Acts of dramaturgy: the dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Additional Information:

- A Doctoral Thesis. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.

Metadata Record: [https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/24175](https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/24175)

Publisher: © Michael Pinchbeck

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: [https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Please cite the published version.
Acts of Dramaturgy:
The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

Michael Pinchbeck
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

Declaration

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Loughborough University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Copyright Notice

This work is the intellectual property of the author. You may copy up to 5% of this work for private study, or personal, non-commercial research. Any re-use of the information contained within this document should be fully referenced, quoting the author, title, university, degree level and pagination. Queries or requests for any other use, or if a more substantial copy is required, should be directed in the owner(s) of the Intellectual Property Rights.

Abstract

This doctoral study examines the evolving role of the dramaturg in the British contemporary performance scene from 2000 - 2015. In 1999, the role was seen in the UK as a luxury, not an essential; now the same companies are working with dramaturgs, often within an academic context, as the funding culture has shifted from Arts Council England to the Academy. This study proceeds through a combination of practice as research and a contextual survey of the role’s recent history taken from readings, interviews and a narrative of personal experience.

Image credits: Julian Hughes
# Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

## The Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Contents</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Notice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Contents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Acknowledgements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Abstract</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foreword</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Act One

| Act One: Prologue                          | 24          |
| Act One Scene One: Performing Dramaturgy   | 29          |
| Act One Scene Two: The body of work        | 32          |
| Act One Scene Three: *The Trilogy* (2014-16) | 38          |
| Act One Scene Four: Making Sense           | 39          |
| Act One Scene Five: The Tapestry           | 43          |
| Act One: Epilogue                          | 45          |

### Act Two

| Act Two: Prologue                          | 48          |
| Act Two Scene One: The dramaturgical toolkit | 52          |
| Act Two Scene Two: A contextual history    | 55          |
| Act Two Scene Three: Dramaturg as mechanic | 61          |
| Act Two Scene Four: Dramaturg as a midwife | 63          |
| Act Two Scene Five: Dramaturg as tourist   | 65          |
| Act Two: Epilogue                          | 69          |

### Act Three

| Act Three: Prologue                        | 74          |
| Act Three Scene One: The Contract          | 76          |
| Act Three Scene Two: Mirror Signal Manoeuvre | 78          |
Act Three Scene Three: Walking the tightrope  83
Act Three Scene Four: The dramaturgy of interruption  86
Act Three Scene Five: Case Studies  88

Act Four
Act Four: Prologue  100
Act Four Scene One: Shedding  101
Act Four Scene Two: Picking  104
Act Four Scene Three: Raveling  106
Act Four Scene Four: Battening  108
Act Four Scene Five: Taking Up  112
Act Four Scene Six: The dramaturg as witness  114
Act Four Scene Seven: Embedded Criticism  118
Act Four: Epilogue  123

Act Five
Act Five: Prologue  126
Act Five Scene One: Performance methodology  128
Act Five Scene Two: The dramaturgy of absence  130
Act Five Scene Three: Naming the structures  133
Act Five Scene Four: Keystone scenes  137
Act Five Scene Five: Liminal Dramaturgies  139
Act Five: Epilogue  140

The Conclusion  142
The Afterword  143
The Appendix  146
The Beginning  147
The Middle  173
The End  182
The Postscript  206
The Footnotes  207
The Bibliography  223
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.</td>
<td>Writing <em>The End</em> (2011)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My right eye (2016)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>The End</em> (2011)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Word cloud for the audience feedback of <em>The Beginning</em> (2012)</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td><em>The End</em> (2011)</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td><em>The End</em> (2011)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td><em>The Middle</em> (2013)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>My left eye (2016)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Acknowledgements

I am a lecturer in drama at the University of Lincoln and a doctoral researcher at Loughborough University where I am completing my practice as research PhD on the role of the dramaturg or outside eye in contemporary performance. This doctoral thesis is dedicated to all the people who have supported my academic and theatre work over the last six years. It is dedicated to all the venues that have commissioned, developed or presented The Trilogy (2014) including SICK! Festival, Brighton Dome, BAC, Chelsea Theatre and CPT (London), Curve Theatre (Leicester), Leeds Met Studio Theatre, The Junction (Cambridge), Lakeside Arts Centre (Nottingham), Nottingham Playhouse and neat 2016 (Nottingham), hÅb arts (Manchester), Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, Loughborough University Arts Centre, New Art Exchange (Nottingham), Primary (Nottingham), Hatch (Nottingham), 100 Grad Festival (Berlin), Théâtre 140 (Brussels), Studiobühne Köln (Cologne) and Staatstheater (Dresden).

It is dedicated to all the performers who have been involved in the different iterations of the project including Nicki Hobday, Ollie Smith and Tony Pinchbeck. It is dedicated to the technical coordinator of The Trilogy (2014), Anneke van de Stege. It is dedicated to all the artists who invited me to be their dramaturg over the last five years including Hetain Patel, Chloe Dechery, Reckless Sleepers, Gabriele Reuter, Henrietta Hale, Chris. Dugrenier, Tom Marshman, Jack Britton, 2 Magpies, 30 Bird and Strange Names Collective. It is dedicated to everyone who has let me interview them for the blog, they are too numerous to name, where appropriate they have been credited on the blog: www.outsideeye-project.wordpress.com

It is dedicated to the supervisors who have overseen the project from start to finish and offered critical feedback, moral support and words of wisdom throughout, Dr Neal Swettenham and Professor Mick Mangan at Loughborough University. I am very grateful to Dr Carolyn Scott-Jeffs at Loughborough University for offering her outside eye too. I would also like to thank Dr Cathy Turner for offering to be the external examiner of this project. It is dedicated to staff at Lincoln University who have helped me along the way, especially Professor Mark O’Thomas who has offered invaluable financial support and Dr Dominic Symonds and Dr Karen Savage for their continued moral support. I would like to thank Arts Council England for funding the work and the British Council for selecting it for the Edinburgh Showcase in 2011 and 2013 and supporting its tour to Belgium and Germany.
At the time of writing, *The Trilogy* (2014) is invited to be shown one last time at Nottingham Playhouse in June 2016, so I would like to think that rumours of my retirement from the stage have been exaggerated. I would like to thank artistic director of Nottingham Playhouse, Giles Croft, for his support. My visits to theatres and universities in Brussels, Cologne, Dresden, Pristina, Riga, Sarajevo and San Jose have informed the study invaluably and I am grateful for the funding that has allowed these visits from the British Council, Arts Council England, Santander and the University of Lincoln. I would like to thank Professor Matthew Spangler at the University of San Jose State for welcoming me to his institution and allowing me to interview him and showing me how the dramaturg operates in the North American context.

On a personal note, this doctoral study is dedicated to my wife, Rhiannon Jones, for always being there and for her endless love and support and enthusiasm for sharing our research and critically punching my writing. I could not have done it without her words and feedback and our journey through this process together has been incredibly important throughout. She is truly my other half and we are expecting our first baby together who will hopefully arrive after this is finished. It is dedicated to my children Dylan and Lydia for letting me pick them up late from after school club and get up before they did to finish the final chapters. It is dedicated to my Mum and Dad for all their pride and encouragement, whatever I do, even if I will never have a proper job. It is dedicated to my Dad for proofreading it before it went to print. It is dedicated to my Granny who paid for my MA and made me realise that I wanted to start learning again. It is dedicated to my Gram, who was a weaver, and told me about how to weave a thread. It is dedicated to my brother Robert who is the reason I am an artist in the first place. I could not have done it without any of you. I could not have done it at all.

It is dedicated to the idea that a PhD is, like any project, a dot dot dot not a full stop. As Tim Etchells writes ‘Climaxes don’t have to be produced, resolutions are not needed. It is what it is’.¹ This is what it is. It is neither the beginning nor the end, but it is a snapshot of a moment in time. Like my Dad, standing blindfolded on the end of a diving board in Malta in 1963, on the front cover of this thesis. There is an old Russian proverb, if you go out to your porch, look at the sky and jump to the stars, you will just land in the mud. This doctoral thesis sits somewhere between knowing and not knowing, jumping and landing, the stars and the mud.

Michael Pinchbeck
1 May 2016
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Abstract

This doctoral study examines the evolving role of the dramaturg in the British contemporary performance scene from 2000 - 2015. In 1999, the role was seen in the UK as a luxury, not an essential; now the same companies are working with dramaturgs, often within an academic context, as the funding culture has shifted from Arts Council England to the Academy. This study proceeds through a combination of practice as research and a contextual survey of the role’s recent history taken from readings, interviews and a narrative of personal experience. As John Freeman writes, ‘Research is also always re-search: a drawing on one’s previous experience and developing this into knowledge’. I arrive at new knowledge about the dramaturg’s current position in a shifting landscape by inhabiting both the role and the landscape. John Berger suggests that to understand a landscape we have to situate ourselves in it. The doctoral study seeks to do this through practice, research and practice as research. I devised three performances - The Trilogy (2014). Their non-linearity is relevant to the line of investigation I took into the role of the dramaturg today, both inviting and playing the role.

The practice as research applies different theoretical models of how a dramaturg operates to a body of theatre work that interrogates the role from different perspectives. The practice asks how dramaturgy might function with or without a dramaturg as an agent for critical feedback or meaning-making by exploring other models such as embedded criticism, work-in-progresses and post-show discussions. The performance work attempts to put the dramaturg onstage and in so doing explores what he / she does as part of the theatre event to make it happen. The project is concerned with making visible the textual trace of dramaturgy within the work. As such, I have written a thesis on the dramaturgy of my practice that questions notions of proximity and distance, objectivity and subjectivity, self and other. The thesis documents how the role has evolved over the last 15 years and argues that it has had a significant, tangible impact on the British contemporary performance scene. Through an understanding of the role, the dramaturg, outside of a traditional writer-director paradigm, becomes an application with which to deconstruct and decode the tropes and contradictions of contemporary performance. I posit that dramaturgs and ‘outside eyes’ operate in fluid and often undefined spatial territory between writer, deviser, director and dramatist – as well as any hyphenated combination thereof - and the doctoral study reflects this fluidity in its style.
‘… There's glory for you!'
'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.
Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"
'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.
'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'
'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all'.

If this was a show, which it is not, I would write some kind of programme note. I always enjoy this process, as it is the last thing I write before the show reaches an audience. All the work has been done, the rehearsals have finished and the script has been printed. If there is a script. Then I write something in a café, or on a train, like I am now, that tries to articulate
what the show is about and what questions it asks. Usually, the programme note would be preceded by some kind of quote like it is above. As such, this is The Foreword for the thesis and it seeks to outline the definitions I am exploring with this doctoral study. A more detailed definition is contained in Act Two, where I explore the contextual history of the role. With thanks to my supervisor, Mick Mangan, there are four main questions that I will address here:

**Question 1**

When people bemoan the lack of dramaturgs in dance, as Judith Mackrell does on p. 25, what do they imagine might be done by such a figure that could not be done (or is not already being done) by a director? I ask if it is possible that the dramaturg’s role is already fulfilled to some extent by the choreographer or the director. Conversely – I say on p. 79 that ‘The contemporary dramaturg’s job is to piece together these fragments to imagine the whole’. Piecing together the fragments and imagining a whole is clearly important.

What happens to a production, or a company, that doesn’t have a dramaturg? Is it doomed to produce fragmented, incoherent work? Clearly not. So, why have I suggested that the dramaturg should take this ‘helicopter view’ (p. 79)? Could it be because much of the work I describe, either work I have done as a dramaturg or made as a theatre director, is personal, and as such, requires a more considered objective dramaturgical input? In Act Four Scene Seven, I define the dramaturg in terms of providing ‘embedded criticism’ and the recent shift towards online responses to rehearsal as well as the finished product. Isn’t ‘embedded criticism’ what a good director does? When a director works this way does he subsume the role of the dramaturg or is it just that he micro-manages more aspects of the production him / herself as an auteur? Is it because I am so keen to involve the members of the ensemble in the process and share the authorial handwriting that I invite a dramaturg to observe?

Different circumstances may require objective feedback and others may not and perhaps that is up to the theatre maker involved in the work. This thesis seeks to explore the added value a dramaturg brings to the process. I return to this notion of value many times (pp. 18, 20, 27, 29, 42, 48, 59, 68, 66, 121, 122, 133). As Matt Trueman suggests of the role, ‘Its value is instrumental, not intrinsic’. I also include interviews with other practitioners about the value of the role. My first question is always: ‘What does the role of a dramaturg mean to you?’ and my interviews aim to take the pulse of the industry as much as seek to define the role.
Question 2

*The End* (2011) had two dramaturgs, Hetain Patel and Mole Wetherell (Reckless Sleepers), *The Beginning* (2012) had one dramaturg / creative producer, Claire Summerfield, and *The Middle* (2013) had no one directly engaged in that role other than me. It is telling that in *The Middle* (2013), the final part of *The Trilogy* (2014), I did not invite an outside eye in, perhaps to see how I could make the piece without one. But also because I was working with my father, I wanted to keep it ‘in the family’. Throughout the thesis I talk about their input into *The Trilogy* (2014) as well as the other people invited into the process e.g. Jens Binder and Jon McGregor (p. 116). At times I have tried to articulate their input, to ask how it changed / improved / damaged the plays and the process of play-making? And how it relates to what the body of the written thesis says about contemporary dramaturging. The key issue with Practice as Research theses concerns the potential gap between the practice and the theory.

Analysis of the contribution made by Patel, Wetherell and Summerfield is undertaken to bridge that potential gap. See more analysis of their work on p. 136. However, it is important to note that perhaps I moved towards having no dramaturg for *The Middle* (2013) because I became more confident in my own dramaturgical support of the work. To some extent, perhaps I had to have outside eyes or dramaturgs informing my earlier work so I could find my own voice as a theatre maker, and through the process of this study I have grown as a dramaturg as a result. That is not to say that I would not work with another dramaturg again.

Question 3

What does dramaturgy mean? As Cathy Turner writes, ‘It can be used as a noun, to suggest the structure of a performance, while also being applicable to the composition of a play text. At the same time ‘doing dramaturgy’ can imply the activity of analysing and interpreting either type of structure, sometimes with a view to making a critical contribution to an ongoing creative process.‘

‘Dramaturgy’ ought to mean ‘what a dramaturg does’. Usually though, we use it to mean something like a) dramatic shape; b) structure c) theatre-making generally d) maybe the theatrical equivalent of dance’s ‘choreography’. We talk about the dramaturgy of a play, or the characteristic dramatic technique of a playwright (e.g. ‘Ibsen’s dramaturgy’ etc). In Performance Studies we talk about the dramaturgy of a non-theatrical event, like a state funeral, a hospital appointment. Let’s call this Dramaturgy I.
We do not use it a lot to talk about the task / role / activity / contract assigned to the theatrical specialist we call The Dramaturg. We do not really have a word for that – which is why we have filled the gap with Turner’s ‘doing dramaturgy’ or Turner and Berhndt’s ‘dramaturging’. If we did have a word for it, it ought to be ‘dramaturgy’. So let’s call this Dramaturgy II.

**Question 4**

So what then is this thesis - *Acts of Dramaturgy* - about? The written element is largely about Dramaturgy II (‘dramaturging in contemporary theatrical culture’) with reference to creative work, which is largely an exploration of Dramaturgy I (‘style, technique and form in contemporary playmaking’). It is also about the practice as research, the body of theatre work I have done as and with ‘The Dramaturg’. As such, we could argue that it comprises:

a) an overview of the contemporary role of The Dramaturg (Dramaturgy II)
b) some key aspects of theatre-making (Dramaturgy I) which the existence of dramaturgs and Dramaturgy II has helped to facilitate, such as:
   a. A dramaturgy of interruption;
   b. A dramaturgy of weaving,
   c. A dramaturgy of process (or “making-the-creative-process-explicit”).
   d. A dramaturgy of absence
   e. A dramaturgy of the text on display
  c) Ways in which they play out in my own work through analysis of the practice and the analysis of the contribution of the invited dramaturgs (see Question 2).

In conclusion, this thesis enacts a live dialogue between meanings I and II of dramaturgy. Dialogue comes from the latin *dialogos*, roughly translating as to speak through. I aim for the practice to speak through the research, and the research to speak through the practice. As Humpty Dumpty says, ‘when I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean’. As such, I use terms like dramaturgy, dramaturging, dramaturg and outside eye interchangeably, in order to engage with the ongoing analysis of and critical discourse around this evolving role. As Carole Gray says, ‘The Latin ‘contextus’ means ‘a putting together’; similarly, the Greek prefix ‘com’ means ‘together’ and ‘textere’ to ‘weave’. So we might understand what we mean by contextualizing as a weaving together and critical analysis of the relevant strands of established and current thinking and practice’. This thesis is a weaving together of strands.
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Introduction

The broad approach to practice as research

Though this started out as a theoretical thesis it quickly became clear that practice as research was the most appropriate vocabulary to explore the role of the dramaturg. The body of work I made as part of the Practice as Research PhD is entitled *The Trilogy* (2014). The three performances that comprise it, *The Beginning* (2012), *The Middle* (2013) and *The End* (2011) set out to explore the role of the dramaturg using performance as an application. To frame my investigations into the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance, I created three performances inspired by the work of William Shakespeare. Taking as their starting point a stage direction or a moment in the narrative that is not the main focus, *The Trilogy* (2014) recontextualises, deconstructs and disorientates the classic text within a landscape that is more polarised, free from the text and inherently and explicitly aware of its own theatricality. The work negotiates the ever-shifting relationship between the text and its performance, the performer(s) and their audience, whilst acknowledging that Shakespeare often employed a play-within-a-play as a device, what we now call a meta-theatrical mode of representation.

Through an understanding of the role, the dramaturg, outside of a traditional writer-director paradigm, becomes a lens or application with which to deconstruct and decode the tropes and contradictions of contemporary performance such as the script as an onstage device, non-matrixed performance, autobiographical material and non-linear narrative. Dramaturgs and ‘outside eyes’ operate in a fluid territory between writer, director and dramatist and the doctoral study reflects this fluidity both in its approach and critical investigation. It is important to note that *The Trilogy* (2014) was non-linear in its devising and, as such, became inherently intertextual. It was my intention to spiral the work as a dramaturg at different proximities to its creation and as my presence as a performer became less my presence as dramaturg could potentially increase. It is this spiral that informs a dramaturgical process for the body of work, allowing me to cut across the dual linearities of time and space. The study describes the process of moving from being an inside eye on *The End* (2011) and *The Beginning* (2012) to an outside eye on *The Middle* (2013). As I moved further from the stage I become more of an outside eye, and more objective on the work. As a result, external dramaturgs, Wetherell and Patel (*The End*) and Summerfield (*The Beginning*) moved away.
The approach to the writing

This accompanying thesis exploring the dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance is called *Acts of Dramaturgy*. The title is taken from *The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook* which, as the authors describe in a foreword, is aimed at those who commit ‘acts of dramaturgy’. This thesis seeks to frame the practice as research, and the playtexts for *The Trilogy*, through a set of critical reflections, micro-chapters and theoretical provocations on contemporary dramaturgy. The micro-chapters (or acts) contextualise the themes and approaches of the work, serve as provocations for the *Acts of Dramaturgy* the work entailed, challenge new models of practice as research (PaR) and problematise the notion of play texts themselves. The thesis is intended as a critical companion to a body of work that toured for six years (and continues to do so) and which stimulates a topical debate about contemporary dramaturgy - what Claire MacDonald describes as a ‘term in flux, a not-yet-settled word’.

The main research questions

The central research questions of this study ask how the evolving role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance veers from suggestion to reflection, subjectivity to objectivity, getting lost or being found. I propose an alternative terminology through working analogies to tourists, navigators, co-pilots and cartographers. I discuss the value of the online space to the dramaturgical process. In my recent performance work, I have played the role of outside eye in an attempt to objectivise the devising process. Taking on Proehl’s observation of the dramaturg as ‘…a particularly postmodern phenomenon - one that signals an acceptance of marginality as a place of choice’, I have written myself into the margins so I can watch what happens from the wings. The research questions will be ‘What is the role of a dramaturg today?’ and ‘How does it function in a landscape that is becoming increasingly defined by a lack of text or conventional structures or theatrical tradition?’ The project draws upon experience making a trilogy of devised work and working as a dramaturg with other artists. It asks what an ‘outside eye’ adds to the creative process and how it catalyses. How does the dramaturg inform or inhabit a devising process? What is the relationship between suggestion and reflection, censorship and mentorship, getting lost in a process and finding a way out? While asking these questions, it is important to remember that, as Haseman points out ‘Conventional calls for a ‘research question’ do not always suit practitioner-researchers whose initial impulse may not be so precisely defined’. Again this is echoed by Turner and
Behrndt when they write, ‘the dramaturgy of the work is not defined before the work commences’. The Trilogy (2014) aims to ask a number of research questions about the role of the dramaturg in making contemporary performance. Who is the author of devised work? What is the role of a script in performance? How might we narrate the role of a dramaturg? How might performance have an ‘auto-dramaturgy’ or an ‘auto-dramaturg’? How might a performance have a handwriting? The doctoral study is concerned with finding different ways in which the dramaturgy of the piece might enact different ways of structuring the material.

### The new knowledge produced

New knowledge might be articulated as an expansion of the dramaturg's role and the understanding of this role as paralleling the academic who researches through practice. Using theory on dramaturgy by Turner and Behrndt, Pearson and Shanks, and a range of academics, I tease out other metaphorical analogies to the role by Beddie, Cardullo and MacDonald. Barthes’ notions of the readerly and the writerly text, the stadium and the punctum are useful critical handrails, as are discussions of intertextuality and metatextuality. The dichotomy between the written and the devised is discussed, with reference to Thies-Lehmann’s notion of the postdramatic and reflections on the devising processes of contemporary theatre companies such as Forced Entertainment and Reckless Sleepers. However, through the process of writing the study and the reflection on the practice as research generated through it, I became interested in how there appear to be direct correlations between dramaturgy and practice as research itself. They are both self-defining, bespoke methodological processes that emerge from a process of doing and it is this doing that yields the research the process seeks. As Smith and Dean propose: ‘To be process-driven is to have no particular starting point in mind and no pre-conceived end. Such an approach can be directed towards emergence, that is the generation of ideas, which were unforeseen at the beginning of the project.’ This view of practice as research echoes Turner and Behrndt’s description of the dramaturgs they interviewed as ‘… having discovered, through practice, the particularities of their own function within the process.’ This thesis argues that the act of working as a dramaturg, or the Act of Dramaturgy, is, by definition, a form of practice as research itself. I designed new models for dramaturgy to take place which I have variously coined ‘360 degree dramaturgy’, an ‘holistic dramaturgy’ or ‘auteur-dramaturgy’. Based, to some extent, on Turner’s notion of ‘porous dramaturgy’ and Pavis’ ‘auto-dramaturgy’, these new models combine a sense of directing one’s own work through a dramaturgical lens and work being (auto)biographical.
The relevance of that knowledge to others

These models are transferable and they have been tested under different conditions and applied to different projects throughout the course of the doctoral study. Each time I have applied an ‘holistic dramaturgy’ to the process of an artist or company I have then written a detailed dramaturgical response to the process. Whereas the interviews with practitioners were labelled as ‘Dramaturgy in Dialogue’, responses to the rehearsal process (embedded criticism) were called ‘Dramaturgy in Practice’. Some of these are housed on the project blog, for example, this response to Chris. Dugrenier’s work Wealth’s Last Caprice (2012): https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/2012/05/06/dramaturgy-in-practice-wealths-last-caprice/. My creative responses were used by the artists to inform their work and then occasionally used to generate programme notes. For example, this response to Chloe Dechery’s A Duet Without You (2013), which attempts to describe the show as a dance: https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/2013/05/23/dramaturgy-in-practice-chloe-dechery/

This knowledge has therefore been made relevant to the work of artists with whom I am collaborating and academics and publications with and for whom I am writing on the topic. They have also been cited as models of best practice for dramaturgs and embedded critics. The programme notes for A Duet Without You (2013) are being expanded for an Intellect publication on Chloe Dechery’s work. For the Brazilian journal, Repertorio, I am currently exploring notions of ‘internal dramaturgy’ and ‘performative dramaturgy’ with reference to The man who flew into space from his apartment (2015), describing how the dramaturgy of the piece is shaped from within by a guest performer and this leads to a ‘curating of the unknown’. I have also recently written papers / articles on the dramaturgy of conflict inherent in Bolero (2014) and the interdisciplinary and intercultural dramaturgy of Bolero (2014) and Concerto (2016). I am currently writing an article for Performance Research about the dramaturgy of a meal in the performance, The Last Supper (2003), by Reckless Sleepers. Finally, a scene from The Beginning (2012) was published in the Podium journal and will be included in Routledge’s forthcoming Twenty First Century Performance Reader (2017). I continue to apply the same methodological approaches to my work as a dramaturg and my work as a theatre maker and this has impacted on every collaboration I have made since 2010. Reflections on these collaborations form the basis of this thesis and have seeded the various research outputs I have worked on since. I am discussing the publication of the play texts of The Trilogy (2016) with Intellect alongside a series of critical reflections. All of these research outputs evidence the impact and relevance of the practice as research and the thesis.
The style of the thesis

A brief note on the style of the thesis, which has been inspired by the writing of Tim Etchells and Eugenio Barba. It takes as its starting point, the style prescribed by Etchells in his article on dramaturgy, *Doing Time* (2009). He writes, ‘Here, - rather than the line A B C D - we have A and also B meanwhile C, the one running through the other’. This thesis, like his paper, is a ‘presentation’ on Dramaturgy ‘of knots, collisions, tangles’. As such I take a non-linear approach to the doctoral study and there are occasional knots and tangles in the logic of my thinking to unpick, just as the dramaturg is always undoing knots in the narrative. Here, instead of A B C D, we have Acts One, Two, Three and Four, in dialogue with each other. Secondly, central to following the narrative is Barba’s concept that “The word ‘text’, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscript text, meant ‘a weaving together’.” In this sense, there is no performance without ‘text. The notion of ‘text’ standing for ‘weaving together’ has prescribed the style of this thesis, just as the dramaturg becomes a metaphorical seamstress, weaving elements of the performance together, weaving together the devised and the written, so I am weaving together my interrogation of that role.

Barba goes on to describe the premise that the work dramaturgs do is that of actions, that these actions make up elements of the performance, which preside within the ‘sounds, noises, lights, changes in space’. He suggests that ‘objects used in the performance are also actions, transforming themselves, acquiring different meanings and different emotive colorations’. The work I have done for this study has tested the notion that the dramaturg is in control of these actions and that objects used in performance also make up these actions. It is these ‘actions’ that has helped me to frame the study into five acts of dramaturgy and it is his notion of weaving that has given me, a sometimes poetic, licence to weave these together.

The control or influence these actions have on the audience’s attention is echoed by Etchells, when he describes the interest he has with the periphery of performance, the notion that you can be forced to look at a specific element of the performance but you are drawn to watch a ‘lesser’ part or fringe portion. Etchells goes on to say that ‘… because ‘not in it’ (watching from the sidelines, changing costume, having a beer and waiting) such figure(s) on stage are (in some partial and temporary way of course) released from the tyranny of representation, released simply into the place of ‘meaning and showing something’. This important and interesting ‘focus-driven’ look at a performance guides my work throughout this study.
The scope of the thesis

This thesis explores the written text and the way it is represented both on and offstage. It oscillates between the two poles, as outlined by Barba in his definition of dramaturgy: the concatenation pole and the simultaneity pole. At the same time, it addresses the topical and potentially false dichotomy of the divide between the written text and the devised text, as addressed by David Edgar’s Oxford symposium *Is the Playwright Dead?* (2015) and *The Guardian*’s response to this with a blog commentary on the exaggeration of the ‘death of the playwright’. Barthes wrote about *THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR*. Michelene Wandor goes one further and says *THE AUTHOR IS NOT DEAD, MERELY SOMEWHERE ELSE*. This thesis explores the intersections between author and devisor, “a theatre based on the mise-en-scene of a previously written text, and a theatre based on a ‘performance’ text”. It acts on the difference between a text, which is the creative and performative starting point and a text, which is the by-product or secondary end result to the performance. I say ‘by-product’, as the text is not the intended end result as in a script, however, it is the sometimes necessary amalgamation of work to historically finish and control the process and product post-performance for the artist / writer, this was certainly the case with *The Trilogy* (2014).

This understanding of text feeds into the dramaturg’s ability to ‘move from a classification of modern theatrical phenomena to a microscopic analysis or to an anatomical investigation of theatrical bios, of dramatic life: dramaturgy’. The concept of space between the two uses of text can be seen in a more physicalised sense of the dramaturg through Etchells’ article where he writes ‘And on the other hand things that are pushed deep into it, away from them, pushed back into fiction. Imagine - even here - if my table were back there - what would I be trying to say? Space is already Dramaturgy”. *The Trilogy* is deeply concerned with the theatre space and its inherent dramaturgy. This contrast between far and close, of focus and unfocus, that Etchells draws upon is an interesting way of bringing validation to a number of the more intricate details that the dramaturg has to take into consideration with regards to devising performance in contemporary theatre. As such I will now guide the reader through the thesis.

A guide to the thesis

In Act One, I seek to introduce the terrain I have explored and raise the research questions that my thesis aims to address. I spell out in the introduction that I am writing from a DIY-
based context rather than the more ‘written about’ institutional perspective on the role. I draw a narrative line between the evolving role of the dramaturg between 2000 and 2015 and my own personal experience of working with and as a dramaturg. I borrow Peter Stamer’s concept of ‘performing dramaturgy’ to explore how I have used performance as a mode to explore the role. I outline the body of work that comprises The Trilogy (2014) with specific reference to how the dramaturg impacted on the devising process. I conclude the chapter by trying to make sense of how the role operates in the contemporary performance context. I refer to Patrice Pavis’ notion of an ‘autodramaturgy’ - which is a particularly useful lens to use when approaching autobiographical work. I draw from a number of interviews I have conducted with dramaturgs and I acknowledge here that everyone disagrees about what the dramaturg does, so I accept that the thesis cannot present every opinion but can try to plot a route through it and in doing so, help to clarify the role or perhaps define its current position. The final scene seeks to introduce the metaphor of a tapestry and weave that is the central thread that draws the thesis together and proposes a model of embodied dramaturgy that best describes my practice. The Epilogue to Act One raises the questions a dramaturg might ask during the creative process and traces a connection between the original German dramaturg, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1769 and US dramaturg Mark Bly’s production work today.

In Act Two, I address the challenges of defining the role of the dramaturg and take a forensic approach to the vocabulary used to describe it and the metaphors other academics have employed as analogous. I describe what a dramaturgical toolkit might be citing David Williams, Patrice Pavis and Richard Schechner and ways in which performance might be analysed. I present a contextual history of the role from Lessing to the present day and spend some time exploring the impact Kenneth Tynan had at the National Theatre as the UK’s first high-profile dramaturg, even though he was not specifically defined as such. He defined himself as a literary manager when joining the theatre. I draw out the nautical terminology that has been used by different scholars and practitioners to describe the role and then move on to explore key models such as the dramaturg as mechanic, midwife, tourist, architect and archaeologist. This chapter explores the potential for these models to be implemented in practice with reference to The Trilogy (2014) and my work with artists such as Gabriele Reuter and Hetain Patel. The Epilogue reflects on how these models are useful paradigms but resist an holistic, three dimensional dramaturgy rendered through practice as research, whereby a dramaturg is both making meaning and reading meaning at the same time. It also
addresses the topical dichotomy between the written text that predates the performance and the devised text that concludes it, with reference to both architecture and archaeology.

In Act Three, I outline the contract and job description that might be drawn up between a contemporary dramaturg and the artist with whom they are working. I draw again on the interviews I have conducted and my own experience working as dramaturg where there is often no formal contract and the job description is designed through the process of doing the job. I introduce a new model for the role based on my own experience: *Mirror Signal Manoeuvre* and deconstruct each component of the model with reference to *The Trilogy* (2014). I describe how the dramaturg is a rear view mirror in the process, and draw on experience using word clouds to signal what the work is doing and manoeuvring across art form and across language in rehearsal. I introduce another concept of *walking the tightrope* when it comes to giving feedback with reference to Carl Lavery’s reading of Jean Genet’s *Le Funambule* (1957) and apply a theoretical reading of Barthes’ *studium* and *punctum* to *The Trilogy* (2014). The chapter concludes with three case studies of *The dramaturgy of interruption*, where I draw on the text and the aesthetics of *The Trilogy* (2014) to identify moments when the dramaturgy of the work was interrupted, disrupted or distorted.

In Act Four, I return to the central metaphor of weaving in order to analyse *The Trilogy* (2014) using each aspect of the weaving process; shedding, picking, raveling, battening and taking up. I apply each of these terms to a stage in the theatre-making process to create a narrative of the dramaturgy and the way in which the performances were composed. This metaphor, stemming from Barba’s definition of text as ‘a weaving together’ and Barthes’ notion of intertextuality, allows for in-depth analysis of the practice. I end the chapter with a section on the dramaturg as witness with reference to Hancock and Kelly’s ‘seers in residence’ and draw on dramaturgical feedback received on *The Trilogy* (2014) from invited guests from other disciplines. I explore the notion of embedded criticism and embedded dramaturgy – enabled and enacted by the advent of blogs and online reflection on process. I survey the online discourse that has circulated recently around the concept and make the point that dramaturgs have actually been embedded in the creative process for centuries but now they are able to speak directly from the rehearsal space via the new technology available to them. The Epilogue proposes a model of embedded academics that fulfil a similar role as ‘thinkers in residence’ today but write mindful of and supported by their institutions for the REF, as the funding model has shifted from Arts Council England towards the Academy.
In Act Five, I reflect on the findings of the thesis and revisit my notes, writing and working in the margins, during the making of the practice as research. I discuss the ontology of absence inherent in the performance work I have made and the subsequent practice that is not part of the study but wears its ongoing influence. I reflect on the impact the dramaturg had on each element of *The Trilogy* (2014) and consider what role the dramaturg might play moving beyond the scope of the study. I envisage a world in which dramaturgs visit the rehearsal space remotely and a new economy emerges where the embedded dramaturg replaces the face-to-face contact between artist and outside eye, the blog replaces the publication. Faced with the challenge of wrestling some kind of meaning out of all of the different opinions I am working with, on such a contested term, I have chosen simply to acknowledge that everyone says something different and to ask what is at the centre of this disagreement. I suggest that the definition of the dramaturg shifts in tentative relationship to the roles that it serves e.g. writer, director, devisor etc. and advise that we ask where the dramaturg ends and other roles begin in the devising process. It has also been noted that one tends to use the word dramaturg in a subservient role e.g. when we say ‘Robert Wilson’s dramaturg’ we imply a certain possessive or hierarchical quality to the relationship. I have attempted to address this issue with a democratic approach. Some directors might simply need a dramaturg for reassurance / sycophancy and this has also been taken into account during the study. I discuss the liminality of the dramaturg’s role and how I am always working at the intersections in between the practice and the research, the process and the product, writing the work and about the work.

Ultimately the conclusion, like the thesis as a whole, aims to name the dramaturg’s role in the 21st Century, endure it with life and give it authority, for a better understanding of what it is. Further to the five Acts of Dramaturgy contained in this thesis there is an Appendix that contains the link to the website that accompanies the study – the Outside Eye project blog: [www.outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com](http://www.outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com). This is a comprehensive account of over 36 interviews with artist and theatre-makers about dramaturgy and has been updated throughout the course of the study and adds to the critical discourse therein. There are also three complete performance texts for *The Beginning* (2011), *The Middle* (2013) and *The End* (2012), which are quoted from here throughout the thesis. These have evolved throughout the study with each and every iteration of the work, and are still in this sense, work-in-progress. There is a final appendix item, a printed publicity brochure for *The Trilogy* (2014) that contains DVD documentation of each performance filmed during the period of the study. It is intended that this should be watched before reading the thesis if possible, for a better
understanding of the critical analyses I present here. There are reflective blogs for each
performance that can be found in The Appendix. These are real-time accounts of each
creative process and exist as repositories for information, critical insights and documentation.
They represent an internal dramaturgy at work during the making of practice as research and
remain as primary evidence of the process that I draw on throughout the study. I employed a
blended approach to document the process to suit the style of the work. As such the tone of
each research output varies according to context and the narrative of this thesis is non-linear.

To conclude this introduction, this is not so much an act of writing as an act of weaving.
There are many different threads running through my research into the role of the dramaturg.
Threads of practice as a theatre maker. Threads of practice as a dramaturg. Threads of
interviews with other theatre makers and dramaturgs. Threads of research through academic
study into existing literature. Threads of writing on and around the subject for publications.
Threads of ongoing online discourse. Threads of my practice as a lecturer in drama, which to
some extent, is a dramaturgical role. All these threads, in isolation, articulate specific aspects
of the role, but when weaved into a whole, they attempt a more comprehensive study of how
the role shapes theatre today and what it offers at different stages of a creative process. In this
tentative description of my research so far, I attempt to determine its value to a context that
has only recently embraced its catalyzing potential. In the UK, the role is often seen to be a
luxury, a job you might create if there is extra funding available; in Germany it is seen as
essential. But how might we describe a work without its influence and how does it impact on
a creative process without the usual hierarchies of a theatre space or other systems in place?

This thesis explores the different roles the dramaturg plays in both the devised and written
theatre context. It speaks from personal experience and draws on interviews with other
practitioners. It speaks of six years of making theatre, writing for theatre and writing about
theatre. As such, the thesis has evolved as I have evolved from student to lecturer, artist to
academic. I hope that you enjoy following my journey as much I have enjoyed making it. The
plays read when I first studied theatre always ended with the words: And the curtain falls.
The Introduction serves as a curtain raiser for the Acts of Dramaturgy to follow. As with all
curtain raisers it is unaware of how the audience will feel when the curtain falls at the end.
Act One

‘In the beginning I was thinking about exits’.

The End (2011)
**Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance**

The only true voyage of discovery… would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is…

**Act One: The Prologue**

![Image of an eye](image)

Fig. 1: My right eye (2016)

Marcel Proust is writing here about how we all see the world in different ways and he wonders what it would be like to see the world as someone else sees it. He suggests this would be the ‘only true voyage of discovery’, to ‘behold the universe through the eyes of another’. It is an image graphically rendered in Chris Thorpe’s recent piece *Confirmation* (2014) when he imagines what it might be like to remove someone else’s’ eyeballs and swap them with his own; ‘his right eye ball in my left hand, my left eye ball in his right etc.’. He confirms that ‘… there would be no blood’ as this is purely a hypothetical concept. Thorpe does this in a bid to understand how someone might be able to see the world in a way he could never imagine seeing it, to subvert the confirmation bias that his performance explores. He likens the impossibility of this as like ‘trying to taste your own tongue’.
However, in practical terms, dramaturgs have been trying to do this for years. The assistant director / dramaturg for Robert Wilson, sits: ‘… behind him, slightly to the left, and tries to see things as he sees them’. As States suggests: ‘… the mission of any form of phenomenological critique is to describe… what it is and what it is doing before our eyes’. Magda Romanska suggests in Routledge’s Handbook to Dramaturgy (2014), dramaturgy is a ‘… mode of looking that implies an eye for the possibilities inherent in the ideas and the material, as well as an eye for their implications, their effects’. This study explores a mode of looking and asks, as andy dramaturg would, what it is and what it is doing before our eyes.

In 2014, Judith Mackrell bemoaned the lack of dramaturgs operating in the dance sector and suggested that ‘… the art form is suffering needlessly from this lack of systematic editorial input….’. By art form here she is referring to dance but it is interesting to note how she regards the role as offering editorial input. She suggests that ‘… it might be a start if an organisation were to assemble individuals who were willing and able to take on the role of “objective eye” who would have the time and expertise to work alongside choreographers in the development of a project.’ It is this model of an ‘objective eye’ that this thesis on dramaturgy sets out to investigate. Dance choreography is in some ways related to the devising of contemporary performance. They are both generating material from scratch using a system of rules or tasks led by a director or choreographer. The creative process is therefore as much contingent on what is left out as what is left in and as such becomes, as Bogart says, a process of ‘scavenging or nesting’. David Williams refers to this in Geographies of Requiredness (2010) and suggests that ‘… the dramaturg is a kind of critical friend who draws attention to the different elements in circulation and at play, and to what they ‘do’: space, light, bodies, language, sounds, objects, ideas, energies, etc.’

This is a useful rubric for exploring the practice of the dramaturg and I seek to do this with specific reference both to an editorial process and the concept of an ‘objective eye’ or ‘critical friend’ who is both present to comment, reflect and impact on the creative process. Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that ‘… in the case of the eye, there is manifestation and display, a making evident’. The ‘objective eye’ is therefore making sense of what they see, ‘making evident’ what is manifested and displayed. There has always been some resistance to this role, Mackrell writes in 2010 but, in 2002, Phylis Nagy advised young playwrights to beware of ‘misguided dramaturgy’. She writes that ‘… the temptation to consciously connect the dots
in our work is great for a number of reasons… when we discuss our plays with dramaturges they insist upon answers, but the questions they ask are almost always of a literal nature...’.

This ‘connecting the dots’ implies the finding of a logic, or the narrativisation of a number of disparate coordinates on an unexpected path. The dramaturg’s role is that of a cartographer mapping this territory and plotting a journey through it. But what is it a journey towards? It is not a journey towards meaning if we are to take Nagy’s advice. She writes: ‘…if we are able to definitively answer questions about why our plays exist or what they mean, then our plays do not allow for active communication with an audience’.

Nagy here is talking about how some writers’ work might resist easy definition or ‘pigeon-holing’ and she assigns the job of defining the work to the audience watching it. This is a refreshing call-to-arms for audiences willing to be actively engaged in the making of meaning or the ‘making evident’. This is an audience that might respond to Etchells’ definition of Forced Entertainment’s Void Story (2012): ‘It’s the gaps that make it, hopefully – gaps between images, or in the images themselves, gaps between the performers and the text. They are voids that the spectators fill for themselves from the clues that flash by’.

In the same publication as Nagy, written to mark the end of the 20th century and take stock of different theatrical practices at that time, Len Berkman suggested that: ‘As my forty-plus active years in theatre range from playwright, professor and essayist to new play development dramaturge, it’s my last-mentioned role that arouses curiosity in the highest: ‘creation’ itself is mystery enough; how does anyone facilitate another’s creative steps?’

