge of a People From Elsewhere baby.

A major task in making Sylvia's communication consistent involved addressing the moment when she interrupts the sisters and Donald with a sign hanging around her neck (Appendix A.5). The issue here for the dramaturge was that the response of the other characters was not necessarily authentic; they were spending too much time speculating and debating in regard to what the writing on the sign in a *language other than English* meant. That is, rather than interpreting the significance of the words, they should have been interpreting and responding to the significance of the event itself. After considering this feedback, it became apparent to me that Sylvia's communication must be as simple and basic as possible. I decided this might be achieved through an image; a window. For me, this represented access to the outside world. I also liked this idea because it lent ambiguity to the act: had it been drawn by Sylvia, or by one of the People From Elsewhere? This was to be left to the audience to decide.

By placing in the text both this event and the incident of Sylvia coughing up a baby slipper, I was attempting to lead up to the definitive moment where Sylvia speaks to Babs. This event occurs because, after attempting to communicate in her way, the sisters have not *heard* her; therefore she has no choice but to

communicate on human terms. Therein lies the nexus of Sylvia's personification.

The change of signifier on the placard around Sylvia's neck also yielded a more appropriate response to the sign by Gloria, Babs and Donald. In fact, their response sparked a new stylistic turn in the play where the sisters seem to be commenting not only on the event but also on the trajectory of the action of the play proper. This is evidenced in the extract below:

SYLVIA trots in and sits in the middle of the room, in full view of all three. She scratches lazily. She has a cardboard sign around her neck with a drawing of a window on it. They all stare at her. Silence.

GLORIA: Cup of tea, anyone?

Pause. They ignore GLORIA and continue to stare at SYLVIA. A long pause.

DONALD: What an extraordinary thing.

BABS: Sylvia!

GLORIA: This must stop.

BABS: Perhaps it's just starting...

GLORIA: What concerns me most is: how did she get access to a pen and paper?

(Appendix A.5)

The intersecting references to the world of the play and a commentary on the action can be observed particularly in Babs's line "Perhaps it's just starting..." and, for me, is akin to the Beckettian *metaphorical staginess* identified as an *invisiblist* characteristic.

In terms of addressing the dramaturgical feedback in regard to Gloria, I first attempted to condense her ill-tempered comments at various points throughout the text to avert the impression of her as the caricature villain. I then tackled the issue of her action or role in the final section of the play: the outcome.

Unlike Babs, who resolves to set the People From Elsewhere free as a result of her epiphany, Gloria remains resistant.

I decided to resolve the play by having Babs and Sylvia conspire to open the window in the space under the stairs and thus release the People From Elsewhere. This action was written as sound cues in the stage directions:

Half –light. Babs and Sylvia outside the cupboard door.

BABS: *(Whispering)* You know, Sylvia, I've decided to open the window in here...to let the light in a bit.

SYLVIA: What a good idea, Babs. And while Gloria is otherwise entertained, I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I?

The sound of the window being opened and the prisoners climbing slowly out of the cupboard in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. It underscores the following scene. Fade to black. Lights up on living room.

(Appendix A.5)

Upon hearing these sounds, Gloria becomes suspicious and moves to investigate – no easy feat as she professes earlier in the text to suffer from a *bung hip*. Donald, however, creates a diversion by kissing her. Lighting then begins to signal the shift in the *status quo* of this world:

Suddenly the lights begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow.

(Appendix A.5)

After integrating these elements and aspects of the metaphorical construct, through the theatrical devices of sound and lighting, what remained was the plotting of Gloria's final state. In the text proceeding these stage directions

Gloria concedes the hardship endured by the People From Elsewhere and makes a public acknowledgement of the birth of a baby in the cupboard (Appendix A.5). This serves to represent a shift in her views.

In regard to exploring Dramaturge Two's feedback in this third draft of the creative text I made a decision to avoid focusing on the character of Babs in terms of her concrete journey. This was for two reasons: the first related to the outcomes of the pilot study where I began to divert and move away from my *invisiblist* aesthetic and privilege a different formal and linguistic style. While Babs may well have undergone a character arc or trajectory resembling a journey by default, I was wary of entering this territory in a formulaic way, or undertaking an exercise that felt to be more of a generic approach, simply for *the sake of it*. Secondly, my first opportunity for realisation of the script was impending.

The George Landen Dann Award rehearsed reading was scheduled to occur in a few weeks and Dramaturge Two advised me that the actors would need to begin working with the developed script soon. Factoring this in, I elected to submit Draft Three to Dramaturge One (who would distribute it to Dramaturge Two) for their feedback, with the view that this would be the draft to be read at this public presentation.

5.7 Dramaturgical Feedback on Draft Three and Implications for Inaugural Reading

After reading Draft Three, both Dramaturge One and Dramaturge Two felt that at this stage *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) had undergone a rigorous developmental process to date and was ready for interpretation by actors and a director. They both felt that it would be helpful for me to see the play made *live* with professional actors, so that I could reflect on the outcomes of the play in a realisation/performance mode and decide how to best proceed with the development process for the second realisation; a production. Accordingly Draft Three was handed over to the practitioners to explore, own and embody for the professional reading.

CHAPTER SIX: STAGING FOR A NOW

6.1 Inaugural Reading of *The Rainbow Dark*

The inaugural public reading of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) occurred at *The Works*, on the 8th of August 2006. *The Works* is an annual event held by Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) to showcase new performance writing. The audience comprised invited guests, season subscription ticket holders, and the general paying public. As a rehearsed public reading was part of the prize for the George Landen Dann Award, I was not directly involved in the casting, rehearsals or the realisation process. That is, while I had prepared *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) in a *writerly* capacity, with the help of the dramaturges, the appointment of the cast and director and the rehearsals and realisation processes were managed by QTC.

Consequently, my experience of the inaugural reading of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) centres on the singular event of the *realisation*, as opposed to the *process*. Readings of plays for public performance might constitute many different things, as evidenced by the reading/realisations of *Shadow Play* (2005) - see 4.3.4. For example, some readings take the form of a verbal realisation of the text. Here the actors enact the character with their voice, reading from the script, remaining seated in the space, sometimes at a lectern. Another form that a professional reading may take is a *moved* reading. In this form of reading the actors embody the writer's stage directions and/or the director partially blocks the scenes so that the actors embody the text, while still having the script in their hands. At *The Works*, *The Rainbow Dark* took the form of a *moved* reading.

Throughout the presentation of this *moved* reading of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) at *The Works*, I was able to observe and reflect on all of the elements that contributed to the realisation, such as casting and directorial choices.

6.1.1 Casting

The Rainbow Dark (2006) was cast from the company acting ensemble, by members of QTC. These actors were also engaged to present the five other plays selected for reading in *The Works* program. The actor playing the character of Babs was, for me, an almost *perfect fit*, both in her appearance and manner. She brought to the role a sense of naivety and the unassuming nature I had always envisioned as inherent in Babs. For the reading she lent the character integrity by appearing to believe implicitly in the world of the play. The actor selected to play Gloria, however, was younger than the character's specified age (Gloria being in her late 60s) by about 20 years. Unfortunately, this actor's methodology, for me, involved *playing for laughs*. The effect was of caricature and translated in performance as one-dimensional. It is acknowledged that developing a character in-depth is quite difficult in a reading situation, where the actors may have only a limited amount of time to familiarise themselves with the script (ranging a few hours to a few days). This, however, highlights the importance of casting in an appropriate way.

This particular casting decision was useful for me, however, in terms of evaluating the dimension of this particular character in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). It raised questions for me, such as: Does this casting decision make the character appear one-dimensional? Or is this idea of caricature inherent in the character as written? That is, is this one-dimensional quality attributable more to a *writerly* issue than an actor's interpretation? For me, this reading alerted me to the possibility that Gloria might be perceived or interpreted by an actor and/or director as a one-dimensional character. She appears to maintain the same *throughline* for the entire play, evidenced by her uncompromising attitude to the issue. At the very end of the play, however, it is revealed that Gloria has acted to support the People From Elsewhere.

The character of Donald was played by an actor of a similar age as to that prescribed by the script. For me, this allowed for a neutral evaluation of Donald's function in the play. In fact, the interpretation of the actor cast to play Donald took me by surprise. I thought I had written a gentleman caller, yet this

Donald behaved lecherously towards Gloria and Babs (nonetheless, the comedic element of this appeared to titillate the audience). He thus had a more ominous presence which, in turn, gave the play a different dynamic. Although I was not opposed to this interpretation of the character, which may have come from directorial interpretation/description, it did concern me that Donald might be perceived as a threatening character which was not necessarily an accurate representation of his purpose or function in the play. This was to bring an outside perspective to the People From Elsewhere issue for the closeted sisters. This portrayal triggered authorial interrogation in regard to the character I had constructed. Was this lecherous side inherent in Donald? Or was it something brought to the character by the actor, in the director? This casting incident reiterated for me that a character may be interpreted in many different ways by a performer.

A young male actor was cast in the role of Sylvia the dog. I had envisioned Sylvia as a middle - aged female dog to be played by an age-appropriate female actor in order to enhance the female/ spinster-like dynamic in the household. To my reasoning, a male dog would have given the sisters a different energy and dynamic. Thus, another male's presence; the arrival of Donald the courting butcher would not be such a momentous occasion. Casting a young male as a dog named Sylvia undoubtedly added an element of humour; the fact that Babs and Gloria called their obviously male dog by a female name was funny for the audience. This heightened the convention of a talking dog to an extent and underlined the fact that these sisters sometimes *missed the mark*, in relation to the veracity of facts. While I was not at all opposed to the interpretation of this cross-gender casting (indeed I was actually quite delighted by it), I did not necessarily concur with the portrayal of Sylvia by the actor cast. Once again, whilst acknowledging the time limitation to fully explore all the nuance of character, the actor cast did not, in my *writerly* opinion, demonstrate the sensitivity required for this role. For example, when delivering the dialogue concerning the rainbow metaphor, which, for me, represents the crystallisation of the play's themes, and is essentially a moment of epiphany for Babs, the actor effectively shouted the lines. Although urgency is a force at play in this moment, there is also a sense of guiding Babs through the metaphoric

realisation, as Sylvia imparts her innate wisdom. However, despite this, the audience's evident delight at a boy dog called Sylvia is a factor to be weighed and considered.

6.1.2 Direction

Just as the cast for *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was appointed by QTC, so too was the director. The director was approximately my age, and completing a mentorship under an Associate Director employed by QTC. Therefore the director might be considered to be an emerging artist/theatre practitioner, not unlike myself.

From the outset, this director was highly effusive in his praise for *The Rainbow Dark*, in his introductory words prior to the reading. To my frustration, however, the director then proceeded to outline the meaning of events that would unfold, the exact identity of the people under the stairs (by referring to them as refugees) and the eventual outcome of the play (their release). I felt that I had deliberately constructed the text so that these pieces of information were released intermittently, slowly and subtly revealed throughout the play as the exchange between Gloria and Babs unfolded. Throughout the writing process, efforts were made to avoid such exposition, so it was disappointing to experience this prior to the first public reading. Similarly, the synopsis in the program summarised the events and announced the ending. I felt that such verbal exposition had the potential to rob the audience of the opportunity to interpret meaning for themselves.

Apart from the prescriptive introduction, the direction throughout the play was adequate. There was a point, however, approximately two-thirds of the way through the reading, where the pace seemed to lag. I began to hear all the machinations in the script – all the crucial information came out sounding quite obvious and expositional, which is the antithesis of an *invisiblist* agenda. Specifically this occurred in the section where Donald enters with the news of recent People From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders escape. Donald's function in the play could be viewed as essentially that of the

messenger (in a technical capacity only), yet the character has to be dramatically interesting for the audience. This exposition, however, unlike the director's introduction, seemed to be inherent in the writing.

Similarly towards the end of the reading, the action seemed a little stilted, almost as if the actors wanted to perform the play, but couldn't, restricted as they were by the parameters of a reading and their scripts in hand. The piece might be considered problematic in a moved reading, as the action occurs over various locations in a house: a lounge room, a kitchen and a cupboard under the stairs. When actors were directed to move in this reading, without a set or clearly defined markings acknowledging the separate locations in the space, the action began to look unfocused and generalised. I was concerned that this would confuse the audience.

For this reading, the stage directions were read aloud by the director. Some of these seemed unnecessary, particularly the ones that described the location in detail. While I believe the director had the best intentions for furnishing the sisters' world for the audience, it became prolonged and drew focus from the action. In a performance context with full production values these would be visually communicated instantly. What was omitted by the director, however, to the detriment of the piece, were stage directions like the sound of fear in the prologue and the vocal presence of the People From Elsewhere (their muffled cries and moans). These acoustics are cues of fundamental importance, as they contextualise the situation. In a reading context, this type of sound dimension might involve an actor making these effects off-stage, in a simple capacity, and would have more effectively evoked the ambience/ aural texture that is integral to *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

Following this reading at *The Works*, several comments were made by various industry practitioners. Feedback was also available in the form of a collated feedback survey, distributed to the audience prior to the reading. This feedback survey can be found in Appendix C.1)

6.1.3 Feedback

One consistent comment expressed by various industry practitioners was that *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was too short. The implication here was that the play was not long enough to sustain an evening at the theatre for a paying audience. Suggestions were made that a double bill would be required. Professional productions are of course a goal of any serious playwright, and so this advice was taken on, however, as discussed previously, the length of the play related to its form and content (see 5.2). It is not a matter of merely extending or adding to it, but negotiating and organically ordering events to convey the ideas and meanings. Such extensions were attempted in draft two as a result of dramaturgical feedback. I discovered, however, that the play does not bear the weight of excess exposition or contextual detail or extraneous character *back-story*. Similarly, as per the methodological pathways, the brevity was a deliberate consideration in the writing process, as this bore witness to the notions of theatre in the *now* (see 4.4).

Secondly, the journey of Gloria was not clear for some practitioners. Specifically, this character seemed unchanged from the beginning of the play to the end. It is a precept of theatrical structure generally that the principal character (and indeed all of the characters to a lesser degree) undergo a change to mark the trajectory of time and experience. This type of comment demonstrates the *non-invisiblist* frame in which the play might be viewed/read. The characters in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) might be considered as *types*, written so to generate identification with. While Babs has something of a *character journey*, evident in her process of realisation, Gloria does not appear to undergo a process of change. In a small twist at the end, however, it is revealed Gloria has made baby slippers for the People From Elsewhere baby. This is not so much a character journey as a revelation. This was unsatisfying for some audience members, as this is not signalled obviously earlier in the text. In contrast, Babs's arc of realisation: from being subjugated by Gloria, to uncertainty and questioning, to epiphany and action to free the incarcerated, could perhaps correlate with a *non-invisiblist* formula for a protagonist (on a psychological level at least).

Applying a *non-invisiblist* critical frame or directorial approach to an *invisiblist* piece can be confusing for both writer and audience. This calls to mind the discussion in Chapter Two regarding Beckett's Gogo and Didi in *Waiting For Godot* (1955) and the argument amongst critics over which of the two is the protagonist (see section 2.4). For Beckett (1956), the term *protagonist* was not applicable here, as he was not working within this particular theatre model. Gogo and Didi worked together to represent an ideology, courting varying sides of an argument, then swapping to the other side, at varying intervals. As such, no opinion or action was definitive for either character. In a similar vein, Babs and Gloria exist as an inseparable pair representing the same and opposing sides of a political issue simultaneously. Sometimes they appear to agree, and at other times, disagree, and therein lies the *invisibility* – the deliberate absence of a definitive throughline. Such feedback regarding this allowed me to recognise and acknowledge that this dynamic of harmony and discord (and not necessarily Gloria's psychological journey) needs to somehow be made more explicit in the script.

Tangential to this, and yet also related, was the relationship between Gloria and the dog character Sylvia. As Sylvia's insights have significant impact on Babs's trajectory in the play, and if Babs and Gloria's agendas are actually interrelated, what bearing does this have on Sylvia and Gloria's relationship? Although it is apparent in the opening lines that Gloria does not like the dog "We should dump her", what is not apparent is *why* – a valid question to solve in the world of the play.

The survey responses represented a cross-section of theatre-goers as, according to the collated material, 12 of the respondents were season ticket holders, the implication being they attend the theatre on a regular basis, and 11 were non-season ticket holders. The survey asked mainly yes/no questions and the respondents had the option of adding a comment. One of the main themes to emerge from this feedback generally supported those already proffered by the industry practitioners: the brevity of the play being a concern for some theatre-goers. This is evident in comments such as "*The Rainbow Dark* was

over too quickly” (Appendix C.1) and “...think this play has a real future but not long enough to stand alone” (Appendix C.1). When asked, however, “Did the story maintain your interest?” (Appendix C.1), 18 of the 23 respondents answered in the affirmative.

Significantly, when asked “Did the play stimulate you to think further about its themes, issues or characters?” (Appendix C.1), 19 respondents answered “yes” definitively. Additionally, for most respondents, the characters seemed to be one of the highlights of the reading. When asked “What aspects of the play did you enjoy the most?” (Appendix C.1) a sample of answers included: “the dog”, “the interplay between the sisters”, “the dog” and “the butcher” (Appendix C.1). Another aspect consistently enjoyed by respondents, according to the survey was the play’s use of humour (Appendix C.1).

This feedback, in conjunction with that offered verbally, and my own observations of the reading had implications for the next draft – Draft Four. I was able to reflect upon these for a period of about one month, leading up to the second realisation of the play; the *Fragments* production season with Backbone Youth Arts.

6.1.4 Implications for Draft Four

From the compiled audience feedback, the verbal feedback (mainly from theatre practitioners) and my own experience of the reading, it became apparent that there were items to consider for the impending rehearsal process and staged performance of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

These included further exploration of the relationship between Gloria and Sylvia the dog, and also addressing the simultaneously symbiotic yet disjunctive relationship between the sisters Gloria and Babs. Other considerations from the feedback included the nature of Gloria’s trajectory or character arc, the brevity issue, exploring the scope of the dog character further, the use of the space, and the further potentialities of the sound dimension/dynamics.

As the production of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was to be staged with another theatre company with a new director and cast, in addition to a new performance space and context, I decided to allow these observations to distil in the intermittent period and bring them to the first meeting of the rehearsal process. This was in order to see what the next ensemble brought to the play. I felt that this would more accurately test what was actually problematic in the text.

6.2 Staging *The Rainbow Dark*

The inaugural season of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was produced by the Backbone Youth Arts organization. Based in Brisbane, Backbone Youth Arts is a not for profit organization that aims to develop the work of emerging artists for presentation to the wider community. As mentioned previously, the first draft of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was submitted to the company for consideration for a season of short works entitled *Fragments* and ultimately selected for performance (see 5.3).

6.2.1 Contextualising the Production Process

The premise of *Fragments* was to produce four works by young and/or emerging playwrights for performance to a paying audience. The works were to be directed by young and/or emerging directors with young and or emerging professional actors, each of whom was assigned a mentor. As outlined in 5.3, my mentor was effectively my dramaturge. The plan was for a four-week rehearsal period and a two-week production season for *Fragments*.

Each of the four works selected for the development and performance by the *Fragments* steering committee had a performance time of approximately 50 minutes. Two plays were to be performed each evening, programmed on alternative nights. The acceptance of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for *Fragments* immediately addressed one of the issues raised after the QTC reading – the brevity issue. The proposed structure for *Fragments* ensured that there would be a play, followed by an interval, and then another play each night, fulfilling the obligatory requirements or expectations of a night out at the theatre.

This writer had neither responsibility for, nor involvement in, the selection process for the young and/or emerging practitioners, including the director. These decisions were to be made by the Artistic Director of Backbone Youth Arts. Unlike in the reading at *The Works*, which was cast by QTC, I was consulted in relation to casting. I attended the initial gathering of the creative practitioners (minus the technicians) for a production meeting and reading. This was effectively the first rehearsal, which the director referred to as a *workshop*. I was invited to this workshop, in order to offer feedback in a number of capacities on the play process.

6.2.2 Director

Prior to the initial group meeting for the staging of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), the director and I met for an informal discussion regarding our thoughts on the Reading of the play at *The Works*, which she had also attended. I was able to share with her my concerns regarding that particular director's decision to interpret the play for the audience in his introductory words. The *Fragments* director acknowledged this point, and also expressed her views in relation to casting for the role of Sylvia. She had enjoyed the cross-casting at *The Works*, where this female role had been filled by a male actor, as it had demonstrated for her that Babs and Gloria had a somewhat limited grasp on reality. She too, wanted to cast the dog in this production with a male in the role, to which I agreed, on the proviso that he be, in her words, *insightful*. This was because, as had been made apparent in the Reading, the gender of the character did not appear to matter as much as the qualities the actor brought to the role.

6.2.3 Casting

In terms of casting for the play, open auditions were held for each of the four plays to be included in the *Fragments* season. Backbone Youth Arts is primarily a youth-based organization, marketed at attracting a youth demographic. Thus, the young actors who arrived to these general auditions proved to be unsuitable for the roles of Gloria, Babs and Donald (as these characters are all in their sixties, as per the cast list). The director found this

problematic, holding the view that casting younger actors in older roles would present as too much of a parody. The director consulted the Artistic Director of Backbone Youth Arts and myself about this and we both concurred with her viewpoint. My feeling was that, by casting young people in older roles, it would detract from the reality of the situation, so that it might become merely a comic exercise and would potentially let the audience *off the hook*.

This dilemma was addressed by the Artistic Director, who approached several actors from an ensemble of the appropriate demographic to play Babs and Gloria. The director held independent auditions for the role of Sylvia. She cast a 25-year-old male in the role, who she believed had brought a wonderful physicality to the role in the audition.

6.2.4 Workshop Reading One

After liaising with the Backbone's Artistic Director and the director assigned to my play, we negotiated a time to gather the practitioners involved for an initial meeting regarding the staging of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). I flew to Brisbane to attend and collaborate with the practitioners at this preliminary stage. They included the cast of four, the director, Dramaturge One, the assistant stage manager and myself. Also present, invited at the request of the company's Artistic Director, was Queensland's current Poet-in-Residence. This writer was a significant theatre practitioner in the UK and was present to offer professional feedback and support. The agenda of this initial gathering included meeting the other practitioners involved, reading the script in its entirety to test that the actors were suitable for this casting, discussing any ideas, issues or concerns raised by the reading, qualifying any questions the ensemble might have, and finally, workshopping any apparent problematic points in the text.

For this initial read I concentrated on two things: the actors and the *flow*, or unfolding of the text and its rhythms. From the very first reading, it became evident the actors had been cast thoughtfully and appropriately. This was because each exhibited vocally and physically some aspect of the character. From this first meeting it was clear that all of the actors were of an appropriate

age and physicality for each role. For example, the actor playing Gloria was a taller woman than the actor playing Bab, which physically reinforced the psychological supremacy - Gloria being the more overbearing over the sisters. The actor playing Sylvia the dog had an animated face and a tall lope-y style of moving. He began to embody the role almost immediately with a dog-like timbre to his voice. In this reading the actor playing Donald hinted at the more affable gentleman-like qualities I had envisioned when writing this character. It was also apparent, from the outset of the reading, that there was a wonderful dynamic between the two actors playing the sisters Babs and Gloria. There was a tangible energy of *tete a` tete* bouncing between them and a subtle sense of barbed rapport. The director signalled a second read through of the script to continue the workshop.

6.2.5 Workshop Reading Two

For this second read-through, the actors settled into the script and their delivery became more assured. They were able to locate the rhythm of the piece more effectively by observing the stage directions, indicating a pause or a silence. The aural experience became less about the nuances and syntax of the writing and individual words, and more about the play's trajectory and flow. The actor playing Sylvia brought an energy to the character in accordance with the trajectory of the action and her principal objective, that is, to communicate her views on the situation. The actor literally began to play and experiment vocally with the text. For an example on the line "Maybe they could catch the condensation from the roof" (Appendix B, B.5), he repeated the words *roof* and *woof* alternatively. The effect was of a dog attempting to speak and phonetically differentiate between the two sounds.

The actors also raised a number of points in this post-reading discussion. One point of contention concerned the central metaphor that conceptually underpins the play – seeing a rainbow in the dark. The actor playing Sylvia made the point that dogs are considered to be colour-blind, and yet in the play, the dog character sees colour – a rainbow in the dark (Appendix B.5). This was something I had not considered at all; did it call the epiphany of the play into

question? To explore this, I went back to the original conceptual framework for the play and came to the conclusion, that for me, the central metaphor concerned transcending the impossible. So while it might be an accepted fact that dogs are colour-blind, for me, this is not necessarily relevant within the heightened reality of the play. After all, it is also considered to be a fact that dogs cannot talk, and yet Sylvia does do so in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). What we might think to be true, for example, dogs being colour-blind, cannot really be known unless we experience their reality. How can we really know these things for certain? In other words, how can such things that are physically beyond our experience, be quantifiable? As the philosopher Raymond Gaita says, “science needs philosophy if it is not to fall into naiveté” (Gaita, 2002: 112).

This issue is central to key concepts in the play; the imperialism of human thinking and the limitations we place on each other. There are parallels with the assumptions made about Sylvia, and the restrictive People From Elsewhere policies. To make visible this paradigm, as Sylvia suggests in the play, perhaps one has to forget “what you know to be true” (Appendix B.5), or effectively reject indoctrinated ideas about Australian border policy.

It was suggested by the Director that perhaps Sylvia was not necessarily *only* a dog but a kind of supernatural entity in dog form, appearing when needed, to right the various wrongs currently transpiring in the world. This sentiment was echoed by the other members of the cast. Such interpretations of the character were very evocative for me in terms of what the reality I had constructed might yield, and were also, on one level, very entertaining.

In this discussion, the Director identified an inconsistency in the script - regarding the moment in the text when Sylvia begins to speak. Although this happens for the first time in the kitchen with Babs, after Sylvia and Babs have returned to the lounge room, Gloria says: “Babs supposes Sylvia can talk” (Appendix B.5). This was effectively a line leftover from an earlier draft, where I was still contemplating whether Babs and Sylvia communicated regularly, or if it occurred for the first time in the play, out of Sylvia’s necessity to communicate her thoughts on The People From Elsewhere’s situation.

Following this second read-through, I also raised the significance of the sound dimension, particularly the “cries” throughout, which indicate the presence of The People From Elsewhere under the stairs. I mentioned that this was absent in the QTC Reading and that this had an impact on the tension implicit in the script. The director acknowledged the absence of the sound dimension present in the QTC Reading and said she would be working with a designer to make this more apparent and underscore the urgency.

The Director then introduced the issue of the action in the play occurring over three separate spaces: a living room, a kitchen and a cupboard under the stairs. While she qualified the point that it was a concern within the parameters of a director’s domain, she asked if I wished to share any thoughts on how the action might be best negotiated and managed over the three locations in the space. I acknowledged that it would be a challenge and perhaps require some lateral thinking. Given that Backbone Youth Arts’s budget would probably not stretch to a multi-level set, compiled with the fact that there would be three other plays showing in the space for the same season, we would have to find a way to solve this on a practical level. It meant that, in designing and constructing the set, we would have to indicate the presence of all three spaces on one level, and also consider a set that was reasonably easy to assemble/disassemble in an interval duration of 20 mins. The Director said she would consult the set designer in regard to this also.

The outcomes of this initial gathering, to read, discuss and workshop the script were significant and I had also identified, as indicated above, several points of contention that could be addressed or further developed in the script. My expectations for this initial meeting of practitioners had more than been fulfilled and I left feeling confident that that the production was in the hands of exciting, thoughtful and able practitioners.

6.3 The Rehearsal Process

In terms of communicating the outcomes of the rehearsal we had agreed that the director would compile a report outlining what had transpired in rehearsals at the end of each week and email it to me. We would also communicate via phone when extra clarification was necessary. I would then make changes accordingly, communicate any details of these changes via email or phone to the director and submit the new draft to Backbone Youth Arts for distribution to the Director, cast and technical crew. We were ready to undertake the rehearsal process toward realisation of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

6.3.1 Rehearsal Week One

At the end of the first week of rehearsals I received an email from the Director concerning the cast's questions and items of discussion. A transcript of this email, in addition to transcripts of each of the director's emailed reports, are included in Appendix E. The email encapsulated items in rehearsal the ensemble had not "been able to come to firm conclusions on" (Appendix D.1). The main concerns of the cast and director in relation to the script included the issue of continuity of the title for *The People From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders*. At some points in the text I had accidentally substituted *Recognise* for *Respect*, which altered the meaning of their title somewhat. This indicated that I had not quite decided which term was more appropriate for them. The cast wanted to determine which one I felt best described the people and suited the aesthetic of the play. In practical terms they also desired consistency in terms of learning their lines. I decided to use *Recognise*, as I felt that *Respect* could be construed as having negative connotations for the people incarcerated under the stairs, and this was not my intent.

Another concern in the text was that the actor playing Babs was finding it difficult to make sense of the line: "It's...it's...it's...politically correct!" (Appendix A.5). This line is delivered by Babs in relation to the Donald character wanting to give his surplus meat to The People From Elsewhere. With this line I had

intended to convey that what Donald was proposing did not fit within the parameters, or political rules, constructed for the world of the play. I conceded that there were multiple sentiments expressed in this single line, making it difficult for an actor to play, and so the solution was to change it to something more clearly accessible for the actor. This was, in a sense, subscribing to a traditionalist theatre theory that there is only one way to play a line; however it was necessary for this actor to understand her intention in the delivery. As a result the line was changed to: “It’s...it’s...it’s...very *kind* (Appendix A.6), as I felt this conveyed Babs’s sentiment in regard to Donald’s suggestion.

Similarly the line “Of course, Barbara won’t have any, she’s a strict vegetarian...Babs you’ll have to put some mince out for yourself pet” (Appendix A.5) was confusing for the actors. I had intended this line to imply that the sisters did not believe mince to qualify as a meat product; to highlight how blinkered they were about certain matters, and on a lighter note, simply as a joke. In a phone conversation with the director she assured me that the cast had enjoyed the fact that Gloria was staking her territory out (Donald) by claiming Babs to be a vegetarian and effectively excluding Babs from the gift. So after some consideration, I came up with a few options – to continue with the dubious meat argument I suggested that Gloria could tell Babs to put Spam out, or if they wanted a real vegetarian option: baked beans, and noted these as potential options in the script for the cast to choose.

The final specific query the cast had related to the section of dialogue below:

GLORIA: And as I was saying, Donald, it’s all in the thread count.

Pause

What is that noise, do you suppose?

DONALD: What noise? I beg your pardon?

GLORIA: That thumping – it sounds like –

DONALD: Let me just turn up my hearing aid, dear

GLORIA: But Donald, you don’t have a hearing aid!

DONALD: Why, that's very true, dear – you're quite right –

(Appendix A.5)

The cast wanted to qualify whether Donald actually had a hearing aid or not. I explained that I had written it as a kind of diversion tactic, so Donald might distract Gloria from the events unfolding: the release of the People From Elsewhere. The cast were satisfied with this and agreed to explore the potential humour of this moment in rehearsal.

The final major concern of the first week for the Director was an issue relating to the set. In her words:

I am still finding it hard to get all three spaces onto the stage and have been thinking that the focus is on the lounge area with the stairs always felt and inferred.

(Appendix D.1)

One solution suggested by the Director was to use a scrim (a transparent screen the width of the stage) with a backlit image of the stairs to indicate their presence. In terms of locating the characters in this space (under the stairs) after the People From Elsewhere have been released (Appendix A.5) the director's suggestion was to re-locate this action to the lounge room. Lighting would be utilised to enhance this, according to the director (Appendix D.1). It seems that what was problematic was that, if this action was located in the space prescribed in the script; a cupboard under the stairs, and this space was represented by a scrim, the characters would be concealed from view, and this important moment would not be accessible to the audience.

I implemented such changes as identified by the director and cast at the first week of rehearsals and forwarded this new draft, Draft Four, to the director, Dramaturge One and Backbone Youth Arts for distribution to the cast and technical crew for the commencement of the second week of rehearsals.