This notion of steps again suggests a sense of journey, a walking towards some kind of creative discovery. It is interesting that Berkman’s role as - ‘new play development dramaturge’ - aroused such curiosity in 2002 when the book was published, and one wonders what understanding of the role we have now that we did not have then. One suspects though that he is writing from and working within a very traditional framework in the North American literary theatre context.

He goes on to suggest that: ‘At times in near apology, we stress ‘work in progress’ and ‘latest draft’. We offer our audience the chance and honour to be ‘in’ on our ‘process’. Today the reading, tomorrow the world. But watch out, warn some: a play can be ‘workshopped to death’.

Berkman’s ‘some’ share concerns about ways in which plays can be developed and are speaking from a different position to Nagy. They would certainly struggle to align their views with the working practices of contemporary theatre companies (Forced Entertainment, Reckless Sleepers etc.) who share work-in-progress to bring it to life rather than kill it.
With devised work, it is important to put something in front of an audience at different times in the creative process and there are many different opportunities for artists to show work-in-progress or ‘scratch’ this kind of work e.g. BAC Scratch, Hatch: Scratch and GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN’s SHOW US YER BITS! Nottingham-based organisation Hatch, which I co-founded, describes their ethos as follows: “We decided that Hatch would embrace work that often succeeds but is not afraid to fail. We wanted to work with artists who didn't know what to call themselves, who wear too many hats. We wanted to showcase work that sweats on a low budget, or no budget. Work that might not ordinarily find a home outside a festival. Work our parents would say was ‘interesting’. Work that is unexpected and unfinished and unashamed of the fact it might not work.” With their focus on the potential for failure they contradict Berkman’s view. As Matthew Goulish, co-founder of Goat Island theatre company says: ‘If you want to study a system, first look at how it fails’. We might follow Samuel Beckett’s instruction here: ‘Try again. Fail again. Fail better.’

The argument for the trying and failing of artist’s work here is strong and I would argue that this is as important for playwriting dramaturgy as it is devised dramaturgy but there will always be some that share Berkman’s suspicions as to its value. When playwright Howard Barker presented a paper entitled ‘Staging the Unforgivable’ at Loughborough University in 2012 he wrote about how theatre attracts: ‘… the attentions of the critical police, the dramaturgical police, the arts council police and the several other police who patrol the corridors of public art’. The phrase ‘dramaturgical police’ was written in pen on his printed manuscript of the paper, almost as an afterthought, but when I asked him afterwards what he meant by this and what he thought of dramaturgs he commented that ‘they are all murderers’. So if a work-in-progress or a workshop can ‘kill’ and a dramaturg can ‘murder’ a play then how might we view the role as both an enabling rather than a disabling one, a facilitator not a destabiliser, a mentor not a censor, a midwife not an undertaker? This thesis takes a non-linear approach to these questions, written as it is around a body of practice as research that was made in a non-linear order: The End (2011), The Beginning (2012), The Middle (2013). I agree with Etchells, who writes of his own work: ‘In fact, of all the challenges and possibilities of the stage, one thing that seems to have evaded me is telling a story from beginning to middle to end’. As Aristotle himself said, ‘action’ as a progression, its necessary wholeness consisting in its having a beginning, a middle and an end.”
When I started this doctoral study in 2010, I set out to investigate the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance in the current artistic, cultural, political and financial landscape. Through an initial series of interviews housed online it became apparent that the role is a deeply contested one with some practitioners suggesting that the role is essential and others suggesting that it is a luxury. Artists like Chris. Dugrenier and Chloe Dechery describe the role of dramaturg as ‘integral’ to the process. However, Stan’s Café Artistic Director, James Yarker, told me he found the role ‘irrelevant’ and Gemma Paintin from Action Hero described the idea of inviting a dramaturg into the process as akin to ‘inviting someone into your bedroom’. Kevin Egan, academic and dramaturg, combined the two responses by telling me he thought the role was an ‘essential luxury’. Barker’s description of dramaturgs as ‘murderers’, of ideas, of texts, of dreams, is completely at odds with the more utopian views of Dutch dramaturg Janine Brogt, who sees her role as a ‘keeper of dreams’. In Total Theatre in 1999 she writes: ‘I love the different shapes it can take in my head when it does not exist yet, as much as I love creating it in reality’. Her aim, as an outside eye, is ‘to protect the dream of production against its necessarily limited reality for as long as I possibly can’. This view, it would seem, was not universally shared by much of the British contemporary theatre scene at the same time of writing. For example, in 1999, Fevered Sleep Theatre Company declared they ‘… can’t see the point of dramaturgs. As devisors and directors of [their] own work, [they] fulfil the dramaturgical role [themselves]’. However, from 2008 until 2013, they have been working with academic, Synne Behrndt, as dramaturg on their recent productions. In 2011, they published a book, Invisible Things: Documentation from a Devising Process co-authored by Behrndt. In this publication they state that ‘devising is a process of creation and it is a process of loss’. It is perhaps the role that Behrndt plays, in both the devising process and in the documentation of it, to capture and record this loss.

As Williams suggests, the dramaturg ‘… acts as an aide-memoire, or archivist of the process, an agent of reculer pour mieux sauter, (‘go backwards in order to jump forwards’) or a reminder of what’s forgotten, overlooked, misplaced in the headlong rush forwards; a braking mechanism, proposing festina lente (‘make haste slowly’). It is perhaps no coincidence that Behrndt is involved in this catalogue of their loss. Julia Locascio seconds this view by describing her role as a ‘historian of the process’ - the ‘looking back’ part of the job alongside the ‘looking ahead’ role of ‘visionary aspect of dramaturging’. She describes her job as ‘a person who brings new source material and makes new connections between things and is alongside the director in seeing shapes take form and pointing to those shapes and
describing them.’

This study will oscillate between a range of different views on the role by people, practitioners and academics who play it. They are drawn from different contexts and different countries, and in presenting all these different views, the study aims to demonstrate not just why there are so many different perspectives on the role, but what we might learn from this difference. Not everybody agrees on the value or function of the dramaturg, but in this disagreement lies an inherent, current debate.

In the original article denying the function of a dramaturg, Fevered Sleep ask the question: ‘… how can any theatre company justify creating a whole new role, given the abject levels of funding that most of us have to work with in this country?’ However, in less than 10 years they have become more aware of the value of the role and have therefore invested in it. This could be due to an increased level of funding for their work but also perhaps to the recent rise of academic publications on the subject including Behrndt and Turner’s *Dramaturgy and Performance* published in 2007. This shift is symptomatic of the way in which British devised theatre has endeavoured to find ‘radically inclusive’ dramaturgy for its theatrical output over the last fifteen years and defines the territory in which I am now working.

**Act One Scene One: Performing Dramaturgy**

Working between these binary parameters of acceptance and denial, engagement and refusal, I was entering into the doctoral study from a position of practice as research from which I had worked with and as a dramaturg. However, I was aware that there was a tangible shift in attitudes towards the role happening within the devised theatre sector at the time. This was typified by a symposium entitled ‘Mentors or Censors?’ hosted at the University of Bristol in 1999 that drew together dramaturgs and literary managers to ask the titular question. According to Mary Luckhurst, one of the organisers, the title: ‘… encapsulated the suspicious polarising view of dramaturgs which many in the theatre profession have assumed: the dramaturg as dangerous controller (destroyer perhaps) of the writer’s creativity; or the dramaturg as ideologue, secretly pressing their own agenda of what a play is or isn’t’.

I realise now that in the first year of the doctoral study I was pressing the agenda of what a dramaturg is or is not by looking at the work I have done as a dramaturg with artists and companies e.g. Reckless Sleepers, 30 Bird, Dog Kennel Hill Project and Hetain Patel. I was
also investigating the performance work I was making with dramaturgs and asking how the 
dramaturg performs their role and how we might be able to perform dramaturgy.

The project title allows me the freedom to approach a notion of what a contemporary 
dramaturgy might be and what a contemporary dramaturg might do with something of a 
pincer movement. It considers a trilogy of work that I have created that deconstructs the tacit 
relationships that take place between a writer, a text, the performers and the audience within 
the broader context of my work as a dramaturg. As part of the study, I have spent time a) 
working with a dramaturg on my own work and b) being a dramaturg on others’ work, and in 
doing so I have attempted to achieve a 360-degree perspective on this relationship. At the 
same time, with the nature of practice as research comes a certain caveat that the doing is the 
thinking. As Smith and Dean propose: ‘To be process-driven is to have no particular starting 
point in mind and no pre-conceived end. Such an approach can be directed towards 
emergence, that is the generation of ideas, which were unforeseen at the beginning of the 
project.’74 This view of practice as research echoes Turner and Behrndt’s description of the 
dramaturgs they interviewed as ‘… having discovered, through practice, the particularities of 
their own function within the process.’75 This thesis can then argue that the act of working as 
a dramaturg, or the Act of Dramaturgy, is, by definition, a form of practice as research itself. 
As Freeman implies in his introduction to Blood, Sweat and Theory (2010), demonstration 
becomes more than illustration: it becomes the thesis itself.76

The title roots itself in the fact that a dramaturg is engaged in the process of doing 
dramaturgy, it is an active role as well as a reflective role, and therefore they are deeply 
involved in the ‘weave’77 of a performance. Turner and Behrndt offer Lynn Thomson’s useful 
description of this practice - ‘dramaturging’ – applying a specific approach to a play text or a 
performance, that which is neither verb nor noun but somewhere in between.78 Williams 
proposes that a ‘… dramaturg sits astride the hyphen between both-and’ and it is across this 
hyphen that I am working in this study.79 As Jessica Kaprow Applebaum points out, ‘devising 
inherently consists of actions of dramaturgy’.80 As such she proposes: ‘For dramaturgs to be 
able to hone our awareness and to have clear and constructive relationships with the actions 
and events of the devising process, we must find the hyphenates to our dramaturgy.’81 She 
suggests that we might want to adjust our terminology to suggest exactly how we are working 
with or as dramaturgs to become ‘more closely connected to the devising team instead of kept 
ringside’.82 Claire MacDonald writes: ‘Dramaturgs engage the space between the elements of
composition and the unfolding of a performance in the presence of viewers’. This doctoral study takes place in the space between composition and performance and as such sees dramaturgy both as a process and a product. In doing so, I seek to bring the devising team together and place a dramaturg at the heart of it.

We might consider the title, ‘Performing dramaturgy’ in two ways in this context, both as meaning ‘performing the role of the dramaturg’ in the work I have carried out with others and ‘performing dramaturgy’ onstage in the work I have made for theatre. By this, I mean a performance that references its own dramaturgy, that makes its own process of devising visible within the performance, and in doing so marks its own making. Let us take as an analogy Robert Morris’ Box with the Sound of its own Making (1961). The artist exhibits a wooden box that contained the sound of him making it. In The Trilogy (2014), the audience is invited to join the performers on a dramaturgical journey. It is a journey that is taking place here and now, wherever and whenever the performance happens, but which carries with it an echo of how it was made and the dialogue that drove its development. It is important that we consider dramaturgy not just as a description of the composition of a piece of work but also as a practice. In pursuing this line of enquiry through practice as research, I combine my observations of the impact of dramaturgs upon my own practice with my observations as a practising dramaturg with others, when doing dramaturgy or ‘dramaturging’.

Barba’s definition of dramaturgy reminds us that: ‘The word text, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant ‘a weaving together’. In this sense, there is no performance that doesn’t have ‘text’. This study is concerned with the role that ‘text’ plays in performing dramaturgy, both in terms of the written notes dramaturgs take and the online blogs and articles for publications I have written and drawn from here, but also in terms of the text (or weave) of the performances I have made, as an artist and inputted on as a dramaturg. Text in its literal sense is the main form of communication for any dramaturgical dialogue. But text, as weave, is also the way in which the work a dramaturg does is most visible. As Thies-Lehmann writes, ‘Dramatic theatre is subordinated to the primacy of the text’, and for this practice I wanted to move away from the text as a primary tool towards the postdramatic theatre that he invokes. Though there are performance texts in The Appendix, these are traces of performance more than scripts, the ‘postscript’ to use Lavery’s phrase.
To frame my investigations into the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance, I have created three performances inspired by the work of William Shakespeare. Taking as their starting point a stage direction or a moment in the narrative that is not the main focus, *The Trilogy* (2014) aims to recontextualise, deconstruct and disorientate the classic text within a landscape that is more polarised, free from the text and inherently (and explicitly) aware of its own theatricality. The work negotiates the ever-shifting relationship between the text and its performance, the performer(s) and their audience, whilst acknowledging that Shakespeare often employed a play-within-a-play as a device, what we now might call a meta-theatrical mode of representation. However, as Quick argues ‘While the postdramatic theatre might free itself from the outmoded limitations of the text-centred stage, it still exists within the confines of the spatial, temporal ordering regime that we know as theatre’.88

As such, my role within the practice as research sits somewhere between performer, director, critic, writer and dramaturg. John Berger argues ‘When we ‘see’ a landscape, we situate ourselves in it’.89 I am the outside eye where possible and a performer and deviser if not. The work explores dramaturgical models and identifies a methodology which combines the role of the practitioner with the role of the dramaturg. The PhD proceeds through practice as research asking different research questions about dramaturgy such as: How does the dramaturg inform or inhabit a devising process? What is the relationship between suggestion and reflection, censorship and mentorship, getting lost in a process and finding a way out? While asking these and other related questions, it is important to remember that, as Haseman points out ‘Conventional calls for a ‘research question’ do not always suit practitioner-researchers whose initial impulse may not be so precisely defined’.90 Again this is echoed by Turner and Behrndt when they write, ‘the dramaturgy of the work is not defined before the work commences’.91 With this concept in mind, *The Trilogy* (2014) deconstructs three classical literary texts and renders them into contemporary, (post)dramatic performance stimuli without always knowing where the work or the research questions would lead us.

**Act One Scene Two: The body of work**

The performance work I have made has led to my taking a more objective position of marginality onstage to attempt to become my own dramaturg. For example, in *The End* (2011), I declare that I will never perform again. In *The Beginning* (2012), I become an onstage technician or prompt sitting in the wings before I am compelled to join the action. In
The Middle (2013), I am a technician or stagehand, but this time no longer onstage and no longer speaking. The narrative of my own involvement with the work is directly related to the role dramaturgs played in its creation. The End (2011) had two dramaturgs, Hetain Patel and Mole Wetherell (Reckless Sleepers), The Beginning (2012) had one dramaturg, Claire Summerfield, and The Middle (2013) had no one directly engaged in that role other than me.

It was my intention to spiral the work as a dramaturg always at different proximities to its creation and as my presence as a performer became less my presence as dramaturg could potentially increase. Ruth Little uses the image of the spiral as a metaphor for how dramaturgy operates, my intention was to see how the dramaturg spirals the work and enables the performance to be composed within an organic structure. She points out how even the most chaotic organisms are structured within a spiral and applies this logic to the making of performance. Now let us look at how the work and the acts of dramaturgy involved in the work have unfolded. I will now explore the three different components of The Trilogy (2014).

The End (2011)

Fig. 2. The End (2011)

‘Exit pursued by a bear’ The Winter’s Tale (Act II Scene II)
Inspired by the stage direction from *The Winter’s Tale*, ‘Exit pursued by a bear’, *The End* (2011) explores endings and exits and the re-enactment of real life events to investigate absence and loss. It asks why we perform and how we will know when to stop. This is the autobiographical engine of the work as I declare my real-life intention never to perform again at the end of each performance. The role of the text within *The End* (2011) has become integral to the work. It serves both as the script as it is read and as the set as it is dropped. Burt Cardullo suggests that the dramaturg is the ‘guardian of the text’. Patrice Pavis declares the status of text as a ‘cultivator of doubt’. *The End* (2011) enacts a power struggle between guardian of text and cultivator of doubt as the old (Michael) is replaced by the young (Ollie) just as the King is challenged in *The Winter’s Tale*. In a way, Michael represents Leontes, hanging on to his kingdom, despite having no natural heir, and Ollie represents Florizel, a young upstart from another kingdom, seeking to dethrone the older man.

Karen Jurs-Murnby writes of ‘text on display’ in performances such as Forced Entertainment’s *Speak Bitterness* (1994) or Elfriede Jelinek’s *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmans* (2009) as a ‘live dramaturgical trace of performance.’ *The End* (2011) proposes that the text might represent this dramaturgical trace as it is read from and then discarded and how we might be able to see the work of the dramaturg in the text’s editing and reediting, ordering and reordering, over the devising process. Now that the piece is finished, the cards wear their own history like a *pentimento*. It is what Freeman describes as ‘… an early draft being somehow made visible … half-thoughts and potential changes of mind being exposed rather than edited out … an act of seeing once and of seeing again.’ These changes of mind are referred to in the piece itself.

```
Michael: The show has finished
Ollie: This is the post-show discussion
Michael: We’re answering your questions
Ollie: We’re talking about what went right
Michael: And what went wrong
Ollie: Apparently I made a few mistakes
Michael: But everything else went according to plan
Ollie: There was no plan.
```
Mischa Twitchin writes in *Dramaturgy: A User’s Guide*: ‘In a traditional theatre setting, the dramaturg is the representation not so much of the writer in a production but of the writing.’

In *The End* (2011), the performers imagine their own post-show discussion, talking about what went right and what went wrong and responding to unheard questions from the audience. Alan Lyddiard and Alison Andrews from Northern Stage assert that ‘post-show discussions… are an example of the audience engaging in the reflexive practice of dramaturgy’ and, to this extent, their work is completed by the audience. They fill in the dots. They complete the *writerly* text, or perhaps establish the readerliness of the text – depending on the nature of the work. We might argue that if this is the case then the audience is in some way a dramaturg too. However, Matthew Spangler, playwright and academic, suggests that: ‘Sometimes the audience feedback actually isn’t useful to you. Whereas if you have the right dramaturg on board then almost everything they would say is spot on. So I guess I wouldn’t suggest that dramaturgs could be replaced by audience talkbacks.’

**The Beginning (2012)**

![The Beginning (2012)](image)

‘When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer’

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Act IV Scene I)
The Beginning (2012) is a meditation on theatrical entrances and how to make them. The play within a play acts a metaphor for the weave of the text. According to Shakespeare’s text, Nick Bottom is a weaver by trade. The process explored director Barba’s theory of the text as weave and the weave as dramaturgy: ‘That which concerns the text (the weave) of the performance can be defined as ‘dramaturgy’. The Beginning (2012) explored Janine Brogt’s notion of dramaturgy as a dream, imagining how the performers might dream a performance. At the same time it instances my ongoing, performative exploration of what it means to perform at all and to perform Shakespeare in particular, something I have very rarely done, since the first time I walked onstage in a school version of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. As Peter Brook says, ‘Forget Shakespeare. Forget that these plays ever had an author… Theatre is the place where writing—and Shakespeare—disappear’. This would be our starting point, and we would take the line ‘When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer’ as our cue.

My performance work is often (auto)biographical, and this piece reflects on why we perform and how we begin. Because I promised never to perform again, I have invited Nicki Hobday and Ollie Smith to join me in remembering how it feels to perform for the first time. I step outside of my own work and remain in the margins, both physically, by sitting in the wings, and metaphorically, by attempting a level of objectivity as an outside eye. I will not perform, other than in the role of technician, operator or prompt. Ollie, Nicki and I have performed in A Midsummer Night’s Dream before. We will revisit these performances so through our memories we are in those theatres as well as this theatre simultaneously, working with the text then and now. There is an ambiguous, liminal space between a text we know and a text we do not know, a space between a rehearsal and a performance. The Beginning (2012) takes place in this liminal space that invites and enacts the dramaturg’s role in the process.

The text was written for me to perform, then rewritten for Ollie to perform, then rewritten for Nicki to perform. In that sense, it is composed of a shared handwriting, a shared signature and questions the singularity of authorial voice and flattens the hierarchical nature of the devising process. I am interested in this notion of the handwriting of the work, how it might be written as well as what it might be writing, how its punctuation might look, how it reads onstage. The work explores two main ideas: how iterations of our previous experience trespass into our present; and how dialogism of collaboration obscures the stability of a text.
The Middle (2013)

The final part of the trilogy – *The Middle* (2013) - deconstructs the play performed in Hamlet. ‘Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue’ (Act III Scene II) says Hamlet to the players. G. E. Lessing, the first dramaturg, analyses Hamlet’s advice to his actors in his folio *The Hamburg Dramaturgy* and includes an essay on the line ‘Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand thus…’ (Act III Scene II) as a barometer of good acting. As Turner and Behrndt suggest: ‘Dramaturgy need not only apply to dialogue. Architects have related it to ways in which buildings suggest the possibility of a range of uses, and are “completed by events”’. The Middle (2013) questions the role of the dramaturg by placing the ‘outside eye’ in both a performance space and in an architectural space and by offering audiences the opportunity to complete and be completed by events.

Inspired by *Hamlet*, *The Middle* (2013) is a one-man show devised for a theatre foyer - a liminal space between the outside and the inside, the real world and the theatre. Hamlet is a character caught in a limbo between ‘To be or not to be’ and by casting my father, Tony, to play the title role, I explored time passing, staging ageing and the relationship between father
and son. My father studied *Hamlet* when he was at school so he is stuck in the middle between the fading memory of reading that play 50 years ago and reading it now. He is trying to remember what it was like to be Hamlet while I continue my struggle to stay in the wings.

**Act One Scene Three: *The Trilogy* (2014-16)**

![The Trilogy poster](image)

**Fig. 5. The Trilogy (2014)**

‘Thank you for giving me three hours of your life so I could give you mine’

*The Trilogy* (2014)

In 2014, I started to tour the three performances as *The Trilogy* (2014) and presenting them in the logical order of *The Beginning, The Middle, The End*. *The Trilogy* (2014) was devised, researched and supported at Loughborough University. The practice as research proceeded
through critical analysis of online and printed source material, visiting of traditional contexts and historical sites of relevance to the Shakespearean texts and interviews with performers who have played relevant roles in the three plays before. At the same time, I conducted interviews with practitioners and dramaturgs about the way they work to inform the study.

I outlined an architectural relationship between dramaturgy and performance through both the reflexive questioning of existing practice and the creation of my own. The work was shown in Loughborough and toured across the UK and internationally, The End (2011) toured to Belgium and Germany, and formed the core of my artistic output for five years while driving a series of research agendas defined as the provisional territory of the doctoral study. Alongside the practice as research, the doctoral study charts a turn in contemporary performance between 2000-2015 towards working with or as a dramaturg / outside eye and this is roughly defined as the research territory but as Alfred Korzybski wrote: ‘A map is not the territory it represents, but if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness’.106 This thesis is not the territory it represents but rather it has ‘a similar structure to the territory’ and as such attempts to define it, to represent it and to prove its usefulness to those who are exploring it. I began this chapter with the metaphor of dramaturg as a cartographer and find myself now using the language of cartography to define the act of writing about it. As with any map please free to follow, ignore or simply fold up and put back in the glove box.

**Act One Scene Four: Making Sense**

This doctoral study examines the evolving role of the dramaturg in British contemporary performance from 2000-2015. There has been a tangible shift in the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance between 1999 and the present day. This study seeks to put the last 15 years in perspective critically, contextually and professionally. The study enacts an attempt at ‘making sense’ of the changes in attitude towards the role and also allows me to explore how contemporary dramaturgs make sense of what they see, literally, semiotically or phenomenologically. The job of the dramaturg, in contemporary performance, is moving away from the traditional paradigm of writer, text and director and more than ever and as such this seems like the appropriate time to take stock of what the role offers theatre now.
In 1999, the role was seen by some in the UK as a luxury or an ‘intrusion’, now the same companies are working with dramaturgs, often within an academic context, as the funding culture has shifted from the Arts Council towards the Academy. This study proceeds through practice as research and a contextual survey of the role’s history taken from reading, interviews and a narrative of personal experience. As the title suggests, this study will explore the role the dramaturg plays in contemporary performance. It is a role I play, a role I have engaged others to play and a role I have talked about with those who play it. For this project, I have talked about how it works and how it does not. I have talked about the role with artists who work with dramaturgs and with people who choose not to, about why they do or do not.

In arguably the most recent comprehensive, publication on the subject, *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy* (2015), Romanska writes that ‘The definition of dramaturgy is expanding and the concept is being redefined as we speak, as verb, skill, and function, to include many modes of making meaning’. This study aims to articulate how the concept of dramaturgy is being redefined and how we might use performance itself as an application to explore its potential. As Pavis says, ‘dramaturgy does not structure pre-given meaning and applies it to the work, but rather creates sense that has not been revealed so far.’ As Locascio describes it, her job is ‘To help the piece become more itself.’ Spangler suggests that as a dramaturg or script editor, ‘I am able to take this play and make it what it wants to be’. Both apply different critical lenses but are engaged in creating as yet unrevealed logic.

I write both as someone who has worked with and as a dramaturg in this context and reference other artists and companies who shared their views on the subject with me. These case studies illustrate best the shift during this time frame within a company context where attitudes have changed towards the contemporary dramaturg. This doctoral study investigates how dramaturgy performs a function that sits somewhere between critic, writer, artist, maker and witness. The project draws upon my experience as a dramaturg and as a playwright, live artist and performance maker working with an ‘outside eye’. The central research questions will be ‘What is the role of a dramaturg today?’ and ‘How does it function in a landscape that is becoming increasingly defined by a lack of text or conventional structures or theatrical tradition?’ The project draws upon experience making a trilogy of devised work and working as a dramaturg with other artists. It asks what an ‘outside eye’ adds to the creative process and how it catalyses. In contemporary performance, it is a role often described as an ‘outside eye’, suggesting that it is the perspective of somebody ‘outside’ of the work.
That could mean someone who is not ‘performing’ in the work but also someone who is not part of the company or collective that is making the work. For an individual artist, the ‘outside eye’ is someone invited into the process to witness, from the outside, how the performance is evolving and to offer critical feedback at various stages in the process. For this project, I have worked as an ‘outside eye’ with numerous individual artists at different stages of their process to see how the relationship shifts from the beginning, the middle and the end of the journey towards a finished work. I have also worked with a number of theatre companies over the last few years but I have decided to focus this study on artists who work on their own practice, as themselves, under their own name. I have made this decision because I have also made a journey from being in Metro-Boulot-Dodo (MBD) to working as an artist on my own. I noticed in making this shift from a company identity to a solo identity that the work is often written, devised and performed singularly rather than collectively, and therefore, arguably, benefits more from the presence of an ‘outside eye’ than a piece of work written, devised and performed by a company, where one or more members of the company can become an ‘outside eye’ at different stages in the process. This is a methodology I was able to practise with MBD as we would sit in and out of the devising process to offer feedback where appropriate. In my own work, devised as part of this doctoral study, I have invited other artists who make their own practice as individuals, to visit the process as ‘outside eyes’, and offer feedback on the work.

The practice as research employs different theoretical models of how a dramaturg operates to a body of theatre work that interrogates the role from different perspectives, both outside and inside the devising process. The practice interrogates how dramaturgy might function with or without a dramaturg as an agent for critical feedback or meaning-making by exploring other models such as embedded criticism, work-in-progress and post-show discussion. The research is a process of generating new knowledge about how the dramaturg operates in contemporary performance today from my own personal experience of making a body of work and my collaborators’ creative input and feedback. As Freeman writes, ‘Research is also always re-search: a drawing on one’s previous experience and developing this into knowledge’. The Trilogy (2014) seeks to research and re-search how a dramaturg behaves. The performances attempt to put a dramaturg onstage and in so doing to explore what he / she does as part of the theatre event. The doctoral study will also proceed through my practice as research as a dramaturg and interviews with artists and academics currently working as dramaturgs about the role they play as well as artists and companies on why they do or do not
work with a dramaturg. I am engaged in ongoing debates with live artists such as Action Hero and Third Angel about why they question the value a dramaturg would have in their practice and identify shifts in some companies thinking in the 15 year timeframe of the study.

The title of this thesis is taken from The Process of Dramaturgy: A Handbook (2010), which as the authors describe it, is aimed at those who commit ‘acts of dramaturgy’. As the theorist, Peter Stramer, writes in his online provocation Ten notes on dramaturgy (2012), a source to which I will return later, ‘The act of dramaturgy does not simulate a process on a piece of paper; instead it executes form in time and space, and gives a body to thought’. As such, this thesis describes and analyses what these acts of dramaturgy might be in the making of my own performances, The Beginning (2012), The Middle (2013) and The End (2011). It is important to note that these performances have been made at a time when the arguments about the role of the dramaturg are constantly shifting and much of the research material for this introduction comes from the same period of time as the practice. Since the study began, the reading available on dramaturgy has grown exponentially, and, as the discourse on the subject broadens so do potential readings of it. As such I have used and discarded several different titles over the last five years. The line ‘So, what do we do now?’ has become a repeated refrain in my performance work, featuring as a recurring motif in The Beginning (2012), and best illustrates the role of dramaturg in questioning a process.

As Mark Bly says of his role as dramaturg: ‘Finally, when I am asked to define my most significant activity as a production dramaturg in the rehearsal process I invariably confess, “I question”’. The study asks how one might commit these acts of dramaturgy in performance and how they might execute form and give body to thought in the work itself. The study resists the temptation to describe the process on a piece of paper, and will refer the reader to a specific video clip to give him or her practical examples. At this point I recommend you watch the opening scene of The Beginning (2012), which gives the audience a sense of what to expect as this best illustrates my point about the role I play. This is available on the DVD and online: https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/the-prologue/.

The study is deliberately problematised by the fact that at times, I am my own dramaturg, and in this sense it outlines a tentative blueprint for an ‘autodramaturgy’, what we might describe as the attempt to be the ‘outside eye’ of one’s own work. This word has been used before in a dance context, Pavis describes it as: ‘A dramaturgy anchored in the dancer’s body which
preexists every project, every construction and every intention’. This description suggests autodramaturgy as an inner rhythm inherent and specific to every performer that precedes any work they do and is therefore always present in their work. However, artists and academics, Marie-Heleen Coetzee and Allan Munro describe autodramaturgy as such that ‘… the “artist” is centrally located and therefore the authorship and authority (the locus of control) and the discourses accessed are personalized.’ In defining the ‘autodramaturg’ they suggest that ‘There has been a burgeoning of performances that draw on an individual’s experiences of the world, and this “personal discourse tapestry” is used to develop the performance text’.

There is a potential overlap here with the notion of auto-ethnography which I will return to. I take issue with Pavis’ definition as it seems too ethereal a concept to tie down and does not really seem too specific to dance to warrant this kind of validation. However, Romanska’s concept of a ‘personal discourse tapestry’ chimes with the work I have made for the doctoral study as each performance is autobiographical in its approach and incorporates biographies of the performers involved in its devising. I, as the lead artist, am always centrally located and the authorship and authority are personalised but there is a shared sense of authorship with the other members of the company as the work draws on all of our ‘experiences of the world’.

Act One Scene Five: The Tapestry

The concept of a tapestry brings to mind the metaphor of weaving, so central to any debate to dramaturgy and the role of the dramaturg today. Taking Barba’s definition of dramaturgy as ‘… the weave of performance’, and the etymological root of ‘text’ as ‘… a weaving together’, I propose a structure for this doctoral study into the role of the dramaturg based on the workings of a loom. We might consider this loom to be a model for a performance process and how it is made. We might consider the dramaturgy of that performance as the thread that is being woven. We might consider the finished weave as the final performance. In doing so, we might use the language of weaving to describe what a dramaturg does.

As I mentioned in The Introduction, this thesis takes as springboards a number of contemporary provocations. Etchells spoke at a conference on dramaturgy in Prague in 2012 and said: ‘The very interrogative weave of material and engagement demonstrates that devised performance is, in and of itself, an active dramaturgical process.’ The weave of these actions is something that Etchells describes as ‘making shape of seconds.’ He says:
‘This practice, this ‘doing time,’ is the application of pure/unfiltered dramaturgy. It is the heart from which the dramaturg should dare to work’.  

It is this heart that drives this study’s line of enquiry through practice as research. Dance-dramaturg Bettina Milz suggests the dramaturg should dare to be the first to respond to the material offered, to ‘… describe what he or she sees, to stumble, to jump in at the deep end, putting into words what you could hardly perceive, what is not yet named.’ It is this ‘jumping in’ that I have tried to achieve here. Peter Stramer agrees by claiming that ‘dramaturgy does not structure established meaning and apply it to the work; it rather creates sense that has not yet been revealed’. As such, I recount ways in which the dramaturg makes sense of what has not yet been revealed, how they can interpret the tapestry.

As Mark Bly suggests: ‘Frequently, the dramaturg must perform an aesthetic high-wire act, for what is often required in interpreting and fulfilling a theatre’s mission is both a supportive and a questioning spirit’. This echoes the sentiments of Lyddiard and Andrews, who suggest that their ‘… thinking and dramaturgy is connected to the so-called right to fail. [They] walk a tightrope’. Bly continues: ‘On every level of my work… I strive to be a supportive but questioning force, never an ‘echo’’. This doctoral study is triggered by a series of questions about how the dramaturg works and these questions are addressed through practice as research, theoretical enquiry and interviews with contemporary practitioners. The project is concerned with making visible the textual trace of dramaturgy within the work. I too want to be a supportive but questioning force, to reflect on, not just echo, current trends. I want this to be a useful handrail for future dramaturgs of contemporary work. I have written a thesis on the dramaturgy of my practice that questions notions of proximity and distance, objectivity and subjectivity, authenticity and authorship. The thesis documents how the role has evolved over the last 15 years and argues that it has had a significant, tangible impact.

Throughout the thesis, I am applying the recent theory of Peter Stramer who proposes a ‘performative dramaturgy’, which is ‘… both experimental and experiential. It’s an art form,
not a science’ where the dramaturg is ‘making form from within’. Pavis suggests that Stramer’s performative dramaturgy ‘… encourages us rather to propose a dramaturgical analysis thanks to the creative work of the dramaturge, who, like the director, tests different possibilities, almost by trial and error, and takes the time to be involved in the process of discovery’. This doctoral study applies Pavis’ and Stramer’s theories of how performative dramaturgy works. As Stramer says: ‘Dramaturgy is visualizing and embodying by performing the structure itself; it emancipates itself from an idea on paper by placing the idea into time and space, giving it a body.’ Stramer here is touching upon a notion of embodied dramaturgy, a dramaturgy that performs the structure itself and in doing so becomes a framework for performance. As dramaturg, Andre Lepecki, states: ‘… dramaturgy implies the reconfiguration of one’s own whole anatomy, not just the eyes. (…) I enter the studio as dramaturge (sic) by running away from the external eye. I enter to find a (new) body.’

Lepecki here literally suggests a form of embodied (or embedded) dramaturgy in action, becoming the dramaturg as an actor might become a character to inhabit the role.

**Act One: The Epilogue**

In *The Stay of Illusion* (2006), Andrew Quick writes: ‘Theatre… always involves placing. Derived from the Greek *thea*, it has (at least) two interconnected meanings, the activity of putting into place, placing, and secondly, the creation of a place from which to see’. We could argue that a dramaturg is both putting the work into a place and creating a place from which to see it at work. Certainly they are active in terms of contextualising and framing the work critically and seeing it take place physically. Synne Behrndt writes of her work as dramaturg with Fevered Sleep that a dramaturg’s role is ‘to help recognise and unfold the place or the moment where the work becomes hot, when it starts to move as if by itself, inviting a feeling of a world to discover there, a sense of pushing the limits of what we can perceive, imagine or articulate.’ The dramaturg’s work resides in the interwoven seam between the semiotic and the phenomenological reading, the reading and the feeling. Barba states that dramaturgy is both the ‘weave and the process of weaving’ and it is perhaps a case of making something wide open and something narrow, of opening and closing the weave.

This is the crux of the unspoken and often unwritten contract between an artist and an outside eye; how do you open without closing, make visible something that is not tangible, tell a story without making it too easy to read or too difficult to understand? How do you move
from inside to outside? For the eye is both outside and inside, looking out and projecting images within. As States suggests: ‘… the mission of any form of phenomenological critique is to describe what Cezanne called “The world’s instant”… any instant that is perpetually apprehended as carrying or leading to an intuition about what it is and what it is doing’.  

‘What is it?’ and ‘What is it doing?’ are the two questions a dramaturg asks of anything they see. Lessing wrote in 1769 ‘The dramaturg bridges the gap between theory and practice… like a poet, (he or she) thinks in our presence’. The dramaturg bridges places and places bridges, they think by doing and do by thinking, and in doing so make manifest performance. This thesis attempts to document how a poet or a dramaturg ‘thinks in our presence’. As such, I conclude my introduction with a poem used by Mark Bly to introduce dramaturgy.

---

**Introduction to Poetry**

**Billy Collins**

I asked them to take a poem and hold it up to the light like a color slide or press an ear against its hive. I say drop a mouse into a poem and watch him probe his way out, or walk inside the poem’s room and feel the wall for a light switch. I want them to water-ski across the surface of a poem waving at the author’s name on the shore. But all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it. They begin beating it with a hose to find out what it really means.

---

Any attempt to analyse this poem rather contradicts the point it is trying to make. Suffice to say that as a dramaturg when we experience performance we are constantly endeavouring to ‘hold it up to the light like a colour slide’ or ‘press an ear against it’. We are interpolators of work not interrogators of it and, as such, we quietly and calmly take notes about what we see to offer our feedback later. My notes are nearly always questions and my questions are nearly always unanswered. There is no pressure for us to find meaning, only to help the artist to find their own way through their own work. We are cartographers of uncharted territory, holding on to the till of the ship with one hand and a pen in the other, hastily drawing the map as we sail. In doing so, dramaturgs, aim to ‘… create a sense of order in the creative chaos’.
Act Two

‘He’s sitting in the wings. He’s been there for quite some time actually’.

*The End (2011)*
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

Only by being a tourist can one truly experience a place.\textsuperscript{136}

Act Two: The Prologue

This is an attempt to define something that resists definition, that keeps moving and, is arguably, in its second wave. As Mary Luckhurst points out, to define comes from the Latin \textit{definire} meaning ‘to limit’ and I do not want to limit understanding of the dramaturg’s role at a time when it seems to have an unlimited potential within the devising process.\textsuperscript{137} However, this is an attempt at a definition. In his article, \textit{The images before us}, in \textit{Dramaturgy in American Theatre} (1996), Geoff Proehl surveys the metaphors currently in circulation and unpacks a phrase used by Robert Wilson’s collaborator Maita di Niscemi: ‘I sit behind him, usually to the left, and I try to see things as he sees them’.\textsuperscript{138} There is a sense here of looking \textit{with} another, to see how someone else might see the work unfold. In this description of my research into the dramaturg, I attempt to determine its value to devised theatre and live art in the UK where, often, there is no director to sit to the left of or to try to see things like. If there is a director, they are possibly onstage either alone or in an ensemble. We might rephrase Proehl’s sentence in this context to read: ‘I sit in front of them, usually on my own, and I try to see things as they do them’. This is an act of dramaturgy where we are not seeing \textit{with} but seeing \textit{for} another. The dramaturg is therefore a surrogate or a proxy, for the artist who has invited them into the process. In the contemporary performance scene in the UK, where factors such as rehearsal space and funding come into play, ‘Because there is no well-established tradition of dramaturgical work, the role can seem newly invented or discovered, emerging as a possible solution to the difficulties inherent in the devising process.’\textsuperscript{139}

I attempt to determine its value to a context that has only recently embraced its catalysing potential. I ask what skills the devising-dramaturg might have that the literary dramaturg might not? Or how the dramaturg might adapt to this script-less context? Using metaphor to capture the subtle interplay of strategies involved, this thesis seeks to explore different definitions of the role of the dramaturg in circulation and their currency. I will draw from existing texts, my own experience as a theatre maker and as a dramaturg collaborating with other theatre makers and a blog that aims to capture contemporary dramaturgy in dialogue.\textsuperscript{140}
The interviews housed on this blog stem from the simple question: what does the role of the dramaturg mean to you? Miriam Rose Sherwood writes that, ‘According to culture journalist and theatre critic Dirk Pilz…’ the ‘… question is already a popular running gag in the German theatre scene.’ Sometimes it is easier to say what the dramaturg does not do than what he does. German dramaturg, Tim Mrosek, recounts a conversation in a dramaturgy class when a student was asked to describe the roles of the dramaturg: ‘The student said “He writes plays” to which the tutor replied “That’s the only thing he doesn’t do”’.141 As Geoff Proehl states, a little bit enigmatically: ‘… they are nowhere and defined by who they are not’.142

**What is dramaturgy?**

This is the key question and a difficult one to answer. Burt Cardullo suggests that: ‘Few terms in contemporary theatre practice have consistently occasioned more perplexity’.143 Such is the difficulty of defining or translating the term dramaturg, that academics have often employed useful but occasionally problematic analogies to other roles, borrowing vocabularies and frames of reference from alternative fields and disciplines. Cardullo’s ‘mechanic’144 or Beddie’s ‘midwife’145 suggest that a performance might be fixed or birthed, Turner and Behrndt propose dramaturgy as ‘the architecture of performance’146 whereas Pearson and Shanks’ theory of ‘dramaturgy as assemblage’147 or Barba’s ‘weave of performance’148 suggest performance as something more fabric or textile, something you can actually touch.

For this thesis, I will approach concepts of dramaturgy as a weave, a raveling or unraveling of threads. As I researched definitions of key words in the central research question the shortest entry was on ‘dramaturgy’ and yet that is the word that has provoked the critical debate that prompted the doctoral study in the first place. It is as if it is not necessary to ‘unpack’ the term outside of a theatre context, and yet, it applies in other contexts too e.g. sociology, architecture etc. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Erving Goffman co-opted Shakespeare's famous line 'all the world's a stage' and developed the term 'dramaturgy' to denote the ways in which social life can be conceptualised as a series of ongoing performances... and other ways in which people operate as actors on life's stage.149 It could equally be applied to film, literature or radio where the role might be described as producer, editor or publisher. Kate Chapman, from Theatre Writing Partnership and a BBC radio
producer described her role at the BBC as: ‘a form of dramaturgical support’ so we see that the term operates across art forms, across disciplines and across contexts.\textsuperscript{150}

**What is dramaturgical?**

Dramaturgical has evolved from the word ‘dramaturgic’. ‘Dramaturgic’ is now rarely used and the inclusion of ‘histrionic’ in its definition, derived from the latin term ‘histrio’ for actor, suggests a traditional reading that speaks of classical drama, notions of melodrama and the delivery of the text rather than the text itself. As Amanda Whittington, playwright, says. ‘Historically, theatre here has always been very writer-centred and hands-off when it comes to offering dramaturgical feedback’.\textsuperscript{151} Much of the dramaturgical support offered by main theatre houses in the UK is in-house, offered by artistic directors, creative producers or literary managers, which as discussed in relation to Tynan, are nomenclatures for dramaturg.

To some extent, it is a clash of cultures, between playwriting and devising, the writer and the theatre maker. However as Alex Kelly, artistic director of Third Angel, points out: ‘I knew what dramaturgs at the RSC, for example, did, illuminating the text, but devising is itself a dramaturgical process. Devising is all about associations, generating meanings, making connections’.\textsuperscript{152} His fellow artistic director, Rachael Walton sums up the difference between the director and the dramaturg as: ‘Rather than the role of the director that decides things for you, the dramaturg enables you to decide for yourself’.\textsuperscript{153} It is this key area of decision-making that the dramaturg both informs and is informed by depending on their relationship with the director. James Yarker, artistic director of Stan’s Café prefers to retain artistic control by eschewing the ‘mysterious dramaturgical thing’ and recounts a story a dramaturg told him when he asked how the relationship was supposed to work: ‘There is a dramaturg and a director. After a rehearsal they get together and the dramaturg says; ‘It’s not working at all, it should be half as long,’ and the director replies: ‘I agree it’s not working, that’s because it needs to be twice as long’\textsuperscript{154} The problematic dichotomy of the ‘outside eye’ is that because it is not your eye, it does not see like your eyes, they do not think like you do and they might therefore tell you things you do not want to hear. In fact, there is perhaps a fine line between critical reflection and sycophantic support, with some dramaturgs the latter.
What is a dramaturg?

The dramaturg sits on the edge between suggestion and reflection, the question and the solution. Rachael Walton, Artistic Director of Third Angel says ‘I think the role of the dramaturg is to ask the right questions’. When I first encountered the term dramaturg, working with Jorg Vorhaben from Theatre Mannheim on a performance by Metro-Boulot-Dodo, The Final Fling (1999), he told me that a dramaturg was ‘someone who had a job but didn’t know why’ (personal communication, 19 June 1999). There is some confusion about spelling. The French add an ‘e’, the Germans do not, the English opt to accept the German spelling perhaps to honour its heritage as a German tradition, coined as it was by Lessing in 1773, but pronounce it with an emphasis on the first syllable not the second or third. Key differences exist between the role and how it fits into the theatre hierarchy across Europe. Laurent Muhleisen, dramaturg at La Comedie Francaise in Paris says: ‘He is in the middle of the process. French and German traditions give more power to the director, the importance of the directors is much higher’. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests ‘dramaturg’ stems from the longer version of the word ‘dramaturgist’. When you seek a definition of ‘dramaturgist’ in the same dictionary it distils it simply as ‘… a composer of a drama, a playwright’ which roots the term completely in a traditional model of dramaturgy as a text-based practice with the dramaturg both as a writer about and a reader of the playwright’s work. Laurent Muhleisen says: ‘He works in order to provide a text with which the director can do something’. The dramaturg works the text like a metallurg works metal. In the contemporary context, the notion of writing or reading a text is more conceptual and refers to the performance as a Barthesian ‘text’ regardless as to whether it is scripted or not or indeed whether there is a director or any of the traditional hierarchy around it. As Kevin Egan, associate artist with Reckless Sleepers and dramaturg with Plane Performance, describes: ‘The role looks at and reads the work from an alternative angle, turns it upside down, on its side, puts it through the shredder so to speak…’. The Guardian blogger, Matt Trueman, on quoting Kevin Egan’s interview about dramaturgy from my Outside Eye project blog, wrote ‘You wonder what most playwrights would think about that’. Trueman’s response suggests that the devising dramaturg is an anathema to the playwright, just as David Edgar seems suspicious of devising full stop. From my perspective, as someone who both devises and writes, dramaturgs and is dramaturged, I would suggest this notion of subverting, recontextualising and shredding sounds appropriate. I recognise the process Egan is describing here as typical of contemporary performance work.
Act Two Scene One: The dramaturgical toolkit

David Williams, academic and dramaturg, recommends Italo Calvino’s writing as a key component of what we might call a dramaturgical toolkit, ‘a set of compositional and dramaturgical tools in devising material’. He suggests drawing on the musical, literary, filmic or curatorial practices of Romeo Castellucci, Don deLillo, Michael Ondaatje, WG Sebald, Annie Dillard, Andrei Tarkovsky, Werner Herzog, Terrence Malick, Francis Alys, Yoko Ono and Tacita Dean. These influences range from different artistic practices and perhaps offer an holistic and complementary approach to composition. As Williams says ‘No single model is privileged’. From my experience as dramaturg I often recommend a book to read. For example, for Gabriele Reuter's piece exploring space I suggested she read Brook's *The Empty Space* (1968) and Georges Perec's *Spaces of Species and Other Pieces* (2008). I reminded her of what Brook writes in terms of theatrical space, that ‘In the theatre the slate is wiped clean all the time’, she used this as her core concept.

Goulish suggests in his introduction to *39 Microlectures: In proximity of performance* that the reader should explore Calvino’s work before continuing to read his book. Goulish proposes that it is a map by which one might better navigate his own writing; an intricate cobweb of references, a rhizomatic rabbit warren of other sources, weaving practice and theory together with a delicate narrative thread. It is a dramaturgy of writing, as it deconstructs its own process, reflecting on its own choice of time and structure. The structure of the book means that we read the sequence of first chapters interspersed with the commentary on the act of reading them. Like dramaturgy, it commentates, it annotates, it footnotes its own process until the footnotes are competing for space on the same page as the text. As Phil Stanier, artistic director of Strange Names Collective describes the dramaturg’s impact on his own creative process, writing comments on a Facebook post: ‘… each comment you make is a footnote… so it resembles the structure of the performance in some way.’ The dramaturg leaves footnotes on the process, whether verbal, in a notebook or nowadays via social media. As a result of this meta-textuality, we ask questions about what we are reading and how it is connected just as a dramaturg does during a devising process. In Gérard Genette’s words, ‘… it unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it’.
The dramaturg seeks unity, clarity and narrative where there is no obvious unity, clarity and narrative, much like the devising process in contemporary performance. It is often a world that is aware of its own making, an experimental postdramatic landscape. We find ourselves in a play within a play where the stage does not stop where it should. Just as Perec suggested we question our teaspoons, so Goulish suggests we question our questions. Using metaphors to capture the subtle interplay of strategies involved, this thesis seeks to explore different definitions of the role in circulation. Artists I have interviewed so far have described the role in many ways including an anchor, a detective, a masonry pointer, an intruder and a shadower. A contemporary dramaturg writes, witnesses, weaves, sieves, sews, shreds, stitches, steers, spills, shares and shines a light on the process. She veers from suggestion to reflection, subjectivity to objectivity, getting lost and being found. She is perhaps a censor or a mentor, a mechanic or a midwife, a tourist or a resident, an archivist or an aide memoire, a creative Personal Assistant or a frustrated Assistant Director.

When we attempt to define dramaturgy we restrict it to a specific context. For example, in Richard Schechner’s *Introduction to Performance Studies* (2013) there is only one mention of the dramaturg as: ‘A person who works with the director in a wide variety of ways’. He suggests that: ‘Dramaturgical work includes researching the historical and cultural contexts and past production history of the dramatic text, working closely with the director in interpreting the dramatic text and writing program notes.’ He adds: ‘During rehearsals, the dramaturge may offer detailed criticism of the ongoing production process’. This is literally a textbook reading of the role that precludes and therefore limits a wider understanding of its potential. Though he suggests that the dramaturg works in a ‘wide variety of ways’, Schechner here insists that a dramaturg always works with a text and a director. What Schechner ignores, perhaps out of economy, is the fact that dramaturgy is a slippery practice that operates across different contexts that often overlap and coalesce. The dramaturg has a fluid role that moves from one context to another, from traditional to experimental theatre, from live art to contemporary dance. He or she works with both playwrights and choreographers and sometimes with neither a text nor a director. He or she may write programme notes but it is perhaps more likely now that the dramaturg will write texts from, for, around and about the creative process, which are then folded back into the narrative of the piece, become part of its wider publicity material or increasingly appear online in the form of rehearsal diaries or embedded criticism.
The phrase ‘embedded criticism’ stems from a question set by writer Maddy Costa at a Devoted and Disgruntled Roadshow in 2012. Costa asked: ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’ Costa proposed the following: ‘When embedded in rehearsals, should a critic be a silent, recording presence? Should they discuss the piece with the maker? Is there a potential model in critic as dramaturg? How do we stop the critic being simply a diarist, or a kind of puppet for the maker?’ Costa writes from a position of being both a critic and a maker and works closely with Jake Orr on the Dialogue project and also collaborates with theatre maker, Chris Goode.

This study takes these questions as a springboard for further discussion to look at the potential model of critic as dramaturg to ask how they become embedded in rehearsals. It will look at how much the dramaturg is silent and how much he records. It is interesting that though the revised version of Schechner’s text, a set text for most UK theatre courses, is augmented with an online companion website it fails to move its view of the dramaturg into the 21st Century beyond a traditional reading of the role. It is worth noting that Schechner uses the French spelling of the term ‘dramaturge’ here as opposed to the original German spelling ‘dramaturg’ which is more popular in the UK. The ‘e’ on the end somehow makes the role more olde worlde, turns it into the ‘other’ and makes it seem more remote and alien to the traditional theatre making processes to which Schechner suggests it bears witness. In doing so, and in only mentioning dramaturgy once in his 359 page book on performance, Schechner marginalises the role the dramaturg plays, in the wings of the theatre.

The most problematic element of his six-line description is hidden in the final line: ‘the dramaturge may offer detailed criticism’. This word ‘may’ implies equally that the dramaturg may not, and it is this sense that the dramaturg seeks permission to share their thoughts or sits silently until the time is right to do so that I will contest in this study. Schechner’s traditional rhetoric takes us back to the time of the dramaturg sitting behind Brecht in the Berliner Ensemble. Even Robert Wilson’s assistant director sits: ‘… behind him, slightly to the left, and tries to see things as he sees them’. I write this from the perspective of someone with no one to sit next to. I write this free from this traditional hierarchy of the director as auteur and the dramaturg as a mediator of their vision. I write free from the traditional paradigms of text. I write freely about how the dramaturg can be an auteur too, perhaps we might call them an ‘auteur-dramaturg’, who knows how to make theatre and how to inspire others to do so.
Act Two Scene Two: A contextual history

Dramaturgs have worked in German theatre since the 18th century. Victor Lange introduces G. E. Lessing’s Hamburg Dramaturgy by describing him as someone who ‘bridges the gap… between theory and practice… who thinks in our presence.’ As Turner and Behrndt write, ‘We might consider the dramaturg as a builder of bridges, helping the company to cohere’. Now the role has become commonplace in British contemporary performance making, even more so when there is no text to speak of. Dramaturgy, the way in which a performance is composed, has been likened by Claire MacDonald, co-founder of Impact Theatre Company and Research Fellow at Central St. Martins College of Art, as similar to the curatorial process. Indeed, she has stated that; ‘Understanding the dramaturgy of an exhibition places the emphasis on the experience of looking and how it unfolds in space and through time’. In fact, dramaturgy meets Nicholas Bourriard’s concept of relational aesthetics in a visual arts context, essentially reading an artwork against a space. The gallery space has become more mutable in recent years, and recently, as in the case of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, each exhibition in the gallery space wears the architectural and curatorial trace of its predecessor.

In a recent symposium on the dramaturgy of Jean Genet at Nottingham Contemporary, Carl Lavery likened the rig of the theatre space to the rigging of a ship’s mast. He reminded us that theatre technicians ‘go into the rigging’ as sailors did, and that French dramaturgs would see their job as undoing knots in the narrative. This metaphor of knots and threads, this weaving and unweaving, enables us to view performance work as a nautical knot, a robust, functional tapestry knitted together out of disparate threads. It is a liminal space between page and stage in which dramaturgical knots are not easily undone and reading unravels. We might continue Lavery’s metaphor and consider the use of other nautical terms. Casting off is both how one finishes knitting and the untying of a rope when a ship sets sail. Tacking is a tentative form of stitch to join two pieces of fabric together, but also the zig-zagging across the water in a boat to catch the wind and gain optimum momentum. When I interviewed artists during my research about the dramaturg, they have often used nautical terminology to describe the role. They have spoken about how the dramaturg enables them to remain ‘anchored’. Goat Island used to refer to ‘anchor points’ in their work for the audience and actors have long used ‘anchors’ for their role, for example, Peter Barkworth. Visual artist, Hetain Patel says of his relationship with an outside eye, ‘I want someone to keep me anchored to what I told him or her about at the beginning, to keep me anchored to
the starting point.’ Just as Lone Twin describe their creative process thus: ‘We always have a clear trajectory for a piece, it works as an anchor’, so other artists require the presence of another to keep them on course. This is especially the case when the course is uncharted. Locascio describes the role she plays: ‘the devising director is a creator of a final piece but also the creator of a process and is a kind of navigator for a collective creation process’.

This notion of navigation has persisted in dramaturgical rhetoric. Kenneth Tynan, the first British equivalent to a dramaturg as literary manager of the National Theatre said: ‘We’re in the crow’s nest of the theatre, we can see what’s happening on the horizon’. Tynan described his role as ‘…trying to steer the National Theatre in certain directions, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, mainly trying to make sure that the wrong directions weren’t taken – it meant being a sort of tugboat, trying to guide this enormous ship into harbour’. Barba writes in *The Deep Order called Turbulence: The Three Faces of Dramaturgy* (2000) about how the creative process is akin to navigating a route between Homer’s Scylla (rocks) and Charybdis (whirlpool). This chimes with Turner and Behrndt’s view that the dramaturg might try to ‘create a sense of order in the creative chaos’. This was certainly the case with making *The End* (2011). In 2011, I said in an interview with the British Council that the piece ‘charts a course from order to chaos’. I meant this textually, aesthetically and physically. In the show, I drink beer and become irritated with how Ollie is taking over. This spills over into the text, when we play with the relationship between the theatre and the sea:

Michael: I wanted to show Ollie the ropes. Actually Ollie I don’t know if you know this but the phrase ‘to show someone the ropes’ comes from working in the theatre. Ollie: Actually Michael, it’s a nautical term. Michael: Fuck off Ollie.

As this study unfolds it has become clear that I am navigating a route between order and chaos, practice and theory, between the rocks of making work and a whirlpool of researching work. It is a route that a dramaturg navigates from the beginning of the creative journey (casting off), through research and development (tacking) to the final realisation of the performance (dropping anchor). This nautical terminology suggests a sense of charting unknown territory, a sense of journey, a sense of taking risks. As Jean Genet wrote: ‘These words still make us reel and our vocabularies pitch and toss’. Lavery concluded that the ‘dramaturgy of the wound’ is an invitation to set sail but that ‘the sea, with its lack of
boundaries, is a dangerous place’. The theatre, with its lack of boundaries, is a dangerous place too. Pearson and Shanks describe performance as ‘... a place where things may still be at risk – beliefs, classifications, lives’. It is this role the dramaturg plays in a process, she is a lifesaver, a classifier, a believer. She is someone the artist trusts to help them to navigate a route home (towards a finished work) - a place of calm, order and resolution – through the storm (the creative process), a place of chaos, disorder and lack of resolution.

![Fig. 6: The End (2011)](image)

Devising theatre, like practice as research, is an invitation to embrace the creative chaos and find a way to locate an order or a logic within it. As Turner and Behrndt suggest, the dramaturg ‘both keeps the process on track and yet (purposefully) might throw it off course’. Barba says: ‘Order and disorder are not two opposing options, but two poles that co-exist and reinforce one another reciprocally. The quality of the tension created between them is an indication of the fertility of the creative process’. This notion of fertility will recur with the view of the idea as progeny to the artist and Beddie’s notion of a dramaturg as midwife between practice (the rocks) and theory (the whirlpool), birthing the idea, facilitating this process. There are similarities between the role of a midwife and a technician. There is a similarity between Barba’s ‘storm’ and Genet’s ‘wound’, both are liminal spaces.
As Shanks and Pearson suggest: ‘Performance tends towards liminality: this “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy”’.\textsuperscript{193} This is perhaps a form of processual scarification. A gap between calm and storm, order and the disorder. Lavery proposes Genet’s dramaturgy operates somewhere between ‘a winding and a wounding, a winding of the imaginary into the real, a dénouement and a renouement’.\textsuperscript{194} Lavery suggests, ‘…the dramaturgy of the wound is the dramaturgy of dislocation’.\textsuperscript{195} In this study, I propose that the dramaturg is, at different stages of the creative process, involved in this action of ‘winding and wounding’, of working with (in the same way as a metallurg works with metal), or weaving or unweaving, the disparate threads of performance and occasionally allowing fissures to be caused in its flow, by asking questions, opening up possibility and refusing to let a process settle or heal, to cause what Patel describes as ‘an itch to scratch’, or a scar.\textsuperscript{196}

We might consider the dramaturg as reading these scars or the piecing together of evidence in the creative process or the landscape of performance. He / she often applies what Pearson and Shanks describe as ‘post-processual archaeology’.\textsuperscript{197} This is also to be understood in terms of the fragments that make a performance and the fragments that are left behind after the performance has taken place. As Shanks and Pearson suggest, ‘It then immediately falls to pieces as traces and fragments of a different order, ranging from documentary photographs to the memories of its participants: fragments / order / fragments’.\textsuperscript{198} With this in mind, the narrative of the relationship a dramaturg has with the artist/work could be described as ‘fragmenter / orderer / defragmenter’. The dramaturg is responsible for piecing fragments together to make meaning in the process of performance and to read these fragments post-processually to evaluate their impact at the end of a process. We might consider aspects of the dramaturg’s role that coalesce with the role critics play in the reading of the work when it is presented and how work evolves post-criticism, whether changes are made and if so why.

There is a potential overlap between the roles dramaturgs play as in-house critics but key differences in terms of how the two jobs operate. Tynan said: ‘The critic tends to look at the minute-hand of the theatre, we can look at the hour hand’.\textsuperscript{199} This inside / outside eye dichotomy lies at the heart of the study, which investigates the differences between short-term and long-term, the immediate and the slow-release feedback one might receive. This study asks of existing critics how their work could be considered a valid dramaturgy and explores case studies of artists making changes as a result of their criticism. I refer to the
The concept of embedded criticism, where critics install themselves in the rehearsal room, in more detail at the end of Act Four. Tynan wrote: ‘I have always been someone who’s reacted to existing phenomena, not a maker of new ones. I’m a reporter of events. I’m a watcher, an observer, a reflector, not an instigator’. The study asks if this is a dramaturg’s job description, to watch, to observe, to reflect, to instigate. I revisit this concept in Act Four.

This study seeks to explore different definitions of the role of the dramaturg in circulation. I will analyse these analogous definitions as they approach the role of the dramaturg from different perspectives, times and contexts. I will intersperse my critical analysis with creative reflections on my own work as a dramaturg with the intention to counterpoint that particular perspective on the role. It is important that the voice of the practice, or the voice of reflection on the practice and the voice of theoretical analysis are in dialogue in this writing. In Dramaturgy on Shifting Ground, Pilkington and Ladver approach a definition of dramaturgy to which I will adhere as much as possible during practical and theoretical research; ‘dramaturgy can describe the structure or composition of a work, the process by which the structure or composition is created and the practice of analysing it’. Barba suggests dramaturgy is both the ‘weave of performance and the process of weaving’, so it would feel insubstantial to present a singular voice here. Academic, Leon Katz writes that ‘The goal of dramaturgy is to resolve the antipathy between the intellectual and the practical in the theatre, fusing the two into an organic whole’. It is clear, so far, that dramaturgy involves threads that weave between the creative and the critical voice, practice and theory, order and disorder, calm and storm, rocks and whirlpools.

The central research questions of this study ask how the evolving role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance veers from suggestion to reflection, subjectivity to objectivity, getting lost or being found. I propose an alternative terminology through working analogies to tourists, navigators, co-pilots and cartographers. I discuss the value of the online space to the dramaturgical process. In my recent performance work, I have played the role of outside eye in an attempt to objectivise the devising process. Taking on Proehl’s observation of the dramaturg as ‘…a particularly postmodern phenomenon - one that signals an acceptance of marginality as a place of choice’, I have written myself into the margins so I can watch what happens from the wings. This is particularly true of The Beginning (2012), where my role is to follow the script and operate the sound and lighting cues.
In recent work, a blog has become a ‘rear view mirror’ that enacts reflections of the process, enabling what visual artist and professor emeritus of sculpture, John Newling, describes as ‘abductive logic’ to take place, he describes this as the knowledge acquired after the event (personal communication, 1 December 2006). As Marshall McLuhan said, ‘We look at the present via the rear view mirror, we march backwards into the future’. I explore the notion of ‘distance dramaturgy’ raised by Deirdre Heddon and Alex Kelly in which dialogue was purely virtual and even work in progresses were shared online. I posit that the dramaturg’s absence from the work affords a different kind of reflection. Ultimately, I ask how distance affords an objective critical perspective but, at the same time, how proximity promotes a tacit level of understanding of the artist’s intention. There is always a tension between the two.

Because objects in the rear view mirror may appear closer than they are.

Fig. 7: The Beginning (2012)
Act Two Scene Three: Dramaturg as mechanic

Burt Cardullo concludes his introduction to *What is dramaturgy? (1995)* with the assertion that: ‘A dramaturg is to a play as a mechanic is to an automobile: He may not have built it, but he knows what makes it work, and this enables him to rebuild it as the theatrical occasion warrants’. Cardullo uses traditional terminology here and by positioning the ‘dramaturg’ alongside the words ‘play’ and ‘theatrical occasion’ he resists a contemporary reading. However, the analogy is an interesting proposition, suggesting a ‘hands on’ approach, someone with a knowledge of the ‘inner workings’ of the ‘engine’ or someone trained in the practice of making it work. This is a proactive role that involves rebuilding what is already made or taking a vehicle apart to find out what is wrong, to identify faults and try to fix them.

The mechanic might carry out a series of tests, calibrating and measuring the way in which the vehicle performs, ensuring it is at its optimum efficacy. The idea suggests there is some kind of check-list, an MOT the mechanic can follow, to service the performance, or play, to make sure everything is in working order. The dramaturg could employ Pavis’ questionnaire and ask question 9b: ‘What kind of dramaturgical choices have been made?’ They could apply Castellucci’s ideas about the core strategies of composition as suggested by Williams in ‘Geographies of Requiredness: Notes on the Dramaturg in Collaborative Devising’.

The mechanic might issue some kind of written report, arguably a qualitative assessment that tells the owner of the vehicle if they have passed or failed the test. The notion of failure is, of course, entirely subjective and that is where the metaphor falls down. The mechanic’s work is predicated by the notion that they can make the vehicle work or they cannot. The dramaturg’s relationship with the performance process is more difficult to fix. As Williams suggests the ‘…role straddles tensions between structure and possibility, known and unknown, fixity and fluidity, and so on’. The dramaturg must first question the notion of something working at all. As Matthew Goulish asks: ‘How does a work work where? What is a work? What does it mean to work? What is a where?’ Williams suggests: ‘The task of devising is to try to locate the shapes of what you think you’re looking for while often being largely in the dark as to exactly what that is’. So a dramaturg in this context is often ‘in the dark’ as well. As a dramaturg, I keep a blog to remember, to reflect on the process and to collate documentation and feedback on the performance. The blog becomes what Mari and Uprichard describe as ‘The memory of what’s going on’.
The assemblage of text, images, video, audio, interviews and reviews becomes a form of dramaturgy itself, seeking to illuminate the process, like a mechanic fixing a car. The language of driving is appropriate. Maggie Kinloch and Nick Wood describe a creative process where ‘pit-stops… enable the refuelling of ideas to occur’. The dramaturg is both a driver and a passenger in the devising process. He or she is ‘... concerned with the composing and orchestration of events for and in particular contexts, tracking the implications of and connective relations between materials and shaping them to find effective forms’. She might be a hunter, gatherer, forager or scavenger, as Anne Bogart describes herself, ‘I am a scavenger. This is what I do. Like a bird that… pulls together different things and makes a nest. I think it is… a nesting impulse, of taking this and that and weaving it together’.

This is the role of the dramaturg, whether reassembling an engine from its component parts or pulling different things together and making a nest, organic architecture. It is habitual, an instinctive act that has been practised many times before and it reflects the way in which dramaturgs know what the material is and how best to make it work. It is interesting to note what Mac Wellman says in ‘The Theatre of Good Intentions’ (2002) ‘Waste is a great obsession of the writer of the American well-made play (one frequently hears its champions refer to writing as material, as though it were a kind of unformed mush or night-soil)’. In contemporary performance, material is often both text and texture and it is, more often that not, unformed and unfound. Lone Twin write in their ‘Job Description’ for an outside eye: ‘You will embark on a journey, taking on an idea, finding its form, its shape, what it is that’s funny about it and what it is that’s sad about it. You will care for it. You will know each part of it. You will be familiar with its texture, its type its mode. You will know how it rests, how it plays and how it works.’ The dramaturg’s job is to look for and after something that is not yet found. As Williams tells Turner and Behrndt, ‘you don’t really know what is being sought’. The dramaturg is in a limbo between finding and looking, knowing and not knowing. For The Middle (2013), before I worked with my father, Tony, I spent some time playing with the material I wanted to use physically: a table, a chair, 40 metres of bubble wrap. I found I could create interesting images with this material that could speak about the themes of liminality, ageing and the archiving of memory. As the final text suggests:

I am in the middle. Between having learned what to do and having to do it. Between practising and performing. Not knowing how you might receive it. Between remembering and forgetting. I am in the middle of talking to you. In the middle.
Fig. 8: The Middle (2013)

**Act Two Scene Four: Dramaturg as a midwife**

According to critic Melanie Beddie: ‘Dramaturgy can be thought of as the midwife between theory and practice’.²²² Contributor to a dialogue called *The Dramaturgies Project* (2006) in Australia, Beddie goes on to suggest that a dramaturg ‘…can provide a process for bringing ideas into a concrete form. It can also allow for the essential luxury of contemplation and evaluation of both process and product’.²²³ This seems, at first glance, a very different proposition to Cardullo’s analogy of mechanic, differentiated by gender, ten years of critical theory surrounding the role and perhaps approaching a definition from a perspective of ‘new dramaturgies’.²²⁴ There is something inherently organic about the notion of a midwife here. Facilitating the birth of something, an idea or a performance arriving naturally, born of a process that the midwife understands and will simply let happen. Again, it is a role that requires training and an understanding of how things work, but more delicate, more human, less technical. Beddie and her colleagues subscribe to Eugenio Barba’s view that dramaturgy is both the ‘weave’²²⁵ and ‘the process of weaving’.²²⁶ Organic terms can suggest both a raveling and an unraveling structure, threads of space and time, connected like human tissue. As Williams writes: ‘Let its seams, stitchings, flaws be visible - it is provisional, contingent, in process, ravelled and unravelling, human, imperfect, a made thing still being made’.²²⁷
Claire MacDonald suggests that dramaturgs ‘…mediate between the starting point of a work and its eventual realization within performance practice’. So a dramaturg is a mediator or facilitator of a process that they themselves are not carrying out, but perhaps one which they have overseen many times before. A midwife, for example, will have facilitated many births and understands the inherent risks, dangers and challenges and find the right language to communicate these to a woman potentially in pain. Williams points out: ‘This is part of the dramaturg’s role as negotiator, mediator / bridge, connective tissue between disparate elements and personnel’. The midwife might also instruct a nurse to oversee elements of the birth and will discuss the birth plan with the patient. MacDonald proposes that ‘… the current understanding of a dramaturgy places greater emphasis on this process of mediation…’ between being in labour and giving birth, in process and in delivery.

MacDonald asserts that dramaturgy ‘… draws out these starting propositions, unfolds a compositional process and enables this process to be enacted’. A dramaturg is not a doer but an enabler. We might find it useful to borrow Turner and Behrendt’s description of ‘dramaturging’ – applying a specific approach to a play text or a performance, that which is neither present participle nor noun but somewhere in between. Williams proposes that a ‘… dramaturg sits astride the hyphen between both-and.’ For example, ‘She is ‘innocent’ and ‘experienced’…’ She is a first-time mother and she is a practised midwife. She is in ‘intimate proximity… and ‘at a distance’. Ultimately, she is in the Labour Suite but not in labour. Like birth, ‘The work requires immersive belief and critical distance…’

Williams describes the dramaturg as focused on ‘… the particularities and implications of rhythms, how they operate: rhythms of space, bodies, language, objects, transitions; that is rhythm as a sensible, palpable ‘pulse’ of contraction…’. Here the dramaturg is a birthing partner, enabling the breathing patterns required to ease the process and keep all involved calm and focused. The medical analogy is reinforced by The Dramaturgies Project (2008), which declares that for a dramaturg to remain just a ‘script doctor’ limits the role. Instead it suggests: ‘As a practice that is often called upon, in the rehearsal and development process, to ‘contextualise’, to keep alive the memory of alternatives in the pressure cooker environment of production, dramaturgy – potentially – lies at the cutting edge of creative praxis’.

This ‘cutting edge’, or this surgeon’s scalpel, in the pressure cooker environment of a woman’s labour might rely instinctively on this delicate balance of practice and theory, for
what we know and what we do are linked inextricably in the moment of decision (or incision) in this environment. As opposed to some readings of dramaturg as a ‘cultivator of doubt’, here we seek a dramaturgy where there is no room for doubt or error; one whose knowledge enables the right decisions to be made. But how can we be certain, like a mechanic or midwife, when we are right or wrong? Perhaps we can pinpoint the immediate reflexivity of our decisions as their value. As MacDonald concludes ‘Dramaturgy then, is a term in flux, a not-yet-settled word, a word that might even have the status of one of Raymond Williams’ keywords – words that are significant, but contested, words that are argued over, words ‘whose time is now’.  

Even Cardullo, with his approach to analogous readings of the role might agree with Beddoe’s definition of the dramaturg as a midwife. He talks in his introduction to What is dramaturgy? (1995) about: ‘… the birth of a ‘new’ theatrical profession and, what is more important, the concomitant rebirth or reimagining of much contemporary theatre.’ He acknowledges that, like a newborn child it will grow, and: ‘As the idea of dramaturgy grows so too does the dramaturg’s potential sphere of influence’. Perhaps with the dramaturgical boom over the last 15 years, the dramaturg finds themselves in the driving seat, to make important decisions and change theatre in the UK. Along with writers and directors, they are currently ‘… challenging traditional ways of working and adopting a fresh, internationalist approach to their work’  

**Act Two Scene Five: Dramaturg as tourist**

Now let us consider the dramaturg as a tourist. Visiting a place that is not their origin artistically, and perhaps meandering in and out of their own discipline to develop their critical faculty whilst, at the same time, informing the process of artists who engage them through an interdisciplinary dialogue. For example, Hetain Patel recently invited choreographer Matthias Sperling to work as a ‘choreo-turg’ on his theatre piece – Ten (2010) – although Sperling would not consider himself a theatre maker, neither is Patel a choreographer. It is no coincidence that the role of the dramaturg has often been a short-term occupation for writers / directors including Brecht, Ibsen and Muller on the journey to their destination profession. It is as if the job is a sojourn, or a mini-break, on their ongoing theatrical trajectory. That it shapes their vision of how work is made through an apprenticeship working alongside
established directors is certain. The value of their experience as dramaturgs is difficult to ascertain; however the fact they engaged dramaturgs for their own work is surely telling. Brecht regarded every member of the Berliner Ensemble as a potential ‘outside eye’ according to Martin Esslin.\textsuperscript{239} As Cardullo states: ‘A dramaturg’s position has often been a transitional phase of his life in the theatre’.\textsuperscript{240} Many young playwrights have started their journey as dramaturgs, again developing their own skills as a visitor or tourist in the process and the company of other writers. Cardullo asserts that ‘… the dramaturg’s work should be regarded not as an end in itself but as part of a collaborative creation, and a source of training for future play directors, artistic directors, playwrights or critics’.\textsuperscript{241} How might the analogy of ‘tourist’ operate in the way a dramaturg views work? As we move away from text-based performance, we could consider the approach of Kitte Wagner, a dramaturg at the Betty Nansen Theatre in Copenhagen. Wagner asks specific questions of the process such as: ‘What is the attraction? What are the dynamics? What are the elements? How many postcards are there? I call them postcards… strong, visual images’.\textsuperscript{242} Wagner collects postcards from the process, referring to them in dialogue with the artists during rehearsal and in writings.

This form of communication with the work echoes the relationship between Deirdre Heddon and Alex Kelly on Third Angel’s \textit{The Lad Lit Project} (2005). Described as ‘distance dramaturgy’, as Heddon and Kelly did not meet until the work was completed, the relationship was defined by written correspondence between the collaborators. As Heddon writes: ‘Correspondence registers in two ways here: it implies not only communication by letters, but also a correspondence of interests, a shared focus’.\textsuperscript{243} This geographical distance from the process and Heddon’s ‘massive doubt’ and ‘ignorance / naivety’ about the male subject matter enabled a degree of objectivity to inform her remote input.\textsuperscript{244} Kelly would send written updates, postcards from the process, and Heddon would reply by interrogating the rehearsal with instructions such as: ‘If you were to choose five photographs from your own ‘photo album’ – real or imagined – of pictures taken between 1987 and 1989, what would they be? What might be just outside the frame? What happened just before? What happened just after?’\textsuperscript{245} Like Wagner’s postcards, Heddon’s instruction is a ‘touristic’ approach to dramaturgy, working with photographs as stimuli and sending messages.

This process deals directly with notions of autobiography and the relationship returns to a question Kelly asked Heddon at the beginning of the process: ‘Why do we feel the need to
tell our own stories?' The style of dramaturgy Heddon employs mirrors a technique proposed by Elinor Fuchs in her article *EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play* (2004). After inviting the reader to think of the performance as a ‘world’ or ‘planet’, Fuchs asks: ‘What is space like on this planet?’; ‘How does time behave on this planet?’; ‘Is this a public world or a private world?’; ‘What changes in this world?’ For Fuchs, dramaturgs should not only step outside of the work but look at it from afar. She urges us ‘…to construct meaning in the most inclusive way you can. There will still be more to see.’ It is perhaps only by achieving the objective distance of a tourist, by taking pictures and making postcards, that we see this world. As Richard Foreman writes in video documentation of *The Bridge Project* (2004), ‘Only by being a tourist can one truly experience a place’. Robert Shaughnessy recounts how he writes about performances he has seen as a recording,

Of necessity, I record sequentially, subjected for the moment to follow the path of performance time's arrow, knowing, however, that this can be immediately re-ordered the instant the show ends, and perhaps before, as the privilege of retrospection allows me to collate my impressions into a "reading" of performance as well as a witnessing of it.

John Deeney in *Writing Live* outlines the ‘presence of difference between playwrights and those working in the field of live art’. I would like to define this more carefully and look at writers making ‘frequent traffic across borders’ as Cathy Turner describes. Perhaps as Turner and Behrndt conclude, ‘The need to clarify the distinction (between the playwright and the dramaturg) might become particularly pressing in processes where notating, shaping and structuring work become the function of the dramaturg’. These distinctions might exist for professional reasons rather than philosophical reasons, and the tacit difference between the playwright and the dramaturg in a more traditional context. Claire MacDonald defines a dramaturgy which might remain more radically inclusive, that ‘fosters the exchange between literary and visual cultures, and moves beyond the convention of play-reading and revision, to include other kinds of textual and performance work around writing’. I would now like to demonstrate a new dramaturgical approach to performance work and writing that stemmed from my research and development of *The End* (2011) as a durational piece. I was invited to present a durational live art piece as part of the biennial Up the Wall Festival in Chester and I was seeking to explore one fragment of theatrical material in this site-specific context.
The only text used in this performance was the following exchange between the performers: ‘Any last words? / [Last words of performer] / Ready Aim Fire [Drop index card]’.

By inviting visual artist, Hetain Patel to be a dramaturg on The End (2011), I aimed to foster this exchange between the literary tradition of ‘writing a play’ and his visual experience of ‘mounting an exhibition’. The resulting collaboration led to the decision to explore the image of the man waiting to face the firing squad. We looked at iconic images from recent conflicts, and the concept of the man’s ‘last words’. This formed the recurring motif for The End (2011) in which we would ask each other ‘Any last words?’ At the same time, I staged a durational performance installation with the same concept with 10 performers blindfolded against a Roman Wall in Chester, each saying their last words before being ‘shot’ by an index card and falling to the ground. The concept was inspired by historical research into the site and the discovery that in the 17th century the wall had been bombarded for four hours and created a breach 10-men wide. The site-specific performance aimed to re-enact this bombardment using the text: ‘Ready aim fire’ as a trigger for 10 performers to read their last words – each time the phrase was repeated an index card would be dropped to the ground. Each performer was blindfolded and would have an index card safety-pinned to their coat as a target before Ollie Smith or myself would ‘pull the trigger’ by dropping another index card.
Over four hours, the performers would fall to the ground and stand again each performing 100 last words, 10,000 last words in total. By the time the performance had ended, the performers’ coats, and the ground, were covered in white index cards. As one audience member commented, it looked like something between shrapnel and snow. This iteration of the process would not have taken place without Hetain Patel’s involvement as he pushed the process out of a theatrical space, the usual timeframe of a one-hour show and our own comfort zones as performers. The experience informed the text and quality of performance when we used this image in the final performance for theatre spaces. It is also an acute example of how dramaturgical research resembles an archaeological dig in its approach.

Act Two: The Epilogue

In What is dramaturgy? (1995) Cardullo insists: ‘Without the dramaturg, in fact, there is no real theatre. He is its true architect and archaeologist, the discoverer, transmitter, and interpreter of playtexts both ancient and modern, a kind of playwright for all ages or crossroads of dramatic tradition.’ Cardullo’s claim that the dramaturg is both ‘architect and archaeologist’ yields a potentially provocative study. It is an interesting proposition, as an architect might be seen to have a pre-emptory role in designing a space or discovering the possibilities of a site, whereas an archaeologist would have a more ‘post-processual’ role, arriving when the building is no more and reading the ruins, excavating what is left behind. For my work as a dramaturg, I have been involved in both modes of dramaturgy, from ‘building up’ the performance from a script to ‘reading the ruins’ of a devising process. The mode is dependent upon the process and what the artist requests in terms of contact. In Theatre/Archaeology (2001), Pearson and Shanks introduce a hybrid reading of performance fusing their practices as a theatre maker and archaeologist. Shanks proposes ‘interpretive archaeology’ as an analytical tool for understanding a site and its stories. He explains, ‘It designates a set of approaches to the ruined material past which foreground interpretation, the ongoing process of what never was firm or certain.’ As a dramaturg, you might enter into a process that is underway and attempt an interpretation of ‘what never was firm or certain.’ As Gregg Whelan and Gary Winters of Lone Twin write, when asked by David Williams to provide a job description for the role he has played; ‘You will have the ability to see things that aren’t there. After perhaps two hours… you will raise your head from your small black notepad and suggest in a quiet, unrushed supportive tone: “it’s there, something is there, I can’t say what it is, but it’s there, something is there”’.
This is the starting point for many dramaturgical contracts before the work starts. When Reckless Sleepers invited me to be their dramaturg on *The Pilots* (2008), I received the following email from artistic director, Mole Wetherell: ‘Would like to know if [you could be an] inside / outside maker / looker. We need a third person to make it work, not as a director, more like someone else to work with, as a maker. I see it like looking at the project, coming up with suggestions, maybe even writing stuff, being Mole or being Tim, being George or being Andrew [the characters] so that I can see what it is too’ (personal communication, 2 July 2007). This ‘looking at the project’ suggests some kind of surveyor. A recent email from Hetain Patel inviting me to work with him as a dramaturg, read: ‘I’m not sure if it is but this feels like one of the earliest times in a process that we will be working together, which is to say I still don’t have a totally clear idea about how the show will be, conceptually. It will be useful to think it through with you’ (personal communication, 2 November 2015). This process of ‘thinking through’ is the starting point of a dramaturgical relationship. That relationship unfolds with an archaeological dig through the material Hetain has amassed during the Research and Development phase of the project. In the case of *American Boy* (2014), that material comprised different film clips exploring notions of cultural identity.

Pearson and Shanks suggest that: ‘What archaeologists do is work with material traces, with evidence, in order to create something, a meaning, a narrative, an image – which stands for the past in the present. Archaeologists craft the past’.  

If Cardullo is correct, the dramaturg ‘crafts the process’ through meaning-making. Pearson and Shanks use the term ‘assemblage’ here to describe the way in which material is processed, patterned and ordered in performance structures. They say, ‘What begins as a series of fragments is arranged in performance. Dramaturgy is an act of assemblage’.  

The dramaturg and the archaeologist share an investigative and excavational vocabulary and both are concerned with assembling meaning. As Pearson and Shanks conclude, ‘Both archaeology and performance involve the documentation of practices and experiences’.  

In the case of *American Boy* (2014), the fragments are film clips and the process of ‘assemblage’ is the ‘storyboard’ Hetain creates to find a narrative between them all. This process of assembling includes the ‘documentation’ of his visual and performance practice and his ‘experience’ attempting to assimilate these clips. However, just as an archaeologist assembles meaning from what is left behind in a space, so an architect can assemble meaning from a structure in a three dimensional space. Turner and Behrndt point out ‘‘Dramaturgy’ need not only apply to dialogue. Architects have related it to
the ways in which buildings suggest the possibility of a range of uses’. They cite architect Bernard Tschumi’s description of ‘events organized and strategized by architecture’ to suggest we consider architecture in dramaturgical terms. They conclude that if ‘… Tschumi looks at the performance of architecture, the theatre dramaturg looks at the architecture of performance’. Certainly, a dramaturg is frequently concerned with structure and the way in which a performance is both ‘organized and strategized’ within structures. For *American Boy* (2014), I focused on how the different film clips might be organised and drew up a sort of timeline and thematic rubric for how they might cross-fade.