6.3.2 *Rehearsal Week Two*

At the completion of the second week of the rehearsal period, the director once more communicated the rehearsal proceedings to me via email. After a meeting with the designers she felt confident that the set as described in the script could be fairly well realised on a single level of staging. In her words, the set would comprise:

...an awesome little house consisting of a kitchen and a living room on a rostra with stairs leading away from the back and obscured by wallpaper and windows travelling into the shadowy unknown.

(Appendix D.2).

Not only had the director and designer honoured my prescribed set by acknowledging each of the three spaces specified in the script, they had also thoughtfully re-interpreted them in terms of their vision for the play, evident in the “windows travelling into the shadowy unknown” (Appendix D.2). The reference to the “shadowy unknown”, for me, communicates that the world outside the sisters’ safe domestic sphere is mysterious to them.

This insight on the part of the designer and director was important, as the set is the first image seen by an audience, and functions as the first clue to the world of the play while evoking the characters’ reality. This humble recognisable domestic setting actually conceals many things embedded in the Australian psyche, which had been tapped into in the design specifications as reported by the director.

The director also felt that this setting would in some ways overcome the problem of locating the action under the stairs in the final moments of the play. Essentially she had found a way of making this action occur in a space accessible to the audience. She was confident that

We have worked out that we can bring the final scene in the lounge room quite conveniently while still showing clearly that the room under the stairs has been opened.

(Appendix D.2)

According to the Director, this would be achieved with the use of lighting. It seems the Director and Lighting Designer had determined “that the light will fill the right spaces and the rainbow will appear” (Appendix D.2). This refers to the stage direction in the script where the lights change to all colours of the rainbow (Appendix A.6) as the People From Elsewhere are released.

I communicated with Dramaturge One via phone about the changes made to the script in the fourth draft. These changes were the result of the collective combined feedback from first week of rehearsals, the initial workshop readings (in which I had participated) and the feedback from the QTC reading at *The Works*. The dramaturge’s comments indicated that, for her, I had not satisfactorily solved the two items as yet unanswered about the play. For her, these were the nature of Gloria’s relationship with the dog and also *the other side* to Gloria herself - the part that makes her knit slippers for the People From Elsewhere baby, unbeknown to Babs. While the Dramaturge acknowledged that the new addition to the prologue (Appendix A.6), in which Sylvia tries to engage in a dialogue with Gloria who effectively ignores her, was useful in setting up the nature of their relationship, the challenge lay in integrating these two key elements into the body of the text. We had come back to the issues evident at the inaugural QTC reading – the nature of the relationship between Gloria and Sylvia and the notion of Gloria’s journey.

The dramaturge and I discussed that a way to achieve this might be to construct a moment that indicates clearly where Gloria’s sympathies lie (that is, with The People From Elsewhere) and position it earlier in the text –currently this is only revealed on the final page (Appendix A.6). She explained that this might entail a moment Gloria does not necessarily want to share with Babs. For the dramaturge this would yield the *satisfaction of the journey*, because it would effectively blur the lines of demarcation. This was a fantastic insight,

however, it was up to me to come up with what this moment might be and where in the text it might take place.

I decided to contact the director by phone to discuss this further and to determine whether this had been problematic at rehearsals. As the cast would be receiving a new draft at the beginning of the third week of rehearsals, I had some concerns. As the fourth week was essentially production week, dedicated to technical and costume rehearsals, followed by the opening performance, I was concerned that any major changes in the script might prove difficult for the cast. This would have substantial implications for them in relation to blocking and character motivations.

Coincidentally, when I spoke to the director, she informed me that they had deliberated on this very question in rehearsal. For the director and the cast it was the “final unanswered question of the play” (Appendix D.2). Their questions took the form: Why does Gloria suddenly appear to be sympathetic also? This information is manifest in the script in her revelation that she made the baby slipper (Appendix A.6). For them, it appeared that Gloria’s motivation for this was concealed in the script; it was too obscure, and too sudden a change for the actor to make in the final moments of the play. The Director felt that they had found ways to overcome it in the staging; however she was not yet completely satisfied with the result. She was unsure how the cast would react to a new section of text at this stage in rehearsal, however, we came to the agreement that I would try and come up with a solution, which had minimal implications for changes to other sections to the script, and submit it for their consideration in rehearsal.

Satisfied that this was an inherent problem in the script from a dramaturgical, directorial and performative point of view, I went back to review the text. After some contemplation, I concluded that perhaps the most appropriate moment for Gloria to let her sympathies *slip* a little might be when Sylvia coughs up the baby slipper to draw the sisters’ attention to the People From Elsewhere baby. Thus, I changed the action here from Babs picking up and pocketing the slipper (Appendix D.6) to Gloria diverting Babs by asking her to check for Donald at the

door. In this moment Gloria (instead of Babs) pockets the slipper. This action and the following changes to the script, which is effectively Draft Five, are included in section 7.2. I hoped that this slight but significant change of action might allow the actor playing Gloria to have a connection to the slipper (for example, holding it to her, looking at it fondly and so on). I also reasoned that it could be incorporated into the blocking with fairly minimal changes. I acknowledged to the director that it would affect the action in the kitchen slightly (Appendix A.6) where Babs, according to the stage directions, produces the slipper. This would no longer be possible/required in this fifth draft, as Gloria had now pocketed it.

6.3.3 Rehearsal Week Three

The communication I received via email from the director following the third week of rehearsals was primarily concerned with my attempt to indicate Gloria's sympathies earlier in the script. The director elaborated on the ensemble's process in relation to "how to reconcile Gloria's apparent and quite sudden change of heart" (Appendix D.3). There had been many attempts in rehearsals and "many interpretations" (Appendix D.3) to make it coherent, prior to my writing Draft Five. In the director's view, however, "after much careful conversation" the general consensus of the cast was that it "changes the dynamic of what we have established just too much" (Appendix D.3). Their collective decision was to use to script as per Draft Four as,

...now the ending has had so much work we know we can achieve the transition for ourselves, keeping intact the bootie exchange in its original.

(Appendix D.3)

The key to this apparently lay in "the nice interaction between the ladies and the audience" (Appendix D.3). I was intrigued to see how they had resolved it in terms of an interaction with the audience, and accepted this decision made by the practitioners collectively as they were there on the ground, as it were, and

were the best judges of how the script was *standing up*. This meant that Draft Four, for all intents and purposes was effectively the *performance* text.

The Director also reported that the actor playing Donald had a breakthrough of sorts. This entailed “a stronger humanitarian agenda than before rather than just being a Lothario” (Appendix D.3). Apparently in this phase of rehearsals, the actor had

...integrated nicely these parts of Donald’s character so that while he is charming, this is a talent he uses to help the People From Elsewhere.

(Appendix D.3)

This was gratifying from a writer’s perspective - that this intention might be intuited from the script and would be realised in this way.

The director also reported that this week’s scheduled discussion with the lighting designer had had a positive outcome, and that the ensemble were preparing a preview run of the performance. A number of interested industry practitioners were invited, including the Artistic Director of Backbone Youth Arts, an Associate Director from QTC, and professional sound designers from the industry. This preview was scheduled in order for the cast and director to receive feedback on the production’s progress and was not open to the public.

For this week there were no changes to script required as the cast were eager to finalise their lines and *mise en scene*, prior to the impending week of technical runs and performances.

Thus, I waited to receive the director’s feedback reporting on the outcomes of the preview.

6.3.4 Rehearsal Week Four

In her email, following up and reporting on the fourth week of rehearsals, the director reported that her only other concern for the week was from a set perspective. According to her, the set had been constructed not quite according to the design, particularly in relation to the space occupied by the People from Elsewhere, which “has been squashed a bit in the translation from drawings to stage” (Appendix D.4). The director promised to conceptualise a way the actors might deal with this for the impending public performances.

In the interim I was to fly down for Opening Night of the Performance. The following sections outline my experience of the inaugural production of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

6.4 Performance Impressions

As outlined earlier, Backbone Youth Arts workshopped and developed four plays for performance in the *Fragments* season. Two plays were performed each night, in alternate pairs, over two production weeks. *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was performed on the evenings of the 25th and 27th October, and the 1st and 3rd of November 2006, thus having a total of four performances to a paying audience. It was paired with a play called *Holy Guacamole* (2006) by emerging playwright Daniel Evans. *Holy Guacamole* (2006) was programmed as the first performance for the evening, followed by an interval of 20 minutes, after which came the performance of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). On each night that *Holy Guacamole* (2006) and *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) played the theatre was seated at maximum capacity; a *full house* with a nightly total of approximately 100 seats sold. This indicates that approximately 400 people saw *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) in the *Fragments* season.

I attended both October performances (one of which was the inaugural performance). My initial impressions in relation to these performances are discussed below, in the order that they became apparent to me.

6.4.1 Set

My first impression of the show related to the set. As I took my seat, I observed the extent to which the director had been faithful to the set as described in the text. Located upstage and slightly to the right was space that was unmistakably the sisters' *living room*. Dominating this space was a two-seater, floral-patterned couch, with a matching armchair. This furniture was almost exactly like that which I had pictured whilst writing, and was covered in plastic as prescribed in the text. On the floor was a carpet of a clashing print to the furniture, with the prescribed plastic carpet runners, which were used to great effect. To the left of the living room was the *kitchen*. This was constructed on a raised rostra, of about 20cms in height, so it was on a slightly higher level than the living room space. The kitchen floor was covered in black and white checkerboard linoleum. It also had a cabinet, atop with a kettle and various assembled tea things. Behind these two set areas of the living room and the kitchen the designer had suspended sheets of floral wallpaper and be-curtained timber window frames intermittently, indicative of walls. To the far right, behind the floral armchair was the space indicating the stairs and the cupboard below them, housing *The People From Elsewhere*. This area was delineated by a partition.

The overall impression of the set was that it encapsulated a sense of the familiar - an iconic *Australian* space. It gave off an aura of feminine fussiness peculiar to a certain generation, almost as though the sisters were stuck in time.

6.4.2 Sound

As the houselights went down and the stage lights came up on the set an opening sound montage announced the beginning of the play. This montage was comprised of samples of the then Australian Prime Minister's voice, speaking about Australia's hardline Asylum Seeker policy. The montage was also spliced with snippets of the Australian National Anthem, and *splashing* sounds, as though a large object had been thrown overboard into a body of water. It was apparent that the latter sound effect was a reference to the

sinking of the Siev X, a ship carrying over 400 Indonesian Asylum Seekers, 353 of whom drowned in Australian waters.

The effect of the sound was as though it was coming from a radio or television set. It was broken up into small sections *or bites*, of a few seconds each in length, exhibiting disjuncture, as though someone was changing channels. Although this montage was clearly cleverly constructed, I was not sure I agreed with its premise. That is, I was torn between enjoying the quality and suitability of the effect, and wondering if the premise was misguided. I felt that it could be problematic to load the piece with political overtones before the characters had even begun to speak. This occurrence was in the same vein as the director explaining what the play was about before it began, as occurred at the QTC reading. In this instance, the exposition of the theme was not as explicit as in the inaugural reading. Nevertheless, I wondered if the *Fragments* audience would have a similar experience as a result of the opening sound montage.

6.4.3 Action and Characters

This opening sound montage gave way to the sound effects to introduce the play proper – the cries of the People From Elsewhere from the cupboard under the stairs. The stage lights were still down, which made these sound effects even more disturbing and chilling in tone. There were more feminine sounding voices than I had anticipated in this sound arrangement, and it worked very well for me in evoking the vulnerability of the captives. Overall, this sound was subtle and not overwhelming. We next heard Sylvia barking and then her conversation with Gloria, as per the prologue (Appendix A.6). This action all took place behind the scrim (that is, it was unseen by the audience). Gloria then entered, apparently flustered by this exchange with the dog, Sylvia at her heels. This action proved a slight variation to the text, where the next scene opens with Gloria and Babs sitting down to tea (Appendix A.6). The Director obviously felt that this flowed more effectively than that indicated in the text – a break in the action and the atmospherics.

From the moment Gloria entered, I felt that the audience was *smitten* by her heavily made-up appearance and costume of nylon peach dressing gown complete with hair curlers. Babs entered soon after and the ladies proceeded with the *mise en scene* as prescribed by the script.

All transpired well as the scene progressed, however, there was a point in the action where I began momentarily to disengage. I looked around and noticed that a few members of the audience were beginning to appear restless, shifting in their seats slightly. This was around the point in the text where the sisters discuss the particulars of the government scheme in which they are participating (Appendix A.6). Their pace of delivery did not vary significantly in this exchange, and the dialogue came off as expository. I also wanted the actors to move – to literally get off the couch where they had remained for the duration of the play thus far. As the director was faithfully adhering to the characters' action as it was written in the text, I realised that this might be something to review at a later date in the script.

The audience appeared to become re-engaged with the play when Sylvia began to cough up the baby slipper (Appendix A.6). This was a turning point in the action that arrested their attention. Following this was the event of Donald's arrival. The sound of the doorbell immediately changed the energy of the sisters to one of urgency and dynamism. When Donald entered there was a tangible shift of dynamic in the play, a certain tension between he and Gloria, and also, between Babs and Gloria, simultaneously. After a period, however, this tension (and the humour born of the sausages debacle) waned, as the text once more became expository. This was around the dialogue concerning Donald's suggestion to give his surplus produce to the People From Elsewhere and the implications it might have on policy regarding the People From Elsewhere (Appendix A.6).

Once more, the energy was raised by the entrance of Sylvia, who had been banished for sniffing inappropriately upon Donald's arrival for sniffing inappropriately. This time Sylvia entered with her sign around her neck bearing a picture of a window. This was unexpected for the audience, who were

apparently delighted by its obscurity. The performers reacted as per the stage directions and this moment segued into Babs and Sylvia's retreat into the kitchen, where the central metaphor of the play took place.

The "rainbow in the dark" exchange between Babs and Sylvia (Appendix A.6) literally gave me *goosebumps* at the Gala Evening performance. It was obviously apparent that these two had a special relationship borne of mutual respect, both as characters and also as actors, and together they conveyed this metaphor beautifully and poignantly. Their delivery and the director's realisation of this moment was not overly sentimental but, for me, it was pitched entirely appropriately.

Things moved at a much quicker pace following this moment of epiphany, as after a brief sojourn in the living room, Babs and Sylvia exit to release the People From Elsewhere, on the premise of giving them a meal. Donald's diversion tactics for this event, including the hearing aid incident and kissing Gloria (Appendix A.6) seemed to be a great hit with the audience. The People From Elsewhere began to leave their *prison*, a move indicated by sound effects and lighting in the script (Appendix A.6). For me, the lighting is important at this point, as specified in the script below:

Suddenly the lights begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow.

(Appendix A.6)

The lighting of this moment in the *Fragments* show was a little too subtle for me. I would have liked the changing colours of the lights - the rainbow, to be more vibrant and wash the entire stage and audience, signalling a significant shift in the world of the play. The director explained in a post-show conversation that the collective company budget had not allowed for the purchase of sufficient gels (the material placed over a theatre light to render colour). What was effective, however, was that when the cast were assembled in front of the window (in the cupboard under the stairs) watching the People From Elsewhere

being led away by Sylvia (Appendix A.6) the stage was flooded with warmer light, a lovely glow with a pervading sense of, in Gloria's words, "a warm fuzzy" (Appendix A.6).

This was apparently what the Director had alluded to in her rehearsal report for Week Two (see 6.3.2). This light indicated that the cupboard below the stairs had been opened; it had "filled the right spaces" (Appendix D.2), as she had assured. Here the lighting served to work on a figurative as well as a literal level. Additionally, in these final moments, Gloria's revelation that she was sympathetic to the cause of the People From Elsewhere, evident in her admission of knitting the slipper did not seem out of place, or a *bolt from the blue*. That is, it did not appear to be uncharacteristic of Gloria, but it served to enhance the spirit of the ending to the play. I am unable exactly to pinpoint how the director and actor playing Gloria integrated this "apparent and quite sudden change of heart" (Appendix D.3) into the character (after a significant struggle in rehearsals with it); however, it is to their credit that they made it work.

Although the final sound effect – of a heavy door creaking shut - signalled the end of the play and the houselights went up, for me, the true ending remained ambiguous. Although the People From Elsewhere had been released from their domestic Australian prison, their futures and collective fate remained unknown.

In addition to my individual *writerly* response to the *Fragments* production of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) I had access to several different forms of feedback, in relation both to the rehearsal process and the performance.

6.5 Feedback

The feedback took various forms including the completion of a questionnaire by the creative practitioners involved in the *standing up* process, and published reviews. Unlike the QTC reading, Backbone Youth Arts did not distribute feedback surveys to the audience after the performance/s. While no formal collation of audience feedback took place, I was nevertheless able to sense or

intuit the audience's response to the play *in situ* or throughout the performance as detailed in my discussion of my impressions above (see 6.4.3).

I was particularly interested in gathering feedback from the creative practitioners closely involved in the *standing up* process in relation to their perceptions of rehearsal and performance outcomes. While I had received snippets of verbal feedback from them along the way, with more detail provided by the director in her weekly reports, I was interested to know their individual interpretations of the outcomes in relation to my initial agenda, to blend a political nexus with *invisiblist* aesthetics.

6.5.1 Practitioners Feedback

Feedback was obtained from the practitioners through a specially designed written questionnaire to enable the performers and director to reflect more thoroughly on the rehearsal process and production outcomes. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first part related to the practitioner's understanding and/or interpretation of the script. The second group of questions related to the practitioners' experience of the standing up process. The third section sought information about the practitioners' concepts and views on contemporary theatre at large. At times, in practice, the responses to each of these questions did not necessarily coincide with the appropriate section, but segued into each other. Three of the four actors and the director provided responses to this questionnaire and transcripts of these are contained in Appendix E.

There were some common themes or overlapping trends between respondents in each of the three sections. For example in response to my question: *How would you describe The Rainbow Dark as a Play?* each practitioner privileged the political aspect in their description. This is evidenced by responses such as "A light political satire" (Appendix E.1), "comedic political satire" (Appendix E.2) and "An allegory reinforcing the duplicity of political policies" (Appendix E.3). This indicates that the political themes, reflecting a concern of the *now*, comprised the nexus of the script's meaning for these practitioners.

While the play was described as political in tone, practitioners were able to qualify this description by also reflecting on each of the different aspects of the script. For example, for one practitioner, in addition to being political, the play was also

Accessible – because of

- a) Its brevity.
- b) Its *everyday* matrix – easy to identify with the characters and their lives.

The sinister subplot slides in with scarcely a ripple.

(Appendix E.2)

This would indicate that, for this practitioner, the play avoids a didactic tone and engages each of the practitioners who, in turn, engage the audience, on *another* level. This is supported by another practitioner's comment:

I believe that the political comment and the way you approached it with humour and compassion achieved a good balance and made the play readily accessible and enjoyable for the audience.

(Appendix E.4)

In relation to the rehearsal process proper, this apparently entailed a “constant interrogation of the play” (Appendix E.1) as

...there seemed so much to uncover, both of the play and our own attitudes towards the subject matter.

(Appendix E.1)

This suggests that the director and cast were engaged with exploring and uncovering the layers of meaning within the play.

In relation to their reflections on the standing up process there were several key items that proved challenging and/or problematic, as identified for each of the practitioners. Primarily these were related to the ambiguity surrounding some

aspects of the script in regards to character intention. For example, the director wrote, in relation to the character of Donald,

Perhaps Donald's role was the most ambiguous. Was he calculating the refugees release or simply suggesting a practical response to their hunger? How well did he know Babs? Did he have anything to do with the Feathersworth escape? We talked a lot on this point and went from a simple practical reading to a more conspiratorial one, then back again.

(Appendix E.1)

The actor playing this character himself definitively stated, however:

Donald's function is to up the inconsistencies of the government policy whilst lending humour to the situation and, finally, applauding the escape. I don't think he was at all involved in its planning.

(Appendix E.3)

The character of Gloria too, proved a challenge for actors and director in her realisation. In the words of the actor playing this character:

Gloria's sudden epiphany presented a problem until I found her in a long dead family friend. There was no sudden conversion to kindness, just an innate generosity and sense of obligation, that - like everything else - needed to be justified and rationalised.

(Appendix E.2)

These character ambiguities were also communicated to me by the director following each week of rehearsals (see 6.3). This feedback resulted in several new drafts of the relevant sections. This idea of justification or rationalisation indicates that the actors in this instance required a certain concrete understanding of their character intention, in order to play them. Paramount to this issue was the notion of the performers feeling confident in their roles, so

that their action would both read as a logical theatrical choice, and support the writer's intention. One performer commented that

In the scene where Donald talks about having leftover meat, Babs's confusion about her attitude was not clearly defined in the writing. Or, at least that is how I felt as the actor and decisions had to be taken about how to play a line which was not always clear to me that that was the writer's intention.

(Appendix E.4)

Further feedback concerned the feasibility of the setting and specifically how to indicate the cupboard under the stairs. This had proved to be problematic in rehearsal as relayed to me by the director (see 6.3). This is evidenced by one response to this item in the questionnaire

How to show the stairs without showing them? Staging the play presented the biggest challenge – finding all the spaces required in the script onstage

(Appendix E.1)

Similarly, another respondent nominated this as a difficulty:

Realising the cupboard under the stairs on a small one level stage
– I felt this was solved by our director

(Appendix E.3)

While budgetary restrictions must be acknowledged as a factor determining the set for this particular production of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), from this experience, I began to appreciate the director's dilemma. It has prompted me to consider how, as a writer, I might be able to accommodate for this in the construction of my work in relation to the specificity of setting in future writing projects.

Also attending the *Fragments* productions were various theatre reviewers who published reviews on *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) and *Holy Guacamole* (2006).

6.5.2 Feedback from Reviews

I was able to access two published reviews for the *Fragments* season, whereby the reviewers reflected on each of the plays in the season. The first review was published in the Arts section of Brisbane's *The Courier Mail*. The second was published in an online Australia-wide theatre magazine entitled *Stage Diary*. Copies of each of these reviews can be found in Appendix F. For the newspaper reviewer, *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) was "a smart play", which "balances humour with serious disquiet" (Appendix F.1).

For *Stage Diary*, the reviewer found the show to be a "...quirky look at modern life..." (Appendix F.2). This reviewer likened the ending, where Babs and Sylvia release their captives, to

...the uplifting climax of all those Italian films of the 1950s when the peasants always triumphed over their poverty.

(Appendix F.2)

This reviewer also went on to say:

This is an interesting script: the setting of a suburban lounge room is a familiar one, and ultimately the play deals with a problem we all recognize, but the writer...employs an almost Pinteresque method of deferring complete knowledge.

(Appendix F.2)

Significantly, this review aligns with the comments made on earlier drafts of the script by the Artistic Director of ATYP, who suggested I familiarize myself with the works of absurdist writers such as Pinter and Ionesco (see 5.3 and Appendix B.1). I came to realise that he had identified early on how the play might be interpreted, and the genre in which it might be read. Indeed, by

identifying some characteristics of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) as having similarities with works by these writers, my individual praxis might warrant further exploration, to determine if this is a defining characteristic.

Each aspect of the realization process/es from the inaugural reading at *The Works* with QTC, to the workshop, rehearsal and performance processes for the *Fragments* production have contributed to the further development of the script.

Whilst *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) might be considered an ongoing creative project, in the sense that the script has the potential to be interpreted anew by a different group of practitioners, the dramaturgical and professional development has ensured that the play has made significant shifts from its original form. The play as an *artifact*, the result of the creative project, constitutes the major part of Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TEXTUAL OUTCOMES

Below are the performed texts of the pilot study, *Shadow Play* (2005) and extended creative project *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

Please note that, while the *Fragments* performers effectively presented Draft Four of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) (see 6.3.3 for more details), Draft Five addresses some of the core dramaturgical and directorial concerns in the rehearsal process. Draft Five then is the current draft of the theatre text and is, for all intents and purposes, the most recent tangible outcome of the creative process.

7.1 Pilot Study Text: *Shadow Play*

Shadow Play

by Victoria Carless

Copyright 2005

Characters: Reg, a retired home economics teacher, 65

Opi, a mermaid, 19-ish

Setting: A classroom. It contains two dressmaker's dummies wearing half-finished skirts. There is also a small fish tank with marbles instead of pebbles

Time: One moonlit evening.

A splash of water is heard. Lights come up. Opi the mermaid is dripping, in a puddle on the stage. The sound of approaching footsteps is heard. She quickly pulls on some clothes and hides behind the fish tank.

Reg enters, flicking on the lights. He walks over to the fish tank. He retrieves a marble from his pocket. He drops the marble into the tank.

Reg: Maybe this one. Maybe this time.

He pulls out some sewing. It looks something like a skirt, with a gathered seam up the front. He goes up to the dressmaker's dummies.

Reg: Hello ladies. Nice evening for it.

Holds up the piece of sewing up to one of them.

Reg: Woeful eh?

He bows before her.

You are looking lovely this evening, my dear.

He takes the dummy in his arms and begins to dance with it – a waltz or a tango. Opi emerges from her hiding spot, drawn to the shadows of the dancers. She begins to shadow dance with them. Reg does not see her until quite a way into the dance. Perhaps she is in his light – on or near his shadow. He stops abruptly.

Reg: Holy - ! Blimmin' heck! You scared the bejesus outta me!

Pauses to regain breath.

Shit, I'll have to change me daks now.

Reg checks the state of his pants.

It's alright. Phew. You had me worried there. Who are you? More to the point, what the bloody hell are you doing here?

Opi: My name's Opi. I've been watching you.

Pause

Reg: That's a bit off-puttin. What for?

Opi: I like your dancing. The way your shadow moves.

Pause

You're a good dancer sir.

Reg: Well, ta. Name's Reg. (*Gestures to dummies*) They don't get out much. Least I can do.

You were watching me you say? For how long?

Opi: A few nights now.

Reg: That's a bit off-puttin.

Opi: Don't worry, I won't say anything.

Reg: What do ya mean? About what?

Opi: You sneaking in here. After hours.

Reg: Think I'm entitled miss! It's me old classroom. Taught here 42 years! Home Economics. I was a pioneer. Never made Principal though. Bastards. Anyway, who gave let you in?

Opi: You did.

Reg: I don't even know you! How could I give you permission?

Opi: You do know me.

Reg: Since when?

Opi: Since always.

Reg: That's rot. Absolute rot. You shouldn't be here. You're dripping! It's not ...appropriate. Trespassing! That's what it is! Get along now.

Opi: I saw your marble.

It was nice. It reminded me of one from before - a long time ago. It was clear with a pattern inside. A blue pattern - like a promise.

Reg: *(In spite of self)* Yeah, it's a beauty. I had one like that myself. When I was a little tacker. Gave it away to someone. Dropped it into a big fish tank. Thought I saw

Opi: What? What did you see?

Reg: Nah, nothing. Just kid stuff. Nonsense out of a storybook. A fish probably et it.

I used to confiscate them. The marbles. From the students at lunchtime. Have a whole collection at home. Cat's eyes, Tom bowlers - got em all.

Opi: Lucky. But the blue promise is the prettiest.

I'm sorry I frightened you.

Reg: It's alright. Just don't go around eyeballing people's marbles! It's not the done thing!

Pause

Opi: Can I ask what it is that you are making?

Reg: I think it's a skirt. But then there's this bloody seam!

Opi: *(Touching the fabric)* It's nice. Like a purple monkfish sea.

Reg: Is that right? You got some strange ideas girl. And why'd you sneak up on a fella like that? Gave me a deep sea chest pain ya did!

Opi: It was your dancing...something about your shadow.

Pause

I need one.

Reg: What's that?

Opi: A shadow.

Reg: A *shadow*? What the bloody hell for?

Opi: *Your* shadow. For my life. For mortality.

Reg: *My* shadow! *Mortality!*

Opi: I am a mermaid. I must swim the sea alone for all time. I am tired of it. If I take a man's shadow, that is, if he falls in love with me, I can become human. I can walk freely. And dance. And love. I know it. Your shadow. From before. It's the right one.

I've been watching.

Reg: You mentioned that. *My shadow.* Wriggling around in the dark! The idea! It gives me the heebie jeebies! I'll have to tell the principal. He won't have it!

Opi: He'll find out you're here. He'll kick you out. Lock you up for sneaking in.

Pause

Reg: Bill wouldn't mind.

Beat

Wouldn't know if his arse was on fire!

Beat

It's not like I'm doing anything wrong.

Beat

I'm just here to sew.

Pause

Purple monkfish sea.

Pause

I feel all het up.

Beat

I see your soft shape and I think things.

Beat

I need some water.

Opi goes to the fish tank. She scoops some water up in a glass. She returns to Reg and throws it over him.

Christ girl! What was that for!

Opi: It drew me in. Your shadow. I thought if I could just touch it –

Reg: I don't like this talk!

Opi: Get inside it -

Reg: I'm a married man!

Opi: Things might be ok.

Reg: Was. I won't have it!

Opi: I might be real -

Reg: You're not having it!

Opi: Realised. Girl. Woman.

Reg: This'll learn ya!

Opi: Instead of ocean. Fin. Fish.

Reg: No shadow play here!

He turns off the classroom lights. Reg retrieves his sewing and sits by the light of the fish tank to continue his sewing.

I don't have time for your rot. I'm working on something important!
You should leave.

Opi: I could help...

Reg: You've done enough.

(under breath) Bloody nut.

Silence

Opi: Would you rather be a bird or fish?

Reg: What sort of question is that?

Opi: People think I'm fragile. That mermaids are shell. That their fingers can sift like sand, through me. But they can't. I'm not.

Beat

I'm strong. Dorsal fin. Mother-fucker.

Beat

Shadow stealer.

Beat

And I'm not lonely.

Beat

Don't contemplate me.

Beat

I could smack your teeth in.

Reg: I'm sitting here with my fingers smelling of take away.

Beat

I know about loneliness.

Pause

My wife made me dinners before she died. Put em in the freezer. Some sort of casserole with green bits in it.

Beat

Some people are happy to stay in the shallows.

Beat

Can't bring myself to eat them.

Pause

I have this deep sea chest pain.

He stops sewing.

A bird I think. Because then I could see my wife. I reckon she's the type to sit on a cloud...

Opi: I came here in a shell. I was scooped from the sea. For a long time I swam in a large tank. There was a man who looked after me. A biologist. He taught me things. About your world. He told me I should hide my tail. From the people outside the tank. And my body from the creatures inside. On dark nights we would take walks to the sea.

Beat

On these nights, I drowned inside myself. To know that I was in the world and not a real part of it.

Beat

On these nights, the man would take little sips from a glass that looked like light, of a drink that looked like blood. On these nights he told me that I was the most beautiful of girls... and of fish.

Beat

One day somebody saw me. Swimming in the aquarium. The man said I must leave. That I should take a shadow. He said this would be my lover.

Beat

I'd never had a shadow.

Beat

I've never had/

Reg: Me neither/

Opi: A toothbrush.

Beat

But there was a boy who saw me too. A boy who came to visit the aquarium. He saw me. He was not afraid. He gave me a gift – a small clear glass ball.

Reg: A marble with a blue promise inside. It was my favourite.

Opi: I have kept it.

Reg: Show me.

Opi: Turn on the light.

Reg does. Opi holds the marble out to him. He takes it.

Reg: I remember when I dropped it. A splash like a world ending. You caught it in your tail. I went back to find you many times but never could.

Beat

Opi: I saw you.

I have found you now.

Reg: What do I have to do? To give you my shadow?

Opi: Touch me.

Reg touches Opi. Projection of their shadows. They wait. Nothing happens.

Dance with me.

They begin to dance Their shadows lengthen. Still nothing happens.

Reg: It's not working.

They stop dancing. A pause.

Opi: It must be a dark night...No shadow to drown inside.

Reg: No.

Reg retrieves his sewing. He takes it to her.

A fish.

He puts the skirt on. It is a tail. He becomes a merman.

Opi: You'll come with me?

Reg: Why not? I've always wanted to be immortal!

Opi: And we'll swim forever in a purple monkfish sea.

Reg: I need some water...