Fig. 10. *American Boy* (2014)

When working with Hetain, the process becomes more architectural when we start to find a structure that can accommodate this material. We are, in fact, drawing up a blueprint for how the performance might look. For example, in *American Boy* (2014), Hetain found a film clip of the actor Michael Caine describing what it is like being an actor moving from theatre to film in an acting masterclass. As his work uses multi-media, I suggested that he return to this material throughout the piece as a motif, each time changing his relationship to the audience by starting with direct address and then using a live camera to mediate the text via monitors. The Caine text becomes a way of engaging them in the narrative, whilst illustrating the difference between the live and the mediated performance. The Caine text is an architectural
structure for the film clips that Hetain lyp-syncs and body-syncs. Yet it is also the keystone motif that thematically and conceptually links the different film clips. It uses the structure and device of film to frame different reflections on how film affects us. Turner and Behrndt propose that; ‘The Dramaturg’s ‘toolkit’ for discussing dramaturgy often produces suggestions for ways of summarizing and encapsulating overall structures’. 266 I interviewed an architect to explore this concept further and he said: ‘When I design a building I am imagining the narrative of its use.’ 267 We could perhaps argue there is a connection between architecture and the structure of a story. Cathy Turner studies the relationship between architecture and dramaturgy in her recently published book Dramaturgy and Architecture: Theatre, Utopia and the Built Environment (2015), which explores the dramaturgy of space. 268 Certainly when identifying the structure for The Trilogy (2014), I was considering it as a form of architecture to see how the story could be told. This is potentially a litmus test for why we might employ these different definitions. As Locascio suggests, when describing Bogart’s approach, the dramaturg is ‘a sort of litmus paper. I think this is analogous for the work the dramaturg does for the director or the creating ensemble as a whole’. 269

This metaphor perhaps takes us even further away from others described in this chapter, it sits somewhere between the forensic and the scientific. However, when discussing performance structures, perhaps architecture provides the most appropriate point of reference, especially when a dramaturg is present from the start of the process, and oversees the performance from its early stages through assembly, to construction. Alternatively, when considering a process whereby one is assembling meaning from material that is already generated, e.g. a text, it is more appropriate to employ an archaeological perspective. Pearson and Shanks suggest, ‘Meaning is generated relentlessly. Performance is a saturated space’. 270 It is a space that affords both an architectural and archaeological reading, that shifts forms throughout the dramaturgical process. Lyddiard and Andrews write: ‘Dramaturgy… proposes a dimension, which supports a shape rather than a line between two poles. It suggests architecture. It creates for us a space in which to act, to operate’. 271 We have touched upon the dramaturg as mechanic, midwife, tourist, archaeologist and architect. In reality, the dramaturg assimilates different aspects of these roles for each process. In relation to my body of work, we might distinguish between the 'holistic dramaturg' (working for others) and the 'auteur-dramaturg' (as primary creator), not necessarily to replace other ideas but to conclude this discussion. The role remains fluid and is perhaps best described using Turner’s description of a ‘porous dramaturgy’, moving from one context to another, while shape-shifting and skill-sharing. 272
‘In the beginning. We wanted to write a contract. So you would know. What to expect from us. And what we expect from you’.

The Beginning (2012)
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

But [what is drama]? With the author, it has its dazzling beginning, so it is up to him to capture this lightning and organize, starting from the illumination that shows the void, a verbal architecture – that’s to say grammatical and ceremonial – cunningly showing that from this void an appearance that shows the void rips itself free.273

Act Three: The Prologue

When we begin a new job there is often a contract involved; a document we sign beneath the signature of the person who has employed us. Often the contract outlines an agreement of what it is we will be doing. Often, before we sign it, we read it through carefully, to make sure we understand exactly what is being asked of us. Whenever I have worked as a dramaturg, I have never been issued with a contract. This may be because of the small-scale touring theatre scene in which I operate but I believe that I have never been asked to sign a document outlining the role because it is difficult to define it. Contract means to make narrow as well as to make an agreement and it is this process of making narrow which is a potential obstacle when it comes to working as a dramaturg. The notion of contracting is at odds with that aspect of a dramaturg’s task which might involve a broadening and opening up of the process. Contracts are at odds with this and therefore do not function on the same terms, in the same territory. When you attempt to define the role of dramaturg before it has begun, you define it as something else entirely. The contract resides in the relationship between the artist and the outside eye, and it writes itself as the project evolves. The relationship is built on a process of drafting and redrafting texts; each draft is an attempt at layering material, each draft represents a change of mind, much like the phenomenon in painting of pentimento.274

In oil painting, as the paint ages, it becomes translucent and layers of paint begin to reveal revisions or amendments made by the artist in the form of pentimento. The layering of the devising process is equally open to making amendments visible. Kate Chapman, from Theatre Writing Partnership says, ‘I see the role of a dramaturg as to shine a light through the words, to find out what is happening between them and behind them. We write in layers and we watch theatre that is made up of layers, the dramaturg identifies the layers’.275 The layers she speaks of could be textual, textural or architectural. Phil Stanier, artist and academic, reflects on how his work responds to feedback over time and becomes ‘… an architecture of
revisions and additions'. Academic and theatre maker, John Freeman, argues that practice as research exhibits *pentimento*, as you can see through the finished work, the layers of previous drafts and alterations, ‘a change of mind’. There is an element of *pentimento* involved in the role of working as a dramaturg in contemporary performance, as the process of writing the text for performance is often made visible through the performance itself.

The word *pentimento* derives from the Latin for repentance. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* which translates as *after or behind one’s mind*. The role of the dramaturg involves fine-tuning this sense of ‘after-thinking’ and making oneself aware of what one has seen, heard and felt. The dramaturg practises both a semiotic and a phenomenological response to piece together the fragments of performance. As Pearson and Shanks suggest, ‘What begins as a series of fragments is arranged in performance. Dramaturgy is an act of assemblage’. However, Etchells is more pragmatic about what is left behind after the event: ‘Fragments in and of themselves are meaningless. Only by piecing them together can we begin to form a picture of what a performance may have been… The creation of a history is a manipulation of fragments’. The dramaturg both assembles futures and creates history. He operates in a liminal space, between process and product, between designing a blueprint and planning a demolition, reading the ruins and witnessing the catastrophe that caused them.

The dramaturg always operates in this liminal space and often defines their own input, their own language, their own vocabulary, in lieu of a contract or job description that might be able to calibrate their mode of input. What is clear is that at different stages of the process, the dramaturg might play, or be contracted to play many different roles. It is a shifting role that, as Claire MacDonald concludes about *dramaturgy*, ‘… is a term in flux, a not-yet-settled word, a word that might even have the status of one of Raymond Williams’ keywords – words that are significant, but contested, words that are argued over. Words whose time is now’. For example, when I worked with Hetain Patel on *Be Like Water* (2010), I found myself looking at video, text, set design and publicity copy and reflecting on how all of these might convey a sense of fluidity. I described this as an ‘holistic dramaturgy’ or a ‘360 degree dramaturgy’, informing across all aspects of the process from inception to final delivery. When working as a dramaturg and marketing consultant on *The Pilots* (2008) with Reckless Sleepers, the company once referred to me as their ‘dramarketurg’ in their production pack.
Act Three Scene One: The Contract

With so many different threads running through the weave, is it possible to define a job description for the role of a contemporary dramaturg? When live artist, Chris. Dugrenier, invited me to work with her as an outside eye, she wrote a letter outlining how we might work together on the project (personal communication, 2 May 2012). It reads as follows:

Where your help will be useful, I think, is:
- trying to bring the elements into a cohesive whole, looking at the structure, the text and making the connections either more visible or less obvious
- making the work more performance than theatre
- tightening the loose ends. There are a lot of things here that are little pet ideas and I wonder if they might be in the way of achieving the vision of the piece.

There are some useful phrases here that we might describe as outlining the role; ‘cohesive whole’; ‘looking at structure’; ‘making connections’; ‘tightening loose ends’; and ‘achieving the vision’. ‘Loose ends’ brings us back to Barba’s notion of dramaturgy as the ‘weave of performance’. Each strand of the creative process can be seen as a thread that is weaved into a whole, that is either tied or untied, resolved or unresolved. Some of these phrases chime with other descriptions of the role from my interviews, particularly a conversation with James Yarker, artistic director of Stan’s Café. Yarker suggests a dramaturg might say ‘you have explained to me what your vision is and at the moment what you are staging is not delivering that vision’. He went on to describe the concept of ‘vision creep’, which dramaturgs might prevent, by returning the artist to their vision when it starts to drift away.

Whatever the choice of language in this tentative contract, it is an attempt to be more specific; to describe what the role of the dramaturg will bring to this particular creative process. It is a tentative job description for the dramaturg and if we look at the wording again, there are two phrases which might suggest a closing role or a process of making narrow; ‘bring the elements into a cohesive whole’ and ‘tightening the loose ends’; in contrast, there is also one phrase which suggests an opening role or a process of making wide; ‘making the connections either more visible or less obvious’. That last phrase epitomises the delicate negotiation the outside eye has to make with the artist between clarity and ambiguity; both making many connections and making sense. In experimental performance and the landscape
of postdramatic theatre, the aim is not just to ‘make clear’ or to ‘make visible’, but also to ‘make less obvious’. 283 This is the crux of the contract between an artist and an outside eye; how do we open without closing, make visible something that is not tangible, tell a story without making it too easy to read or too difficult to understand?

After the rehearsal process, I interviewed Dugrenier about the role of the outside eye I had played and she said: ‘I was surprised when you asked me how I see the work you will be doing with me? I thought ‘I don’t know. You’re the dramaturg’. But it was a very useful question to make me think clearly about what we would work on’ (personal communication, 3 May 2012). She describes the role as ‘an intruder... Detective came to me because of the metaphor of shining light to the dusty corners... But it is unsatisfactory... I have been rummaging through my thesaurus and I have not found one word that can communicate what I think... But this series of words is getting closer: 'shadower' (as of shadowing), search party, enquirer...’ (personal communication, 3 May 2012). In Dugrenier’s work, Wealth’s Last Caprice (2011), when the process involves the itemisation of personal belongings to make a will, the ‘outside eye’ is a shadow of reassurance, of moral as well as artistic support, he is a counsellor as well as a mentor. She concludes: ‘I quite like 'shadower' as I could see the role of the outside eye as a shadow, meeting at the same point, looking at the same point but from a different angle / perspective...’ (personal communication, 3 May 2012). The dramaturg shines a light and shadows, enabling both a meeting and a divergence to take place. She could be described as a ‘rear view mirror’, enabling another view of the process.

In my recent performance work, I have played the role of outside eye in an attempt to objectivise the devising process. I write myself into the margins so I can watch what happens from the wings. I keep a blog for each project that enables a sedimentary layering of material to take place. This online space has become a rear view mirror that enables real-time reflections on the journey. Like the rear view mirror, the outside eye affords a view of the past framed within a view of the future. She creates a dramaturgical space where the road ahead is foregrounded by the road behind. However, there is potential for slippage between the inside and the outside, a subjective and an objective perspective. The need for an outside eye arises when an artist becomes too close to the work to see it for what it really is; because objects in the rear view mirror may appear closer than they are.
To extend the metaphor of driving further, we might place the dramaturg in the car with the artist, we might say the car is the piece of work, the road is the process, the destination is the final performance. We might consider dramaturgy to be a road map, a potential route from where you are now in the process to where you are going. The dramaturg is aware of the territory but also the fact that the map is not the territory. Heather Uprichard, working with Shunt, describes the dramaturg as ‘a compass’, helping to navigate the maze of ideas, images and material. She suggests that compared to the director, who ‘takes snapshots on the ground’, the dramaturg actually ‘holds the map of the process’. Perhaps she reminds you of what you learned when you first started to drive the car: mirror, signal, manoeuvre.

**Act Three Scene Two: Mirror Signal Manoeuvre**

As an outside eye, I sometimes find myself serving the function of the mirror. First I must look at my own practice and find a way of calibrating the way I make work with the way I work with other artists (e.g. tastes, preferences, styles, methodology). Then I reflect what I see. I tell the artist I am working with what I am seeing that they might not know that they are showing me. I might ask the following questions of the work: How does it look? How does it feel? How does it walk? How does it talk? How does it touch? How does it rest? How does it sleep? How does it stretch? How does it taste? When I worked with Reckless Sleepers on *It was never called snowman* (2009) a member of Proto-type Theater, Dr Andrew Westerside, saw a work-in-progress featuring real snow and said ‘It tasted like sorbet’. Barba posits that ‘Actions are what work directly on the audience’s attention, on their understanding, their emotiveness, their synaesthesia’. The sorbet response to the work demonstrates how synaesthesia enables a cross-sensory duality through these actions.

Working with Zoi Dimitriou on *You May* (2012), one of the performers described how they were starting to ‘taste the text’ after we had played with its pace, its tempo, its volume and its temperature. Sometimes when we describe performance in a new language, it is as if we taste it in a different way. Our language defines our experience and our experience defines how we talk about it. The dramaturg sees the work from a different perspective, from different eyes. Dramaturg, Julia Locascio has her own set of questions she asks of work: ‘How did it make you feel? How do you want us to feel? How do you want us to feel at the beginning, middle, and the end? What do you want the audience to crave, do you give it to them or not? When do you give it to them? How do you give it to them?’ She concludes...
that ‘An important question that came from that training that I return to all the time, was asking the creator why do you need to make this piece of work today, in this hour, in this minute?’ This is a question I asked myself during this doctoral study. Why this? Why now?

A curator and dance dramaturg, Andre Lepecki writes of how the dramaturg’s activity in documenting the work is a way of ‘creating the memory of the production’. The dramaturg’s responsibility is to reflect accurately the process and not to distort, to distract, but at the same time, to be honest, to be up-front, to have what artist a smith describes as ‘the capacity to be frank’, as a mirror might be when you have just woken up. A mirror can also be used to deflect, to direct the gaze and sometimes it helps to hold it at an angle, to show the artist things he or she cannot see; as live artist Dugrenier puts it, ‘shining lights on the dark corners, the dusty sections, the messy bits’. A mirror reflects light. In my experience of playing the role, a dramaturg opens up the corners of the process, the nooks and crannies, to look underneath, to look behind, to look in the wings and to look from above. Adrian Heathfield suggested the optimum view of Goat Island’s work was from above. The dramaturg can attempt to achieve this ‘helicopter view’, but as Heathfield points out ‘There is no location from which to see the work in totality; there are only subjective and partial positions, fragments of a whole, that remains, no matter how many times you see the work, stubbornly out of reach’. The contemporary dramaturg’s job is to piece together these fragments to imagine the whole. Let us consider the notion that, as in German Romanticism, a fragment is in itself whole. If a mirror is shattered, each fragment is still a mirror.

Let us imagine a signal to be the way in which a dramaturg communicates their opinions to the artist. Live artist, Tom Marshman, invited me to work with him a week before his premiere and stated; ‘Be sensitive to the fact that some things I cannot change’ . Another artist, David Parkin, told me before a work-in-progress I was attending that ‘the best feedback you can give is that there is no feedback’ (personal communication, 17 May 2012). We see here that the timescale can often alter the nature of the contract involved. As dramaturgs, it helps to listen to the needs of the artist and to respond accordingly. If invited to look at the detail, look at the detail. If invited to look at the overall image or concept, look at the overall image or concept. I interviewed two companies about how the role of the ‘outside eye’ functions in their work and both have different ways of approaching the process. Third Angel co-directors, Alex Kelly and Rachael Walton, apply a ‘big paintbrush’ (concept) and a ‘little paintbrush’ (detail) respectively.
Action Hero’s co-directors, Gemma Paintin and James Stenhouse, look at the ‘micro-level’ (detail) and the ‘meta-level’ (concept) respectively. In these contemporary companies, the process is filtered through two different directorial lenses and their collective ethos enables dramaturgical work to take place both inside and outside. A signal might include how the outside eye represents the ‘audience in the room’. He might signal to the artist where the work is going. He might ask if it is getting warmer or colder, faster or slower, more busy or less still? He might ask where the work is happening in the space and map where the action takes place to ask which parts of the stage are hotspots or cold spots, corridors and destinations. The same could be said of the text. He might make a word cloud of the performance text to find out which words are most frequently used, to audit the text. For The Beginning (2012), I made word clouds of both the performance text and the collated audience feedback from a work-in-progress to see how the text and the feedback differed. In the text, the key word was ‘Beginning’. In the feedback, the key word was ‘Relationship’. This informed the way we developed our onstage relationships as performers, as we became more aware of how we were being observed. We also saw that Ollie was being primarily focused on in the audience feedback, so we addressed this by trying to balance out the ensemble more equally. This ‘word auditing’ process enabled us to visualise what we were putting in and what the audience was getting out of the work. It is a way of focusing on one plane of the performance, to deconstruct one element and then rebuild it. Dugrenier talks of the dramaturg ‘un-building and taking apart’ the devising process and this is one way of approaching this task. I was able to reflect on ‘The memory of what’s going on’ through this process.

Fig. 11. Word cloud for the performance text of The Beginning (2012)
Chicago-based company, Goat Island, practised an exercise that involved walking around the city observing only what happens below the knee level. How might we segment the process into planes? How does what we see inform what we make? The dramaturg provides this cross section, to segment, to salami slice, to put slivers of the process under a microscope. In Analogue Theatre’s piece, 2401 Objects (2011), a German dramaturg, Jorg Vorhaben, worked with the company to thread the medical research through the theatrical mode of delivery, to enable a factual narrative of a man’s brain being dissected to be woven through imagined re-enactments of his past. The weave was clear and signalled a journey for the audience to navigate, a series of threads to follow, from birth to death, from his first meeting with his doctor to his last, as the scalpel dissected his brain into the 2401 slices live on the internet. The play shifts from a voiceover of a doctor who conducted the operation describing his job as telling stories, to an actor playing the doctor telling the story of the patient.

In this context, manoeuvre might mean the way we negotiate our relationship with the artist inside and outside of the process. Is it close or distant, present or absent, in residence or remote? We might ask how a dramaturg responds to the work she sees via email, facebook, face-to-face meetings or skype, over the phone or during studio visits. Action Hero suggests that ‘The dialogue happens between the work’, whereas Goat Island would claim ‘The dialogue is the work’. The dialogue is constantly shifting between contexts and tenses and
can also take place in different languages, both literally, for example Zoi Dimitriou (Greek),
Chris. Dugrenier (French), Hetain Patel (Gujarati) and Gabriele Reuter (German), and in
terms of art form (e.g. dance, fine art, photography and film). The practice of an outside eye
sometimes approaches the practice of a translator. As Walter Benjamin said; ‘It is the task of
the translator to release in his own language that pure language that is under the spell of
another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work’. 306 For
example, for Reuter’s piece, Inventory/Raumung (2008), she introduces different areas of the
performance space and in one corner of the stage she speaks in german. She leaves this space
and then tells us: ‘This is where I speak in my own language’. 307

The role I played with Reckless Sleepers on The Pilots (2008) was described as an 'inside /
outside eye', but Wetherell was always hesitant to give it too concrete a definition which
would fix it (personal communication, 2 July 2007). I was in residence with the company and
would observe and take a performing role if Wetherell wanted to see how it looked, so I
would essentially replace him. This threw up the challenge of being myself onstage playing
him or being him, as I would be unsure whether to walk as I walk or walk as he walks, talk
like myself or talk like him. At times, I lost myself in the process of attempting to re-enact
someone else’s performance. I was not quite myself and not quite him, not quite inside or
outside. At other times, I was taking notes and keeping a blog that was used to source text.
So, for example, my transcription of an improvisation would find its way into the script. 308 At
other times I was involved in marketing the piece. I wrote this on the project blog:

The nature of marketing is always having to describe work that doesn't exist yet. To
sit somewhere between the vague and the specific. The Pilots seems like a paradigm
of this paradox because it sits somewhere between the ready and the unready. Half
The work in progress will not feel too different to the finished piece. Two men
reading scripts trying to work out where they are in the world and on the page. The
programme itself is a work in progress. Text trying to find its place upon the page. 309

If there is clarity in the role, we define it ourselves. We write our own job description in the
act of doing the job. As Goat Island said of their work: ‘We discovered a performance by
making it’. 310 When we return to our own practice after spending time working with another
artist as a dramaturg, we might ask about the manoeuvre that is needed in order to re-enter
our own work. Is it the same or different? Does it take on qualities from the experience of being another artist’s outside eye? And, if so, is it a one-way street or a dual carriageway? Do we head in the same direction or not? There is a road sign in New Zealand, when two roads approach a junction where both have right of way, that reads: ‘Merge like a zip’. Dramaturgy is enacted like this zip. It is the zip and the process of zipping or unzipping the work from its own devising, of making something wide and making something narrow, closing the weave.

**Act Three Scene Three: Walking the tightrope**

This study reflects on roles I play as a theatre maker. As Pearson and Shanks write, ‘It assumes, of desire, a deliberate erasure of the finely etched line between the academic and the artistic.’ It opens itself up as much to questions as to answers, uncertainly as much as certainty, and reflects Barthes’ notion of the ‘writerly text’ in the performance work it describes. It is both personal and detached, objective and subjective, and remains aware of proximity to the work when writing about it in the knowledge that: ‘… the traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel’, like the surgeon and the scalpel. Just as my fingerprints remain on work that I helped to shape.

In 2009, I was asked to write about dramaturgy by *Dance Theatre Journal*. I wrote that: ‘As an artist I often wonder what I am and who I want to be. Defining myself by what I do not do rather than what I do. I never know with whom I will work next and what the rules of engagement will be. I try out ideas in the studio to prove to myself that I do not want to pursue them’. There is a reduction of potential that takes place in this space and the role of the dramaturg is placed into sharp relief during this process of self-doubting, this open invitation to vulnerability. As one of the roles I play is a dramaturg, I am always intrigued to see how other artists work. How they face an empty space or an empty page. How they find a beginning. How they find a middle. How they find an ending. As I write this, there is a book on my shelf called *How to find an ending*, it proved useful during the process of making *The End* (2011), but we never actually made it to the end of the book like we never made it to the end of the show. In 2013, I wrote an article for CTR’s Backpages about working on Reckless Sleepers’ *Schrödinger* (2011) as a performer. I wrote that: ‘We were engaged in a dramaturgy of re-enactment that sits somewhere between the memory and the stage, 1998 and now, the scores and photos of the original and our own response to its original intention’. With this project, more than any other I was both performer and dramaturg, outside eye and inside eye.
Every role is different but I sit somewhere between an outside eye and an inside eye, a mentor and a confidante. It is helpful there is no English word for dramaturg. I think of the role I play as the wild track. The wild track is an audio recording intended to be synchronised with film or video but recorded separately. These might be sound effects gathered when the cameras were not rolling or extra takes of lines performed for audio only. I provide feedback recorded separately to the performance, parallel to the process, to be taken forward or left on the cutting room floor. I have a passive engagement with the work and our contact varies from face-to-face to Facebook, over coffee and via skype. Critically, responses to my feedback or input take place without me. I am an agent provocateur, an investigator, an inquisitor, an interlocutor, an interjector, an interloper. I was on location but the cameras were not rolling. The dramaturg is a mediator, a facilitator, a collaborator. She operates along the hypen after the prefix co- to co-devise, co-direct or co-author someone else’s work. She takes the temperature of the process. The dramaturg’s role is not to teach or know the answers but, as Harradine and Behrndt suggest, to ‘… help recognize and unfold the place or the moment where the work becomes hot, where it starts moving as if by itself, inviting a feeling of a world to discover there, a sense of pushing the limits of what one can perceive, imagine and articulate’. It is to find and channel the ‘connecting force’ between ideas.

Dugrenier describes dramaturgy as, ‘Like tapestry, if you look at the image from the front, it’s all there on the front, beautifully rendered and put together. Turn the tapestry round to the back and that’s what I’m describing. It’s threads, intricacy, process and structure’. The work of the weave is hidden and the business of weaving is not visible to the audience at the end. This metaphor enables us to take Barba’s notion of the weave of performance further towards a sense of a final image; a tapestry that has been worked upon by the artist but which hides its own working, its fundamental effort, its engine. Chapman describes dramaturgy as, ‘not so much of a mystery as an engine. Under the bonnet of a play there is a shared language and understanding between the writers, performers, directors, in the thick of making it’.

For my most recent theatre project Bolero (2014), as the cast involved were an intercultural ensemble of British, German, Bosnian and Dutch practitioners, our shared language was theatre making and our vocabulary was physical rather than verbal. We spent more time making the work, often without speaking, than talking about it. We might consider the tapestry of dramaturgy to be like this piece of writing. It hides its own working in the same way. It has been drafted and redrafted, its fonts changed, its word count going up and down...
like the tide, fluctuating with every edit. Track Changes comments have come and gone in the margins and the chapter headings are no longer there. None of this is now visible. And by the time the text appears in this final thesis, if it does, all that effort will be forgotten. As Chapman suggests: ‘Sometimes it feels like a swan, on the surface it’s calm, but its feet are paddling underwater. From my experience of dramaturgy, the role is always changing’.  

In *Tightrope Walking in Dramaturgy: A User’s Guide*, Alan Lyddiard and Alison Andrews suggest that ‘Our thinking and dramaturgy is connected to the so-called right to fail. We walk a tightrope. We hope the audience and partners want us to stay on.’ This image of the dramaturg as a tightrope walker brings to mind Genet’s *Le Funambule* (1957) – a man walking across a void or wound. Carl Lavery proposes that Genet’s dramaturgy operates somewhere between a winding and a wounding, a winding of the imaginary into the real, a dénouement and a renouement. Lavery’s notion of the winding and the wounding describes a set of circumstances where the dramaturg is always at risk and always ‘in between’. A dramaturg walks a cable wound tightly over a wound. In his theatre workshops, Peter Brook would suggest that if a performer walking across an invisible tightrope looks as if they are going to make it, ‘then something else needs to take place’. The dramaturg is always seeking to find a way across the tightrope without it becoming too predictable. Lyddiard and Andrews describe the dangers of their predicament as both directors and theatre makers: ‘The possibility we could plummet is not really part of the show. Of course, it’s theatre, not circus. Our tightrope is metaphorical – as is the safety net. Still the trick is not to fall off’.

‘The function of a dramaturg,’ they continue, ‘… is taken by an individual towards maintaining and developing a common vocabulary – a lexicon’. In this study, I have seen that those who practise dramaturgy and those who analyse dramaturgy are always approaching a common vocabulary, a lexicon, a language that is bespoke and specific to the process within which they are working or upon which they are reflecting. It is a slippery practice and a ‘slippery, elastic and inclusive term’ always shifting in relation to the terrain in which it is operating. As Turner and Behrndt suggest: ‘If the dramaturg attempts to sketch a ‘map’, perhaps this will always be in pragmatic and tentative relation to the territory of performance event’. Lyddiard and Andrews conclude: ‘We work with theatre as an argument. We create theatre that is argued about; by us, by critics and by audiences. Somewhere between the two discursive systems of theatre and criticism, dramaturgy takes place’. Perhaps the most poetic definition of the dramaturg I encountered in my research
into the role is Janine Brogt’s ‘keeper of dreams’. She says ‘I love the different shapes it can take in my head when it does not exist yet, as much as I love creating it in reality’. Her aim, as an outside eye, is ‘to protect the dream of production against its necessarily limited reality for as long as I possibly can’. She speaks of a role that is always weaving a delicate thread between practice and theory and winding the imaginary into the real.

**Act Three Scene Four: The dramaturgy of interruption**

Nicki: I saw a sign in a theatre once that said ‘Only courtesy stands between you and a performance free from interruption and I thought what if you want to be interrupted? What if you make a piece of work that needs to be interrupted?  

In *Camera Lucida* (1980), Barthes suggests that in interpreting a photograph there are two key elements to consider: *studium* and *punctum*. The *studium* enables the viewer ‘… to participate in the figures, the faces, the gestures, the settings and the actions.’ However, the *punctum* ‘rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces…’ Barthes’ choice of theatrical vocabulary e.g. ‘the settings and the actions’, to describe the composition of a photograph readily lends itself to a dramaturgical context to ask how performance might be interrupted. If the *studium* is found in a reading of ‘settings and actions’ then the *punctum* might interrupt, disrupt, puncture or punctuate the performance. Barthes describes the *punctum* as ‘… this wound, this prick, this mark… sting, speck, cut, hole’ and concludes that ‘… a photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)’. He uses the example of a picture of a child (*studium*) holding a gun (*punctum*).

If the *studium* is both safe and stable then the *punctum* is both risky and unstable. As I write this on Bonfire night, the *studium* of Radio 4 is punctured by the sound of fireworks. They wound, they prick and mark my listening to the radio and disrupt its usual narrative with their unpredictable punctuation. They bring with them the nostalgia of every bonfire night before this one. They bruise my memory with the sounds and smells of every firework display I have ever witnessed. More than anything they interrupt the performance of a usual routine and, in doing so, they make me reappraise my relationship to the radio by deciding whether to turn it up and listen or turn it off and head outside to watch the sky. The *punctum*, in its interruption, issues an invitation to take another journey than the one you thought you were taking. It is a tangent from the expected trajectory. If *studium* is expected then *punctum* is
unexpected. It interrupts performance because you did not know that it would happen. Brook
describes a notion of a moment burning onto the memory that chimes with this idea, in
response to the question: ‘When a performance is over, what remains?’ he writes this:

When emotion and argument are harnessed to a wish from the audience to see more
clearly into itself – then something in the mind burns. The event scorches on to the
memory an outline, a taste, a trace, a smell – a picture. It is the play's central image
that remains, its silhouette, and if the elements are highly blended this silhouette will
be its meaning, this shape will be the essence of what it has to say.\textsuperscript{331}

For this chapter I intend to borrow Brook’s scorched memory and Lavery’s concept of the
dramaturgy of dislocation and reframe it to become the dramaturgy of interruption using
Barthes’ \textit{studium} and \textit{punctum}. Genet wrote, ‘But [what is drama]? With the author, it has its
dazzling beginning, so it is up to him to capture this lightning and organize, starting from the
illumination that shows the void, a verbal architecture – that’s to say grammatical and
ceremonial – cunningly showing that from this void an appearance that shows the void rips
itself free’.\textsuperscript{332} Perhaps the same could be said of a dramaturg. They operate within a liminal
space and walk a tightrope between different stages of the creative process, over metaphorical
voids or wounds in the work, reading the \textit{studium} and the \textit{punctum} from beginning to end.
The process of devising theatre always walks this dramaturgical tightrope and risks failure
and falling into the void.

Now let us analyse \textit{The Beginning} (2012), \textit{The Middle} (2013) and \textit{The End} (2011) by
considering their dramaturgy in terms of \textit{studium} and \textit{punctum}. In both performances, the
narrative focuses on how we might begin or end a relationship, a career or a show. There are
at least three narrative threads in each performance but the central theme represents a
constant, core thread of enquiry, interwoven with other ways of approaching beginnings and
 endings. This is the \textit{studium}; the background context for the settings and actions of the world
each piece attempts to create and inhabit. However, this context, once established, is often de-
estabilised, disrupted and distorted as the delicate and disparate threads of material are cut and
the narrative becomes knotted or frayed. Let us consider these cuts and knots in the material
to be its \textit{punctum} and the way in which the material is disrupted as a dramaturgy of
interruption. Threads of material constantly shift towards juxtaposition rather than resolution
to suggest a patchwork approach that has a multi-textual, non-linear narrative. It is as
Williams and Lavery describe, ‘the intention of creating an aesthetic shock, a small tear in the fabric of everyday life’. \textsuperscript{333} I will now analyse three specific moments in \textit{The Trilogy} (2014) where the \textit{punctum} is tangible in terms of spikes in the action, or we attempt an aesthetic shock, a small tear in the fabric of the material. In doing so I hope to illustrate how the performances I have made for this study evidence a dramaturgy of interruption that ‘rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces.’ It both winds and it wounds. Just as a needle can be used to both sew and puncture, to weave and wound, \textit{The Trilogy} (2014) weaves together different material into intricate tapestries, always aware of their own making and often unraveling. The dramaturgy of interruption is therefore a knot in the thread that anchors and binds, that makes a small tear in the fabric, and scorches the memory.

\textbf{Act Three Scene Five: Case Studies}  
\textbf{The Beginning (2012)}

Fig. 13. \textit{The Beginning} (2012) - The Song Scene

Michael: Ladies and Gentlemen of the company this is your 30 minute call. Ollie Smith, Nicki Hobday, You have 30 minutes. Thank you.\textsuperscript{334}
There is a rectangle of white tape on stage. A man with long hair is sitting on a chair stage left playing the electric guitar. The sound is amplified by a Marshall Amp that is sitting onstage beside him. He starts to sing a song by The Shirelles. The song is sincere and slow and loving and sung to the audience as if he means it. Another man is sitting at a table upstage cutting off a lock of his hair and sliding it into an envelope. A female performer is slipping into a black chiffon dress and painting her lips scarlet with a cheap red lipstick from a local chemist. She draws a line on her hand with the lipstick and then turns to the man sitting behind a table and kisses him on the cheek. Her kiss interrupts him as he waits for his entrance, as he waits to begin. At the same time she rests her hand on the upturned envelope on the table. The envelope is filmed live from above and this video is projected behind the man sitting at the table so the ‘kiss’ on the envelope appears on the screen at the same time as she kisses him on the cheek and leaves him covered in her lipstick. She is ruffling the man’s hair, turning his collar up and undoing his top button to make him appear more disheveled. She walks away to reveal to the audience a man who is literally love-struck. He has been interrupted and he stares out as if in a dream.

The woman in the black chiffon dress starts to dance centre-stage, like The Shirelles, to the music being played on the guitar by the man with long hair. She looks longingly at the audience. As she is doing so, the man who she has just kissed places an index card under the camera so it lies on top of the envelope sealed with a loving kiss. The card reads: ‘I am wearing a donkey’s head’. He walks offstage and returns with a helium-filled heart-shaped balloon that he carries across the back of the stage while watching the woman who is dancing centre stage at all times. When he gets to the amp he drops the balloon and walks back to the table. When he gets back to the table he presses play on a laptop visible to the audience and interrupts the music. The man with long hair stops playing the guitar and singing a song by The Shirelles. The man who cut his hair off walks centre stage and picks up the woman in the black chiffon dress and carries her back to her chair on stage right. The man with long hair walks to the table and writes on an index card that he slides into the upturned envelope. The words he writes are read out by the woman into a microphone from her chair on stage right. The man who cut his hair off takes his glasses off and puts them on the table, walks to the chair on stage left and takes his shirt off before dropping it onto the floor. When the man with long hair has finished writing on the envelope, the man who cut his hair off and took his top off says into a microphone: ‘So, what do we do now?’ Birds sing.
There are several interruptions taking place here. The central interruption in question is walking onstage and ‘looking like an ass’ which foreshadows *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* The action described in italics takes place half way through the devised performance that forms the second practical component of my practice as research doctoral study - *The Beginning* (2012). Immediately preceding this sequence is a half hour call into a microphone delivered onstage. This ‘back stage call’ is to signal to the audience that the performance is at its halfway point. This is the hinge of the performance. It is the moment at which the performance opens and closes, like a door, so that its workings are visible. It also makes audible the mechanics of a backstage usually not seen or heard by an audience. Having the stage manager, played by myself, onstage enables the performance to move the wings onstage into the frame of the theatrical interpretation. It marks the interval between the perceived reality of the world they inhabit and the false reality of the performance where performers enact and reenact fragments of text, music and movement inspired by Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Histoire de Melody Nelson* (1970), an album by Serge Gainsbourg. The repeated device of an onstage stage manager making ‘calls’ is employed to suggest that everything that takes place in *The Beginning* (2012) is actually happening in the hour leading up to the performance. The ‘first call’ to the actors to take the stage is the final moment of the show’s narrative.

Conceptually, *The Beginning* (2012) takes place between the texts of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Histoire de Melody Nelson* (1970), a rehearsal and a performance, dreaming and being awake. It is a rehearsal for a performance that has not yet happened. But as we can see from the end of this description it is a rehearsal that does not know what will happen next. The phrase ‘So, what do we now?’ is repeated as a motif by three performers throughout the piece as if the piece is unfinished, unready and unresolved. This is a question asked by anyone facing a blank page or an empty stage at the beginning of the creative process. As *The Beginning* (2012) sets out to explore notions of how to begin; whether it be a career, a relationship, a life or a show; it seems appropriate to ask it within the timeframe of its own performance. It acts as an interruption or **punctum** that triggers new material.

It is the **punctum** that signals to the audience that they are being taken on a narrative tangent. The first time it is said, Michael picks up a recorder and plays *Je T’Aime* by Serge Gainsbourg. The second time it is said, birds sing and the audience is taken to a place where the forest in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* meets the road in Paris on which Melody Nelson
has been knocked off her bicycle. Nicki plays both Titania and Melody by lying on the floor. The final time it is said, the performers reset the stage as if to perform all over again. The end is the beginning, the beginning is the end. The performance is caught up in an ourobousian loop in which its narrative temporal markers are collided and overlapped and the performers ask: ‘So… what do we do now?’ because they simply do not know which world to inhabit when. To quote Claire Marshall from Forced Entertainment; ‘They knew that something strange had happened to time.’ But they are also aware that they are not in control of it.

Later in the blog, I liken my role in this performance to that of a ventriloquist ‘with my glass of water, silently, discreetly, speaking my text through the voice of another’: I was onstage in case the text broke down or was not delivered as it was written on the page. The act of remembering was a factor as Nicki [Hobday, one of the performers] occasionally paused and looked to me for guidance or an acknowledgement that what she said was as it was written. The audience watched Nicki speak the text that I had written and watched me read it without speaking it at the same time.

In this framing, the performance becomes multi-layered, and each layer in itself is an act of performance: the writing of the lines as much as their speaking on stage; and framed by watching, even the reading becomes a performative act. The Beginning (2012) exhibits its own devising process as questions are asked of the audience throughout about if they would like to leave or if the performers will kiss them. In this context, Will you still love me tomorrow? (1961) by The Shirelles makes the audience aware of and at the same time challenges the tacit unwritten contract they ‘sign’ with performers. It asks them to consider if they will enter into a long term relationship or a one night stand, if they will continue to consider its line of enquiry after they leave the theatre or not. Etchells writes about how when Forced Entertainment make performance they use improvisation as a way of ‘eliminating things from our enquiries’. Pearson and Shanks use a similar metaphor to describe the dramaturg’s role, ‘statements are taken… from those “helping us with our enquiries”’. The Beginning (2012) proposes a series of enquiries that interrupt, overlap and undermine each other, until the question ‘So… what do we do now?’ is asked. In The Beginning (2012) the line of enquiry is the beginning of a performance, the beginning of a creative process and the beginning of a relationship. It is a relationship taking place between characters in a
Shakespeare play; or real-life lovers on a French concept album; or the performers onstage; or the audience and the performers. It blurs the boundary between ‘who we are playing and who we are supposed to be in love with’ and, as such, results in a series of slippages or punctums between narratives. We are always somewhere between A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Histoire de Melody Nelson (1970) and as the show progresses there is a tension between the two texts. It is in these punctums (or puncti) that we find the rich potential for slippage; in the premature ending of music, or the way in which one performer interrupts another, or the way the show constantly establishes new worlds and then discards them and the props that are employed for each world. For example, hard hats, shoes and a roll of gaffer tape are left on an empty stage to signify characters in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

In The Beginning (2012) the performers tell the audience that they have been reading the programme. The text references fire exit signs in the theatre where it is performed and makes the audience aware of the fact that they might leave. Describing the contract that they invite the audience to sign, the performers say ‘If you leave, we leave, because we are all in this together’. The piece is engaged in a line of enquiry about entrances and exits, comings and goings, beginnings and endings. It plays with the material of time itself. In The Beginning (2012), the hour of the show is shifted backwards an hour so what you see is the action that takes place in the hour before you arrive. Time, like space, is pliable in performance and words and actions can rewrite it. Theatre is a time machine. You see a play set in the past or in the future and you are asked to consider why it is set in that time and place. The Trilogy (2014), the practical component for this doctoral study, works from the basic assumption that it is more interesting to ask why something is set in a theatre, so we do not go anywhere else.

The End (2011)

Michael: We’ve been through a lot, you and I…
Ollie: Actually we haven’t.
Michael: Stop interrupting. This is my moment in the limelight. This is my time to shine. Brightly. Before I fade away forever. Like a dying star. This is my finale. This is my farewell.
Ollie: This is what people will remember.
Michael: … For the rest of their lives.
Ollie: For the rest of the night.
This is an extract from *The End* (2011) at a point in the performance where the younger performer (Ollie Smith) is slowly starting to undermine the authority of the older performer (Michael Pinchbeck). *The End* (2011) invites the audience to consider notions of ‘last-ness’, à la Goat Island’s *The Lastmaker* (2008), and to consider the end of a relationship, the end of a life or the end of a show through the deconstruction of a stage direction from Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, ‘Exit, pursued by a bear’. The engine of the piece is Michael’s real-life promise never to perform onstage again. What poignancy there is, is soon dispelled and Ollie serves as a grounding for this. When Michael becomes sentimental and attempts to make it poignant at the end, Ollie interrupts and dismisses everything Michael says and in doing so subverts any poignancy he might hope to create in this his theatrical swansong. If *The Beginning* (2012) is a love letter to theatre soundtracked by *Je T’Aime* (1970), *The End* (2011) is a resignation to theatre soundtracked by the distorted voices of the performers saying ‘I didn’t expect it to end like this’ repeated *ad infinitum* until the end of the show.

Interruption often serves to puncture and deflate some of the pomposity that the ‘character’ of Michael exhibits in *The End* (2011). There is a moment when Ollie tells him that ‘to show someone the ropes’ is a nautical term and Michael tells him to shut up. This is another interruption that serves to illustrate the power struggle between the two performers. When
Michael is in control, *The End* (2011) is attempting to be poignant and a fitting finale to his career, a swansong, ‘a beautiful burst of song’. When Ollie is in control, the show and Michael’s role in it falls apart and at the same time he discards the cards and performs the final text from memory. As he throws the cards in the air and they cascade to the floor he says ‘It was supposed to be part of the aesthetic.’ This invites two readings, either he has learnt a text that Michael wrote for him or he is speaking from his own mind without using the script for the first time. Either way he is liberated from the device that Michael has established, both as an artistic director of the creative process and as a performer in the show. At the same time, the projection changes to signify who is in control. Ollie’s name appears at the moment when he shoots Michael for the final time. This is the final interruption. The index cards act as both the script and the set as they slowly litter the stage. *The End* (2011) asks what would happen if the performers leave. Would that be the end? The performers point out the fire exit signs to the audience and leave the stage to ask ‘Have we left?’ to suggest a space where wings are visible and walls are porous. The fourth wall between the performers and the audience is acknowledged and used as a wall in front of which to shoot each other using the index cards as bullets. But this wall is broken down and rendered transparent as soon as the performer holding the index cards tells the audience that ‘Maybe you can see my hands shaking.’ The audience is implicit throughout; witnessing a ‘bear’ being baited or hearing the last words of each performer before they are shot by a ‘bullet’.