She picks him up. They exit. Lights down.

7.2 Creative Project Text: Draft Five of *The Rainbow Dark*

The Rainbow Dark

a stage play

by Victoria Carless

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Characters

Gloria	late 60's
Babs	mid 60's
Sylvia	a dog. She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this. Only Babs can hear her.
Donald	a butcher, early 60's, courting Gloria

Setting

A living room/ a kitchen/ a cupboard under the stairs.

Time

Early Evening

Prologue

In darkness. There is the sound of footsteps – those of Gloria and Sylvia. Low cries of people incarcerated, muffled by a heavy door. The language is indistinguishable. The cries increase as the footsteps approach. The door is slowly opened. Sylvia begins to bark. The sound of ‘fear’ rushes out. A tray of food is set down. Silence. The door closes slowly. Muffled sounds of desperate eating.

SYLVIA: Woof, woof – Window!

GLORIA: Quiet, Sylvia!

SYLVIA: Window, woof, window!

The cries increase.

GLORIA: Sylvia! Stop that! You’re encouraging them!

SYLVIA: Woof woof woof woof window!

GLORIA: Sylviaaaa!

GLORIA drags SYLVIA up the stairs. SYLVIA and the cries fade out.

BABS and GLORIA enter, to sit down to an evening cuppa. The tea things are assembled on a tray. They use fine bone china. There are three cups. The ladies lower themselves down onto their plastic covered couch. Much fussing. The floor is covered in plastic carpet runners. SYLVIA enters.

GLORIA: Sit, Sylvia!

Snuffling of SYLVIA as she settles.

That cursed dog. You really should have her put down.

Pause

BABS: Yes, dear. Fancy a cuppa? Just a quick one. Before he arrives?

GLORIA: What a good idea. It'll settle my nerves.

BABS: Lovely. I'll just pop my teeth in.

BABS retrieves her teeth from a glass on the tea tray and pops them in her mouth. She pours the tea.

Gloria, darling?

GLORIA: Yes pet?

BABS: Are these your teeth or mine?

GLORIA: Let me see.

BABS removes the teeth and hands them to GLORIA. GLORIA removes her own teeth and tries to fit them. A struggle. They do not fit.

They're yours, pet.

GLORIA hands them back to BABS who re-fits them— pop!

BABS: Thank you, dear.

Pause

One sugar or two?

GLORIA: Two, dear.

Pause

I don't know why you ask. I've been taking my tea the same way for fifty years. Sisters should come to know these things.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: It's always been white with two sugars. Except of course when Teddy Hunt was courting. Then it was one. Watching my weight you know.

BABS: Yes. Indeed. A lady must never appear to overindulge.

BABS takes a sip of her tea

GLORIA: Or slurp.

BABS: Yes pet.

Pause

Gloria, dear?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Will you be having one sugar this evening, do you think?

GLORIA: Well that all depends on *him*, doesn't it?

SYLVIA yawns. Loudly.

I honestly don't know why you encourage that dog inside, Barbara. She smells so.

SYLVIA snorts.

And she snores. We should dump her.

BABS: Yes, my love.

Pause

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?

BABS: Yes, dear. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the fridge.

GLORIA: Good. We don't want any fuss while our guest is here.

Pause

I hope you were economical.

BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.

GLORIA: A smidgeon of Vegemite?

BABS: A speck of jam.

GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.

BABS: I know, dear.

GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the government. It's only a token, mind.

BABS: Of course, dear.

GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.

GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?

BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk our duty.

GLORIA: Not everyone could do it, could they? Take on this type of responsibility. It's not for everyone.

BABS: No they couldn't. No indeed. We're a special two.

Pause

GLORIA: Take Helen from number three. She couldn't handle it. She only lasted two weeks. And she claims to be a Modern Woman!

Pause

Or Mrs Robertson, from down the road. Couldn't hack it either. Gave it away after a month. Just gave them up – fancy! Imagine the bureaucratic headache! I think some of her lot are mixed in with ours now.

Pause

And she had a *husband*.

BABS: They just couldn't take it, it seems. The thumps under the stairs. The cries in the night.

Pause

The voices in the dark.

GLORIA: Don't think of that, Barbara. Don't speak of it. It's a minor inconvenience. Compared to the good we're doing.

BABS: (*Reminding herself*) Yes, yes don't dwell. It's for the greater good.

There is a low muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks. She looks at BABS and barks again.

GLORIA: (To SYLVIA) Quiet!

BABS: Yes pet, settle down.

GLORIA: Besides, it won't be for too much longer now.

BABS: Yes, there will be a solution soon. A government action to address the issue.

GLORIA: A policy amendment.

BABS: A law.

GLORIA: A constitutional rectification.

BABS: A by-law.

A slightly louder muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks then begins to whine. She sits up and begs.

GLORIA: Quiet, Sylvia!

BABS: They always set her off.

GLORIA: She'll annoy the neighbours. They'll report us.

BABS: Oh dear – will they take her away?

GLORIA: Yes and pound her up.

BABS: She wouldn't be so fond of that.

GLORIA: It's probably the best thing.

Pause

As I was saying, there'll be something done to maintain the agenda.

BABS: Yes, something significant will happen soon.

Pause

How long has it been, exactly?

GLORIA: I'd say, at a guess, about 12 months.

BABS: About a year.

GLORIA: That's right, about 12 months.

BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.

GLORIA: We've had Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.

BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for ONE YEAR. Without even the window open.

There is a muffled cry, louder than before. Longer pause. SYLVIA whimpers but is cut short by A LOOK from GLORIA.

GLORIA: Speaking of which.

BABS: It must be just about time to feed them.

GLORIA: It's your turn, I believe. I did it last night.

Pause

BABS: How many are there, do you think?

GLORIA: I don't know. I never look.

BABS: Well, what did the booking sheet say?

GLORIA: I can't remember. Twenty. Or twenty-five.

BABS: There would be at least half a dozen children.

GLORIA: I never look.

BABS: At least six kids.

GLORIA: I don't look. Can't bear their eyes.

A louder muffled cry. Pause. SYLVIA moves to GLORIA'S feet and begins to cough and retch. She is coughing something up. The sisters watch in horror as she coughs up what looks like a baby slipper.

GLORIA: *(To herself)* Please, Sylvia, no.

SYLVIA moves away from GLORIA.

Sylvia! You wretched thing!

BABS: Sylvia! Naughty!

SYLVIA hangs her head.

What *is* it?

GLORIA: Nothing to speak of. She's been through the bins again.

BABS: It looks like a...*baby's slipper* -

GLORIA: Nonsense. Just a bit of fluff! We must clean it up! He'll be here in a minute. Take a look, would you?

BABS: Yes, dear.

BABS goes to the window to check. GLORIA, alone, picks the slipper up, looks at it, holds it to her, and puts it in her pocket. BABS returns.

BABS: He certainly is taking his time.

GLORIA: Donald is a busy man, Barbara.

Pause

How do I look dear?

BABS: Just lovely, pet. Peach is definitely your colour.

GLORIA: I have been told so, on occasion.

BABS: Although...you don't think....

GLORIA: What?

BABS: That it might be ...a touch...just a tad...

GLORIA: Spit it out.

BABS: Inappropriate? A bit *forward*, even? After all, it is a negligee.

GLORIA: It's a *nightgown*. It *is* night-time.

BABS: Is there a difference? I was never certain.

GLORIA: Of course there's a difference.

BABS: But for a visitor... a *man*...

GLORIA: I don't know what you're worried about, Barbara – it's completely lined.

Pause

Besides, sometimes it serves the mature woman well to be *slightly* less than subtle...

BABS considers her own outfit. She undoes her top button.

BABS: How do I look?

GLORIA: Fine, dear.

An even louder muffled cry. SYLVIA howls.

GLORIA: Sylvia, that's it!

BABS: I could almost swear that she's trying to tell us something.

GLORIA: Don't be absurd, Barbara!

BABS: You don't think so?

GLORIA: I most certainly do not! I've had enough!

BABS: Gloria, please pet.

Pause

After all, they are making quite a racket tonight.

GLORIA: She should close her ears to it. I do!

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

Tell me Gloria, do you think I've made enough?

GLORIA: Enough what?

BABS: Sandwiches. Do you think they get hungry?

GLORIA: What a ridiculous question!

The door bell rings – a novelty ring tone. GLORIA and BABS freeze, then fuss with the couch/room and their clothes.

GLORIA: That's him! You get the door. Where should I sit?

BABS: Don't panic! *(She thinks. Points)* There – where the light is softest. And me?

GLORIA: *(Pointing to a dimly lit area/the corner)* Over there.

The doorbell rings again – a novelty ring tone. They jump. GLORIA takes her place, while BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks across the plastic carpet runner offstage to the front door. The sound of the front door opening.

BABS: *(Off)* Good evening, Donald! What a surprise! Gloria we have a visitor - Donald is here.

GLORIA: Come in Donald!

BABS and DONALD enter. They walk down the plastic carpet runner and settle on the plastic-covered couch.

GLORIA: Good evening, Donald. You'll have to excuse me, I look a fright in my night gown! If only I'd known you were coming - I would have dressed more appropriately! Do sit down!

DONALD: Good evening ladies. *(Clearing his throat)* I've brought you some sausages.

GLORIA: Donald! How lovely! Thank you.

DONALD: No trouble at all. Plenty more where they came from.

GLORIA: They'll go nicely with some mash for tea. Of course, Barbara won't have any – she's a strict vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat of any kind. Babs, you'll have to put some spam out for yourself pet.

BABS: Yes dear.

DONALD: There are some nice bones for the dog as well.

GLORIA: That really wasn't necessary, Donald.

BABS: Thank you, Donald, Sylvia will love them.

Sylvia barks, trots up to DONALD, sniffs his pockets.

GLORIA: No, Sylvia! Do not sniff! Down!

DONALD: It's fine, I -

GLORIA: Down, Sylvia! That's enough! Out!

SYLVIA exits, tail between her legs.

BABS: She could smell the bones.

DONALD: What a nice puppy.

GLORIA: I apologise, Donald, for my sister's unsavoury dog. I have told her time and again, no good comes of taking in strays. No good at all!

BABS: She's quite a dear dog really...

DONALD: Seems harmless to me.

GLORIA: I've told her before, Donald, You know what they say – "soft heart, soft head".

DONALD: I have to confess I'm a bit of a softie meself, when it comes to animals...

GLORIA: Nonsense, a butcher! A strapping man of meat like you!

DONALD: Gloria, you're embarrassing me,

GLORIA: (*Giggling girlishly*) Oh Donald! And so to what do we owe the pleasure of your company this evening?

DONALD: No special reason- I was just in the neighbourhood and I thought I might call in...

GLORIA: Babs mentioned you were about.

DONALD: Yes I just dropped in on number three - she's quite the modern woman you know.

GLORIA: Yes. So we've heard.

DONALD: But I do enjoy coming here. And how are you two, my dears?

GLORIA: We're fine, Donald. Couldn't be better.

BABS: We're well. Really quite good.

DONALD: And what about ...how are things with the...the um...
Arrangement?

GLORIA: Wonderful. No problems at all. None whatsoever.

BABS: Yes, everything's peachy.

Pause

DONALD: Good. Glad to hear it. I'm relieved, in fact.

Pause

Truth be told, I was worried. You ladies have taken on quite a responsibility. A burden, one might say. And I thought, maybe with all the unrest – the recent escapes and whatnot – I thought you might be having a hard time of it ...what with your... charges ...and all.

GLORIA: Nonsense. Not at all.

BABS: Everything's just super.

Pause

GLORIA: Pardon, Donald, did you say *unrest*?

BABS: You mentioned *escapes*?

DONALD: You haven't heard?

GLORIA: Heard what exactly?

DONALD: It was on the news this morning. Two Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped, from a sewing room in Marraborne.

GLORIA: How unfortunate!

DONALD: It said in the paper that the lock to the room was cut by pinking shears.

BABS: That sounds like an inside job to me...

DONALD: Mrs Feathersworth – the woman who owned the sewing room, has been taken in for questioning.

BABS: Poor Mrs Feathersworth!

DONALD: They are saying that it may affect government Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders policy...

GLORIA: Of course it will affect the policy! Ninnies like that Feathersworth woman shouldn't be given such responsibility!

DONALD: The government are desperate, Gloria, what with the major centres being overloaded. I suppose they have to take what they can get-

GLORIA: How that woman passed the screening test, I'll never know. Surplus Peoples are only to be detained in *suitable* residential civilian properties. It's in the handbook! Page one!

BABS: You don't think Mrs Feathersworth had anything –

GLORIA: Of course not! It was obviously someone sympathetic to their cause - a bleeding heart who cut the lock for a warm fuzzy!

BABS: But the pinking shears... perhaps it was planned.

DONALD: These things often are...

GLORIA: Nonsense! They escaped of their own accord. She was only doing her duty. Albeit incompetently!

BABS: Her civil responsibility. Bungling non-withstanding.

GLORIA: And for what – ingratitude!

BABS: Obviously some people just don't know a good sewing room when they see one.

GLORIA: Still, nothing for us to worry about. We're safe here.

BABS: No need to fret. Our locks are strong. And there are no pinking shears to speak of.

GLORIA: I'd say it's just a base attempt at federal scare mongering.

BABS: Really just an example of departmental scape- goating.

Pause

BABS: What will happen to them, do you think? The Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders?

GLORIA: Don't even consider it, Barbara! It's not our concern.

Pause

DONALD: Well it's good that you're taking it so well. I was afraid ...It's just... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you, Gloria – to either of you, I mean...

GLORIA: That's sweet! Isn't that sweet Babs, pet? Donald was worried about us!

BABS: It's sweet, yes.

GLORIA: But you needn't worry. We're perfectly capable.

BABS: We're managing quite well.

GLORIA: Now let us hear no more on the matter. How is business, Donald?

DONALD: As well as to be expected, Gloria.

GLORIA: Whatever do you mean?

DONALD: Admittedly, things have been quiet. A lot of my customers are feeling the strain, what with all the extra mouths to feed. Let's just say, roast beef isn't at the top of their shopping list.

GLORIA: Yes, times are rather difficult. Money is tight. But surely a little chuck steak is in the budget for most? Perhaps a lamb chop or two?

BABS: Not much left over for luxuries these days is there?

Pause

Things like Meat.

Pause

Or fresh air.

Pause

Or sunlight on your face in the morning.

Pause

GLORIA: But there are benefits. Anyone who provides appropriate accommodation receives financial support.

BABS: Maybe it doesn't stretch to the meat budget. What with the extra vegemite on the bill.

GLORIA: Still, we all should do our little bit shouldn't we? It's the patriotic thing.

DONALD: All I know is, I can have up to half a side of beef left on any given day.

BABS: That's three and a half bullocks a week!

GLORIA: What are you saying, Donald?

DONALD: Truth be told, I came here for another reason ladies. It's not just a social call.

GLORIA: But I thought... the sausages –

DONALD: I need to ask a favour, Gloria.

GLORIA: Surely you're not suggesting –

DONALD: Gloria, I'm a butcher not a bureaucrat. The fact of the matter is, you have starving people living under your stairs and I have leftover food!

GLORIA: But what you're proposing is illegal!

BABS: It's against government policy.

GLORIA: It's bleeding heart bull.

BABS: It's...it's...it's...very *kind*.

GLORIA: I refuse to allow Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit *illegally* from my Land of Plenty!

Pause

There are limits, Donald!

Pause

Look, I never thought I'd be the type to lock people up in a cupboard.

Pause

In a cupboard under my stairs.

Pause

I don't even like stairs. Never did.

Pause

I have a bung hip, you see.

Pause

Makes it difficult, to say the least.

Pause

And as for locking people up, well...

Pause

I think you've forgotten something.

Pause

Something very important.

Pause

It's a very big cupboard.

BABS: *(Helpfully)* At least four feet wide.

GLORIA: I didn't realise you felt so strongly about the issue, Donald.

Pause

Is this going to affect our courtship?

SYLVIA trots in and sits in the middle of the room, in full view of all three. She scratches lazily. She has a cardboard sign around her neck with a drawing of a window on it. They all stare at her. Silence.

GLORIA: Cup of tea anyone?

Pause. They ignore GLORIA and continue to stare at SYLVIA. A long pause.

DONALD: What an extraordinary thing.

BABS: Sylvia!

GLORIA: This must stop.

BABS: Perhaps it's just starting...

GLORIA: What concerns me most is: how did she get access to a pen and paper?

DONALD: Where there is a will, there is a way...

All three look at SYLVIA. Pause. SYLVIA passes wind. Slowly.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You naughty girl! Take that offensive creature away, Barbara!

BABS: Yes lovey. Shall I put the kettle on then? Tea anyone?

DONALD: I'd love a cuppa.

GLORIA: White with *one*, dear.

BABS: Back in a jiffy then. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic covered couch and walks across the plastic carpet runner to the kitchen. SYLVIA pads after her.

GLORIA: I must apologise Donald - I really don't know how much more of this I can take. Perhaps you could do something...after all – you're a butcher....

DONALD: Is that necessary Gloria? Sylvia's no bother to me. By the by, that's an interesting choice of name for a canine. Very distinguished.

GLORIA: Babs named her. After a poet or some such maudlin personage. She reads far too much...

DONALD: The dog does appear to have an artistic bent...

GLORIA: Indeed. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the sausages... (*she giggles*)

Cross fade to BABS and SYLVIA in the kitchen. BABS fills the kettle and assembles the tea cups.

BABS: Fancy that! Of all things! Did you hear all that ,Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I did. One sugar – fancy it. She's coming on a bit strong.

BABS: I didn't mean that exactly.

SYLVIA: I suppose he did bring her sausages...

BABS: I was talking about Donald's suggestion. About the meat.

SYLVIA: Of course.

BABS: Do you think he has a point?

SYLVIA: Well it's very contentious issue, Babs, but like the man said, he does have leftovers.

BABS: It's certainly very *humane* of him.

Pause.

Sylvia – Goodness gracious – you're talking!

SYLVIA: Yes.

BABS: But - I – you – you've never spoken before!

SYLVIA: As they say, desperate times call for desperate measures. Maybe you just weren't listening hard enough.

Pause

I mean, come on, Babs, what do I have to do? All the barking, the begging, the passing of wind - do you think that was all for my own amusement? Do you consider that normal behaviour?

BABS: Yes, well I do, rather. For a *dog*.

Pause

Does Gloria know about this?

SYLVIA: I tried to strike up a conversation with her, but it turns out we don't see eye to eye...

BABS: I see. Sylvia, you don't think that Mrs Fearthersworth let those peoples out *deliberately*, do you?

Pause

But how could she do it? Go against government policy like that? We all have to do our bit, even if it means putting ourselves out. If it's for the greater good...

SYLVIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected, I suppose...

BABS: What will happen to the escapees, do you think?

SLYVIA: It won't be easy for them on the outside, that's a fact. But they've travelled too far to be locked in a sewing room.

(Pause)

Or a cupboard under somebody's stairs.

BABS: I do have to admit, Sylvia, it's dreadfully inconvenient. What with all their crying, the endless sandwich making and so on. It gets me quite anxious sometimes. Frankly I don't blame that Feathersworth woman!

SYLVIA: Why, those peoples under your stairs don't know how good they've got it! Free accommodation, all the vegemite sangers they can eat...

BABS: Don't forget the jam ones for the children.

SYLVIA: The children, especially, are having a wonderful time. I heard them playing a game the other day. Something to do with aliens...

BABS: That doesn't sound nice.

SYLVIA: The baby's grown too. He's almost walking now...

BABS: I didn't know there was a baby! Of course, the little slipper!

SYLVIA: A child was born right there in the cupboard. You didn't hear the mother labouring?

BABS: I thought all that screaming might have been part of some ritual – a cultural thing perhaps...

SYLVIA: Spoke his first word the other day. Do you know what it was?

BABS: No I'm afraid I don't...

SYLVIA: Me neither. I don't speak the language.

BABS: I do feel a tiny bit awful about them being stuck in that little cupboard without fresh air, natural light, or *immediate* access to running water...

SYLVIA: I'm sure they could catch the condensation from the roof...

BABS: After all, Sylvia, it's probably a good thing that it's so dark in there. Then they can't see what they're missing out on. Us being the lucky country and all...

The kettle begins to boil/scream. It underscores the following section.

SYLVIA: Close your eyes, Babs.

BABS: Ok, dear. What for?

SYLVIA: Don't you worry. Are they shut tight?

BABS: Yes, dear.

SYLVIA: What do you see?

BABS: Nothing, of course.

SYLVIA: Press your hand to your eyes. Close out the light. Now what do you see?

BABS: Nothing, dear. Only black.

SYLVIA: Press harder. Concentrate.

BABS: I am concentrating.

SYLVIA: Forget about everything else. Forget about trying to see something. Forget about remembering what was there before the darkness. What do you see?

BABS: I told you. Nothing dear. Blackness.

SYLVIA: Listen closely. Look past the black. Forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true. Look beyond your hands. Look beyond the colour of the dark. What do you see?

BABS: I...nothing really...maybe a hint of red? At the edges.

SYLVIA: Aha!

BABS: It's just a hint, mind...very faint.

SYLVIA: Don't open your eyes! Keep looking into the dark. What else do you see?

BABS: Maybe yellow. Yes, there's a stream of yellow in the centre of the darkness.

SYLVIA: Yes! Yes! And what else?

BABS: Near the red there's... purple. And pink! The pink is bordering the purple!

SYLVIA: Good, Good! Anything else?

BABS: There's orange too. And a bit of green beside the yellow? And blue. Sylvia, there's blue!

SYLVIA: So there is.

The kettle sings.

BABS: My goodness, it's a rainbow! A rainbow in the dark!

SYLVIA: That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not Recognised Perfectly Good Borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark.

The kettle switches off. Pause.

It's teatime, don't you think?

BABS picks up the tea tray. They walk down the plastic carpet runner to the living room and BABS settles herself on the couch. SYLVIA snuffles at her feet.

GLORIA: What on earth were you yelling about in the kitchen?

BABS: I was just chatting with Sylvia.

GLORIA: Really? And what did she have to say?

BABS: She was very vocal on one point actually -

DONALD: Gracious. Is that so?

GLORIA: Barbara, how absurd!

DONALD: Well now, Gloria, she *is* handy with a pen and paper, so I suppose it's not too much of a stretch...

There is a loud cry from under the stairs.

GLORIA: Babs dear, are you forgetting something?

BABS: Yes, of course. I'll attend to them, shall I?

GLORIA: Yes, pet. Don't forget the sandwiches. And mind your nightgown this time. Don't let them grab you again. A torn slip is not very ladylike is it?

SYLVIA: Neither is a peach negligee if you ask me. Even if it *is* lined...

BABS: No, dear, I won't. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks down the plastic carpet runner to the cupboard under the stairs. SYLVIA trots after her.

GLORIA: I tell you, it's not proper, Donald. It took me an age to stitch it up last time...

Fade to black.

The sound of Babs and Sylvia's footsteps down the stairs. The sound of muffled cries increase as they approach the heavy cupboard door. Babs opens the door slowly. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. Silence. Babs sets down the plate of sandwiches. Pause.

Half -light. Babs and Sylvia outside the cupboard door.

BABS: *(Whispering)* You know, Sylvia, I've decided to open the window in here...to let the light in a bit.

SYLVIA: What a good idea, Babs. And while Gloria is otherwise entertained, I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I?

The sound of the window being opened and the prisoners climbing slowly out of the cupboard in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. It underscores the following scene. Fade to black. Lights up on living room.

GLORIA: And as I was saying, Donald, it's all in the thread count.

Pause

What is that noise, do you suppose?

DONALD: What noise? I beg your pardon?

GLORIA: That thumping— it sounds like—

DONALD: Let me just turn up my hearing aid dear...

GLORIA: But Donald you don't have a hearing aid!

DONALD: Why, that's very true, dear — you're quite right —

GLORIA: It sounds like — Barbara! Where is she? She should be back by now.

DONALD: I don't mind her taking a little longer. If you know what I mean.

GLORIA: Oh Donald!

DONALD: Gloria.

GLORIA: Oh *Donald*...

DONALD: *Oh Gloria.*

He kisses her.

Suddenly the lights begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow.

GLORIA: Donald — it's the Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: Gloria!

He kisses her again.

GLORIA: Excuse me, Donald, how lovely, but I must check on Barbara!

She gets up to leave. He joins her.

DONALD: But, Gloria, you don't even like stairs! And what about your bung hip?!

GLORIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected I suppose...

Fade to black. The sound of DONALD and GLORIA's laboured footsteps on the stairs. They push open the door to the cupboard. The room is bathed in light from the large open window. BABS is by the window looking out. The empty sandwich tray is on the floor. GLORIA and DONALD go over to her and look out.

GLORIA: The Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: I can see them! Across the park. They are shining.

GLORIA: Do you think it was the sandwiches?

BABS: Well, Vegemite *is* an acquired taste...

GLORIA: Maybe it was the accommodation, I will concede it was a touch cramped.

BABS: Yes there was distinct lack of elbowroom.

DONALD: Well there's so many of them! One, two, three.....twenty- four, twenty- five!

BABS: Twenty-six actually. At least six kids.

GLORIA: And a baby too.

BABS: Yes, he was born right there in the cupboard.

GLORIA: I made him slippers.

GLORIA retrieves the slipper from her pocket.

BABS: But you didn't say.

GLORIA: It wasn't in the handbook, dear.

BABS: Lots of things aren't, pet.

GLORIA: It's just an example of the fact that life will prevail.

BABS: Simply a case in point that the spirit can't fail.

GLORIA: You know, I never noticed how nice the light in here could be.

BABS: Yes, it looks much better now.

DONALD: Will they be alright,
do you think? After all, they don't know the territory...

GLORIA: I hope you at least packed them a lunch, Babs.

BABS: Yes, and filled them a thermos, dear. And look, they've got a
guide.

DONALD: *(Looking out the window)* It appears they are being led away by a
small animal...is that a *dog*?

BABS: Of course. It's Sylvia.

GLORIA: We must give her a bone...

BABS: After all, it was all dreadfully inconvenient...

Fade to black.

Epilogue

In darkness. A cupboard door closing. The sound of silence.

The End.

7.3 *Fragments* Production Photographs

All Photographs are from the Backbone Youth Arts production at Metro Arts, Brisbane, 2008.



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.1 The Sisters: Jan Nary as Gloria and Kaye Stevenson as Babs



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.2 Sylvania: Dirk Hault as Sylvania the dog



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.3 Gloria and Donald: Jan Nary as Gloria and Hugh Taylor as Donald



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.4 The Sisters and Donald in the Living Room Set: Kaye Stevenson as Babs, Jan Nary as Gloria and Hugh Taylor as Donald



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.5 Sylvania sees a Rainbow in the Dark: Dirk Hoult as Sylvania



Photography by Nick Martin

Plate 7.3.6 The Kiss: Jan Nary as Gloria, Hugh Taylor as Donald

CHAPTER EIGHT: OUTCOMES, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

8.1 Outcomes of the Writing Process

At the culmination of this study there are several identifiable outcomes of and findings for the research in relation to the writing and realisation processes of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006).

When reflecting on the writing process, one of the immediate questions, for me, is the extent to which the written text of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) conforms to *invisiblist* patterning or shapes, in keeping with some key aspects of the *invisiblist* tradition of drama, as identified in Chapter Two. The simple answer is that in some instances it does and in others it does not. These deductions are based on personal experience of the writing and developmental process and also the commentary of the dramaturges and other theatre industry practitioners involved at various phases of development of the script.

According to the principles derived from the literature, as distilled in 4.1.1, *invisiblist* theatre comprises the following: exhibiting *otherness* in terms of form, in terms of (a) as a myth or ritual; and/ or (b) shape or trajectory of action; and/or (c) *doubling* of functions or realities; and/or (d) assemblage/collage and/or brevity. While these features are derived from identified *invisiblist* texts the writer was not necessarily limited to these in the undertaking of the creative project (see 4.1) and indeed, new *invisiblist* strategies emerged from within this process simultaneously.

While some of the textual outcomes appear immediately to correspond to some of the principles, such as d) brevity in that it had a performance duration of approximately 50 minutes, the play also transcended some of the prescribed conditions. For example, rather than taking its impetus from a myth, *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) had its genesis in *images* such as that of a closed space: a cupboard beneath stairs, as well as an image of two women and their pet dog, who later became the characters of Babs, Gloria and Sylvia. These images

sparked ideas about concealment of things, the hiding of an issue, or even of people, potentially to be represented in an abstract way.

The idea or premise of the play, however, essentially had its impetus in the privileging of the notion that a pertinent political issue might be, in fact, the thing concealed. Initially, this was to address the perceived lack of the presence of the *peripheral now* in previous creative projects and practice (see 4.2.3). Personal reflections on Australian border politics became the trigger for the thematic concerns of the play; the *peripheral now* was evident in this contemporary issue and had superseded the identified *invisiblist* point of departure, that is, myth or ritual. To an extent, the *now* informed the content of the piece, although the play might still be regarded as *invisiblist* in aesthetic or style. This was a discovery that had implications for the shape of the text.

This discovery is also evidenced by the dramaturgical process. For instance, Dramaturge One encouraged the exploration of actions or ways in which Sylvia might communicate within the world of the play. This dramaturge reiterated the importance of each act of communication being more urgent than the last, so that this character eventually has no choice but to speak English, or communicate in a language that the humans around her will be sure to understand (see 5.6). By structuring Sylvia's attempts at communication as increasing in urgency, effectively I built up to a climax - her act of speaking. Employment of this formal approach or formula, however, does not necessarily subscribe to a more conventional dramatic model. For me, Sylvia's repeated, albeit varied, attempts at communication are more in the vein of the Steinian concept of *insistence* (Stein, 1967). This is where a word or motivation is effectively repeated but also varied in some way for each delivery; every time the object has a different insistence. This might be considered to be a *new* way of building tension, or increasing the stakes in dramatic action. It does not necessarily function as a concrete dramatic structure, but represents a more fluid trajectory.

I also employed the *invisiblist* formal principle of *doubling* in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). This can be observed most prominently when the sisters appear to be

commenting on both the events occurring within their world, and also on the structure of the play itself. Such instances of *metaphoric staginess* represent a *doubling* or *interface* between two worlds; that of the action of the play, and that of reality.

The principles identified from the literature and synthesised in 4.1.1 regarding character in the *invisiblist* aesthetic include: existing in a state of *liminality*, or as a mythic/historical/canonical figure, or as exhibiting a self-conscious *metaphorical stagi-ness* and, often without formal assignation in the text. I would argue that the character of Sylvia displays traits consistent with at least some of these *invisiblist* principles, most noticeably that of existing in a state of *liminality*. That is, while Sylvia takes the appearance of a dog, or an actor might represent her as such in behaviour and appearance, she has the ability to communicate verbally in a human way. In this way, for me, she also subscribes to the precept of being a kind of mythic figure, and thus to an *invisiblist* concept of character. This is because there are inherent ambiguities in the text about her origins; she is dismissed by Gloria as a stray, and her past is an unknown quantity.

The characters of Babs and Gloria also foster a sense of the liminal state or the *in-between worlds* experience. This is evident in their practice of commenting on the action at certain points, identified above, which represents instances of *metaphorical staginess*. This is because the reality to which the characters are referring - the world of the play or the reality of the audience, or both – cannot be precisely known. For me, there remains a fundamental sense of ambiguity about the character of Donald in that the reason for his visit remains open and subject to interpretation. That is, while he appears to have subtle sympathy for the plight of the People From Elsewhere, he could just as easily be coming around to *court* the sisters, Gloria in particular. These decisions were left up to the practitioners to decide, as I did not want to prescribe specific intention, but imbue it with ambiguity.