Michael: In the end, I want to go out doing something I love. Thank you for listening. You’ve been a great audience. Thank you for giving me an hour of your life so I could give you mine. I hope it was worth it and what you saw was what you wanted to see. I hope you won’t be glad to see the back of me. I was always told when I was at the beginning of my journey that you should never show the audience your back. Now I’m at the end of my journey I know why...

*The End* (2011) begins before the audience arrives and does not end until long after the audience leave the theatre. In some ways, the audience interrupts the ongoing, onstage argument between Michael, an ageing and jaded professional, and Ollie, his younger, more talented apprentice. As they walk in, Michael is walking round in circles dropping index cards and saying ‘Dot dot dot’. Ollie is lying on the floor. At the end, Ollie is walking round in circles and saying ‘Dot dot dot’ as Michael lies on the floor in exactly the same position. As they leave the theatre, Michael is picking up cards from the floor as Ollie sits onstage
drinking a beer refusing to help with the get out. The relationship between Michael and Ollie continues to deteriorate to suggest that, even in a get out, the relationship breakdown between the two performers is *real*.

> Michael: I don't think I will ever perform again…
> Ollie: What about (the next gig on the tour)?
> Michael: I mean after that’.

One could argue that the performance begins when the audience member sees a poster, or reads a brochure, or books a ticket. They are already starting to enter into a dialogue with the work and its unfolding narrative. In *The End* (2011), the performers mention the publicity for the show in an attempt to recognise the machinery that operates around the work before it arrives in a venue e.g. the publicity copy in the brochure that they sent before they made it, the fliers that will be recycled, the poster that will end up on the back of the toilet door. As theatre maker, Tassos Stevens, suggests, the performance event begins when we see a poster about it and ends when we stop talking about it. Every element of the process is referred to as part of the work and thus interrupts it, destabilises it and renders the process of performing it unstable. This ongoing interruption of the process into the performance continues as the characters predict the end of the tour itself. Ollie tells the audience that after touring the piece for two years, the relationship between the two performers has become irreconcilable and ‘Michael has to cancel the last date of the tour.’ This is the final interruption. *The End* (2011) is not a full stop, it is a dot dot dot, an endless ellipsis.

**The Middle (2013)**

Tony: This story takes place in the interval. In a theatre. There is one man in the foyer. This man. In a theatre. And he is standing.
We are in a theatre foyer during the interval between *The Beginning* (2012) and *The End* (2011). A white-haired man sits enshrouded by bubble wrap mumbling a soliloquy from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. His son, the stagehand, unwraps him carefully and then the man starts to tell a story. It is a story about a man in the foyer during the interval. It is a dramaturgy of what takes place in foyers during intervals. People finish their drinks. People take phone calls. The stage hand brings props onstage for the white haired man to use, a pencil becomes a cigar, a handkerchief becomes a blindfold, endless glasses of water build up on the table over time to suggest the detritus left behind at the end of an interval. Slowly it becomes clear from the text that the white haired man is the stagehand’s father and that he is reading a text that the stagehand has written for him. The text is in front of him and he turns over the pages one by one, reflecting on the fact: ‘His handwriting becoming more and more like mine’.  

*The Middle* (2013) operates in a liminal space between father and son, the outside and the inside, the real world and the theatre, text and speech act. It asks how we perform text and how text performs. It reflects on its own process, at one point referring to the writer sitting on the stairs listening to The Shipping Forecast ‘writing this now’. It also sits between the text of *Hamlet* and the text of its own narrative, the ghost of Hamlet’s father haunting the play and the real father of the author haunting this personal homage to *Hamlet*. It becomes clear that
the father – Tony – has played *Hamlet* before and recalls a soliloquy from 50 years ago. The text operates in a space between the words on the page and the words in the father’s memory.

The other man too, Michael, who is both the writer and stage-hand, the author and the son, sits in the wings, only venturing onstage when he needs to give his father a prop or, in one case, the time. Everything in this world is on the edge of some kind of meaning and the performance event exists in a kind of non-place. At once, neither interval nor performance, neither foyer nor theatre. As Auge states: ‘In the concrete reality of today’s world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together. The possibility of non-place is never absent from any place’. 358 The Middle (2013) operates in what Adrian Heathfield describes as a ‘nowhen’. 359 In this interval, the audience are implicit in a choreography, a dramaturgy of events, and active in a way that they can never be in the formal context (and confines) of the theatre auditorium. The text of The Middle (2013) refers to them as being: ‘…like a tide, you come and go, ebb and flow’. 360 The piece refers to them as an inspiration.

Tony: It is too loud. Or maybe I am just sitting under the speaker. The writer turns to the middle of his notebook. And starts to write about what people do during the interval. He is writing this during the interval now. In a foyer. In a theatre. 361

The refrain ‘In a theatre’ is repeated several times during the text and the performance never forgets about its own ephemerality and the fact that it sits between two acts that bookend it. At the same time, it is an autobiographical response to being onstage. Tony – has been performing amateur dramatics for 40 years – and first learnt the text of *Hamlet* when he was at school. Now he is relating the text of *Hamlet* to the fact that he has grown old, and is himself in a state ‘betwixt and between’ organising childcare for his grandchildren and residential care for his parents. He refers to a ‘middle generation, squeezed between beginnings and endings, just like tonight’. 362 His words echo both the Labour Party’s talk of a ‘squeezed middle’ 363 and a line in a Philip Larkin poem about how the children are coming, the parents are going. This notion was made particularly pertinent by the fact that two of my grandparents passed away during the making and touring of the performance. As such, the performance allowed by Dad to make an auto-dramaturgical response to that bereavement.

*The Middle* (2013) activates a dramaturgy of liminality, making its subject matter its own intervality, and referencing the music and imagery of advertisement breaks (e.g. *Hamlet*...
cigars, Hovis etc.) to reinforce its examination of what lies in between one thing and another. The aesthetic of bubble wrap suggests a performance in transit or in stasis. The location in the foyer suggests someone being themselves rather than a character. The performance is framed by the music from the Shipping Forecast fading in and out and therefore hovers somewhere between falling asleep and dreaming. As Tony says at the end, before ushering the audience back into the theatre, ‘None of this will be here when you leave’. He speaks of the emptiness that fills a theatre when we are not there. As the audience leave the foyer, his son covers him up again in bubble wrap. He is protected against what the future might bring or perhaps simply rested until the next performance. As Hamlet says ‘The rest is silence’.

Tony: And everything here will be returned to normal. None of this will be here when you leave. Just as it was when you arrived. I am just here. Where one thing ends. And another thing begins. In the middle.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to reflect on my own role during the process and the performance of making *The Middle* (2013). I have mentioned already in The Foreword (p. 9) that I felt more confident to be the outside eye on my own work. I was also in a position of not having to perform, which enabled me to sit out of rehearsals and write reflections on the process. I was also in the position of working with my father and enjoyed the personal relationship and father-son bonding time that the process allowed us to share. We talked over coffee and cake and recorded our conversations. We filmed rehearsals and would watch video recordings afterwards transcribing new lines of text or capturing improvised movement. I was essentially more able to fulfil the role of dramaturg on my own work by not being in it. At the same time, at a later stage of the process, when the script was more settled, we decided that I should be the stage hand / prompt / technician to enhance the real-life relationship between father / actor and son / writer. As Etchells observed for The Guardian blog in 2009 about offstage action, this enables a ‘glimpsing [of] reality inside the frame of theatre’. I operated the soundtrack and the Powerpoint presentation from the wings and referred to the text in case my Dad needed prompting. I was also able to whisper words of encouragement to him during the show. In doing so, I retained my place in the margins of the page and the stage as an inside / outside eye. However, as Etchells notes, ‘Whether it's watching prompters or stagehands, sometimes you can't take your eyes off the jobs you're not meant to see’.
In the beginning. I’m here to give you some guidance. To steer you through this. To intervene if necessary’. The Beginning (2012)
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

Whether ‘inherent awareness’ or ‘basic need’, the human proclivity for structuring events as a rise and fall of dramatic action is tested in everyday life. Think of stories you’ve heard without a beginning, a middle and an end. Pointless, rambling, disorganized and seemingly endless, there is no story, no drama, there at all.369

Act Four: The Prologue

In 2008, Goat Island made their final piece, The Lastmaker, exploring concepts of ‘lastness’. We might consider the three elements of practice as research created as part of this study on their own, as hermetically sealed individual performative enquiries into the role of the dramaturg and notions of beginning-ness, middle-ness and end-ness. Or we might consider them holistically in their final incarnation as a non-linear trilogy. For this chapter, I am interested in exploring how the three different performances speak to each other and create an inter-textual enquiry into the role of the dramaturg and the process of writing, devising and touring theatre. To do this, I cite different sections of text from The Trilogy (2014) and draw on Barthes’ notion of the intertextual and Barba’s definition of dramaturgy in his chapter on Actions at Work. Barba writes: ‘The word ‘text’, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscripted text, meant ‘a weaving together’.370 In the theatre work considered as part of the doctoral study, the aim has been to weave together different source material into a coherent and intertextual narrative. Barthes describes the ‘intertextual’ as when two different texts meet to create a new axis of meaning, and more potential readings of these texts are generated.371 The word ‘intertextuality’ derives from the Latin intertexto, meaning to ‘mingle while weaving’.372 Barba continues: ‘In this sense, there is no performance which does not have ‘text’. That which concerns the text (the weave) of the performance can be defined as ‘dramaturgy’, that is, drama-ergon, the ‘work of the actions’ in the performance. The way in which the actions work is the plot.373 We could consider the horizontal and vertical texts of each piece and explore how they meet to create an axis of meaning. To do this, let us look at the vocabulary of weaving to find an understanding of how it might serve as a metaphor.

Weaving is carried out by intersecting the longitudinal threads, the warp i.e. ‘that which is thrown across’, with the transverse threads, the weft, i.e. ‘that which is woven.’ Let us consider the warp and the weft of a performance to be its common denominators: time and
space, across whose axes, any performance travels. Longitude is both a vertical line and a marker of time used by navigators to denote where they are in the world. Let us use this as a time code. The transverse threads are the space. The stage the performance inhabits. In the loom, yarn processing includes shedding, picking, raveling, battening and taking up operations. These are the principal motions of weaving. Let us consider how they might have a theatrical equivalent then apply them to our particular frame of reference for this study. Shedding is a form of editing. Picking suggests sourcing material. Raveling, a weaving together. Battening, a making good of the weave. Taking up, a making into performance.

**Act Four Scene One: Shedding**

Shedding is the raising of part of the warp yarn to form a shed (the vertical space between the raised and unraised warp yarns), through which a filling yarn, carried by a shuttle, is inserted. On the modern loom, simple and intricate shedding operations are performed automatically by the heddle, known as a harness. This is a rectangular frame to which wires, called heddles, are attached. The yarns pass through the eye holes of the heddles, which hang vertically from the harnesses. The weave pattern determines which harness controls which warp yarns. Shedding is literally a form of making material. It speaks to how time and space is worked to create performance. Shedding might take place by setting a task during the process.

For example, in *The Beginning* (2012), I asked the two performers, Nicki Hobday and Ollie Smith, to remember their first performances and act out those lines or stage directions from that memory. I performed my own memory of playing Bottom in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and these memories opened up a space in which we could create an opening scene exploring beginnings. We found out by chance that each of us had played a part in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the beginning of our theatrical careers. Ollie played Oberon and Nicki played Titania at school. This then became our concept, but we would not have discovered this keystone of the piece without the initial improvisation task and the free association from one performance memory to another. It was an organic devising discovery. As Turner and Behrndt write ‘… the dramaturg must bear in mind that new ideas can develop by chance, from ‘mistakes’, detours and free associations: these can sometimes change the direction of the piece entirely.’ As the dramaturg, I was able to take these free associations and weave them together into a scene that became a tombola of performance memory, moving from *Oliver Twist* to *Grease* to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.*
At the same time, when we entered our first rehearsal space at Lakeside Arts Centre in Nottingham there were traces of electrical tape left behind on the floor at a slight angle to the front of the room. We found that we naturally oriented ourselves to perform at the same angle and decided to keep this taped out rectangle in place whenever we rehearsed the show. It both changed the perspective of the traditional end-on format and also meant we were always somehow inhabiting the memory of a past performance that had inhabited the stage before we arrived. It was a physical map of memories and its slight angle naturally called to mind looking to the past, calling upon memory and a sense of nostalgia. Our standing at an angle situated us somewhere between performer and audience, onstage and offstage, our past inhabiting a performance memory and our present performing now. It also meant our rehearsal space was always inscribed onto the performance space, our process always mapped out onto our end product, much like The Maly Theatre’s *Claustrophia* (1996) in which the set was a detailed, to-scale replica of their rehearsal space in St. Petersburg.

As Turner and Behrndt write: ‘Tracing, tracking and mapping the process from the beginning can become vital in identifying and articulating an emerging pattern in the material’. Our emerging pattern was how we could perform memories of the first time we walked onstage and this was collided with the first time we had walked into a rehearsal room together. The memories of our first performances were spoken and then written to create a collage of different characters slowly focusing in on where we are at the time of performing the show. It was a process of live writing or ‘wrighting’. As Turner and Behrndt point out ‘the dramaturg is often very closely involved with creating the work *in situ* in the rehearsals, at times literally co-writing, co-editing text on the spot or intervening with suggestions from the ‘memory bank’. This scene served to introduce our three different narrative threads, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Histoire de Melody Nelson* (1970) and the hour before a show takes place. I sit on a chair at a table talking into a microphone reading from a script. It ends like this:

Michael: The first time I performed I was sitting on a chair at a table talking into a microphone and I was reading from a script because I was nervous, I didn’t want to make any mistakes. I wanted Nicki and Ollie to help me to remember how it feels to perform for the first time. I wanted them to help me to remember. I wanted them to help me. I wanted them to do the things I could not do. I wanted them to say the words I could not say. I wanted them to talk to you. But now I am talking to you too. But I didn’t want to say anything. Because I made a promise I couldn’t keep. In the
beginning. The first time I performed was in (venue). The first time I performed was on (date). The first time I performed was at (time).

The line ‘Because I made a promise I couldn’t keep’ is a reference to the fact that in The End (2011) I vow never to perform again. However, at this point of The Trilogy (2014) we are not aware of this promise, but in approximately two hours, when it comes at the end of the show it serves to close the circle and create a Mobius strip of logic in which there is no end and no beginning. As Chris Horwood, dramaturg of The Lyric Hammersmith’s Secret Theatre project says of his work, sometimes the dramaturg must play the role of: ‘logic police… I just wanted every moment to be clearly thought through, to really expose and clarify the themes and to be entirely and utterly rigorous.’

The logic of connections between the different parts of The Trilogy (2014) were carefully considered in much the same way and its intertextual connections were such that each show would inhabit the same space. For example, the angled taped square on the floor for The Beginning (2012) would remain in place for The End (2011), and the props and objects required for both shows would leak into each other, predicting or recalling their future and past life onstage, leaving traces of their existential logic onstage like the tape on the floor.

David Williams writes this of his role as a dramaturg: “So you look at how logics are set up and maybe forgotten and look at possibilities and you look at how this bit makes sense in terms of the logics that you’ve developed, and maybe this [bit] doesn’t make sense in relation to that bit. So, I think it’s very related to architecture, which is certainly how I understand it for myself”. We have already looked in Act Two at how the dramaturg’s role echoes the role of the architect. However, the architecture of the theatre is always exposed for The Trilogy (2014) and the bare stage, with tabs tied up and fire exits exposed, draws attention to the hard hats, index cards, beer bottles, shoes, trousers, bear suits and donkey heads that inhabit the wings, much like the bear in The Winter’s Tale, waiting for its entrance.

There is a moment in The End (2011) where I am becoming exasperated during an imaginary post-show discussion, and I shout the line: ‘The text is the set. The soundtrack is the set. The theatre is the set’. This is the case for much of The Trilogy (2014), in some ways it is site-specific, responding to the architecture of the theatre space (especially the architecture of emergency – fire exit signs, fire doors etc.), the inherent hierarchies at play both in the auditorium and the foyer. The performers are constantly acknowledging this architecture and the audiences’ place within it and my job as dramaturg was to see how we could refer to it.
This involved, what Turner and Behrndt describe as: ‘… a constant process of facilitation, exploration, reflecting, drafting and redrafting. And all the while he has to keep an eye on the potential overarching architecture or dramaturgy that emerges from the process.’\textsuperscript{380} In our case, the overarching dramaturgy involved referring to the fact that we are all in the same room. As we say in \textit{The Beginning} (2012): ‘The first time I saw you was in a theatre’.

\textbf{Act Four Scene Two: Picking}

As the harnesses raise the heddles, which raise the warp yarns, the shed is created. The filling yarn is inserted through the shed by a small carrier device called a shuttle. The shuttle is pointed at each end to allow passage through the shed. In a traditional shuttle loom, the filling yarn is wound onto a quill, which in turn is mounted in the shuttle. A single crossing of the shuttle from one side of the loom to the other is known as a pick. As the shuttle moves back and forth across the shed, it weaves an edge on each side of the fabric to stop it raveling.

Picking is therefore akin to a form of writing, moving across the page, whether it be a quill or pen on paper, or letters on the computer screen as I type this. My fingers on the keyboard are moving the cursor from left to right, and the resulting letters populate the document like a pick, weaving meaning out of words. Occasionally I might make a mistake and the text ravel. For example, if I write pucking instead of picking. However, out of this other meaning might derive, pucking might mean ‘to be Puck’ in \textit{A Midsummer Night’s Dream}, thus a typo has become a bon mot, a mistake has become a pun. Sometimes we might exploit this tension between meaning and not meaning, ravelling and unravelling. For example, in \textit{The End} (2011), we play on different meanings of the homophone bear and bare, with reference to the history of bear-baiting in theatres and the empty stage upon which the show takes place.

Ollie: I wanted to be a bear for you
I wanted to be bare for you
I wanted to be laid bare for you
I wanted to be stripped bare for you
I wanted to be a bare performer on a bare stage for all of you
I wanted to bare all
I wanted to be all bare.\textsuperscript{381}
This subtle shift from one ‘bear’ to another ‘bare’ was found through improvisation when Ollie and I were playing with the image of a man dressed a bear on a bare stage. It was born out of our practical enquiry into Shakespeare’s stage direction ‘Exit, pursued by a bear’ from *The Winter’s Tale*. But at the same time it spoke of the man playing the bear standing in a state of undress waiting to make his entrance and the honesty and potential energy of an empty stage. *The End* (2011) makes the tentative proposition that perhaps, by having a bear devour a central character, Shakespeare is offering the bear its revenge for being baited in theatres as the Elizabethan audience ‘play cards on the edge of the stage wondering how it is going to end’. As Turner and Behrndt suggest, sometimes the dramaturg must: ‘link moments together in the processes of ‘writing’ or perhaps ‘wrighting’ the dramaturgy inside the rehearsal process’. I used another device in ‘writing’ or ‘wrighting’ the dramaturgy of *The End* (2011), which was to record and transcribe our rehearsals and collate interviews with actors who had played the bear in *The Winter’s Tale*. Dr Neal Swettenham, my former supervisor at Loughborough University, spoke of the transition he underwent when playing the part. He said ‘I was a man in a bear suit. Then I was a bear. And after that I was a man in a bear suit again’ (personal communication, 25 May 2010). This reflection recalled J. L. Austin’s writing on pretending, he writes, ‘To pretend to be a bear is one thing, to roam the mountain valleys in a bearskin rather another’. Ollie and I are not becoming a bear in a literal sense, or even attempting a rendition of authentic bear-ness, but we are pretending.

Using the verbatim text from Swettenham and other actors enabled us to hint at the role of the actor playing the bear rather than the role of the bear itself, and in this sense, much like Forced Entertainment focus on pretending. As Artistic Director, Etchells, wrote of their early theatre work, ‘In the end, as far as set design went, all we could put on the stage was another stage. Inside the larger building of the theatre, our crude wooden stage on the theatre’s own stage, our crude scaffolding and worker’s lamps proscenium inside the existing proscenium of the theatre. As if to say: this pretending is our topic’. *The Trilogy* (2014) shares this concern and has come to investigate why we make theatre, how we fell in love with it and how we will know when to stop making it. My work has always been influenced by the desire to tell different stories, to weave together different threads into a narrative.

It is mindful too of the mantra of Goat Island, as Matthew Goulish spells out in his book *Microlectures: In proximity of performance* (2000), ‘Some words speak of events, other words, events make us speak’. *The Trilogy* (2014) tells stories we are compelled to say, by
our very presence onstage, by it being our first or last performance, about what it means to walk onstage and face an audience. These are the shows events made us devise and this was the dramaturgy events made us find. The Trilogy (2014) comprises a love letter to theatre, a theatrical memoir and a resignation letter to the theatre. It resides in both the written text and the speaking of that text to an audience. It explores the contract between the performers and those who have chosen to watch them perform. Indeed, in The Beginning (2012), we write a contract for the audience to sign as Ollie sings The Shirelles’ Will you still love me tomorrow? (1961). I would like you to play it now and then watch the scene in The Beginning (2012) called The Contract when Ollie and Nicki tell the audience how they feel. The song best describes how the performers feel about the audience. As Ollie says, it is:


Act Four Scene Three: Raveling

Raveling is an interesting term because it means both to tangle and untangle a thread. Ravel is both an antonym and a synonym for unravel and serves as a perfect metaphor for the role of the dramaturg in making a performance. It also exists as an idiom in terms of ‘raveling a thread’, which means literally to tell a story or to spin a yarn. Therefore, raveling is a keystone metaphor for much of this doctoral study. If we consider the dramaturgical process to involve Barba’s concept of ‘a weaving together’, then the dramaturg is a weaver.388 We make this point in The Beginning (2012), which takes as its premise the fact that Bottom was a weaver by trade. As I tell the audience, in what will later be described as The Keystone Scene: ‘Bottom was a weaver. So I wanted to weave these two stories together’.389 The dramaturg tries to ‘establish connections, to examine what each element might mean in relation to the whole piece’.390 These connections are moments of raveling or unraveling. For example, in The Trilogy (2014), a journey takes place in which I start calm at the beginning of the show in my own clothes and end up distraught, lying on the floor, wearing a bear suit. There are different points at which the tension is ratcheted up and perhaps we enter a more acted register. For example, in The Beginning (2012), Nicki kisses me and I lose control, my shirt dishevelled, my face covered in lipstick. I am love struck like Bottom the Weaver in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. The overall direction of the show is then called into question when I ask the cast: ‘So, what do we do now?’391 This becomes a repeated refrain. I end The
Beginning (2012) by telling the audience ‘It started with a kiss, but I don’t know how to end this’. The verb, to ravel, has also inspired the making process for my most recent theatre project, Bolero (2014), which involved weaving together different narratives connected to the music of Maurice Ravel, from the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914 to Torvill and Dean winning Olympic Gold in 1984. The dramaturgical process for this project has been entirely focused on a weaving together of different narrative threads into a tapestry.

Fig. 16. The Beginning (2012)

In The Middle (2013), my father tells the audience in the foyer: ‘This is when things start to unravel.’ He speculates that the audience might turn to the person next to them and ask ‘Is this part of the show?’ As he says this, I lip-sync the same phrase to him and he answers ‘I don’t know.’ There is confusion about who is saying what to whom, am I the writer questioning him the actor, or is he questioning me? We look to our fathers for guidance at times of confusion, but here the confusion is felt by us both at this point of unravelling. Only the text can guide us, but the text is also questioning its own sense of agency. Rob Drummer, Associate Dramaturg at the Bush Theatre says of his role: ‘It’s about trying to ask as many questions as possible, as early as possible, about the story of that play, the gesture of the play and the central question of that play. It’s about giving the writer a sounding board. To give the writer a point of resistance – something to react against. It’s about guiding a text to an
In The Trilogy (2014), the point of resistance is a questioning of the show by its own performers and an acknowledgement of its own failings in the only theatrical device that sustains it – the script.

This currency of problematising the process exists in The End (2011), when Ollie and I repeat the phrase ‘I don’t care what it says in the programme / contract. It’s just not how imagined it.’ The piece is predicated by its own failure to do what it wants to do, it ‘falls flat on its face’. Ollie’s monologue that predicts the demise of the show (and my career) as he goes on to ‘work with bigger companies on better shows’ alludes to a future for the show that has yet to be written and enters into the conceit that this is my final performance each time we perform it. The monologue ends: ‘And Michael has to cancel the final date of the tour’, which suggests that however many times we have performed the show, which is a lot, there will always be one more gig that never takes place. As such, the piece propagates its own mythology and the dialogue of the actors enters into a discourse around their own demise.

At the time of writing, there is one more date for The Trilogy (2014) in the pipeline, at Nottingham Playhouse as part of NEAT 2016 (Nottingham European Art and Theatre Festival). This will be the last time I perform and enables us finally to honour the promise I made nearly six years ago to retire from the stage. During those six years, the show has evolved and shifted as we have grown older, so the relationship between myself as the tutor and Ollie as the student has become more difficult to discern, more ambiguous. As dramaturg, I am engaged with the constant task of asking questions, but in the knowledge that I do not always have the answers. As Turner and Behrndt say: ‘The dramaturg is therefore not an authority that has all the answers. Perhaps the dramaturg is a map-maker, but is nevertheless, like the other devisers, engaged in a journey of exploration’.

Act Four Scene Four: Battening

Between the heddles and the take up roll, the warp threads pass through another frame called the reed (which resembles a comb). The portion of the fabric that has already been formed but not yet rolled up on the take up roll is called the fell. After the shuttle moves across the loom laying down the fill yarn, the weaver uses the reed to press (or batten) each filling yarn against the fell. For the purposes of this study, we will consider battening a kind of editing. The process of pressing or reducing the material to a more refined and finished form. When I
was in Metro-Boulot-Dodo theatre company an American performance artist saw a show we had made which he felt was too long. He said to us: ‘You need to pack a tighter snowball’ (personal communication, 28 August 1999). This process of packing the same material, or an essence of it, into a more compact time and space applies to the way in which we might rework a scene in devising, or redraft the text.

For example, in *The End* (2011), Ollie and I devised a scene by blindfolding each other and then transcribing each other’s words as we described the room around us. I was trying to generate the sense of a man waiting to face his death, blindfolded in front of a firing squad, speaking his last words. We then changed the ‘I’ to ‘He’, for example, ‘He feels cold. He doesn’t know what’s going to happen’. What emerged were two slightly cryptic and poetic texts which explored waiting for something to happen, however in the final performance it felt that though they had an interesting quality, they were perhaps not progressing the overarching dramaturgy of the piece. On their own, these vignettes of isolation and existential tension told a story, but in the context of the overall piece, they were slowing what we might call the master-narrative down. As Turner and Behrndt suggest: ‘The dramaturg… is in a good position to see the arc of the piece, emotionally and dramatically’, and sometimes that arc is interrupted by the material. After some consideration we cut them out. We did this in
response to audience feedback and industry feedback (Lyn Gardner in *The Guardian* wrote that the piece ‘outstayed its welcome by 10 minutes’ – roughly the duration of these two scenes). Following discussion of how we might ‘pack a tighter snowball’, we tried the material without the sequence in question and to see if it was necessary. In some ways, material can exist as a kind of scaffolding which enables you to make the piece but once made, can be removed. The structure still stands and it is perhaps better off without it. A temporary structure, like scaffolding, can enable something to be built but it is not always necessary when the construction is completed and the piece can stay standing without it.

Williams says: ‘The most difficult thing of all… is that sense of being kind of close up and far away (at the same time)… having a real sense of how things are put together and how those details might relate to some broader structure that in turn will feed back into the micro-detail… It is the sense of the relationship between the very small and the… overview that allows you to dive into the micro-detail that somehow undoes what is being sought.’ As dramaturg, one has to attend to the micro-detail and overview of the work at the same time. The image remains of the blindfolded man and some of the text remains in the form of our ‘last words’ that are spoken before being ‘shot’. At one point, Ollie says: ‘In the end… I just wanted to make my parents proud.’ It is both the last wish of a doomed man and of a theatre maker without a proper job and it echoes the monologue I have already delivered about the man playing the bear reserving two tickets for his parents on the front row: ‘He hopes he is making them proud’. We made the decision that following the prompt ‘Any last words?’ we would not script our response, so they were improvised. On what was, at the time, our last performance at Curve Theatre, with most of his family in attendance, Ollie said ‘In the end… I just wanted to make my parents proud, and my girlfriend, and my brother, and my brother’s girlfriend, and my sister, and my sister’s boyfriend, and my grandmother etc.’ As Turner and Behrndt write: ‘… despite the need for a dramaturgical overview, the dramaturg… aims to create a space for the performers and the director to drift, wander, dream and play. At the same time the dramaturg can also provide new perspectives on the work’.

Thus, the battening process enabled both a refined, ‘tighter snowball’ version of the text and also created a space for freedom within that text where the performers could reflect on how they felt in the moment of performance. A space for them to drift, wander, dream and play. This was no more apparent when *The End* (2011) was shown to mark the closure of The Greenroom in Manchester after they lost their Arts Council England funding in 2011. At this
point in the piece, I said ‘In the end, nobody wanted it to end like this’, referring both to my death on stage and the death of the venue, which was being mourned by audience and employees alike. As the stage was exposed, and the tabs were tied up, you could see the stage manager who was operating the card drop boxes weeping about the end of an era as she pulled the wires. The image of a blindfolded man, waiting to face his death, became a metaphor, in the eyes of this audience and maybe the wider theatre industry, for the fate of many venues in the current climate. The performance marked both the end of my career and the end of the venue’s life. The two endings were woven together in a poignant and poetic paean for closing theatres everywhere, struggling to stay alive as we were struggling to perform the text. This final performance at The Greenroom was described by a critic thus:

*The End* is purportedly Michael Pinchbeck’s last show for the theatre, and Ollie Smith’s first show. *The End* is also one of the last shows to be performed at Greenroom before it closes its doors forever at the end of the month. They didn’t know when they booked *The End* that Arts Council England would elect to completely cut their funding, thus spelling the end for one of Manchester’s most interesting and vital theatre spaces.  

Fig. 18. Fire Exit Sign, The Junction, Cambridge (2012)
As a footnote, *The Beginning* (2012) was invited to close Leeds Met Studio for the same reasons in 2012. The meta-text of a theatre’s closure resonates with the themes of *The Trilogy* (2014), beginnings and endings. On a more positive note, *The Middle* (2013) was invited to launch the new season of live art at Word of Warning taking place in Manchester after the closure of The Greenroom. So *The Trilogy* (2014) has been involved in closing and opening venues. The motif of a Fire Exit sign, that haunts each piece, has never felt more appropriate.

**Act Four Scene Five: Taking Up**

There are two secondary motions, because with each weaving operation the newly constructed fabric must be wound on a cloth beam. This process is called taking up. At the same time, the warp yarns must be let off or released from the warp beams. To become fully automatic, a loom needs a tertiary motion, the filling stop motion. This will brake the loom, if the weft thread breaks. Taking up suggests putting onstage, putting into production or touring. For the purposes of this study, I propose to use the phrase ‘taking up’ to explore the touring life of the work, because like ‘a dot dot dot not a full stop’ there are many different iterations of the work, from its initial inception to its final version that changes every time it is shown depending on audience, context and changes that are made in response to the site.⁴⁰⁸

As I toured with the work as a performer, I was constantly engaging with a process of dramaturgy so to this extent the work was never finished, in fact, we kept making connections between the different pieces in *The Trilogy* (2014). As Turner and Behrndt write: ‘the dramaturg is a creative collaborator within the artistic process, engaged in on-the-spot dramaturgical composition’.⁴⁰⁹ I became what Barton describes as ‘an immediate witness’ to the process of touring the show as well as the process of making it, and the performance evolved to reflect on this process within the work itself.⁴¹⁰ As we see in *The End* (2010):

Michael: And after a while, when you’re on tour, and you go bowling and Ollie always wins, and you drink too much and you smoke too much and you say ‘bagsy not driving’ after everyone else so you end up driving and everyone else gets drunk and falls asleep on the way home and you don’t know whether you’re going up or down the M1 and you’re eating a pot noodle with a pair of pliers in the back of a van at 2am in the morning and you’re staying in a caravan in Morecambe in November and it’s raining and you’re playing cards for your per diems and you’re losing when one of the others turns to you and says…
Ollie: I don’t care what it says in the contract, it’s just not how I imagined it…

[Playing cards fall from the lighting rig and the performers stand still as they fall.]

Fig. 19. *The End* (2011)

This monologue was based on my own experience of touring with Metro-Boulot-Dodo and perhaps deliberately exaggerates the experience of taking experimental theatre on the road. It was adapted wherever we performed the piece, so for example, when we were in Germany we were driving up and down the A2, Question Time was porn and the caravan was in Chemnitz. However, it does have a serious point to make, in that the life of a theatre event does not end when the curtain falls, indeed in this kind of theatre there is no curtain at all. The life of the theatre event lives on in the minds and bodies of those who see it and those who make it and the emotional toll on those performing can sometimes affect the work itself.

Michael: And you realise that you all fucking hate each other. Then you’ll think. That’s it. It’s over. That’s the end. It’s time to call it a day. Maybe then you’ll remember how you felt. When you wrote this. Sitting here three minutes ago. Or three
hours ago. Or three days ago. Or three weeks ago. Or three months ago. Or six months ago. Or a year ago. Or two years if we’re lucky. Or three years. Or however long it takes to get this over with. Whatever this is.\textsuperscript{412}

**Act Four Scene Six: The dramaturg as witness**

At the time of writing, it will have taken six years to get this over with. The work continues to change and the dramaturgy of the work is an ongoing process. Turner and Behrndt write: ‘While the dramaturg may keep track of the details, he or she is constantly relating them to a larger picture’.\textsuperscript{413} The role is constant, intuitive and instinctive when devising work is on tour. As Horwood tells *The Stage*, ‘It wasn’t strict or formal and I think if it had been then we couldn’t have made the work we did. A traditional set-up might not have led to something so instinctual.’\textsuperscript{414} In the same interview, Duska Radosavljevic goes even further to suggest that the dramaturg occupies an ‘invisible role’, under the radar of the devising process to which they bear witness.\textsuperscript{415} This may be true, but the inherent complexity and contradiction of *The Trilogy* (2014) is the fact that I am a visible and present witness, often watching what is taking place whilst onstage or sitting in the wings. For example, in *The Middle* (2013), I become the stagehand, serving drinks to my father and bringing him props as required by the script. At one point I take him a pen that he can use to pretend to smoke like a cigar as the music from the Hamlet advert plays. I take it away when he tells the audience that he cannot smoke because of health and safety concerns about smoking in the foyer.

I blindfold him with a handkerchief as he remembers jumping from a diving board in Malta in 1963. As he stands on the school desk, I take a photograph, which mirrors the image taken in 1963 projected behind him. At another point, my father describes how the teacher at school used to write quotes from Shakespeare on the blackboard in chalk. As he says this I walk onstage and write ‘To be or not to be’ in chalk on the front of the school desk my father is using. I serve the image we are making but never engaged as a performer. I am perhaps more akin to the stagehands in Morecambe and Wise. Indeed, when I last performed professionally with my father in *The Post Show Party Show* (2008) we were described in a review as a ‘Brechtian-inspired Morecambe and Wise double act’.\textsuperscript{416} There is a coincidence, in that Brecht and Morecambe and Wise, engaged in subverting the onstage illusion and revealed the mechanics of how images were made, just as I do as stagehand in *The Middle* (2013).
I am constantly engaging in the ongoing process of what dramaturg Christiane Kretschmer calls: ‘observing the performance’s own ‘dramaturgy’… and ensuring that it works’. My role as observer or witness is problematized by other dual functions as both writer and performer. In 2008, Martin del Amo, Richard Hancock and Traci Kelly, conducted a one-day symposium at NottDance, *The Witness as Dramaturg*, with a panel of professionals from dance, academic and legal backgrounds. Hancock and Kelly noted that their exchange explored ‘… the creative and critical potential of the figure of ‘the witness’. Withholding judgments, feedback and questions, their roles have hinged on accounts, testament and a verifiable presence.’ Their work aligns with the devising processes employed for the making of *The Trilogy* (2014), when I, as the lead artist, am both making the work and witnessing what is being made. My reflective writing on the projects’ blogs enabled me to take account of the process and to record my own testimony of the process. Often I would withhold any feedback on how the performers had responded to my tasks, but simply fold the work they had made into the next iteration of the material. The written testimony of the process was a direct result of my verifiable presence. It is a controversial suggestion, the silent witness. Hancock and Kelly claim that ‘… they have challenged the conventional role of the dramaturg seen as someone contributing direct critical input to the creative process.’
We could argue that the same challenge was made by the devising processes for this doctoral study. We could even cite the scene when Ollie and I documented each other’s experience of being blindfolded as a direct example of how the witness and our testimony of the work can inform its dramaturgy. At the same time, I would often invite other artists and thinkers into the devising process. Hancock and Kelly talk of inviting ‘seers in residence’ into their process, and it is interesting that their panel involved legal as well as artistic speakers. We see from the blog posts during the making of *The End* (2011), how the devising process was witnessed by a psychology lecturer from Nottingham Trent University, Jens Binder. He said:

> I got the distinct feeling that I was witnessing a journey. It did have a beginning. It did have an end. That structure was there. These elements create their own dynamic and the whole thing morphs from one state to another to reach a state of equilibrium. As it was at the beginning but different somehow. The relationship is the structure.\(^{421}\)

Novelist and professor of literature at Nottingham Trent University, Jon McGregor, was invited to attend a work-in-progress and write the programme notes for the show – see Appendix. I recorded his feedback and my reflections upon it on another blog post here:

> Jon McGregor, a writer, wrote ‘Kill the father’ in his notes about the relationship between me and Ollie. He said our relationship seemed to be at the emotional and conceptual core of the piece. Interesting because in our early versions we were quoting The Doors’ *The End* lyric: ‘Father I want to kill you’ and we had developed an idea that I was a father figure to Ollie. A father that he eventually usurps.\(^{422}\)

This interdisciplinary feedback was invaluable to the process and it is possible that we could say Binder and McGregor are involved in dramaturging here. A psychology lecturer talks of structure. A novelist talks of vocabulary. All of this is dramaturgical input regardless of their background. As Anne Bogart says, her sound designer is often one of her most trusted dramaturgs.\(^{423}\) Indeed, the sound designer for *The End* (2011), Chris Cousin, spoke regularly about ‘turning up the volume’ of the piece, so that the soundtrack and the narrative intertwined. Chris ‘… talked about how an ending might be a coda, an encore, a reprise, or static. Something in the background. Like the fuzz on a TV or a radio… He talked about the dusk and the end of the day and how we hear certain sounds when night falls or day
breaks'. He talked about how a bullet shot might ricochet through the show like the ellipsis it describes. This was captured on the project blog: [http://www.makingtheend.wordpress.com](http://www.makingtheend.wordpress.com)

Fig. 21. *The End* (2011)

As such, all of these critical insights serve to demonstrate the role the blog has played as a dramaturgical tool throughout the devising process. The rise of the online space as a means to develop and document the creative process has arguably taken place alongside the timescale of this study. A recent article in *The Stage* posits that the rise of the dramaturg in the UK ‘… draws consciously on European dramaturgical practice – combining conceptual inventiveness with critical rigour.’ It suggests that ‘… this critical impulse… is essential to the dramaturg’s practice.’ At the time of writing, this article has been retweeted 25 times and favorited 18 times, arguably by many of the people and places mentioned such as the Lyric Hammersmith, the Royal Court, the Young Vic, as such the writing-centric (and London-centric) notion of the dramaturg persists. However, can an article claiming the dramaturg is an, ‘unsung hero’, still make this claim when word has spread? I would argue that the role is being championed far more in the mainstream media as a result of the rise in social media mentions of its work. As such it is in the spotlight more than ever before now.
A recent BBC online video featured Will Gompertz interviewing the dramaturg of Wayne McGregor’s *Woolf Works*, Uzma Hameed, and calling her a ‘rare but flourishing species’.\(^{427}\) He begins his video feature, provocatively titled ‘What on earth is a dramaturg?’ by describing the oddity of meeting a dramaturg at a party and the general tone of his interview suggests he is sceptical about why the role should exist at all.\(^{428}\) Gompertz asks Hameed: ‘Suddenly we now need dramaturgs apparently, why do we need them?’ Hameed responds by suggesting that it is about collaboration and everyone involved in the process is a dramaturg. She ends the interview by saying ‘Does that answer your question?’ to which Gompertz replies ‘Ish’.\(^{429}\) What Gompertz’s interview shows us is that the role is surfacing in mainstream press and media and is no longer really occupying the fringes of the process.

The article in *The Stage* concludes that ‘… the dramaturg’s liminal status remains his or her greatest asset, whether as conceptual curator, creative pathfinder or critical provocateur’.\(^{430}\) However, in the present day, and in the six years since I have been touring this work and writing this study, the role has seen more of the spotlight and its liminality has been challenged by its success. Much of this spotlight has been shed by the online debate of the role of the dramaturg. I will now turn my attention to the notion of embedded dramaturgy and the role that the internet and blogosphere has played in democratising and flattening the hierarchy of the devising process with reference to recent debate of the dramaturg online. On a personal note, I can also cite the advent of Twitter as a revolutionary means to have a dramaturgical dialogue with an audience. For example, when I was performing *The End* (2011) in Edinburgh, an audience member tweeted ‘Left @mdpinchbeck’s The End after 5 minutes. Worst show ever’. On seeing this message, I was able to reply: Sorry to hear this and happy to offer you a refund. Maybe the other 55 minutes might have changed your mind #theend’ (personal communication, 24 August 2011). Twitter plays a large part in facilitating audience feedback and democratising the relationship between performers and audience that I now include tweets about work in evaluation forms for Arts Council England. It also serves to flatten the hierarchy between theatres programming the work and audiences watching it.

**Act Four Scene Seven: Embedded Criticism**

The discussion of ‘embedded criticism’, introduced on the Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog, takes the role of critics and questions its validity within the industry, posing the question: ‘what new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who
In attempting to answer this question, blogger Andrew Haydon touched on the problems that arise when critics become involved in the production that they are writing about, and the positives that may come out of a closer and more intimate, symbiotic relationship between those who write about theatre and those who make it. Haydon writes in a post about embedded criticism, that ‘… the critic is essentially a parasite, feeding off a host body and is incapable of surviving without it.’ He suggests that, contrary to popular opinion, critics ‘…aren't a cancer on theatre. [Their] survival and reproduction does not entail the death of theatre. [They] essentially have a vested interest in theatre's survival.’