In terms of character assignation, or the lack thereof, espoused by the proposed parameters for character in *invisiblist* theatre, this was eventually

rendered null and void throughout the text. It became apparent that, as the drafting process progressed, not only was it necessary to endow the characters with names, but also with qualities that differentiated each from the others. For example, in regard to the response to earlier drafts by Dramaturge One, part of the redrafting process involved qualifying the relationships between each of the characters. It was important for me, at the outset when the premise emerged, that these characters be familiar and identifiable. Hence, they were named and endowed with idiosyncratic qualities, embodied in their particular ways of speaking and interacting with each other. This sense of the familiar was complicated by the sense of *metaphorical staginess* attached to these characters, and prevented them from becoming characters in a more conventional sense. That is, while recognisable, they were imbued with *otherness*, evidenced by their mythic presence, their *metaphorical staginess* and the ambiguities in relation to their motivations.

The Rainbow Dark (2006) also exhibited engagement with the linguistic stylings of the *invisiblist* aesthetic. Earlier (4.1.1) it is prescribed/speculated that language in this particular aesthetic comprises some or all of the following: *bodily writing* and spatial dynamics, *Semiotic* language with word-as-*other*, composition of a sound-scape or score, juxtaposition/ alternation of linguistic styles, repetition or *insistence*, a *rearrangement* of syntax and/or spelling, and either an absence of stage directions, or ones that are *expressionistic* or interpretive.

Several of the above principles were employed in the writing process. For example, the notion of *bodily writing* was explored to an extent through the character of Sylvia, albeit in a somewhat literal sense. Initially appearing unable to communicate verbally, I explored ways in which this character might communicate in a physical sense, such as by begging, carrying a sign in her mouth, and so forth. These physical acts were all ways of communicating and signified her agenda to her owners, Babs and Gloria. Sylvia also communicated verbally in a language other than English; evident in her barking and variations of *canine speak*, used throughout to punctuate her physical or bodily communication.

In a similar way, a type of sounds-scape was employed to signal the presence and emotional state of the People From Elsewhere. This is evident in the low murmurings and cries that gradually build up in volume and intensity as prescribed in the stage directions. Such sounds were designed to correspond to the Kristevian notion of the *Semiotic* sound or *Poetic* language (see 2.1). Fundamentally this is a language of *otherness* or

...an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation
constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases.

(Kristeva, 1984: 25)

Not only is language the primary mover in the play, it also comprises the play's nexus of meaning. This is evident in Sylvia's momentous act of speaking English, and her allegorical way of communicating, the language of metaphor. Similarly the linguistic qualities evident in the Beckettian derived *cross talk act* of Babs and Gloria take a central focus at various points in the text. This occurred to such an extent that my reaction in performance was a desire for these characters to *stop talking* and *do something*, that is, to get up off the couch (see 6.4.3). An example occurs when the sisters discuss the government scheme that they are involved in at length, and its impact on the People From Elsewhere (see 7.2). Perhaps in this instance the play might more effectively have scoped the potentialities of *otherness* in language, such as by signalling the distress of the People From Elsewhere here, with the *sound-scape* device already established. This would have resulted in the editing of talk while still communicating the situation.

And what of the *now* in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006)? In relation to the aspects distilled from the literature and synthesised in section 4.1.2, a work engaging with the *peripheral now* considers or possesses an underpinning of a political ideology. This corresponds to the recurring belief held by each of the theorists in Table 4.1.2. that art, at its most fundamental state, is political. These theorists and/or practitioners also characterise the art of this epoch as artefacts of postmodernity, featuring fragmentation and disjuncture.

As noted earlier, it emerged in the conceptualisation phase that the nexus of the play's meaning would be based on a current political issue, specifically the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia. Interpreting and exploring this issue, albeit through an *invisiblist* orientated framework, indicates referencing of *contemporaneity*, and therefore the *peripheral now*. In regard to the play reflecting the postmodern trait of fragmentation or disjuncture, this was limited. I had experimented with such ideas in the first draft, evident in the introduction of a television report announcing a People From Elsewhere escape, which essentially fragmented the continuity of the sisters' dialogue. This was a trend picked up by the sound designer, who had devised a kind of fragmented sounds-cape featuring *sound bites* at the beginning of the *Fragments* production, in response to my first draft. This report, however, was edited out in subsequent drafts in response to Dramaturge One's concerns. For her, the device of the news report represented an external mouthpiece. That is, the important information (which acts as a trigger or catalyst for change for the sisters) was coming from an external source, a source apparently beyond the immediate world of the play, and one a relatively neutral attitude to the outcomes. Therefore I integrated this important information into the dialogue of the already-existing character of Donald who, in this way, became a *messenger* figure.

This dramaturgical input and my subsequent action in re-drafting this section to some extent altered the styling of the play. If I had continued to explore the notion of media and reportage in relation to the content, the play may have taken a different path; indeed it may have become more fragmented in form and reflected aspects of postmodernity, that which characterises art in this epoch for Jameson (1991) and Baudrillard (1981) (see 3.1 and 3.2). Instead I elected to explore the idea, triggered by the dramaturgical discussion, of embedding this information in the already existing layers of the play. This was with a view towards *servicing the metaphor*, in a way more akin to the realm of the *Invisible*. This had the effect of enhancing the *otherness* of the piece for me as it took the world of the play to another level - beyond that of an everyday media-saturated reality.

In relation to the *immediate now* or *live factor* in theatre, theorists and practitioners reviewed in the literature (see 4.1.2) privilege the political as a thematic concern in theatre productions and in theatre making methodologies. Furthermore, Brecht (as discussed by Jameson (1998)) and Boal (1992) demonstrate the fostering of a dialogue between the actors and audience, while Blau (1982a) theorises theatre as the “dynamics of disappearance” (Blau, 1982a: 1), a place where the audience is invited to reflect upon the *afterthought* or *afterimage*. Integral then to the notion of the *immediate now* is the interactivity of the audience. In the writing of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), I endeavoured to make conditions conducive to this dynamic interplay. The idea of a dialogue or conversation with the audience; a transaction or exchange of ideas is apparent in the ambiguity seeded, or the ideas integral to the play and finally turned over to the audience for interpretation. Thus the text was realised in two separate ways in a *live* capacity, that is, read and performed for an audience.

8.2 Outcomes of the Realisation Process

By reflecting on the realisation outcomes, it becomes apparent that I did indeed participate in a *writerly* function in two separate realisations of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), as projected in 4.5. Specifically, my process encompassed: identifying my role as *writerly* (only) in the rehearsal room. This allowed for a subsequent period for reflection about the script after the initial public presentation, in order to consider each of the play’s production values in depth before developing it further. I also actively sought opportunities for staging to allow for the possibility of several different realisations of the text. This enabled me to observe the interpretive possibilities, and ideally also to identify and work with practitioners who acknowledge/exhibit an aesthetic akin to my own. I would argue that each of these was achieved to varying degrees in the realisation process. This is evidenced not only by my experience of the two different *standing up* processes detailed in Chapter Six but also by the audience feedback, the practitioners’ feedback and published reviews of the realisations: one reading and one production season as discussed below.

8.2.1 Outcomes of the Reading

The inaugural reading of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) for Queensland Theatre Company's (QTC) *The Works* yielded two types of feedback. The first was that communicated to me personally on the night and over the next few days by industry practitioners. The second was derived from the QTC audience response survey (see Appendix C.1).

There were several key findings from the former (see 6.1.3 for detail). However, upon reflection perhaps the most interesting discovery for me was in relation to the character of Gloria and her *arc*. This was difficult for many practitioners as it did not appear to adhere to conventional theatrical/character logic. Gloria's journey towards realisation or *seeing the light*, as it were, is different to that of her sister's. While Babs's journey towards actioning the release of *The People From Elsewhere* is triggered by events in the play, and signalled at various points by her voicing her dissent, Gloria's *change of heart* is quite sudden. The audience is aware of Babs's rising levels of concern due to her interconnectedness with Sylvia, which eventually results in her epiphany. That is, the cause and effect chain is visible within Babs's journey. Gloria's transition in attitude, however, is subtler, almost subversive, *Invisible* in fact, and only revealed to the audience at a crucial point in the action – the final moments of the play.

While I cannot claim that this different trajectory of Gloria's necessarily represents *otherness*, it is nonetheless an interesting development as it proposes an alternative to the conventional character arc. Due to the practitioners' feedback, I realised that this aspect of the play would require further development if this were to be my intention.

After the inaugural reading there was similar conjecture amongst practitioners and also Dramaturge One in regard to the relationship between Gloria and Sylvia the dog. That is, they questioned Gloria's dislike towards the dog as they perceived no apparent evidence in the script as to *why*. In other words, this needed to be justified and made visible. For me, this was linked to the notion

that Gloria intuits Sylvia's sympathies and this makes her uncomfortable. This existed as an undercurrent to their relationship and did not necessarily need to be made explicit at the outset, as it was to be *sensed*, and then later qualified in the resolution.

For the ongoing drafting process, however, I felt that at times I was caught between my *invisiblist* vision – pursuing such ideas and the dramaturgical and practitioner feedback. That is, as discussed in the rehearsal process of the Backbone Youth Arts production, these ambiguities, or Gloria's *Invisible* motivations, became problematic for the *Fragments* ensemble (see 6. 3.2). They required clarity on this issue in order to feel confident in realising the text for performance and, as such, this was addressed in the re-drafting process (see 6.3.3). This, in turn, had implications for the play's form in that the process became more akin to making links in the cause and effect chain, and moving away from any grey areas or ambiguities embedded within the text. This meant that my intent to explore new *invisiblist* principles in relation to character and form *morphed* slightly in the realisation of the *invisiblist* text. While not necessarily abandoned entirely, these ideas segued into more conventional structures and modes as a result of the feedback.

The second form of feedback for this realisation of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) came from the paying public and subscription season ticket holders who had attended the reading. Some of these audience members completed a formal, generic survey designed by QTC to obtain information about audience responses to productions (see Appendix C.1). As discussed in 6.1.3, the main purpose of this survey appeared to be gathering audience feedback in relation to style/genre preferences for future programming decisions. Nonetheless, this survey gave me a snapshot overview of audience response.

The main findings as a result of the QTC feedback were that the audience generally appreciated the work, expressed thoughts in favour of the play's development, and were receptive to the political nexus, or the *now*, as filtered through the other elements, for example, the novelty of the talking (see more detail in 6.1.3). One audience member's comment was in counterpoint to this

feedback. In relation to the section for other comments, this particular audience member stated that “the message in *The Rainbow Dark* seemed laboured” (Appendix C.1). This may have been a result of the continual interplay and word play between the sisters, which is also a feature of Beckett’s texts. I nevertheless kept this comment in mind as I moved towards the next phase of the creative process – the realisation of the text with Backbone Youth Arts.

8.2.2 Outcomes of the Production

The outcomes of the production and second realisation of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) can be determined once again from my response to the performances, the feedback of the audience, the feedback of the practitioners involved and also from independent published reviews.

My responses to this production are detailed in 6.4 and may, generally be summarised as thorough appreciation for the level of artistic skill and creative direction involved. In fact, I felt that the director and cast had been so faithful to the text as written, including to the stage directions, that I was able to observe clearly where the script did contain inherent problems. For example, as specified in 6.4.3, and again in 8.1, there were points in the action where I literally wanted the characters to *get up off the couch*. The static situation of the set and their (in)action seemed to reduce the energy behind the text, and debilitate the dynamism of the dog and the urgency of her apparent message. This was a result of the dialogue and the occasionally *languorous* language style; the concern here was that this may cause the audience to grow restless.

That the play achieved a level of populist, critical and *writerly* success is evidenced by the QTC award, the full houses, the positive feedback, and the published reviews. In this second realization, however, for me, the play moved away somewhat from rather than towards an *invisiblist* realization which privileges fluidity, the allegorical, and the non-definitive.

That is, the political issue informing the content became more overtly accessible or definitive for the audience as a result of the re-drafting and staging

processes. My *invisiblist* intentions for form, character and language as proposed in the methodological pathways (see 4.4) in fact became casualties of the dramaturgical and developmental processes. I maintain nevertheless that traces of these ideas remain. While the *now* appeared to be a more explicit force at work in the text in a *thematic* sense, at no point did the feedback suggest that the political segued into diatribe or was too didactic. In this way, the *invisiblist* elements came to the fore, and successfully tempered the tone of the political.

I believe that the identifiable presence of the *now* and the latent or underlying presence of *invisiblist* elements is due, in part to the collaborative nature of the project. The nature of theatre is that it exists as an interactive art, particularly in the development of a new script as was the case here, and this has inevitable implications for textual outcomes. A significant input into these textual outcomes derived from dramaturgical feedback. Just as I felt in the pilot study that the play was focused in a different direction to that from my original intention (see 4.3), in the instance of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) rehearsals, I felt the play inexorably moving away from my framework as a response to the suggestions for shaping offered by the rehearsal process. Hence my corresponding actions took on an increasingly conventional approach to building a *well-made-play*. The actors and director of the production also contributed to an extent to these textual outcomes. While in this instance they very much enjoyed and respected the play from the outset, ultimately their preference in the realization and rehearsal process was for a less fluid and more concrete realization at the expense of the ambiguities and *invisiblist* elements.

However, this is not to say the outcomes were not, in the main, satisfactory as acknowledged above. There was much positive feedback in relation to the play and its two realizations, even though the outcome deviated somewhat from my proposed framework (see the methodological pathways in 4.4). For example, in rehearsals the director/actors made concrete decisions about inherent ambiguities in the text. From my understanding, this was so that the actors might feel secure in their (character) intentions, and confident in their presentation of the text in a *live* context. What became apparent throughout

was that a familiar model of rehearsals prevailed. Such an outcome might be considered a wonderful departure point for an exploration into *new invisiblist* principles for realizing a performance text.

Clearly the outcomes from this research: the literature exploration, and the writing and realizations of the play contribute to the development of a potential model for writers seeking to encapsulate the particular aesthetic underpinning an *invisiblist* theatre model.

8.3 Towards a Model for a Hybrid Theatre Text.

In regard to a proposed pattern or model for a theatre that blends an *invisiblist* aesthetic whilst still embodying *contemporaneity*, the creative text of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) is one such example. Of course, this pattern is not definitive, and requires further testing in additional creative texts realised for an audience, in order to ascertain its viability.

I would propose that the writer allow the nexus of the creative product stem from a concern of the *now*, in the vein of Blau (1982a) and Boal (1991) as theatre makers. If this aspect of the *peripheral now* happens to be intrinsically linked with political issue, as was the case with *The Rainbow Dark* (2006), there is always the risk that the work will read *only* as a vehicle for an ideology. As Blau (1982a) experienced, this may be problematic, in the sense that the audience critically reject the text on the grounds of *being preached to*. I received a taste of this in terms of the commentary in the inaugural QTC of the political message appearing *laboured*.

Arguably, every artefact borrows from the political matrix, not necessarily in a *partisan* sense, but almost by default, as a product of its time and circumstance. This argument is supported by Jameson's (1991, 1998b) theory that the effacement of borders between art and politics fall away in the thrall of postmodernity (Jameson, 1991, 1998b). This argument is also encapsulated by the words of Keene (2005), as cited by Muh and Bouvier (2005) - "Every public act is political" (Muh and Bouvier, 2000: 5).

To caution against such a political theatre backlash however, or against audience aversion to overt political messages, where the play in performance effects a sense of rhetoric or diatribe, the author might temper politics with aspects of an *invisiblist* aesthetic. I would advise that the writer be guided by *invisiblist* principles to subvert the content and avoid the effect of rhetoric or of didacticism, by employing an *otherness* of form, character or language. This approach, essentially constituting a *light touch*, might yield the infinite possibilities and the ambiguities that reward the writer and audience in the pathway towards realising a play's meaning for themselves. Perhaps somewhere in here lies the model for *contemporaneity* in theatre.

The experience of this study demonstrates that there is great potential for extending concepts of *otherness* further in each of these aspects: form, character and/or language. In the instance of both the pilot study and the larger text, I became caught between pursuing an *invisiblist* form and being effectively seduced by conventional notions of structure via dramaturgical input. While the latter has the advantage of making the text overtly accessible for the audience, for me, it somewhat limits the interpretivity and levels of ambiguity that an *invisiblist* writer strives for.

Thus, greatly enhancing this process would be the exploration of an innovative new dramaturgical model – one complementing the *invisiblist* aesthetic and writing process. The theatre writing model corresponding with an Aristotlean-derived approach, is not necessarily always suited to an *invisiblist* text. Rather than attempting to develop a new text in a familiar or existing dramaturgical frame, a new model may foster *otherness*. By eschewing an approach featuring three act structure, linear narrative and definitive meaning, and privileging an approach extending upon Dramaturge One's notion of *servicing the metaphor*, this nexus of proposed new model may be found.

I relish the idea of exploring the potentialities of these models further in ongoing and future projects.

8.4 Concurrent and Future Directions

In terms of the direction and development of my praxis, there exist several concurrent projects, in addition to projects on the immediate horizon, through which I intend to extend my creative energies. Throughout my praxis I will be furthering the exploration and development of *writerly* aesthetics such as that of the *invisiblist* theatre aesthetic pursued in this research.

My attention to language in the writing process as evidenced by the considered plotting of the rhythms encapsulating the sisters' dialogue and the interpretive and open-ended stage directions which support the idea that language and aural qualities are perhaps the most privileged of the *invisiblist* aspects in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). In late 2005, I attended a workshop on the subject of writing drama for radio, hosted by two producers from the ABC Radio National broadcast *Airplay*. For these producers, language is the mainstay of, or the most useful mode of communication for, the writer in this medium. This is because the radio play experience is primarily an aural one for the audience, which is effectively a *listening* one. Arguably there exist no tangible visual signifiers in the radio play experience, as opposed to *live* performance. In radio, the author crafts and shapes the language to construct another type of visual image. This image takes place in the mind of the audience and is completely realised in imagination. The realisation, when produced verbally cues the visual, albeit in the stage that is the listener's mind. In many ways radio might be considered one of the most interpretive mediums, as the visual factors, while cued by both the *writerly* text and the performative delivery, are finally realised by the audience, in a myriad of different ways due to their idiosyncratic listening. For the producers, in the radio format, virtually anything is possible as the theatrical visual parameters are removed and disbelief is suspended by possibility.

Hence one such project is the adaptation of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) into *radio play* format. After regarding initial feedback to early drafts, in conjunction with my experience of the reading and the performances, I considered my text conducive to an adaptation for the radio play medium. This is largely due to the

privileging of *language* in the text, one of the emergent outcomes of the study and creative process.

As discussed above, in the process of styling an *invisiblist* text, one of my key concerns was the exploration of a theatre language exhibiting *otherness*. This language-based interplay is something I consider conducive to the radio medium. As such I generally did not attempt to re-draft the dialogue in any way, but rather to enhance and build upon the aural qualities and potentialities.

Also, in a *formal* sense, the interpretive stage directions provided throughout the text, such as the sound effect of fear signalling the presence of The People From Elsewhere provides scope for a radio producer. Their role involves interpreting how best to pattern or texture the world of the play aurally; which is perhaps the best signifier of this particular world. I retained such stage directions in the radio draft version of *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) in order to allude to the presence of The People From Elsewhere and provide scope for a producer in the creation of the play's world.

My decision to adapt *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) into a radio medium was also a function of the realization that it would extend the life of the play. If contracted for production it would constitute a further, different, realisation of the play, potentially reach new audiences and further extend the *invisiblist* exploration.

Thus, I sent my radio draft to the ABC Radio Regional Production Fund for consideration for programming. At this time of writing, *The Rainbow Dark* (2006) is contracted for production in 2008 with ABC Radio National in their Airplay program, and has been assigned an expert producer. This means that the show will be cast, rehearsed and pre-recorded, before being broadcast in two separate thirty-minute timeslots, with the potential for a third broadcast. The writer's role in this production process may involve some editing in regard to the text length for the allocated time, and potentially being on-hand in the recording studio in the production/recording phase for the practitioners.

The second creative project I will be undertaking in the near future is the scripting of a full-length play taking its cue from the celebration of the state of Queensland's 150th anniversary. I have been commissioned by Just Us Theatre Ensemble, along with three other writers to produce a text that reflects upon notions of Queensland identity.

In this work, with a current working title of *The Shining Path* (2007), I explore the journey of two men, Len and Dale on the road back to friendship. The current synopsis reads:

Meet Len. He works in middle level bureaucracy - Consumer Complaints Division. His special talent is answering phones. When Len's old mate Dale bursts back into his life, some twenty years later and minus a leg, the pair embark on a madcap, unwieldy train trip around Queensland, where the past and the present collide.

The Shining Path follows two map-less blokes on a buoyant, somewhat random train journey around Queensland. Quirky, sometimes sad, and often hilarious, the play visits the iconic, familiar, as well as the out of the way places that are unique to this great state.

With the help of a host of storytelling Queenslanders they meet along the way, including a nun, a miner and a slightly sinister Mr Whippy, will Len and Dale find the shining path back to friendship?

Touching on universal themes of friendship, betrayal and redemption, the play celebrates all that is broken, beautiful, and bizarre about your sunny patch.

Who will Len and Dale meet in your town?

(Carless, 2007)

While the political themes appear to be more latent, the *invisiblist* aspects are ensconced in *otherness*, embodied in a host of characters that Len and Dale meet along the way: outcasts, loners and those who are longing. These characters (up to 10), will be played by just two actors, one male and one female. This exploration of *otherness* in relation to character will expand upon the preoccupations of this study. This will be in terms of looking at different character arcs, as occurred with Gloria in *The Rainbow Dark* (2006). It might also address a deeper exploration of the liminal state in relation to character – a feature of *invisiblist* theatre still somewhat untapped.

The Shining Path (2008) would also seem to explore intersections of *now*, blurring the past and the present along the way, as evidenced by Len and Dale's reconciliation of their friendship. This will have implications for form. While the play remains grounded in narrative, there is the sense that characters shift fluidly between realities – the past and the present, or, the *immediate now*.

There are also implications for dramaturgy and the development process in this new *invisiblist* text. That is, the writer might actively seek out collaboration with a dramaturge pursuing a model complementing the *Invisiblist* writing process, that is, one that privileges an otherness of form, character and/or language. This would help ensure that the writer continues to move towards a text that celebrates ambiguities in its *live* realisation.

Thus this creative project, *The Shining Path* (2008) might facilitate further research into, and extend upon, the concepts privileged in this study - the notions of *invisiblist* theatre and the intrinsic notion of *now*. In order to continue to explore the possibilities of *otherness* in this theatrical aesthetic, a new study might particularly focus on *form*, by looking to the work of contemporary practitioners. This includes not only writers, but also contemporary theatre makers who inter-splice this age-old art form with new media. By undertaking further research projects into the ways conventional theatre structures may be enhanced or subverted by new technologies, such as through digital technology

and new media, the pathway towards *contemporaneity* and manifesting the *invisible* in performance may become even more visible.

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APPENDIX A:
DRAFTS OF *SHADOW PLAY* AND *THE RAINBOW DARK*

A.1 Draft One of Shadow Play

Shadow Play

by Victoria Carless

Copyright 2005

Characters: Reg, a retired school teacher, 65

Oepi, a mermaid, 19 ish

A classroom. There are two dressmaker dummies in the room. They wear half finished skirts. There is also an aquarium. It has marbles in the bottom of the tank. Oepi is hiding somewhere in the room, maybe behind the fish tank.

Reg enters. He flicks on the lights. He surveys the room. He walks over to the fish tank. He retrieves a marble from his pocket. He holds it up to the light. He drops the marble into the tank. He walks to the blackboard. He writes his name on it. He bangs two chalk dusters together and walks through the chalk dust haze, inhaling deeply. He pulls out some sewing. He holds it up – it looks like a skirt. It has a gathered seem up the front. He sighs and starts to unpick it. He goes up to the dressmaker's dummies.

Reg: Hello ladies.

Holds up the skirt to one of them.

Reg: Woeful eh?

He bows before her

Looking lovely this evening my dear.

He takes the dummy in his arms and begins to dance with it – a waltz or a tango. Oepi emerges from her hiding spot, drawn to the shadows of the dancers. She begins to shadow dance with them. Reg does not see her until quite a way into the dance. Perhaps she is in his light – on or near his shadow. He stops abruptly. Has a heart attack-esque moment.

Reg: Holy - !
Blimmin' heck! You scared the bejesus outta me!

Pauses to regain breath.

I'll have to change me daks now.

Pause

You the new cleaner then?

Oepi: *(nods)* You're a good dancer.

Reg: Ta. *(Gestures to dummies)* They don't get out much. Least I can do ya see.

Oepi: What are you making?

Reg: To tell you the truth, I don't really know. Finishing it for me wife. I think it's a skirt but then there's this bloody seam! Looks like a flippin' tail.

Oepi: (Touching the fabric) It's nice. Like a purple monkfish sky. Or a broken sea.

(Pause)

I saw your marble.

Reg: Listen, you shouldn't be here. It's not ...applicable. Trespassing! That's what it is!

Oepi: It reminded me of one from a long time ago. It was clear with the universe caught inside.

Reg: Oh yeah? I had one like that myself. Dropped it. When I was a kid. In a big fish tank. May as well have been the ocean!

Oepi: I'm sorry I frightened you.

Reg: Well it's OK - just don't go around eyeballing people's marbles! It's not the done thing!

Oepi: I live here.

Reg: So did I! You don't see me wriggling around in the dark. Why'd you sneak up on a fella like that? Gave me a deep sea chest pain ya did!

Oepi: It was your dancing...something about your shadow.

Reg: Christ girl! What are you? A neck? I'll have to tell the principal. It's not allowed. He'll sort it out.

Oepi: Are *you* allowed?

Reg: What's that?

Oepi: Does he know *you* sneak in here?

Reg: I think I'm entitled! Taught here 42 years!

Pause

And what for? A bunch of confiscated marbles?

Pause

Roger wouldn't mind.

Pause

It's not like I'm doing anything wrong.

Pause

I'm just here to sew.

Pause

I wouldn't fondle someone's shadow!

Pause

I feel all het up.

Pause

I need some water.

Pause

I see your soft shape and I think things.

Oepi: It drew me in. Your shadow. I thought if I could just touch it -

Reg: I don't like this talk!

Oepi: get inside it -

Reg: I'm a married man! Was.

Oepi: things might be ok.

Reg: I won't have it!

Oepi: I might be real -

Reg: You're not having it!

Oepi: realised. Girl. Woman.

Reg: I'm doing it!

Oepi: Instead of ocean. Fin. Fish.

Reg: This'll learn ya!

He turns off the lights. They are now in complete darkness. Only their voices can be heard. There is a pause.

Oepi: Would you rather be a bird or fish?

Reg: What sort of question is that?

Oepi: If you're Fish it's easy to understand. You see, people think I'm fragile. That I'm shell. That their fingers can sift like sand, through me. But they can't. I'm not.

Pause

I'm strong, dorsal fin, motherfucker.

Pause

Shadow stealer.

Pause

I'm not lonely.

Pause

Don't contemplate me.

Pause

Or I'll smack your teeth in.

Reg: I'm sitting here with my fingers smelling of take away. I know about loneliness.

Pause

My wife made these meals for me before she died. Put em in the freezer. Some sort of casserole with green bits in it.

Pause

Some people are happy to stay in the shallows.

Pause

Can't bring myself to eat them.

Pause

Oepi: I have such a deep sea chest pain.
It seems like all the sadness of the sea is rolled up inside me and I can foam and crash all I want....

Pause

Don't pretend to me you're an ocean floor.

Reg: I would never.

Pause

A bird I think. Because then I might see my wife. I reckon she'd be the type to sit on a cloud.

Oepi: I came here in a shell when I was very young. For a long time I lived in a large tank. An aquarium. I had to hide. So the people who came to see the sharks and the angelfish would not be frightened. There was a man who looked after me. A marine biologist. He taught me things. On dark nights we would take walks to the sea. He told me I was different. From the people outside the tank. And the creatures inside. That I was the most beautiful of girls... and of fish.

Pause

On these nights, I drowned inside myself.

Pause

On these nights, he would take little sips from glass that looked like light, of a drink that looked like blood. And he would look at me with his red wine eyes and say daddy's long legs...

Pause

One day somebody saw me in the tank. It was time for me to leave. When I asked my biologist what I should do, he told me, to belong to this world I must take a shadow. He said this would be my lover.

Pause

I'd never had a shadow.

Pause

I've never had a toothbrush.

Reg: Me neither. Just a gaunt outline where one should be.

Pause

Why this one?

Oepi: There was a boy once. At the aquarium. He saw me. He was not afraid. He gave me a gift. - a small shiny ball of clear glass.

Reg: With the universe inside. It was my favourite.

Oepi: I still have it.

Reg: Show me.

Oepi: Turn on the light.

There is a pause. Reg turns the lights on. Oepi is holding the marble out for him to inspect. He takes it.

Reg: I remember when I dropped it. A splash like a world ending. You caught it in your tail, like a precious pearl. I went back to find you many times but never could. You were lost amongst the starfish and bottom dwellers.

Pause

What must I do?

Oepi: Touch me.

Reg touches Oepi. Nothing happens. He embraces her. Still nothing happens. (Projection or enhancement of their shadows would be helpful here). Reg has an idea. He finds his sewing. He takes it to her.

Reg: A purple monkfish sky. A breaking sea.

He puts the skirt on. It is a tail! He becomes a merman!

It's a dark night. Let's drown inside ourselves.

Oepi: My shadow, my lover, lost in a little, big universe...

She picks him up. They exit. Lights down.

A.2 Draft Two of Shadow Play

Shadow Play

by Victoria Carless

Copyright 2005

Characters: Reg, a retired school teacher, 65

Oepi, a mermaid, 19ish

A classroom. There are two dressmaker's dummies in the room. They wear half finished skirts. There is also an aquarium. It has marbles in the bottom of the tank. Oepi is hiding somewhere in the room, unseen by Reg and the audience. She is waiting for him.

Reg enters. He flicks on the lights. He surveys the room. He walks over to the fish tank. He retrieves a marble from his pocket. He holds it up to the light. He drops the marble into the tank. He pulls out some sewing. He holds it up – it looks something like a skirt. It has a gathered seam up the front. He sighs and starts to unpick it. He goes up to the dressmaker's dummies.

Reg: Hello ladies.

Holds up the piece of sewing up to one of them.

Reg: Woeful eh?

He bows before her.

You are looking lovely this evening, my dear.

He takes the dummy in his arms and begins to dance with it – a waltz or a tango. Oepi emerges from her hiding spot, drawn to the shadows of the dancers. She begins to shadow dance with them. Reg does not see her until quite a way into the dance. Perhaps she is in his light – on or near his shadow. He stops abruptly. Has a heart attack-esque moment.

Reg: Holy - ! Blimmin' heck! You scared the bejesus outta me!

Pauses to regain breath.

I'll have to change me daks now.

Pause

You the new cleaner then?

Oepi: *(nods)* You're a good dancer.

Reg: Ta. *(Gestures to dummies)* They don't get out much. Least I can do.

Oepi: What are you making?

Reg: Tell you the truth, I don't really know. I think it's a skirt. But then there's this bloody seam!

Oepi: *(Touching the fabric)* It's nice. Like a purple monkfish sea.

Pause

I saw your marble.

Reg: *(Puts down sewing)* Listen, you shouldn't be here. It's not ...appropriate. Trespassing! That's what it is!

Oepi: It reminded me of one from before. It was clear with a blue promise inside.

Reg: Oh yeah? I had one like that myself. When I was a little tacker. Dropped it in a big fish tank. May as well have been the ocean!

Oepi: I'm sorry I frightened you.

Reg: It's alright. Just don't go around eyeballing people's marbles! It's not the done thing!

Oepi: I'm allowed here. Just for a bit. Til I find something.

Reg: Is that right?

Pause

Why'd you sneak up on a fella like that? Gave me a deep sea chest pain ya did!

Oepi: It was your dancing...something about your shadow.

Pause

I've been watching.

Reg: I'll have to tell the principal. He'll sort it out. You understand? Wriggling around in the dark! We can't have it!

Oepi: Are *you* allowed?

Reg: Think I'm entitled! Taught here 42 years!

Pause

And what for? A bunch of confiscated marbles!

Rog wouldn't mind.