Embedded criticism is a concept which has been proposed and debated through the blogs of several arts journalists actively involved in the industry, Haydon included, alongside Hannah Silva, Daniel Bye and Tassos Stevens, each critiquing theatre through their respective blogs; it has been the subject of discourse amongst people who are doubting the traditional methods and practices of theatre criticism, and their purpose within the industry. In the original discussion on the Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog, the main school of thought surrounded the distance between the theatre maker and the writer, and whether this gap could be bridged by involving process in the art of theatre criticism. Maddy Costa, the convenor of the discussion, asked, ‘… how do we stop the critic being simply a diarist, or a kind of puppet for the maker?’ Theatre criticism relies on the companies and artists it critiques, taking their ideas and adaptations and commenting on the successes and failures of the production; but does this model create too much distance between the two parties (maker and writer), reducing the effectiveness of the critic’s opinion and devaluing the entire process of writing about theatre?

In examining this thesis, I will refer to Irving Wardle’s book *Theatre Criticism* (1992), and the fundamental role theatre critics hold within the industry. He says ‘What arts page writers have to remember is that they are there to hold the mirror up to the theatre - its leg shows and rude jokes no less than its poetry and political debate - just as the theatre holds the mirror up to nature.’ The critic’s role, in its simplest form, is to put artists’ work under a microscope, analysing its treatment of the topic it addresses, and the successes and failures of the work as a complete entity. It has never been common practice to consider the process of arriving at that final production, to take into account the artist or company’s rehearsal period and place that under the same analytical treatment; the critic watches the performance, goes home and writes to a tight deadline, before moving on to the next piece. However, embedded criticism puts more focus on these elements, making them a priority alongside the actual opinion on
the performance. As Haydon writes, ‘… it is an interesting position for “a critic” to find themselves in. Indeed, the question of “embeddedness” is one that goes to the very heart of what we think a critic is *for*. Or what a critic's job is/should be.’

Here the job description overlaps the dramaturg, who we might argue, in some contexts, is a theatre’s in-house critic.

Embedded criticism essentially elongates the critic’s process, allowing them to construct and present an overall opinion through engaging with the artist’s own process. Wardle states that, ‘Overnight reviewing is on the decline in Britain, in spite of the new technology which, in theory, ought to speed everything up’. Despite the very quick turnaround of a critic’s review, between watching the production, writing the piece and sending it to the editor, made easy through the technology available to us, criticism is now being regarded as an art form in itself - placing a new pressure on critics to produce reviews which cater to an industry facing and constantly demanding audience. Through embedded criticism, critics can form more developed arguments, which are balanced by the influence of a knowledge of the company’s rehearsal process, whilst also maintaining objectivity in their opinions and judgements.

However, as Haydon points out, ‘If a critic is “embedded” then there's the possibility that that relationship of trust is shaken slightly.’ Matt Trueman, reviewer and blogger, acknowledges these doubts when he writes, ‘Theatres have a duty of care. Embedded critics have a duty of care. Artists have a duty of care. There needs to be a careful thought-process in placing embedded critics alongside artists. In other words, there needs to be a proper contract from the start or else embedded criticism entirely fails.’ Trueman writes that ‘embedded criticism is both new and not new’ and cites Kenneth Tynan’s 1970 trip to Washington with actor Nicol Williamson as a precedent. He states that, ‘The resultant articles cover the artist’s lives, their characters, their work, the history of that work and their working methods. Read them. They’re extraordinary pieces of work.’ Tynan’s article actually inspired much of The End (2011). After drinking too much on tour and before performing for President Nixon, Williamson told Tynan that he would never perform again. He said ‘Acting is nothing but reminding people. That’s all it is. It’s reminding people. Sometimes, if it’s very good, it can even remind them of themselves’. This concept inspired my decision to make The End (2011) the last show I perform, my resignation letter to theatre, and we cite Tynan’s text in the piece. Trueman suggests that only by being an ‘embedded critic’, was Tynan able to capture the actor at this moment of essential truth. Only by making this promise, was I able to
make *The End* (2011) have a real-life, real-world emotional driver. In terms of how it was made, there was embedded criticism by the devisors and dramaturgs taking place throughout.

Catherine Love, a reviewer for The Guardian, comments on the window between seeing a production and writing and submitting the review. She says ‘How could these works be reduced to a few hundred sleepily composed words and a hastily slapped on star rating? I do sincerely believe that a review at its best is a thing of beauty and that criticism can be creative in its own right…’.

Love, in this response to the idea of embedded criticism, is clearly unsure about the value she is placing on the productions she reviews, and the time it takes her to churn out each piece of writing. The embedded criticism discussion centres around putting more value on the act of writing criticism, for the collective benefit of the artists, the audience and the industry as a whole. The suggestion that theatre criticism is its own art form stems from a desire to ‘…extend the life of the work beyond the event’ and allow for the production to be preserved through creative, critical writing.

In *Theatre Criticism* (1992), Wardle suggests that ‘…the act of criticism distorts the critic’s perception. While the rest of the audience surrender themselves to the event in hope of having a good time, the critic sits on his hands thinking only of what he can make of it afterwards’. The critic goes into a performance essentially blind, allowing his or her
objectivity as a reviewer to become dominant in order to watch and critique the production as usefully as possible. Embedded-ness, on the other hand, serves as a remedy to this ‘distorted perception’ - it allows the critic to make judgements not solely reliant on the performance in front of him or her, as they are able to take into consideration the process they have seen, and the ways in which this has influenced the final performance. Their verdict becomes a more rounded and complete critique of the event, still with the objectivity, which keeps the review consistent in terms of its validity. An embedded journalist attempts the truth.

Theatre criticism is an inherently important part of British theatre, and the way we create and process theatre is influenced directly by its presence within the industry. On the Devoted and Disgruntled blog, it states ‘We all read more about theatre than we actually get to see’.446 Reviews are as much a part of the industry as theatre itself as they act as a voice to people invested in theatre and what it has to offer. They are important in their role as a continuing conversation between creators, audiences and critics. They create conversations within the industry and allow the art form to have an impact long after the actors have left the stage. As artist, Tassos Stevens, argues, ‘The experience of an event begins for its audience when they first hear about it and only finishes when they stop thinking and talking about it’.447 This is a concept we explore in The End (2011) when Ollie describes a conversation taking place after the show at the train station. He tells the audience, ‘You are about to say what you think [about the show] when… [train announcement] you forget what you are going to say and that’s the end of that’.448 The train of thought is interrupted by an announcement, telling the audience where we are in the country when we perform the show (e.g. ‘the next train to London will be…’), and the conversation about the performance abruptly comes to an end.

We are ephemeral. We are forgettable. We are always reminding the audience of the performance’s own temporality. It is as if we are predicting when the event will end at the moment the audience forget about us. In stark contrast The Beginning (2012) asks the audience directly, ‘Will you still love me tomorrow?’.449 The same question could be asked of critics and is problematised when the relationship lasts more than a ‘one-night stand’ and the critic becomes more embedded in the devising process. As Trueman writes of his own experience, ‘The time spent looking at theatre from within(ish) is designed to educate and thus improve the mode of looking at theatre from without(ish). Its value is instrumental, not intrinsic.’450 The embedded critic is both an inside and outside eye, looking out and in at the same time. The ‘holistic dramaturg’ is also approaching the work from this perspective.
Within this discussion, we must also take into account how the critic educates and thus improves the mode of looking at theatre if they produce a completely objective and strongly supported critical review. Devoted and Disgruntled asks, ‘Why does a critic have to write from a point of certainty? Why can’t they be as vulnerable as the makers?’ The art of criticism is skewed by the need for critics to submit their work on time, and to create work which can be relied on by audiences - there is incredible pressure on every critic and every piece of writing to be reliable, yet they themselves are creators, who deserve room to be a little vulnerable, to feel affected by theatre and allow that to show through in their writing. More so, embedded criticism allows for more potential playfulness with writing a review, making ‘… everyone excited by the idea that theatre writing / criticism could experiment with form, the way the work we watch does’. Fundamentally, it asks how critics might ‘Investigate the sculptural possibilities of writing.’ Critics are arguably able to be more playful and excited by the reviews they write, and are therefore enabled to write in new engaging ways by the opportunity and proximity that embedded criticism affords them. As Haydon himself states, ‘I’ve pretty much given up trying to be a ‘proper’ critic… I’m more interested in experimenting with new models of how to write about theatre’.

**Act Four: The Epilogue**

In conclusion, in discussing embedded criticism and its validity within the industry today, though allowing the critic to present a more rounded view, there is something of an ouroborosian loop taking place here. It is like a camera crew following a camera crew, as making theatre and writing about it could potentially get in the way of actually producing a critique. The people who make the theatre are embedded in it, immersed in it; therefore, the critic cannot possibly write about the production fully without being aware of the process. Thinking of criticism as an artform changes the way it is processed and presented at this point in time - embedded-ness offers an innovative and intuitive way of thinking about criticism for all people in the theatre industry, and it has informed writers that there are different ways of thinking about and producing reviews of theatre, giving both forms more credit. In short, the embedded critic reviews process as much as, if not more than, a final product. As Trueman writes, ‘Since process has become increasingly prominent for theatre makers in recent years, a number of critics followed their lead to ask how that can be the subject of criticism’. 
Process is increasingly prominent for a dramaturg’s role. The same is true of ‘embedded academics’ inhabiting rehearsal processes such as David Williams with Lone Twin or Synne Berndt with Fevered Sleep. What will emerge from these residencies is both a critical rigour with which the company will develop their work and a written publication by the dramaturg that will document the process. They are not so much reviewers as see-ers, who observe as outside eyes and then write up their reflections. They will have their reflections cited in theses like this and published in books funded by their institutions that act as a testimony to the process in which they were embedded and these books will count towards their institutions REF (Research Excellence Framework). As such we see a shift from Arts Council England to the academy in terms of sources of funding and the focus of the role of dramaturg.

As Trueman writes, ‘Frustrated with the limitations of popping in at the last minute, seeing a show and responding, these embedded critics spend time in rehearsals or workshops and document or respond to the on-going creative process, as well as the final piece’. We could argue that the dramaturg is an embedded critic of the process, or a ‘thinker-in-residence’ to use the phrase Haydon employs when embedded as a critic in the devising process. This ‘thinker-in-residence’ of today is not too far removed from Lessing’s poet who ‘thinks in our presence’, however the diaries have simply become blogs. Arguably, the tacit relationship here has not changed but the technology that enables the relationship to exist has and will continue to do so. It still ‘bridges the gap between theory and practice’ but there are now more tools to use. Turner and Berndt refer to the dramaturg using this image, ‘We might consider the dramaturg as a builder of bridges, helping the company to cohere’. New technology enables the embedded dramaturg to build bridges, both between members of the company, and between the work and its audience. It is a virtual bridge that makes the process public and, in doing so, loops back to play a marketing role as much as a dramaturgical role. We could argue that the bridge has not changed but the means of crossing it has. I want to end this chapter with an anecdote about the role of the blog to the creative process. On performing The End (2011) at York St. John University, a member of the audience took one of the index cards and later posted a picture of it on their blog. They said on this blog that they had witnessed most of my work for the last 10 years. They wrote a blog post that wove a dramaturgical thread between various projects, The Long and Winding Road (2004-2009), The White Album (2006), The Ashes (2009) and The End (2011). In short, they authored a connection between my practice that thought beyond the timeframe of each specific project. In doing so, they offered an embedded criticism of my work and ‘thought in its presence’.
‘This man is in the middle of a stage. This man in the middle. I am this man. This middle man. Between a writer and an audience. This page and this stage’.

*The Middle* (2013)
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

It was an arduous task. Often I could not get on for hours or days at a time, and not infrequently I unravelled what I had done, continuously tormented by scruples that were taking tighter hold and steadily paralysing me. These scruples concerned not only the subject of my narrative, which I felt I could not do justice to, no matter what approach I tried, but also the entire questionable business of writing. I had covered hundreds of pages with my scribble, in pencil and ballpoint. By far the greater part had been crossed out, discarded, or obliterated by the additions. Even what I ultimately salvaged as a ‘final’ version seemed to me a thing of shreds and patches, utterly botched.461

Act Five: The Prologue

At the time of writing I am not sure if this is an introduction or a conclusion. This description from the end of W.G Sebald’s The Emigrants (2002) encapsulates how I feel about writing my thesis. It is an arduous task reflecting on practice as research as the practice shifts and changes as I write about it. In a bid to reflect the practice, the writing has sought to share its creative voice but, as Mole Wetherell, an artist and outside eye who worked with me on the practice, writes, ‘… projects aren’t written in a traditional sense of the word. They are constructed layers out of pasted sets of fragments that have been worked out in front of a computer screen, in a black box, on a train journey home, in the middle of the night’.462

This writing has a fragmented, non-linear narrative like the theatre it describes. It too has been written in front of a computer, in a black box and on a train, before, during and after the process of making theatre. Wetherell shares his approach with his contemporary Etchells, who writes about Forced Entertainment’s devising process as, ‘The reconstruction of a narrative from clues, the reconstruction of an event from its objects, the reconstruction of a text from its fragmentary scenes… framed as the object of our work’.463 For The Trilogy (2014), I was working with self-as-source (myself and my collaborators) and site-as-source (the theatre and the theatre foyer) to collate and interweave real and fictional narratives. At times, the lines of fiction and fact would blur as our memories of our first performance would overlap or my Dad’s memory of reciting Shakespeare fifty years ago would fade.
As Adrian Heathfield says of Forced Entertainment’s approach to making their work, ‘[they] are used to making work that borrows stories from [their] own lives and other people’s lives. [They are] used to making work that strays into the grey area between the truth and fiction’. The Trilogy (2014) inhabited this grey area too. We worked from different sides of the tapestry, weaving together fact and fiction, memory and imagination, to create our narratives about beginnings, middles and ends. As Eugenio Barba says ‘… [the] painter does not reconstruct a real ‘view’, but rather constructs a synthesis of several ‘views’, making a montage of…different sides’. These are the different sides to the story of making work. Grotowski used to say ‘When you don’t know what to do, just do’. This practice has been driven by a creative impulse ‘just to do’. Now I am driven by the impulse ‘just to write’. Goat Island used to say that ‘We discovered a performance by making it’. They insisted that the ‘dialogue was the work’ when they made theatre. This thesis is the dialogue and the work and the dialogue about the work. But what is work? Matthew Goulish, co-founder of Goat Island, describes it as a series of ‘infinite events’ that are ‘happening in our present, and that have happened in our past and that clearly define a work, and temper and shape our perceptions of it, and our responses to it’. The dramaturg, in my definition of what they do, ‘defines, tempers and shapes’ theatre. Dramaturgy itself has an etymological relationship to the term ‘metallurgy’, the shaping of metal, so we might consider it to mean the shaping of drama.

But how much can a drama be shaped until it breaks? There is a quote from Baudrillard: ‘The child’s first relation to its toy is: how can I break it?’ Etchells from Forced Entertainment writes: ‘I think we have this similar sort of relationship to theatre.’ Etchells’ intention of ‘breaking’ the theatre is also present within the rehearsal process. The company have shown interest in spaces that were not fully formed, for example, they ‘… talked about the way that half-demolished or half-built houses were the best places to play… so much incompletion in the spaces’. The practice I have made for this doctoral study shares this interest in ‘shaping drama’ or ‘breaking theatre’. It aims to take the empty space and turn it into a place to play within a half-demolished or half-built structure. If that structure is the narrative of a performance then the architect or the archaeologist of this half-built or half-demolished space is the dramaturg. Now let us look in detail at some examples from the practice as research in relation to absence and presence, half-building and half-demolishing narratives and notions of liminality. The process involved what Pearson describes as a ‘purposeful assemblage of fragments created elsewhere, at some other time, from viewpoints unavailable to the audience’. The viewpoints were shared and singular, my personal viewpoint as director,
the performers’ viewpoints and our outside eyes’ viewpoints, the final result was somewhere between the univocal and the unioptic. This enabled a summative feedback that aimed to reflect upon what had been made but also a combination of formative feedback and ‘feed-forward’, a term used in pedagogical practices, that enabled each process to accelerate.\footnote{472}

**Act Five Scene One: Performance methodology**

I was interviewed about my process for making *The Beginning* (2012) for the British Council Edinburgh Showcase. I described my process thus: ‘I work very much with the empty space as a starting point and with collaborators whom I invite to develop a kind of handwriting together and we start making a show around a certain theme or idea or image and that evolves into a kind of shared exploration’.\footnote{473} This remains a general description of my methodology to making theatre. The empty space is always a starting point, and as Brook wrote, ‘I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage’.\footnote{474} *The Trilogy* (2014) starts from the assumption that ‘the theatre is the set’\footnote{475} Much of *The End* (2011) focuses on the wordplay between a bare stage, a bare performer and a bear as it draws lines between Elizabethan bear baiting and Brook’s bare stage. But it is equally drawn to the problem of confronting an empty page.

![Fig. 23. *The End* (2011)](image-url)
It is the idea of the shared handwriting that seems the most pertinent to my theoretical line of enquiry. Everything that is written onstage, in other words, all that is said, is always onstage materially. The text for *The End* (2011) is handwritten by myself and Ollie Smith. The text for *The Beginning* (2012) exists as a printed script on a clipboard held by the prompt sitting upstage right. The script for *The Middle* (2013) resides in an old school desk and is taken out at the beginning of the show by my Dad, who proceeds to read from it, referring to its handwritten notes in the margins. At one point in *The Middle* (2013), my Dad recounts learning lines from Shakespeare’s plays at school, he lists: *The Winter’s Tale*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Hamlet*, as these are the sources for *The Trilogy* (2014). As he recounts this memory, I write ‘To be or not to be’ on the front of the desk in chalk. In this sense, sometimes the text of the performance is literally written onstage, the text written on an envelope in *The Beginning* (2012) or index cards written in the wings in *The End* (2011). At one point in *The End* (2011), Ollie tells the audience that I am going to read something I have written over some ‘sad music’ and I read a text about what it was like making the show.476

Michael: When you wrote this, six months ago, or three months ago, or however long it takes, to get this over with.477

It is this, ‘however long it takes’, that is always embedded in the final piece. The work is imbued with its own sense of process and wears the traces of its own evolution. The index cards wear their history. As Forced Entertainment describe their process on their website:

> With a few exceptions we don’t work with a ready-made text so making a show starts with us in a rehearsal room – discussing ideas, raiding the dressing-up box, trying a line of dialogue, playing a soundtrack, improvising a scene until something starts to stick. Then we keep developing the material – we experiment with it, debate it, videotape it, watch it, adapt and edit it before trying it on an audience which can open up a whole new set of questions". 478

There is a scene in *The Beginning* (2012) in which I walk onto the stage, step into a pair of discarded shoes, and nod at the technician. Music plays; *L’Anamour* by Serge Gainsbourg. I smile at the audience and start to lip-sync (badly) to the lyrics: “Je cherche en vain la porte exacte / Je cherche en vain le mot exit”. (“I search in vain for the right door / I search in vain for the exit sign”. The song ends. I leave the stage. All three performances stem from my
decision never to appear on stage again. During the performance, aside from this one moment of onstage presence, I am absent from my own work. As I wrote on the blog as we made it:

I step outside of my own work and remain in the margins, both physically, by sitting in the wings, and metaphorically, by attempting a level of objectivity as an outside eye. I will not perform, other than in the role of technician, operator or prompt.479

This situation, in its contradictions, throws up some interesting questions. For although the conceit of this work is that I have removed myself from the stage, I continue to create theatre, and more than that, continue to feature prominently in the work I create. The Beginning (2012) is definitely a piece of theatre auteured by the artist Michael Pinchbeck, self-consciously autobiographical and, beyond the stage itself, heavily documented in my own words on my blog. In performance, I am an ever-present figure as a technician or prompt, presiding over the work and, like Tadeusz Kantor, actively engaging in its own machinery as it is ‘… being set in motion’.480 Despite this asserted absence, my presence as the director looms large in the practice. I talk about my role in the proceedings as dramaturgical, a position we conceptualise somewhere between the site of inscription (by the playwright) and the site of performance (by the actor).

Act Five Scene Two: The dramaturgy of absence

In theorising my dramaturgical practice as performance, though, I seek to draw the audience’s attention to the fact that in this work, in this sort of work and perhaps in practice as research by definition, the whole process is a ‘performance’. After all, if a showing of work itself is just one iteration in a cycle, and if the experience of that showing feeds back into the tacit development of knowledge, the showing itself cannot be all that constitutes performance. From its moment of conception, from the beginning, an act of performance has been set in motion, and the various disseminatory articulations of that performance — in the rehearsal room, on the blog, in the documentation of the devising process, in the theatre presentation, in the post-show discussion, in this thesis — are what make it visible to its audience. Later in my blog, I liken my role in this performance to that of a ventriloquist ‘with my glass of water, silently, discreetly, speaking my text through the voice of another’482.
In this framing, the performance becomes multi-layered, and each layer in itself is an act of performance: the writing of the lines as much as their speaking on stage; and framed by watching, even the reading becomes a performative act. One of the initial points of departure for The Beginning (2012), is the conceptual artwork The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment (1981-1988) by the American-based, Russian artist Ilya Kabakov. This installation presents a small apartment whose walls are covered in Soviet propaganda. The apartment is empty, though the space is dominated by an enormous make-shift slingshot, and a hole in the ceiling reveals that the slingshot has recently been used. An empty pair of shoes beneath the apparatus marks the former presence of someone in the room. That someone is now absent, and that absence is fundamental to our reading of the installation. The installation explores the ontology and politics of absence, and I have now made a performative response to it exploring what Etchells has described as a ‘Dramaturgy of ontological tension’. 483

Since I have finished making The Trilogy (2014), my latest project is a return to this Russian installation. I have recently completed an immersive slideshow for an audience of ten people at a time. The man who flew into space from his apartment (2015) is a performance for gallery and non-theatre spaces that takes the audience on a journey from a slideshow to a show, an artist’s talk to an artwork. It draws connections between the theatre space and outer space, fine art and performance. Performed by someone who has not read the script or seen the show before, it aims to explore how both the man in the title and the person performing are taking a leap into the unknown. In this way, like the installation, the performance engages and enacts a dramaturgy of absence. The absent protagonist in the poem included as a postscript of this thesis (p. 206) was always The man who flew into space from his apartment when I wrote it originally. But now it seems to describe the guest performer. Ghosting their physical presence into the piece. It speaks of the performers who worked with me discreetly, sensitively, intuitively, leaving their marks upon the work like Benjamin’s handprints on clay. I propose that this enacts a dramaturgy of not knowing, a curating of the unknown. Their feedback is essential to its future and they are inside eyes, internal dramaturgs, working the drama from within. The performance ends, with the guest performer inviting the audience members’ to leave their shoes on a pallet tied to the corners of the room to look like a catapult. He or she then leaves the space. The final image of the performance mirrors that of the installation that inspired it. It is an empty space where all that is left is a pair of shoes.
It is the empty shoes in Kabakov’s installation that inspired the use of shoes in The Beginning (2012). These examples bring into performance the tangibility of absence, which, like the Venus de Milo’s missing arm, or the stolen Mona Lisa (more people visited the Louvre to see the space left behind by the artwork when it was stolen), becomes the defining feature of the artworks. The essence of what makes them engaging is their own lack. The space they leave behind remains as a negative presence.\(^{484}\) Thus absence can constitute presence, and presence is determined by its absence. But if the presence of performance is constantly slipping away, I become troubled by even that word: presence. One way of explaining its paradox has been to dismantle the very metaphysics that brings it into currency. Derrida argued that writing functions in the absence of both an author or a reader: ‘And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence, it is a rupture in presence’.\(^{485}\) In The Beginning (2012), I recall performing in A Midsummer Night’s Dream as a teenager and revisit that performance onstage, or at least the memory of that performance. I wrote in the project blog:

We are waiting in the wings for our entrance, both in 1992 when I first performed in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and whenever we perform it now. Both backstage at a school that no longer exists where I performed for the first time and here or wherever we are performing it next.\(^{486}\)
This observation, a further example of Carlson’s ‘ghosting’, indicates how significantly memory feeds the act of creation by the performer, not just an act of reception by the audience. The ephemeral texture of performance, in its act so apparently present, relies on a residue of that which is absent to shape it. As Heathfield argues, ‘The ephemerality of performance, its tendency towards disappearance, is at the heart of its cultural value, but it is also this quality that sets in motion all the forces that seek to place, name and contain it’. In this example, the school no longer exists; the site of performance itself has been erased and replaced with a surrogate place, which is always different depending on where the show is being performed, and everywhere we go is mentioned in The Prologue. At the same time we explore The Contract that is fundamental to the ethical consideration of performance, that, according to Alan Read, ‘there is, in the act of theatre, the performer, the audience and you, and it is this tripartite, dialectical nature that demands distinct responses to the ensuing event.’ Such an activity is ethical, Read goes on to propose, because it distils 'the dialectic of the performer's ethic: the constant interplay between the "egologial" of the individual and the "cosmologial" of the world as audience," and thus encompasses "the urge to be seen as separate but dependent upon the will of the other, the recognition of the observing eye and its relation to the 'I' of being human, the listening ear and the 'here' of performance’.

The Trilogy (2014) explored the space between the ‘observing eye’ and the ‘here of performance’.

Act Five Scene Three: Naming the structures

The Trilogy (2014) was performed for the last time (at the moment) on 8 April 2014 at Curve Theatre in Leicester. This thesis will be completed exactly two years after the curtain fell that night. At the time of writing, this date marks my retirement from the stage, the promise I made in The End (2011) has now been fulfilled: ‘I will never perform again’. The Trilogy (2014) toured for three years to the UK, Belgium and Germany. It formed the practical backbone of this doctoral study. This section of the thesis reflects specifically on the way in which the practice makes manifest these concerns and enquiries. It calls to mind the different exercises and processes through which the work was developed during the rehearsal period. It also applies different dramaturgical lenses to the devising process. The Trilogy (2014) aimed to ask a number of research questions about the role of the dramaturg in making contemporary performance. Who is the author of devised work? What is the role of a script in performance? How might we narrate the role of a dramaturg? How might performance have an auto-dramaturgy? How might a performance have a handwriting? It was also concerned
with different ways in which the dramaturgy of the piece might enact different ways of structuring material. When working with fragments, it is often difficult to find the right scaffolding, or the right way of cohering these fragments into a whole. In the case of Station House Opera’s piece *The Bastille Dances* (1989), Julian Maynard Smith, a member of the organisation, said that during the devising process ‘naming the structures was useful as a way of developing the narrative, but this is not a big story, there’s no coherent thread. Fragments are set up and abandoned or transformed… One situation metamorphoses into another’. 491

Fig. 25. *The Beginning* (2012)

I consider the ‘keystone scene’ in *The Beginning* (2012) as a form of ‘naming the structures’ and, as a result, one hermetically sealed performance structure becomes more porous and metamorphoses into another as I have documented in Act Three. The same could be said of the material in each show and how they combined as *The Trilogy* (2014), with each piece’s set and props and even each member of the cast, metamorphosing into the other. For example, at the beginning of *The Beginning* (2012) we see the index cards laid out ready for *The End* (2011) and *The End* (2011) is performed in the space taped out for *The Beginning* (2012). I also wear the same costume for *The Beginning* (2012) and *The Middle* (2013) and Ollie returns to join me in *The End* (2011). There is an ouroborosian quality to my promise never to perform again in *The End* (2011) as in *The Beginning* (2012) I foreshadow this vow.
This was a deliberate non-linear gesture to disrupt and disturb the natural linear flow of the event and question the nature of my promise never to perform again. We also insert a line at the end of *The End* (2011) where I say: ‘I don’t think I will ever perform again’ to which Ollie replies ‘What about [next venue] on [date]?’ and I reply ‘I mean after that’. We are pointing out the inherent absurdity of my vow not to perform again but also representing Ollie’s usurping of his senior colleague. As Lyn Gardner of *The Guardian* pointed out: ‘In the beautifully structured post-modernist piece *The End*, Michael Pinchbeck is making his final exit; his protege, Ollie Smith, is making his first entrance. As one ends, the other begins; as one makes his final bow, the other takes his first… *The End* is not all theatrical exits and entrances. It's about life and death and the natural progression in which the young become old, the son rises as the father falters, the protege replaces the mentor.’

The older we get the more the notion of father and son resonates. It is continued by *The Middle* (2013), where I perform with my own father, to reflect on the concept of memory, time passing and ageing. These themes are more elegantly explored in Mick Mangan’s book *Staging Ageing* (2013).

*The End* (2011) had two dramaturgs or outside eyes - Mole Wetherell (Reckless Sleepers) and Hetain Patel. I was interested in bringing two different lenses to the process, one physical / textual (Wetherell), the other visual (Patel). At the same time, I had invited a photographer, Julian Hughes, to document the process and to offer any feedback on our image making. Chris Cousin, the sound designer, had also offered dramaturgical feedback on the soundscape for the show. As such, the process benefited from a rich and diverse array of dramaturgical viewpoints. They had ‘a real sense of having discovered, through practice, the particularities of their own function within the process’. With each offering specific feedback from their different perspectives as the process progressed to offer an holistic dramaturgy. It is clear that when devising, as David Williams says, ‘you don’t really know what is being sought’. For *The End* (2011), Wetherell and Patel provided discoveries that we did not know were there. The way we fell after being shot. The way veins bulge in my neck when I shout. The fourth wall. At other times they became performers in the process in their own right, inside / outside eyes. For example, Ollie and I discovered how to fall with Wetherell in rehearsal for *The End* (2011). His contribution to our physicality and text remained influential throughout the devising process as he would talk about ‘pouring our weight into the floor’.

The video of the first rehearsal of this motif is here: [https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/the-process/](https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/the-process/)
I would meet with Summerfield, Wetherell and Patel to discuss how the work was evolving and the discoveries being made. I welcomed these multiple opinions and diversely skilled voices, who would not ordinarily be collaborating, into the process to take part in ‘… a conversation in which you try to find the shape of the thing that you think you’re after’. Many contemporary companies have a similar approach. For example, Frantic Assembly believe that ‘… the shaping of theatre and choreography requires an outside eye and it is this objective influence that can liberate the performer to be brave, take risks and try new things’. The Beginning (2012) had a creative producer, Claire Summerfield, who acted as an outside eye / dramaturg on the process. One of her first contributions was to suggest a way of introducing the show within the show, this evolved from verbal to written opening credits. You can watch the original work-in-progress of the sequence here that became the final version using index cards: https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/the-work-in-progress/.

Both The Beginning (2012) and The Middle (2013) marked an attempt to become an onstage dramaturg (or technician or prompt), a kind of ‘autodramaturg’ reflecting on my own work as it was being made. I aimed to sit in the wings, literally and metaphorically, and reflect back into the text of the performance the changes I was making in rehearsal.

I operated somewhere between onstage and offstage, a rehearsal and a performance. Working in the wings, it is easy to see what performers are doing and, by default, I assumed a neutral state, in a state of limbo, somewhere between active and passive, performing and not performing. As I made nominal contributions to the onstage action, other than sitting still at a technician’s desk upstage right and following the script on a clipboard, I would often sit in the auditorium and watch the performers work without me onstage. I would set the performers challenges such as ‘How do you perform a love letter?’ Or ‘How do you make the stage smile?’ As Gob Squad describe their process, “it [is] all about trial and error, it [is] about trying it out, getting up, doing something and then looking at that same thing.” At one point I asked Ollie, who knows it well, to describe the plot of A Midsummer Night’s Dream and then used the recording of that description to create a verbatim text to be used in the show. This new scene, entitled The Synopsis, was then used to explain the play. At another time, we were trying to collide or ‘mash up’ the two narratives with which we were working, Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Gainsbourg’s Histoire de Melody Nelson (1970) and returned to it in different ways with different texts several times until we found the ‘keystone scene’.
Michael: Bottom was a weaver. So I wanted to weave these two stories together. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Histoire de Melody Nelson*. They are both about love. They are both about falling in love. With the first person you see when you wake up. They are both about a man waiting in the wings for his entrance. They are both about beginnings. This show takes place between this album and this play. Between a rehearsal and a performance. Between dreaming and being awake. It’s written in the first pages of our notebooks. It’s scored in the first bars of this music. It’s scribbled in the margins of the first draft of each scene. In the beginning…”

When we finally arrived at the version that remains in the final cut of the show we referred to the scene as the ‘keystone scene’ because it suddenly made sense of every other scene around it. At the same time of explaining the show’s methodology I am revealing the objects to which I refer. The album. The play. My notebook with the first draft of the performance. The manuscript for *Je T’Aime* (1970). The script of the scene we are performing with notes in the margin. This scene holds the show together like a keystone because it explains to the audience why both narratives are there, it unlocks the logic of the performance from within.
These ‘trial and error’ exercises were attempted through repeated rewrites of the script and improvisation. Sometimes the writing would happen outside of the space and sometimes inside. Alternatively, I would film the rehearsal, a tactic used by theatre companies such as Reckless Sleepers, Forced Entertainment and Frantic Assembly. As Graham and Hoggett from Frantic Assembly say: ‘… the video camera is not just for capturing and documenting what you know is there. It is also for capturing all the possibilities that emerge by accident.’ I used the video camera as a tool ‘… to show you what you don’t yet know’. This view goes against that of Etchells, artistic director of Forced Entertainment, who writes, ‘Documentation of live events is an attempt at capture, a dragging down of the ephemeral into the fossilising mud of all that is fixed and fixing’. Etchells suggests that in his case ‘… work should look thrown together – chaotic, out of control, unintended’. He adds that ‘… it [is] important that no one did their homework too well’. The same could be said of working on Reckless Sleepers’ Schrödinger (2011), when ‘Mole [Wetherell] did not want us to know it too well. He was interested in how we could break up a text, or forget it, or stop halfway through, as if we were thinking of something else. He wanted to work with incompleteness’. This incompleteness has informed my work for the doctoral study.

For The Trilogy (2014) we were doing our homework together and trying to find a shared handwriting amongst the company. When we succeeded it is difficult to pinpoint who wrote what and in that sense it became co-authored. Heddon and Milling suggest that ‘While the word ‘devising’ does not insist on more than one participant, ‘collaborative creation’ clearly does’, therefore both Frantic Assembly and Forced Entertainment can be said to create ‘collaboratively authored works of theatre’ as there is not just one creative force behind their finished products. It is certainly true of The Trilogy (2014) that the ‘actor/performer […] becomes part of a creative partnership in authoring the emergent theatre piece in question’.

For both The Beginning (2012) and The End (2011) I worked with devisers and performers on developing material together, we were attempting a way of finding a shared vocabulary between us which was important both to the authorship and ownership of the piece. As Alex Mermikedes and Jackie Smart suggest about Frantic Assembly ‘… performer-authored material is deployed for aesthetic reasons – as a means of generating compositional rather than linear dramatic structures within a performance style that exemplifies a ‘sense of the ensemble’’. For example, in The Beginning (2012), we devised a montage of performance memories, ‘The first time I performed etc.’. This scene served the dual
function of introducing us to working together for the first time in rehearsal and introducing
us in the show as an ensemble. As the director, I would sketch out the concept of a scene or
sequence and then leave a “… space for other people to fill”. This space could be
conceptual in terms of the content of the work or theoretical, like a liminal space.

**Act Five Scene Five: Liminal Dramaturgies**

Here we might consider the definition of the liminal space as a threshold, where one thing
ends and another thing begins. Originally developed as a term for rituals by Victor Turner,
liminality, has come to be used in performative contexts to define a fluid state. For *The
Middle* (2013), which operated in the liminal space of the theatre foyer, between outside and
inside, real world and theatre, again I was always positioned off the main stage, lurking in the
corner of the foyer. As stagehand I pass the performer the props he needs to enact his site-

I was working in the margins of the script, taking notes of how we might edit the text or time
the music more elegantly and appropriately to the rhythm of the piece. The dramaturgy of
*The Middle* (2013) sought to reflect the natural ebb and flow of an audience ‘toing and froing,
coming and going… like a tide’ and the piece began and ended with the sound of waves
lapping on the shore and the Shipping Forecast. At one point in the script, the performer (my
Dad) tells the audience that the writer (me) is listening to the Shipping Forecast, sitting on the
stairs, wondering why he cannot sleep. He proceeds to sing a song that used to lull me to
sleep when I was a baby, sound-tracked by my two-year old daughter Lydia whispering the
word ‘Daddy’ over and over again. The text was authored together. As my Dad says on the
project blog, ‘Michael asked me to contribute a few words here and there to the text, and he is
always very receptive to ideas, so *The Middle* (2013) does feel like a joint venture, especially
with its autobiographical slant’. As such the text explores a space between a father and a
child, an actor and a writer, the state of being awake or being asleep, or half way up or down
the stairs. Everything in this fictive cosmos is in between one thing and another in a liminal
space and this is made more apparent when *The Middle* (2013) is shown as part of *The
Trilogy* (2014). Marketing for the work embraces this potential for liminality by describing its
Act Five: The Epilogue

When I interviewed Jochem Naafs, a Dutch dramaturg, about what he did, he said: ‘There is this part of the dramaturg that is seriously in-between, in a kind of liminality. You are part of the project and you are not, you are part of the outside world and you are not. Maybe you can try and make these parts run more smoothly together.’ Naafs concluded that: ‘I would like to think of myself as a dramaturge. The problem is that I find it hard to describe what that is. Here is what I know: I find myself at the sideline. Sometimes I join, most of the time I am just watching. But quite often I find myself in the middle. Stuck in the middle. In a liminality, between the line. Between creating and observing, between acting and passing. Between active and passive.’ Naafs view chimes much with my own, especially in the making of The Middle (2013), when the concept of liminality seems pertinent to the subject of the piece. As de Certeau said it is, ‘... not here or there, one or the other, but neither the one nor the other, simultaneously inside and outside, dissolving both by mixing them together, associating texts like funerary statues that [the writer] awakens and hosts, but never owns’.

Perhaps de Certeau gives us another tentative job description for the dramaturg, being both simultaneously inside and outside, dissolving both perspectives by mixing them together. The dramaturg and the dramaturgy also associates texts, awakens and hosts, but never owns.
In this chapter, I have reflected on the findings of the thesis and revisited some of my own notes, writing and working in the margins, during the making of the practice as research. As Shaughnessy states: ‘To write a note is, surely, a form of theatrical address, for it must envisage, and speak to, a future version of oneself who is presumed to have forgotten; to that avatar, it says: you must remember this, you must remember me’. 519 This thesis documents that which I remember from working with and as dramaturgs, that which burnt my memory, that which bruised me. I have considered what role the dramaturg might play moving beyond the scope of the study. I envisage a world in which the dramaturg can visit the rehearsal space remotely and a new economy emerges where the embedded dramaturg replaces the face-to-face contract between artist and outside eye, the blog replaces the publication. Faced with the challenge of wrestling some kind of meaning out of all of the different opinions I am working with on such a contested term I have chosen simply to acknowledge that everyone says something different and to ask what is at the centre of this disagreement.

I suggest that the definition of the dramaturg shifts in tentative relationship to the roles that it serves e.g. writer, director, devisor etc. and advise that we ask where the dramaturg ends and other roles begin in the devising process. It has also been noted that one tends to use the word dramaturg in a subservient role e.g. Robert Wilson’s dramaturg. I have attempted to address this issue with a democratic approach. Some directors might simply need a dramaturg for reassurance / sycophancy and this has also been taken into account during the study. For this study I have discussed the liminality of the dramaturg’s role and how they are in between the practice and the research, the process and the product, writing the work and writing about it. This is perhaps a different kind of limbo than the one Naafs has described but it is equally on the line. Ultimately, if the dramaturg represents the audience in the room, then we must watch those around us to see how the work of the dramaturg has unfolded. As Shaughnessy states;

Watching theatre, I watch myself watching; I also watch known, partially known, and unknown others, as they too watch; scanning faces and bodies, speculating and imagining about what they may be thinking or feeling as a way of enabling myself to come to know what it is I think and feel. 520

Again, we return to a sense of thinking and feeling, looking and reading, the semiotic and the phenomenological response to the work. As States suggests, we ask ‘What it is and what it is doing before our eyes?’ and the dramaturg is betwixt and between these modes of looking. 521
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Conclusion

The thesis has aimed to explore what is happening in the process of creation when we cross this threshold, from a pre-liminal understanding to a post-liminal knowledge of what dramaturgy is. This is the conclusion to the Five Acts. The conclusion reiterates the new knowledge produced, the relationship between dramaturgy and practice-as-research as disciplines. The conclusion reminds the reader that the new knowledge might be articulated as an expansion of the dramaturg's role, reiterating and adding here the understanding of this role as paralleling the academic who researches through practice. The conclusion might also suggest new lines for enquiry here. How might we continue to develop new methodological models for dramaturgical practice? How might the new technology that the internet affords makers and critics contribute to an online dramaturgical space? How might blogs and social media feed-forward into the process, rather than simply feedback on the product? How might the dramaturg become more central to the creative process, to sit less at the ringside and more at the wheel. I acknowledge that throughout this thesis I have mixed my metaphors. This has not been a conscious or deliberate choice, but rather, represents the raft of metaphors in circulation that seek to define the role. The problem of definition persists, but it is perhaps the role of artists and academics to continue to shape the potential of dramaturgy through practice as research. At the end of Act Two, I placed an understanding of the dramaturg ('holistic dramaturg' (for others) and the 'auteur-dramaturg' (as primary creator), not necessarily to replace other ideas but to conclude the discussion. However, the discussion will continue. In conclusion, Lecoq approaches a definition of the role of dramaturg here: ‘Everything moves. Everything develops and progresses. Everything rebounds and resonates. From one point to another, the line is never straight. From harbour to harbour, a journey. A vague point appears, hazy and confused a point of convergence, the temptation of a fixed point, in a calm of all passions. Point of departure and point of destination in what has neither beginning nor end. Naming it, enduring it with life, giving it authority. For a better understanding of what [it] is’. 522 This study has aimed to name the role of the dramaturg, to describe what it is and how and why it is done. I have aimed to endure it with life and give it an authority, for a better understanding of what it is today. I hope I have succeeded in some part. Thank you for reading this. Remember it is a fragment of a whole. Please watch the documentation and consult the performance texts and blogs submitted as The Appendix. And the curtain falls.
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Afterword

Each of these interludes is a kind of test site of an idea of dramaturgy: what I am proposing as a <dramaturgy without a dramaturge>. In each of the works there is no named figure operating behind the works who could stake a claim to the name dramaturge. Nonetheless, these works each manifest aesthetic dynamics and pose particular conceptual paradoxes that for me are vital to the question of the practice of contemporary dramaturgy.\textsuperscript{524}

A lot has happened since I started writing this study in 2010. My early understanding of the role of dramaturg was shaped by making The Final Fling with MBD in 1999 (negative experience), taking part in Writing Space in 2008 (positive experience), then my work with Reckless Sleepers (mixed) and my role as lecturer at the University of Chester (2008-2010) and the University of Lincoln (2013-ongoing). Writing Space, instigated by Cathy Turner, aimed ‘… to test a structure that would engage diverse writers in an inclusive, non-hierarchical conceptual dialogue, leading to the production of a series of short, experimental texts’.\textsuperscript{525} Turner argued that a ‘greater awareness or interest in the collaborative and dialogic element within theatre and performance writing practices could lead to a transformation of dramaturgical strategies among and between writers and other artists’.\textsuperscript{526} This was a landmark project for me as it shaped my thinking around the relationship between writing and dramaturgy in my own practice. The experience went on to inform my work on The Trilogy (2014) and inspire me to start this study. It also encouraged me to re-contextualise my performance work within an academic context. I realise that much of what I do as a lecturer now is actually dramaturgical, although it is often not called that, for example, outside eyeing rehearsals, reading scripts, feedback etc. I would like to develop the role of dramaturgy in pedagogy and at University of Lincoln in particular as a result of writing this doctoral study.