Pause

Wouldn't know if his arse was on fire!

Pause

It's not like I'm doing anything wrong.

Pause

I'm just here to sew.

Pause

Purple monkfish sea.

Pause

I feel all het up.

Pause

I see your soft shape and I think things.

Pause

I need some water.

Oepi goes to the fish tank. She scoops some water up in a glass. She returns to Reg and throws it over him.

Christ girl! Wasn't ready for that!

Oepi: It drew me in. Your shadow. I thought if I could just touch it -

Reg: I don't like this talk!

Oepi: get inside it -

Reg: I'm a married man!

Oepi: things might be ok.

Reg: Was. I won't have it!

Oepi: I might be real -

Reg: You're not having it!

Oepi: realised. Girl. Woman.

Reg: This'll learn ya!

Oepi: Instead of ocean. Fin. Fish.

Reg: No shadow play here!

He turns off the classroom lights. They are now in darkness. Only the light on the fish tank is on. Reg retrieves his sewing and sits by this light to continue his sewing.

I don't have time for such rot. I'm working something out!

Oepi: I could help...

Reg: You've done enough.

Pause

Oepi: Would you rather be a bird or fish?

Reg: What sort of question is that?

Oepi: People think I'm fragile. That I'm shell. That their fingers can sift like sand, through me. But they can't. I'm not.

Pause

I'm strong. Dorsal fin. Mother-fucker.

Pause

Shadow stealer.

Pause

And I'm not lonely.

Pause

Don't contemplate me.

Pause

Or I'll smack your teeth in.

Reg: I'm sitting here with my fingers smelling of take away.

Pause

I know about loneliness.

Pause

My wife made me dinners before she died. Put em in the freezer. Some sort of casserole with green bits in it.

Pause

Some people are happy to stay in the shallows.

Pause

Can't bring myself to eat them.

Pause

I have such a deep sea chest pain.

Oepi: Don't pretend you're an ocean floor.

Reg: I would never!

He stops sewing.

A bird I think. Because then I could see my wife. I reckon she's the type to sit on a cloud.

Oepi: I came here in a shell. When I was very young. For a long time I lived in a large tank. There was a man who looked after me. Taught me things. He told me I should hide. From the people outside the tank. And the creatures inside. On dark nights we would take walks to the sea. On these nights he told me that I was the most beautiful of girls... and of fish.

Pause

On these nights, I drowned inside myself.

Pause

On these nights, he would take little sips from glass that looked like light, of a drink that looked like blood. And he would look at me with his red wine eyes and say daddy's long legs...

Pause

One day somebody saw me. The man said I must leave. That I should take a shadow. He said this would be my lover.

Pause

I'd never had a shadow.

Pause

I've never had/

Reg: Me neither.

He goes over to the dummy. Touches it softly.

Oepi: A toothbrush.

Pause

There was a boy once. He saw me. He gave me a gift – a small clear glass ball.

Reg: *(Stops sewing)* With a blue promise inside. It was my favourite.

He embraces the dummy.

Oepi: I still have it.

Reg: Show me.

Oepi: Let me turn on the light.

Reg nods his consent. He is still embracing the dummy when the lights are switched on. Oepi holds the marble out to him. He takes it.

Reg: I remember when I dropped it. A splash like a world ending. You caught it in your tail, like a precious pearl. I went back to find you many times but never could.

Pause

What do I have to do?

Oepi: Touch me.

Reg moves from the dummy to touch Oepi. They wait. Nothing happens.

Dance with me.

They begin to dance. Still nothing happens. (Projection or enhancement of their shadows would be helpful here).

Reg: It's not working.

They stop dancing. A pause.
Oepi: It must be a dark night...No shadow to drown inside.

Reg: No.

Reg retrieves his sewing. He takes it to her.
A fish.

He puts the skirt on. It is a tail. He becomes a merman.

Oepi: And we'll swim in a purple monkfish sea.

Reg: I need some water...

She picks him up. They exit. Lights down.

The Rainbow Dark

a stage play

by Victoria Carless

Copyright 2006

Characters

Gloria late 60's
Babs mid 60's
Sylvia a dog. She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this. Only Babs can hear her.
Donald a butcher, early 60's, courting Gloria
Newsreader no specified gender or age

Setting

A living room/ a kitchen/ a cupboard under the stairs.

Time

Early Evening

Prologue

There is the sound of footsteps. Low cries of people incarcerated, muffled by a heavy door. The language is indistinguishable. The cries increase as the footsteps approach. The door is slowly opened. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. A tray of food is set down. Silence. The door closes slowly. Muffled sounds of desperate eating. Fade out.

BABS and GLORIA are sitting down to their evening cuppa. Rattling of tea tray, clinking of fine bone china teacups on saucers and so on. The ladies lower themselves down onto plastic covered couch. SYLVIA enters - sound of a dog's paws on plastic carpet runner.

GLORIA: Sit, Sylvia!

Snuffling of SYLVIA as she settles.

That cursed dog. You really should have her put down. She snores so.

Pause

BABS: Fancy a cuppa?

GLORIA: Lovely.

BABS: I'll just pop my teeth in.

Sound of teeth clinking in a glass and smacking insertion into BABS mouth. BABS pours tea.

BABS: Gloria, darling?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Are these your teeth or mine?

GLORIA: Let me see.

Sound of sucking and dentures clacking as BABS removes them and GLORIA tries to fit them

They're yours, pet.

Sound of BABS re-fitting her dentures – pop!

BABS: Thank you dear.

Pause

One sugar or two?

GLORIA: Two, dear.

Pause

I don't know why you ask. I've been taking my tea the same way for fifty years. Sisters should come to know these things.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: It's always been white with two sugars. Except of course when Teddy Hunt was courting. Then it was one. Watching my weight you know.

BABS: Yes. Indeed. A lady must never appear to overindulge.

BABS takes a sip of her tea

GLORIA: Or slurp.

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?

BABS: Yes, lovey. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the Fridge.

GLORIA: Good. I hope you were economical.

BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.

GLORIA: A smidgeon of vegemite?

BABS: A speck of jam.

GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.

BABS: I know, dear.

GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the government. It's only a token, mind.

BABS: Of course, lovey.

GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.

BABS: That's very true, dear.

GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?

BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk.

GLORIA: Not everyone could do it, could they? Take on this type of responsibility. It's not for everyone.

BABS: No they couldn't. No indeed. We're a special two.

Pause

GLORIA: Take Helen from down the road. She couldn't handle it. Only lasted two weeks. And she claims to be a Modern Woman!

Pause

Or Mrs Robertson, at number three. Couldn't hack it either. Gave it away after a month. Just gave them up – fancy! Imagine the bureaucratic headache! I think some of her lot are mixed in with ours now.

Pause

And she had a *husband*.

BABS: They just couldn't take it, it seems. The thumps under the stairs.
The cries in the night.

Pause

The voices in the dark.

GLORIA: Don't think of that, Barbara. Don't speak of it. It's a minor inconvenience. Compared to the good we're doing.

BABS: (*Reminding herself*) Yes, yes don't dwell. It's for the greater good.

There is a low muffled moan. They pause.

GLORIA: Besides it won't be too much longer now.

BABS: Yes, there will be a solution soon. A government action to address the issue.

GLORIA: A policy amendment.

BABS: A law.

GLORIA: A constitutional rectification.

BABS: A by-law.

A slightly louder muffled moan. They pause.

GLORIA: Anyway, there'll be something done to maintain the agenda.

BABS: Something significant will be done soon.

Pause

BABS: How long has it been, exactly?

GLORIA: How long? I'd say, at a guess, about 12 months.

BABS: About a year.

GLORIA: That's right, about 12 months.

BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.

GLORIA: We've had Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.

BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for ONE YEAR.

There is a muffled cry, louder than before. Longer pause.

GLORIA: Speaking of which.

BABS: It must be just about time to feed them.

GLORIA: It's your turn I believe. I did it last night.

Pause

BABS: How many are there, do you think?

GLORIA: I don't know. I never look.

BABS: Well, what did the booking sheet say?

GLORIA: I can't remember. Twenty or twenty-five.

BABS: There would be at least half a dozen children.

GLORIA: I never look.

BABS: At least six kids.

GLORIA: I don't look. Can't bear to see their eyes.

A louder muffled cry. Pause

GLORIA: The seven o'clock report will be on in a minute.

She switches the television on .An even louder muffled cry.

BABS: They're making quite a racket.

GLORIA: Turn it up, dear.

Fade in of news intro music, increasingly louder.

BABS: *(Over news intro)* Do you think I've made enough?

GLORIA: Enough what?

BABS: Sandwiches. Do you think they get hungry?

GLORIA: What a ridiculous question.

News report begins:

NEWSREADER: And in breaking news, two People from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped, from a sewing room in Marraborne. It is unknown whether the captives had planned the escape, or were freed by someone sympathetic to their cause. The lock to the room was cut by pinking shears. Mrs Feathersworth, the resident, has been taken in for questioning. It is unknown how this incident will affect the government Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't recognise Perfectly Good Borders policy, whereby surplus Peoples are detained in residential civilian properties due to overloading in the major centres....

News report fades out

GLORIA: What an unfortunate event.

BABS: Poor Mrs Feathersworth.

GLORIA: She's only doing her duty.

BABS: Her civil responsibility.

GLORIA: And for what – ingratitude!

BABS: Obviously some people don't know a good sewing room when they see one.

GLORIA: Still, nothing for us to worry about. We're safe here.

BABS: No need to fret.

GLORIA: I'd say it's just a base attempt at federal scare mongering.

BABS: Really just an example of departmental scape- goating.
The doorbell rings – a novelty ring tone. The ladies jump.

GLORIA: Who could it be do you think?

BABS: Oh dear. You don't suppose –

GLORIA: No, I certainly don't.

Pause

I'm the eldest. I'll go.

GLORIA rises from the plastic-covered couch – Ssscchlep! She walks across the plastic carpet runner to the front door. She opens the door.

GLORIA: Donald! What a surprise! Phew – we thought – never mind!
What a lovely surprise! (*Shouting*) Babs! It's Donald! Barbara, Donald the butcher is here!

BABS: (*from living room*) Good evening, Donald!

GLORIA: Come in! You'll have to excuse me, I look a fright here in my night gown - if only we'd known you were coming, we would have dressed appropriately, made a cake, some scones even – Come in!

GLORIA and DONALD walk down the plastic carpet runner and settle on the plastic-covered couch.

DONALD: Good evening ladies. (*Clearing his throat*) I've brought you some sausages.

GLORIA: Donald! How lovely! Thank you.

DONALD: No trouble. Plenty more where they came from.

GLORIA: They'll go nicely with some mash for tea. Of course, Barbara won't have any – she's a strict vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat of any kind. Babs, you'll have to put some mince out for yourself pet.

BABS: Yes, dear.

DONALD: There are some nice bones for the dog too.

GLORIA: That really wasn't necessary.

BABS: Thank you Donald. Sylvia will love them.

Sylvia barks. Pause

DONALD: Everything alright with you two?

GLORIA: Of course. We're fine.

BABS: We're well. Really quite good.

DONALD: Good. Glad to hear it. I'm relieved in fact.

Pause

Truth be told, I was worried. You have ladies have taken on quite a responsibility. A burden, one might say. And I thought, maybe with all the unrest – the recent escapes and whatnot – I thought you might be having a hard time of it ...what with your... charges ...and all.

GLORIA: Nonsense. Not at all.

BABS: Everything's peachy.

DONALD: Well that's good. That's wonderful news. It's just... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you, Gloria – to either of you, I mean...

GLORIA: That's sweet! Isn't that sweet, Babs, pet? Donald was worried about us!

BABS: It's sweet.

GLORIA: But you needn't worry. We're perfectly capable.

BABS: We can manage.

GLORIA: Now let us hear no more on the matter. How is business, Donald?

DONALD: As well as to be expected, Gloria.

GLORIA: Whatever do you mean?

DONALD: Admittedly, things have been quiet. A lot of my customers are feeling the strain, what with all the extra mouths to feed. Let's just say, roast beef isn't at the top of their shopping list.

GLORIA: Yes, times are rather difficult. Money is tight. But surely a little chuck steak is in the budget for most? Perhaps a lamb chop or two?

BABS: Not much left over for luxuries these days is there?

Pause

Things like Meat.

Pause

Or fresh air

Pause

Or freedom.

Pause

GLORIA: But there are benefits. Anyone who provides appropriate accommodation receives financial support.

BABS: Maybe it doesn't stretch to the meat budget. What with the extra vegemite on the bill.

GLORIA: Still, we all should do our little bit shouldn't we? It's the patriotic thing.

DONALD: All I know is know is, I can have up to half a side of beef left on any given day.

BABS: That's three and a half bullocks a week!

GLORIA: What are you saying, Donald?

DONALD: Truth be told, I came here for another reason ladies. It's not just a social call.

GLORIA: But I thought... the sausages –

DONALD: I need to ask a favour, Gloria.

GLORIA: Surely you're not suggesting –

DONALD: Gloria, I'm a butcher not a bureaucrat. The fact of the matter is, you have starving people living under your stairs and I have leftover food!

GLORIA: But what you're proposing is illegal!

BABS: It's against government policy.

GLORIA: It's bleeding heart bull.

BABS: It's...it's...it's... politically correct!

GLORIA: I refuse to allow Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit *illegally* from my Land of Plenty!

Pause

There are limits, Donald!

Pause

Look, I never thought I'd be the type to lock people up in a cupboard.

Pause

In a cupboard under my stairs.

Pause

I don't even like stairs. Never did.

Pause

I have a bung hip, you see.

Pause

Makes it difficult, to say the least.

Pause

And as for locking people up, well...

Pause

I think you've forgotten something.

Pause

Something very important.

Pause

It's a very big cupboard.

BABS: *(Helpfully)* At least four feet wide.

GLORIA: I didn't realise you felt so strongly about the issue Donald.

Pause

Is this going to affect our courtship?

Pause. SYLVIA the dog passes wind.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You naughty girl! Take her away, Barbara!

BABS: Yes lovey. Come on, Sylvia. Shall I put the kettle on then? Tea anyone?

DONALD: I'd love a cuppa. I take it black with two sugars please.

GLORIA: White with *one*, dear.

BABS: Back in a jiffy then.

BABS rises from the plastic covered couch - Ssscchlep! she walks across the plastic carpet runner to the kitchen. SYLVIA pads after her.

GLORIA: I am so sorry about our unsavoury dog, Donald. She really ought to be put down. Or dumped.

DONALD: No bother at all. Interesting name for canine. Very distinguished.

GLORIA: Babs named her. After a poet or some such maudlin personage. She reads far too much...

DONALD: The dog does appear to have a melancholy spirit...

GLORIA: Indeed. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the sausages... (*she giggles*)

Fade into conversation with BABS and SYLVIA in the kitchen. The sound of kettle being filled, cups assembled and so on.

BABS: Fancy that! Of all things! Did you hear that, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I did. One sugar – fancy it. She's coming on a bit strong.

BABS: I didn't mean that exactly.

SYLVIA: I suppose he did bring her sausages...

BABS: I was talking about Donald's suggestion.

SYLVIA: Of course.

BABS: Do you think he has a point?

SYLVIA: Well it's very contentious issue Babs, but like the man said, he does have leftovers.

BABS: It's certainly very *humane* of him.

Pause

Sylvia, you don't think that woman on the news let those people out *deliberately* do you?

Pause

How could she do it? Go against government policy like that? We all have to do our bit, even if it means putting ourselves out. If it's for the greater good...

SYLVIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected I suppose...

BABS: What will happen to the escapees, do you think?

SYLVIA: It won't be easy for them on the outside, that's a fact. But they've travelled too far to be locked in a sewing room.

Pause

Or a cupboard under somebody's stairs.

BABS: I do have to admit, Sylvia, it's dreadfully inconvenient. What with all their crying, the endless sandwich making and so on. It gets me quite anxious sometimes. Frankly I don't blame that Mrs Feathersworth woman!

SYLVIA: Why, those people under your stairs have don't know how good they've got it! Free accommodation, all the vegemite sangers they can eat...

BABS: Don't forget the jam ones for the children.

SYLVIA: The children, especially, are having a wonderful time. I heard them playing a game the other day. Something to do with aliens...

BABS: That doesn't sound nice.

SYLVIA: The baby's grown too. He's almost walking now...

BABS: I didn't know there was a baby!

SYLVIA: Yes, he was born right there in the cupboard. You didn't hear the mother labouring?

BABS: I thought all that screaming might have been part of some ritual – a cultural thing perhaps...

SYLVIA: Spoke his first word the other day. Do you know what it was?

BABS: No I'm afraid I don't...

SYLVIA: Me neither. I don't speak the language.

BABS: I do feel a tiny bit awful about them being stuck in that little cupboard without fresh air, natural light, or *immediate* access to running water ...

SYLVIA: I'm sure they could catch the condensation from the roof...

BABS: After all, Sylvia, it's probably a good thing that it's so dark in there. Then they can't see what they're missing out on. Us being the lucky country and all...

The kettle begins to boil/scream. It underscores the following section.

SYLVIA: Close your eyes, Babs.

BABS: Ok dear. What for?

SYLVIA: Don't you worry. Are they shut tight?

BABS: Yes dear.

SYLVIA: What do you see?

BABS: Nothing, of course.

SYLVIA: Press your hand to your eyes. Close out the light. Now what do you see?

BABS: Nothing, dear. Only black.

SYLVIA: Press harder. Concentrate.

BABS: I am concentrating.

SYLVIA: Forget about everything else. Forget about trying to see something. Forget about remembering what was there before the darkness. What do you see?

BABS: I told you. Nothing, dear. Blackness.

SYLVIA: Listen closely. Look past the black. Forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true. Look beyond your hands. Look beyond the colour of the dark. What do you see?

BABS: I...nothing really...maybe a hint of red? At the edges.

SYLVIA: Aha!

BABS: It's just a hint, mind...very faint.

SYLVIA: Don't open your eyes! Keep looking into the dark. What else do you see?

BABS: Maybe yellow. Yes, there's a stream of yellow in the centre of the darkness.

SYLVIA: Yes! Yes! And what else?

BABS: Near the red there's... purple. And pink! The pink is bordering the purple!

SYLVIA: Good, Good! Anything else?

BABS: There's orange too. And a bit of green beside the yellow? And blue. Sylvia, there's blue!

SYLVIA: So there is.

The kettle sings.

BABS: My goodness, it's a rainbow! A rainbow in the dark!

SYLVIA: That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not Respected Perfectly Good Borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark.

The kettle switches off. Pause.

It's teatime, don't you think?

BABS picks up the tea tray. They walk down the plastic carpet runner to the living room and BABS settles herself on the couch.

GLORIA: What on earth was all the yelling about in the kitchen?

BABS: I was just bouncing some ideas around with Sylvia. We go a bit carried away...

GLORIA: Babs supposes she can talk with Sylvia.

DONALD: Gracious. Is that so?

BABS: Well not talk to her exactly...we don't have a conversation as such.

GLORIA: I catch her at it all the time. Waffling on, about goodness knows what, to a *dog*. Really, Donald, sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't have her checked out, if you know what I mean...

BABS: It's more like we share thoughts. We have an unspoken understanding if you like...

DONALD: So it's silent, per say, this conversation?

BABS: Yes. Something like that.

DONALD: But how does Sylvia achieve it? The function of speaking, if I may ask?

SYLVIA: Same as you Donny, old boy. Wobble my lips, flap my tongue a bit and pray that an intelligible sound comes out.

BABS: She doesn't speak as such.

DONALD: You mean to say it's only in your minds?

BABS: In a nutshell, yes.

DONALD: How marvellous.

GLORIA: I've considered selling them to the circus.

SYLVIA: I could bite her...

BABS: You wouldn't really –

There is a loud cry from under the stairs.

GLORIA: Babs, dear, are we forgetting something?

BABS: Yes, of course. I'll attend to them, shall I?

GLORIA: Yes pet. Mind your nightgown this time. Don't let them grab you again.

SYLVIA: A torn slip is not very ladylike is it?

BABS: No dear, I won't. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the couch. Sscchlep! Sound of her slippers on the plastic floor runner. SYLVIA trots after her.

GLORIA: I tell you, it's not proper, Donald. It took me an age to stitch it up last time...

There is the sound of Babs and Sylvia's footsteps. The sound of muffled cries increases as they approach the heavy cupboard door. Babs opens the door slowly. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. There is then silence. Babs sets down the plate of sandwiches. Pause.

BABS: (Whispering) You, know, Sylvia, I've decided to leave the door to the cupboard open for a bit...to let the light in.

SYLVIA: What a good idea. And all while Gloria is otherwise entertained. I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I? Out the back door I think...

The sound of the prisoners walking slowly out, in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. Their footsteps gradually disappear.

BABS: After all, it's dreadfully inconvenient...

Fade into a news report

Newsreader: And in yet another dramatic escape, 25 People From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped from a cupboard under some stairs in East Marraborne. They were previously in the charge of two retired sisters. There have several unconfirmed sightings of them in the company of a small dog...

Epilogue

A cupboard door closing. The sound of silence.

The End.

The Rainbow Dark

a stage play

by Victoria Carless

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Characters

Gloria late 60's
Babs mid 60's
Sylvia a dog. She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this. Only Babs can hear her.
Donald a butcher, early 60's, courting Gloria
Newsreader no specified gender or age

Setting

A living room/ a kitchen/ a cupboard under the stairs.

Time

Early Evening

Suggestions for Sylvia

This character might be realised by an actor playing a "dog" with their body. The dialogue could be pre-recorded and delivered as voiceover, to lend an otherworld quality to the character and to heighten the convention.

Prologue

In darkness. There is the sound of footsteps – those of a woman and a dog. Low cries of people incarcerated, muffled by a heavy door. The language is indistinguishable. The cries increase as the footsteps approach. The door is slowly opened. The dog begins to bark. The sound of ‘fear’ rushes out. A tray of food is set down. Silence. The door closes slowly. Muffled sounds of desperate eating. Fade out.

BABS and GLORIA are sitting down to their evening cuppa. The tea things are assembled on a tray. They use fine bone china. There are three cups. The ladies lower themselves down onto plastic covered couch. Much fussing. The floor is covered in plastic carpet runners. SYLVIA enters.

GLORIA: Sit, Sylvia!

Snuffling of SYLVIA as she settles.

That cursed dog. You really should have her put down. She snores so.

BABS: Yes, dear. Fancy a cuppa? Just a quick one before he arrives?

GLORIA: What a good idea. It'll settle my nerves.

BABS: Lovely. I'll just pop my teeth in.

Sound of teeth clinking in a glass and smacking insertion into BABS mouth. BABS pours tea.

BABS: Gloria, darling?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Are these your teeth or mine?

GLORIA: Let me see.

Sound of sucking and dentures clacking as BABS removes them and GLORIA tries to fit them.

They're yours, pet.

Sound of BABS re-fitting her dentures – pop!

BABS: Thank you, dear.

Pause

One sugar, or two?

GLORIA: Two, dear.

Pause

I don't know why you ask. I've been taking my tea the same way for fifty years. Sisters should come to know these things.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: It's always been white with two sugars. Except of course when Teddy Hunt was courting. Then it was one. Watching my weight you know.

BABS: Yes. Indeed. A lady must never appear to overindulge.

BABS takes a sip of her tea

GLORIA: Or slurp.

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

Gloria, dear?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Will you be having one sugar this evening, do you think?

GLORIA: Well that all depends on *him*, doesn't it?

BABS: I suppose it does rather.

GLORIA: You must always let him lead. And I can't be certain of Donald's intentions at this point.

BABS: Of course. He does pay other visits

GLORIA: Indeed. That is not to say I don't have my hopes for exclusivity.

Sylvia yawns. Loudly.

I honestly don't know why you encourage that dog inside, Barbara. She smells atrocious.

Sylvia snorts.

Not to mention the snoring. We should dump her.

BABS: Yes, my love.

Pause

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?

BABS: Yes, lovey. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the Fridge.

GLORIA: Good. We don't want any fuss while our guest is here.

Pause

I hope you were economical.

BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.

GLORIA: A smidgeon of vegemite?

BABS: A speck of jam.

GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.

BABS: I know, dear.

GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the

government. It's only a token, mind.

BABS: Of course lovey.

GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.

BABS: That's very true, dear.

GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?

BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk.

GLORIA: Not everyone could do it, could they? Take on this type of responsibility. It's not for everyone.

BABS: No they couldn't. No indeed. We're a special two.

Pause

GLORIA: Take Helen from down the road. She couldn't handle it. Donald told me – he calls on her too you know and she only lasted two weeks. And she claims to be a Modern Woman!

Pause

Or Mrs Robertson, at number three. Couldn't hack it either. Gave it away after a month. Just gave them up – fancy! Imagine the bureaucratic headache! I think some of her lot are mixed in with ours now.

Pause

And she had a *husband*.

BABS: They just couldn't take it, it seems. The thumps under the stairs. The cries in the night.

Pause

The voices in the dark.

GLORIA: Don't think of that, Barbara. Don't speak of it. It's a minor inconvenience. Compared to the good we're doing.

BABS: *(Reminding herself)* Yes, yes, don't dwell. It's for the greater good.

There is a low muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks. She looks at BABS and barks again.

GLORIA: *(To SYLVIA)* Quiet!

BABS: Yes, pet. *(To SYLVIA)* Settle down, dear.

GLORIA: Besides it won't be too much longer now.

BABS: Yes, there will be a solution soon. A government action to address the issue.

GLORIA: A policy amendment.
BABS: A law.
GLORIA: A constitutional rectification.
BABS: A by-law.

A slightly louder muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks the begins to whine. She sits up and begs.

GLORIA: Quiet, Sylvia, or I'll muzzle you!
BABS: They always set her off.
GLORIA: She'll annoy the neighbours. They'll get the council onto us.
BABS: Oh dear.
GLORIA: They'll take her away. Pound her up.
BABS: She wouldn't be so fond of that.
GLORIA: For such a nuisance it would be the best thing.

Pause

GLORIA: Anyway, there'll be something done to maintain the agenda.
BABS: Something significant will be done soon.

Pause

BABS: How long has it been, exactly?
GLORIA: How long? I'd say, at a guess, about 12 months.
BABS: About a year.
GLORIA: That's right, about 12 months.
BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.
GLORIA: We've had Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.
BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for ONE YEAR.

There is a muffled cry, louder than before. Longer pause. SYLVIA whimpers but is cut short by A LOOK from Gloria.

GLORIA: Speaking of which.
BABS: It must be just about time to feed them.
GLORIA: It's your turn I believe. I did it last night.

Pause

BABS: How many are there, do you think?

GLORIA: I don't know. I never look.

BABS: Well, what did the booking sheet say?

GLORIA: I can't remember. Twenty or twenty-five.

BABS: There would be at least half a dozen children.

GLORIA: I never look.

BABS: At least six kids.

GLORIA: I don't look. Can't bear to see their eyes.

A louder muffled cry. Pause. SYLVIA begins to cough and retch. She is coughing something up. The sisters watch in horror as she coughs up what looks like a baby slipper.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You wretched thing!

BABS: Sylvia! Naughty!

Pause

What *is* it?

GLORIA: Nothing to speak of. She's been through the bins again. Filthy mongrel.

BABS: It looks a bit like a –

GLORIA: Just a bit of fluff. Clean it up. He'll be here in a minute.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: *(To SYLVIA)* Pull anymore stunts like that and you're out on your ear!

BABS gingerly picks the item up, inspects it and puts it in her pocket.

BABS: He certainly is taking his time. Perhaps he is held up somewhere.

GLORIA: Donald is a busy man, Barbara. Is everything ready?

BABS: Yes I've baked the scones and set out jam and cream –

GLORIA: It's plum, I hope?

BABS: I'm afraid we've run out, dear. We'll have to make do with strawberry...

GLORIA: Well, I suppose it *is* homemade –

BABS: That's sure to impress him.

GLORIA: Quite. How do I look, dear?

BABS: Just lovely, pet. Peach is definitely your colour.

GLORIA: I have been told so, on occasion.

BABS: Although...you don't think....

GLORIA: What?

BABS That it might be ...a touch...just a tad...

GLORIA: Spit it out.

BABS: Inappropriate? A bit *forward*, even? After all, it is a negligee.

GLORIA: It's a *nightgown*. It *is* night-time.

BABS: Is there a difference? I was never certain.

GLORIA: Of course there's a difference.

BABS: But for a visitor... a *man*...

GLORIA: I don't know what you're worried about, Barbara – it's completely lined.

Pause

Besides, sometimes it serves the mature woman well to be *slightly* less than subtle...

BABS considers her own outfit. She undoes her top button.

BABS: How do I look?

GLORIA: Fine, dear. Although it hardly matters, does it.

An even louder muffled cry. SYLVIA howls, then makes barking noises suspiciously like the words: People From Elsewhere Who do not Respect Perfectly Good Borders want to be free! She struggles throughout.

GLORIA: Sylvia, that's it!

BABS: I could almost swear that she's trying to tell us something.

GLORIA: Don't be absurd Barbara!

BABS: You don't think so?

GLORIA: I most certainly do not! I've had enough of this rot! The muzzle is going on!

BABS: Gloria, please, no! She's just a little dog.

Pause

After all, they are making quite a racket tonight. She is sensitive to them.

GLORIA: She should close her ears to it. I do!

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

BABS: Tell me Gloria, do you think I've made enough?

GLORIA: Enough what?

BABS: Sandwiches. Do you think they get hungry?

GLORIA: What a ridiculous question

The doorbell rings – a novelty ring tone. The ladies freeze, then fuss with the couch/room and their clothes.

GLORIA: That's him! You get the door. Where should I sit?

BABS: Don't panic! (*She thinks. Points*) There – that's where the light is softest. And me?

GLORIA: (*Pointing to a dimly lit corner*). Over there I think.

The doorbell rings again – a novelty ring tone. They jump. GLORIA takes her place while Babs rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks across the plastic carpet runner offstage to the front door. The sound of the front door opening.

BABS: Good evening, Donald! What a surprise! What a surprise! Gloria, we have a visitor. Donald is here.

GLORIA: Come in, Donald!

BABS and DONALD enter. They walk down the plastic carpet runner and settle on the plastic-covered couch.

GLORIA: Good evening, Donald. You'll have to excuse me, I look a fright in my night gown - if only I'd known you were coming, we would have dressed appropriately! Do come in!

DONALD: Good evening, ladies. (*Clearing his throat*) I've brought you some sausages.

GLORIA: Donald! How lovely! Thank you.

DONALD: No trouble. Plenty more where they came from.

GLORIA: They'll go nicely with some mash for tea. Of course, Barbara won't have any – she's a strict vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat of any kind. Babs, you'll have to put some mince out for yourself, pet.

BABS: Yes, dear.

DONALD: There are some nice bones for the dog too.

GLORIA: That really wasn't necessary.

BABS: Thank you Donald. Sylvia will love them.

Sylvia barks, trots up to DONALD, sniffs his pockets.

GLORIA: No Sylvia! Do not sniff! Down!

DONALD: It's fine, I -

GLORIA: Down Sylvia! That's enough! Out!

SYLVIA exits, tail between her legs.

BABS: She could smell the bones.

DONALD: What a nice puppy.

GLORIA: I apologise, Donald, for my sister's unsavoury dog. I have told her time and again, no good comes of taking in strays. No good at all!

BABS: She was very weak, you see. She's quite a dear dog really...

DONALD: Seems harmless to me.

GLORIA: I've told her before Donald, You know what they say – "soft heart, soft head".

DONALD: I have to confess I'm a bit of a softie meself, when it comes to animals...

GLORIA: Nonsense, a butcher! A strapping man of meat like you!

DONALD: Gloria, you're embarrassing me,

GLORIA: *(Giggling girlishly)* Oh, Donald! And so to what do we owe the pleasure of your company this evening?

DONALD: No special reason- I was just in the neighbourhood and I thought I might call in...

GLORIA: Babs mentioned you were about.

DONALD: Yes I just dropped in on no. three - she's quite the modern woman you know.

GLORIA: Yes. So we've heard.

Pause

DONALD: But I do enjoy coming here the most. And how are you two my dears?

GLORIA: We're fine, Donald. Couldn't be better.

BABS: We're well. Really quite good.

DONALD: And how are things with the...um...*Arrangement*?

GLORIA: Wonderful. No problems at all.

BABS: Yes everything's peachy.

DONALD: Good. Glad to hear it. I'm relieved in fact.

Pause

Truth be told, I was worried. You have ladies have taken on quite a responsibility. A burden, one might say. And I thought, maybe with all the unrest – the recent escapes and whatnot – I thought you might be having a hard time of it ...what with your... charges ...and all.

GLORIA: Nonsense. Not at all.

BABS: Everything's just super.

Pause

GLORIA: Pardon, Donald, did you say *unrest*?

BABS: You mentioned *escapes*?

DONALD: You haven't heard?

GLORIA: Heard what exactly?

DONALD: It was on the news this morning. Two People from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped, from a sewing room in Marraborne.

GLORIA: How unfortunate!

DONALD: It said in the paper that the lock to the room was cut by pinking shears.

BABS: That sounds like an inside job to me...

DONALD: Mrs Feathersworth – the woman who owned the sewing room, has been taken in for questioning.

BABS: Poor Mrs Feathersworth!

DONALD: They are saying that it may affect government Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't recognise Perfectly Good Borders policy...

GLORIA: Of course it will affect the policy! Ninnies like that Feathersworth woman shouldn't be given such responsibility!

DONALD: The government are desperate Gloria, what with the major centres being overloaded. I suppose they have to take what they can get-

GLORIA: How that woman passed the screening test, I'll never know. Surplus Peoples are only to be detained in *suitable* residential civilian properties. It's in the handbook! Page one!

BABS: You don't think Mrs Feathersworth had anything –

GLORIA: Of course not! It was obviously someone sympathetic to their cause - a bleeding heart who cut the lock for a warm fuzzy!

BABS: But the pinking shears... perhaps it was planned.

DONALD: These things often are...

GLORIA: Nonsense! They escaped of their own accord. She was only doing her duty. Albeit incompetently!

BABS: Her civil responsibility. Bungling non-withstanding.

GLORIA: And for what – ingratitude!

BABS: Obviously some people just don't know a good sewing room when they see one.

GLORIA: Still, nothing for us to worry about. We're safe here.

BABS: No need to fret. Our locks are strong. And there are no pinking shears to speak of.

GLORIA: I'd say it's just a base attempt at federal scare mongering.

BABS: Really just an example of departmental scape- goating.

Pause

BABS: What will happen to them, do you think? The People From Elsewhere Who Don't Respect Perfectly Good Borders?

GLORIA: Don't even consider it Barbara! It's not our concern.

Pause

DONALD: Well it's good. That's wonderful news. I was afraid... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you Gloria – to either of you, I mean...

GLORIA: That's sweet! Isn't that sweet Babs pet? Donald was worried about us!

BABS: It's sweet.

GLORIA: But you needn't worry. We're perfectly capable.

BABS: We're managing quite well.

GLORIA: Now let us hear no more on the matter. How is business, Donald?

DONALD: As well as to be expected, Gloria.

GLORIA: Whatever do you mean?

DONALD: Admittedly, things have been quiet. A lot of my customers are feeling the strain, what with all the extra mouths to feed. Let's just say, roast beef isn't at the top of their shopping list.

GLORIA: Yes, times are rather difficult. Money is tight. But surely a little chuck steak is in the budget for most? Perhaps a lamb chop or two?

BABS: Not much left over for luxuries these days is there?

Pause

Things like Meat.

Pause

Or fresh air

Pause

Or freedom.

Pause

GLORIA: But there are benefits. Anyone who provides appropriate accommodation receives financial support.

BABS: Maybe it doesn't stretch to the meat budget. What with the extra vegemite on the bill.

GLORIA: Still, we all should do our little bit shouldn't we? It's the patriotic thing.

DONALD: All I know is know is, I can have up to half a side of beef left on any given day.

BABS: That's three and a half bullocks a week!

GLORIA: What are you saying, Donald?

DONALD: Truth be told, I came here for another reason ladies. It's not just a social call.

GLORIA: But I thought... the sausages –

DONALD: I need to ask a favour, Gloria.

GLORIA: Surely you're not suggesting –

DONALD: Gloria, I'm a butcher not a bureaucrat. The fact of the matter is, you have starving people living under your stairs and I have leftover food!

GLORIA: But what you're proposing is illegal!

BABS: It's against government policy.

GLORIA: It's bleeding heart bull.

BABS: It's...it's...it's... politically correct!

GLORIA: I refuse to allow Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit *illegally* from my Land of Plenty!

Pause

There are limits, Donald!

Pause

Look, I never thought I'd be the type to lock people up in a cupboard.

Pause

In a cupboard under my stairs.

Pause

I don't even like stairs. Never did.

Pause

I have a bung hip, you see.

Pause

Makes it difficult, to say the least.

Pause

And as for locking people up, well...

Pause

I think you've forgotten something.

Pause

Something very important.

Pause

It's a very big cupboard.

BABS: *(Helpfully)* At least four feet wide.

GLORIA: I didn't realise you felt so strongly about the issue, Donald.

Pause

Is this going to affect our courtship?

SYLVIA trots in and sits in the middle of the room, in full view of all three. She scratches lazily. She has a cardboard sign around her neck with a drawing of a window on it. They all stare at her. Silence.

GLORIA: Cup of tea anyone?

They ignore GLORIA and continue to stare at SYLVIA. A long pause.

DONALD: What an extraordinary thing.

BABS: Sylvia!

DONALD: Did she...do you think the dog did that?

GLORIA: I certainly do not –

BABS: Sylvia! Come here girl!

DONALD: How astonishing! You should register her my dear. With one of those pet talent agencies. She certainly has the skills for it, not to mention the face –

GLORIA: I don't think that would –

DONALD: Perhaps they could mke a movie – one of those documentary type things – you could make quite a lot of money Gloria –

GLORIA: I'm not sure that –

DONALD: At least call in the papers. Science journals would be particularly interested, I'm sure. She could go down in history alongside those monkeys that paint. I once knew a horse that could-

GLORIA: Donald, don't be ridiculous!

BABS: Sylvia, come!

SYLVIA trots over to BABS who pats her and removes the sign.

BABS: It's a sign. Written in A-Language- Other –Than-Perfectly-Good – English!

GLORIA: What concerns me most is: how did she get access to a pen and paper?

DONALD: Where there is a will, there is a way...

All three look at SYLVIA. Pause. SYLVIA passes wind.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You naughty girl! Take her away, Barbara!

BABS: Yes, lovey. Come on, Sylvia. Shall I put the kettle on then? Tea anyone?

DONALD: I'd love a cuppa. I take it black with two sugars please.

GLORIA: White with *one*, dear.

BABS: Back in a jiffy then.

BABS rises from the plastic covered couch and she walks across the plastic carpet runner to the kitchen. SYLVIA pads after her.

GLORIA: I am so sorry about our unsavoury dog, Donald. She really ought to be put down. Or dumped. Perhaps you could do something. After all, you're a butcher.

DONALD: Is that really necessary? No bother at all. Interesting name for canine. Very distinguished.

GLORIA: Babs named her. After a poet or some such maudlin personage. She reads far too much...

DONALD: The dog does appear to have a melancholy spirit...

GLORIA: Indeed. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the sausages... (*she giggles*)

Fade into conversation with BABS and SYLVIA in the kitchen. The sound of kettle being filled, cups assembled and so on.

BABS: Fancy that! Of all things! Did you hear that, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I did. One sugar – fancy it. She’s coming on a bit strong.

BABS: I didn’t mean that exactly.

SYLVIA: I suppose he did bring her sausages...

BABS: I was talking about Donald’s suggestion. About the meat.

SYLVIA: Of course.

BABS: Do you think he has a point?

SYLVIA: Well it’s very contentious issue, Babs, but like the man said, he does have leftovers.

BABS: It’s certainly very *humane* of him.

Pause

Sylvia – Goodness gracious – you’re talking!

SYLVIA: Yes.

BABS: But - I – you – you’ve never spoken before!

SYLVIA: Maybe you just weren’t listening hard enough.

BABS: But how do you do it?

SYLVIA: Same as you dear, wobble my lips, flap my tongue a bit and pray that an intelligible sound comes out.

BABS: But you’re a dog!

SYLVIA: And you’re a nincompoop!

BABS: I beg your pardon?

SYLVIA: As thick as a two by four.

BABS: I’m sorry, I don’t follow.

SYLVIA: I mean, come on, Babs, what do I have to do? All the barking, the begging, the passing of wind - do you think that was all for my own amusement? Do you consider that normal behaviour?

BABS: Yes, well I do, rather. For a *dog*.

Pause

Sylvia, you don't think that woman on the news let those people out *deliberately* do you?

Pause

How could she do it? Go against government policy like that? We all have to do our bit, even if it means putting ourselves out. If it's for the greater good...

SYLVIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected I suppose...

BABS: What will happen to the escapees, do you think?

SYLVIA: It won't be easy for them on the outside, that's a fact. But they've travelled too far to be locked in a sewing room.

Pause

Or a cupboard under somebody's stairs.

BABS: I do have to admit, Sylvia, it's dreadfully inconvenient. What with all their crying, the endless sandwich making and so on. It gets me quite anxious sometimes. Frankly I don't blame that Mrs Feathersworth woman!

SYLVIA: Why, those people under your stairs have don't know how good they've got it! Free accommodation, all the vegemite sangers they can eat...

BABS: Don't forget the jam ones for the children.

SYLVIA: The children, especially, are having a wonderful time. I heard them playing a game the other day. Something to do with aliens...

BABS: That doesn't sound nice.

SYLVIA: The baby's grown too. He's almost walking now...

BABS: I didn't know there was a baby!

SYLVIA: Yes, he was born right there in the cupboard. You didn't hear the mother labouring?

BABS: I thought all that screaming might have been part of some ritual – a cultural thing perhaps...

SYLVIA: Spoke his first word the other day. Do you know what it was?

BABS: No I'm afraid I don't...

SYLVIA: Me neither. I don't speak the language.

BABS: I do feel a tiny bit awful about them being stuck in that little cupboard without fresh air, natural light, or *immediate* access to running water ...

SYLVIA: I'm sure they could catch the condensation from the roof...

BABS: After all, Sylvia, it's probably a good thing that it's so dark in there. Then they can't see what they're missing out on. Us being the lucky country and all...

The kettle begins to boil/scream. It underscores the following section.

SYLVIA: Close your eyes, Babs.

BABS: Ok, dear. What for?

SYLVIA: Don't you worry. Are they shut tight?

BABS: Yes, dear.

SYLVIA: What do you see?

BABS: Nothing, of course.

SYLVIA: Press your hand to your eyes. Close out the light. Now what do you see?

BABS: Nothing, dear. Only black.

SYLVIA: Press harder. Concentrate.

BABS: I am concentrating.

SYLVIA: Forget about everything else. Forget about trying to see something. Forget about remembering what was there before the darkness. What do you see?

BABS: I told you. Nothing dear. Blackness.

SYLVIA: Listen closely. Look past the black. Forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true. Look beyond your hands. Look beyond the colour of the dark. What do you see?

BABS: I...nothing really...maybe a hint of red? At the edges.

SYLVIA: Aha!

BABS: It's just a hint, mind...very faint.

SYLVIA: Don't open your eyes! Keep looking into the dark. What else do you see?

BABS: Maybe yellow. Yes, there's a stream of yellow in the centre of the darkness.

SYLVIA: Yes! Yes! And what else?

BABS: Near the red there's... purple. And pink! The pink is bordering the purple!

SYLVIA: Good, Good! Anything else?

BABS: There's orange too. And a bit of green beside the yellow? And blue.

Sylvia, there's blue!

SYLVIA: So there is.

The kettle sings.

BABS: My goodness, it's a rainbow! A rainbow in the dark!

SYLVIA: That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not Respected Perfectly Good Borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark.

The kettle switches off. Pause.

It's teatime, don't you think?

BABS picks up the tea tray. They walk down the plastic carpet runner to the living room and BABS settles herself on the couch.

GLORIA: What on earth was all the yelling about in the kitchen?

BABS: I was just bouncing some ideas around with Sylvia. We go a bit carried away...

GLORIA: Babs supposes she can talk with Sylvia.

DONALD: Gracious. Is that so?

BABS: Well not talk to her exactly...we don't have a conversation as such.

GLORIA: I catch her at it all the time. Waffling on, about goodness knows what, to a *dog*. Really, Donald, sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't have her checked out, if you know what I mean...

BABS: It's more like we share thoughts. We have an unspoken understanding if you like...

DONALD: So it's silent, per say, this conversation?

BABS: Yes. Something like that.

DONALD: But how does Sylvia achieve it? The function of speaking, if I may ask?

SYLVIA: Same as you, Donny, old boy. Wobble my lips, flap my tongue a bit and pray that an intelligible sound comes out.

BABS: She doesn't speak as such.

DONALD: You mean to say it's only in your minds?

BABS: In a nutshell, yes.
DONALD: How marvellous.
GLORIA: I've considered selling them to the circus.
SYLVIA: I could bite her...
BABS: You wouldn't really –

There is a loud cry from under the stairs.

GLORIA: Babs, dear, are we forgetting something?
BABS: Yes, of course. I'll attend to them, shall I?
GLORIA: Yes, pet. Mind your nightgown this time. Don't let them grab you again. A torn slip is not very ladylike is it?
BABS: No dear, I won't. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the couch. Sscchlep! Sound of her slippers on the plastic floor runner. SYLVIA trots after her.

GLORIA: I tell you, it's not proper, Donald. It took me an age to stitch it up last time...

There is the sound of Babs and Sylvia's footsteps. The sound of muffled cries increases as they approach the heavy cupboard door. Babs opens the door slowly. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. There is then silence. Babs sets down the plate of sandwiches. Pause.

BABS: (Whispering) You, know, Sylvia, I've decided to leave the door to the cupboard open for a bit...to let the light in.
SYLVIA: What a good idea. And all while Gloria is otherwise entertained. I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I? Out the back door I think...

Fade to black. The sound of the prisoners walking slowly out, in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. The lights come up on the living room. Their fading footsteps underscore the following scene:

GLORIA: And as I was saying, Donald, it's all in the thread count.

Pause

What is that noise, do you suppose?

DONALD: What noise? I beg your pardon?
GLORIA: That thumping– it sounds like-
DONALD: Let me just turn up my hearing aid dear...
GLORIA: But, Donald you don't have a hearing aid!

DONALD: Why, that's very true dear – you're quite right –

GLORIA: It sounds like – Barbara! Where is she? She should be back by now.

DONALD: I don't mind her taking a little longer. If you know what I mean.

GLORIA: Oh, Donald!

DONALD: Gloria.

GLORIA: Oh, *Donald...*

DONALD: *Oh, Gloria.*

Sound of footsteps running.

GLORIA: Donald – it's the People From Elsewhere Who Do Not Respect Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: Gloria!

He kisses her. She eventually pushes him away.

GLORIA: Excuse me, Donald, that's lovely, but People From Elsewhere Who Do Not Respect Perfectly Good Borders are escaping!

GLORIA rushes out of the room. Lights up on the cupboard under the stairs. GLORIA enters the cupboard.

GLORIA: Barbara! You bleeding heart! What have you done?

BABS: Well, Gloria, it was dreadfully inconvenient...

BABS and SYLVIA step out of the cupboard. SYLVIA closes the door while GLORIA is still inside.

BABS: Sylvia! You naughty thing.

GLORIA: *(Muffled)* Sylvia, you wretched dog! Barbara, let me out!

BABS: One minute, Gloria. I'll just have to check the policy on that.

GLORIA: *(Muffled)* Get me out!

BABS: Won't be a tick dear. Come on, Sylvia. What page is it in the handbook, do you think?

GLORIA: Barbara! Sylvia! Donald!!

Epilogue

A cupboard door closing. The sound of silence. The End.

A.5 Draft Three of The Rainbow Dark

The Rainbow Dark

a stage play

by Victoria Carless

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Characters

Gloria	late 60's
Babs	mid 60's
Sylvia	a dog. She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this. Only Babs can hear her.
Donald	a butcher, early 60's, courting Gloria

Setting

A living room/ a kitchen/ a cupboard under the stairs.

Time

Early Evening

Suggestions for Sylvia

This character could be realised by an actor embodying a "dog" physically. The dialogue could be pre-recorded and delivered as voiceover, to lend an otherworld quality to the character and to heighten the convention.

Prologue

In darkness. There is the sound of footsteps – those of a woman and a dog. Low cries of people incarcerated, muffled by a heavy door. The language is indistinguishable. The cries increase as the footsteps approach. The door is slowly opened. The dog begins to bark. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. A tray of food is set down. Silence. The door closes slowly. Muffled sounds of desperate eating. Fade out.

BABS and GLORIA enter, to sit down to an evening cuppa. The tea things are assembled on a tray. They use fine bone china. There are three cups. The ladies lower themselves down onto their plastic covered couch. Much fussing. The floor is covered in plastic carpet runners. SYLVIA enters.

GLORIA: Sit, Sylvia!

Snuffling of SYLVIA as she settles.

That cursed dog. You really should have her put down.

Pause

BABS: Yes, dear. Fancy a cuppa? Just a quick one. Before he arrives?

GLORIA: What a good idea. It'll settle my nerves.

BABS: Lovely. I'll just pop my teeth in.

BABS retrieves her teeth from a glass on the tea tray and pops them in her mouth. She pours the tea.

Gloria, darling?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Are these your teeth or mine?

GLORIA: Let me see.

BABS removes the teeth and hands them to GLORIA. GLORIA tries to fit them. A struggle. They do not fit.

They're yours, pet.

GLORIA hands them back to BABS who re-fits them— pop!

BABS: Thank you, dear.

Pause

One sugar or two?

GLORIA: Two, dear.

Pause

I don't know why you ask. I've been taking my tea the same way for fifty years. Sisters should come to know these things.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: It's always been white with two sugars. Except of course when Teddy Hunt was courting. Then it was one. Watching my weight you know.

BABS: Yes. Indeed. A lady must never appear to overindulge.

BABS takes a sip of her tea

GLORIA: Or slurp.

BABS: Yes, pet.

Pause

Gloria, dear?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Will you be having one sugar this evening, do you think?

GLORIA: Well that all depends on *him*, doesn't it?

SYLVIA yawns. Loudly.

I honestly don't know why you encourage that dog inside, Barbara. She smells so.

SYLVIA snorts.

And she snores. We should dump her.

BABS: Yes, my love.

Pause

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?

BABS: Yes, dear. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the fridge.

GLORIA: Good. We don't want any fuss while our guest is here.

Pause

I hope you were economical.

BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.

GLORIA: A smidgeon of Vegemite?

BABS: A speck of jam.

GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.

BABS: I know, dear.

GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the government. It's only a token, mind.

BABS: Of course, dear.

GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.

BABS: That's very true, dear.

GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?

BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk our duty.

GLORIA: Not everyone could do it, could they? Take on this type of

responsibility. It's not for everyone.

BABS: No they couldn't. No indeed. We're a special two.

Pause

GLORIA: Take Helen from number three. She couldn't handle it. She only lasted two weeks. And she claims to be a Modern Woman!

Pause

Or Mrs Robertson, from down the road. Couldn't hack it either. Gave it away after a month. Just gave them up – fancy! Imagine the bureaucratic headache! I think some of her lot are mixed in with ours now.

Pause

And she had a *husband*.

BABS: They just couldn't take it, it seems. The thumps under the stairs. The cries in the night.

Pause

The voices in the dark.

GLORIA: Don't think of that, Barbara. Don't speak of it. It's a minor inconvenience. Compared to the good we're doing.

BABS: *(Reminding herself)* Yes, yes don't dwell. It's for the greater good.

There is a low muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks. She looks at BABS and barks again.

GLORIA: *(To SYLVIA)* Quiet!

BABS: Yes pet, settle down.

GLORIA: Besides, it won't be for too much longer now.

BABS: Yes, there will be a solution soon. A government action to address the issue.

GLORIA: A policy amendment.

BABS: A law.

GLORIA: A constitutional rectification.

BABS: A by-law.

A slightly louder muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks then begins to whine. She sits up and begs.

GLORIA: Quiet, Sylvia!

BABS: They always set her off.

GLORIA: She'll annoy the neighbours. They'll report us.

BABS: Oh dear – will they take her away?

GLORIA: Yes and pound her up.

BABS: She wouldn't be so fond of that.

GLORIA: It's probably the best thing.

Pause

As I was saying, there'll be something done to maintain the agenda.

BABS: Yes, something significant will happen soon.

Pause

How long has it been, exactly?

GLORIA: I'd say, at a guess, about 12 months.

BABS: About a year.

GLORIA: That's right, about 12 months.

BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.

GLORIA: We've had Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.

BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for ONE YEAR. Without even the window open.

There is a muffled cry, louder than before. Longer pause. SYLVIA whimpers but is cut short by A LOOK from GLORIA.

GLORIA: Speaking of which.

BABS: It must be just about time to feed them.

GLORIA: It's your turn I believe. I did it last night.

Pause

BABS: How many are there, do you think?

GLORIA: I don't know. I never look.

BABS: Well, what did the booking sheet say?

GLORIA: I can't remember. Twenty. Or twenty-five.

BABS: There would be at least half a dozen children.

GLORIA: I never look.

BABS: At least six kids.

GLORIA: I don't look. Can't bear their eyes.

A louder muffled cry. Pause. SYLVIA begins to cough and retch. She is coughing something up. The sisters watch in horror as she coughs up what looks like a baby slipper.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You wretched thing!

BABS: Sylvia! Naughty!

Pause

What *is* it?

GLORIA: Nothing to speak of. She's been through the bins again.

BABS: It looks like a -

GLORIA: Just a bit of fluff! We must clean it up! He'll be here in a minute.

BABS: Yes dear.

BABS gingerly picks the item up, inspects it and puts it in her pocket.

BABS: He certainly is taking his time.

GLORIA: Donald, is a busy man, Barbara.

Pause

How do I look, dear?

BABS: Just lovely, pet. Peach is definitely your colour.

GLORIA: I have been told so, on occasion.

BABS: Although...you don't think....

GLORIA: What?

BABS: That it might be ...a touch...just a tad...

GLORIA: Spit it out.

BABS: Inappropriate? A bit *forward*, even? After all, it is a negligee.

GLORIA: It's a *nightgown*. It *is* *night*-time.

BABS: Is there a difference? I was never certain.

GLORIA: Of course there's a difference.

BABS: But for a visitor... a *man*...

GLORIA: I don't know what you're worried about, Barbara – it's completely lined.

Pause

Besides, sometimes it serves the mature woman well to be *slightly* less than subtle...

BABS considers her own outfit. She undoes her top button.

BABS: How do *I* look?

GLORIA: Fine dear.

An even louder muffled cry. SYLVIA howls.

GLORIA: Sylvia, that's it!

BABS: I could almost swear that she's trying to tell us something.

GLORIA: Don't be absurd, Barbara!

BABS: You don't think so?

GLORIA: I most certainly do not! I've had enough!

BABS: Gloria, please, pet.

Pause

After all, they are making quite a racket tonight.

GLORIA: She should close her ears to it. I do!

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

Tell me, Gloria, do you think I've made enough?

GLORIA: Enough what?

BABS: Sandwiches. Do you think they get hungry?

GLORIA: What a ridiculous question!

The door bell rings – a novelty ring tone. GLORIA and BABS freeze, then fuss with the couch/room and their clothes.

GLORIA: That's him! You get the door. Where should I sit?

BABS: Don't panic! *(She thinks. Points)* There – where the light is softest. And me?

GLORIA: *(Pointing to a dimly lit area/the corner)* Over there.

The doorbell rings again – a novelty ring tone. They jump. GLORIA takes her place, while BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks across the plastic carpet runner offstage to the front door. The sound of the front door opening.

BABS: *(Off)* Good evening, Donald! What a surprise! Gloria, we have a visitor - Donald is here.

GLORIA: Come in, Donald!

BABS and DONALD enter. They walk down the plastic carpet runner and settle on the plastic-covered couch.

GLORIA: Good evening, Donald. You'll have to excuse me, I look a fright in my night gown! If only I'd known you were coming - I would have dressed more appropriately! Do come in!

DONALD: Good evening, ladies. *(Clearing his throat)* I've brought you some sausages.

GLORIA: Donald! How lovely! Thank you.

DONALD: No trouble at all. Plenty more where they came from.

GLORIA: They'll go nicely with some mash for tea. Of course, Barbara won't have any – she's a strict vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat of any kind. Babs, you'll have to put some mince out for yourself pet.

BABS: Yes, dear.

DONALD: There are some nice bones for the dog as well.

GLORIA: That really wasn't necessary, Donald.

BABS: Thank you, Donald, Sylvia will love them.

Sylvia barks, trots up to DONALD, sniffs his pockets.

GLORIA: No, Sylvia! Do not sniff! Down!

DONALD: It's fine, I -

GLORIA: Down, Sylvia! That's enough! Out!

SYLVIA exits, tail between her legs.

BABS: She could smell the bones.

DONALD: What a nice puppy.

GLORIA: I apologise, Donald, for my sister's unsavoury dog. I have told her time and again, no good comes of taking in strays. No good at all!

BABS: She's quite a dear dog really...

DONALD: Seems harmless to me.

GLORIA: I've told her before, Donald, You know what they say – "soft heart, soft head".

DONALD: I have to confess I'm a bit of a softie meself, when it comes to animals...

GLORIA: Nonsense, a butcher! A strapping man of meat like you!

DONALD: Gloria, you're embarrassing me,

GLORIA: *(Giggling girlishly)* Oh, Donald! And so to what do we owe the pleasure of your company this evening?

DONALD: No special reason- I was just in the neighbourhood and I thought I might call in...

GLORIA: Babs, mentioned you were about.

DONALD: Yes I just dropped in on no. three - she's quite the modern woman you know.

GLORIA: Yes. So we've heard.

DONALD: But I do enjoy coming here. And how are you two, my dears?

GLORIA: We're fine, Donald. Couldn't be better.

BABS: We're well. Really quite good.

DONALD: And what about ...how are things with the...the um...*Arrangement*?

GLORIA: Wonderful. No problems at all. None whatsoever.

BABS: Yes, everything's peachy.

Pause

DONALD: Good. Glad to hear it. I'm relieved, in fact.

Pause

Truth be told, I was worried. You ladies have taken on quite a responsibility. A burden, one might say. And I thought, maybe with all the unrest – the recent escapes and whatnot – I thought you might be having a hard time of it ...what with your... charges ...and all.

GLORIA: Nonsense. Not at all.

BABS: Everything's just super.

Pause

GLORIA: Pardon, Donald, did you say *unrest*?

BABS: You mentioned *escapes*?

DONALD: You haven't heard?

GLORIA: Heard what exactly?

DONALD: It was on the news this morning. Two People from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped, from a sewing room in Marraborne.

GLORIA: How unfortunate!

DONALD: It said in the paper that the lock to the room was cut by pinking shears.

BABS: That sounds like an inside job to me...

DONALD: Mrs Feathersworth – the woman who owned the sewing room, has been taken in for questioning.

BABS: Poor Mrs Feathersworth!

DONALD: They are saying that it may affect government Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't recognise Perfectly Good Borders policy...

GLORIA: Of course it will affect the policy! Ninnies like that Feathersworth woman shouldn't be given such responsibility!

DONALD: The government are desperate Gloria, what with the major centres being overloaded. I suppose they have to take what they can get-

GLORIA: How that woman passed the screening test, I'll never know. Surplus Peoples are only to be detained in *suitable* residential civilian properties. It's in the handbook! Page one!

BABS: You don't think Mrs Feathersworth had anything –

GLORIA: Of course not! It was obviously someone sympathetic to their cause - a bleeding heart who cut the lock for a warm fuzzy!

BABS: But the pinking shears... perhaps it was planned.

DONALD: These things often are...

GLORIA: Nonsense! They escaped of their own accord. She was only doing her duty. Albeit incompetently!

BABS: Her civil responsibility. Bungling non-withstanding.

GLORIA: And for what – ingratitude!

BABS: Obviously some people just don't know a good sewing room when they see one.

GLORIA: Still, nothing for us to worry about. We're safe here.

BABS: No need to fret. Our locks are strong. And there are no pinking shears to speak of.

GLORIA: I'd say it's just a base attempt at federal scare mongering.

BABS: Really just an example of departmental scape- goating.

Pause

BABS: What will happen to them, do you think? The People From Elsewhere Who Don't Respect Perfectly Good Borders?

GLORIA: Don't even consider it Barbara! It's not our concern.

Pause

DONALD: Well it's good that you're taking it so well. I was afraid ...
It's just... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you, Gloria – to either of you, I mean...

GLORIA: That's sweet! Isn't that sweet, Babs, pet? Donald was worried about us!

BABS: It's sweet, yes.

GLORIA: But you needn't worry. We're perfectly capable.

BABS: We're managing quite well.

GLORIA: Now let us hear no more on the matter. How is business, Donald?

DONALD: As well as to be expected, Gloria.

GLORIA: Whatever do you mean?

DONALD: Admittedly, things have been quiet. A lot of my customers are feeling the strain, what with all the extra mouths to feed. Let's just say, roast beef isn't at the top of their shopping list.

GLORIA: Yes, times are rather difficult. Money is tight. But surely a little chuck steak is in the budget for most? Perhaps a lamb chop or two?

BABS: Not much left over for luxuries these days is there?

Pause

Things like Meat.

Pause

Or fresh air

Pause

Or sunlight on your face in the morning.

Pause

GLORIA: But there are benefits. Anyone who provides appropriate accommodation receives financial support.

BABS: Maybe it doesn't stretch to the meat budget. What with the extra vegemite on the bill.

GLORIA: Still, we all should do our little bit shouldn't we? It's the patriotic thing.

DONALD: All I know is know is, I can have up to half a side of beef left on any given day.

BABS: That's three and a half bullocks a week!

GLORIA: What are you saying Donald?

DONALD: Truth be told, I came here for another reason ladies. It's not just a social call.

GLORIA: But I thought... the sausages –

DONALD: I need to ask a favour, Gloria.

GLORIA: Surely you're not suggesting –

DONALD: Gloria, I'm a butcher not a bureaucrat. The fact of the matter is, you have starving people living under your stairs and I have leftover food!

GLORIA: But what you're proposing is illegal!

BABS: It's against government policy.

GLORIA: It's bleeding heart bull.

BABS: It's...it's...it's... politically correct!

GLORIA: I refuse to allow Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit *illegally* from my Land of Plenty!

Pause

There are limits, Donald!

Pause

Look, I never thought I'd be the type to lock people up in a cupboard.

Pause

In a cupboard under my stairs.

Pause

I don't even like stairs. Never did.

Pause

I have a bung hip, you see.

Pause

Makes it difficult, to say the least.

Pause

And as for locking people up, well...

Pause

I think you've forgotten something.

Pause

Something very important.

Pause

It's a very big cupboard.

BABS: (*Helpfully*) At least four feet wide.

GLORIA: I didn't realise you felt so strongly about the issue Donald.

Pause

Is this going to affect our courtship?

SYLVIA trots in and sits in the middle of the room, in full view of all three. She scratches lazily. She has a cardboard sign around her neck with a drawing of a window on it. They all stare at her. Silence.

GLORIA: Cup of tea, anyone?

Pause. They ignore GLORIA and continue to stare at SYLVIA. A long pause.

DONALD: What an extraordinary thing.

BABS: Sylvia!

GLORIA: This must stop.

BABS: Perhaps it's just starting...

GLORIA: What concerns me most is: how did she get access to a pen and paper?

DONALD: Where there is a will, there is a way...

All three look at SYLVIA. Pause. SYLVIA passes wind.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You naughty girl! Take that offensive creature away, Barbara!