On the verge of submitting this thesis I made two discoveries that it feels appropriate to share here. The first was an article by Adrian Heathfield on ‘Dramaturgy without a Dramaturge’ (2010). In it, he argues that a performance’s inherent dramaturgy can be achieved with or without anyone specifically taking the role of dramaturg. He cites correspondence with practitioners such as Jonathan Burrows and Tim Etchells and images of their work. The argument he makes and the way in which he makes it has influenced this study and I realise
now, at the point of making my conclusion, that this applies to the work I have made too. Even though individuals were tentatively invited to work with me as dramaturgs on The End (2011) and The Beginning (2012) they were never with us in rehearsal for long, sometimes just attending occasional work-in-progresses, post-show discussions and communicating online. For example, Claire Summerfield attended a work-in-progress at Lakeside Arts Centre (Nottingham) and chaired the post-show discussion, which I transcribed and put on the blog. For a while this text existed as an introduction to the show and then it became the programme note, the questions Claire asked also prompted the next phase of the process. In fact, she was one of the first to ask the creative team ‘So… what do we do now?’.

What I conclude here is that the Dramaturgy II, as outlined in The Foreword (p. 9), is the essential focus of this study rather than Dramaturgy I (which it was at the start). This thesis has enacted a live dialogue between these different meanings of dramaturgy and found that they are intrinsically and tacitly linked. The title, Outside Eye: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance, hints more at a dramaturgical awareness or awakening (like in A Midsummer Night’s Dream) than a turn towards the specific role of dramaturg being played in the creative process. Especially when funding becomes scarce and companies and artists are unable to allocate budget to members of the creative team whose role they can easily play themselves. In some ways, this is the same argument made by Harradine and Butler from Fevered Sleep in 1999 (p. 28). It is obvious that we are opening our eyes to dramaturgy now, more aware of what it is and what it is doing than we were 15 years ago. This could be a textual awareness, a spatial awareness or a kinaesthetic awareness in the same way that Anne Bogart breaks down ways of making movement in Viewpoints. This thesis then investigates a shift towards a ‘dramaturgical sensibility’ or a ‘cognitive dramaturgy’ rather than analysing individual dramaturgs at work. To borrow Heathfield’s phrase, when it comes to The Trilogy (2014), ‘… these works each manifest aesthetic dynamics and pose particular conceptual paradoxes’. They are ‘test sites’ and practice as research uses performance as an application to carry out these tests at these sites. It is these aesthetics and paradoxes that my analysis has explored and which continue to inform my practice as research. As a lecturer now engaged in research for the REF, I am seeking ways of framing new knowledge as outputs and I continue to use dramaturgy as a conduit. It occurs to me that dramaturgy becomes a lens through which we can see any performance and perhaps instead of answering the big research questions in The Foreword (p. 9) I have actually succeeded in generating
many more questions because that is what dramaturgy does. As Bly suggests on p. 42, when asked to describe his role as a dramaturg in one sentence he replies, ‘I question’.530

The second discovery I made was the way in which once we become attuned to the inherent dramaturgy of contemporary devised performance, which is, as we have explored, and as Alex Kelly suggests ‘itself a dramaturgical process’ (see p. 50), we begin to see the dramaturgical make-up of any performance.531 As part of my role as a Lecturer in Drama at the University of Lincoln, I was invited to chair a post-show discussion for LaPelle’s Factory at Lincoln Performing Arts Centre. Perhaps because of my research and the fact that students that came to the show were engaged in creating their own work, the conversation turned towards dramaturgy as it often does (perhaps the dramaturgical turn we are discussing here). A student asked how the company had ‘composed’ the show. Ollie Smith, artistic director of LaPelle’s Factory and performer in The Beginning (2012) and The End (2011) replied; ‘There are four ‘moods’: 1. Comfort / Security. 2. Contemplative. 3. Unnerving / Unsettling. 4. Danger / Fear. Everything we are doing aims to follow this score of moods’.532 It became clear to me at this moment that he was describing the dramaturgy of the show, not using a script or character or plot, but in terms of an emotional trajectory. It is a show with no discernible or recognizable dramaturg (although it did have mentors from other companies e.g. Forced Entertainment, Third Angel etc.) but a very clear sense of its own dramaturgy. I end The Afterword with the final exchange from this show that neatly and completely summarises the way in which an audience can be led to believe that anything that happens in a theatre is true. Especially when they have been carefully dramaturg-ed into thinking that.

*OLWEN and OLLIE pour ‘petrol’ over themselves. OLLIE produces the box of matches.*

OLWEN: This is the kind of movie that shoots us down at the end.
OLLIE: This is the kind of movie where the bad guys go down in flames.
OLWEN: There will be no sunset. Just the burning heat.

**OLLIE takes a match from the box and goes to strike it. He pauses.**

OLLIE: They know it’s just water.
OLWEN: They hope it’s just water.

**OLLIE resumes striking the match.**

*BLACKOUT.*533
The Appendix

7. *The End* blog - [www.makingtheend.wordpress.com](http://www.makingtheend.wordpress.com)
8. *Outside Eye* blog – [www.outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com](http://www.outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com)
10. The Postscript

Fig. 28: My left eye (2016)
[Ollie plays guitar. Michael scrolls opening credits on index cards]

The Beginning

Work in Progress
Supported by
Arts Council England
Developed at
Lakeside Arts Centre (Nottingham)
The Junction (Cambridge)
Leeds Met Studio Theatre
Loughborough University
Devised and Performed by
Nicki Hobday
Michael Pinchbeck
Ollie Smith
Production
Claire Summerfield
Costume Design
Kate Unwin
Lighting Design
James Harrison
Photography
Julian Hughes
Video
Kate Rowles
Design
Cubic
Eflier Design
Versus
Website
www.michaelpinchbeck.co.uk
Blog
www.makingthebeginning.tumblr.com
Hashtag
#thebeginning

[Ollie tunes guitar]

The Preset

Michael: Ladies and Gentlemen of the company this is your one hour call.
Nicki Hobday. Ollie Smith. You have one hour. Thank you.

[Ollie sits down and picks up script]
The Prologue

SFX Clint Mansell - Moon

Ollie: So this is it…

Nicki: The Beginning…

Ollie: Here we are…

Nicki: At the beginning…

Ollie: Here we all are…

Nicki: At the beginning…

Ollie: All –

   (Nicki tells Ollie number of audience members)

   – of us.

Nicki: At the beginning…

Ollie: In (name of theatre)

   On (name date) 2011

Nicki: ‘12

Ollie: At (check watch) O’Clock

   All (number of audience members) of us…

Nicki: At the beginning

Ollie: So…

   What do we do now?

Nicki: Well…

   I’ve got a few things to say

Ollie: At the beginning

Nicki: That I usually say

Ollie: At the beginning

Nicki: So this seems like as good a time as any
Nicki: Please switch off your mobile phones

Nicki: Please note the toilets are down the corridor on the left

Ollie: They’re on the right

Nicki: Please take a moment to look for the fire exit signs

   Please take a moment to plan your escape route

   In the unlikely event of a fire

Ollie: Or if you want to leave

Nicki: Please don’t leave

Ollie: At least until the end of the safety announcement

Nicki: Because otherwise you won’t know how to

   And you’ll end up wandering around the stage

   Looking like an ass

   Who wants to leave before it has even started.

Ollie: Please take a moment

   To think about whether you want to look like an ass

Nicki: Please take a moment

   To turn to your neighbour

   Please take a moment

   To smile at your neighbour

   Please take a moment

   To tell your neighbour your name

Ollie: If it feels appropriate

Nicki: Please take a moment
To tell your neighbour your telephone number

Ollie: If it feels appropriate

Nicki: Please take a moment

To touch your neighbour lightly on their knee

Ollie: If it feels appropriate

Nicki: Please take a moment

To slap your neighbour lightly across the face

If it was not appropriate

Please take a moment to apologise

If neither touching their knee nor slapping their face was appropriate

Ollie: Please take a moment to think about what you’ve just done

And if you didn’t do anything

Please take a moment to think about why

Nicki: And if you want to leave now

Please take a moment to think about whether you want to look like an ass

Ollie: So…

This is the beginning…

Here we are…

Nicki: Still…

Ollie: At the beginning…

Here we all are…

Nicki: Still…

Ollie: At the beginning…

All (number of audience members) of us…

Nicki: Still…
Ollie: At the beginning…

Unless some of you have already left

Nicki: I’ve still got a few things left to say

That I usually say

At the beginning

So this still seems like as good a time as any

You may have noticed that I am not sitting on the stage. I am, depending on what is possible in the venue technically, logistically, artistically, conceptually, and in terms of health and safety, either sitting in the wings, or if there are no wings, on the edge of the stage and if there is no edge, in the control room, or if there is no control room, on the back row, or if there is no room on the back row, on the front row, or if there is no room on the front row, in the foyer, or if there is no foyer, in the rig, or if there is no way of sitting in the rig, then I might just prerecord it.

Ollie: Wherever I am sitting when I am saying this to you I can tell you now that I will not be sitting on the stage. That is a really important part of the work that I decided at the beginning. If you can see me, something has gone wrong, and I will not be very happy about it, but I will carry on regardless because I am a fucking professional and I’m here to get the fucking job done.

Nicki: Sorry I forgot to mention at the beginning that there might be some swearing in the show.

Ollie: And nudity.

Nicki: There might be some nudity.

Ollie: And strobe lighting.

Nicki: There might be some strobe lighting.

Ollie: And smoke. I will be smoking all the way through the show like a fucking chimney. And it will be loud. Really fucking loud. And I will be using a microphone. And I will give you ear plugs. And if I’m not using a microphone then maybe you won’t need the earplugs and if I am then you will. And if I haven’t given you the ear plugs it means the loud bit has been cut because of technical, logistical, artistic, conceptual or health and safety reasons and I will not be very happy about it but I will still carry on regardless because I’m still a fucking professional and I’m still here to get the fucking job done. Even if I can’t fucking smoke or take my fucking clothes off.

Nicki: It’s a good job I told you at the beginning that there might be some swearing. Because there is already a lot more swearing than I expected.
But whatever I do. Wherever I am. I will not be reading this out. Because, even if this is a work-in-progress, it’s really important to me that I know what I want to say and I have learned my lines and I’m not just reading it from a script. You see I want to give you your money’s worth. I want you to go away thinking, even if you don’t like what I said, at least he learnt his lines. If I am reading from a script then you may as well go now because it’s already not what I wanted it to be. There may have been latecomers. There may have been flash photography. There may have been a mobile phone going off in someone’s pocket. Some of you may be filming this and I may have noticed. Some of you may have opened your laptops and started live blogging. Some of you may be taking notes. Some of you may be reviewing this. Some of you may be tweeting about this. Some of you may be texting your friends to see what they think about this. Some of you may be wondering where this music is from. Some of you may be reading the programme. Some of you may be getting something out of your bag. Or checking your watch. Or yawning. Or rustling something. Or falling asleep. Or leaving. All these things will have thrown me completely and I will be dying a death up here waiting for the end of the show to come so we can all go home. I may speed up. I may start to say this quicker because I think I am boring you. I saw a sign in a theatre once that said ‘Only courtesy stands between you and a performance free from interruption.’ And I thought yes. But what if you want to be interrupted? What if you make a piece of work that needs to be interrupted? What if you want someone to walk onstage looking like an ass?

Ollie: And in the beginning I wanted to tell you why I would not be sitting on the stage. Because I made a promise that I would end my performance career. That I would never perform again. That I would never stand onstage again. That I would never face an audience again. And I thought that if I sat in the wings, or on the edge, or in the control room, or on the back row, or on the front row, or in the foyer, or in the rig, or if I pre-recorded it, then it would be OK because I wouldn’t be onstage and I wouldn’t be standing and I wouldn’t be facing an audience. So I hope I have not broken my promise. If I have then I will tell you I am sorry. If I have then I will look you in the eye and tell you…

Nicki: I am sorry.

But it is not going to be one of those shows where someone says sorry for all the things they haven’t been able to do in the show. It’s not about failure or futility or existential disillusionment. And it’s not going to be one of those shows which lists what it’s going to be or what it’s not going to be and if it is then I will look you in the eye and tell you…

Ollie: I am sorry.

Nicki: But in the beginning…

Ollie: I realised that if it was not possible to sit in the wings or wherever else I am sitting when I am saying this to you if I am not sitting in the wings and I had to stand onstage and face an audience then maybe it wouldn’t be me saying this but somebody else and maybe it would be a man’s voice

Nicki: Or a woman’s voice
Both: Or both

Ollie: But whoever’s voice it would be it would not be my voice. Not my voice at all. So in the beginning I wanted to make this clear. That this will not be my voice. That I will not be me. That I will not be here. That I will not be standing onstage facing an audience. And if it is. And if I am. Then I will look you in the eye and I will tell you

Both: I am sorry

Nicki: So here I am.

Ollie: Not being me.

Nicki: Not being here.

Ollie: Not standing onstage.

Nicki: Not sitting offstage.

Ollie: Not facing an audience.

Nicki: At the beginning…

Ollie: So this is it…

Nicki: The Beginning

Ollie: So… what do we do now?

Recorder  SFX Recorder

[Michael picks up recorder and puts manuscript under the camera]

Michael: The first time I performed I was playing a recorder onstage in front of an audience. I was nervous and I didn’t want to make any mistakes so I moved my fingers but I didn’t play the notes. Everyone else onstage was playing their recorder but I was just miming along to the music.

Nicki: The first time I performed I pushed a car on stage for Grease Lightning

Ollie: The first time I performed I was Joseph and I had to stand next to Mary who was holding a plastic Jesus

Nicki: The first time I performed I was told I wasn't sexy enough. I was playing Maryln Monroe ...’s corpse

Ollie: The first time I performed I was Oliver, and everyone thought it was hilarious that I happened to share a name with that character
Michael: The first time I performed I was a doctor and had to sit someone down and give them the bad news

Ollie: … in fact most of my classmates at the time presumed the only reason I'd been given that role was because I shared a name with that character

The first time I performed was to an audience of one and that person walked out

Michael: excuse me, excuse me..

Nikki: The first time I performed I had my first on stage kiss

Michael: The first time I kissed was on stage

Ollie: The first time I performed I sang Where is Love on my own and I made my teacher cry

Michael: The first time I performed I did a little dance

(Ollie joins Nikki)

Michael: The first time I performed I took my clothes off

Nikki: The first time I performed I kept my clothes on

Ollie: Excuse me, excuse me

Michael: The first time I performed I cut off my hair

Nikki: The first time I performed I stood on a chair

Ollie: The first time I performed I didn't know how to cross my legs

Nikki: The first time I performed was in a nativity

Ollie: I was Joseph

Nikki: I was Mary

Michael: I was the donkey

Ollie: The first time I performed was in Oliver

Michael: The first time I performed was in Grease

Ollie: Please sir can I have some more

Nikki: The first time I performed was in a musical
Ollie: The first time I performed was in a school play
Michael: The first time I performed was in a chorus line
Ollie: The first time I performed was in a pantomime
All: The first time I performed was in A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Ollie: I was Oberon
Nicki: I was Titania
Michael: I was bottom
Ollie: The fairy king
Nicki: The fairy queen
Michael: The donkey
Nicki: The first time I performed was behind a wall
Michael: The first time I performed I looked through a wall
Ollie: The first time I performed I mimed a wall
Michael: The first time I performed I was shot in front of a wall over and over
Nicki: The first time I performed I was lying on the floor
Michael: The first time I performed I did a warm up but now my idea of a warm up is a lie down
Nicki: The first time I performed I was pretending to ride a bicycle
Michael: The first time I performed I was pretending to play the recorder
Ollie: The first time I performed...
Michael: You forgot your lines?
Ollie: I forgot my lines
Michael: The first time she performed she was lying on the floor
Ollie: In the middle of a road
Michael: In the middle of a forest
Ollie: After being knocked off her bicycle
Michael: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Ollie: The first time she performed she was Melody Nelson
Michael: She was Jane Birkin
Ollie: She was Nicki Hobday
Michael: She was herself
Ollie: The first time I performed I was a musician
Michael: The first time I performed I was a technician
Ollie: The first time I performed I was playing Serge Gainsbourg
Michael: The first time I performed I was playing Bottom the Donkey
Ollie: The first time I performed I was playing the guitar

Michael: The first time I performed I was sitting on a chair at a table talking into a microphone and I was reading from a script because I was nervous, I didn’t want to make any mistakes. I wanted Nicki and Ollie to help me to remember how it feels to perform for the first time. I wanted them to help me to remember. I wanted them to do the things I could not do. I wanted them to say the words I could not say. I wanted them to talk to you. But now I am talking to you too. But I didn’t want to say anything. Because I made a promise I couldn’t keep. In the beginning. The first time I performed was in (venue). The first time I performed was on (date). The first time I performed was at (time).

The Introduction

[SFX Introduction]

[Ollie and Nicki go back to their chairs. Michael brings on hard hats.]

Michael (Voiceover): This was the beginning
There was me
There was you
There was us
At the beginning
This was the time when anything could happen
When anything seemed possible
This was now
At the beginning
This was the time when we had started
When we had still not made any mistakes
When we were still full of hope
For what might be to come
This was the time when we thought we could do anything and you believed us
This was here
At the beginning
This was the time when you were here and we were here and you were still with us
At the beginning
Because this was happening here and now to us and to you in this theatre
This was the time for us to turn the lights down
This was the time for you to sit back and relax
This was the time for us to take you on a journey
This was the time for us to play
This was the time for us to press play
This was the time to listen to the music
Like we did the first time we heard it
This was the time to say these words
Like we did the first time we said them
This was the time to perform this
Like we did the first time
Because this was not a rehearsal
This was a first night
This was our final call
This was our entrance
This was our cue
This was the beginning
And we were the performers
And you were the audience
And these were our stage directions

Stage directions SFX Serge Gainsbourg – En Melody LX 4

[Ollie and Nicki move helmets into place for beginning of each scene. Michael puts cards under camera with Act number and Scene number for each one. At the end Ollie sits down, Nicki lies down and Michael puts book under camera]

The Preface LX 4.5

In the beginning
I’m here to give you some guidance
To steer you through this
To help you to breathe
To intervene if necessary
To make you feel more comfortable
You see I’ve been here before
And I know how this works
I know some music might help to relax you

SFX Serge Gainsbourg - Hotel Particulier

In the beginning I was reading A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Because it’s the first play I performed
And the first part I played was Bottom the Donkey
He’s on the front cover looking like an ass
Bottom is putting on a play with the Mechanicals
But he’s not a very good actor
The Fairy King turns Bottom into a donkey
The Fairy Queen sees Bottom when she wakes up
He’s singing a song
She’s lying on the floor in the middle of a forest
And they fall in love

In the beginning I was listening to an album by Serge Gainsbourg
**Histoire de Melody Nelson**
It’s the first album he recorded after falling in love with Jane Birkin
She’s on the front cover wearing only a pair of jeans
She plays Melody Nelson on the album
But she’s not a very good singer
Serge Gainsbourg is driving a Rolls Royce but he’s been drinking
He knocks Melody Nelson off her bicycle.
*Shit.*
She’s lying on the floor in the middle of a road
And they fall in love
Bottom was a weaver
So I wanted to weave these two stories together
A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Histoire de Melody Nelson
They are both about love
They are both about falling in love
They are both about falling in love with the first person you see when you wake up
They are both about a man who is waiting in the wings for his entrance
They are both about beginnings.

This show takes place between this album and this play, between a rehearsal and a performance, between dreaming and being awake
It’s written in the first pages of our notebooks
It’s scored in the first bars of this music
It’s scribbled in the margins of the first draft of each scene
In the beginning

**The first time I saw her**

**SFX Melody Loop**

**LX 5**

*Michael puts ‘The first time I saw her’ under the camera*

Ollie: He’s on the decline. He’s desperate.
He’s a mess. He’s worn out.
I’m worn out too but I’m still here!
The first time I saw her – Jane – who’s this floozy little English girl… It’s Jane.
Melody is Jane. In fact she’s the girl I had been waiting for. It wasn’t clear at first.
There was a… mutation.

*Michael puts ‘The first time I saw him’ under the camera*
Nicki: I was completely overwhelmed by all the sexual goings on.

Ollie: That’s not sexy enough. L

Nicki (sexy voice): I was completely overwhelmed by all the sexual goings on. We had an erotic adventure which was sensational to me because I didn't know any of that existed. The first time I saw him I wanted to know everything and he wanted to show me it all. Loveable silly little girl upset me a bit. But then I thought of course that's what he thought before he knew me too well. Perhaps afterwards he'd be impressed by my deep... intellect.

[Ollie goes to play the guitar and Michael turns index cards over]

Voiceover SFX This is a voiceover

[Ollie and Nicki reset helmets and Michael brings on dress, jeans and clogs.]

Michael (Voiceover): This is a voiceover
I recorded earlier today
I’m sitting offstage
I’m sitting backstage
I’m waiting in the wings
I’m watching you perform
My palms are sweating [Put palms under camera]
My hands are shaking [Turn hands over. Shaking]
My breath is louder than it should be [Breathe heavily]
My voice doesn’t sound like it normally does [‘Testing Testing’]
I’m taking one last look at my lines [Put script under camera]
I don’t want to forget anything
I’m wondering how to begin?
How to begin a performance
Or a relationship
Or a career
Or a life
Or this
In the beginning
There was an empty page [Put empty card under camera and move]
There was an empty stage
With a line of tape on the floor
That made us stand at an angle
And some props
That we found backstage
Helmets. Shoes. A roll of gaffer tape
That stumbled into our story
And some words
From the beginning of each scene
of a play we didn’t write
That seemed to make sense
But now I’m not so sure it does
And you try to find a way
You always want to find a way
To keep everything in the story
But sometimes
Things don’t fit
Things don’t move
They just stay there
Sitting on the floor
Waiting to stumble back in
Through the door
Waiting for their cue
Waiting to begin
And at the end
I will say
When my cue comes
Call me
And I will answer

[Nicki and Ollie arrive at shoes centre stage. Michael draws heart in lipstick]

Ollie: 'What's your name?'

Nicki: 'Melody'

Ollie: 'Melody what?'

Nicki: 'Melody Nelson'

In The Beginning

SFX Serge Gainsbourg – Ah! Melody

LX 7

[Michael speaks via index cards]

In the beginning
There were two pairs of shoes
There was a text
There was a camera
There was a man
There was a woman
There was an audience
Watching
There was a man
Waiting for his entrance
Waiting to begin
There was music
There was a guitar that still needs tuning
There was a song that won’t stop playing
There was a bicycle
There was a wheel that won’t stop spinning
There was a Rolls Royce
There was an accident
There was a man
There was a woman
There was an audience
Wondering what was going on
There was a man
Drinking
Under the influence
Under a spell
Falling in love
Falling asleep
At the wheel
He was out of control
He was worn out
He was a mess
He made a promise he couldn’t keep
She didn’t mind
She was overwhelmed
She was in love
He was still in use
They were beginning an adventure
They didn’t know what it would be
They didn’t mind
They were in love
They were telling a story
There were two pairs of shoes
In the beginning
This is a love story

This is a Love Story

[Nicki and Ollie step out of shoes and share text]

Nicki: This is a story

Ollie: This is a love story

Nicki: This is a story about how we fall in love

Ollie: This is a love song

Nicki: This is a dedication on the first page of a book

Ollie: This is a love letter

Nicki: Sealed with a loving kiss

Ollie: And scented

Nicki: And stamped
Ollie: And posted
Nicki: To this address, so that you know how much we love you
Ollie: And how lucky we are to be standing here now talking to you

Nicki: Today
LX 8.5

Ollie: Tonight
Nicki: You are why we do this
Ollie: You are the reason
Nicki: We wake up in the morning
Ollie: We warm up
Nicki: We learn our lines
Ollie: We wait in the wings
Nicki: We put ourselves through this for you
Ollie: But when we come out of the theatre at the end of the night
Nicki: And you smile at us
Ollie: Or you buy us a drink
Nicki: Or you offer us a cigarette
Ollie: Or a cuddle
Nicki: Or a kiss
Ollie: Then we think
Nicki: This is what we do it
Ollie: This is why we perform
Nicki: This is why we stand onstage in front of an audience
Ollie: This is why we love it
Nicki: We love you
Ollie: We want to kiss you
Nicki: Each one of you
Ollie: Individually
Nicki: One by one
Ollie: On the cheek
Nicki: On the forehead
Ollie: On the lips
Nicki: On the –
Ollie: We want to lean over and really delicately remove a little bit of white fluff when it gets caught in your hair but as we do that we just want to hold the eye contact for a little bit longer than usual
Nicki: We want to hold your drink as you take your coat off, sit down, get settled, and then we want to hand it back to you
Ollie: We want to lean over and pop your label back in the top of your shirt collar when it sticks out but as we do that we just really gently want to stroke the back of your neck
Nicki: We want to wake up with you tomorrow morning…
Ollie: But unfortunately we can’t do any of those things

The Contract
SFX Pilote – No Truck

[Michael puts a card with ‘The Contract’ written on it and starts to dot dot dot]

Nicki: In the beginning
  We wanted to write a contract
  So you would know
  What to expect from us
  And what we expect from you

Ollie: What we give
  And what you take
  And what you pay
  And what you get
  Because we want you to get your money’s worth

Nicki: The last thing we want to see is someone sitting there
  Who doesn’t want to be there
  Holding someone else’s hand
  And whispering in their ear

Ollie: ‘I can’t believe we got a babysitter for this’
Nicki: Or someone sitting there  
Who doesn’t want to be there  
Touching someone else’s knee  
And whispering in their ear

Ollie: ‘Shall we leave in the interval’

Nicki: I’ll tell you one thing  
There isn’t an interval…  
And so we thought it might be nice of you’d sign a contract between us

Ollie: Each one of you

Nicki: Individually

Ollie: One by one

Nicki: On the dotted line

Ollie: In a black pen

Nicki: And if you don’t sign it  
Please take a moment to think about why  
Before slowly making your way towards the exit  
Whispering

Ollie: ‘Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me’

Nicki: As you shuffle sideways to the end of the row  
Hoping no one on stage will notice

Ollie: But we have noticed and we will notice

Nicki: And the contract will say  
If you leave, we leave  
If you get up and go, we get up and go  
So you see, we are all in this together

Ollie: You and us  
We are professionals  
We have learned our lines  
We are ready to make our entrance  
We are ready to begin  
And we ask you for the same commitment

[Michael puts a cross next to the dotting line and lies the pen on the card]

Nicki: And to make it easier for you  
To sign this contract
I’m going to sing you a song
I’m going to do a little dance

Ollie: And I’m going to sing you a song

Nicki: In these clogs

Ollie: A song about standing on stage in front of an audience
A song that does not begin in the way it usually does
A song that is not sung in the voice it usually is
A song without an ending
A song that won't stop playing
A song that says anything we want it to say
So we can stop saying anything
A song that takes us somewhere
Without us going anywhere
A song about today
A song about tomorrow
A song about love
A song about sorrow
A song about something you lost
And something you found
A song that makes you smile
A song that frowns
A song you might know
Sung in a way you might not
A song that will be remembered
More than forgotten
A song that tells you how to stop
But makes you want to begin
A song that when you hear it
Makes you want to sing
A song that sounds like a love song
But is actually about this
About us
About you
About here
About now
About standing in front of an audience

Nicki: As we sing this song and dance this dance
We are going to pass this contract around
And ask you to sign it.
On the dotted line.
With a black pen.
Or maybe a red pen.
And if you don’t sign it
Please take a moment
To think about why you have not
And whisper
Ollie: ‘Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me Excuse me’

Nicki: As you make your way slowly towards the exit. And out of the theatre.  

Michael: Ladies and Gentlemen of the company this is your 30 minute call. Nicki Hobday. Ollie Smith you have 30 minutes. Thank you.

The Translation SFX: L’anamour

[Michael walks downstage and puts on clogs and lip synchs to L’Anamour. Ollie plays guitar. Nicki turns over cards that talk about Michael translating.]

The Song LX 12

[Ollie plays ‘Will you still love me tomorrow. Nicki puts on lipstick, dress and clogs and goes to kiss Michael. Michael turns into a donkey and brings on a balloon. Nicki goes to do a little dance. Michael interrupts Ollie with music.]

The Letter SFX: The Letter

[Nicki starts to write a letter under the camera. Michael and Nicki sit.]

Nicki: I was asked to do a test for the film slogan
I began the test with this person who seemed quite arrogant
And I think he was upset during the filming of slogan when I said I didn't know who he was
So he offered me this little book
With a dedication inside that said:
‘To Jane, a few chansons cruelles including Je T’aime (Moi Non Plus) Serge Gainsbourg’ crossed out with a red pen and then continued in red - still aesthetic – ‘It is only missing the chanson de Mallory (my middle name) that I will write for you and Histoire de Melody Nelson.’ So Melody Nelson was already around…

Michael: [Takes his top off] So…what do we do now?

Synopsis SFX Nightingales and Bombers

[Ollie puts a card that says ‘Synopsis’ under camera and starts to pour drink]

Ollie: There is a couple. They are getting married. They are having an argument. Everyone is in love. Everyone is falling out. Everyone makes up. There are two young lovers. There are people who are not sure who they are in love with and who they are playing. There is one other man in this scene who is not very important so I have placed him on the left hand side of the stage. There are three different stories. Three different strands woven together. These amateurs are trying to put on a play. They are going to get cast in various roles. One of them is given the main character but the others are not very happy about that because he is not a very good actor. There is a scene where people are
rehearsing and it doesn’t look like one of them is going to show up. The writer and director is worried he won’t show up at all. But he does. And it’s still a disaster. There are so many plot lines and there is so much confusion about identity. But the writer has left it open. One interpretation is that none of this happened at all. That it was all a dream and we have woken up.

The first time I saw you (Part One)  
LX 14

Ollie/ Michael / Nicki: The first time I saw you

Michael: Was in the middle of a forest

Ollie: Was in the middle of a road

Nicki: In a theatre

Michael: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Ollie: I knocked you off your bicycle

Nicki: We were in the bar

Michael: You were sleeping

Ollie: You were breathing

Ollie / Michael / Nicki: I had been drinking

Ollie: I was over the limit

Michael: I was over the moon

Nicki: You walked over

Nicki / Ollie / Michael: I was in love

Nicki: I told you my name. I didn’t tell you my telephone number. It didn’t feel appropriate.

Ollie: I didn’t know what I was doing

Michael: In the middle of the forest

Ollie: In the middle of the road

Michael: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Nicki: In a theatre

Ollie: In Paris
Michael: I wasn’t a very good actor
Ollie: I wasn’t a very good driver
Nicki: I didn’t want you to go [Nicki gets up]

Ollie/ Michael: The first time I saw you
Ollie: Was in the middle of a forest
Michael: Was in the middle of a road
Ollie: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Michael: I knocked you off your bicycle

Nicki: I was lying on the floor [Nicki lies down]

Ollie: You were still sleeping
Michael: You were still breathing
Ollie / Michael: I had been drinking
Michael: I was over the limit
Ollie: I was over the moon
Ollie / Michael: I was still in love
Michael: I didn’t know what I was doing
Ollie: In the middle of the forest
Michael: In the middle of the road
Ollie: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Michael: In Paris

Ollie: I wasn’t a very good actor
Michael: I wasn’t a very good driver
Ollie / Michael: I wasn’t in control
The first time I saw you

Michael: Was in the middle of a forest
Ollie: Was in the middle of a road
Michael: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Ollie: I knocked you off your bicycle

Michael: You were still sleeping

Ollie: You were still breathing

Ollie / Michael: I had been drinking

Ollie: I was over the limit

Michael: I was over the moon

Ollie / Michael: I was still in love

Ollie: I didn’t know what I was doing

Michael: In the middle of the forest

Ollie: In the middle of the road

Michael: In A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Ollie: In Paris

Michael: I wasn’t a very good actor

Ollie: I wasn’t a very good driver

Ollie / Michael: I wasn’t in control

Michael: You were waking up. You were coming round. You were still breathing. You had your head on my chest. Your head was spinning. The birds were singing. Your eyes were closed. You had something in your eye. Someone put something in your eye. Something that made you fall in love with the first person you saw when you woke up. That was me. I was the first person you saw when you woke up. Something changed. In the middle of a forest. In A Midsummer Night’s Dream. When you woke up.


Melody Nelson

SFX Melody Loop

LX 15

Ollie: And so I was messing around before losing Control of the Rolls. I moved forward slowly My car swerved and a violent thud Tore me suddenly from my daydreams. Shit!

[Michael rolls bicycle tire across stage. Nicki gets up from floor and sits down]
Ollie: I saw a bicycle tire up ahead,  
That continued to roll freely,  
And like a doll that loses its balance  
Her skirt pulled up on her white pants

The first time I saw you (Part Two) SFX Serge Gainsbourg - Je T’Aime   LX 16

[Nicki takes off her dress and stands up then does sexy bicycle walk onstage]

Michael: The first time I saw you, you were sitting on a chair at a table talking into a microphone and you were reading from a script. I was nervous, I didn’t know what was going to happen or what to expect. We had taken our seats, taken our coats off. You asked us to sit back and relax. You said you were going to take us on a journey. I gave you my name, I didn’t give you my telephone number, it didn’t feel appropriate. I wanted to know you. I wanted to know everything about you and you wanted to show me it all. The first time I saw you was in a theatre. The first time I saw you was at the beginning. The first time I saw you everything stopped… [Michael stops music].

Michael: Ladies and Gentlemen of the company this is your five minute call.  
Nicki Hobday. Ollie Smith. You have five minutes. Thank you.

The first time I saw you (Part Three)    LX 16.5

Ollie The first time I saw you was in a bar in Nottingham. And it was a bit of an odd meeting because it hadn’t really been planned very far in advance. I had been in contact with you through work; I can’t remember if it was via email or over the phone. And after we’d finished discussing whatever business we’d been discussing, you suddenly chimed in with: “Would you like to go for a drink?” And I said: “Yeah, alright…”. And I was a bit taken aback because I’d never just been asked out for a drink before especially not by someone I didn’t know – or someone I hadn’t ever even met. So you suggested a bar and we made arrangements to meet there after I’d finished work. I finished work around 5, and went to the bar. I was feeling a little nervous. But I was excited to be meeting somebody new. And all this would have been fine except for the fact that I had also agreed to meet my sister after work. So she came too. I went into the bar and instinctively knew which one you were. You got up and greeted me, you were very warm and welcoming, and we headed over to the bar for some drinks. And after we’d bought them we went to sit down on these plush leather sofas. You offered to hold my drink as I sat down, took my coat off and got settled, which was a nice gesture but there was a table. And there was some music that wouldn’t stop playing. We started chatting, getting-know-you small talk. And I remember you were very friendly and interested in me as a person, which was really lovely. And this whole meeting probably only lasted about 45 minutes – – just shy of an hour. But that was OK because I was confident that we’d meet again. We got on well. So we finished our drinks, said goodbye” and left the bar. And when we were outside my sister said:

Nicki: “Well, he seemed nice”.

Ollie: I said: “Yes. He was nice”. That’s how it happened, wasn’t it, Michael?
When my cue comes

SFX: Are you there?

LX 17

Michael: I was drunk Ollie
Nicki? Ollie? Are you there?
I don’t know how I got here
This isn’t where I usually sit
This isn’t what I usually say
This isn’t how I usually look
Something has changed
This has changed
I have changed
And I don’t know who I am
Or where I am anymore
Who I’m supposed to be in love with
Or who I’m supposed to be playing
And in the beginning I was a technician
I didn’t want to say anything
I didn’t want to take my clothes off
I didn’t want to cut my hair off
I didn’t want to pretend
I wanted to play the recorder
But I didn’t want to make any mistakes
I wanted Ollie to play the guitar
But it still needed tuning
I wanted Nicki to dance in those clogs
But they weren’t sexy enough… apparently
I wanted to play Bottom the Donkey
Like I did the first time but…

Ollie: But you forgot your lines

Michael: … But I forgot my lines
So now I feel like an ass
And it started with a kiss
But I don’t know how to end this
I don’t know how this ends
And I was always told
You should never end a story
And then I woke up and it was all a dream
But this is a dream
And I’m waiting to wake up
I’m waiting for my entrance
I’m waiting for my moment
I’m waiting for my cue
I’m waiting to begin
When my cue comes
Call me
And I will answer

Nicki: So here I am.
Ollie: Not being me.
Nicki: Not being here.
Ollie: Not standing onstage.
Nicki: Not sitting offstage.
Ollie: Not facing an audience.
Nicki: At the beginning…
Ollie: So this is it…
Nicki: The Beginning
Michael: So… what do we do now?

[Michael, Ollie and Nicki reset to beginning]

Michael: Ladies and Gentlemen of the company this is your beginners’ call. To the stage please. This is the beginning. Thank you.

SFX Reset
LX 18
SFX Preset
Blackout
The Middle

[Sound of waves. Michael and Tony take off shoes and set up the space. When Shipping Forecast plays Tony begins soliloquy under bubble wrap.]

Tony: To be, or not to be – that is the question;
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep –
No more – and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. ’Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep –
To sleep – perchance to dream. Ay there’s the rub.
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. [Pause. Michael unveils Tony]
There’s the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

[Elgar plays. Tony stands.]

Tony: This story
Takes place in the interval
In a theatre
There is one man in the foyer
This man
In a theatre
And he is standing

[Michael stands. Tony sits]

Tony: This man is sitting down
He is telling a story
This story
In a theatre
This theatre
In the interval
This interval
He is drinking

[Michael brings drink]
He is possibly drunk

[Michael brings drink]

He watches
He waits
He drinks

[Michael brings drink]

He walks up and down
He is drinking

[Michael brings drink]

He is possibly drunk

[Michael brings drink]

He watches
He waits
He drinks

[Michael brings drink]

He is repeating himself
He is waiting
In a theatre
In a foyer
In an interval

He is waiting for something to happen
Something to end or to begin
Something to be or not to be
Something in between

[Tony waits for Elgar to finish. Tony drinks.]

This man is someone you might have heard of
He has seen it all
He has lived through it all
He has stood on many stages
He has faced many audiences
This man is an amateur who is trying to be professional
An actor trying to be Hamlet
He could be a father
He could be a grandfather
He could be your grandfather
He could be you.
He could be me.
This man is in the middle of a stage
This man in the middle
I am this man
This middle man
Between a writer and an audience
This page and this stage
But I am not the writer
I am the writer’s father
The writer is the actor’s son
He is writing this now
Sitting on the stairs
In the middle of the night
Listening to the Shipping Forecast
Wondering why he can’t work at normal hours
Why he has never had a proper job
I’ve always wondered that too
(That isn’t in the script)
He is sitting on the stairs
In the middle of the night
Wondering why he can’t sleep
I used to sing him to sleep
A song about a rabbit

_Cotton tail, Cotton tail_
_Sitting in the sun_
_Cotton tail, Cotton tail_
_You’re the lucky one_

_Dig no well, plant no beans_
_Make no pumpkin grow_
_Say your prayers_
_Thank the Lord_
_That he made you so_

_Shine no shoe, bake no bread_
_Don’t go split no rail_
_Sometimes wish I could be_
_Like old cotton tail_

And now I sing it to my grandchildren

_Cotton tail, Cotton tail_
_Snoozing in the shade_
_Cotton tail, Cotton tail_
_That’s the way you’re made_

_Two leg folk, work and slave_
_Guess that’s why they’re born_
_Work and slave till the day_
Gabriel blows his horn

In the land far away
Down the starry trail
All the Lord’s children play
Like old cotton tail
Lazy Cotton Tail
Oooh oooh oooh oooh
Lazy Cotton Tail (and repeat)

And by the end of the song my son, or grandchildren, would be nearly asleep.

My son asked me here to help him out
Because I have been here before
And I know how this works
I have read Hamlet before
Not just for this show
But when I was a young man at school
Younger than he is now
Sitting at a desk like this one

He is here now
Watching me read this out
Hoping I can read his handwriting
Hoping I can read it out the way he wrote it
Hoping that you will enjoy what you hear
He is hoping
And so am I
That you like classical music

[Bach plays]

This is the interval
This is when you usually drink

[Tony drinks]

This is when you possibly get drunk

[Tony drinks]

This is when things start to unravel
When things become unclear
When you turn to someone next to you and say
‘Is this part of the show?’
And they say

Michael: I don’t know

Tony: This is when you light a cigar
[Michael brings cigar]

This is when I usually light a cigar
But because of health and safety
I am not permitted to smoke today / tonight

[Michael removes cigar]

I don’t smoke anyway
I don’t know how to smoke a cigar
So you will have to imagine that I am smoking
I am smoking a Hamlet cigar
I am Hamlet
It is 2013 [whichever year in which this is performed]
I am on stage
In the middle of a stage
Waiting to perform in front of you
I am in the middle
Between having learned what to do and having to do it
Between practising and performing
Not knowing how you might receive it
Between remembering and forgetting
I am in the middle of talking to you
In a theatre
In a foyer
In an interval
In the middle of a show
You are the audience
Like a tide
You come and go
You ebb and flow
Walk in and walk out
Stand up and sit down

[Tony drinks. Michael blindfolds Tony who stands on chair.]