BABS: Yes, lovey. Shall I put the kettle on then? Tea anyone?

DONALD: I'd love a cuppa.

GLORIA: White with *one* dear.

BABS: Back in a jiffy then. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic covered couch and walks across the plastic carpet runner to the kitchen. SYLVIA pads after her.

GLORIA: I must apologise, Donald - I really don't know how much more of this I can take. Perhaps you could do something...after all – you're a butcher....

DONALD: Is that necessary, Gloria? Sylvia's no bother to me. By the by, that's an interesting choice of name for a canine. Very distinguished.

GLORIA: Babs named her. After a poet or some such maudlin personage. She reads far too much...

DONALD: The dog does appear to have an artistic bent...

GLORIA: Indeed. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the sausages... (*she giggles*)

Cross fade to BABS and SYLVIA in the kitchen. BABS fills the kettle and assembles the tea cups.

BABS: Fancy that! Of all things! Did you hear all that Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I did. One sugar – fancy it. She’s coming on a bit strong.

BABS: I didn’t mean that exactly.

SYLVIA: I suppose he did bring her sausages...

BABS: I was talking about Donald’s suggestion. About the meat.

SYLVIA: Of course.

BABS: Do you think he has a point?

SYLVIA: Well it’s very contentious issue Babs, but like the man said, he does have leftovers.

BABS: It’s certainly very *humane* of him.

Pause.

Sylvia – Goodness gracious – you’re talking!

SYLVIA: Yes.

BABS: But - I – you – you’ve never spoken before!

SYLVIA: Maybe you just weren’t listening hard enough.

Pause

I mean, come on, Babs, what do I have to do? All the barking, the begging, the passing of wind - do you think that was all for my own amusement? Do you consider that normal behaviour?

BABS: Yes, well I do, rather. For a *dog*.

Pause

Sylvia, you don’t think that woman Donald let those people out *deliberately*, do you?

Pause

But how could she do it? Go against government policy like that? We all have to do our bit, even if it means putting ourselves out. If it’s for the greater good...

SYLVIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected, I suppose...

BABS: What will happen to the escapees, do you think?

SYLVIA: It won’t be easy for them on the outside, that’s a fact. But they’ve travelled too far to be locked in a sewing room.

(Pause)

Or a cupboard under somebody’s stairs.

BABS: I do have to admit, Sylvia, it's dreadfully inconvenient. What with all their crying, the endless sandwich making and so on. It gets me quite anxious sometimes. Frankly I don't blame that Feathersworth woman!

SYLVIA: Why, those people under your stairs have don't know how good they've got it! Free accommodation, all the vegemite sangers they can eat...

BABS: Don't forget the jam ones for the children.

SYLVIA: The children, especially, are having a wonderful time. I heard them playing a game the other day. Something to do with aliens...

BABS: That doesn't sound nice.

SYLVIA: The baby's grown too. He's almost walking now...

BABS: I didn't know there was a baby! Of course, the little slipper!

(She retrieves it from her pocket)

SYLVIA: A child was born right there in the cupboard. You didn't hear the mother labouring?

BABS: I thought all that screaming might have been part of some ritual – a cultural thing perhaps...

SYLVIA: Spoke his first word the other day. Do you know what it was?

BABS: No I'm afraid I don't...

SYLVIA: Me neither. I don't speak the language.

BABS: I do feel a tiny bit awful about them being stuck in that little cupboard without fresh air, natural light, or *immediate* access to running water...

SYLVIA: I'm sure they could catch the condensation from the roof...

BABS: After all, Sylvia, it's probably a good thing that it's so dark in there. Then they can't see what they're missing out on. Us being the lucky country and all...

The kettle begins to boil/scream. It underscores the following section.

SYLVIA: Close your eyes, Babs.

BABS: Ok, dear. What for?

SYLVIA: Don't you worry. Are they shut tight?

BABS: Yes, dear.

SYLVIA: What do you see?

BABS: Nothing, of course.

SYLVIA: Press your hand to your eyes. Close out the light. Now what do you see?

BABS: Nothing, dear. Only black.

SYLVIA: Press harder. Concentrate.

BABS: I am concentrating.

SYLVIA: Forget about everything else. Forget about trying to see something. Forget about remembering what was there before the darkness. What do you see?

BABS: I told you. Nothing, dear. Blackness.

SYLVIA: Listen closely. Look past the black. Forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true. Look beyond your hands. Look beyond the colour of the dark. What do you see?

BABS: I...nothing really...maybe a hint of red? At the edges.

SYLVIA: Aha!

BABS: It's just a hint, mind...very faint.

SYLVIA: Don't open your eyes! Keep looking into the dark. What else do you see?

BABS: Maybe yellow. Yes, there's a stream of yellow in the centre of the darkness.

SYLVIA: Yes! Yes! And what else?

BABS: Near the red there's... purple. And pink! The pink is bordering the purple!

SYLVIA: Good, Good! Anything else?

BABS: There's orange too. And a bit of green beside the yellow? And blue.

Sylvia, there's blue!

SYLVIA: So there is.

The kettle sings.

BABS: My goodness, it's a rainbow! A rainbow in the dark!

SYLVIA: That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not Respected Perfectly Good Borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark.

The kettle switches off. Pause.

It's teatime, don't you think?

BABS picks up the tea tray. They walk down the plastic carpet runner to the living room and BABS settles herself on the couch. SYLVIA snuffles at her feet.

GLORIA: What on earth were you yelling about in the kitchen?

BABS: I was just chatting to Sylvia.

GLORIA: Babs supposes Sylvia can talk.

DONALD: Gracious. Is that so? Well she *is* handy with a pen and paper, so I suppose it's not too much of a stretch...

BABS: Well not talk to her exactly...we don't have a conversation as such.

GLORIA: Waffling on, about goodness knows what, to a *dog*. Really Donald, sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't have her checked out, if you know what I mean...

There is a loud cry from under the stairs.

GLORIA: Babs, dear, are you forgetting something?

BABS: Yes, of course. I'll attend to them, shall I?

GLORIA: Yes pet. Don't forget the sandwiches. And mind your nightgown this time. Don't let them grab you again. A torn slip is not very ladylike is it?

SYLVIA: Neither is a peach negligee if you ask me. Even if it *is* lined...

BABS: No dear, I won't. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks down the plastic carpet runner to the cupboard under the stairs. SYLVIA trots after her.

GLORIA: I tell you, it's not proper, Donald. It took me an age to stitch it up last time...

Fade to black.

The sound of Babs and Sylvia's footsteps down the stairs. The sound of muffled cries increase as they approach the heavy cupboard door. Babs opens the door slowly. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. There is then silence. Babs sets down the plate of sandwiches. Pause.

Half -light. Babs and Sylvia outside the cupboard door.

BABS: *(Whispering)* You, know, Sylvia, I've decided to open the window in here...to let the light in a bit.

SYLVIA: What a good idea, Babs. And while Gloria is otherwise entertained, I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I?

The sound of the window being opened and the prisoners climbing slowly out of the cupboard in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. It underscores the following scene. Fade to black. Lights up on living room.

GLORIA: And as I was saying, Donald, it's all in the thread count.

Pause

What is that noise, do you suppose?

DONALD: What noise? I beg your pardon?

GLORIA: That thumping— it sounds like—

DONALD: Let me just turn up my hearing aid dear...

GLORIA: But, Donald you don't have a hearing aid!

DONALD: Why, that's very true dear — you're quite right —

GLORIA: It sounds like — Barbara! Where is she? She should be back by now.

DONALD: I don't mind her taking a little longer. If you know what I mean.

GLORIA: Oh, Donald!

DONALD: Gloria.

GLORIA: Oh, *Donald...*

DONALD: *Oh, Gloria.*

He kisses her. Suddenly the lights begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow.

GLORIA: Donald — it's the People From Elsewhere Who Don't Respect Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: Gloria! *He kisses her again.*

GLORIA: Excuse me, Donald, how lovely, but I must check on Barbara!

She gets up to leave. He joins her.

DONALD: But, Gloria, you don't even like stairs! And what about your bung hip!

GLORIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected I suppose...

Fade to black. The sound of DONALD and GLORIA's laboured footsteps on the stairs. They push open the door to the cupboard. The room is bathed in light

from the large open window. BABS is by the window looking out. The empty sandwich tray is on the floor. GLORIA and DONALD go over to her and look out.

GLORIA: The People From Elsewhere Who Don't Respect Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: I can see them! Across the park. They are shining.

GLORIA: Do you think it was the sandwiches?

BABS: Well Vegemite *is* an acquired taste...

GLORIA: Maybe it was the accommodation, I will concede it was a touch cramped.

BABS: Yes there was distinct lack of elbowroom.

DONALD: Well there's so many of them! One, two, three.....twenty- four, twenty- five!

BABS: Twenty-six actually. At least six kids.

GLORIA: And a baby too.

BABS: Yes, he was born right there in the cupboard.

GLORIA: I made him slippers.

BABS: But you didn't say.

GLORIA: It wasn't in the handbook.

BABS: Lots of things aren't.

GLORIA: It's just an example of the fact that life will prevail.

BABS: Simply a case in point that the spirit can't fail.

GLORIA: You know, I never noticed how nice the light down here could be.

BABS: Yes it looks much better in here now.

DONALD: *(Still looking out the window)* It appears they are being led away by a small animal...is that a *dog*?

BABS: Of course. It's Sylvia.

GLORIA: We must give her a bone...

BABS: After all, it was all dreadfully inconvenient...

Fade to black.

Epilogue

In darkness. A cupboard door closing. The sound of silence.

The End.

The Rainbow Dark

a stage play

by Victoria Carless

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Characters

Gloria late 60's
Babs mid 60's
Sylvia a dog. She is almost like an echo or a conscience. Her voice should reflect this. Only Babs can hear her.
Donald a butcher, early 60's, courting Gloria

Setting

A living room/ a kitchen/ a cupboard under the stairs.

Time

Early Evening

Prologue

In darkness. There is the sound of footsteps – those of Gloria and Sylvia. Low cries of people incarcerated, muffled by a heavy door. The language is indistinguishable. The cries increase as the footsteps approach. The door is slowly opened. Sylvia begins to bark. The sound of ‘fear’ rushes out. A tray of food is set down. Silence. The door closes slowly. Muffled sounds of desperate eating.

SYLVIA: Woof, woof – Window!

GLORIA: Quiet Sylvia!

SYLVIA: Window, woof, window!

The cries increase.

GLORIA: Sylvia! Stop that! You’re encouraging them!

SYLVIA: Woof woof woof woof window!

GLORIA: Sylviaaaaa!

GLORIA drags SYLVIA up the stairs. SYLVIA and the cries fade out.

BABS and GLORIA enter, to sit down to an evening cuppa. The tea things are assembled on a tray. They use fine bone china. There are three cups. The ladies lower themselves down onto their plastic covered couch. Much fussing. The floor is covered in plastic carpet runners. SYLVIA enters.

GLORIA: Sit, Sylvia!

Snuffling of SYLVIA as she settles.

That cursed dog. You really should have her put down.

Pause

BABS: Yes, dear. Fancy a cuppa? Just a quick one. Before he arrives?

GLORIA: What a good idea. It'll settle my nerves.

BABS: Lovely. I'll just pop my teeth in.

BABS retrieves her teeth from a glass on the tea tray and pops them in her mouth. She pours the tea.

Gloria, darling?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Are these your teeth or mine?

GLORIA: Let me see.

BABS removes the teeth and hands them to GLORIA. GLORIA removes her own teeth and tries to fit them. A struggle. They do not fit.

They're yours, pet.

GLORIA hands them back to BABS who re-fits them— pop!

BABS: Thank you, dear.

Pause

One sugar, or two?

GLORIA: Two, dear.

Pause

I don't know why you ask. I've been taking my tea the same way for fifty years. Sisters should come to know these things.

BABS: Yes, dear.

GLORIA: It's always been white with two sugars. Except of course when Teddy Hunt was courting. Then it was one. Watching my weight you know.

BABS: Yes. Indeed. A lady must never appear to overindulge.

BABS takes a sip of her tea

GLORIA: Or slurp.

BABS: Yes, pet.

Pause

Gloria, dear?

GLORIA: Yes, pet?

BABS: Will you be having one sugar this evening, do you think?

GLORIA: Well that all depends on *him*, doesn't it?

SYLVIA yawns. Loudly.

I honestly don't know why you encourage that dog inside, Barbara. She smells so.

SYLVIA snorts.

And she snores. We should dump her.

BABS: Yes, my love.

Pause

GLORIA: Have you made the sandwiches?

BABS: Yes, dear. Vegemite. And some jam ones for the children. They're in the fridge.

GLORIA: Good. We don't want any fuss while our guest is here.

Pause

I hope you were economical.

BABS: Yes, dear. Just a scraping of butter.

GLORIA: A smidgeon of Vegemite?

BABS: A speck of jam.

GLORIA: Good. We're not made of money you know.

BABS: I know, dear.

GLORIA: Of course we get some assistance. Some benefits from the government. It's only a token, mind.

BABS: Of course, dear.

GLORIA: Nothing really to speak of. Doesn't cover the cost. Not when you account for it. The risk we're taking.

BABS: That's very true, dear.

GLORIA: Of course, it's our civic duty. Our responsibility. We're very civil-minded, wouldn't you say?

BABS: We are, dear. Very civil-minded indeed. We don't shirk our duty.

GLORIA: Not everyone could do it, could they? Take on this type of

responsibility. It's not for everyone.

BABS: No they couldn't. No indeed. We're a special two.

Pause

GLORIA: Take Helen from number three. She couldn't handle it. She only lasted two weeks. And she claims to be a Modern Woman!

Pause

Or Mrs Robertson, from down the road. Couldn't hack it either. Gave it away after a month. Just gave them up – fancy! Imagine the bureaucratic headache! I think some of her lot are mixed in with ours now.

Pause

And she had a *husband*.

BABS: They just couldn't take it, it seems. The thumps under the stairs. The cries in the night.

Pause

The voices in the dark.

GLORIA: Don't think of that, Barbara. Don't speak of it. It's a minor inconvenience. Compared to the good we're doing.

BABS: *(Reminding herself)* Yes, yes don't dwell. It's for the greater good.

There is a low muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks. She looks at BABS and barks again.

GLORIA: *(To SYLVIA)* Quiet!

BABS: Yes, pet, settle down.

GLORIA: Besides, it won't be for too much longer now.

BABS: Yes, there will be a solution soon. A government action to address the issue.

GLORIA: A policy amendment.

BABS: A law.

GLORIA: A constitutional rectification.

BABS: A by-law.

A slightly louder muffled moan. They pause. SYLVIA barks then begins to whine. She sits up and begs.

GLORIA: Quiet, Sylvia!

BABS: They always set her off.

GLORIA: She'll annoy the neighbours. They'll report us.

BABS: Oh dear – will they take her away?

GLORIA: Yes and pound her up.

BABS: She wouldn't be so fond of that.

GLORIA: It's probably the best thing.

Pause

As I was saying, there'll be something done to maintain the agenda.

BABS: Yes, something significant will happen soon.

Pause

How long has it been, exactly?

GLORIA: I'd say, at a guess, about 12 months.

BABS: About a year.

GLORIA: That's right, about 12 months.

BABS: We've had people living under our staircase for a year.

GLORIA: We've had Peoples from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders, *temporarily* housed in an appropriate vestibule for approximately twelve months. Give or take a week.

BABS: We've had people living in the cupboard under our stairs for ONE YEAR. Without even the window open.

There is a muffled cry, louder than before. Longer pause. SYLVIA whimpers but is cut short by A LOOK from GLORIA.

GLORIA: Speaking of which.

BABS: It must be just about time to feed them.

GLORIA: It's your turn I believe. I did it last night.

Pause

BABS: How many are there, do you think?

GLORIA: I don't know. I never look.

BABS: Well, what did the booking sheet say?

GLORIA: I can't remember. Twenty. Or twenty-five.

BABS: There would be at least half a dozen children.

GLORIA: I never look.

BABS: At least six kids.

GLORIA: I don't look. Can't bear their eyes.

A louder muffled cry. Pause. SYLVIA begins to cough and retch. She is coughing something up. The sisters watch in horror as she coughs up what looks like a baby slipper.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You wretched thing!

BABS: Sylvia! Naughty!

Pause

What *is* it?

GLORIA: Nothing to speak of. She's been through the bins again.

BABS: It looks like a -

GLORIA: Just a bit of fluff! We must clean it up! He'll be here in a minute.

BABS: Yes dear.

BABS gingerly picks the item up, inspects it and puts it in her pocket.

BABS: He certainly is taking his time.

GLORIA: Donald is a busy man, Barbara.

Pause

How do I look, dear?

BABS: Just lovely, pet. Peach is definitely your colour.

GLORIA: I have been told so, on occasion.

BABS: Although...you don't think....

GLORIA: What?

BABS: That it might be ...a touch...just a tad...

GLORIA: Spit it out.

BABS: Inappropriate? A bit *forward*, even? After all, it is a negligee.

GLORIA: It's a *nightgown*. It *is* night-time.

BABS: Is there a difference? I was never certain.

GLORIA: Of course there's a difference.

BABS: But for a visitor... a *man*...

GLORIA: I don't know what you're worried about, Barbara – it's completely lined.

Pause

Besides, sometimes it serves the mature woman well to be *slightly* less than subtle...

BABS considers her own outfit. She undoes her top button.

BABS: How do *I* look?

GLORIA: Fine, dear.

An even louder muffled cry. SYLVIA howls.

GLORIA: Sylvia, that's it!

BABS: I could almost swear that she's trying to tell us something.

GLORIA: Don't be absurd, Barbara!

BABS: You don't think so?

GLORIA: I most certainly do not! I've had enough!

BABS: Gloria, please, pet.

Pause

After all, they are making quite a racket tonight.

GLORIA: She should close her ears to it. I do!

BABS: Yes, dear.

Pause

Tell me, Gloria, do you think I've made enough?

GLORIA: Enough what?

BABS: Sandwiches. Do you think they get hungry?

GLORIA: What a ridiculous question!

The door bell rings – a novelty ring tone. GLORIA and BABS freeze, then fuss with the couch/room and their clothes.

GLORIA: That's him! You get the door. Where should I sit?

BABS: Don't panic! *(She thinks. Points)* There – where the light is softest. And me?

GLORIA: *(Pointing to a dimly lit area/the corner)* Over there.

The doorbell rings again – a novelty ring tone. They jump. GLORIA takes her place, while BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks across the plastic carpet runner offstage to the front door. The sound of the front door opening.

BABS: *(Off)* Good evening, Donald! What a surprise! Gloria, we have a visitor - Donald is here.

GLORIA: Come in, Donald!

BABS and DONALD enter. They walk down the plastic carpet runner and settle on the plastic-covered couch.

GLORIA: Good evening, Donald. You'll have to excuse me, I look a fright in my night gown! If only I'd known you were coming - I would have dressed more appropriately! Do come in!

DONALD: Good evening, ladies. *(Clearing his throat)* I've brought you some sausages.

GLORIA: Donald! How lovely! Thank you.

DONALD: No trouble at all. Plenty more where they came from.

GLORIA: They'll go nicely with some mash for tea. Of course, Barbara won't have any – she's a strict vegetarian. She doesn't eat meat of any kind. Babs, you'll have to put some spam/baked beans(?) out for yourself pet.

BABS: Yes, dear.

DONALD: There are some nice bones for the dog as well.

GLORIA: That really wasn't necessary, Donald.

BABS: Thank you, Donald, Sylvia will love them.
Sylvia barks, trots up to DONALD, sniffs his pockets.

GLORIA: No, Sylvia! Do not sniff! Down!

DONALD: It's fine, I -

GLORIA: Down, Sylvia! That's enough! Out!
SYLVIA exits, tail between her legs.

BABS: She could smell the bones.

DONALD: What a nice puppy.

GLORIA: I apologise, Donald, for my sister's unsavoury dog. I have told her time and again, no good comes of taking in strays. No good at all!

BABS: She's quite a dear dog really...

DONALD: Seems harmless to me.

GLORIA: I've told her before, Donald, You know what they say – “soft heart, soft head”.

DONALD: I have to confess I'm a bit of a softie meself, when it comes to animals...

GLORIA: Nonsense, a butcher! A strapping man of meat like you!

DONALD: Gloria, you're embarrassing me,

GLORIA: *(Giggling girlishly)* Oh, Donald! And so to what do we owe the pleasure of your company this evening?

DONALD: No special reason- I was just in the neighbourhood and I thought I might call in...

GLORIA: Babs mentioned you were about.

DONALD: Yes I just dropped in on number three - she's quite the modern woman you know.

GLORIA: Yes. So we've heard.

DONALD: But I do enjoy coming here. And how are you two, my dears?

GLORIA: We're fine, Donald. Couldn't be better.

BABS: We're well. Really quite good.

DONALD: And what about ...how are things with the...the um...
Arrangement?

GLORIA: Wonderful. No problems at all. None whatsoever.

BABS: Yes, everything's peachy.

Pause

DONALD: Good. Glad to hear it. I'm relieved, in fact.

Pause

Truth be told, I was worried. You have ladies have taken on quite a responsibility. A burden, one might say. And I thought, maybe with all the unrest – the recent escapes and whatnot – I thought you might be having a hard time of it ...what with your... charges ...and all.

GLORIA: Nonsense. Not at all.

BABS: Everything's just super.

Pause

GLORIA: Pardon, Donald, did you say *unrest*?

BABS: You mentioned *escapes*?

DONALD: You haven't heard?

GLORIA: Heard what exactly?

DONALD: It was on the news this morning. Two People from Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders have escaped, from a sewing room in Marraborne.

GLORIA: How unfortunate!

DONALD: It said in the paper that the lock to the room was cut by pinking shears.

BABS: That sounds like an inside job to me...

DONALD: Mrs Feathersworth – the woman who owned the sewing room, has been taken in for questioning.

BABS: Poor Mrs Feathersworth!

DONALD: They are saying that it may affect government Peoples From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders policy...

GLORIA: Of course it will affect the policy! Ninnies like that Feathersworth woman shouldn't be given such responsibility!

DONALD: The government are desperate Gloria, what with the major centres being overloaded. I suppose they have to take what they can get-

GLORIA: How that woman passed the screening test, I'll never know. Surplus Peoples are only to be detained in *suitable* residential civilian properties. It's in the handbook! Page one!

BABS: You don't think Mrs Feathersworth had anything –

GLORIA: Of course not! It was obviously someone sympathetic to their cause - a bleeding heart who cut the lock for a warm fuzzy!

BABS: But the pinking shears... perhaps it was planned.

DONALD: These things often are...

GLORIA: Nonsense! They escaped of their own accord. She was only doing her duty. Albeit incompetently!

BABS: Her civil responsibility. Bungling non-withstanding.

GLORIA: And for what – ingratitude!

BABS: Obviously some people just don't know a good sewing room when they see one

GLORIA: Still, nothing for us to worry about. We're safe here.

BABS: No need to fret. Our locks are strong. And there are no pinking shears to speak of.

GLORIA: I'd say it's just a base attempt at federal scare mongering.

BABS: Really just an example of departmental scape- goating.

Pause

BABS: What will happen to them, do you think? The People From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders?

GLORIA: Don't even consider it Barbara! It's not our concern.

Pause

DONALD: Well it's good that you're taking it so well. I was afraid ...It's just... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you Gloria – to either of you, I mean...

GLORIA: That's sweet! Isn't that sweet, Babs pet? Donald was worried about us!

BABS: It's sweet, yes.

GLORIA: But you needn't worry. We're perfectly capable.

BABS: We're managing quite well.

GLORIA: Now let us hear no more on the matter. How is business, Donald?

DONALD: As well as to be expected, Gloria.

GLORIA: Whatever do you mean?

DONALD: Admittedly, things have been quiet. A lot of my customers are feeling the strain, what with all the extra mouths to feed. Let's just say, roast beef isn't at the top of their shopping list.

GLORIA: Yes, times are rather difficult. Money is tight. But surely a little chuck steak is in the budget for most? Perhaps a lamb chop or two?

BABS: Not much left over for luxuries these days is there?

Pause

Things like Meat.

Pause

Or fresh air

Pause

Or sunlight on your face in the morning.

Pause

GLORIA: But there are benefits. Anyone who provides appropriate accommodation receives financial support.

BABS: Maybe it doesn't stretch to the meat budget. What with the extra vegemite on the bill.

GLORIA: Still, we all should do our little bit shouldn't we? It's the patriotic thing.

DONALD: All I know is know is, I can have up to half a side of beef left on any given day.

BABS: That's three and a half bullocks a week!

GLORIA: What are you saying, Donald?

DONALD: Truth be told, I came here for another reason ladies. It's not just a social call.

GLORIA: But I thought... the sausages –

DONALD: I need to ask a favour, Gloria.

GLORIA: Surely you're not suggesting –

DONALD: Gloria, I'm a butcher not a bureaucrat. The fact of the matter is, you have starving people living under your stairs and I have leftover food!

GLORIA: But what you're proposing is illegal!

BABS: It's against government policy.

GLORIA: It's bleeding heart bull.

BABS: It's...it's...it's...very *kind*.

GLORIA: I refuse to allow Peoples From Elsewhere Who Do Not Recognise Perfectly Good Borders to benefit *illegally* from my Land of Plenty!

Pause

There are limits, Donald!

Pause

Look, I never thought I'd be the type to lock people up in a cupboard.

Pause

In a cupboard under my stairs.

Pause

I don't even like stairs. Never did.

Pause

I have a bung hip, you see.

Pause

Makes it difficult, to say the least.

Pause

And as for locking people up, well...

Pause

I think you've forgotten something.

Pause

Something very important.

Pause

It's a very big cupboard.

BABS: (*Helpfully*) At least four feet wide.

GLORIA: I didn't realise you felt so strongly about the issue, Donald.

Pause

Is this going to affect our courtship?

SYLVIA trots in and sits in the middle of the room, in full view of all three. She scratches lazily. She has a cardboard sign around her neck with a drawing of a window on it. They all stare at her. Silence.

GLORIA: Cup of tea, anyone?

Pause. They ignore GLORIA and continue to stare at SYLVIA. A long pause.

DONALD: What an extraordinary thing.

BABS: Sylvia!

GLORIA: This must stop.

BABS: Perhaps it's just starting...

GLORIA: What concerns me most is: how did she get access to a pen and paper?

DONALD: Where there is a will, there is a way...

All three look at SYLVIA. Pause. SYLVIA passes wind. Slowly.

GLORIA: Sylvia! You naughty girl! Take that offensive creature away, Barbara!

BABS: Yes lovey. Shall I put the kettle on then? Tea anyone?

DONALD: I'd love a cuppa.

GLORIA: White with *one*, dear.

BABS: Back in a jiffy then. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic covered couch and walks across the plastic carpet runner to the kitchen. SYLVIA pads after her.

GLORIA: I must apologise, Donald - I really don't know how much more of this I can take. Perhaps you could do something...after all – you're a butcher....

DONALD: Is that necessary, Gloria? Sylvia's no bother to me. By the by, that's an interesting choice of name for a canine. Very distinguished.

GLORIA: Babs named her. After a poet or some such maudlin personage. She reads far too much...

DONALD: The dog does appear to have an artistic bent...

GLORIA: Indeed. Now, where were we? Ah yes, the sausages... *(she giggles)*

Cross fade to BABS and SYLVIA in the kitchen. BABS fills the kettle and assembles the tea cups.

BABS: Fancy that! Of all things! Did you hear all that, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I did. One sugar – fancy it. She's coming on a bit strong.

BABS: I didn't mean that exactly.

SYLVIA: I suppose he did bring her sausages...

BABS: I was talking about Donald's suggestion. About the meat.

SYLVIA: Of course.

BABS: Do you think he has a point?

SYLVIA: Well it's very contentious issue, Babs, but like the man said, he does have leftovers.

BABS: It's certainly very *humane* of him.

Pause.

Sylvia – Goodness gracious – you're talking!

SYLVIA: Yes.

BABS: But - I – you – you've never spoken before!

SYLVIA: As they say, desperate times call for desperate measures. Maybe you just weren't listening hard enough.

Pause

I mean, come on, Babs, what do I have to do? All the barking, the begging, the passing of wind - do you think that was all for my own amusement? Do you consider that normal behaviour?

BABS: Yes, well I do, rather. For a *dog*.

Pause

Does Gloria know about this?

SYLVIA: I tried to strike up a conversation with her, but it turns out we don't see eye to eye...

BABS: I see. Sylvia, you don't think that Mrs Fearthersworth let those people out *deliberately*, do you?

Pause

But how could she do it? Go against government policy like that? We all have to do our bit, even if it means putting ourselves out. If it's for the greater good...

SYLVIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected, I suppose...

BABS: What will happen to the escapees, do you think?

SYLVIA: It won't be easy for them on the outside, that's a fact. But they've travelled too far to be locked in a sewing room.

(Pause)

Or a cupboard under somebody's stairs.

BABS: I do have to admit, Sylvia, it's dreadfully inconvenient. What with all their crying, the endless sandwich making and so on. It gets

me quite anxious sometimes. Frankly I don't blame that Feathersworth woman!

SYLVIA: Why, those people under your stairs don't know how good they've got it! Free accommodation, all the vegemite sangers they can eat...

BABS: Don't forget the jam ones for the children.

SYLVIA: The children, especially, are having a wonderful time. I heard them playing a game the other day. Something to do with aliens...

BABS: That doesn't sound nice.

SYLVIA: The baby's grown too. He's almost walking now...

BABS: I didn't know there was a baby! Of course, the little slipper!

(She retrieves it from her pocket)

SYLVIA: A child was born right there in the cupboard. You didn't hear the mother labouring?

BABS: I thought all that screaming might have been part of some ritual – a cultural thing perhaps...

SYLVIA: Spoke his first word the other day. Do you know what it was?

BABS: No I'm afraid I don't...

SYLVIA: Me neither. I don't speak the language.

BABS: I do feel a tiny bit awful about them being stuck in that little cupboard without fresh air, natural light, or *immediate* access to running water...

SYLVIA: I'm sure they could catch the condensation from the roof...

BABS: After all, Sylvia, it's probably a good thing that it's so dark in there. Then they can't see what they're missing out on. Us being the lucky country and all...

The kettle begins to boil/scream. It underscores the following section.

SYLVIA: Close your eyes, Babs.

BABS: Ok dear. What for?

SYLVIA: Don't you worry. Are they shut tight?

BABS: Yes, dear.

SYLVIA: What do you see?

BABS: Nothing, of course.

SYLVIA: Press your hand to your eyes. Close out the light. Now what do you see?

BABS: Nothing, dear. Only black.

SYLVIA: Press harder. Concentrate.

BABS: I am concentrating.

SYLVIA: Forget about everything else. Forget about trying to see something. Forget about remembering what was there before the darkness. What do you see?

BABS: I told you. Nothing dear. Blackness.

SYLVIA: Listen closely. Look past the black. Forget what you have been told, or what you know to be true. Look beyond your hands. Look beyond the colour of the dark. What do you see?

BABS: I...nothing really...maybe a hint of red? At the edges.

SYLVIA: Aha!

BABS: It's just a hint, mind...very faint.

SYLVIA: Don't open your eyes! Keep looking into the dark. What else do you see?

BABS: Maybe yellow. Yes, there's a stream of yellow in the centre of the darkness.

SYLVIA: Yes! Yes! And what else?

BABS: Near the red there's... purple. And pink! The pink is bordering the purple!

SYLVIA: Good, Good! Anything else?

BABS: There's orange too. And a bit of green beside the yellow? And blue.

Sylvia, there's blue!

SYLVIA: So there is.

The kettle sings.

BABS: My goodness, it's a rainbow! A rainbow in the dark!

SYLVIA: That's why these people have come here, Babs. This is why they wait in the dark. Even under your stairs. This is why they have not Recognised Perfectly Good Borders. It is because they see colour beyond the darkness. They can see a rainbow in the dark.

The kettle switches off. Pause.

It's teatime, don't you think?