I am in the middle of walking the plank
Over a beach in Malta
On a student holiday in 1967
I am in the middle
Between studying and working
Between learning what to do and having to do it
I am in the middle of talking to my friend
Who is taking a picture of me
Walking the plank
Between sky and sand
And I am laughing while I am talking
I am in the middle of jumping and falling
Between the memory and the photograph
[Tony sits down. Michael removes blindfold.]

I am in the middle of an exam room in 1960
I am sitting at a desk in the middle of a test
I am in the middle between learning what to do and having to do it
Between a practice test and an important exam

[Michael writes on the desk: ‘To be or not to be’]

Our English teacher has written on the blackboard in chalk
Extracts of Shakespearean text
It is A Midsummer Night’s Dream or Hamlet or The Winter’s Tale
We are to write who is saying what and why they are saying it
The teacher is in the middle of handing out the questions

[Michael hands out paper]

I turn the page over
I am in the middle of working out the answers
Between success and failure
Between being treated like a boy and being treated like an adult
I memorise as many of Hamlet’s soliloquies as I can
As a bank of quotations to use in an exam
And here I am recalling them on this stage
Fifty years later.

[Michael removes paper.]

I am in limbo
A middle aged man
In the middle of a stage
Emerging from a chrysalis
Hamlet in bubblewrap
A neo-geriatric in aspic
In the middle of being a father and being a son
Michael’s dad and Harry’s lad
Between spending time caring for elderly parents
And spending time with our grandchildren
Between helping with childcare
And organizing residential care
Between dealing with the sadness of a parent’s departure
And sharing the joy of a new arrival
Between trying to keep memories alive
And creating new memories
I am in the middle
A middle generation
Squeezed between beginnings and endings.
Just like today / tonight.
[Bach stops playing. Tony drinks.]
This is the interval
People are drinking

[Michael brings drink]
People are taking their coats off
Putting their handbags down
Putting sugar in their coffee
Salt and pepper on their food
People cry
People don’t want to cry
But people do
People leave during the interval
Because people cry
Because people do
People go to the toilet
Because people have to do
What people have to do
People are still drinking

[Michael drinks]
People are still laughing
Still talking
Still eating
Talking while they are eating
Talking while they are laughing
There is music playing

[Dvorak plays. Tony waits until end of fanfare]
It is too loud
Or maybe I am just sitting under the speaker
The writer turns to the middle of his notebook
And starts to write about what people do during the interval
He is writing this during the interval now.
In a foyer.
In a theatre.

A woman finishes her coffee
Another woman has just started hers.
In this foyer
Someone is always standing up
When someone else is sitting down
And the music accompanies it
As if the interval is as choreographed
As the performance that bookends it
But the actors are not here
They are somewhere else
The Front of House staff check their watches
The programme sellers give it one last push
The ice cream sellers have shut up shop
The tannoy comes on and a voice says:

‘Please return to your seats
The second act is about to begin’

And you do because it is
People put on their coats
Pick up their handbags
Scrape their chairs across the floor
Finish their drinks

[Tony drinks]

People make phone calls

[Michael brings phone]

To say ‘Where are you?
I’m waiting. What shall I do?
Shall I go back in without you?’

[Michael takes phone]

People look out of the window
Wondering where their friend is
Wondering what to do
Because people wonder
Because people do
And now only my son is left
His handwriting becoming more and more like mine
The music is playing to itself
The empty bottles on the empty tables
With the empty cups and the empty glasses
Wait to be collected
By the waiters who are looking forward to the end of the show
So they can all go home

[Michael removes drinks]

And everything here will be returned to normal
None of this will be here when you leave
Just as it was when you arrived
I am just here
Where one thing ends
And another thing begins
In the middle.
‘Ladies and Gentlemen
Will you please take your seats
As this evening’s performance is about to resume
Thank you’

[Michael covers Tony up. Tony soliloquy.]

Remember thee? Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmixed with baser matter. Now to my word:
It is ‘Adieu, adieu, remember me.’

[Dvorak stops. When Shipping Forecast starts Michael uncovers Tony and they reset the space and put shoes back on. The sound of waves plays.]

THE END
Michael: Dot Dot Dot etc.

[Michael reads cards. Ollie lying on the floor.]

Michael: Thank you for coming to The End
Before we start
There’s something I really need to say
Something I need to get off my chest
And I want to get it right
So I’ve written it down
Word for word
Just in case
Something goes wrong
It’s just that
I’ve been performing now for, well, a long time
In different theatres
In different cities
In different countries
To different audiences
Of different sizes
And I came to a decision while we were making this show
That this will be the end
And that’s not just the title
It’s time to call it a day
This will be the last time I perform
This will be the last stage I stand on
You will be the last audience I face
This will be the last costume I wear
Actually this will be the last costume I wear
This will be the last projection I stand in front of
This will be the last spotlight I stand in

This will be the last text I speak
This will be the last soundtrack I speak over

[Ollie brings mic onstage.]

This will be the last microphone I speak into
This will be the last microphone stand I spike
Actually Ollie could you just come and…

[Ollie spikes the mic]

I don’t know if you know this Ollie but when you have something onstage you’re supposed to spike it so you can remember where it should go if moves

Ollie: Yes I did know that.
Michael: Thanks Ollie. Well because this is the end of my journey. I thought it would make sense to work with someone who was at the beginning of their journey. This is Ollie. Actually Ollie please could you come and stand here and read those cards I gave you.

Ollie: This is my first show

Michael: This is my last show

Ollie: This is my first time on stage

Michael: This is my last time on stage

Ollie: This is my professional debut

Michael: This is my swansong

[Michael steps away from mic]

Michael: I don’t know if you know this Ollie but according to mythology, a swan was mute but would let out a beautiful burst of song before it died,

Ollie: Yes I do know

Michael: We call it a swansong.

Ollie: I told you that

Michael: Now we say it about artists performing for the last time. This is my last time. This is Ollie’s first time. This is my resignation letter to the theatre. As I take my last steps towards an early retirement. This Ollie’s love letter to the theatre as he takes his first steps towards a professional career. He is my apprentice. My protégé. My pupil. He’s got a lot to learn. Are you ready Ollie?

Ollie: I’m ready Michael. I’m ready to start the show.

[Michael takes Ollie downstage and blindfolds him. Ollie starts to walk the wall]

Michael: Ollie’s going to start the show for you now while I explain my decision to say goodbye to the theatre. I’m finding it difficult to break through, to connect, to feel like I’m engaging you. It’s not you, it’s me. It feels like something has come between us. Something big. There’s something in the way. I can’t see you but you can see me. Maybe you can see my hands shaking but I can’t see your hands. All I can see are the fire exit signs. You know my name. You know Ollie’s name. But we don’t know your names. We don’t know you at all. We don’t even know how this ends. Because this doesn’t end when the show finishes. This doesn’t end when you go home. This doesn’t end when you go to sleep. And you might sleep but I won’t sleep and you might move on but I won’t move on. So I’ve asked Ollie to start the show by trying to work out what has come between us. What have you found?

Ollie: A wall
Michael: Any last words?
Ready Aim Fire

[Michael shoots Ollie]

Michael: Dot Dot Dot
Dot Dot Dot
Dot Dot Dot
Dot

Michael: I wanted this to be a dot dot dot

Ollie: Not a full stop

Michael: But it’s difficult isn’t it

Ollie: To end things

Michael: Maybe like a relationship

Ollie: Or a long distance phone call

Michael: With a loved one

Ollie: Or a life

Michael: Or a career

Ollie: Or a show

Michael: It’s difficult sometimes to find the right words

Ollie: Or to find a way in

Michael: Or a way out

Ollie: So tonight

Michael: We found some words

Ollie: That we’re going to try to end this with

Michael: But I’m going to have to ask Ollie to read them for me

Ollie: But that’s at the end

Michael: But in the beginning

Ollie: I was thinking about exits
Michael: And I was thinking about fire exits

Ollie: Because now when we go to the theatre

Michael: We always have to know where the exits are

Ollie: Here and there [points out]

Michael: In case we want to leave

Ollie: In case there’s a fire

Michael: Or if it’s rubbish

Ollie: Don’t leave

Michael: Please don’t leave [gives card to audience member]

Ollie: Because we can’t leave can we?

Michael: No because if we left

Ollie: Then that would be the end

Michael: And we’ve only just begun

Ollie: So tonight we were thinking about stage exits

Michael: And what happens if we cross this line over here [walk offstage]

Ollie / Michael: Have we left?

Ollie: And we were thinking about stage directions

Michael: And the stage direction

Ollie: In The Winter’s Tale

Michael: By William Shakespeare

Ollie: I don’t know if any of you know it

Michael: Exit pursued by a bear

Ollie: And no one’s really sure if it was a real bear

Michael: Or a man dressed as a bear

Ollie: So tonight
Michael: I’m going to be bare for you
Ollie: I’m going to be a bear for you
Michael: In a theatre
Ollie: Because in those days actually
Michael: Theatres weren’t just used for plays
Ollie: They were used for bear baiting as well
Michael: So you might see The Winter’s Tale one night
Ollie: And the next night you might go and see a bear being baited by a man
Michael: And the bear would be standing there onstage like this
Ollie: And the audience would be playing cards on the edge of the stage
Michael: Wondering how it was going to end
Ollie: We don’t know how this is going to end
Michael: But there are some words here that might help
[Michael and Ollie pick up more cards]
Ollie: And we think what Shakespeare was doing
Michael: By giving the bear a stage direction
Ollie: He was giving the bear its revenge over the man
Michael: He was giving the bear its voice back
Ollie: He was reclaiming the theatre space for the bear
Michael: So tonight I’m going to try to find the voice of the bear for you
Ollie: I’m going to find my inner bear for you
Michael: And I’m going to try to reclaim the theatre space for the bear for you
Ollie: And in the end
Michael: If this works
Ollie: If this works
Michael: I’m going to be somewhere else

Ollie: And I’m going to be trying to find a way to end this

Michael: I’m going to be trying to find the right words

Ollie: The way in

Michael: The way out

Ollie: But that’s at the end

Michael: And we’ve only just begun

Ollie: So I’m going to stop there

Michael: But it’s not the end

Ollie: I’m just here

Michael: Where one thing ends

Ollie: And another thing begins

Michael: And in the middle I’ll be back at the beginning
   And in the beginning
   I wanted to be bare for you
   I wanted to be laid bare for you
   I wanted to be stripped bare for you
   I wanted to be a bare performer on a bare stage for all of you
   I wanted to bare all
   I wanted to be all bare
   But then I realised
   That I didn’t feel comfortable being naked
   In front of a room full of strangers
   So I got these bear suits
   And in the beginning
   I started to think about being the bear
   And being the man dressed as the bear
   And being the man the bear
   Or maybe the man dressed as the bear
   Pursues as he exits offstage over there
   But then I realised that this theatre
   Doesn’t have any wings
   So there was nowhere to
   Exit, pursued by a bear
   So we were just going round in circles

But it was difficult to…
Ollie, Ollie I think you can stop there
Twice was enough
Actually I think once was enough
Twice was overkill probably
They got it, you can tell they got it
But it did make it into a joke didn’t it
That’s not what we wanted to do
We don’t want to make fun of it
These were real bears
You know
Real men
Real bears
Real bear baiters
Real men dressed as bears
On a bare stage
And what are you doing on stage eh?
Because you’re not a bear
And you’re not a performer
You should be up there shouldn’t you
Looking down on where I am here
Trying to make sense of it all
Trying to make sense of everything I’ve seen
But you’re here
And I don’t understand why you’re still here
And you had a job to do didn’t you Ollie?
You had a job. We talked about your job.
And it was to put the bear suit on.
And you couldn’t even do that right could you?
You did it right in front of me so no one could see me
Why don’t you go back where you came from
Go back to drama school
Go back to acting Ollie
Go back to wanting to make your parents proud
Get back up there
Get back to doing what you do best which is fuck all
Do you know what I’m doing? What am I doing Ollie?

Ollie: Baiting me

Michael: Yes I am
I’m baiting you
I’m the man
You’re the bear
I’m the man who baits the bear

Ollie: You’re the man

Michael: I’m the man and you’re the bear
And bears are only good for one thing
Bears are only good for dancing Ollie
I want you to dance
Dance for me Ollie

[Michael uses big index cards]

Michael: Dance
Have you started?
You look like you’re warming up.
I think you can do better that that.
Dance
Dance faster
Dance faster
You’re not a man in a bear suit
You’re a bear
And bears are good at dancing
I want you to dance faster
Dance faster and harder
Faster and harder
Faster
Faster
Faster
Dance faster

Michael: Any last words?
Ready aim fire

[Michael shoots Ollie]

Michael: That was great Ollie. Much better than in rehearsal. Remember. Think bear.

Ollie: I’m sitting in the wings. You don’t know I’m here. I’ve been sitting here for quite some time actually. I was watching you come in to the theatre tonight and in a few minutes I’ll watch you leave. I’m looking after you, keeping an eye on you. I’m here in case something goes wrong. I’m here in case of an emergency. I know where the fire exits are. I’ll just draw your attention to the two illuminated green signs above the doors either side of the stage, and the third on your right-hand side at the back of the raked seating. Please leave calmly and sensibly if we do need to evacuate the building. Please don’t run. There’s no need to panic. You don’t have to worry. You’re in safe hands. We’re just trying to do our job. We’re trying to get to the end of this.

[Ollie goes to speaker and starts playing cards on the edge of the stage]

Michael: He’s still sitting in the wings. He’s still waiting for his entrance. Sometimes he plays cards backstage. Sometimes he has a bottle of beer. Sometimes he smokes a cigarette and stubs it out in a fire bucket by his feet. He used to have a job as a fire officer in a theatre. He knows the ropes. Actually Ollie I don’t know if you know this but the phrase ‘know the ropes’ comes from working in the theatre.

Ollie: Actually Michael that’s a common misconception, it’s a nautical term
Michael: Fuck off Ollie. The stage manager is helping him into his bear suit now. The director comes up and says ‘Remember. Think Bear’ He walks to the edge of the stage and waits for the thunder, the lightning, the roaring. The stage manager gets the signal in her cans ‘Cue Bear’ and he’s on. He shuffles onstage. Arms outstretched. He’s trying not to knock into the scenery. The suit is heavy and there’s an effort involved in walking across the stage. It was made to fit him and he wonders if he’ll get to keep it after the show. Or if he will ever play the role of the bear again. Maybe this will be the last time.

He’s centre stage now. He turns towards the audience and he sees his mother in the front row. He hopes he is making her proud. He winks at her through the mouth of the bear. But she can’t see him because of the smoke and the strobe lighting. In fact she doesn’t even realise it’s her own son. No one ever notices who plays the bear. No one has ever mentioned him in a review of the show. He’s never really received the critical acclaim he craves. A five star review. And he’s off. He was a man in a bear suit. Then he was a bear. Now he’s a man in a bear suit again. And the curtain falls.

Ollie: There is no curtain call

Michael: The show has finished

Ollie: This is the post-show discussion

Michael: We’re answering your questions

Ollie: We’re talking about what went right

Michael: And what went wrong

Ollie: Apparently I made a few mistakes

Michael: But everything else went according to plan

Ollie: There was no plan

Michael: Ollie dropped his cards

Ollie: Michael got his zip stuck

Michael: Ollie forgot to tie his hair back

Ollie: Michael forgot to learn his lines

Michael: The programmer is introducing us to the audience

Ollie: They ask us to talk about how we made the show

Michael: Ollie says it’s his first show

Ollie: Michael says it’s his last show… again.
Michael: There is an awkward silence when no one asks a question
Ollie: Michael suggests
Michael: Maybe we should just end the post-show discussion there
Ollie: No one laughs
Michael: Finally someone asks a question about the set.
Ollie: Like where is it? Michael says:
Michael: The text is the set
Ollie: Michael says
Michael: The soundtrack is the set
Ollie: Michael says
Michael: The theatre is the set
Ollie: No one knows what he is talking about
Michael: Ollie is sweating.
Ollie: Michael’s resorting to yes or no answers.
Michael: He feels a bit out of his depth
Ollie: He needs a drink.
[Ollie and Michael move centre stage with mic]
Michael: No. We’ve not made a show together before
Ollie: This whole process is a beginning
Michael: And it’s supposed to be about endings
Ollie: We’ve got to get from here to there
Michael: Yes
Ollie: We have to find out what we want to say
Michael: Yes
Ollie: You see there’s a certain responsibility to try everything
Michael: Yes. Even if it’s Ollie’s idea

Ollie: Sometimes you talk it around in circles

Michael: You just throw it away before you try it

Ollie: And then you’ll never know if it works or not

Michael: No

Ollie: It’s a compromise

Michael: Yes

Ollie: A compromise in terms of both of you wanting to get the same thing

Michael: Both wanting to make you laugh

Ollie: Both wanting to make you cry

Michael: But we don’t know how to

Ollie: How do we reach a solution when we haven’t set a problem?

Michael: How do we end something when it’s only just begun?

Ollie: How do we end our relationship when we’ve just started working together?

Michael: Maybe we should just end the post-show discussion there.

[Michael blindfolds Ollie]

Michael: Any last words? Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: I have no intention of this being my last performance

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: In that sense. Maybe I’m not helping you.

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: Maybe I don’t want it to end

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: I was here to make Michael look good

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: Since then our relationship has changed
Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: I’ve found myself in a kind of limbo. Where one thing ends and another begins.

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: We wanted to end something together

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: But it only occurred to us after a while. That we haven’t actually started

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: I’m ready now

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: Because we made a bit of a mess

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: So at the beginning of the end I did this

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: Michael started a long time ago, a long time before I did

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: He called me in to make him look good

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: I’m here to make him look good

Michael: Ready aim fire [Michael shoots Ollie]

Ollie: You look good Michael

Michael: Thanks

Ollie: Michael is going to write a letter to himself now.

Michael: You’re doing really well Ollie

Ollie: And later on he’s going to read it to you over some music

Michael: It was all my idea anyway
[Michael blindfolds himself and walks along the wall]

Ollie: And he’s going to say it was all his idea anyway. I’m really here so I can carry on when Michael finally packs it all in. He called me in because he needed some youth and vigour in order to pull this off – I’m really here to make Michael look good. And at the end when he starts talking about his swansong and his final farewell, and he starts tugging at all your heartstrings and making you feel warm and fuzzy and loved, but also sad that he’s leaving, I’m going to step unassumingly aside and let him have the limelight. And I’m looking to you, Michael, to show me the ropes. Come on… Pass me the baton, Michael. It’s my turn now. Any last words? Ready aim fire.

[Ollie shoots Michael]

Ollie: We are very sorry

Michael: We didn’t mean it to end this way

Ollie: We wanted you to remember

Michael: When the curtain falls it will be over

Ollie: There will be no encore.

Michael: There will be no curtain call

Ollie: There will be no flowers at our feet

Michael: There will be no standing ovations

Ollie: There will be no five star reviews

Michael: This is my swansong

Ollie: So we’ve been thinking about endings

Michael: And exits

Ollie: And stage exits

Michael: And stage directions

Ollie: And the stage direction

Michael: Exit pursued by a bear

Ollie: We’ve been imagining the bear

Michael: Or the man dressed as a bear
Ollie: Waiting in the wings for his stage direction

Michael: We’ve been imagining endings of our own

Ollie: The end of our relationship

Michael: The end of our performance

Ollie: The end of your night

Michael: The end of the tour

Ollie: The end of our career

IPOD SOUND: Track 2

Michael: I’m standing where you are now but three months ago. I know that by the time you read this it will be ready. We’ll have costumes. And a lighting plan. And a set. Well. Maybe not a set. But we’ll know what we’re doing. We’ll know what we have to say. If we have lines we might even have learned them. Ollie will have bought something to tie his hair back because it keeps getting in his eyes. We might use the video projector. We should do because they put it up especially for us. But at the moment we would only be using it because it’s there.

You might get another blindfold. This one is getting a bit frayed around the edges. You’ll take up all cards lying on the floor. Or maybe you’ll leave them where they are and say it’s part of the aesthetic. All of this will somehow come together. By the end of this, you’ll have worked out how all of this fits into place. You’ll have given the venue its kettle back and washed up the cups for the last time. You’ll have put all the DV tapes, neatly labelled, back into a box and you’ll probably never watch them again or record over them by accident like last time. Or you’ll do a really good rehearsal and forget to film it.

You’ll have got a picture taken that might represent the show. Maybe a picture of you or Ollie standing against a wall blindfolded. But you’ll think I’m sure I’ve seen that before somewhere. And you’ll send it off to venues for their brochures with some words you wrote before you made the show that don’t really make any sense any more. And some fliers that’ll stay under a desk until after your gig when they’ll be recycled. And your posters will end up on the back of the toilet door so every time someone goes for a shit they’ll see your stupid blindfolded face. You’ll sign contracts that you don’t read and write risk assessments for doing things like running around dressed as a bear or sitting on a speaker or drinking beer. You’ll get an audience of 12 and sit in a Travelodge after the show watching Question Time and drinking instant coffee with single service punnets of UHT milk wondering what’s the bloody point.

Ollie: It’s supposed to be part of the aesthetic… [throws cards in the air]

Michael: And after a while, when you’re on tour, and you go bowling and Ollie always wins, and you drink too much, and you say bagsy not driving after everyone else so you do all the driving and everyone else gets drunk and falls asleep on the way home and you don’t know whether you should be going up or down the M1 and you’re eating a pot noodle with a pair of pliers at 2am in the morning and you’re staying in a caravan in Morecambe in November and
it’s raining and you’re playing cards for per diems and you’re losing when one of the others turns to you and says

Ollie: I don’t care what it says in the contract, it’s just not how I imagined it.

CARDS 1

Michael: And you realise that you all fucking hate each other. Then you’ll think. That’s it. It’s over. That’s the end. It’s time to call it a day. Maybe then you’ll remember how you felt. When you wrote this. Sitting here three minutes ago. Or three hours ago. Or three days ago. Or three weeks ago. Or three months ago. Or six months ago. Or a year ago. Or two years if we’re lucky. Or three years. Or however long it takes. To get this over with. Whatever this is.

Ollie: Don’t worry.

Michael: We know what you’re thinking.

Ollie: It’s not going to be a show

Michael: About a show

Ollie: About a show

Michael: About a show

Ollie: About a show

Michael: About a show

Ollie: About a show

Michael: About a show

Ollie: About a show

Michael: About people pretending to be

Ollie: People pretending to be

Michael: People pretending to be

Ollie: People pretending to be

Michael: People pretending to be

Ollie: People pretending to be

Michael: People pretending to be

Ollie: People pretending to be
Michael: People pretending to be
Ollie: People pretending to be
Michael: Repeating
Ollie: Repeating
Michael: Repeating
Ollie: Repeating
Michael: Repeating
Ollie: Repeating
Michael: Repeating
Ollie: Repeating
Michael: Repeating
Ollie: Repeating
Michael: Themselves
Ollie: No it’s not
Michael: It’s about you.

Ollie: You’re sitting in the train station waiting for the train home. And you’re reflecting on the evening, mulling it over in your head, trying to work it out. You have some vague ideas, but you’re curious to know whether or not your friend has reached similar conclusions to you. So you turn to your friend and you say, “So what did you think of it?” and they let out a long sigh, and say:

Michael: I don’t care what it says in the programme. it’s just not how imagined it.

CARDS 2

Ollie: And you nod in agreement, and you’re about to say something else, when all of a sudden, “The train now arriving on Platform 2 is the 22:20 Southern service to London Victoria, calling at East Croydon, Clapham Junction and London Victoria”, and you forget what you were going to say. The train pulls in. You go home. Have a beer. And that’s the end of that.

[Michael brings Ollie a beer]

Ollie: Thanks Michael.
Michael: I have every intention of this being my last performance.

Ollie: You’re doing really well Michael

Michael: In that sense. Maybe I’m not helping you.

Ollie: It was all my idea anyway.

Michael Maybe you don’t want it to end.

Ollie: Maybe they do.

[Ollie starts to get out of his bearsuit]

Michael: I invited Ollie here to show him the ropes. Since then our relationship has changed. He got a bit big for his bearsuit. I’ve found myself in a kind of limbo. Where one thing ends and another begins. We wanted to end something together. But it only occurred to us after a while. That we haven’t actually started. I’m ready now. Because we made a bit of a mess. So at the beginning of the end. I did this. Ollie started about an hour ago. A long time after I did. I invited him here to make me look good.

Ollie: You look good Michael

[Ollie gets dressed in his clothes]

Michael: Ollie is really here so he can carry on where I left off. I used to be like you. I used to dress like you. I used to act like you. I used to be able to act like you. I used to go to acting classes. I used to make my parents proud. I used to have hopes and dreams. I used to have passion and ambition and motivation and drive. Now I’m too tired. I’m too tired all the time. I’m getting too old. I’m too old for this. I need to lie down. It’s your turn. It’s your turn to face the end. I feel like I’m being swept aside by people younger than me.

[Ollie pushes Michael away from mic. Michael kicks over beer bottle]

Michael: Now look what you’ve made me do. You’ve made me look old and tired and slow. I wanted to show you the ropes. Show you the way. But you showed me up. With your energetic dancing and enthusiastic deaths. I used to be energetic and enthusiastic and do warm ups. Now my idea of a warm up is a lie down. You were supposed to make me look good and you made me look old and tired and slow. It’s your turn. It’s your turn to face the end. It’s your turn Ollie. I’ve run out of words.

Ollie: Any last words? Ready Aim Fire

[Ollie shoots Michael]

Ollie: It’s not over yet Michael. It’s not over until you have danced like a bear.

[Ollie uses big index cards. Gives Michael big index cards]
Ollie: Dance
Michael: No
Ollie: Have you started?
Michael: No
Ollie: You look like you’re warming up.
Michael: No
Ollie: I think you can do better than that.
Michael: No
Ollie: Dance
Michael: No
Ollie: Dance faster
Michael: No
Ollie: Dance faster
Michael: No
Ollie: You’re not a man in a bear suit
Michael: No
Ollie: You’re a bear
Michael: No
Ollie: And bears are good at dancing
Michael: No
Ollie: I want you to dance faster
Michael: No
Ollie: Dance faster and harder
Michael: No
Ollie: Faster and harder
Michael: No

Ollie: Faster

Michael: No

Ollie: Faster

Michael: No

Ollie: Faster

Michael: No

Ollie: Dance faster

Michael: No

Ollie: Any last words?

Michael: In the end I don’t know whether to get up or not

[Michael goes to speaker and starts playing cards on the edge of the stage]

Ollie: He’s sitting in the wings. He’s been there for quite some time actually. He arrived well before the rest of the cast this evening, as he does every evening, to give himself plenty of time to get his head into the right place and settle into his role. Even though he plays a small part he believes that his moment on the stage is one of the most important moments of the whole play. In the dressing room before the show he sits for a while staring at his costume, contemplating the evening ahead.

Then he gets changed in silence and makes his way to the wings, before the curtain goes up on the first act, even though he doesn’t make his entrance until well into Act Three. He sits down. He waits. Lights up on Act One. He waits. He plays and replays what he has to do over and over in his head. He tries not to worry about doing it too fast or too slow. He pushes the image of himself falling flat on his face out of his head and superstitiously touches some wood. He waits. He half listens to the dialogue on stage; he knows every line now, right up until his entrance. He’s a professional. He wonders what might happen if he were to miss his cue. He listens harder. He waits.

Act Three begins and he slowly begins limbering up. He rolls his shoulders; stretches his arms. He stands up and bends over, touching his toes. It’s nearly time. He notices the stage manager looking at him. He feels his pulse start to quicken as his scene begins. And then he’s on. He enters so another character can exit, pursued by a bear…

[Michael runs across the stage.]

Ollie: He did well tonight. His performance was just right. Not too fast, not too slow. He wonders if maybe tonight was the best performance he’s ever done. But he doesn’t hang
around; he leaves the wings and makes his way back to the dressing room to get changed. He
doesn’t know what happens in the play after that. He’s never seen the end.

Michael: We’re leaving you now because we can’t be ourselves anymore
Ollie: Because we can’t be who you want us to be anymore
Michael: Because you used to let us be everything we wanted to be
Ollie: To pretend to be somebody different
Michael: Somebody funny
Ollie: Somebody confident
Michael: Somebody free
Ollie: Now we feel a bit trapped
Michael: Because all you want us to be now is ourselves
Ollie: And we can’t remember who that is anymore
Michael: And you want us to make you laugh
Ollie: And you want us to make you cry
Michael: And we don’t know how to
Ollie: And you gave us the time
Michael: And you gave us the space
Ollie: And all we could give you was this
Michael: It’s about exits
Ollie: It’s about endings
Michael: It’s about death
Ollie: But in the end
Michael: When we try to put all the pieces together
Ollie: We’ll be in the dark
Michael: We didn’t want it to end this way
Ollie: There are too many beginnings
Michael: Too many endings

Ollie: Too many dots

Michael: Dot Dot Dot… [picking up cards]

Ollie: We’re in the hire van after touring the piece for around two years. We are more than a little surprised at how well received it’s been so far, touring all over the UK and some parts of mainland Europe which is surprising because there are quite a lot of words in it. Michael has become increasingly paranoid over a period of several months, obsessing over the details of the piece, changing things at the last minute, making things more difficult, drinking onstage and becoming a lot more irritable.

Michael: It’s supposed to be part of the aesthetic… [throws cards in the air]

Ollie: He also has a problem with the fact that he does the get-outs on his own as Ollie has been getting a bit full of himself because he now considers himself to be a successful artist and consequently shouldn’t have to do the get outs, and now he’s been offered work by much more established companies who are playing bigger venues with better shows. So he’s not really too bothered about helping Michael anymore. Ollie thinks that it’s Michael’s show so he should really do it himself or get an intern to do it or something. A conversation turns into a heated debate. A heated debate turns into an argument, an argument turns into a fight, which ends with Ollie saying;

Michael: I don’t care what it says in the contract, it’s just not how I imagined it.

CARDS 3

Ollie: And Michael has to cancel the final date of the tour. Any last words?

Michael: Yes I have actually Ollie.

Ollie: Ready Aim Fire

Michael: Because this is the end.

Ollie: Ready Aim Fire

Michael: We’ve been through a lot.

Ollie: Ready Aim Fire

Michael: You and I.

Ollie: Actually we haven’t

Michael: Stop interrupting. This is my moment in the limelight. This is my time to shine. Brightly. Before I fade away forever. This is my finale. This is my farewell. I wonder if you could step aside and let me enjoy my last words.
Ollie: This is what people will remember

Michael: For the rest of their lives

Ollie: For the rest of the night

Michael: In the end I’ve given it my best shot. I’ve tried to do everything I can to make this make sense. And now I have to leave you. And when I get home and hang up my bear suit for the last time and think about what I did wrong.

Ollie: What did you do wrong?

Michael: I sat on stage right instead of stage left.

Ollie: It’s an easy mistake to make.

Michael: I will make no more mistakes. I will have no more regrets. And whatever mistakes I made tonight I will forget.

Ollie: Was it when you kicked over your beer?

Michael: No I meant to do that. [It was when… names mistake from show]

Ollie: Well you better clear it up after the show.

Michael: Actually does anyone have a cigarette? Because after the show I might have a cigarette because after a show I sometimes have a cigarette and every time I do I say it will be my last cigarette and this time it will.

Ollie: It doesn’t get any better than this.

Michael: Ollie?

Ollie: Yes

Michael: I can’t go on like this

Ollie: That’s what you think

Michael: I’m standing where I started Ollie. You see, I’ve been here before. An hour ago. Last year. Maybe the year before that. And I won’t be standing here again. Because even if you’re still here. Even if they’re still here. Even if this theatre is still here. I won’t be. This has to be the end. Because otherwise what’s the point of calling it The End? Otherwise, it’s just words. And you’re not going to pick them up again. And I’m not going to pick them up again.

Ollie: Yes you are.
Michael: And so who is? Acting is nothing but reminding people. That’s all it is. It’s reminding people. Sometimes, if it’s very good, it can even remind them of themselves.

Ollie: What if it’s rubbish?

Michael: I don’t think I shall ever act onstage again.

Ollie: How about [next time we will perform show]?

Michael: I mean after that. It’s going down well Ollie.

Ollie: Yes it is Michael / Like the biggest lead balloon ever

Michael: In the end / I want to go out doing something I love. Thank you for listening. You’ve been a great audience. Thank you for taking the time out. Thank you for giving me an hour of your life so I could give you mine. I hope it was worth it and what you saw was what you wanted to see. I hope you won’t be glad to see the back of me. I was always told when I was at the beginning of my journey that you should never show the audience your back. Now I’m at the end of my journey [Ollie blindfolds Michael] I know why… I’m ready Ollie.

Ollie: Ready aim fire

[Ollie shoots Michael. Michael stays on floor]

[Ollie picks up last pile of cards]

Ollie: It’s supposed to be part of the aesthetic

[Ollie throws cards to floor]

Ollie: Michael is very sorry
He didn’t want it to end like this
Unfortunately he cannot be with us here tonight
He’s somewhere very far from home
It’s a shame because he had some good ideas
He was going to dress as a bear
He was going to dance for you
He was going to let out a beautiful burst of song
Now I guess we’ll never see it
We’ll never hear it
We’ll never know
The truth is
Michael is falling
Michael is failing
He wanted to tell you about the end
But in the end
He couldn’t find the words
You may think that he wrote this
That this is his voice
But the truth is in the end
He couldn’t find the voice
The words
The way in
The way out
The way to end this
And so he left us to pick up the pieces
To join up the dots
To say his last words
Michael didn’t want it to end this way
He wanted you to see him dance
He wanted you to hear his beautiful burst of song
But in the end you saw him disappear
In the end he gave it his best shot
But in the end he ran out of words
In the end it was nothing to write home about
In the end he had his back against the wall
He wanted to go out with a bang
He wanted to bring the house down
But it went down like a lead balloon
And in the end it was a little bit flat
He fell flat on his face
He didn’t want it to end this way
He wanted this to be a dot dot dot not a full stop
Dot Dot Dot etc.

Michael: I don’t know whether to get up or not…

LX 5: Spots out
CARDS 4
SLIDE 5
LX 6: Blackout
LX 7: House Lights / Warm Wash
Every time I look out of my window

Every time I look out of my window.
I etch his face upon the sky.
Whether moulding clouds into his likeness.
Or tracing stars with half-closed eyes.
Every time I listen to the wind I score his voice upon its staves.
Longing to hear a loving whisper.
Though the voice is not the same.
Every time I feel the rain I sense him falling down.
He permeates the concrete.
He penetrates the ground.
Every time I see the picture of the room he left behind.
The hole still serves to haunt me.
More than it reminds.
He is the sky, the earth, the stars, the sea.
His face, his voice, his history.
But I know he’s standing next to me.
Every time I look out of my window.

- Written for The Ashes (2011 / 2013) and reworked for The man who flew into space from his apartment (2015 / 2016). Referring to on p.131 in relation to the role of the dramaturg in contemporary performance. I return to this piece of writing as a motif when I seek to recalibrate my practice as a theatre maker and my parallel practice as a dramaturg. It is my aim that my work leaves its trace and I am perhaps standing next to the artist in absentia.
Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Footnotes


24 Ibid., p. 78.
26 Ibid., 76.
27 Ibid., 76.
28 Ibid., 76.
31 David Edgar, Is the Playwright Dead, Oxford University (5 February 2015).
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
50 Ibid. p. 79.
53 Ibid., p. 90.
57 Howard Barker, Staging the Unforgivable (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 22 May 2013).
58 Ibid.
61 Michael Pinchbeck, Outside Eye Project blog [online] (3 November 2010) [Accessed throughout the thesis].
64 Howard Barker, Staging the Unforgivable (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 22 May 2013).
70 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 201.
82 Ibid., p. 201.
116 Ibid., p. 107.
119 Ibid., p. 197.
120 Ibid., p. 197.
130 David Harradine and Synne Behrndt, Invisible Things: Documentation from a Devising Process (Brighton: Fervedor Sleep).
171 Maddy Costa, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, *Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog* [online] (29 April 2012). <http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].
172 Ibid.
183 Ibid., p. 157.
189 Carl Lavery ‘Aesthetics and politics of Genet’s late theatre’, *Genet: Sex, Power and Dramaturgy*, Nottingham Contemporary (14 September 2011), 1-12 (p. 12).
194 Carl Lavery ‘Aesthetics and politics of Genet’s late theatre’, *Genet: Sex, Power and Dramaturgy*, Nottingham Contemporary (14 September 2011), 1-12 (p. 7).
195 Carl Lavery ‘Aesthetics and politics of Genet’s late theatre’, *Genet: Sex, Power and Dramaturgy*, Nottingham Contemporary (14 September 2011), 1-12 (p. 6).
References:

198 Ibid., p. xvii.
200 Ibid., p. 158.
211 Ibid., p. 198.
223 Ibid., p. 4.
231 Ibid., p. 93.
236 Claire MacDonald, ‘Conducting the flow: Dramaturgy and Writing’, Studies in Theatre and Performance, 30.1 (2010), 91-100 (p. 94).
237 Ibid., p. 5.
241 Ibid., p. 8.
244 Ibid., p. 215.
245 Ibid., p. 216.
246 Ibid., p. 214.
247 Elinor Fuchs, 'EF’s Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play', Theater, 42.2 (Summer, 2004), 4-9.
248 Ibid. p. 6.
249 Ibid. p. 9.
256 Michael Pinchbeck, The End (Durational Performance), dir. by Michael Pinchbeck (first performance Chester: Up the Wall Festival, 22 October 2010).
261 Ibid., p. 55.
262 Ibid., p. 56.
264 Ibid., p. 5.
265 Ibid., p. 5.
266 Ibid., pp. 5-6.


275 Michael Pinchbeck, *Outside Eye Project blog* [online] (3 November 2010) [https://outsideeyeproject.wordpress.com/2012/03/07/dramaturgy-in-dialogue-kate-chapman/] [accessed 28 February 2016].


286 Ibid., p. 176.

287 Michael Pinchbeck, *Making It was never called snowman* [online] (23 April 2010) [http://www.itwasevercalledsnowman.wordpress.com/] [accessed 17 May 2012].

288 Andrew Westerside, *It was never called snowman* by Reckless Sleepers, post-show discussion (Lancaster: Nuffield Theatre, 19 August 2009).


290 Andrew Graham, *You May* by Zoi Dimitriou company, post-show discussion (London: Laban, 10 May 2012).


292 Ibid.


296 Adrian Heathfield, ‘Coming Undone’, *Goat Island Performance* [online] [http://www.goatislandperformance.org/writing_comingUndone.htm] [accessed 17 May 2012].


Michael Pinchbeck, *Outside Eye Project blog* [online] (3 November 2010) [accessed 17 May 2012].

Michael Pinchbeck, *Outside Eye Project blog* [online] (3 November 2010) [accessed 17 May 2012].

Michael Pinchbeck, *Outside Eye Project blog* [online] (3 November 2010) [accessed 17 May 2012].

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 185.

Ibid., p. 170.

Ibid., p. 91.

Ibid., p. 47.

Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., p. 8.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 18.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 18.

Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.

Ibid., p. 52.
335 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
338 Michael Pinchbeck, *Making The Beginning blog* [online] (23 February 2012) [accessed 28 February 2016].
342 Ibid.
343 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
348 Ibid.
349 Ibid.
350 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
353 Tassos Stevens, ‘The experience of an event’, *Tassos Stevens blog* [online] (29 December 2011) [accessed 20 April 2016]
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
358 Ibid.
362 Ibid.
363 Ibid.
364 Angela Monaghan, ‘Who exactly are Ed Miliband's squeezed middle class?’, *The Guardian* [online] (14 January 2014) [accessed 20 April 2016].
369 Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Maddy Costa, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, *Devoted and Disgruntled* 7 blog [online] (29 April 2012). <http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].

Andrew Haydon, ‘Embedded’, *Postcards from the Gods* [online] (16 April 2012)
Maddy Costa, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog [online] (29 April 2012).<http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].


Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Maddy Costa, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog [online] (29 April 2012) <http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].


Maddy Costa, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, Devoted and Disgruntled 7 blog [online] (29 April 2012).<http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Tim Etchells, Certain Fragments (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 73.


Acts of Dramaturgy: The dramaturgical turn in contemporary performance

The Bibliography


Barker, Howard, *Staging the Unforgivable* (Loughborough: Loughborough University, 22 May 2013).


Costa, Maddy, ‘What new dialogue can we set up between people who write about theatre and people who make it?’, *Devoted and Disgruntled 7* blog [online] (29 April 2012). <http://www.devotedanddisgruntled7.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/what-new-dialogue-can-we-set-up-between.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].


Edgar, David, *Is the Playwright Dead*, Oxford University (5 February 2015).


Etchells, Tim, Certain Fragments (London: Routledge, 1999).


Fuchs, Elinor, 'EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play', *Theater*, 42.2 (Summer, 2004), 4-9.


Haydon, Andrew, ‘Embedded’, *Postcards from the Gods* [online] (16 April 2012) <http://postcardsgods.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/embedded.html> [accessed 28 February 2016].


LaPelle’s Factory, *CLOUDUCKOOLANDERS*, dir. by Ollie Smith and Olwen Davies (First performance Lincoln, Lincoln Performing Arts Centre, 29 January 2016).


Love, Catherine, ‘Reviewing reviewed: an attempt to be honest’, *Catherine Love blog* [online] (27 April 2012) <https://catherinelove.co.uk/2012/04/27/reviewing-reviewed-an-attempt-to-be-honest/> [accessed 27 April 2016].


Pinchbeck, Michael, *The man who flew into space from his apartment*, dir. by Michael Pinchbeck (first performance Manchester: Zion Arts Centre, 28 November 2014).


Reckless Sleepers, *It was never called snowman*, dir. by Mole Wetherell (Lancaster: Nuffield Theatre, 19 August 2009).


Stevens, Tassos, ‘The experience of an event’, *Tassos Stevens blog* [online] (29 December 2011) <http://allplayall.blogspot.co.uk/2011/12/experience-of-event.html>


Turner, Cathy, 'Getting the now into the written text (and vice versa?): developing dramaturgies of process', *Performance Research*, 14.1 (2009), 106-114.