BABS picks up the tea tray. They walk down the plastic carpet runner to the living room and BABS settles herself on the couch. SYLVIA snuffles at her feet.

GLORIA: What on earth were you yelling about in the kitchen?
BABS: I was just chatting with Sylvia.
GLORIA: Really? And what did she have to say?
BABS: She was very vocal on one point actually -
DONALD: Gracious. Is that so?
GLORIA: Barbara, how absurd!
DONALD: Well now Gloria, she *is* handy with a pen and paper, so I suppose it's not too much of a stretch...

There is a loud cry from under the stairs.

GLORIA: Babs dear, are you forgetting something?
BABS: Yes, of course. I'll attend to them, shall I?
GLORIA: Yes pet. Don't forget the sandwiches. And mind your nightgown this time. Don't let them grab you again. A torn slip is not very ladylike is it?
SYLVIA: Neither is a peach negligee if you ask me. Even if it *is* lined...
BABS: No dear, I won't. Come on, Sylvia.

BABS rises from the plastic-covered couch. She walks down the plastic carpet runner to the cupboard under the stairs. SYLVIA trots after her.

GLORIA: I tell you, it's not proper Donald. It took me an age to stitch it up last time...

Fade to black. The sound of Babs and Sylvia's footsteps down the stairs. The sound of muffled cries increase as they approach the heavy cupboard door. Babs opens the door slowly. The sound of 'fear' rushes out. Silence. Babs sets down the plate of sandwiches. Pause.

Half -light. Babs and Sylvia outside the cupboard door.

BABS: *(Whispering)* You, know,, Sylvia, I've decided to open the window in here...to let the light in a bit.
SYLVIA: What a good idea, Babs. And while Gloria is otherwise entertained, I'll lead the way to the fresh air, shall I?

The sound of the window being opened and the prisoners climbing slowly out of the cupboard in small groups, talking softly amongst themselves in their own language. It underscores the following scene. Fade to black. Lights up on living room.

GLORIA: And as I was saying, Donald, it's all in the thread count.

Pause

What is that noise, do you suppose?

DONALD: What noise? I beg your pardon?

GLORIA: That thumping– it sounds like–

DONALD: Let me just turn up my hearing aid dear...

GLORIA: But, Donald you don't have a hearing aid!

DONALD: Why, that's very true, dear – you're quite right –

GLORIA: It sounds like – Barbara! Where is she? She should be back by now.

DONALD: I don't mind her taking a little longer. If you know what I mean.

GLORIA: Oh, Donald!

DONALD: Gloria.

GLORIA: Oh, *Donald*...

DONALD: *Oh Gloria.*

He kisses her. Suddenly the lights begin to flicker and change colour: red, orange, yellow, green, blue purple and pink. The room is bathed in all the colours of the rainbow.

GLORIA: Donald – it's the People From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: Gloria!

He kisses her again.

GLORIA: Excuse me, Donald, how lovely, but I must check on Barbara!

She gets up to leave. He joins her.

DONALD: But, Gloria, you don't even like stairs! And what about your bung hip?!

GLORIA: Some sacrifice is to be expected I suppose...

Fade to black. The sound of DONALD and GLORIA'S laboured footsteps on the stairs. They push open the door to the cupboard. The room is bathed in light from the large open window. BABS is by the window looking out. The empty sandwich tray is on the floor. GLORIA and DONALD go over to her and look out.

GLORIA: The People From Elsewhere Who Don't Recognise Perfectly Good Borders!

DONALD: I can see them! Across the park. They are shining.

GLORIA: Do you think it was the sandwiches?

BABS: Well Vegemite *is* an acquired taste...

GLORIA: Maybe it was the accommodation, I will concede it was a touch cramped.

BABS: Yes there was distinct lack of elbowroom.

DONALD: Well there's so many of them! One, two, three.....twenty- four, twenty- five!

BABS: Twenty-six actually. At least six kids.

GLORIA: And a baby too.

BABS: Yes, he was born right there in the cupboard.

GLORIA: I made him slippers.

BABS: But you didn't say.

GLORIA: It wasn't in the handbook, dear.

BABS: Lots of things aren't pet.

GLORIA: It's just an example of the fact that life will prevail.

BABS: Simply a case in point that the spirit will triumph.

GLORIA: You know, I never noticed how nice the light in here could be.

BABS: Yes it looks much better now.

DONALD: Will they be alright do you think? After all, they don't know the territory...

GLORIA: I hope you at least packed them a lunch Babs.

BABS: Yes, and filled them a thermos, dear. And look, they've got a guide.

DONALD: *(Looking out the window)* It appears they are being led away by a small animal...is that a *dog*?

BABS: Of course. It's Sylvia.

GLORIA: We must give her a bone...

BABS: After all, it was all dreadfully inconvenient...

Fade to black.

Epilogue

In darkness. A cupboard door closing. The sound of silence.
The End.

APPENDIX B:

FEEDBACK OF INDUSTRY PRACTITIONERS ON FIRST DRAFT

B.1 Feedback from the Artistic Director of the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP)

Format: transcription of an email.

Thanks Victoria - some comments:

- Your script is really a general sketch of an interesting idea. Perhaps something in the vein of Monty Python or a comedy show sketch - as such the idea needs a lot more work to get up to production standard.
- The idea is caught between a type of naturalism and absurdist. However I think it is really begging to go towards absurdism as you have a talking dog! If you don't follow this have a read of Pinter (Birthday Party) or Ionesco - you will get the idea. Also I think you are edging towards something like Father Ted (comedy show that was on the ABC) which I think could be good for you to see. Currently you have very standard exchanges between the old ladies (cups of tea etc.) which don't ring true (do you have friends in their 60's who speak like this?) and not quite extreme enough to be in another world all together - again this way is more exciting, theatrical etc.

Some questions and thoughts:

- What do you really feel about this issue?- why do you think that this govt policy is ridiculous? Research it thoroughly and use that as your touchstone for your play. At the moment the subject seems a little under researched - the more you know about the area the easier it will be to write the play.
- Be brave and get it right out of the land of talking heads - what is the possible action of this play? What can happen around it? Sometimes absurd plays don't need as much conflict as other plays as the ideas and the situations are extreme enough - but a useful starting point is "what is the story of this play?" and then see if it interests you on purely this level.

I think there is something in it - I am interested why you as a young person are passionate about this issue - but allow the passion to come through the writing - make it extreme, make it difficult, make it weird, don't settle for clichés (unless you are using them very deliberately eg: a huge boiling urn of tea in the lounge room ready to dispense at any second etc - Father Ted again). I look forward to reading your next draft.

APPENDIX C: WORKS AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

C.1 Collated survey responses from *The Works*

Format: transcription of an email attachment.

DATE: 8th August, Tuesday

PERFORMANCE: *Fewer Emergencies/The Rainbow Dark*

TOTAL FORMS: 23

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 164

SEASON TICKET HOLDER? 12 Yes/ 11 no

QUESTION 1: DID THE STORY MAINTAIN YOUR INTEREST?

16 – Yes

1 – No to both

1 – *The Rainbow Dark* was over too quickly

2 – *The Rainbow Dark* Yes/ *Fewer Emergencies* No

1 – Yes. Yep, especially because of the play's currency.

1 – Somewhat

1 – Yes, loved how the three acts in *Fewer Emergencies* fitted together

QUESTION 2: DID THE PLAY STIMULATE YOU TO THINK FURTHER ABOUT IT'S THEMES, ISSUES OR CHARACTERS?

18 – Yes

1 – Blank

1 – *Fewer Emergencies* was a bit confusing

1 – *Fewer Emergencies* no/ *The Rainbow Dark* yes

1 – No I already do

1- It will, later

QUESTION 3: WERE THE CHARACTERS BELIEVABLE

16 – Yes

1- *Fewer Emergencies* no/ *The Rainbow Dark* yes

1 – In the context of the theatrical worlds, neither play was naturalistic, the stretched the notion of what's real

1 – Sylvia was ace

1 – Mostly

1- Were they characters? Or talking about characters...

1 – N/A

1- Hayden Spencer did a great job I believed

QUESTION 4: WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PLAY DID YOU ENJOY THE MOST?

6 – The wit, language, absurdism and structure of *Fewer Emergencies*

1- The dog

1- Blank

1- The interplay between the sisters (*The Rainbow Dark*)

1 – The humour in dealing with something serious

1- humour to make a serious point and Hayden's performance

1 – All of them

2- It was intriguing; the actors did a great job with the humour

1- *Fewer Emergencies*: brilliant handling of structure; *The Rainbow Dark*: political comment

1- The butcher

1- The idea

1 – the song in *Fewer Emergencies*/ the dog in *The Rainbow Dark*

1- I enjoyed the way the scenes were verbally set as the way they would be in a theatre production

1- Hidden kindness

1- *Fewer Emergencies*: the flights of fancy that examined our fears and preoccupations/ *The Rainbow Dark*: the heart of the piece

1 – *Fewer Emergencies*: none/ *The Rainbow Dark*: sensitivity

QUESTION 5: WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN SEEING A FULL PRODUCTION?

10- Yes

2- No to both

4 – Yes to *Fewer Emergencies*/ No to *The Rainbow Dark*

3 - No to *Fewer Emergencies*/ Yes to *The Rainbow Dark*

4 - Maybe

QUESTION 6: WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT ATTENDING A PLAY READING?

7 – The chance to see new work/writing/what's in the pipeline for the company

4 – The rawness and spontaneity

2 – Blank

2 – Using my imagination

1 – It was quite insightful

1 – It gives you a taste of how it might be in production

1- We're addicts

2 – The actors

1 – Hearing the writers' work and seeing a rough interpretation of their work

1 – Novelty

1 – Intensity of the words without visual distraction

QUESTION 7: DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

10 – Blank

5 – Excellent/ loved it/ well done/ good program

1 – More overseas theatre please

1 – We appreciate The Works program so much, it keeps us coming back as subscribers

1- Didn't understand why one actor was divided from the others (in *Fewer Emergencies*)

1 – Enjoyed it, close to the bone, unsettling and topical

1- The message in *The Rainbow Dark* seemed laboured

1 – Spontaneity

1- *Fewer Emergencies*: would think that this production would be a disaster financially and artistically/ *The Rainbow Dark*: think that this play has a real future but not long enough to stand alone

1- I would like to see the South African/ Angola play called *Dead Weight/ Want* from a few years ago in full production

APPENDIX D: DIRECTOR'S REHEARSAL REPORTS

Format: transcriptions of emails.

D.1 Week One Rehearsal Report

Hi Victoria!

Well the first week of rehearsals is over now and the second begins today.

We have some questions for you re. the script, things that we have chatted about over and over and not been able to come to firm conclusions on, so we wanted your advice.

1. What are you thinking about for the word recognise/respect? They are all trying to learn lines so they want to know, so they can be consistent, whether it will be recognise or respect...
2. We are a little confused on what is meant by It's... it's... it's... politically correct! on page 19. If it was politically correct wouldn't that be a good thing? Has Babs just had an epiphany? We can't really understand it.
3. If Babs is vegetarian, why does she have to get some mince for herself?
p. 13
4. p. 28 - When Donald refers to his hearing aid which he doesn't have, he's saying he chooses not to hear anything else that's going on, right? He's just into Gloria?

Ok, they are the particular questions we have so far.

Please send any new drafts of the scripts as early as you can because the cast are anxious about learning lines. That said, they are all pausing frequently to compliment your writing and are tremendously impressed by the layers you have written into your characters. None of the characters isn't challenged by their apparent agenda and they all have many levels to their relationships with one another.

I am still finding it hard to get all three spaces onto the stage and have been thinking that the focus is on the lounge area with the stairs always "felt" and inferred. The sound goes a long way towards this but I have also thought of using a backlit scrim for the stairs so that they are ever present but not actually seen - the feeling that they are there but always pushed out of mind. The only real problem with this is at the end when they

are supposed to be in the room under the stairs and we don't have a space for them. At the moment they are coming back into the lounge room to look out over the street at the people in the park. It seems to be the only way we can see the characters at the end. Do you mind putting this action in the lounge? It would mean changing one line on page 30 to

Gloria: You know, I never noticed notice how nice the light could be.

Instead of ...the light down here could be.

Changes it a bit. But there just doesn't seem another place on the stage for under the stairs unless we had different levels and we can't be that detailed when we need to share the space with 3 other plays. We have also thought of putting under the stairs actually under the stage as there are 2 trapdoors and actual under the floor space. This would be great if the sounds came up from below but we still couldn't actually see the action under the stairs for the last scene. Any suggestions?

Ok, I will write more to you as we have more to write. Thanks Victoria!

D.2 Week Two Rehearsal Report

Hello Victoria!

Another week of rehearsals is over and another about to begin...

I had a great meeting with the designers this week and am happy to report that they will try to get me everything I want in the set. This means that we have an awesome little house consisting of a kitchen and a living room on rostra with stairs leading away from the back and obscured by wallpaper and windows traveling into the shadowy unknown. We have worked out that we can bring the final scene into the lounge room quite conveniently while still showing clearly that the room under the stairs has been opened. It's hard to explain so please trust me that the light will fill the right places and the rainbow will appear.

Particular things I wanted to say/ask:

Page 13. can we change "Do come in;" to "Do sit down."? as Donald is already in the house by that stage.

We would like to use "spam" instead of "mince"...?

On page 30 You have changed Babs line to "Simply a case in point that the spirit will triumph." But it was soooo nice when Babs and Gloria rhymed and she said "...Spirit can't fail." Can we change it back, please?

Other than that, things are coming along nicely.

D.3 Week Three Rehearsal Report

Hello Victoria!

Well, there seems fewer questions about the text this time - only one major conversation that I have already addressed with you.

As we approached the end of the play and studied it in depth the big question was how to reconcile Gloria's apparent and quite sudden change of heart - she was in denial the whole play through and then enraptured at the thought of her humanity. There had to be more to it than simply changing her mind. Well, through much discussion and many attempts at staging this action we decided it worked if Gloria was already being bugged openly by the peoples by the time she says "some sacrifices need to be made." then she has a few lines to reflect on her part in their discomfort and come around to seeing how much better it was that they were out. It was still far too chummy and denying all the set up we had done throughout the play of the siblings relationship and Donald's part in it. Then the girls kind of tried throw away lines at the end as if they were getting on with their lives now that it was over, thank god. Then Donald decided it was all his doing, then... there were many interpretations and I actually think that this is still the one bit that we will fine tune over the course of the week. It's almost there but just needs tuning to take the audience with us and not lose them at the end.

You sent the new page 10 to us a couple of days ago and we read through it at rehearsal last night and had a discussion. Victoria, after much careful conversation we all feel that it changes the dynamic of what we have established just too much,. the girls really like their dynamic and now that the ending has had so much work we know that we can achieve the transition for ourselves keeping in tact the bootie exchange in its original. There is actually a nice interaction between the ladies and audience in the original that we have worked out that makes it quite clear so... would you mind if we keep the original. Maybe if you see it and it doesn't work for you, you can write the new version in your final, published draft? We really, really appreciate all these changes you have been so accommodating with... what do you think?

Donald, too has undergone some work... Hugh thinks now that Donald actually has a stronger humanitarian agenda than before rather than just being a lothario. This was a discussion you had had with me from the outset and Hugh has now integrated nicely these parts of Donald's character so that while he is charming, this is a talent he uses to help the peoples from elsewhere.

Ok, so, last night Geoff the LX designer came to see the play and we discussed the lighting we'll have. Seems good.

Tonight we will have Jon, Brett, Fraser and Dimity join us for a full run with all the props and costumes, makeup etc. It will be great to present the full play with still a week to go and have outside feedback on what can be tweaked, changed, improved, what is not clear etc. I'll write and let you know what happened!

Speak soon

PS Are you coming down on Monday? You are welcome at all our time in the theatre - plot, tech, dress etc. although maybe you want to wait and have it revealed to you at the dress or even opening night? Whatever you want to do is fine with me. You have been a joy to work with.

D.4 Week Four Rehearsal Report

Well, it's production week. We bumped-in yesterday and this afternoon will tech and dress run the show. I must say that after a weekend of mild apprehension and wanting to just get on with it, I left feeling strengthened last night after seeing it in the space. We just have some last minute things to finalise but it's all looking pretty good. The actors are in this afternoon so we'll soon see how it comes together.

I kind of don't want to report too much to you in this email because the show is so close and you'll see it in two days time.

The only little things are really logistical and mostly about the set. The actors will have to negotiate some slightly different spaces and I am still fine tuning the "peoples" space which has been squashed a bit in the translation from drawings to stage. So I must get it back in shape.

Ah! see you on Wednesday. If I need anything else, I'll contact you, but I think it's ok, now.

Thanks so much for this play, Victoria, it's been a real pleasure and a privilege.

APPENDIX E: PRACTITIONERS' FEEDBACK

Format: transcriptions of hand-completed questionnaire.

E.1 Respondent 1: Director

Script Questions

1. *How would you characterize the type of theatre experience offered by The Rainbow Dark?*

An opportunity to explore the current Australian political climate in terms of human rights. An excellent opportunity to develop a play and its characters in collaboration with numerous artists to present a neat strong piece of Australian political entertainment.

2. *How would you describe The Rainbow Dark as a play?*

A light political satire that understands irony. Comedy/drama exploring the human cost of apathy/ignorance.

3. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you enjoy/identify with?*

The characters were a delight. I identified with them all and was fond of them as friends. I have never known a talking dog, but this only fuelled the delight when a dog (I love dogs) spoke and was such an insightful intelligent sweetheart. Also, the premise that Australia is so desired as a place to live that refugees flock, yet this is how they are treated. It seems outrageous and yet scarcely believable.

4. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you find problematic/not enjoy?*

Whether Donald had premeditated the refugees' release? How involved Sylvia was also. How to show the stairs without showing them.

5. *What (if anything) about the play challenged or confronted you? Why?*

Staging the play presented the biggest challenge – finding all the spaces required in the script onstage. Also, the talking dog – whether he was real, a human or imagined.

6. *How did you react initially to your character? Did this change over time? Why?*

n/a

7. *What was your character's function in the play?*

n/a

8. What is your interpretation of the meaning in the play?

That sheltered, censored lives lead to apathy and blindsightedness. That the current state of Australian politics determines a society that finds it easy to ignore human injustice.

9. Was there anything unclear/ambiguous in the script? If so, what? How did you resolve this?

Perhaps Donald's role was the most ambiguous. Was he calculating the refugees release or simply suggesting a practical response to their hunger? How well did he know Babs? Did he have anything to do with the Feathersworth escape? We talked a lot on this point and went from a simple practical reading to a more conspiratorial one, then back again.

A strength was the presentation of the play as a living room drama – it enabled middle Australian audience to access a situation with and characters they identified with and liked before unleashing a political message.

10. What, in your view, are the play's strengths and weaknesses?

Most – constant interrogation of the play, there seemed so much to uncover, both of the play and our own attitudes towards the subject matter.

Least – The frustrations at not having all cast members available for all the rehearsals we wanted.

Your Process Questions

11. What were the most/least enjoyable aspects of the standing up process for you?

n/a

12. Particularly, what did you find challenging about the standing up process?

n/a

13. What was your experience of negotiating the world of the play; its everyday reality, and its political tone? How balanced did you find these to be?

As stated earlier I found it a great strength of the play that it was presented as a reality so my take was to highlight this reality – present the characters world as identifiable and accessible to real people so that when the (science?) fictional politics and talking dog were introduced the audience went with it.

Your Concepts of Theatre

14. *What type/s of theatre do you like to watch? Why?*

Heightened risky theatre exploring extreme circumstances and states of mind. Striking visual images and powerful human interactions. I see theatre to have an experience of what is possible in the universe and of humanity, not what we are generally fed in our day to day lives.

15. *What type/s of theatre do you like to be involved in? Why?*

As above. I want to explore extremes. The grotesque and the completely fragile. I want to cause a change in people and give them a sense of their, and my, potential.

16. *What are your views on political theatre as a genre?*

Usually, if I feel I am being preached too, I am bored. Politics are dry without the direct involvement of my own or anyone else's life. There needs to be a good reason that I should listen and that reason is my humanity.

17. *What do you regard as the contemporary function/s of theatre?*

To engage, change, question, explore, make an audience feel something. Also to entertain – this is the most potent engagement and the need for escapism is powerful. The *live* aspect of theatre – that distinction from all other art forms - provides a direct and powerful transaction from one human being to another.

E.2 Respondent 2: Actor Playing Gloria

Script Questions

1. *How would you characterize the type of theatre experience offered by The Rainbow Dark?*

Accessible – because of

- a) It's brevity.
- b) It's *everyday* matrix – easy to identify with the characters and their lives. The sinister subplot slides in with scarcely a ripple.

2. *How would you describe The Rainbow Dark as a play?*

Comedic political satire.

3. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you enjoy/identify with?*

- The political message, sharp without belabouring the point.
- The astute observation and recreation of human belief systems and responses (sometimes conflicting!).
- The off-the-wall whimsy – a talking philosopher dog, 25 people in a cupboard for a year, how vegemite helps nations survive...

4. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you find problematic/not enjoy?*

- Gloria's sudden epiphany presented a problem until I found her in a long dead family friend. There was no sudden conversion to kindness, just an innate generosity and sense of obligation, that - like everything else – needed to be justified and rationalised.
- The real nature of the relationship with Donald – the actor playing Donald helped this by taking his character away from a romantic pursuit and requiring Gloria to be the (almost innocent) predator.

5. *What (if anything) about the play challenged or confronted you? Why?*

Oh, gosh – realising how much of Gloria the vulgarian actually resided in this actress – it took a bit of courage (and a determined director!) to let her loose but once I did, it was bliss.

6. *How did you react initially to your character? Did this change over time? Why?*

I saw her originally as a loud and domineering woman with a bit of a sexual history. This later shifted, realising that she was driven by:

- a) An overdeveloped sense of responsibility (she is the elder sister and thinks Babs is a bit of an airhead)
- b) Fear – fear of breaking the rules and being punished, of having no-one to defend her, of being thought inadequate fear of being unloved forever and so on. (But she was still loud and domineering!)

7. *What was your character's function in the play?*

She represents *middle Australia* (I hate that term!) – those who repress their conscience for as long as they can because it is so much easier and less frightening to conform. Denial, denial – the headset that re-elects Bush and Howard etc.

8. *What is your interpretation of the meaning in the play?*

- That reality can't be changed by ignoring it – there are moral rules for survival, as uncomfortable as they may be.
- That there is a kernel of goodness in people that can flourish if it's discovered and encouraged.
- What epiphanies come from societies unexpected sources.

9. *Was there anything unclear/ambiguous in the script? If so, what? How did you resolve this?*

We had a few little blips but they were sorted with discussion (lots of that!) and a few small re-writes.

10. *What, in your view, are the play's strengths and weaknesses?*

Strength: We are so in need of intelligent political satire – this play does it so well.

Strength: It's compactness in time and staging – means it could travel easily. Lets hope it gets around!

Your Process Questions

11. *What were the most/least enjoyable aspects of the standing up process for you?*

The initial terror (learning lines, cues) – which translated into euphoria. It was a wonderful process to work with a director who had such clear concepts but was also willing to spend ages on interpreting and developing characters. Great team to work with and *really* good to have a writer who welcomed feedback/queries as we hit bumps.

12. *Particularly, what did you find challenging about the standing up process?*

There's always a sense of responsibility to the play, its writer and its director. When the writer and director are alive and building their careers – and when it's the *world premiere* of the play the sense of responsibility is even greater.

13. *What was your experience of negotiating the world of the play; its everyday reality, and its political tone? How balanced did you find these to be?*

The characters were people we know, the political reality was honestly reflected, the political potential to *do things better* was intelligently handled. There was no doubt about the politics in the play but they were approached as issues of humanity rather than party politics.

Your Concepts of Theatre

14. *What type/s of theatre do you like to watch? Why?*

Something with gristle and bones and marrow in it that leaves you thinking for days about possible interpretations and implications. But not too weighty or pedantic. Plays that use language well. And I like really funny stuff. Love panto[mime].

15. *What type/s of theatre do you like to be involved in? Why?*

As above, if it has social relevance so much the better. Something with characters that can be wrestled . comedy – laughs driven by human foibles and lovely subtle language.

16. What are your views on political theatre as a genre?

“Theatre is a weapon. Is that Stanislavsky? I think theatre should be in every protest march, at every festival, particularly those that have a social conscience – like the National Folk Festival – I confess to a vested interest here!), every picket line, in shopping malls and centres – there is so much to be said and theatre can say it so subtlety and so persuasively – as yet it hasn’t been slapped by the sedition legislation.

17. What do you regard as the contemporary function/s of theatre?

- Entertainment.
- A channel for raising social/political awareness
- A much-needed alternative to the often mediocre often pernicious grill served up in cinemas and on television.
- A continuing cultural tradition for transmitting stories and history.
- A wonderful way for so many people to find and nurture the muse within, to ever find themselves.

E.3 Respondent 3: Actor Playing Donald

Script Questions

1. How would you characterize the type of theatre experience offered by The Rainbow Dark?

Entertainment with [an] underlying message.

2. How would you describe The Rainbow Dark as a play?

An allegory reinforcing the duplicity of political policies.

3. What (if any) aspects of the script did you enjoy/identify with?

The biting humour and often what was *not* said more than what was.

The play underlines the basic uncaring attitudes of the community to *Peoples From Elsewhere* with Babs’s final rationalisation – “After all it was dreadfully inconvenient”.

4. What (if any) aspects of the script did you find problematic/not enjoy?

Realising the cupboard under the stairs on a small one level stage – I felt this was solved by one director – but we all enjoyed the challenge.

5. *What (if anything) about the play challenged or confronted you? Why?*

Nothing confronted me. The challenge is always to bring the words to life and achieve the writer's aim.

6. *How did you react initially to your character? Did this change over time? Why?*

I enjoyed the character but felt he was *not* – as in the character list *courting* Gloria as such. I felt the *courting* was more wishful thinking on Gloria's part. The kissing session at the end was more opportunistic to distract Gloria from the escape.

7. *What was your character's function in the play?*

Donald's function is to up the inconsistencies of the government policy whilst lending humour to the situation and, finally, applauding the escape. I don't think he was at all involved in its planning.

8. *What is your interpretation of the meaning in the play?*

See number 2.

9. *Was there anything unclear/ambiguous in the script? If so, what? How did you resolve this?*

No.

10. *What, in your view, are the play's strengths and weaknesses?*

Brevity can be both a strength and a weakness, but I doubt the play could have been longer. The biting humour, the interplay between Gloria and Babs and Sylvia's transmogrification were definite strengths.

Your Process Questions

11. *What were the most/least enjoyable aspects of the standing up process for you?*

There is always a challenge in the theatre presentation; always action and reaction. I enjoy that challenge. The joy in working with a good script, a good director and good fellow actors, and these *The Rainbow Dark* provided.

12. *Particularly, what did you find challenging about the standing up process?*

Going through the rehearsal process and then getting up and doing it.

13. *What was your experience of negotiating the world of the play; its everyday reality, and its political tone? How balanced did you find these to be?*

Difficult to expand on *excellent*.

Your Concepts of Theatre

14. *What type/s of theatre do you like to watch? Why?*

I enjoy comedy – the more subtle the better. Timing is everything. Nevertheless a good drama I find entertaining and stimulating.

15. *What type/s of theatre do you like to be involved in? Why?*

As for number 14.

16. *What are your views on political theatre as a genre?*

Should not be heavy and is better presented with underlying humour – satire not sarcasm. Subtlety should be the name of the game. It is best to sneak up behind the audience rather than confront them. This is where *The Rainbow Dark* scores.

17. *What do you regard as the contemporary function/s of theatre?*

Personally I regard the primary functions of theatre are to entertain and if possible, amuse. It should also illuminate human nature. Scatology and foul language for the sake of realism to me is an excuse for the writer's lack of imagination and poor command of language. There is far too much tragedy in the outside world to send the audience home depressed and unsatisfied.

E.4 Respondent 4: Actor Playing Babs

Author's note: This actor opted to send me a her thoughts on the play and the process in a more open format, rather than responding specifically to each question on the questionnaire. This was because, in her words, "I find questionnaires rather daunting".

As I was eager to include this actor's feedback, I have elected to insert some of her thoughts as responses to specific questions, as I felt some of these corresponded with the numbered questions below. This actors remaining thoughts and observations are recorded below the numbered questions.

Script Questions

1. *How would you characterize the type of theatre experience offered by The Rainbow Dark?*

2. *How would you describe The Rainbow Dark as a play?*

3. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you enjoy/identify with?*

I enjoyed the play from the initial draft I read and was even more pleased with the version we rehearsed and presented. The characters and their dialogue attracted me. I found them all believable, even Sylvia the talking dog, they all would if they could, wouldn't they? I have always believed they know and understand more than we give them credit for, so including this prescient creature was a stroke of genius. That it is a political play which is very clear about the point it wishes to make made it even more attractive to me as a project to be involved with.

4. *What (if any) aspects of the script did you find problematic/not enjoy?*

The characters were all clearly defined but there were moments when it was difficult to know how to play certain lines e.g. What was Donald's real intention. Was he a knowing instigator of challenge and rebellion?

5. *What (if anything) about the play challenged or confronted you? Why?*

In the scene where Donald talks about having left-over meat, Babs's confusion about her attitude was not clearly defined in the writing. Or, at least that is how I felt as the actor and decisions had to be taken about how to play a line which was not always clear to me that that was the writer's intention.

6. *How did you react initially to your character? Did this change over time? Why?*

7. *What was your character's function in the play?*

8. *What is your interpretation of the meaning in the play?*

9. *Was there anything unclear/ambiguous in the script? If so, what? How did you resolve this?*

Gloria also shows us at the very end of the play that she has a heart and does indeed care about the people under the stairs and was able to defy the rules. Some inkling of her complexity given earlier, without giving too much away would have helped with the playing of the final scene. These were some of the things I felt that we did not wholly resolve, but after much discussion we made our decisions and played them to the best of our ability.

10. *What, in your view, are the play's strengths and weaknesses?*

Your Process Questions

11. What were the most/least enjoyable aspects of the standing up process for you?

The standing up process, as you call it, was no different to most plays. Most of our energy was concentrated on the text. Always a good thing.

12. Particularly, what did you find challenging about the standing up process?

13. What was your experience of negotiating the world of the play; its everyday reality, and its political tone? How balanced did you find these to be?

I believe that the political comment and the way you approached it with humour and compassion achieved a good balance and made the play readily accessible and enjoyable for the audience.

Your Concepts of Theatre

14. What type/s of theatre do you like to watch? Why?

I like to watch and participate in plays which, first of all, are well written, have something to say about the human condition and involve me in a good story. I also enjoy a good laugh when appropriate, and a good cry when my emotions are touched. To be engaged is paramount.

15. What type/s of theatre do you like to be involved in? Why?

As above.

16. What are your views on political theatre as a genre?

Most plays are political in some way. I find it interesting to hear, and see, conflicting points of view and to be encouraged to look at an issue or idea from different points of view.

17. What do you regard as the contemporary function/s of theatre?

The death of live theatre has been predicted by some since the advent of cinema. The use of technology and multi-media should be taken advantage of if it serves a particular production, and the play, well, but it is the human connection that that will keep the audience coming out to share the experience, with each other, of seeing real flesh and blood people in the same space as themselves, delighting and surprising with all their skills. From large spectacles in arenas to the very intimate in a tiny room, the human connection and the story is the thing!

**APPENDIX F:
PUBLISHED REVIEWS**

Format: transcripts of a newspaper article and web article

F.1 Review 1: Courier Mail Review, author Emma Cox

Today: Fragments, Metro Arts until Saturday - *Holy Guacamole* and *The Rainbow Dark*

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F.2 Review 2: From www.STAGEDIARY.com, Edition 64, October-December 2006, by Barbara Garlick

**Fragments: A Season of Short Plays
Backbone Youth Arts (Metro Arts Theatre)**

by Daniel Evans, Victoria Carless, Elizabeth Pullen, Kim Wilkinson

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